



The Age of Thomas Nashe

Text, Bodies and Trespasses of Authorship in Early Modern England

Edited by
**Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton
and Steve Mentz**

THE AGE OF THOMAS NASHE

Material Readings in Early Modern Culture

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Early Modern England

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Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2013 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:

Guy-Bray, Stephen.

The Age of Thomas Nashe / by Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, and Steve Mentz.
pages cm. – (Material Readings in Early Modern Culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Nash, Thomas, 1567-1601 – Criticism and interpretation. I. Linton, Joan Pong.
II. Mentz, Steve. III. Title.

PR2326.N3Z66 2013

828'.309—dc23

2013007745

ISBN 9781409468059 (hbk)

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Introduction

The Age of Thomas Nashe

Steve Mentz

For a long time, literary critics described the Age of Elizabeth through C.S. Lewis's mid-twentieth-century term: "golden." During Elizabeth's reign, out of the ashes of the earlier Tudor poetry that Lewis called "drab," sprang the splendid phoenixes who would exemplify the English Renaissance: fiery Marlowe, idealistic and idolized Sidney, honey-tongued Shakespeare, the sage and serious poet Spenser. Early modern studies have come a long way from Lewis's vision, but his approach still casts a shadow over idiosyncratic Elizabethan writers such as Thomas Nashe. For Lewis and his traditional conception of Elizabethan literature, Nashe presents a basic conundrum. "In a certain sense of the word, 'say,'" Lewis famously intoned in 1944, "when asked what Nashe 'says,' we should have to reply 'nothing.'"¹ Lewis recognized Nashe's talent and his influence on other writers, but the literary works themselves baffled his critical faculties. Even after Lewis's day passed, Elizabethan scholarship continued to treat Nashe as an outsider and oddity.²

In the final decades of the twentieth century and increasingly in the early twenty-first, this conception of Nashe and of Elizabethan literature has changed radically. More opportunity than problem, Nashe has come to represent what we have overlooked for too long, so that the 1590s can more engagingly be thought of as the "Age of Nashe" rather than Elizabeth's "Golden Age." Nashe's work now figures prominently in many emerging trends in late sixteenth-century studies, in large part because of this author's multiplicity. He touches many of the areas of early modern literary culture that interest today's critics. He was a jobbing playwright, occasional poet, a "man in print," a polemicist, an amateur theologian, and an enthusiastic pornographer. His variety and productivity have led recent critics to see in him the seamy and multifaceted side of Elizabethan literary culture that critics like Lewis overlooked. Nashe today sits at the center of many dominant and emerging trends in early modern literary scholarship, including print culture and the history of the book; histories of sexuality and pornography; urban culture;

¹ C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954) 416. This material was first presented as the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1944.

² Critics from Lewis to Jonathan Crewe and others often refer to "the Nashe problem." For a summary of responses, see Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 183–7.

the changing nature of patronage, including theatrical patronage; polemic and “cheap print”; religious controversy; and evolving definitions of authorship and even “literature” as such.³

This book collection renames the late sixteenth century in English letters “The Age of Nashe” in order to reimagine what has been traditionally known as the “Age of Elizabeth,” or the “Age of Shakespeare.” Nashe’s example helps shift our conception of this period’s literary production away from Lewis’s “golden” model toward a deeper sense of the embeddedness of the literary in material and cultural history. Nashe’s writings reveal how changes in social and cultural production, from the massive growth of the city of London to the expansion of the domestic market for printed books and pamphlets, changed the structure of English literary culture. During his ten-year public career from 1589 to 1599, Nashe wrote from the shifting points of view of a restless, improvident, ambitious young writer whose radical invention was fueled by a desperate search for a flexible literary order. His career path provides a welcome alternative to the familiar biographies of court poets such as Spenser and Sidney and public dramatists such as Marlowe and Shakespeare. As our understanding of Elizabethan culture has broadened, Nashe seems central, not marginal.

In launching this new conception of late sixteenth-century English literature, this introduction begins with a summary of the ways that the past two to three decades of Nashe scholarship have engaged six important areas of early modern literary studies: urban culture, print culture, the early modern theater, polemic and religious cultures, pornography, and changing understandings of authorship. Recent discourses around these subjects facilitate the claim that Nashe has already begun to shape critical practices in early modern literary studies. The chapters that follow offer some new directions for the future of Nashe scholarship. The volume in full aims to show how this compelling and sometimes perplexing figure can help today’s critics make meaningful changes in our understanding of early modern English literature.

Perhaps the most striking area of early modern scholarship that Nashe has influenced has been studies of the early modern city.⁴ For many scholars, Nashe is first and foremost one of the definitive writers of early modern London. The two major critical studies that most of today’s Nashe scholars point to as touching off the current state of scholarship, Jonathan Crewe’s deconstructivist *Unredeemed Rhetoric* (1982) and Lorna Hutson’s historicist *Thomas Nashe in Context* (1989),

³ For a valuable collection of Nashe criticism, see Georgia Brown, (ed.), *Thomas Nashe: The University Wits*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

⁴ Among many others, see Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture of Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, (eds), *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

both locate urban culture at the heart of his professional and cultural identity.⁵ The influential biography by Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News* (1984), explicitly names Nashe an urban journalist before his time.⁶ Recent critical work on the culture of London, which expanded rapidly during the sixteenth century to become, for the first time, one of the largest metropolises in Europe, has emphasized the complexity and multiplicity of urban life. From this city-centered point of view, the literature of courtly romance may seem remote or overly idealized fantasies about Elizabeth's court, while Nashe's street-level *Pierce Penilesse* provides a richer picture of city life. Nashe's London is both fetid and fecund. His texts often displace urban vices to imagined portraits of Italian cities, as in *The Unfortunate Traveler's* Rome or *Pierce Penilesse's* description of "Italie, the Academie of man-slaughter, the sporting place of murther, the Apothecary-shop of poyson for all Nations" (1: 186).⁷ Nashe's true subject, however, has almost always been read as London, and its combination of vice and opportunity. Nashe's acid tongue sometimes created trouble with city authorities; in 1593, Sir George Carey noted that Nashe had been imprisoned for "writinge against the Londoners."⁸ New scholarship on the growth and dynamism of London continues to enrich our understandings of early modern cities and their diverse economies, cultural ecologies, and opportunities for rhetorical and performative display. Through the critical framework of urban studies, Nashe's streets provide a powerful counterpoint to Shakespeare's theater and Spenser's court.

In related ways, Nashe, who lived and worked for part of his career with the bookseller, printer, and sometime book pirate John Danter, is an exemplary figure for the relationship between early modern literature and print. One key scholarly work here is Alexandra Halasz's *The Marketplace of Print* (1997), which places Nashe squarely within the culture of "cheap print" that booksellers and printers were creating in Elizabethan London.⁹ Nashe was deeply committed to both print and manuscript cultures, including their practical, physical, and even sexual aspects; he occasionally writes about his fear of "pressing" and extols the powers of his "private penne."¹⁰ His literary output in multiple genres, including print,

⁵ Jonathan Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

⁶ Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984).

⁷ All citations from Nashe are from R. B. McKerrow, (ed.), *The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). Citations given in the text by volume and page number.

⁸ On Nashe and Carey, see Nicholl, *Cup of News*, esp. 180–90.

⁹ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ On Nashe's metaphors for both print and manuscript publication, see Steve Mentz, "Day Labor: The Practice of Prose in Early Modern England," *Early Modern Prose Fiction*:

manuscript circulation, and the public and private stages, make him ideally suited to represent the variety and interconnectedness of early modern media cultures. Unlike earlier criticism that connected Nashe with academic humanism, twenty-first century studies by Julian Yates and Steve Mentz suggest that his fascination with print's perils and opportunities led him to imagine the public culture of print as an alternative to the universities, the theater, or the court.¹¹ Nashe maintained his allegiance to university erudition – his first-printed text, a preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon*, includes a full-throated celebration of his alma mater, St. John's College, Cambridge, "that most famous and fortunate Nurse of all learning" (3: 317) – but he also carved out his intellectual career on both printed and handwritten pages. Like many Elizabethan authors, he claimed not to want print publication – after *Pierce Penilesse* appeared he wrote that he was "verie sorrie...I am thus unawares betrayed to infamie" (1: 153) – but he clearly sought out print from his arrival in London in 1589, when he published the combative preface to *Menaphon* and then guided his Cambridge-written, and already licensed, *Anatomie of Absurditie* into print later that year. Nashe's famous feud-in-print with Gabriel Harvey, which began in 1592, in part represents the struggle between Nashe the independent urban writer, who depended on print publicity for his living, and Harvey the established Cambridge Don.

Nashe's lost writings appear to have been voluminous, especially in relation to the best-known genre of his age, drama. He wrote one surviving play, "Summer's Last Will and Testament," for private performance, but his name also appears on the title page of Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594), and he has been identified as the likely author of at least the first act of Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 1*.¹² What we know about his practice as a dramatist, including his tantalizingly brief commentaries on stage performances, epitomizes the variety of Elizabethan theatrical culture. Nashe, whose name appears more often than any other Elizabethan author in the Sources of the *Riverside Shakespeare*, seems to have been an anonymous contributor to many plays; he himself claims, in *The Foure Letters Confuted*, one of his attacks on Gabriel Harvey, to have written "in all sorts of humors privately...more than any yoong man of my age in England" (1: 320).¹³ He emphasizes the brash challenge that early modern theatrical culture made to established academic learning by celebrating sixteenth-century actors over their classical models: "Not *Roscius* nor *Aesope*, those admyred tragedians that haue liued euer since before Christ was borne, could euer performe more in

The Cultural Politics of Reading, Naomi Leibler, (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2007) 18–32.

¹¹ Mentz, *Romance for Sale*; Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

¹² See J.J.M. Tobin, "A Touch of Greene, Much Nashe, and All Shakespeare," *Henry VI: Critical Essays*, Thomas Pendleton, (ed.), (London: Routledge, 2001) 39–56.

¹³ William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans and J.J.M. Tobins, (eds), 2nd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997) 77–88. Tobin is the primary author of the table of sources and chronology.

action than famous Ned Allen” (1: 215). By placing Nashe’s labors as dramatist and theater critic in touch with more well-known careers in dramatic authorship, including those of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Jonson, we can produce a richer and more accurate view of how early modern London’s print, stage, and manuscript cultures coexisted and overlapped.

One anonymous work that has been fairly confidently ascribed to Nashe is the polemic *An Almond for a Parrot*, an anti-Puritanical treatise written against the pseudonymous Martin Mar-prelate around 1590. Nashe first became widely known as a polemicist, and many posthumous descriptions of him, including John Taylor’s *Tom Nashe his ghost* (1642) and a remark in Izaak Walton’s *Life of Hooker* (1665), remember Nashe primarily as an anti-Puritan satirist.¹⁴ While Nashe wrote in many genres, he returned to polemic in the wake of Robert Greene’s death in 1592, when he took up pen and press to defend his dead friend against the slanderous comments of the Harvey brothers. The flying-match between Nashe and Gabriel Harvey soon left Greene behind, and it filled many volumes on Nashe’s side, including (obliquely) *Pierce Penilesse* in 1592, *Strange Newes* in 1593, and *Have with You to Saffron-Walden* in 1596. Nashe apologized to Harvey and begged forgiveness in the front matter of one edition of *Christes Teares* (1593), and then recanted his apology and reignited the feud in the second edition (1594). Part of the appeal of these polemical texts is Nashe’s rhetorical abandon; even a short catalog of his many names for Harvey – Gaffer Jobbernoule, Gregory Haberdine, Timothy Tiptoes, Braggadocchio Glorioso – reveals his expansive stylistic signature. The books of both Nashe and Harvey were called in by the Bishop’s Ban in 1599, though the only printed reply to Nashe after 1596, a bitter pamphlet entitled *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (1597), seems to have been written not by Harvey, but by the Trinity College barber to whom Nashe had mockingly dedicated *Have with You*. The legacy of this flurry of printed insults was a wealth of stylistic invention and a new notoriety for printed pamphlets as a means of social exchange. Nashe put his personal stamp on English polemic for a long time.

Another element of Nashe’s career that has attracted attention recently is his work as pornographer and chronicler of sexual variety. Especially in his manuscript poem, “The Choice of Valentines,” also titled “Nashe his Dildo,” written in the early 1590s, Nashe’s fascination with sexual plurality has proved valuable for scholars who have been reconsidering established ideas about early modern sexuality. The poem combines pornographic fantasies with a Chaucerian tone and a final apologetic reminder that “Ouids wanton Muse did not offend” (3: 415). At the center of the erotic action, the hero, named “Thom,” of course, fails to please his mistress, who resorts instead to the dildo of the title. That mechanical “counterfet” becomes “my Mistris page” (3: 413), standing in, like Jack Wilton, the page-hero of *The Unfortunate Traveler*, for the power of the printed page, which displaces the hero’s sexual body. Nashe’s fascination with sexual variety and

¹⁴ See McKerrow’s “Selection of Early Allusions to Nashe” in *Nashe, Works*, (5: 142–57).

the economics of prostitution – the heroine of what is now Nashe’s most popular work, *The Unfortunate Traveler*, is a courtesan, or at least the narrator calls her a courtesan – fuels his radical skepticism about received values. Critics have found analogues for Nashe’s erotic skepticism in his use of the romance genre and his fascination with epistemological questions more broadly. His portraits of sexual license, prostitution, and the cultural implications of such practices mark his works as key sites for current critical renegotiations of early modern sexualities.

Nashe as starving, self-reinventing, wandering man in print, self-dramatized as “Pierce Penilesse,” and constantly present in all his works, is helping to revitalize current understandings of authorship in Elizabethan culture. Many recent scholars, including Wendy Hyman (2005) and Georgia Brown (*Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 2004), have emphasized Nashe’s self-conscious construction of himself as author and his spanning of the worlds of aristocratic patronage and urban print.¹⁵ He seems to have been infamous even in his lifetime, probably appearing as Moth (an anagram of T-h-o-m) in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labors Lost*, and explicitly in the figure Ingenioso in the University satires *The Parnassus Plays* (1598–1602?).¹⁶ Especially in the elaborate prefatory letters that he wrote for his own books, as well as for Greene’s *Menaphon* (1589) and an unauthorized edition of Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), Nashe revels in self-presentation and self-invention.¹⁷ He devised the figure of Pierce (i.e., purse) Penilesse to represent the poverty-stricken author, but by the time of *Have with You* he includes himself in the dialogue as “Piers Penilesse Respondent,” and everyone in the book calls him “Tom.” The arc of his career, from the hopeful brash commentary of *Anatomy of Absurditie* to the wanderings of *Pierce Penilesse* to the desperate fantasia of *Lenten Stuffle*, a hymn to the endless fecundity of the herring of Yarmouth, to which city Nashe fled when the authorities wanted to imprison him for his part in the lost play, “Isle of Dogs,” tracks his biography very closely. His varied oeuvre shows his efforts to transform himself – a brilliant but improvident young scholar with few connections and massive ambition – into a model for what was possible in late Elizabethan literary culture.

Building on these areas of established interest in Nashe, the chapters in this collection also carve out new territory. The first cluster of chapters, “Beyond the City,” draws together the work of some established Nashe critics to help revise the

¹⁵ Georgia Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Wendy Hyman, “Authorial Self-Consciousness in Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveler*,” *Studies in English Literature 1500 – 1900*, 45:1 (2005) 23–41.

¹⁶ For recent reconsideration of the Parnassus plays, see Edward Gieskes, “‘Honesty and Vulgar Praise’: The Poet’s War and the Literary Field,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005) 75–103. For an older summary, see Marjorie Reymburn, “New Facts and Theories about the Parnassus Plays,” *PMLA* 74:4 (1959) 325–35.

¹⁷ On Nashe’s role in *Astrophil and Stella*, see Steve Mentz, “Selling Sidney: William Ponsonby, Thomas Nashe, and the Boundaries of Elizabethan Print and Manuscript Cultures,” *TEXT* 13 (2000): 151–74.

paradigms of their earlier work. Georgia Brown's "Sex and the City: Nashe, Ovid and the Problems of Urbanity" explores the overlap among Nashe's commitment to urban culture, his fascination with deviant sexuality, and his devotion to humanist classicism in order to present a rich analysis of multiple Nashe texts. Finding Nashean analogs in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Brown shows that Nashe's particular configuration of urban culture underpins literary London in the 1590s. Jonathan Crewe's chapter, "This Sorrow's Heavenly: *Christ's Teares* and the Jews," adds intellectual and religious seriousness to Nashe's radical authorial play. The next two authors, Jennifer Andersen and Steve Mentz, suggest in different ways that Nashe's final printed book, *Lenten Stuffe*, can recast his career in ways that previous critics have overlooked. Their conclusions do not always dovetail – Andersen reads Nashe as a moral satirist, while Mentz reads him as an oceanic utopian – but they both suggest rich new avenues for critical exploration.

The second section, "Mediating Bodies," expands the now-established pattern of interrogating Nashe's broad interest in early modern media technologies. The first two chapters give renewed attention to Nashe's interface with drama, that most famous of Elizabethan forms which the focus on Nashe as "man in print" has tended to marginalize. Karen Kettlich's "Nashe's Extemporal Vein and His Tarltonizing Wit" shows how the clown and public performer Richard Tarlton influenced Nashe's career in multiple ways, as performer, stylist, and self-promoting author. Melissa Hull Geil's "Reproducing Paper Monsters in Thomas Nashe" explores reproductive language in Nashe's self-aware prose, suggesting that the reproductive female body was especially salient in authorial self-creation and self-understanding in Nashe's works. John Nance's chapter, "Gross Anatomies," suggests that Nashe was powerfully influenced by advances in medical science, especially Vesalius's landmark achievements in understanding and textually reproducing the physical anatomy of the human body.

This focus on authorial self-conception continues in the final cluster of chapters, "Trespasses of Authorship." David Landreth's "Wit without Money in Nashe," focuses on poverty in *Pierce Penniless* as a form of self-representation, and his analysis shows how far Nashe takes his own relentless materialism. Corey McEleney's "Nashe's Vain Vein: Poetic Pleasure and the Limits of Utility," asks us to reconsider Nashe's works in light of early modern and modern conceptions of the utility of poetry. Nashe may, McEleney argues, be better read as a defender of poetic pleasure than a reluctant or veiled purveyor of traditional moral advice. Finally, a concluding essay by co-editors Stephen Guy-Bray and Joan Pong Linton explores "Nashe Untrimmed: The Way We Teach Him Today." Relying on a 2010 survey of college instructors who include Nashe in their courses, this chapter shows that Nashe's works in the classroom call attention to both "difficulty" and "pleasure" in ways that help challenge and clarify what we ask Renaissance texts to do with and for our students.

In conclusion, this collection builds itself atop Nashe's own restless and relentless invention, which drives so much current critical interest. The great

problem for Nashe, and for Nashe critics, is trying to find a way to stop. Nashe's own last gasp of authorship, the closing pages of *Lenten Stuffe*, includes an elaborate conceit in which he imagines that his own act of writing requires him to spend "the whole bagge of my winde" in order to ascend "the lofty mountaine creast" (3: 226). The contents of Nashe's bag of winds seem unlikely to be exhausted soon as the author's reputation continues to climb. Perhaps a more practical model for closure can be found in the final line of his breakthrough success *Pierce Penilesse*. There the author despairs of any firm conclusion and instead ruptures his own narration, "break[ing] off this endlesse argument of speech abruptlie" (1: 245). If we were to guess, we do not think that sort of abrupt break is likely to happen in Nashe studies too quickly.

SECTION 1

Beyond the City

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Chapter 1

Sex and the City: Nashe, Ovid, and the Problems of Urbanity

Georgia Brown

Critics have devoted a lot of energy to Ovid and the ways his texts were reinterpreted by English Renaissance writers.¹ This work has been very important, but it has tended to concentrate on Ovid as an erotic poet, or as the author of the *Metamorphoses*, and has tended to overlook the fact that Ovid is also a poet of urbanization. For their part, Elizabethan writers like Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe certainly did recognize Ovid as a city poet and adapted his model to their own confrontations with emerging urban forces. Marlowe had probably finished his translation of Ovid's *Amores* by the time he left Cambridge in 1587, and Nashe certainly knew this translation, as he quotes from it in *The Vnfortunate Traueller* (1594).² The *Amores* is well known for its frank descriptions of sexual desire, but the poet-lover also emphasizes the sequence's Roman setting and articulates a self-consciously urban way of life. The *Amores* are not only poems

¹ For example: Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 35 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000); Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), to cite but a few examples of the best work on Ovid.

² For Anthony Ossa-Richardson, "Ovid and the 'freeplay with signs' in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *MLR* 101 (2006): 945–56, Nashe cites Ovid in such a way as to produce a "downward transposition" (253). In this particular case, he quotes Ovid to introduce eroticism into a discussion of religion and Anabaptism. I would argue that, in doing so, Nashe is only developing a sceptical tendency already present in Ovid, and that this kind of rhetorical flexibility, the ability to apply one's knowledge to any argument or situation, is not only a humanist goal, it is also characteristic of the successful urban-dweller. For the quotation from the *Amores*, beginning "Crede mihi," see *The Vnfortunate Traueller*, in, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, V vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, revised F.P. Wilson (1957; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), vol.II: 217–18. All quotations from Nashe will be taken from this edition and will be identified by volume and page numbers in the text.

about sex, they are poems about sex and the city.³ Indeed, Rome is the other object of desire in the sequence, as we are reminded by the play on the word amor (love) as an anagram of Roma (Rome).

In the *Amores* and the *Ars amatoria*, Ovid sets a distinctly urban, sophisticated and knowing mode of behaviour, which he terms “cultus,” against clumsy, prudish rusticity.⁴ Urbanity for Ovid is modern, while rusticity is associated with the past. Implicit in Ovid’s criticism of rusticity is his resistance to the emperor Augustus’s program of moral reform and its invocation of idealized, rural values for Augustus’s own political ends. Although Ovid also expresses scepticism about the state of being “cultus,” which one might also translate as the state of being cultivated and urbane, he is obsessed with the city. The love poems are not only poems about human relationships, they are also poems about who controls Rome and what it is to be Roman. Even the *Tristia*, the poems of exile, written after Ovid had been banished from Rome to the Black Sea, express his desire for Rome, and apply the terms he once used in his erotic lyrics to the city, even though the poet now knows Rome is a flawed lover.

Ovid’s definition of “cultus” acknowledges that self-cultivation and self-construction are crucial in achieving success in the city, and it is this definition of urbanity that Thomas Nashe develops in his early works. Like Ovid, Nashe not only writes about the city, he also incorporates the city into his own identity, fashioning himself as a wit and man-about-town. Partly through his own efforts at self-promotion, for which Ovid’s own blend of fiction with autobiographical fact is an important model, Nashe pushed himself to the centre of Elizabethan culture. His self-proclaimed role as the champion of print culture and professional authorship, together with the creativity and satirical dynamism of his style, which redefined the possibilities for English prose, made him a forceful cultural presence. No less important to his contemporaries was the way Nashe developed contemporary debate about London and contributed to the establishment of an urban sensibility and new forms of affiliation to the city. The questions Nashe

³ On Ovid as an urban poet, see, for example: L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); Robert W. Hanning, *Serious Play: Desire and Authority in the Poetry of Ovid, Chaucer, and Ariosto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Catherine Connors, “Field and forum: culture and agriculture in Roman rhetoric,” *Roman Eloquence*, ed. William J. Dominik (London: Routledge, 1997) 71–89; Edwin S. Ramage, *Urbanitas: Ancient Sophistication and Refinement*, University of Cincinnati Classical Studies 3 (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati Press, 1973).

⁴ See, for example, *Amores*, Book 1, elegy 8, and the *Ars amatoria*, Book 3, ll. 107–28, where rustic simplicity is rejected in favour of the cultured life of the modern city. At the same time, Ovid is also having a dig at Virgil’s *Georgics*. References to the *Ars amatoria* are to *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. J.H. Mozley, revised G.P. Goold, The Loeb Classical Library (1979; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). All references to the *Amores* are to Marlowe’s translation, entitled *All Ovids Elegies*, which was published in 1600. See, *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. Stephen Orgel (1971; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).

raises about the relationship between city and country, about the moral status of the city, about the possibility of specifically urban forms of behaviour and specifically urban forms of language, are so compelling for late Elizabethan writers because, by the late sixteenth century, London had become by far the largest city in England and also the economic, political and cultural focus of the country. Never before had London's dominance been so diverse or so powerful. Nashe confronts this phenomenon with a mixture of excitement, fear, and self-conscious bravado, and helps define new discursive spaces within the city, which offer writers and readers new chances for social, political, and cultural engagement.

Though a growing number of critics have explored Nashe in an urban context, few have done justice to the pressure the city exerts on every page of Nashe's output.⁵ Urban life generates the conditions in which Nashe's kind of professional authorship could emerge. Elizabethan responses to Nashe identify him as an urban writer. Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication To The Diuell* was published in 1592, and describes how the city dweller, Pierce, "[h]auing spent many yeeres in studying how to liue," still finds himself in poverty and without a patron, and so decides to make supplication to the devil, the only source of generosity left in the city (I: 157). To this end, Pierce enlists the help of the Knight of the Post, and both the text he prepares for the devil, and the conversation he has with the Knight, contain powerful satirical attacks on London vices. The invective force and wit of the writing in *Pierce Penilesse*, combined with colloquial vigour, contemporary reference, apparently boundless linguistic creativity, and the free combination of modes, had a profound impact on other writers. *Pierce Penilesse* was far and away Nashe's most popular text, and the identification between the vigorous, witty, Pierce and Nashe himself, became so strong that Nashe was often referred to as Pierce, the name of his own urban protagonist. At the end of this essay, I will explore some of the ways Shakespeare uses Nashe's status as an urban writer and how he develops his association of urbanity and linguistic wit in *The Taming of the Shrew*, written between 1590 and 1594. But before I discuss *The Taming of the Shrew* and its relationship to Nashe, I will explore how Nashe adapts Ovid to refine his own response to the intellectual and imaginative challenges posed by the city.

⁵ Among the studies that deal imaginatively and in detail with Nashe as an urban author are: Jonathan V. Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984) 39–61; Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 320–40; Steve Mentz, "Jack in the city: *The Unfortunate Traveler*, Tudor London, and literary history," *A Companion To Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 489–503; Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe In Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Per Sivefors, "'This Citty-sodoming trade:' the Ovidian authorial persona in Thomas Nashe's *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem*," *Urban Preoccupations. Mental and Material Landscapes*, ed. Sivefors (Pisa: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2007) 143–57.

Images of prostitution are characteristic of both Nashe's and Ovid's representations of the town as the site for particular kinds of monetary, sexual, and cultural transactions. Like Ovid, Nashe explores commerce and the exchange of money as expressions of urbanity, and both the market-place and the city are characterized by multiplicity, open-endedness, ceaseless movement, and superficial social exchanges. Nashe differs from Ovid, however, in giving more attention to the linguistic effects of such febrile, multifaceted encounters. Words acquire unpredictable connotations when they enter the realms of exchange. In fact, word-play and sound-play have both positive and negative consequences for Nashe. On the one hand, they can establish and refine meanings, and may even provide the structure of the text. On the other hand, they can undermine and confuse meanings. Nashe recognizes urbanization as a material reality and a spiritual challenge, but it also has profound cultural consequences, for Nashe, as it transforms the way people think and behave, and even alters the very language they use.

London provokes an even more ambivalent response in Nashe than Rome does in Ovid, and in *Christs Teares Ouer Ierusalem* Nashe's dismantling of urban pretensions and urban authority actually got him into trouble with the City of London and forced him to lie low for a while on the Isle of Wight.⁶ Yet his condemnation of the urban environment goes hand in hand with a disturbing fascination with, and self-implication in, its processes. In *Christs Teares Ouer Ierusalem*, first published during the plague year of 1593, Nashe draws a fearsome parallel between London and Jerusalem. According to Nashe, the plague which is raging through London is a punishment for sinfulness and, if London does not repent, it will suffer the same terrible punishments as Jerusalem: "The Land is full of adulterers, & for this cause the Land mourneth. The Land is full of Extortioners, full of proude men, full of hypocrites, full of murderers. This is the cause why the Sword deuoureth abroad, and the Pestilence at home." (II: 158)⁷ Nashe's text is in a long tradition that associates cities with catastrophe. It is as if cities like Rome, Sodom, Jerusalem, London, Antwerp, even Troy, are so big, so complex and/or so monstrous that they defy representation as a totality. They are rendered more manageable by being imagined at the moment of their destruction and disintegration. As is the case in *Christs Teares Ouer Ierusalem*, apocalypse is a moment of destruction, but also a moment of disclosure and revelation when we see the city for what it is.

Nashe uncovers many terrible sins which will lead to London's desolation, if they are left unchecked, and one of these sins is the capital's notorious lechery:

⁶ Nashe revels in the role of compulsively outspoken satirist, but in *Christs Teares* this had very serious, and potentially dire, consequences, as Katherine Duncan-Jones points out in, "Christs Teares: Nashe's 'forsaken extremities,'" *RES* ns 49 (1998):167–80.

⁷ These lines refer to London, and also allude to Isaiah's attack on, and lament for, Jerusalem. Compare Isaiah, ch.1–5.

To my iourneys end I haste, & discend to the second continent of Delicacie, which is Lust or Luxury. In complayning of it, I am afrayd I shall defile good words, and too-long detayne my Readers. It is a sinne that nowe serueth in *London* in steade of an after-noones recreation. It is a trade that heeretofore thriued in hugger-mugger, but of late dayes walketh openly by day light, like a substantiall graue Merchant. Of hys name or profession hee is not ashamed: at the first beeing askt of it, he will confesse it. Into the hart of the Citty is vncleannesse crept. (II: 148)

Lust is a ubiquitous and spectacular feature of London life. No attempt is made to hide it in back alleys or in darkness. In fact, lust is so common and so ordinary in the shameless metropolis that it has become the quintessential afternoon pastime: "It is a sinne that nowe serveth in *London* in steade of an after-noones recreation." Afternoons have a long and torrid history, and the poet-lover of Ovid's *Amores* famously consummates his love in the afternoon, as he admits in one of his prayers to Jove: "Jove send me more such afternoons as this" (*Amores*, Book 1, elegy 5, l.26).

In *Christs Teares*, prostitution defines London as a social space that favours certain kinds of debased social transaction. It also defines the physical space of the city. As the author travels through London, observing the different manifestations of prostitution, he journeys between the suburbs and the heart of the city and maps the physical space of the city: "*London*, what are thy Suburbes but licensed Stewes? Can it be so many brothel-houses of salary sensuality & sixe-penny whoredome (the next doore to the Magistrates) should be sette vp and maintained, if brybes dyd not bestirre them?" (II: 148). In the *Amores*, Ovid eroticizes Rome and urbanizes his beloved Corinna, and in Book I, elegy 9, and Book II, elegy 12, for example, she is compared to a city that is to be breached and invaded. Nashe similarly produces an eroticized map of London, in which the city takes shape around a number of salient points of reference, which include brothels, as well as magistrates' houses. Ironically, sin and disease, in this case prostitution and the plague, solidify Nashe's understanding of the interrelationship between the City and the suburbs. Nashe imagines London as being composed of interrelated spaces and communities. After all "vncleannesse" has crept into the very heart of the City, while the suburbs are "licensed Stewes," which are permitted by the City of London authorities.

The boundary between different urban localities is not the crucial boundary for Nashe because he does not understand the City and the suburbs as completely distinct entities. The operative boundary is a moral boundary, and it occurs within locations, and within individuals, rather than between locations. It is the boundary between sinfulness and righteousness. Nashe carries a physical plan of London in his head and that physical plan is also an ideological plan of the metropolis which is centripetal and hierarchical. Places and people are defined in relation to the centre which is occupied by the monarch and ultimately by God. Nashe's fear

is that social order will become permanently separated from divine, natural, and cosmic order.

Critics have sometimes condemned Nashe's texts for a lack of structure and coherence.⁸ However, I suggest that the structure and rhythm of texts like *Christs Teares* or *Pierce Penilesse* are urbanized and that they replicate the experience of urban living, albeit with varying degrees of success. These texts present a sequence of transitory experiences of repetition and variation, which is what the city presents to its inhabitants, and they offer the reader encounters of unpredictable length, which is what the city offers those who pass through its streets. Moreover, they seem to mix the arbitrary with the planned. The city is the topos of these texts: it is a physical space and also the imaginative frame which holds contingency together and gives the texts unity and continuity. The city, with its particular modes and tics, determines the shape of the text.

Prostitution is particularly characteristic of London because London is a great market of exchange. "Tell me," asks Pierce Penilesse, in *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication To The Diuell*, "is there anye place so lewde as this Ladie London?" (*Pierce Penilesse*, I: 216). This great urban market, packed with people, and endless comings and goings, not only throws people into multiple social encounters, which can turn into sexual encounters, it also expands the variety of sexual practices and identities. The logic of the market-place fosters specialization as vendors and consumers hunt out new and ever more exotic wares to satisfy the endless pressure to consume and buy: "We haue not English words enough to vnfold it. Positions & instructions haue they, to make theyr whores a hundred times more whorish and treacherous, then theyr owne wicked affects (resigned to the deuils disposing) can make them." (*Christs Teares*, II: 153)

The drive to create, and then satisfy, new identities, practices and desires stimulates imaginative possibilities. So it would appear that London is particularly conducive to all kinds of creativity and one might expect that it would be a particularly congenial place for writers. In fact, this is the case for Nashe. London, with its developing print industry, offers him the chance to exploit the opportunities of professional writing and attempt to earn a living. However, the flexibility (sometimes perverse flexibility) that is so characteristic of Nashe's style, and which seems to be a prerequisite for successful urban life has, as Nashe acknowledges, a destructive and immoral potential, and the imaginative freedom of London is not without its ironies. While London frees the imagination from the restraints of custom and tradition, allowing invention to fly to new heights and

⁸ G.R. Hibbard, *Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1962) 61–62, dismisses *Pierce Penilesse* as a disconnected farrago. Peter Holbrook, *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe, Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994) 27–85, interprets the apparent disconnectedness more creatively. Relating the lack of cohesion to the problems caused by Nashe's social marginality, he argues arbitrariness is deployed to construct the impression of social-literary authority.

creating the conditions for professional authorship, what the imagination generates are extravagant sexual practices for which words have not yet been invented. The urban pressure to create neologisms is inextricably bound up with the pressure to create new kinds of sex. Urban language for Nashe is wanton.

Nashe is particularly concerned with the ways words acquire unpredictable connotations when they enter the realms of exchange and become subject to the urban logic that separates signs from inherent values. For Nashe the city demands urban forms of articulation and creates its own kind of language. In the preface to the edition of *Christs Teares* published in 1594, Nashe defends his style and specifically its coinages and portmanteaux terms by arguing that such words have a special satiric power because they are “swelling and boystrous” (II: 184) and thus powerful. He then points out that such language is not only appropriate to its urban subject, it is actually produced by the city. Such coinages are only responding to the pressure to compound, increase, and make a profit, at the expense of boundaries and customs, which is the principle of being in the city.

To the second rancke of reprehenders that complain of my boystrous compound wordes, and ending my Italionate coyned verbes all in Ize, thus I repleie: That no winde that blowes strong but is boystrous, no speech or wordes of any power or force to confute or perswade but must bee swelling and boystrous. For the compounding of my wordes, therein I imitate rich men who, hauing gathered store of white single money together, conuert a number of those small little scutes into great peeces of gold, such as double Pistols and Portugues. Our English tongue of all languages most swarmeth with the single money of monasillables, which are the onely scandall of it. Bookes written in them and no other seeme like Shop-keepers boxes, that containe nothing else saue halfe-pence, three-farthings, and two-pences. (II: 184)

Of course, prostitution is just another kind of business, another kind of exchange where the intersection of the social and the economic is alarmingly clear. Prostitution serves as a synecdoche for the market forces that drive economic and social interactions in London, forces that turn everything into a commodity so that even human bodies are “debas[ed] ... to euery one that bringes coyne,” as the speaker notes in *Christs Teares* (II: 149). As Nashe walks through the metropolis in *Christs Teares* he simultaneously moves through his text, and the book becomes an emblem of the city with its margins, suburbs, highways and byways. As a text which follows the structure of the urban landscape and is built out of urban elements, *Christs Teares* is implicated in London’s sinfulness. The text is stuffed with prostitution and then goes on to sell prostitution yet again to its readers. Thus *Christs Teares* is the quintessential product of the urban world in that it double

sells, extra sells and sells selling, as it re-retails the prostituted bodies that have already been sold.⁹

The association of sex, money and the city is made repeatedly in the *Amores*. In Book II, elegy 3, for example, the poet-lover talks about his need for lots of women in a poem that clearly identifies Rome as its setting. Sex and money are linked in Book I, elegy 8, in which the poet-lover attacks Dipsas, the bawd, who advises his mistress to use sex to gain material benefit, with the argument “To beggars shut, to bringers ope thy gate” (l.77). The bawd links this kind of venal and venereal transaction to writing, even writing in its most idealized, godlike form. Not only does Dipsas argue that the more sex the woman has, the more matter there is for poetry, she also invokes Apollo, “The poet’s god, arrayed in robes of gold” (l.59), now resplendently adorned in the symbolic colour of money, to justify the association of poetry and venality. Ovid is worried by the reification of values in the world of the city where all things, even words and thoughts, can be bought and sold, but the problem is even more acute for Nashe, who is a professional author, who sells words.

Nonetheless, the dilemma of the prostituted text is also Ovid’s dilemma in the *Amores*. In Book I, elegy 12, Ovid curses his writing materials because they are ineffective and duplicitous and prays that time might destroy his writing tablets and cover them with “sluttish white-mould” (l. 30). The association between Ovid’s elegies and sluttishness is appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, the tablets on which the elegies are written are made from wood, covered with wax, which is folded double so that they are physically duplicitous. Secondly, Ovid’s poems are “sluttish” because they lie. They are also “sluttish” because they often aim to argue Corinna into sex, and they are “sluttish,” as Ovid acknowledges in Book III, elegy 11, because they prostitute Corinna and make her attractions available to multiple pairs of eyes as “she” is simultaneously opened and handled by multiple pairs of hands: “The bawd I play, lovers to her I guide: / Her gate by my hands is set open wide” (ll.11–12). In addition, Ovid is himself “sluttish” because he wastes his time writing love elegies instead of pursuing the noble art of epic, as he announces in the opening lines of the very first elegy of Book I: “With Muse prepared I meant to sing of arms, / Choosing a subject fit for fierce alarms. / Both verses were alike till Love (men say) / Began to smile and took one foot away” (ll. 5–8).¹⁰

⁹ In “Day labour: Thomas Nashe and the practice of prose in Early Modern England,” in, *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York: Routledge, 2007) 18–32, Steve Mentz argues that Nashe embraces the charge of prostitution because it relates writing to the body, and he connects this shameless authorial positioning to a wider privileging of “solidity over liquidity” (30) and of public forms of circulation over private ones.

¹⁰ Mentz, “Day labour,” (21) notes that in *Haue With You To Saffron-Walden* (1596), Nashe rejects serious labour for more obviously productive forms of amorous play, in terms, I would add, that allude to Ovid’s famous rejection of epic at the start of the *Amores*.

Nashe invokes Ovid at moments of authorial crisis when he feels threatened by the kind of author the city, with its markets, has made him. The problem for Nashe is that he is implicated in the urban depravity he describes. As the author of printed texts, he is someone who puts his wares up for sale, and, to the extent that he invests himself in writing and defines himself through his writing, he also sells his body to everyone that brings coin. Not only does Nashe live in London, he is also of London, in the sense that he behaves like a Londoner, and attempts to make money out of sin. He may pry into lechery for moral purposes but, like the bawds and procurers he castigates, he still capitalizes on prostitution. Ovid actually compares the poet-lover to a procuress in Book III, elegy 11, l. 11, "The Bawd I play lovers to her I guide." Elsewhere, he implies parallels between the poet and the procuress, Dipsas, and he even stigmatizes elegy itself, describing the genre through which he tries to get sex as a procuress, "lena," (Book III, elegy 1, l. 44).¹¹ Ovid's self-accusation epitomizes the witty knowingness that characterizes urbanity, but it also points to a serious tension in his position. Similarly, in Nashe, the value of authorial mobility is put in question, along with authorial claims to honesty and authority: "The worlde woulde count me the most licentiate loose strayer vnder heauen, if I shoulde vnrippe but halfe so much of their veneriell machiauelisme as I haue lookt into" (*Christs Teares*, II: 153). By "vnripp[ing]" sin, Nashe exposes it to view, but the "vnripp[ing]" of the satirist reminds the reader of ripping clothes and the possibility that Nashe has ripped off both his own and the prostitutes' clothes in his pursuit of knowledge. In other words, how far does Nashe take the claim that his text is substantiated by first-hand experience?

Nashe is concerned with tying referentiality to textuality, and the relationship between a writer and their work is a recurring obsession. However, just as his claims to truthfulness are corroborated by his claims to first-hand knowledge, so his claims to authority are rendered suspect by his repeated implication in the business of prostitution. Laurie Ellinghausen has recently argued that Nashe links authorship to displacement and turns displacement into a virtue.¹² As Nashe gains mobility, she argues, he envisions possibilities beyond service and patronage and, while the loss of an anchored identity may threaten Nashe with poverty, it also gives him freedom. Consequently, his mobility gives him the moral and social independence that enables him to exploit a satirical voice. This is true to a degree, but, as Nashe wanders through the brothels of London, his mobility also becomes a source of taint. Nashe's view of the city as a great market that generates and is generated by rampant commodification and prostitution makes his position as

¹¹ For the Latin original, "*huic ego proveni lena comesque deae*" (to be go-between and comrade to this goddess was I brought forth), see Ovid, *Heroides And Amores*, trans. Grant Showerman, The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1914). The line is spoken by a personification of elegy. Marlowe does not translate "lena" directly, but still preserves the idea that elegy (and the poet) are pimps.

¹² Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567–1667* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 37–62.

a professional author who generates markets, as well as being generated by the market, profoundly equivocal.

One of the things that characterizes the city for Nashe is materialism. The city is not only full of stuff, it is obsessed with materiality. Nashe thrusts stuff and matter into our minds at unexpected moments by concentrating the force of a lexicon of physicality. For example, in *Christs Teares* the unexpected use of the word “scummy,” in the context of a discussion of sin, reminds us that the metropolis is also full of waste and that the Thames, like all London streets, is both a thoroughfare that connects individuals, and a sewer: “*London*, thou art the seeded Garden of sinne, the Sea that sucks in all the scummy chanel of the Realme” (II: 158).¹³ Materiality, in the sense that a text points to a flesh and blood author, becomes a particularly vexed issue in a print economy where text, author and reader can be very distant in space, as well as time, and where the author probably does not know the reader, nor the individual reader the author.

Nashe pursues a variety of strategies which tie abstraction to reality, and he refers to real places in London, just as Ovid refers to real places in Rome.¹⁴ Of course, both Nashe and Ovid play with issues of proof and referentiality and alternately encourage and discourage the identification of texts with writers and real people. This is often very witty, but Ovid also serves as a serious warning against the dangers of referentiality. In the *Tristia*, Ovid tells us that he was exiled to the Black Sea for his poetry, in particular the *Ars amatoria*, and for an unspecified mistake, an unwitting error which leads him, in *Tristia* Book 2, ll.103–108, to draw parallels between his own fate and that of Actaeon.¹⁵ Ellinghausen interprets Nashe’s lack of a firm position as positive, but Ovid-the-exile is a famous image that represents writing from the outside, while looking in, as tragic experience.

In *Pierce Penilesse*, Nashe invokes Ovid to express tensions or stresses in his own authorial position. Ovid is the spectre lurking behind Pierce. He is the epitome of the learned poet, a touchstone of civilized, urban behaviour, who is out of step with his surroundings: “*Ouid* might as well haue read his verses to the *Getes* that vnderstood him not, as a man talk reason to them that haue no eares but mouths, nor sense but of that which they swallowe downe their throates” (I:

¹³ For an extremely suggestive discussion of the ways in which the material guarantee of truth keeps surfacing in *The Vnfortunate Traueller* see Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 101–37.

¹⁴ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 82–113, analyses Nashe’s role in the development of the pamphlet as the site of alternative public discourse and notes that the invocation of real London places establishes this alternative discursive field in relation to the material world.

¹⁵ See Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto*, trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler, The Loeb Classical Library (London, Heinemann, 1924).

180). At other times, Nashe moves immediately from his own words into those of Ovid, who now speaks up for Nashe against his critics, the Harveys. One wrongly convicted poet defends another wrongly convicted poet in a quotation from the *Tristia*: “Poor Slaue, I pitie thee that thou hadst no more grace but to come in my way. Why, could not you haue sate quiet at home, and writ Catechismes, but you must be comparing me to *Martin*? and exclaime against me for reckoning vp the high Schollers of worthy memory? *Iupiter ingeniis praebet sua numina vatum*, saith *Ouid*; *Seque celebrari quolibet ore sinit*” (*Pierce Penilesse*, I: 197).¹⁶

In *Strange Newes Of The Intercepting Certaine Letters* (1592), Nashe meditates on satire, and its vexed relationship to authority, and calls up Ovid once again. Nashe warns that the actions of kings “must not be sounded by their subiects” (I: 286) and then proceeds to a meditation on Ovid that uses Ovid’s own terms and recasts Ovid as Actaeon: “*Ouid* once saw *Augustus* in a place where he would not haue beene seene; he was exile presently to those countries no happy man hears of” (I: 286). As Nashe repeatedly reminds us, it is dangerous to tie fiction to historical figures. The limits to the satirist’s power are implied through the story of Ovid-the-exile. At the same time, Ovid is also identified as a sexualized and urban poet. Nashe goes on to consider Ovid’s claim to provide truth based on experience, as he analyses the consequences of playing upon “all the wenches in Roome,” with a pun on the city of Rome, on the word room, and perhaps a pun on room in the sense of stanza:

Long might hee, in a blinde Metamorphosis, haue playd vppon all the wenches in Roome, and registred their priuie scapes, vpbrayded inhospitalitie with the fable of *Licaon*: alluded to some Ambodexter Lawyer vnder the storie of *Battus*: haue described a noted vnthrif, whose substaunce hawkes and houndes haue deuoured, in the tale of *Acteon*, that was eaten vp by his owne dogges: mockt Alcumistes with *Midas*: picturde inamaratos vnder *Narcissus*: and shrouded a picked effeminate Carpet Knight vnder the fictionate person of *Hermaphroditus*; with a thousand more such vnexileable ouer-thwart merrimentes, if lust had not led him beyond the prospect of his birth, or hee seene a meaner man sinning than an Emperour. (I: 286)

For Nashe, Ovid prompts meditations on urbanity, on celebrity, on the translation of gossip into a literary mode, on the relationship between writers and their public identity, and on the impact of the city on modes of being and modes of writing.

Nashe plays a crucial role in unlocking the cultural and political potential of urbanization for his contemporaries, and in developing new identities and new possibilities for affiliation for both authors and readers. As a pioneer of professional authorship, he is also instrumental in unlocking the economic potential of the city.

¹⁶ The quotation is from *Tristia*, Book IV, poem 4, ll.17–18. Wheeler translates the lines as: “Jupiter offers his divinity to the poets’ art, permitting himself to be praised by every mouth.”

Nashe has often been identified as the inspiration for a new style of dramatic comedy in the 1590s in the tavern scenes of *Henry IV* (written between 1596 and 1598), for example.¹⁷ This new type of comedy thrives on invective, physicality, grotesque imagery, and low-life realism. It is also urban comedy, and is different from the pastoral/romantic comedy of plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (probably written in 1595–1596). However, Shakespeare had already started to reflect on the new kind of urban, Nashe-inspired comedy in *The Taming of the Shrew* (written between 1590 and 1594). In *Foure Letters Confuted*, part of *Strange Newes* (1592), Nashe defends *Pierce Penilesse* against Harvey's charge that it is mere "railing" (I: 320) and that it only serves to insult and denigrate. Nashe specifically recasts railing as shrewishness, and in a strategy typical of his style produces a hybrid, one that mixes educated, masculine railing, as exemplified by Aretino or Agrippa, with populist clichés of female shrewishness. He turns shrewishness from a negative form of behaviour into a positive cognitive process. Shrewishness becomes shrewdness and then Nashe inserts the shrew into a legitimizing tradition that includes Mother Hubbard: "If this (which is nothing else but to swim with the streame) be to tell tales as shrewdly as mother *Hubbard*, it shoulde seeme mother *Hubbard* is no great shrewe, howeuer thou treading on her heeles so oft, shee may bee tempted beyonde her ten commandements" (I: 321).¹⁸ In fact, Ovid and Cicero are also included in the ranks of "scolds and railers" in *Foure Letters* (I: 324) and, in Nashe's estimation, are fit to be classed as "shrewes and rakehels" (I: 324).

The phrase, "shrewes and rakehels," calls to mind the pairing of Katharina and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. On his arrival in Padua, Petruchio goes to find his friend, Hortensio, and tells him that he has come to Padua to seek his fortune and "Happily to wive and thrive as best I may" (1.2.51).¹⁹ In reply, Hortensio proposes Katharina as a potential wife for Petruchio and describes her as "shrewd" and "ill-favored" (1.2.55), although he does not name her. Later he describes her as "shrewd, and froward" (1.2.84). "Shrewd" means evil-disposed, wicked, given to railing, mischievous, naughty, and, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, could also mean artful, cunning, and clever. Katharina can certainly bandy word with word, as well as any character in the play. Her language displays vigour, an attraction to the physical, wit and bite. This is how she dismisses Hortensio, who has the temerity to imagine himself as her husband:

¹⁷ John Dover Wilson, (ed.), *The First Part of the History of Henry IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946) 191–96, was one of the very first critics to suggest a link between Nashe and the tavern scenes. Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 1980) 89–130, develops Wilson's lead in a very rich discussion of Nashe and *Henry IV*. Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984), 1, suggests that Petruchio echoes Nashe, but does not develop the point.

¹⁸ This probably refers to Spenser's complaint, *Mother Hubberds Tale* (1591), as well as to the folk-tale tradition of Mother Hubbard.

¹⁹ All references are to *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Frances E. Dolan, text ed. David Bevington (Boston: Bedford/St.Martin's, 1996).

I' faith, sir, you shall never need to fear;
 Iwis it is not halfway to her [i.e.my] heart.
 But if it were, doubt not her [i.e.my] care should be
 To comb your noddle with a three-legged stool,
 And paint your face, and use you like a fool. (1.1.61–65)

Like Nashe, Katharina knows a fool when she sees one, and even with the rhyme, these lines call to mind Nashe's tone and his stylistic tics and predilections. Both Katharina and Petruchio are reworkings of Nashe which allow Shakespeare to explore the nature of invective and the destructive and creative potential of verbal wit. As her dismissal of Hortensio reveals, Katharina, like Petruchio, has the ability to objectify herself and write herself into different narratives. Such exercises in self-authoring, and self-authorizing, wit are typical of Nashe, yet, for a while, Katharina exposes the possible pitfall in Nashe's strategy, as she runs the risk of becoming fixed in one role, that of the clichéd shrew, until she rediscovers the flexibility that makes her one of the city's winners.

Katharina and Petruchio represent different aspects of Nashe's public image, an image that combined verbal fluency and wit, with vitriol. For example, for Thomas Dekker, Nashe is "ingenious, ingenuous, fluent, facetious, *T.Nash*," while Robert Greene refers to him as "yong *Iluenall*, that byting Satyryst," in *Greene's Groatsworth Of Wit* (1592).²⁰ Katharina, Petruchio, and Nashe are all fluent and witty, and they are all scolders and railers, who set themselves against things, and are constantly overturning and reversing. They are indeed shrewish. Petruchio and Nashe are "rakehels," or scoundrels, rascals, and debauchees. As such, they are quintessential products of the city which associates sex, money, personal gain, rootlessness, and vagabondage. They are extravagant, in the dual sense of being over the top, and in the sense of wandering about, whether it is Nashe who wanders through the streets of London in his texts, or Petruchio who tells Hortensio that he is blown to Padua by "Such wind as scatters young men through the world / To seek their fortunes farther than at home" (1.2.45–46).

Petruchio "rails, and swears, and rates" (4.1.153), as Curtis remarks, which is exactly what Nashe is supposed to do. Petruchio even describes himself as "peremptory" (2.1.127). He is, by turns, the agent of social disorder and the voice of solid and successful mercantile values. On the other hand, Katharina and Nashe are both marginal figures in their societies – Katharina because of gender, Nashe because of class – and both exploit railing to construct a precarious form of authority and to open up a discursive space for the articulation of their desires and opinions. It is through the Katharina/Petruchio coupling that Shakespeare also starts to address celebrity and Nashe's talent for self-promotion through fabulation. Katharina and Petruchio dominate the play, even when they are not on

²⁰ Thomas Dekker, *News From Hell* (1606), cited in McKerrow, (ed.), *Works of Nashe*, V, 152. For Greene, see McKerrow, (ed.), V, 143.

stage, and are constantly being talked about. Like Nashe, they make spectacles of themselves, and although they may be reviled, they prove very difficult to ignore.

Although the induction scenes with Christopher Sly that frame the main action of *The Taming of the Shrew* are set in a country-house, the action itself is urban. Baptista's home is on "the marketplace" of Padua (5.1.8); the city is a great thoroughfare, attracting visitors who come and go; and Paduan society is driven by the economics associated with the city, in other words with the drive for money and individual security. In fact, Padua is an amalgamation of different cities, both foreign and domestic, as details specific to London's urban culture are superimposed on the Italian bedrock. Both urban writing and satire encourage referentiality and topicality. Shakespeare pokes fun at such gestures in *The Taming of the Shrew* when Gremio invokes the Elizabethan cony-catching pamphlets: "Take heed, Signor Baptista, lest you be coney-catched in this business" (5.1.76–77). These pamphlets claim to expose real criminal scams and are supposedly based on close observation of contemporary Elizabethan (not Paduan) low-life. Their invocation allows Shakespeare to have his cake and eat it, by pointing to his own topicality and knowledge of the cultural reference points of Elizabethan London, while suggesting a certain superiority to such gestures.

The competitiveness and fluidity of the urban world depicted by *The Taming of the Shrew* encourage challenges between persons and groups, and the town becomes a stage in which actors take turns as spectators, and spectators take turns as actors. Padua is a place in which the projected image becomes all important. The production of the self is less the expression of a natural order, but rather an increasingly technical phenomenon, a process of assembling a striking appearance out of the materials produced by others. In comparison, there is a strong sense in Nashe that his identity is relational, that it is called into being by particular situations, or by particular texts, hence his identity is vivid, but inconsistent. The urban environment generates self-made men, just as Petruchio cobbles together his bridegroom's suit from things taken from here and there (3.2.41–55). Not only are Petruchio's style of speaking and being, with their hyperbole and aggressive inversions and paradoxes, influenced by Nashe's style, Petruchio's outlandish appearance materializes Nashe's grotesque images of hybridity and incongruity. Ironically, the description of Petruchio's wedding outfit causes Biondello to speak like Nashe:

his horse hipped, with an old mothy saddle and stirrups of no kindred; besides, possessed with the glanders and like to mose in the chine, troubled with the lampass, infected with the fashions, full of windgalls, sped with spavins, rayed with the yellows, past cure of the fives, stark spoiled with the staggers, begnawn with the bots, swayed in the back and shoulder-shotten. (3.2.45–50)

The description seems to generate itself, piling words on words, in a great paratactic list full of wit, sound-play and hyperbolical amounts of detail.

Petruchio recalls Nashe in other ways as well. Katharina refers to him as "a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen" (3.2.10) and Petruchio lays claim to the

power of extemporal creativity. When Katharina asks him where he learnt to speak in such a peculiar fashion, he replies, "It is extempore, from my mother wit" (2.1.256). There are different kinds of clown in *The Taming of the Shrew*: Sly is a more old-fashioned sort of "antic" (Induction: scene 1, 1.97); Gremio is a pantaloone, according to a stage direction in the first scene of Act 1; and Katharina calls Petruchio "a frantic fool" (3.2.12). Nashe sets great stock on a writer's ability to argue extempore and values the ability to improvise. In *Strange Newes* (1592), for example, he praises "Tully, Horace, Archilochus, Aristophanes, Lucian, Iulian, [and] Aretine ... because they haue broght in a new kind of a quicke fight, which your [Harvey's] decrepite slow-mouing capacitie cannot fadge with" (I: 283). Petruchio's notorious perversity in calling the sun the moon, and the moon the sun, reveals just such an improvisatory talent in both Petruchio, and, to a lesser degree, Katharina. The trajectory of Petruchio and Katharina's courtship embodies the comic potential latent in the ability to see familiar things in a new light. Moreover, the power to unmoor signs from reality, and impair referentiality, is exacerbated by urban living.

The new type of comedy of *The Taming of the Shrew* is both urban comedy and Ovidian comedy. The "wanton pictures" (Induction: scene 1, 1.43), that the Lord causes to be hung in his bed-chamber, as a fit setting for "Lord Sly," remind us of Ovid's presence, as they create an atmosphere of sophisticated, urban eroticism around Sly. In the 1590s, the buzz-word "wanton" inevitably calls to mind Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but also erotic, urban poems, like the *Amores*. Ovid is not just the poet of sex and transformation, he is the poet of the city as well, and he is a much more varied poet than critics of *The Taming of the Shrew* usually allow.²¹ Tranio may set amorous and frivolous Ovid against philosophical study, but he does so in terms that point to Ovid's exile, to the politicized aspect of his career and to his vexed relationship with Rome: "Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray, / Or so devote to Aristotle's checks / As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured" (1.1.31–33).

Ovid, Nashe, and Shakespeare, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, are all interested in what happens when established authority and elite educational practices confront desire in a city driven by commercial imperatives. In this new urban environment, the bonds of family and class are disrupted and new wealth promotes hedonism and a self-consciously modish search for self-gratification. At the same time, an increasingly centralized state is also trying to control personal behaviour. The

²¹ The trend to see Ovid as the author of the *Metamorphoses*, only, can be seen in discussions of *The Taming of the Shrew*. For example, Vanda Zajko, "Petruchio is 'Kated': *The Taming of the Shrew* and Ovid," in, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, ed. Charles Martindale & A.B. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 33–48, concentrates on the ways Shakespeare uses the *Metamorphoses* to enrich his exploration of the psychology of relationships. See, however, Patricia Phillippy, "'Loytering in love': Ovid's *Heroides*, hospitality, and humanist education in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Criticism*, 40 (1998): 27–54; and Richard Willmott, "A study of the influence of Ovid's *Amores* on Marlowe and Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Yearbook*, 9 (1999): 282–305.

resultant tensions are focused on gender relations: on extra-marital relations in Ovid; on marital relations in Shakespeare; and on prostitution in Nashe. Nashe helps Elizabethan culture rediscover Ovid as the author of sex and the city, invoking Ovid to make issues of urbanization and urbanity available for debate. He uses Ovid to return again and again to an exploration of the city as the place for particular kinds of economic, sexual, social and cultural transaction. It is Nashe who comes to epitomize the Londoner and man-about-town in late Elizabethan culture, and it is Nashe who uncovers, through the Ovidian model, new ways of addressing the specific challenges and delights of London, in terms that Shakespeare, among other contemporaries, found particularly productive.

Chapter 2

This Sorrow's Heavenly: *Christ's Teares* and the Jews

Jonathan Crewe

Extensive recent discussion of the Jewish presence and Jewish (“Jewish”) representation in early modern England has generally bypassed Thomas Nashe’s *Christ’s Teares over Jerusalem* (1593, 1613).¹ That text does nevertheless invite consideration as an English representation of Jews produced almost concurrently with *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Nashe represents – indeed, impersonates – Christ as the Son of God, but also as a Jew angrily addressing his people.

The Jewishness of Christ has almost always been accepted, albeit with considerable difficulty and complex maneuvering, in Christian theology and historiography. In Nashe’s historical period and context, Martin Luther wrote an early, evangelizing pamphlet titled *Dass Jesus ein Geborener Jude Sei* (*Jesus was Born a Jew*) (1523).² This family membership complicates and intensifies Christ’s animus towards the Jews of Jerusalem in *Christ’s Teares*.

Christ’s Teares additionally incorporates an account of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70 by the Roman armies of Titus and Vespasian. The destruction of the city ostensibly fulfills Christ’s prophecy in Matthew 23, 34–38:

[34] Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes:
and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in
your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

¹ *Christ’s Teares* does not appear in, for example, the index to James Shapiro’s *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), or in Janet Adelman’s *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in “The Merchant of Venice”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), or in Lara Bovilsky’s *Barbarous Play: Race on the Renaissance Stage* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). It does not feature even in Matthew Martin’s “Jack Wilton and the Jews: the Ambivalence of Anti-Semitism in Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*,” *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 89–106.

² Martin Luther, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, in *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People*, ed. Brooks Schramm and Kirsi J. Stijerna (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 76–83.

[35] That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

[36] Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

[37] O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

[38] Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

Luke 11, 41–44, amplifies:

[41] And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

[42] Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

[43] For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

[44] And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

Nashe derives his Jewish history primarily from Peter Morvyn's 1579 English translation of a medieval text, written in Hebrew and attributed to Yosippon (Joseph ben Gorion), which narrates the destruction of Jerusalem.³ That tenth-century text enjoyed high prestige, notably among Jews, during the Middle Ages, and it continued to be known as "the Hebrew Josephus" through the eighteenth century, although its authenticity and reliability eventually came into question among humanist scholars. Still relying on Yosippon in translation, however, Nashe evidently supplemented Yosippon's account by drawing on the contemporaneous history of the Jewish wars by Flavius Josephus, a Romanized Jew writing in Greek, who remains the principal historical witness to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus's *The Jewish Wars* was well known and widely translated by Nashe's time. As a pamphlet in a contemporary English "literature of warning," *Christ's Teares* represents the current plague-outbreak in London as a sign of

³ Intriguingly, the first prime minister of Israel, David ben Gorion, borrowed his name from this author.

worse to come if the citizens fail to repent and abandon their evil ways.⁴ The fate of Jerusalem prefigures the impending fate of London, whose citizens, like the earlier Jews, seem deaf to Christ's appeals.

Before considering *Christ's Teares* as an instance of early modern English anti-Semitic and/or "Jewish" representation, I should like to suggest briefly why it has hitherto largely escaped such consideration. Unlike Marlowe and Shakespeare, Nashe does not focus in *Christ's Teares* on reproducing or revising current theatrical, ethnic or religious stereotypes of the European Jew. What we might call the imaginary Jew(s) of the Elizabethan stage are absent from *Christ's Teares*; Nashe's imaginative and theatrical powers are harnessed instead to representing the apparently "tragic" subjectivity of Christ. If that makes Christ an "imaginary Jew" of another sort, he is a figment of the New Testament and Jewish history rather than medieval legend and stage caricature.⁵ His representation does not therefore supply the cues to which we are accustomed in early modern representations of Jewishness.

The Jews Christ addresses, and from whom he tries to distinguish himself, are historical Jews, understood, to be sure, from the perspective of early modern Christian orthodoxy, but differing from the sensationalized Jew Zadok or the sinister Dr. Zachary, for example, in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Yet no firewall separates the representation of Jews in *The Unfortunate Traveller* and the nearly concurrent *Christ's Teares*: indeed, the phobic discourse of the Jew as a toxic, pathogenic, or excremental figure infecting the healthy, Christian body politic, discussed in connection with Zadok by Jonathan Gil Harris, not only marks Christ's alienation from his own contaminated body in *Christ's Teares* but also makes the Roman invasion of a "pollutionate" Judaea into a cleansing operation (one meaning of "avenge" as distinct from "revenge").⁶ Nevertheless differences of genre, source, and affect between *The Unfortunate Traveller* and *Christ's Teares* permit a significant difference of orientation in the representation of "Jewishness."

In *Christ's Teares*, Jews are represented primarily as actors in a continuing eschatological drama, in which contemporary London has replaced Roman-era Jerusalem, and contemporary Londoners have replaced Jerusalem's Jews. The evil Londoners are now asking for it, as did their predecessors in Jerusalem. Radical Jewish "otherness" is thus attenuated although not wholly erased in this historical succession. Even usury, a key marker of Jewishness in early modern anti-Semitism, has been taken over by Londoners, who, in fact, out-Jew the Jews in cruelty and

⁴ E.D. Mackerness, "Christ's Tears and the Literature of Warning," *English Studies*, 33 (December, 1952), 251–54.

⁵ Technically, no doubt, Nashe's Christ is not imaginary since Christ's words in the New Testament are quoted verbatim and merely repeated or "amplified."

⁶ Thomas Nashe, *Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem*, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. R.B. McKerrow, rev. F.P. Wilson, 5 vols, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 3: 63. Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

rapacity (see below). The point, as Harris has noted (98), is that “fallen” Christians revert to being Jews.

By far the longest section of *Christ's Teares* is the one in which the speaker berates Londoners for their many crimes of Pride, Ambition, Avarice, Disdain, Atheism, Discontent, Contention, Delicacy, Gorgeous Attire, Gluttony, Lust and Sloth. If that satirical use of Jerusalem and its Jews as a stick to beat Londoners cannot be separated from prevailing anti-Semitism, it nevertheless reflects relatively little interest on Nashe's part in Judaism per se, or in ontologically differentiating Jews from Englishmen.

My main contention in this paper is that *Christ's Teares* can and should be included in the constellation of “Jewish” representations in the English literature of its place and time. If *Christ's Teares* has flown under our critical radar, that it is partly because it does not give us the cues we expect, and partly because the text was then, and is now, less conspicuous than *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*, both public theater hits. While *Christ's Teares* was read widely enough to support a second edition in 1613, contemporary references to it are sparse. Predictably enough, these include scathing comments by Gabriel Harvey, Nashe's pamphlet-war antagonist. Like practically all other works by Nashe, *Christ's Teares* gave rise to scandal, but that scandal had nothing directly to do with its representation of Jews. Judging by changes made in the second edition, Nashe had crossed a red line by becoming too specific about the English evils against which he inveighed:⁷

Let them looke that theyre ritches shall rust and canker, being wet & dewed with Orphans teares. The Lord ... beholdeth how they peruert foundations and will not bestow the Bequeathers free almes but for brybes, or for friendship. I pray God they take not the like course in preferring poore mens children into their Hospitals, and courting the impotents mony to theyr priuate usury... .

Let vs leaue of the Prouerbe which we vse to a cruell dealer, saying, Goe thy waies, thou art a lewe; and say, Goe thy waies, thou art a Londoner. (3:159)

These offending passages were removed, presumably in response to outrage from the city, when a leaf was substituted in the 1594 printing of the text.

Consideration of *Christ's Teares* as “Jewish” representation of its time has also been obstructed to some degree by the singularity to which Nashe

⁷ To the extent that Jewishness is indirectly at issue in the attack on London, it is so partly because of the common polemical characterization of Puritan English citizens, by their English-church antagonists, as de facto Jews. That charge generally arose from the perception that Puritans dwelt excessively on Old Testament theology and/or on the punitive legalistic and moralistic teachings of the Old Testament at the expense of Christian teachings of forgiveness and mercy. In *Christ's Teares*, and possibly other texts as well, the usurious greed of Puritan merchants and moneylenders consolidates their “Jewishness.”

evidently aspires in that text, as elsewhere in his works.⁸ Just how Nashe's singularity gets characterized varies from one critic to another, but his freakish *Christ Teares* has contributed more than its fair share to that characterization.⁹ A grandiose impersonation of Christ, informed by the language and conventions of contemporary tragedy (*Tamburlaine* above all, but with revenge tragedy very much in evidence), certainly appears singular in its time. So does the style of the performance, two features of which are, first, its obsessive repetition of key words (stone[d], gather[ed], desolation, would'st not), and, second, its coinage of participles ending in -ize[d] and of hyphenated compounds, both regarded as outlandish even by Nashe's contemporaries: mummianized, mirmidonized, anthropophagized, diagorized, sirenize[d], palpabriz[e][d], obliuionize[d], royalize[d]; unweaponed-ieapardous, creditor-crazed, art-enamel, fury-haunting, soule-hating, heauen-gazing, clowd-climbing, yeeres-dimnesse, beauty-creasing, firmament-propping, teare-eternizers, etc. (*CTJ*, *passim*). Whether these novel terms are meant to signify a "divine" power of poetic creation or its material double, prolific "coining" (counterfeiting), they mark *Christ's Teares* as a thing apart; in its own terms, then, *Christ's Teares* seemingly eschews typicality or representativeness.

In *The Renaissance Bible*, however, Debora Shuger argues that *Christ's Teares* is not singular at all, but rather a strong representative of a contemporary genre.¹⁰ That is the genre of Calvinistically inflected contemporary narratives of Christ's passion. These narratives do not, as in earlier times, trace the sequence from the crucifixion to the resurrection but rather from the crucifixion to the fall of Jerusalem. This change of trajectory subsumes "Christian selfhood" in an increasingly tragic, or tragicomic, portrayal of an anguished, vengeful Christ, at once tortured and torturing. (In a sense, these traits tend to make Christ conventionally "Jewish," or reveal his Jewishness.) In this view, some of the apparent peculiarities of Nashe's representation are not foreign to Calvinistic passion narratives in general. One of these is the extreme, contradictory emotional violence ("passion") of Christ's

⁸ For example, Stephen S. Hilliard, *The Singularity of Thomas Nashe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), but the claim crops up periodically in Nashe criticism. It is a claim implicitly countered by work on Nashe as a creature of a contemporary print culture dominated by generic and nearly anonymous production. Nashe's insistence on his authorial signature, even at the level of his claimed distinctive "extemporall" style, together with his competitive aggression and hyper-violence, seem like symptomatic responses to the print market's tendency to erase distinction. See, for example, Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁹ At least since G.R. Hibbard, *Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1962) "a kind of gigantic oxymoron in which style and content, tone and intention are consistently at odds" (123).

¹⁰ Debora Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

address to the feminized city of Jerusalem, akin to that of a frustrated Petrarchan wooer/rapist-manqué.¹¹ Another is Christ's discovery of the all too human limitations of his power, his persuasiveness, and his mercy; yet another is the revelation of an inner defilement in a "self-hating" Christ that manifests itself even as an outward darkening or blackening:

The fount of my teares (troubled and mudded with the Toade-like stirring and long-breathed vexation of thy venomous enormities) is no longer a pure siluer Spring but a mirie puddle for Swine to wallow in. Black and cindry lyke Smiths-water) are those excrements that source downe my cheeks, and farre more sluttish than the vglie oous of the channel (36).

On at least one conspicuous occasion, Nashe's Christ speaks in the language of Tamburlaine while threatening destruction to Jerusalem. He thus betrays his kinship, not just to the tyrants and mad revengers of Elizabethan melodrama, but to the Christ contemporary biblical interpreters could perceive as one possessed, like Othello, by a seemingly contradictory "love":

I must weep
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love.¹²

In effect, Shuger's alignment of *Christ's Teares* with Calvinistic passions makes the text representative – powerfully and centrally representative, what is more – rather than eccentric or singular.

For the purposes of my argument, *Christ's Teares* does not have to be either wholly singular or merely generic. The representative *potential* I want to claim for it is that, in ventriloquizing Christ, Nashe wittingly or otherwise produces an "unconscious" for contemporary anti-Semitism. In other words, he makes manifest what is broadly denied or repressed in Christian orthodoxy. I do not use the term "unconscious" in a rigorously psychoanalytic sense, although I do not exclude that use either, but rather use it to designate a force or agency repressed, not fully present to consciousness, or remaining unacknowledged, in ordinary Christian (Protestant) discourse regarding the Jews. In producing that content, *Christ's Teares* is either an idiosyncratic imaginary projection by Nashe or is more broadly representative. If that, too, is indeterminable, as is always the case when revelations of the unconscious are proposed, the text is revelatory either way.¹³ What might a

¹¹ Shuger cites other instances in which authors feminize cities about to be assaulted, 124–27.

¹² William Shakespeare, *Othello*, 5.2.20–22, *The New Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin, 2002) 1439.

¹³ Nashe's identification with a "failed" Christ is obviously, among other things, an authorial self-projection, notwithstanding Nashe's claim to be shedding his own identity in

“revelatory” reading of *Christ's Teares* tell us, then, about “Jewish” and/or anti-Semitic representation rather than just about the individual Thomas Nashe?¹⁴

The obduracy of Jews (as well as their crucifying cruelty) is a commonplace of Christian anti-Semitism in Nashe's time, and it constitutes a provocation that, failing conversion, calls alternately for Jewish expulsion and extermination.¹⁵ In *Christ's Teares*, the hardness of Jerusalem's Jews makes them practically indistinguishable from the stones of the city they inhabit. Nashe's text channels contemporary Christian anger and frustration at the perverse obstinacy of the Jews. It thus participates to some degree in a contemporary Protestant anti-Semitism given its most virulent, popular expression in Luther's writings against Jews.¹⁶

Precisely why Jewish denial of Christ's divinity is so provocative is less obvious than one might think, notwithstanding Luther's enormous catalogue of blasphemies and iniquities in “On the Jews and their Lies.”¹⁷ Indeed, it can appear paradoxical if unconverted Jews have effectively been “remaindered” by the

order to impersonate Christ. A good deal of Nashe criticism – if not all of it – supplies implicit commentary on the psychosocial compulsions that eventuate in this quasi-autobiographical performance. Nashe's own “martyred” condition as a writer in the supposedly hostile, unremunerative Elizabethan print market (i.e., Nashe as Pierce Pennilesse) informs the impersonation of Christ; so does Nashe's apparently oscillating sense of omnipotence and impotence, both related not just to private psychology but to rhetorical performance, in which Nashe invested to the limit. Among other things, Christ's oration in *Christs Teares* dramatizes the powerlessness of the rhetoric so widely extolled in humanism. The story of Amphion to the contrary notwithstanding, it cannot move stones.

¹⁴ This is not to suggest that Protestantism is uniformly anti-Semitic. Even Luther began by entertaining “philosemitic” hopes of evangelical outreach and conversion. His premise was that the abuses of Catholicism sufficed to deter anyone from converting, and he imagined that Protestants could be more successful. He was evidently enraged to learn otherwise. On English Protestant hopes of converting the Jews, see, for example, Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 140–43. Shapiro's account of a specific English conversion, conducted by John Foxe, makes it clear that conversion was not quite enough to erase Jewish difference and stigma. In *Barbarous Play*, Bovilsky shows that anti-Semitic jibes directed at Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice* become more frequent after she has converted than before she has done so (81–92). She is no longer a cross-dressing romance heroine but a potential bearer of children.

¹⁵ The cruelty of Jews is, of course, a staple of anti-Semitism, yet the cruelty of Christ's torture and crucifixion, often laid wholly at the door of the Jews, often seems hysterically exaggerated, as if to justify as well as inflame Christian animus.

¹⁶ Having begun his writings about Jews with the sympathetic, evangelizing *Dass Jesus ein Geborner Jude Sei*, Luther went on to write the virulently anti-Semitic pamphlets titled *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* (*On the Jews and Their Lies*) and *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* (*Of the Unknowable Name and the Generations of Christ*), both published in 1544 and reprinted five times within his lifetime. *Warning Against the Jews*, a compilation of four sermons, was published in 1546.

¹⁷ Martin Luther, *On the Jews and their Lies*, tr. Martin H. Bertram (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1971). Luther's anti-Semitism was probably exacerbated by his

advent of Christianity, or if Judaism has been subsumed and superseded within the ideological framework of so-called “Christian supersessionism.”¹⁸ *Christ’s Teares* may help to elucidate this apparent paradox.

Nashe, in contrast to Luther, engages with Jewish resistance to Christian incorporation or supersession by dramatizing its subjective consequences for Christ. In the first place, Nashe’s Christ is resentfully *aware* of the “slanders” leveled against him by the Jews:

I haue heard quietly all thy vpbraidings, reproofs, and derisions: as when thou

Saydst I was a drunkard, and possessed with the diuel, that I cast out diuels by the power of *Beelzebub*, was mad and knewe not what I spake; nor was I any more offended with these contumelies, then when thou calledst me the son of a Carpenter (23).

Christ is conscious as well that, in the eyes of the Jews, his lowly appearance contradicts his claim to divinity. His explanation, which is that he comes in lowly guise to rebuke worldly pride and ostentation, evidently cannot overcome simple disbelief on the part of those who observe him. In that view, he is what he appears to be, an unhinged common man. According to a deposition to the Privy Council by the informer Richard Baines, Christopher Marlowe, Nashe’s co-author in writing *The Tragedy of Dido*, shared this “Jewish” perception: That [Christ] was the son of a carpenter, and that if the Jews among whom he was born did crucify him, they best knew him and whence he came.¹⁹

Jewish “slanders” also rankle with Luther, constituting one reason why, according to him, Jews who resist Christian incorporation should be expelled from the Christian polity: “They also call Jesus a whore’s son, saying that his mother, Mary, was a whore who conceived him in adultery with a blacksmith” (*Lies*, 56).²⁰

Baines attributed that “slander” as well to Marlowe: “That Christ was a bastard and his mother dishonest” (135). In Luther’s pamphlet, however, these slanders

opposition to Protestant Sabbatarians, who advocated adherence to Jewish usages in their desire to recover the so-called primitive authenticity of the early church.

¹⁸ See Julia Reinard Lupton, “Ephesian Conclusions,” *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 47–48, and Susannah Heschel, “From Jesus to Shylock: Christian Supersessionism and ‘The Merchant of Venice,’” *Harvard Theological Review*, 99, 4 (2006): 381–405. Heschel observes that under a modern regime of racial anti-Semitism it becomes puzzling that an inferior race can threaten a superior one.

¹⁹ Christopher Marlowe as reported by Baines, cited in Lisa Hopkins, *A Christopher Marlowe Chronology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 135.

²⁰ Luther was not, of course, making this up. That accusation among many others appeared in the *Godot Yeshu*, a body of scathing texts circulated among Jews at least since the Middle Ages.

are ones to which latter-day Christians, not Christ, indignantly react. Not only is Nashe's Christ conscious of these slanders, the resistance of the Jews to his blandishments has rendered him painfully self-conscious. The Jews' "stony" inhumanity has had the power to demoralize and deform him, alienating him from his divine image, power, and selfhood:

Yet, though I haue sounded the vtmost depth of dolour, and wasted myne eye-bals well neere to pinnes-heades with weeping ... so long haue I wasted, so long haue I washed and embalmed thy filthe in the clear streames of my braine, that now I haue I not a cleane Teare left more, to wash and embalme any sinner that comes to me ... My leane withered hands (consisting of naught but bones) are all to shiuered and splintered in their wide cases of skinnne, with often beating on the anuil of my bared breast (36–37).

This decay comes to include the decomposition of Christ's masculinity, a decomposition that proceeds, as Shuger has argued, to the extreme at which Miriam, the cannibalistic Jewish mother who devours her own son in the famine that afflicts Jerusalem, becomes a parodic mirror of Christ, loving yet devouring his city.²¹ Indeed, the hysteria of Christ's address is "unmanly" from beginning to end. In effect, Jewish denial, i.e., denial by his own people, suffices to undermine Christ's confidence in his own constantly, violently, reasserted divine difference. In his mind, the endless repetition and rejection of his appeals increasingly situates him in a long line of impotent, failed prophets, stoned by the Jews:

O Ierusalem, Ierusalem, Ieruaslem, that stonest and astoniest thy Prophets with thy peruersenes, that lendest stonie eares to thy teachers and with thyne yron breast drawest nothing but the Adamant of Gods anger: what shall I doe to mollifie thee? (23).

Christ foresees his own death and prophesies doom to the city; the destruction of Jerusalem ostensibly fulfills this prophecy. Yet the forty-year interval between the prophecy and its fulfillment renders the causal connection tenuous, especially since the agents of destruction are the Romans, acting for their own reasons without reference to Christ or to any eschatological schema. Christ's oration thus remains suspended, so to speak, as one in which unlimited violence is willed rather than performed. Or, insofar as violence is performed, it is verbal violence only.

It is not just Christ's divinity in general that is eroded by Jewish obstinacy, but also the specific, unlimited powers of mercy and forgiveness that supposedly distinguish the New from the Old Testament. The citizens of Jerusalem exhaust Christ's mercy, leaving him no option but revenge: "For sinne I came to suffer: thy

²¹ The killing and eating of babies belongs to anti-Semitic legend, but here the baby eaten is not a Christian one. The incident is recorded in Yosippon's Hebrew narrative.

sinne exceedeth my suffering; It is too monstrous a matter for my mercie or merits to worke vpon" (35).

Once this limit has been reached, the obduracy of the Jews ceases to be the object of divine mercy and becomes instead the justification for a commensurate revenge that will annihilate them. Famine engulfs many, while the conquering Romans destroy many more. The temple, now the definitive site of provocation, is leveled.

Christ's Teares implies, then, that in the unconscious of contemporary anti-Semitism, the recalcitrance of the Jews does more than hold the Second Coming hostage to Jewish conversion, supposedly the point of numerous biblical prophecies.²² It has the power to undermine the divinity of Christ and erase the distinction between Christ and the Jewish prophets who preceded him. This unacknowledged *power* of denial goes some way towards explaining the seemingly irrational virulence of anti-Semitism, a virulence projected as the inexhaustible malice of Jews *towards* Christians. What should be the merely perverse and self-punishing obduracy of the Jews seems capable of disabling Christianity.

That this should be so is partly an outcome of the perennially vexed relation between Christianity and its own Jewish antecedents.²³ Continuity with and separation from those antecedents have both had to be constantly reformulated in Christian history. The "family" bond of Christianity to Judaism makes Jewish denial doubly vexing and consequential, as, for example, Muslim denial cannot be.²⁴ The priority and, so to speak, parental authority of Judaism continues to empower its unwavering resistance to Christian innovation. A *break* with genealogically antecedent Judaism is impossible, and so, it might seem, is the overthrow of Jewish "parents" by one whose family romance of a divine father becomes a symptom of his humiliating mortal affiliation. Jewish resistance holds out, then, against the Christian universalism Paul enunciates in Galatians 3:28 that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The obvious fact in *Christ's Teares* is that not all are one in Jesus Christ, and will never be.

The apparent revelations of *Christ's Teares* prompt some reconsideration of the Calvinistic passions discussed by Shuger. She offers no clear and compelling explanation for Calvinistic refocusing of the passion narrative on the destruction of Jerusalem rather than the Resurrection.

²² For example, Hosea, 3:5, Zechariah, 12:10, Matthew, 23: 37–39, Romans, 11:25–26.

²³ Heschel, "From Jesus to Shylock," 385–86, argues that this difference came to be mapped on to the body-soul distinction in such a way that Christ could have a Jewish body and a non-Jewish soul.

²⁴ Indeed, as Lupton argues in "Othello Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations," *Representations*, 57 (Winter, 1997), 73–89, Muslims tend to figure in the Christian thinking of Nashe's time as, among other things, belated or second-order Jews, without the excuses of the Jews, no doubt, but also without their power to disable.

Nor does she fully account for the tragicomic, almost stagey, representations of Christ in those passions. It is *possible*, no doubt, that a conviction of human depravity colors both the Calvinist understanding of Christ's humanity and explains a punitive focus on the "malice" of Jewish denial. Yet perhaps both *Christ's Teares* and those passions attest to the early modern emergence of discourse(s) of the individual subject or self, "fashioned" or otherwise, as a distinct phenomenon and object of inquiry.²⁵ Insofar as "Christian selfhood" becomes captive, so to speak, to increasingly analytic or introspective discourses of early modern selfhood, the divine person of Christ becomes increasingly subject to "human" understanding. By the same token, it is this increasingly, and in some respects disastrously, humanized Christ that seemingly affords increased identificatory purchase to self-conscious "sinners."

The early modern emergence of the "self" inseparably coincides with intensified philosophical skepticism (pyrrhonism) with which the name of Montaigne is practically synonymous. Nashe's attraction to Cornelius Agrippa, a fictionalized character in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, implies his own participation in the contemporary culture of skepticism, as does his evident familiarity with Sextus Empiricus. While it obviously cannot be demonstrated, it is reasonable to infer that, under a skeptical regime, Christ's crazed humanity may become more rationally intelligible than his human divinity. Such appears to be the case for the "Jews" of *Christ's Teares*. For Christians, that skepticism does not necessarily overthrow belief, but it apparently does raise the threshold of strain, anxiety, and "darkness," both in biblical interpretation and "Christian selfhood." The Calvinistic construction of Christian selfhood evidently cannot rely either on innocent faith or a sanitizing of the scriptures. Insofar as Nashe does not merely conform to these Calvinistic norms, he appears to exceed them in *exposing* a profound anxiety about the power of Jewish denial.

In principle, of course, the destruction of Jerusalem vindicates Christ's prophecies as well as his divinity. Yet, as I have already suggested, a forty-year gap renders the causal link tenuous. In the schema of *Christ's Teares* the Romans are providential agents without knowing it. First Vespasian's conquest of Galilee and then Titus's siege of Jerusalem become the deferred penalty for the refusal of the Jews to accept Christ. The Roman assault begins with a plethora of warning signs:

²⁵ To the frequent exasperation of medievalists, claims regarding the distinctively early modern emergence of the individual subject or "self" continue to be repeated and elaborated in the early modern field. The claim is at least as old as Jakob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860); Montaigne's essayistic self-inscription remains canonical for this view. Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) and Cynthia Marshall's *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) continue to have a bearing on the discussion of early modern selfhood.

God thought it not enough to have threatened [the Jews] by his Sonne, but he emblazond the ayre with tokens of his terror. No Starre that appeared but seemd to sparkle fire ... the Moone had her pale-siluer face iron spotted with freckle-imitiating blood-sprincklings ... Ouer the temple was seen a comet most Coruscant, streamed & tailed forth with glistering naked swords ... which in his mouth ... all at once he made semblance as if hee shaken and vambrasht (61).

And that is just the beginning: night turns into day, flocks of ravens beat against the temple windows, a heifer calves a lamb, a terrible voice is heard speaking in Latin, etc. This apocalyptic overload will surely seem only parodic to any present-day reader (although the same goes for practically all of *Christ's Teares*). This parodic appearance cannot be discounted given Nashe's frequent recourse to deliberate parody in his writing. Yet parodic intent as we would understand it need not necessarily be posited here. In effect, the languages of *Christ's Teares*, including that of Christ, "fall" into parody insofar as the forms of transcendental belief supporting them have been undermined. What then remain are large, discursive residues of eclipsed belief that may or may not be deployed for comic or satirical purposes, but which, in any event, constitute a "problem" to which literate culture may respond by seeking to recharge them with meaning.

Insofar as Nashe is subject to this cultural drive, he recharges Christ's prophecies by linking them to the destruction of Jerusalem via Roman portents that are also then being recharged in this context. These portents are required in the text to bridge between the providential and the historical; without them, the history of Jerusalem's destruction would be radically disconnected from Christ's warnings, and Christ's oration would merely be juxtaposed to an unrelated secular chronicle. That contingent alternative is no less, and perhaps even more, plausible in *Christ's Teares*, for reasons I have suggested, than the providential one. Nevertheless, the portents link the oration to the historical narrative that begins with Vespasian's conquest of Galilee:

The Romains, like a droue of Wild-Bores, roote vp and forage fruitful *Palestine*. That which was called the *Holy Land* is now vnhalloved with theyr Heathen swords ... no Hogstie is now so pollutionate as the earth of *Palestine* and *Jerusalem* (63).

Since the Jews have brought this fate wholly upon themselves, the Romans are acquitted of all culpability (and, as so often in Christian anti-Semitism, it is also forgotten that the Romans were the actual crucifiers of Christ):

Not the Infidell-Romaines, which shall inuade thee, and make thy Citty ... a shambles of dead bodies, teare down thy Temple, and set vp a brothel-house in thy Sanctuarie, not they (I say) shall haue one droppe of thy blood layde to theyr charge (34).

The Jews, in fact, destroy themselves by continuing to sin and to engage in ferocious internecine strife even while the Romans besiege them. This view of the matter may owe something to both Josephus and Yosippon.²⁶ Although a Jew himself, who fought against the Romans in Galilee, Josephus surrendered to the Romans while shamefully, as some have complained, failing to fulfill a suicide pact with his trapped comrades. Josephus traveled to Rome and prospered as a Roman negotiator, eventually writing his history of the Jewish wars from what has often been regarded as a biased Roman perspective (notwithstanding his claims to historical impartiality). In Yosippon's narrative, indebted to Josephus, it is Jewish "sedition" that causes the downfall of the city. In the English translation, "sedition" includes the revolt of the Jews against Roman hegemony, but it also, perhaps more importantly, means "Violent party strife; an instance of this, esp. a factious contest attended with rioting and disorder" (*OED*, 1.) Such are the factionalized politics of Jerusalem that undermine its defense against the Romans. In the course of this sedition, the Temple is vandalized and defiled. Offering immunity to every kind of criminal becomes a way of recruiting scoundrels into a faction. "Sedition" in Jerusalem, initiated by Eleazar and pursued by Simeon and Jochanan, resembles unbridled gang warfare without the slightest ideological cover.

In Yosippon, this explanation of Jerusalem's undoing has to contend with the narrated heroic and often successful resistance of Jewish fighters to the Roman armies. Yet Jewish desire for national independence remains largely unacknowledged. This narrative of a self-consuming Jewish people lends itself to the purposes of *Christ's Teares*. Not only are the Romans exculpated, the Jews' incorrigible wickedness continues to the very last moment, justifying any punishment visited on them. That punishment includes the death of:

Eleuen hundred thousand, all which in fourteene monthes misfortuned ... Sixteen thousand *Titus* ledde prisoners to Rome (these omitted which vnder *Eleazar's* conduct perished)... The *Sanctum Sanctorum* was sette on fire, and the Priestes therein smothered. All the antique buildings were burnt and beaten downe (78).

The story of Miriam, the cannibalistic mother who devours her own child during the famine caused by the Roman siege of Jerusalem, is a horror that epitomizes the tendency of the Jews to consume themselves and each other. Yosippon, in the Morvyn translation, gives considerable prominence to this episode (the relevant passages being quoted extensively in the notes to McKerrow's edition of Nashe, 4: 224–26), and Nashe expands it, mainly by amplifying the orations Miriam delivers before and after eating her son. These orations are, first, a *tour de force*

²⁶ Although "Hegesippus" was long identified as a primary source for Yosippon, Robert M. Price, "Diaspora Judaism, Christianity and Roman Crisis," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 5, 3 (October 2002) suggests that "Hegesippus" is probably a transmutation of "Josephus."

of rationalization that reconciles her to the cannibalistic feast, and, second, a *tour de force* of “guilting,” in which Miriam incriminates the men of Jerusalem who break in at the scent of cooked meat. There is no question that the famine is dire:

So many men as were in *Ierusalem*, so many pale, rawbone ghosts you would have thought you had seene. Euen through theyr garments theyr rake-leane rybbes appeared. Theyr sharpe embossed anckle-bones turnd vppe the earth like a Plowshare, when in going theyr feete swarued. The empty ayre they would catch at instead of meate, like a Spaniell catcheth a flie; the very dust they gnasht at as it flew, and theyr owne armes and legges they would hardly for-beare. Theyr teeth they would grinde one against another to a white powder like meale (69).

The far-fetched metaphoric extravagance of this passage renders the effects of famine at once horrific and comical. Starvation has transformed the Jews into creatures resembling grotesque automata, their spasmodic actions rendered virtually involuntary by hunger. In keeping with the governing trope of self-consumption, the Jews can scarcely “for-beare” to devour their own limbs, while they apparently grind their own teeth into consumable “meale” (making a meal of themselves). Alienation of sympathy through figurative or rhetorical extravagance is a consistent feature of Nashe’s writing and, here as elsewhere, it forestalls identification with the victims.

Macabre, alienating tragicomedy seems also to characterize Miriam’s cannibal banquet. Rather than acting impulsively, she delivers a long, remarkably eloquent, apologia in which she excuses herself to the child for planning to “Anthrophagize” (73) him and, indeed, suggests that what she will do is in his best interests: “The fore-skinne of originall sinne shalt thou clean circumsise, by this one act of piety ... into the Garden of *Eden* I will leade thee” (74). Montaigne flirts with the notion of cannibalism as the signifier of a prelapsarian condition, but hardly to the point of suggesting that the person devoured is thereby returned to the Garden of Eden. That *tour de force* of sophistry is left to Miriam, the devouring Jewish mother from hell. In any event, Miriam’s highly performative enablement of the unspeakable (“I am a Mother and play the murdresse” [72]) clears the way for her to prepare a cooked, formal meal:

At one stroke (euen as these words were speaking) she beheaded him, and when she had done, turning the Apron from her own face on his, that the sight might now afresh distemper her, without seeing, speaking, deliberating, or almost thinking any more of him, she sod, rost, and powdred him; and hauing eaten as much as suffised, set vppe the reste ... the Seditious smelling the saour of a feast ... roughlie (in heapes) rusht & burst into the house (75).

Shuger has noted the conspicuously reversed maternity in this episode: “Return vnto me and see the Mould wherein thou wert cast” (74); “who can abstain from these two round, teate-like cheeks?” (76). Consumption and self-consumption in

Jerusalem (the child is flesh of her flesh) evidently include reversed propagation, the reabsorption of the newborn that forestalls increase. In this case, however, not just reversed maternity is at issue. If Nashe's Miriam functions as a grotesque reflection of Christ, she is also the Jewish counterpart to Mary. By devouring her child – a hyper-parodic eucharist²⁷ – she is not only committing the ultimate anti-messianic crime but is also, in ostensible contrast to the New Testament, devouring the possibility of her own and her people's salvation. Such is "Jewishness," and such the threat held over Christianity by Jewish denial.

If the stylistic and tonal peculiarities of the famine passages in *Christ's Teares* imply a certain discomfort on Nashe's part with the material – as does the episode of the Anabaptist massacre in *The Unfortunate Traveller*²⁸ – those peculiarities nevertheless displace at least as much as they capture the anguished immediacy of starvation. The doom of Jerusalem's citizens continues to be the dark, removed, extravagant comedy of their self-destructive perversity. Representing the Jews as self-consuming and wholly responsible for their own extinction cannot, however, mask the presence of a powerful genocidal wish, both in the famine passages and in *Christ's Teares* as a whole. Nothing less, it would seem, than the elimination of the Jews and the erasure of their temple-centered religious difference can overcome their power of negation.

Luther speaks of Jewish expulsion from Christian communities, thereby taking a cue from previous attempted expulsions in England, Spain, and elsewhere. He also prevailed upon his prince, John Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, to issue a mandate in 1536 that prohibited Jews from inhabiting, engaging in business in, or passing through his realm. Luther set forth his plans for the exclusion and/or subjugation of Jews in brutal, graphic detail in *On the Jews and their Lies*.²⁹

²⁷ The cannibalism of the Eucharist is, however, embraced in Christianity, notably in John, 6, 53–56. In answer to the question posed by Jews: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Christ answers: "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him." References to cannibalism are fairly widespread in the Old Testament, and Jewish cannibalism was a feature of anti-Semitic legend.

²⁸ I would suggest that if and when Nashe finds violence troubling, it is violence perpetrated on historical victims as "others" (Anabaptists, Jews) rather than fictional stereotypes like the saintly Heraclide who is raped and murdered in *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

²⁹ Calvin and Calvinism are sometimes presented as philosemitic alternatives to Lutheranism, yet Calvin did not scruple to write that: "[The Jews] rotten and unbending stiffneckedness deserves that they be oppressed unendingly and without measure or end and that they die in their misery without the pity of anyone." John Calvin, *Ad Quaelstiones et Objecta Juaei Cuiusdam Responsio*, cited in Gerhard Falk, *The Jew in Christian Theology* (McFarland and Company, Inc., Jefferson, NC and London, 1931), 138.

Expulsion is tantamount to a “soft” genocide, in which Jews are simply wished away, but Luther did not stop short of advocating extirpation:

So we are even at fault in not avenging all this innocent blood of our Lord and of the Christians which they shed for three hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the blood of the children they have shed since then (which still shines forth from their eyes and their skin). We are at fault in not slaying them.³⁰

While Luther found Jewish obstinacy provoking, then, his anti-Semitic pamphlets nevertheless contain no self-exposure comparable to that of *Christ's Teares*.³¹

Without denying that all anti-Semitism, going back at least to Roman times, is complex, overdetermined, and regionally and historically variable, I will nevertheless reiterate that the power of Jewish denial, to which *Christ's Teares* so graphically calls attention, may have to be recognized as a powerful unconscious factor in the anti-Semitism of Nashe's time and later; the trajectory of the passion narrative towards Jerusalem is also a trajectory towards genocide.

To conclude here would, however, be premature. The third and longest section of *Christ's Teares* focuses on London as Jerusalem's successor. Is it to be assumed that Nashe harbors genocidal wishes regarding his English fellow-citizens? The animus and fantasized retribution of Nashe's attack on the vices of London does not necessarily suggest otherwise, nor does any of Nashe's writing, while the self-Judaizing misconduct of London's citizens makes them equivalent to Christ-denying Jews. That, indeed, is Nashe's point. The attack on London is nevertheless notably discontinuous with the narrative of Jerusalem's destruction. What seems absent from London is precisely the “sedition” that becomes Jerusalem's undoing.³²

³⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan (ed.), *The Works of Martin Luther* (St. Louis: Concordia Press, 1955–86), vol. 47, 267. Claiming continuity between the anti-Semitism of Luther and German Protestantism and the genocidal Third Reich is contentious to put it mildly, partly by virtue of a distinction between theological anti-Judaism and modern racial or pseudoscientific anti-Semitism. While I am far from suggesting that this is a distinction without a difference, it may also belie continuities between early modern anti-Semitism and modern anti-Semitism, as argued by Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play*, 1–36. See also Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against his Better Judgment* (Eerdman's: Grand Rapids, 2012).

³¹ This is hardly to deny other forms of self-exposure in Luther's texts. Since Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther, A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958), Luther has been something of a magnet for psychoanalysis. Further discussion along those lines might more profitably consider the cultural unconscious revealed by Luther's writings than his individual psyche. The “popular” dimension of Luther's anti-Semitism is widely apparent in contemporary legend and iconography. In any event, Luther's anti-Semitism is hardly singular in Catholic as well as Protestant discourse of his time.

³² That the advocacy of Jewish rituals and practices by Protestant preachers could in fact be construed as sedition against the state appears in the seventeenth century case of John Traske, tortured and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1618 for preaching that

If the plague seems like a premonitory divine visitation – or even a pathological consequence of the citizen's recidivist Jewishness – the citizens do not (yet) collaborate in their own undoing through factional violence tantamount to civil war. That is precisely the form of violence that Tudor and Stuart rulers were at pains to forestall. Apart from the endlessly recalled domestic horrors of civil war, factional anarchy would make England vulnerable to continental powers. (Perhaps that, too, is a “warning” embedded in *Christ's Teares*.) What is “Jewish” about Jerusalem, as distinct from London, is the apparent compulsion of the Jews to engage in self-destructive internecine struggle no matter what. A core of blind, violent, symptomatic irrationality – already implicitly calling for the corrective of Roman rationality in Josephus – still distinguishes denying Jews from Nashe's English contemporaries even as *Christ's Teares* links them. The genocidal wish of the text seems, then, to be that the Jews will always, in effect, have consumed *themselves*, leaving no one else responsible.

Jewish ceremonial laws applied to Christians. This charge may have been little more than a pretext for prosecution, but it is nevertheless indicative. See Nicholas McDowell, “The Stigmatizing of Puritans as Jews in Jacobean England: Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon and the *Book of Sports Controversy*,” *Renaissance Studies*, 19, 3 (2005), 348–63.

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Chapter 3

Blame-in-Praise Irony in *Lenten Stuffe*

Jennifer Andersen

Dominant current readings of Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe* take it as a genuine panegyric of the Great Yarmouth fishing trade, yet the work can just as credibly be read as a mock encomium. Some earlier critics mention the genre of mock encomium in connection with the tract's final section on the herring, but I argue here that Nashe presents a sustained and consistent satire through inversion of praise throughout his text. This paper examines numerous internal references to and hints at the genre of mock encomium as well as local and national contexts that expose Nashe's hyperbolic rhetorical copia as sarcastic. Standing readings of *Lenten Stuffe* share basic assumptions with Lorna Hutson's argument that Nashe contrasts the "uninhibited commerce" of the Great Yarmouth herring fair favorably to monopolistic London. Henry Turner, like Hutson, sees the text as a celebration of proto-capitalist markets. The proponents of this argument construe Nashe's admiration of Yarmouth as a meta-commentary on his writerly aspiration, like mercantile Yarmouth, to sell his wares (books) and live independently from the profit, and thus the relationship of Nashe's writing to the market is key to this reading.¹ By contrast, I want to make the different argument that Nashe's hyperbolic celebration of the Great Yarmouth fish trade satirizes venal commerce and the public rhetoric of the common good used to support it. This interpretation has affinities with Tiffany Stern's observation that satire and invective are inherent

¹ The arguments of Lorna Hutson and Henry Turner may be taken as representative of the pro-Yarmouth interpretation. See Lorna Hutson, chapter 12 of *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and Henry Turner, "Nashe's Red Herring: Epistemologies of the Commodity in 'Lenten Stuffe' (1599)" *ELH* 68, 3 (2001), 529–61. Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), and, more recently, Aaron Kitch, "Fishing for Gold: The Political Economy of Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe*" in *Political Economy and the States of Literature in Early Modern England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), follow the pro-Yarmouth interpretation as well. Hutson explicitly denies that the praise of Yarmouth is satiric; she argues that Nashe has a different target of criticism: "Yarmouth's free acknowledgement of the commercial sources of her prosperity implies a criticism of the sublimated discourse of honour, patronage and moral obligation through which London's governors negotiated their lucrative economic privileges" (254). Hutson does not revise her argument about *Lenten Stuffe* in her recent essay on Nashe in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* eds. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). It should also be noted that R.B. McKerrow assumes a pro-Yarmouth reading in the notes to his edition, volume IV: 372.

in most of Nashe's prose writing and that Nashe enjoyed playing tricks on and games with his readers. Taking *Lenten Stuffe* as a mock encomium assumes that most of it is written in irony: its real meaning must be inferred from how the ironist writes or from the context in which he writes. To follow this reading, we need to understand standard strategies of mock encomium and to understand Great Yarmouth's reputation for business and trade.²

I. Satire as a Salty Dish

Both sections of *Lenten Stuffe* explicitly introduce the work as a mock encomium. The section in praise of the red herring opens with a three-page discourse on the origins and scope of the genre:

Homer of rats and frogs hath heroiquit it; other oaten pipers after him in praise of the Gnat, the Flea, the Hasill nut, the Grashopper, the Butterflie, the Parrot, the Popiniay, Phillip sparrow, and the Cockowe ... (176)³

Referring to the traditional origin of the genre in the pseudo-Homeric *Margites* (also known as *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice*), a lost mock epic attributed to Homer by Aristotle, Nashe's list of subjects that follows evokes the sorts of trivial subject matter treated by the second century Hellenistic rhetorician, Lucian, in his numerous mock encomia. Renaissance parodists translated, published and found inspiration in Lucian's paradoxical encomia. Erasmus cited Lucian's *The Fly* and *The Parasite* in his *Praise of Folly* as classical models of paradoxical encomium. The comic tension in the paradoxical encomium typically springs from the contrast between its ridiculously trivial or vexatious subject and the

² See Tiffany Stern, "Nashe and Satirical Fiction" in *Prose Fiction in English from the Origins of Print to 1750* ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). My reading also suggests that *Lenten Stuffe* shares in rather than departs from the satirical intent of *The Isle of Dogs*; such a case is made for a specific portion of *Lenten Stuffe* by Alice Lyle Scoufos, "Nashe, Jonson, and the Oldcastle Problem" *Modern Philology* 65, 4 (1968), 307–324; the satire of Oldcastle is treated in an extended version of my chapter but not here. Charles Nicholl also describes the idea that *Lenten Stuffe* extends the satire and libel of *The Isle of Dogs* in *A Cup of News: the Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), chapter 16. When, in the course of this essay, I refer to 'irony', I'm referring to varieties of what D.C. Muecke classifies as verbal irony, and not to dramatic irony or the irony of events. See D.C. Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic* (New York: Methuen, 1970), chapter 3. Linda Hutcheon also describes this sort of irony in *Irony's Edge: the theory and politics of irony* (New York: Routledge, 1994), chapter 3.

³ Thomas Nashe, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, R.B. McKerrow ed. Volume 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 176. This and all following references to *Lenten Stuffe* will be taken from this edition.

magniloquent rhetoric in which it is celebrated.⁴ We can see the potential for this kind of incongruity in the long catalogue of subjects of mock praise that Nashe goes on to list: povertie, imprisonment, death, sicknesse, banishment, baldnesse, the bee, the stork, the turtle, the horse, the dog, the ape, the ass, the fox, the ferret, sodomitrie, the strumpet errant, the gout, the ague, the dropsie, the sciatica, folly, drunkenness and slovenry and so on (176–7).⁵

Earlier, in the author's prefatory note to his readers, Nashe describes the entire work as an exercise in paradoxical praise as well:

This is a light friskin of my witte, like the prayse of iniustice, the feuer quartaine, *Busiris*, or *Phalaris*, wherein I follow the trace of the famousest schollers of all ages, whom a wantonizing humour once in their life time hath possest to play with strawes, and turne mole-hils into mountaines. (150)

The phrase “turn mole-hils into mountains” comes from the last line of Lucian's *The Fly*, his seminal example of the mock encomium, but the praise of injustice, of *Busiris* and *Phalaris*, points to the subject of tyrants, and thus indirectly suggests that *Lenten Stuffe* also makes a political point beyond being an amusing exercise in rhetorical inversion.

Another oblique reference to the genre of satire comes on the first page in the trope of Nashe pickling or salting his detractors:

... perhappes I may prooue a cunninger diuer then they are aware, which if it so happen, as I am partly assured, and that I plunge aboue water once againe, let them looke to it, for I will put them in bryne, or a piteous pickle, every one. (153)

The association of satire with salt had long since become proverbial, since classical Latin authors used *sal* (salt) in a figurative sense to refer to intellectual acuteness, good sense, shrewdness, cunning, wit, facetiousness, and sarcasm. Thomas Campion, in a 1595 Latin poem to Nashe, refers to Nashe's words as wounding salts (*vulnificos sales*). The salty image relates also of course to Nashe's subject matter of the herring, for which salting was a common preservative. Nashe's title ‘*Lenten Stuffe*’ also suggests a traditional gustatory metaphor for satire. We know this metaphor from the fourth-century grammarian Diomedes who summed up the four main surmises about the etymology of Latin *satura* (satire). One guess was that the word *satura* came “from a kind of stuffing [*farciimen*] called *satura*:

⁴ David Marsh, chapter 3 “The Paradoxical Encomium” in *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 148–176.

⁵ Many of these topics can be found in the contents of a famous Renaissance anthology of satires and paradoxical encomia by Caspar Dornavius, entitled *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae Socraticae Joco-Seriae, Hoc Est, Encomia et Commentaria Autorum, qua Recentiore prope omnium* (Hanover, 1619); the copy I consulted was BL 8811.

or from some kind of stuffing which was crammed full with many ingredients and called *satura* according to the testimony of Varro ...” A ballad printed in the early seventeenth century entitled “Turners dish of Lentten stuffe, or a Galymaufery” suggests that ‘lenten stuffe’ was synonymous with a gallimaufry, and hence a dish made up of odds and ends or a hodgepodge, thus indicating that the title too could refer to the ancient culinary metaphor for satire. One modern critic suggests that the point of comparison between stuffing or sausage (*farcimen*) and satire lies in satiric form where we have “the intrusion of various and spicy substances into a flexible but limited form.” Another ancient definition of satire derives the word from Latin *lanx satura*, denoting a mixture or medley of foods, and this too may be suggested by ‘lenten stuffe’.⁶

Nashe’s self-referential hints about his genre via traditional metaphors are not always embedded in tropes; occasionally he makes the equation of text and meal explicit, as in the following passage:

There be of you, it may be, that will account me a paltrier, for hanging out the signe of the redde Herring in my title page, and no such feast towards for ought you can see. Soft and faire, my maisters, you must walke and talke before dinner an houre or two, the better to whet your appetites to taste of such a dainty dish as the redde Herring. (159)

The phrase red herring in the title creates certain generic expectations, he acknowledges, which have thus far (seven pages into the text) been disappointed. As he concludes his history of Great Yarmouth and commences with the praise of the red herring, Nashe expresses a desire to emulate Chaucer. He laments,

had I my topickes by me in stead of my learned counsel to assist me, I might haps marshall my termes in better aray, and bestow such costly coquery on this *Marine magnifico* [the herring] as you would preferre him before tart and

⁶ For the Campion poem, see text and translation by Dana Sutton on <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/campion/contents.html> (accessed on 8/31/2010); on ancient definitions of satire see Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16–27, and C.A. Van Rooy, *Studies in Classical Satire and Literary Theory* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965). The text of “Turners dish of Lentten stuffe, or a Galymaufery” can be found in David Norbrook and H.R. Woudhuysen eds. *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 437–441. A good example of the liberties satirists took with such traditional metaphors occurs in Jonathan Swift’s *Modest Proposal* where he embeds a clue to his irony as he introduces the putative modest proposal: “I have been assured by a very knowing *American* of my Acquaintance in *London*; that a healthy young Child, well nursed, is, at a Year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome Food; whether *Stewed, Roasted, Baked, or Boiled*; and, I make no doubt, that it will equally serve in a *Fricasie, or Ragoust*.” Swift knew the ancient etymological definitions for satire, and here, besides provoking the reader’s disbelief through the atrocity of his proposal, he also hints through the culinary images that his mode is satire.

galingale, which *Chaucer* preheminentest encomionizeth aboue all iunqueties or confectionaries whatsoever. (176)

In other words, as Chaucer had praised a dish of galingale, so Nashe wishes to exalt a meal of red herring. “Galingale” refers to the aromatic root of certain East Indian plants, as well as to a dish seasoned with galingale (OED s.v.1 & 1.b). Chaucer mentions “galingale” in the *descriptio* of the Cook in his “General Prologue” to the *Canterbury Tales*. While Chaucer’s naïve narrator praises the Cook’s galingale as superlative, he also mentions, in ostensible sympathy, that the Cook suffers from an open, running sore on his leg. Irony by way of superlative is one of Chaucer’s favorite satiric techniques (he “preheminentest encomionizeth”), and it is also the primary mode of irony in mock encomium. We seem then to have in this Chaucerian spice or spicy dish a sort of medieval equivalent of the Latin *farcimen* (stuffing or sausage), which is used by prose satirists as a self-reflexive trope for their heterogeneous, hybrid form of satire. We have here a somewhat coded expression of Nashe’s desire to emulate Chaucerian satire and perhaps especially to imitate Chaucer’s naively enthusiastic narrator. All of the examples discussed in this section, in short, constitute generic signals or acknowledgements that *Lenten Stuffe* is a satire in the mode of paradoxical encomium. For the connoisseur of satiric tropes and traditions, Nashe leaves a trail of crumbs pointing to his rhetorical methods.

II. The Local Dispute: Great Yarmouth and its Rivals

Nashe’s panegyric of Great Yarmouth includes a history of its geography and an enumeration of its legal rights, privileges, and economic advantages. On the surface we are presented with a picture of abundance and hospitality (the idealized free market of “uninhibited commerce” noted by Hutson and others), but not far below runs a current of sarcasm. Understanding the economic relationships and customs that governed Great Yarmouth’s annual free fair and its collection of tolls helps reveal this level of irony. Luckily for us, these details are well documented and studied owing in large part to the records left by a long history of legal disputes that went as far as Parliament in the late sixteenth century.⁷

⁷ This section relies on the following sources: G.R. Elton, “Piscatorial Politics in the Early Parliaments of Elizabeth I” in *Business, Life and Public Policy: Essays in Honour of D.C. Coleman* eds. Neil McKendrick and R.B. Outhwaite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1–20; David M. Dean, “Parliament, Privy Council, and Local Politics in Elizabethan England: the Yarmouth-Lowestoft Fishing Dispute” *Albion* 22 (1990), 39–64; Rosemary Sgroi, “Piscatorial Politics Revisited: the Language of Economic Debate and the Evolution of Fishing Policy in Elizabethan England” *Albion* 35, 1 (2003), 1–24; A. Saul, “The Herring Industry at Great Yarmouth c.1280–c.1400” *Norfolk Archaeology* 38 (1981), 33–43. Historians interested in the relationship between central

Great Yarmouth jealously controlled and guarded its rights to collect customs and tolls on herring from neighboring towns on the East Anglian coast. Anyone aware of Yarmouth's litigious history, which had become intense in the 1590s, would recognize irony in Nashe's salubrious picture of the harbor town's prosperity and congeniality. In order to preserve the fishing trade and its profits for local men, Yarmouth had persistently defended two particular liberties: its free fair and its right to collect tolls on herring sold anywhere within 7 "leuks," or about 10 miles. The privilege of Yarmouth's "free-fair" meant that from Michaelmas to Martinmas (coinciding with the seasonal arrival of herring shoals) fishermen had to sell their catches to a Yarmouth freeman acting as "host" who then resold the fish to other freemen merchants.⁸ Nashe pretends to admire Great Yarmouth's generosity during the free fair:

But how Yarmouth, of it selfe so innumerable populous and replenished, and in so barraine a plot seated, should not onely supply her inhabitants with plentifull purueyance of sustenance, but prouant and victuall moreouer this monstrous army of strangers, was a matter that egregiously bepuzzled and entranced my apprehension. Hollanders, Zelanders, Scots, French, Western men, Northren men, besides all the hundreds and wapentakes nine miles compasse, fetch the best of their viands and mangery from her market. For ten weeks together this rabble rout of outlandishers are billeted with her. (158)

Here Great Yarmouth is a nurturing mother who feeds and harbors all foreign visitors. Yet the manner in which buying and selling was conducted at the fair, and in particular the practice of hosting, did not lead to such open-handedness as the passage suggests. In the hosting system, foreign merchants were assigned to townsmen who provided accommodation and business introductions and who were often responsible for debts arising therefrom. In return the host took one quarter of the guest's merchandise at the selling price and then resold them. Such hosting was often restricted to burgesses. King Edward III had worried about the fairness of hosting at Great Yarmouth and set up an investigation that revealed that a number of families at the center of the town's political life who were engaged in several branches of the trade had monopolized the hosting system. At one point a group of Great Yarmouth's lesser burgesses petitioned in Parliament that the leading townsmen were establishing a monopoly of the herring trade, and as a result thirty-four burgesses were identified as oppressors of the poor.⁹ Nashe's panegyrist ostensibly keeps on the good side of Great Yarmouth's burgesses, praising the "magnificence" of town government,

government and the localities in early modern England have often been drawn to the case of Great Yarmouth.

⁸ Dean, "The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Fishing Dispute" (1990), 41.

⁹ Saul, "Herring Industry" (1981), 38.

[H]ere I could breake out into a boundlesse race of oratory, in shrill trumpetting and concelebrating the royall magnificence of her gouernement, that for state and strict ciuill ordering scant admitteth any riualls: but I feare it would be a theame displeasent to the graue modesty of the discreet present magistrates; and therefore consultively I ouerslip it . . . (158–9)

Concluding his discourse on the free fair, he makes explicit claims about the economic justice of the fair, as if pre-emptively denying or answering the charge that a privileged few monopolize its profits:

All Common wealths assume their prenominations of their common diuided weale, as where one man hath not too much riches, and another man too much pouertie . . . To this *Commune bonum* (or euery horse his loafe) Yarmouth in propinquity is as the buckle to the thong, and the next finger to the thumb; not that it is sibbe or cater-cousins to any mungrel *Democratia*, in which one is all, & all is one, but that in her, as they are not al one, so one or two there pockets not vp all the peeces; there beeing two hundreth in it worth three hundred pounce a peece, with poundage and shillings to the lurtched, set a side the Bailifes fowre and twentie, and eight and fourtie. Put out mine eye, who can, with such another bragge of any Sea towne within two hundred myle of it. (168–9)

Then he amplifies this claim with an even broader one: “But this common good within it selfe is nothing to the common good it communicats to the whole state. Shall I particularize vnto you *quibus viis & modis*, how and wherein?” (169). Not only does Great Yarmouth provide for its own citizens, but its economic and military contributions on a national level are also trumpeted.

In another defensive maneuver, Nashe’s narrator refers to the challenge in Parliament to Great Yarmouth’s rights to collect tolls on fish:

The red herring alone it is that countervailes the burdensome detrimentes of our hauen, which euery twelue-month deuoures a Iustice of peace liuing, in weares and banckes to beate off the sand and ouerthwart ledging and fencing it in; that defrayes all impositions and outwarde payments to her Maiestie (in which Yarmouth giues not the wall to sixe, though sixe-teene moath-eaten burgesse townes, that haue dawbers and thatchers to their Mayors, challenge in parliament the vpper hand of it), and, for the vaward or subburbes of my narration, that empals our sage senatours or *Ephori* in princely scarlet as pompous ostentyue as the *Vinti quarter* or Lady *Troynouant*... (174–5)

He repeats one of the standard arguments for the town’s need for special revenues: the charge of maintaining Great Yarmouth’s harbor, which silted up regularly and had to be re-cut about every thirty years. The town’s strategic and economic importance to the nation was typically urged in its favor. In referring to the Great Yarmouth town burghers as *Ephori* he implies a comparison with

ancient Sparta, perhaps to imply the town's martial and strategic importance. This echoes Nashe's probable source for the history of Great Yarmouth which compared Yarmouth to Thebes, Rome, and Sparta, and which Nashe parodies. The Cinque Ports of England's east coast received economic privileges because of their strategic position as the first line of defense against invasion from the Continent, and Nashe's narrator seems to argue for similar privileges on similar grounds for Great Yarmouth.¹⁰

Nashe returns to the practice of hosting foreign merchants at the herring fair when describing the apparent reverence with which local people regard the arrival of the herring. The passage presents Yarmouth citizens doing somersaults to outdo one another in hospitality; taken ironically, however, we can see this as a grandiose description of the unseemly scramble of burgesses to "host" as many merchants as possible so as to aggrandize themselves:

Holy S. Taurbard, in what droues the gouty bagd Londoners hurry down and die the watchet aire of an yron russet hue with the dust that they raise in hot spurd rowelling it on to performe complementes unto him [the herring]... Citty, towne, cuntry, Robin hoode and little Iohn, and who not, are industrious and carfull to squire and safe conduct him in, but in vshering him in, next to the balies of Yarmoth, they trot before all, and play the prouost marshals, helping to keep good rule the first three weeks of his ingresse, and neuer leaue roaring it out with their brasen horne as long as they stay, of the freedoms and immunities soursing from him. (186–7)

The "freedoms and immunities" insisted upon by the town burgesses refer to their rights to hold the herring fair and collect tolls. Beneath the narrator's naïve posture, through mock blame-in-praise irony, Nashe describes the competition of Yarmouth's "balies and marshals," tripping over one another in mock heroic eagerness to welcome in the herring:

[B]eeing thus entred or brought in, the consistorians or settled standers of Yarmouth commense intestine warres amongst themselues who should giue him [the herring] the largest hospitality, and gather about him as flocking to hansell him and strike him good luck as the Sweetkin Madams did about valiant *S. Walter Manny* ... (187)

While the Oxford English Dictionary suggests that Nashe uses the term "consistorians" here to mean "settled standers" (OED s.v.B.1), it was also used

¹⁰ See Catherine Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite, and the Crown 1580–1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 123. The same arguments in Yarmouth's favor are repeated at pages 180 and 191. It should be noted that precisely these arguments were made to Parliament when other coastal towns petitioned against Great Yarmouth's economic privileges.

by anti-Puritan polemicists such as Richard Bancroft at this time as a derogatory term for Calvinists or Puritans (OED s.v.A.1). Nashe's engagement in anti-Puritan polemics in earlier works suggests that the pejorative meaning could apply here as well, and it would not be surprising to find Puritans a target of his satire.¹¹ Pretending ignorance of the economic competition underlying this free-for-all, Nashe's naïve narrator presents these "intestine warres" as a contest in chivalry and courtesy.¹² Once we understand the commercial advantages prompting the "consistorians" to host foreign merchants, however, it is hard to read such a passage as anything but sarcastic. The context of economic competition suggests a bathetic deflation of the epic notion of 'hospitality' and 'hosting'. The subtext of avarice also echoes charges made by the London Fishmongers who accused Great Yarmouth fishermen of being "fishers in saten doublets with gold and silver."¹³

Discrepancies between assertions of harmony and plenty and the acknowledgment of the envy and resentment of Great Yarmouth's neighbors call into question the rosy picture painted by Nashe's narrator. For Great Yarmouth's efforts to assert its rights to collect tolls and customs from ships unloading along the coast within 7 "leuks" of the haven often provoked disputes with neighboring coastal towns, and in particular with Lowestoft. Nashe mentions this "discord" in passing, as if it had long ago been settled in Great Yarmouth's favor:

Richard the second, vpon a discord twixt Leystofe and Yarmouth, after diuerse law-dayes and arbitrarie mandates to the counties of Suffolke and Norfolke directed about it, in proper person 1385. came to Yarmouth, and, in his parliamente the yeare ensuing, confirmed vnto it [Great Yarmouth] the liberties of Kirtley roade (the onely motiue of all their contention). (165)

The matter was far from settled, however, since the dispute was ongoing even as Nashe wrote *Lenten Stuffe*. In the Parliament of 1597–8, the 1581 Fisheries Act was being contested.¹⁴ This Act had given Great Yarmouth a decisive advantage over the London Fishmongers' Company; it promoted free trade of fish by Englishmen but prohibited the import of foreign fish by English merchants, which had been the practice of the London Fishmongers, who regularly imported from the Dutch. According to this Act, trade was open provided English vessels were used. The London Fishmongers complained that the 1581 Act had been

¹¹ Phil Withington suggests that there was an affinity between Calvinism and the ideology of the city commonwealth; see his *The Politics of Commonwealth: Citizens and Freemen in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 230–264.

¹² See D.C. Muecke, *Irony* (1970) for a discussion of the *eironeia* as a classic pose adopted by satirists as a persona.

¹³ Dean, "The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Fishing Dispute" (1990), 41; Sgroi, "Piscatorial Politics Revisited" (2003), 17.

¹⁴ A fictional gentleman interlocutor who asks Nashe's narrator to write in praise of the red herring mentions the case in Parliament (174).

promoted by Great Yarmouth out of self-interest. “The coastmen,” they said, were “the solicitors and procurers of this lawe,” and enhancing prices was their only aim, “for their owne private lucre and gayne, and to the detrymente of our comon weale.”¹⁵ Over the centuries, a series of royal grants and laws had shored up and bolstered the fishing trade in Great Yarmouth, giving them considerable economic advantages over their neighbors.

To defend Great Yarmouth in this challenge to its traditional rights and privileges, the clerk of the Great Yarmouth corporation and erstwhile member of Parliament for Great Yarmouth, Thomas Damet, had prepared a history of the town, arguing for its strategic and commercial importance to the nation. R.B. McKerrrow observed that Nashe’s history of Great Yarmouth seems rather closely to follow a *History of Great Yarmouth* written by Henry Manship; subsequent research has revealed that the history attributed to Manship consisted in fact of materials compiled and written by Thomas Damet for use in the 1597 legal dispute.¹⁶ Needless to say, this is a highly tendentious document, intended to present the town’s case for its rights to collect customs and tolls. The significance of Nashe echoing this document is far from clear. One historian of Elizabethan shipping policy, for example, assumes that Nashe’s nod to the town history used in its legal case meant that he implicitly supported Great Yarmouth’s claims. Another historian, the eighteenth-century editor of “Manship’s” *History of Great Yarmouth*, assumes that since Nashe was a Lowestoft man, and because of the enmity between the two towns, Nashe could have only praised Yarmouth in jest.¹⁷ Some critics have mistakenly asserted that Great Yarmouth was Nashe’s hometown, even though Nashe alludes to being born in Lowestoft (“the head Towne in that Iland [Lovingland] is *Leystofe*, in which bee it knowne to all men I was borne, though my father sprang from the Nashes of Herefordshire”, 205) which the Dictionary of National Biography confirms. By the time of Nashe’s birth in 1567 the dispute between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft had been going on for two centuries, and during his lifetime it would be

¹⁵ Sgroi, “Piscatorial Politics Revisited” (2003), 16.

¹⁶ R.B. McKerrrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, volume 4, 372–374. See Paul Rutledge, “Thomas Damet and the Historiography of Great Yarmouth” *Norfolk Archaeology* 33 (1963), 119–130 and “Archive Management at Great Yarmouth since 1540” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 3 (1967), 89–90. Robert Tittler summarizes Rutledge’s findings in “Henry Manship: Constructing the Civic Memory in Great Yarmouth” in *Townpeople and Nation: English Urban Experiences, 1540–1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 124–125.

¹⁷ Sgroi, “Piscatorial Politics Revisited,” 21, speculates that Nashe wrote on Yarmouth’s side. The eighteenth-century edition is *The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Burgh of Great Yarmouth in the County of Norfolk Collected from the Corporation Charters, Records, and Evidences; and other the most authentic Materials* by Henry Swinden (Norwich: printed for the Author by John Crouse, in the Market-Place, 1772), iii. The long-running dispute between Yarmouth and Lowestoft was also noted in William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586), 267.

contested in Parliament. This suggests to me more evidence for satire in Nashe's history of his rapacious childhood neighbors.

Lowestoft joined the chorus of complaint against Great Yarmouth in a petition which presented Great Yarmouth men as notorious deceivers and self-seekers whose "untrue pretences" were set out at length. As Rosemary Sgroi suggests, the tide was turning against Great Yarmouth's defense of its customary privileges in the 1590s since such "liberties" granted by royal charters and patents were seen increasingly as monopolies which served private gain at the expense of the commonwealth. Sgroi presents Great Yarmouth as precisely the kind of monopoly to which Hutson would contrast it, implicitly calling Hutson's interpretation into doubt.¹⁸

Nashe's "panegyric" of Great Yarmouth and its herring trade includes a common element of mock encomia: a discussion of the subject's origins, often in the manner of an Ovidian transformation myth. In Lucian's *The Fly*, the satirist traces the fly's origin to a girl called Muia, who was turned into a fly for annoying the Greek goddess of the moon, Selene. Nashe recounts a number of etiological fables as explanations for the origins of the red herring (smoked herring), but the most extended etiological myth in the text centers around the long-running quarrel between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Nashe embarks on retelling the classical story of Hero and Leander as a way to "epitomize" and "to recount *ab ouo*, or from the church-booke of his birth, howe the Herring first came to be a fish" (195). He also uses it to explain natural aspects of local geography and custom, such as the migrational paths of herring and ling, the origins of the name Loving-land, the institution of fish days or fasts, and even the custom of eating herring with mustard.

Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft are substituted in the tale for the feuding Sestos and Abidos: "In their [Hero's and Leander's] parents the most diuision rested, and their townes that like Yarmouth and Leystoffe were stil at wrig wrag, & suckt from their mothers teates serpentine hatred against each other" (195). This analogy, like many another homespun figure of speech in the story, emphasizes demotic diction, clumsy puns, loquaciousness, and a gift of gab that often gets out of the narrator's control.¹⁹ Wooden alliteration and puns ("At Sestos was his soule, and hee coule not *abide* to tarry in *Abidos*," 197, italics mine) pepper the tale and also mark him as an inept orator. Vulgar, uncouth images repeatedly turn moments of deep pathos comical; for example, the passage describing Hero when she "thought to haue kist his dead corse aliue againe" begins with great pathos, but is subsequently

¹⁸ Although Great Yarmouth succeeded in fending off attacks upon its charter in 1597, the dispute between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft remained unresolved at the end of Elizabeth's reign.

¹⁹ Some other examples of homespun figures are: "Heroes tower" is "not so wide as a belfree, and a Cobler cannot iert out his elblowes in; a cage or pigeionhouse, romthsome enough to comphrehend her and the toothlesse trotte, her nurse" (196); fate is "a spaniel that you cannot beate from you; the more you thinke to crosse it, the more you blesse it and further it" (196); and the Olympian gods weep a "huge hogshhead of teares they spent for *Hero and Leander*" (200).

deflated by the low comical images used for lips, kisses and waves, “but as on his blew iellied sturgeon lips she was about to clappe one of those warme plaisters, boystrous woolpacks of ridged tides came rowling in, and raught him from her ...” (198). The humorous shoddiness of the rhetoric emphasizes the narrator’s inflated pretensions about Great Yarmouth’s importance. Christopher Marlowe’s version of *Hero and Leander* (known through his c.1593 translation) was versified in high style. Nashe, by recounting the classical story with colloquial informality, extends the mock learned characterization of his gauche narrator.

The description of Leander’s final swim and death by drowning offers a good illustration of Nashe’s comic domestication of the exotic eastern myth:

Rayne, snowe, haile, or blowe it howe it could, into the pitchie Helespont he [Leander] leapt, when the moone and all her torch-bearers were afraide to peepe out their heads; but he was peppered for it, hee hadde as good haue tooke meate, drinke, and leisure, for the churlish frampold waues gaue him his belly full of fishbroath, ere out of their laundry or washe-house they woulde graunt him his coquet or *transire*, and not onely that, but they sealde him his *quietus est* for curuetting any more to the mayden tower, and tossed his dead carcasse, well bathed or parboyled, to the sandy threshold of his leman or orange, for a disiune or morning breakfast. (197)

The narrator vacillates between metaphors, switching between washing and cooking images for the sea, reducing the Hellespont to a kitchen kettle or washing tub. What could be the satirical point of such a literary travesty? Nashe’s stylistic inflation of the subject matter points up a comic incongruity. The story mythologizes and romanticizes, naturalizes and rationalizes the age-old rivalry between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. It elides the underlying economic competition that has fueled the conflict. The inflated style helps point up how far short Great Yarmouth and its venal fishing trade fall from models of self-sacrificing classical heroism.

Hero and Leander’s final transformation into fish is not part of the original poem written by Musaeus; in the ancient version the lovers simply die at the end. Marlowe’s translation (c.1593) did not go to the end of the poem, but the continuations of it by George Chapman (1598) and Henry Petowe (1598) take the poem to an ending where they introduce Ovidian transformations of the lovers (Chapman has them transformed into goldfinches and Petowe into pine trees).²⁰ Like these closely contemporary translations of the ending, Nashe’s narrator takes the liberty of introducing an Ovidian transformation of the tragic lovers – into fish. A council of gods determines the nature of the lovers’ supernatural metamorphosis as follows:

²⁰ It is uncertain whether Marlowe’s translation should be considered complete or incomplete; see Marion Campbell, “Desunt Nonnulla’: the construction of Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* as an Unfinished Poem” *English Literary History* 51, 2 (1984). For texts of Marlowe’s, Chapman’s and Petowe’s translations, see Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations* ed. Stephen Orgel (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971).

in their synode [the gods] thus decreede, that, for they [Hero and Leander] were either of them seaborderers and drowned in the sea, stil to sea they must belong, and bee diuided in habitation after death, as they were in their life time. *Leander*, for that in a cold darke testie night he had his pasport to *Charon*, they terminated to the vnquiet cold coast of Iseland, where halfe the yeare is nothing but murke night, and to that fish translated him which of vs is termed Ling. *Hero*, for that she was pagled and timpanized, and sustained two losses vnder one, they footebald their heades together, & protested to make the stem of her loynes of all the fishes the flanting Fabian or Palmerin of England, which is Cadwallader Herring, and, as their meetings were seldome, and not so oft as welcome, so but seldome should they meete in the heele of the weeke at the best mens tables, vppon Fridayes and Satterdayes, the holy time of Lent exempted, and then they might be at meate and meale for seuen weekes together. (199–200)

To fabricate such a grand myth of origins for Yarmouth's herring trade seems to parody the process of mythologizing itself. The narrative includes but also suppresses the discord between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft.

To sum up the argument of this section, previous critics have construed Nashe's rhetoric about Great Yarmouth to be genuinely enthusiastic, whereas another available reading exposes this grandiloquent rhetoric as facetious and ironic. I argue that the social and historical as well as rhetorical evidence suggest it is precisely Yarmouth's mercantile practices which Nashe lampoons and satirizes. Contrary to an idyll of capitalistic-style free trade, Great Yarmouth's Free Fair and the practice of hosting through which the herring were sold permitted a small group of town burgesses to monopolize the profits to be made from such sales. The mock encomiastic frame of *Lenten Stuffe* means that this vision of bourgeois competition and prosperity is presented to us naively as a sort of social utopia. In reality for Nashe, however, such small town government by acquisitive and self-aggrandizing magistrates represented a dystopia of greed and self-interest, a grotesque carnival of rampant bourgeois materialism.²¹

III. Lent as Carnival

The final inversion of *Lenten Stuffe*'s many molehills turned into mountains that I examine here is Nashe's deployment of the symbolism of Lent. Nashe develops traditional customs and symbolism associated with Lent to suggest that a debased version of the penitential ritual is offered under Elizabeth's regime. Key to Nashe's satire is a storehouse of tropes and traditions surrounding Lent. While Lent was

²¹ Nashe registers his suspicion and disdain for upstart parvenus in other works such as *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*. Other examples occur in his representation of John of Leiden and the Münster rebellion in *The Unfortunate Traveller* and in his passage on upstart burgomasters in *Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil*.

traditionally associated with hunger and scarcity, in Nashe's paradoxical praise of the red herring he attributes wonder-working properties and powers to the fish. In this section I consider some popular and polemical literary uses of the imagery of Lent and Carnival to understand Nashe's appropriation of the trope.

From the beginning of the Reformation, Carnival and Lent had supplied a symbolic, and usually satiric, language for commenting on religious conflict and confessional division. A century before Nashe, Rabelais had adapted the traditional battle of Carnival and Lent as a fable for the early Reformation struggle between radical Protestants, Catholics, and moderate reformers in the Schmalkaldic War of 1546. In the surreal travel narrative of Rabelais' *Fourth Book of Pantagruel*, the hero Pantagruel (representing moderate reformers) lands on the island of *Andouilles* (tripe sausages or chitterlings); the *Andouilles* (who stand for Lutherans) mistake Pantagruel for the monster *Quaresmeprenant* (King Lent, Charles V and/ or the Catholic Church) and attack Pantagruel. Pantagruel and his friends set up a great hollow sow and hide cooks inside of it; eventually the cooks attack from the giant sow and decimate the sausages. The sausages are in full retreat when a huge flying pig (Martin Luther) appears, dumping vast quantities of mustard on the battlefield and crying "Mardigras, Mardigras" ("Carnival, Carnival").

As various commentators have explained, in this mock epic battle (featuring the sow as a kind of Trojan horse) the sausages, through a series of complex French puns, serve as a metaphor for the Protestant allies during the Schmalkaldic War (1546) in which the Holy Roman emperor defeated the Protestant allies. Allies of the *Andouilles* such as the Savage Blood Sausages and the Mountain Sausages stand for radical Protestants such as Zwingli and Bucer. A fundamental matter of dispute between Catholics and Protestants at this stage of the Reformation concerned how feasting and fasting should be observed and, more particularly, the interpretation of the Mass or Eucharist. Rabelais' *Fourth Book* figures this dispute in terms of the traditional battle between Carnival and Lent, associating the *Andouilles* with the red meat of Carnival, echoed in a battle cry when their deity the flying pig cries "Mardigras, Mardigras".²² The identification of Lutherans with Carnival here implies that Protestants wanted to throw off religious asceticism to live as antinomian libertines (an extreme caricature of Protestant theology).

Rabelais was not the first to imagine the confessional struggles of the Reformation in terms of the festive battle between Carnival and Lent. Many visual representations of the traditional battle were depicted on prints and in paintings, one of the most intricate of which is Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *Combat between Carnival and Lent*. In Brueghel's painting, as in Rabelais' mock epic narrative, Lutherans (who had rejected Lent) are associated with Carnival, while the Catholic Church is associated with Lent and its rituals of fasting. In Brueghel's allegory Lent is an emaciated old woman on a cart drawn by a monk and a nun; this thin female figure carries a beehive on her head, and uses a baker's shovel as a weapon

²² Florence Weinberg, "Layers of Emblematic Prose: Rabelais' *Andouilles*" *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, 2 (1995), 367–377.

in a jousting match with Prince Carnival; atop the baker's shovel are two fish, and in her other hand ascetic Lent holds a bunch of dead twigs; she wears wooden clogs, and on her cart are a few biscuits, onions, and herring.²³

The post-Reformation evolution of the ritual of Lent in England helps explain Nashe's particular appropriation of its imagery. Nashe's satire is neither a direct imitation of Rabelais nor of Brueghel, but rather an analogue, drawing on the same popular-festive system of images.²⁴ While Nashe also uses the symbolism of Carnival and Lent to fictionalize a satire about religious controversy, the identifications in *Lenten Stuffe* are updated and adapted, for Nashe associates Puritans with the Lenten herring.²⁵ By 1599, England had long been a Protestant country, and the struggle over the nature of the English Reformation involved an intra-Protestant debate between Conformists and Puritans. From the time of his enlistment to write satires against Martin Marprelate, Nashe had typically taken the side of Conformist Protestants against Puritans. While Rabelais and Brueghel had associated Lent with Catholics, Nashe associates Lent with Puritans and their policies. This identification works in the English context because Lenten fasting, though no longer part of Catholic ritual, had been retained and even expanded after England's Reformation.

Lent had survived in the English Protestant Church as a custom converted for economic and political purposes ('political Lent'). In the medieval Catholic Church Lent was a penitential fast observed during the forty days before Easter, when meat was renounced and substituted with fish. For Protestants, since Lent had been part of the popish sacrament of penance, such fasts presumably could not remain in the

²³ C.G. Stridbeck, "'Combat between Carnival and Lent' by Pieter Brueghel the Elder: An Allegorical Picture of the Sixteenth Century" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956), 96–109.

²⁴ Anne Lake Prescott has established quite convincingly that Rabelais's works were known only second-hand by sixteenth-century English authors, making a direct imitation highly implausible; see her *Imagining Rabelais in Renaissance England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). On the popular-festive system of images surrounding Carnival and Lent, see Mikhail Bakhtin, trans. Helene Iswolsky, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), chapter 3. While Nashe associates puritans with Lent, Kristen Poole analyzes a later example of English satire where puritans are associated with carnival, so these identifications are flexible, depending on the point and purposes of the satirist; see "Eating disorder: feasting, fasting, and the puritan bellygod at 'Bartholomew Fair'" in *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Rabelais was a moderate reformer sending up the extreme positions of radical Protestants in his satire; he acknowledges matters of genuine theological difference between Lutherans, Erasmians, and Catholics even though he represents their disagreements in a bathetic mock epic battle. Nashe, by contrast tends to assume that English puritans and their patrons are a-religious, and that social ambition and avarice, rather than genuine theological differences, fuel their sponsorship of the new religion. In this sense Nashe subscribes to a version of the English Reformation promulgated in Elizabethan Catholic libels.

Protestant calendar, which was the conclusion reached by continental Protestants. Under the English Tudors, however, Lenten fasts or “fish-days” were retained and even expanded under the terms of its navigation and fisheries acts. Over the second half of the sixteenth century English Parliament repeatedly ordered that the days of Lent and other days that were by old custom held as fasts should continue to be observed. Proclamations issued annually explained that this abstinence was to be observed for political reasons: to maintain the navy and the English fishing trade. Nashe refers to the English retention of Lent in *Lenten Stuffe*:

Item, if it were not for this Huniades of the liquid element, that word Quadragesima, or Lent, might be cleane spung'd out of the Kalender, with Rogation weeks, Saints eues, and the whole Ragmans roule of fasting dayes, and Fishmongers might keepe Christmasse all the yeere for any ouerlauhish takings they should haue of clownes and clouted shoes, and the rubbish menialty, their best customers; and their bloudy aduersaries, the butchers, would neuer leaue clea-uing it out in the whole chines, till they had got a Lord Maior of their company as well as they. (183–4)

The consequences for the meat and fish trades of abolishing Lent which Nashe imagines here are ones that Erasmus had contemplated in one of his Latin colloquies, “Concerning the Eating of Fish.” This work features a dialogue between a Butcher and a Fishmonger who argue about the causes and effects of religious fasting. Erasmus advocated the abolition of fasts along with other ecclesiastical rules and superstitions which he felt confused ordinary Christians about the primary means and ends of Christian living. Continental Protestants had erased Lenten fasts from their sacred calendars, and, Nashe’s readers may well have wondered why, despite the abolition of Lent in the Netherlands, the fishing trade had not suffered there but rather flourished and expanded, indeed, had become England’s chief competitor. So the Dutch case might seem to nullify the official English argument that fish days were necessary to prop up the fishing trade. If unnecessary for the preservation of the fishing trade, the retention of Lenten fasting would seem to be a gratuitously punitive imposition on the populace.²⁶

As we saw in the allegories of Rabelais’ *Fourth Book* and Brueghel’s print, Lent is traditionally associated with hunger and abstinence, yet Nashe’s narrator perversely insists that the herring is the source of all plenty. The herring is, we are told, England’s most valuable commodity in trade – more than English wool and cloth, grain or corn, lead, tin, iron, butter and cheese. He refers to the herring in a

²⁶ English Catholic polemicists like Robert Persons often pointed to the hodge-podge of doctrine and ceremony in the English Church; see, for example, *A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realme of England* (1592), 10–11. Catholic libels regularly presented other reasons for the languishing of English trade: for example, England’s strained relations with France and Spain due to its military assistance to Protestants in religious wars in France and the Low Countries.

litany of hyperbolic and grandiose titles (“this *Semper Augustus* of the Seas finnie freeholders,” 180; “our mitred Archpatriarch, *Leopald* herring,” 181) – asserting its importance in the economy – as a staple in everyone’s diet, as a generator of employment, and as a means of increasing navigation and shipping. The herring is related, it is asserted, to “Lady Lucar” (184). In a strange compression of the logic mandating fish days, Nashe also claims that when eaten the red herring inspires martial courage, “But to thinke on a red Herring, such a hot stirring meate it is, is enough to make the crauenest dastard proclaime fire and sword against Spaine.” (191). Such absurd claims only make sense as parodic hyperbole spilling over into mock encomium, signaling an ironic distance between Nashe’s exaggerated panegyric and the reality of herring as the lean man’s supper. In a strange inversion, then, Nashe presents the Lenten herring to us as a Carnival feast of plenty.

These are precisely the sort of claims made in government proclamations promoting fish days.²⁷ What we have here, I would suggest, is a sending up of some of the enthusiastic claims made in the navigation acts about the patriotic virtues of fishing and eating fish. The mock- heroic comparisons to and extravagant mythmaking about the herring provide a way of mocking official claims about the benefits of this policy. Because William Cecil had argued for the original legislation of fish days in 1563, and then argued in 1585 to add Wednesdays to the traditional fish days, he became associated with this unpopular policy, which was sometimes known as “Cecil’s fast.” Cecil was the only one of Elizabeth’s original inner circle of counselors to survive in the 1590s and he was perceived as monopolizing power, patronage, and policy initiatives at Court. The command to abstain from meat might have been unpopular at any time, but it likely seemed particularly gratuitous in the 1590s. From 1592 to the end of the decade England had suffered famine, plague, and taxation for war to the extent that historians refer to the decade as a period of crisis. *Lenten Stuffe*, in celebrating the bitter pill of compulsory lean eating, seems to participate in the dark humor of such a period.

Finally, the pro-Yarmouth reading of *Lenten Stuffe* is one that Nashe himself invites through the extravagance of his praise. That very extravagant praise may also function as a technique of mock praise, however, and there are other

²⁷ A 1595 fish-day proclamation explains the reason for them as follows:

First, for as much as our Countrey is (for the most part) compassed with the Seas, and the greatest force for defence thereof, under God, is the Queenes Maiesties Navie of ships: for maintenance and increase of the said Navie, this lawe for abstinence hath bene most carefully ordained, that by the certaine expence of fish, fishing and fisher-men might be the more increased and the better maintained, for that the said trade is the cheefest Nource, not only for the bringing up or youth meete for shipping, but great numbers of ships therein are used, furnished with sufficient Mariners, men at all times in a readiness for hir Maiesties service in those affaires. The second cause, for that many Townes and Villages upon the Sea Coasts, are of late yeeres wonderfully decayed, and some wonderfully depopulated ...

From A briefe note of the benefits that growe to this Realme, by the observation of Fish-daies (London, 1595); BL 21.h.5(1) Tract 1.

compelling reasons for considering *Lenten Stuffe* as an extended exercise in mock praise. Through allusions to famous examples of mock encomium and its practitioners, Nashe drops hints that he is playing the game of blame-in-praise irony. Other signals outside of the text may also cue Nashe's readers in to his humor. Great Yarmouth was better known for its tight-fisted clutch on profits than for its facilitation of free market commerce. As a meal, the herring was associated with hunger and scarcity rather than considered a rare feast. Thus in praising Great Yarmouth and the red herring for their bounty, Nashe may be parodying specific public rhetorics used to promote the benefits to the commonwealth of Great Yarmouth, the herring trade, and fish days. Such a parody signals that he has not been taken in by these styles and modes of writing whose self-promoting conventions are transparent, and he invites the reader to deride them along with him. Nashe draws both Great Yarmouth's boastful claims to special status and the foisting of fish days upon the populace as a patriotic duty in exaggerated colors to show them up as fatuous and venal. If *Lenten Stuffe* is a critique of the market rather than a celebration of it, then we have reasons to think that the dominant reading of this work is not right. If the dominant reading of *Lenten Stuffe* is wrong, this would cast doubt on the assumption that Nashe preferred a literary marketplace over the traditional patronage economy.

Chapter 4

Nashe's Fish: Misogyny, Romance, and the Ocean in *Lenten Stuffle*

Steve Mentz

But who doth not know that the poore Hollanders, chiefly by fishing, at a great charge and labour in all weathers in the open Sea, are made a people so hardy, and industrious? And by venting this poore commodity...are made so mighty, strong and rich, as no State but Venice, of twice their magnitude, is so well furnished with so many faire Cities...

John Smith, *A Description of New England* (1616)¹

The past twenty years of early modern literary studies has solidified an image of Thomas Nashe as perhaps the most relentlessly urban writer of the late Elizabethan generation. An expanding body of criticism about Nashe, including the current volume, testifies to an increasing fascination with this peculiar author. In many cases, Nashe appears quintessentially urban. Influential studies, such as Lorna Hutson's analysis of the contradictory meanings of "profit" in Nashe's historical context, Alexandra Halasz's enmeshment of his output within print culture, and Georgia Brown's diagnosis of his place in the heady decadence of the 1590s, all place him at the center of the expanding culture of early modern London.² Critics have also recognized, as Philip Schwyzer points out, that Nashe's supreme creative principle was "innovation," and that in a ten-year, roughly ten-book, career he never repeated a generic form.³ The dominant shared critical

¹ John Smith, *A Description of New England* (London: Robert Clerke, 1616) 11. Further citations in the text. Smith's text also appears as Part 6 of his *General History of Virginia* (1624). Smith's celebration of English fishing appeared after Nashe's death.

² Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Georgia Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³ See Philip Schwyzer, "Summer Fruit and Autumn Leaves: Thomas Nashe in 1593," *English Literary Renaissance* 23 (1994) 583–619, 585. Depending on whether we give Nashe credit for *An Almond for a Parrot* and whether short texts like *The Choice of Valentines* and *Isle of Dogs* count as "books," Nashe seems to have published between nine and thirteen volumes between 1589 and 1599, plus prefaces to other volumes and doubtless much lost material.

framework for this author links his prodigious output to the thriving, dirty, vibrant streets of early modern London. I do not really want to challenge this consensus, to which I have recently added.⁴ This city-centered model, however, works least well to explain Nashe's last work, *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), which constructs out of the herring fishery of Great Yarmouth an alternative to Nashe's career-long struggle with romance narratives and a newly maritime vision of productive labor. Reconsidering *Lenten Stuffe* in an oceanic context suggests that Nashe's literary vision also reached outside the labyrinthine alleyways of the early modern city, in ways that tantalizingly anticipate larger historical trends in English literary culture.

It is difficult to speak decisively about this richly ironic and polyvocal text, but *Lenten Stuffe* at least entertains the possibility that Nashe might have discovered, or imagined discovering, a route out of the urban underworld. The narrative leaves London for Great Yarmouth, and it also reconsiders Nashe's generic allegiances. The dense and allusive text, contains, among other things, a conclusive reconstruction of the feminized romance plot that had been dogging Nashe since his Cambridge days. Tromping around his natal grounds on England's easternmost coast, detailing the topography and economy of Yarmouth in loving detail, Nashe stumbles upon a newly-imagined ocean-world of abundant and valuable herring. These fish provide, as critics have noted, another occasion for the writer's bravura wordplay.⁵ In addition to being Nashe's last subject for rhetorical *copia*, however, the red herring also helps Nashe imagine what John Smith, whose propaganda for the North Atlantic fishing industry provides this essay's epigraphs, would later claim that fishing provided the Dutch: a limitless extra-urban economy that extracts value from empty space and builds "faire Cities" out of a "poor commodity." *Lenten Stuffe* anticipates, on an imaginative level, the transoceanic plans of seventeenth-century colonizers such as Smith. In Smith's historical imagination, fishing creates empire, building "strong and rich" cities from empty oceans. I do not suggest that Nashe was tempted to turn fisherman himself, nor even that he fully shared the maritime boosterism of Smith or of Nashe's closer contemporary Richard Hakluyt.⁶ Instead I suggest that *Lenten Stuffe* creates out of Yarmouth's proximity to the ocean a fantasy of escaping the urban and romance economies that dominate Nashe's career. Nashe's fish represent a final literary transformation for this restless writer and also a way of connecting this intriguing

⁴ See my article, "Jack and the City: *The Unfortunate Traveler*, History, and Tudor London," *The Blackwell Companion to Tudor Literature*, Kent Cartwright, ed., (Chichester: Blackwell, 2010) 489–503.

⁵ Lewis, interestingly, calls *Lenten Stuffe* "one of his best works," in part because he seems relieved to have a solid geographic location: "The description of Yarmouth is a real relief after the somewhat feverish unsubstantiality of his other pamphlets" (C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*, [Oxford, Clarendon, 1954] 415).

⁶ For an alternative reading of *Lenten Stuffe* that emphasizes Nashe's critique of Yarmouth's economic system, see Jennifer Andersen's contribution to this volume.

1590s figure to longer-term trends in English literature and culture. Like England more generally, Nashe seems to intuit that the future lies at sea.

My argument builds on two distinct features of *Lenten Stuffe*: its satiric attack on late Elizabethan romance narratives, and its persistent recourse to the transfiguring power of the symbolic and real economies of herring. The economic and maritime subtexts of Nashe's text have already attracted productive critical attention in the early twenty-first century. Henry Turner reads *Lenten Stuffe* as exposing the "epistemologies of the commodity" that run throughout Nashe's works, which in turn unveils the pervasive role of symbolic exchange in this text and Nashe's career.⁷ Turner sees Nashe's herring as both "an index of absolute particularity" and "a general form of value," and this combination enables Yarmouth's fishy economy to critique the prevailing logic of economic exchange in early modern England.⁸ Even more recently, Matthew Day connects Nashe through Gabriel Harvey to Hakluyt in order to contrast Nashe's corrosive individualism and Hakluyt's corporate nationalism.⁹ Day also notes, without quite following up on his own suggestion, that Nashe and Hakluyt are oddly compatible writers. Both the urban pamphleteer and the compiler of maritime histories register the allure of maritime expansion: the ocean provides radically open vistas, spacious enough for Hakluyt's mercantile imperialism and Nashe's ironic self-aggrandizement. This nonhuman space opens up new vistas for formerly land-bound literary forms.

Alongside the dominant strains of Nashe's urbanism and individualism, the herring grounds of the North Sea seem out of place. As John Smith's colonialist claims suggest, however, fishing provided a humble but powerful economic engine for early modern maritime nations, particularly the English and the Dutch.¹⁰ Nashe, I suggest, saw in Yarmouth's oceanic world an economy of abundance that contrasted with the stark competitiveness of his urban milieu. The ocean, which has served in Western literature as a metaphor for vastness and instability since Homer, becomes in Nashe's prose a "universall unbounded empery of surges."¹¹ All four terms of this typically exuberant Nashean coinage help define the author's particular maritime vision: the ocean is "universall" in

⁷ Henry Turner, "Nashe's Red Herring: Epistemologies of the Commodity in 'Lenten Stuffe' (1599)," *ELH* 68:3 (Fall 2001) 529–561.

⁸ See Turner, "Nashe's Red Herring," esp. 543–4.

⁹ Matthew Day, "Hakluyt, Harvey, Nashe: The Material Text and Early Modern Nationalism," *Studies in Philology* 104:4 (Summer 2007) 281–305.

¹⁰ On the English North Sea herring fishery and its repeated conflict with the Dutch, see Arthur M. Samuel, *The Herring: Its Effect on the History of Britain* (London: J. Murray, 1918); James T. Jenkins, *The Herring and the Herring Fisheries* (London: P. S. King, 1927); and Neville John Williams, *The Maritime Trade of the East Anglian Ports* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). John Smith's propaganda celebrates the fishing grounds of the North Atlantic, which would become central to the New England colonies.

¹¹ Thomas Nashe, *Lenten Stuffe, The Works of Thomas Nashe*, R.B. McKerrow, ed., Five vols., (Oxford: OUP 1966) 3:157. Further citations in the text.

its vast topography; “unbounded” in that it (unlike a city) has no walls; and it generates a wide “emperey” for both Nashe and proto-imperialists like Hakluyt. Finally, the sea’s “surges,” its ceaseless motion, underline its symbolic resonance. The waters are always surging, always becoming something other than what they seem. This uncontainable space generates the universally convertible herring fish, which, as Nashe encomiazies it, serves as co-creator of Elizabeth’s empire: “her Maiesties tributes and customes this Semper Augustus of the Seas finnie freeholders augmenteth & enlargest uncountably, and to the encrease of Nauigation for her seruice hee is no enemy” (180). These fish build empires, monarchies, and many other things besides. Schools of herring exceed Helen in launching ships (181). They initiate violence and international conflict: “to think on a red herring, such a hot stirring meat it is, is enough to make the cravenest dastard proclaim fire and sword against Spain” (191). They resemble Midas and Jupiter and even, cross-culturally, “the Ismael Persians Haly, or Mortus Ali” (193–5). The fish are, in Turner’s terms, ideal commodities, and they produce, in Day’s terms, non-imperialist economies. They are also symbols of Nashe’s desire to escape the fecund and fetid streets of London.

In the context of underwriting Nashe’s non-urban utopia, the most important two things that herring do are short-circuit the writer’s ambivalent relationship with feminized romance narratives, and then substitute a masculine but non-martial economy of productive labor. To unpack these claims, I will first touch briefly on Nashe’s troubled relationship with romance and femininity throughout his career. While this misogyny may not seem to distinguish Nashe very much among male Elizabethan writers, his conflicted position vis-à-vis symbolic femininity forms a through-thread in his varied career. Female or feminized figures shadowed Nashe’s literary career, from his earliest would-be patron, the Countess of Pembroke, to whom he wrote an epistle dedicatory to a pirated edition of her brother’s *Astrophil and Stella*, to his first collaborator, Robert Greene, in the prefatory matter to whose romance *Menaphon* Nashe made his debut in print. More directly than his peers Greene and Lodge, however, Nash consistently registers, or tries to register, his distance from these feminized romance-inflected models.¹² Arguably one central ambition of his printed books entails expunging the feminized disease of literary romance from the still-young medium of print authorship. Nashe often figures print as a masculine zone of intellectual struggle, as in his combat with Harvey. I have argued elsewhere that *The Unfortunate Traveler* is fundamentally a romance, albeit a “dishonest” one.¹³ Nashe’s misogyny measures his resistance to romance as a genre-and-gender category that he never fully escapes. In suggesting that *Lenten Stuffle* bring Nashe’s relationship with prose romance to a conclusion, I will examine the textual vignette in it that was, as far as we know, the last romance episode that Nashe wrote, the burlesque of Hero and Leander. Rather

¹² On Nashe’s ambivalent relationship with Greene, see Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early modern England*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

¹³ See *Romance for Sale*, 183–205.

than only seeing this passage as recapitulating Nashe's resentment of feminized aristocrats and their romances – the Countess of Pembroke, perhaps? – I shall show that it also imagines a new oceanic commonwealth, in which the abiding love between Hero-the-herring and the seas encircling Yarmouth creates a utopian collective alternative to urban individualism. Nashe's ocean was neither national, like Hakluyt's, nor a representation of poetic power, like Shakespeare's or Spenser's. Instead his red herring-filled seas imagine a perfect relationship between consumers and consumed, a circle of productivity that never exhausts itself. It is, as Charles Nicholl has suggested, a utopia of productive labor.¹⁴ In the inset romance's apotheosis, drowned Hero becomes the herring fish, so that fish-commodity and woman-audience are one. This hybrid herring fuels Nashe's ideal economy, his final attempt to rewrite the feminine romance plot as masculine (but non-elite) anti-romance.

Nashe's Misogyny

Herring, Cod, and Ling, is that triplicitie that makes their wealth & shipping multiplicities...

John Smith, *A Description of New England* (12)¹⁵

Nashe appears to have acquired his studied disdain for women during his undergraduate days. His first book, *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), which he probably wrote at Cambridge, contains a lengthy catalog of attacks on women, from lists of notorious classical figures like Lais, Media, and Scylla to citations of grave advice by Aristotle – “gette a little wife then a great, because always a little euill is better,” (1:11) – and Plutarch – “a reason why men faile so often in choosing of a good wife [is] because...the number of them is so small” (1:12). These examples, which extend for a half-dozen pages, are familiar enough, as is the connection Nashe draws between three Elizabethan bugbears, women, Catholicism, and medieval romance:

what els I pray you doe these bable bookemungers endeour, but to reaire the ruinous wals of *Venus* Court, to restore to the world that forgotten Legendary licence of lying, to imitate a fresh the fantastickall dreames of those exiled Abbie-lubbers, from whose idle pens proceeded those worne out impressions of the

¹⁴ Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe*, (London: Routledge, 1984) 260–1. Turner's Marxist reading also hinges on the herring's symbolic role as labor-produced value.

¹⁵ Smith, in this passage, sees fish as an endless fuel for national and mercantile expansion. Nashe, I suggest, views printed narrative as a comparable resource, but only if it can be purged of feminizing romance tendencies.

feyned no where acts, of Arthur of the round table, Arthur of litle Brittain...
with infinite others. (1:11)

All of Nashe's favorite targets are here combined: greedy booksellers, loose women, lying Catholics, and hackneyed stories. At the center of this dense cultural cliché sits femininity as a principle of cultural contagion: the only thing worse than women are men who write for women. Women seem to represent for Nashe uncontrolled circulation and multiplicity, against which the wealth-creating fish described by Smith serve as a purely economic counterpoint. Against female multiplicity Nashe discovers a male bounty of endless fish. To re-characterize multiplicity and abundance as positive qualities requires de-toxifying them in Nashe's literary imagination. That purification, ultimately, requires the herring of Yarmouth.

Much of Nashe's hostility to his fellow writers can be attributed to his imputing of feminized qualities to their work. The *Anatomy* includes an oblique attack against the "Homer of women" (1:12) which presumably refers to Robert Greene and his heroine-centered romances.¹⁶ Nashe's more pointed attacks charge a wide swathe of Elizabethan writers, including himself, with literary prostitution. He all but admits to being "newfangled and idle, and prostituting my Pen like Curtizan" (3:30).¹⁷ The figure of Diamante in *The Unfortunate Traveler* especially unfolds the connection between literary plotting and prostitution. Nashe's desperate search for a viable genre, from invective to satire to narrative to polemic, can be read as a series of attempts to escape from the feminized clutches of literary prostitution. In this context, *Lenten Stuffe* represents a radical departure, shifting both geographically, from London to Yarmouth,¹⁸ and generically, from satire to panegyric. His attacks in *The Anatomy of Absurdity* on writers who "blot many sheetes of paper in the blazing of Womens slender praises" (1:11) almost entails a condemnation of praise as such. When he turns, in his final book, to full-throated celebration of an unconventional sort, his shift requires explanation.

¹⁶ See *Romance for Sale*, 123–50.

¹⁷ I discuss this passage in regard to Diamante in *Romance for Sale*, 195–6, and with regard to Nashe's authorial persona more generally in "Day Labor: Thomas Nashe and the Practice of Prose in Early Modern England," *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, Naomi Leibler, ed., (London: Routledge, 2007) 18–32.

¹⁸ Despite its pan-European scope, *The Unfortunate Traveler* generally keeps its sights on urban London, as do wide-ranging works like *Christ's Teares Over Jerusalem and Terrors of the Night*. I do not claim that *Lenten Stuffe* ignores London – Yarmouth's appeal is understood by way of contrast – but it clearly represents a departure.

Nashe and Herring

[T]his is their Myne; and the Sea the source of those siluered streames of all their virtue...

John Smith, *A Description of New England* (11–12)¹⁹

While it does not seem that the modern sense of “red herring” as a diversion or attempt to mislead was part of the early modern lexicon,²⁰ Nashe’s interest in the fish was not linguistically innocent. The “Pickelhering” was a popular urban and bohemian clown figure on the German and Dutch stages, and this figure appears to have influenced the theatrical circles in which Nashe circulated.²¹ Robert Greene’s death after a banquet of “pickle herring and Rhenish wine” was notorious, and many of the observations of Greene’s death, including Thomas Dekker’s uncharitable punning depiction of the author’s last days, “shortend by keeping company with pickle herrings,” encompass both the social type and the preserved fish.²² In seeking the font of herring of Yarmouth’s coast, Nashe continues his ambivalent jousting with Greene’s herring-filled ghost as well as anticipating Smith’s celebration of fisheries of the North Atlantic. Transforming Greene’s deadly preserved fish into the living schools off Yarmouth substitutes a limitless economy of production for an urban bohemian author’s final feast.

Nashe’s defense of the red herring emphasizes his (and the fish’s) originality. “I am the first,” he crows, “that euer set quill to paper in prayse of any fish or fisherman” (224). He accentuates his novelty by contrasting his defense of fishing with Ovid’s and Plautus’s attacks on the sea, and also by relating an old tale about Homer drowning himself because he could not “expound” (224) the sea.²³ Having assailed humanist models, Nashe proceeds to align himself with Yarmouth’s fishing industry. He imagines that fishermen have profound depths. “Will this appease you,” he writes to them, “that are the predecessors of the apostles, who were poorer fishermen than you, that for your seeing wonders of the deep you may

¹⁹ This passage shows Smith treating fish as a source of mercantile value. Nashe, by contrast, imagines the herring as producing both cultural and economic worth.

²⁰ Turner finds no use of “red herring” in this sense before 1892.

²¹ See John Alexander, “The Dutch Connection: On the Social Origins of the Pickelhering,” *Neophilologus* 87 (2003) 597–604. Alexander explicitly suggests the type of the pickle herring was known to Greene, Nashe, Shakespeare and others.

²² See Alexander, “The Dutch Connection,” 600. Dekker’s description appears in *A Knight’s Conjuring*.

²³ The more familiar tale, which Nashe does not cite, describes Aristotle drowning himself in the straights of Euripus because he could not explain their irregular tidal motions. See, for example, Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Vulgar Errors* (London, 1646) 7:13. Montaigne and Robert Burton also mention this story. Nashe may have misremembered his sources, or perhaps wants to align his own project with the poet Homer rather than the philosopher Aristotle.

be the sons and heirs of the prophet Jonas, that you are all cavaliers and gentlemen because the king of fishes vouchsafed you for his subjects" (224–5). In addition to being Jonah's heirs, Yarmouth's fishermen resemble the maritime workers who "go down to the sea in ships" and find "wonders of the deep," in Psalm 107. These fishermen, ennobled by the herring's touch, comprise Nashe's new tribe. As he asks pages to defend his honor with their rapiers in the preface to *The Unfortunate Traveler*, he here asks that fishermen "let not your rusty swords sleep in their scabbards, but lash them out in my quarrel as hotly as if you were to cut cables or hew the mainmast overboard, when you hear me mangled and torn in men's mouths about this playing with a shuttlecock or tossing empty bladders in the air" (225). Fishing and fishermen have replaced pages as the constituents of Nashe's ideal community, but while the symbolic value of Jack Wilton's profession seems straightforward – the King of Pages represents the pages of a book – the herring's metaphoric thrust opens outward to a new watery world.²⁴

Nashe always relishes the challenge of ever-inflationary rhetoric, and his final salvo in praise of red herring captures the movement of his style:

The puissant red herring, the golden Hesperides red herring, the Meonian red herring, the red herring of Red Herrings Hall, every pregnant particular of whose resplendent laud and honor to delineate and adumbrate to the ample life were a work that would drink dry fourscore and eighteen Castalian fountains of eloquence, consume another Athens of fecundity, and abate the haughtiest poetical fury twixt this and the burning zone and the tropic of Cancer. (226)

This sentence moves its fish around, from the Hesperides to Meonia to Athens, but the focus remains on "every pregnant particular" which may be "delineate[d]" and "adumbrate[d]" but never fixed. The red herring is never static; its oceanic flux and motion always exceed the author's descriptive powers. Even as Nashe spends "the whole bag of my wind in climbing up to the lofty crest of [the herring's] trophies" (226), the paradoxical herring eludes his grasp. Finally he relies on political geography to close his case: "But no more wind will I spend on it but this: Saint Denis for France, Saint James for Spain, Saint Patrick for Ireland, Saint George for England, and the red herring for Yarmouth" (226). By raising this local industry to semi-national status and sanctifying the humble fast-day fish, Nashe simultaneously gives over his rhetoric and exaggerates it. Herring power Nashe's final imagined community. These products of the sea, fed "only by the [ocean's] water...and naught else" (223), fill his pages and transfigure his writing.

The most famous passage in *Lenten Stuffe*, the burlesque of Hero and Leander, juxtaposes Nashe's newfound fishy interests with his ambivalent classicism, his misogyny, and his abiding fascination with late Elizabethan literary culture. He

²⁴ For an influential reading of Jack Wilton as a figure for Nashe's aggressive model of authorship, see Margaret Ferguson, "Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveler*: The 'Newes of the Maker' Game" *English Literary History* 11 (1981) 165–82.

introduces this story with a glance toward “divine Musaeus...and a diviner muse than him, Kit Marlowe” (195), and he retells the old tale as a rollicking spoof. Leander opts “to play the didopper and ducking water spaniel to swim to [Hero], nor that in the day, but by owle-light” (195), and Hero rewards him by disdaining chastity: “Were hee neuer so naked when he came to her...she found a meanes to couer him in her bed, &, for he might not take cold after his swimming, she lay close by him, to keep him warm” (196). This portrait of welcoming female sexuality is familiar from Diamante in *The Unfortunate Traveler* and Frances in *The Choice of Valentines*, and on a basic level the passage simply extends Nashe’s frequent parodic tilts at exemplary female virtue. But when the Hellespont claims both lovers, Nashe’s writing turns more drastically toward the ocean. Drowning in sea water means encountering nature’s full immensity and hostility. In this episode’s portrait of the element from which Yarmouth extracts its mercantile living, Nashe suggests that the ocean shatters the aristocratic fantasies that subtend the Hero and Leander story, and also that the sea then converts these two symbolic figures into herring and ling, staples of the North Atlantic fishery. Out of classical and elite fictions, Nashe’s ocean breeds fish.

Leander, first to drown, sinks into a punning sea of ironic wordplay that identifies the marine element as a poetic and stylistic challenge for the author.²⁵ The ocean that kills him is unstable and untrustworthy:

the churlish frampold waues gaue him his belly full of fish-broath, ere out of their laundry or washe-house they woulde graunt him his coquest or transire, and not onely that, but they sealed him his quietus est for curcuetting any more to the mayden tower, and tossed his dead carcasse, well bathed or parboiled, to the sandy threshold of his leman or orange, for a disiune or morning breakfast (197).

The pun in “leman or orange” typifies Nashe’s leveling style, his consistent cross-contamination of tones and discourses. The ocean itself, in this passage, is both dominant actor and variegated figure, “churlish” and full of fish, bathing and par-boiling Leander’s body, providing Hero with breakfast and tragedy. Like Shakespeare’s “never-surfeited sea” (*The Tempest*, 3.3) and “hungry ocean” (Sonnet 64), this watery world shifts too quickly to be safe for human habitation.²⁶ Hero, seeing “her loue, sodden to haddocks meate” (197), runs frantic, drowns herself, and creates “work for Musaus and Kit Marlow” (198). Nothing but poetry can respond to the sea.

The lovers’ transformation into fish seems a natural part of the Ovidian metamorphic frame, but unlike so many of Ovid’s couples – Ceyx and Alcyone,

²⁵ We might compare similar moments of uncertain tone in *The Unfortunate Traveler*, when Heraclide’s suicide gets followed by a joke, and when Nashe seems to be laughing at an old woman dying of the sweating sickness. See *Romance for Sale*, 190–1, 199–200.

²⁶ On Shakespeare’s salt-water poetics, see Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009).

transformed into kingfishers, provide an appropriately watery example²⁷ – Nashe’s pair is not united in death. Leander heads “to the unquiet cold coast of Iseland, where halfe the yeare is nothing but murke night, and to that fish translated him which of us in termed Ling” (199). Here the lover becomes meat for John Smith’s New England settlers. Hero, however, stays close to English shores and becomes the mother of all herring: the gods “footebald their heades together, & protested to make the stem of her loynes of all fishes the flanting Fabian or Palmerine of England, which is Cadwallader Herring” (200). These two fish, the inshore herring and offshore ling, represent arguably the two most important fisheries in the early modern North Atlantic. Nashe’s love for herring thus refigures Leander’s doomed love for Hero; the classical romance of doomed love becomes an experimental epic of national and individual expansion. Now that the heroine is a fish, her love no longer threatens men: “Louing Hero, how euer altered, had a smack of loue still, & therefore to the coast of louing-land (to Yarmouth neere adioyning, & within her liberties of Kirtley roade) she accustomed to come in pilgrimage euery yeare” (200). The sustained, lasting love story that Nashe’s writings seldom or never tell – the marriage between Diamante and Jack Wilton may have a future, but it is precisely that future that Nashe refuses to describe – appears here as a love between fish and city, between sea and land, and between vagabond writer and expansive new subject.

The herring into which Hero has been transformed thus represents an escape from many aspects of the London literary scene against which Nashe had been struggling throughout the 1590s. Hero’s story is a faux-romance without the social and public triumph of the heroine that serves as the mainstay for the prose romances of Greene and Lodge, their classical avatars Heliodorus and Longus, and dramatic comedies and romances built on this narrative model such as *As You Like It* and *The Winter’s Tale*. The fishy world of Yarmouth is an anti-romance space in its frankly mercantile, non-aristocratic, and labor-intensive qualities, but it retains romance’s utopian optimism. Nashe, who so often wrote about the technical labor of making books, found in Yarmouth’s fishermen an analogous practice of non-elite but skilled labor. Their world may not quite be entirely male, though relatively few women went openly to sea in the sixteenth century, but maritime labor was and would continue to serve as a badge of non-elite masculine identity in English culture.²⁸ We know nothing of Nashe’s death, including its date, though he seems to have been dead by 1601, and it seems unlikely that so restless a writer could have settled outside London. But his intensely imagined vision of Yarmouth’s herring fishery may help us reconsider the changing shapes of his literary career.

²⁷ See *Metamorphoses* 11.

²⁸ Much later, we might recall Conrad’s Marlow solemnly describing “the bond of the sea” in *Heart of Darkness* (1900).

An Oceanic Nashe?

[T]he Saluages compare [the fish's] store in the Sea, to the haire of their heads: and surely there are an incredible abundance upon this Coast.

John Smith, *A Description of New England* (17)²⁹

Nashe's diverse works hold special appeal for early twenty-first century critics. This author has since the 1970s been held up as a precursor of modern ideas about authorship and literary culture; he has been read as a journalist, a satirist, a postmodernist, an Elizabethan anti-humanist, and a radical individualist.³⁰ Recent studies by Turner and Day have imagined Nashe as proto-Marxist or anti-imperialist. In adding oceanic concerns to the mix, I do not only want to extend our already long list of this author's concerns and fascinations. I also suggest that Nashe's tantalizing oceanic turn aligns his literary output with a broader cultural trend, in which early modern England and its colonies came to construct a transoceanic English identity after the turn of the seventeenth century. Just as Smith's writings about New England in the early seventeenth century anticipate mid-century settlements in Massachusetts, Virginia, and elsewhere, so Nashe's enigmatic final turn to the ocean suggests a direction that would become central to expanding English literary culture. Full-throated explorations of the sea as "England's national chemical" (Pound), or of England as a place where "men and the sea interpenetrate, so to speak" (Conrad), would not appear for some time.³¹ But Nashe's salty wanderings through Great Yarmouth suggest that the tropes and habits that modernist writers would use to connect English literature to the sea have early modern roots.

²⁹ This vision of abundance represents colonial possibility for Smith, but for Nashe the endless fecundity of the sea also represents a cultural fantasy of infinite expression.

³⁰ For a survey of the "Nashe problem," see *Romance for Sale*, 185–6.

³¹ Pound's remarks appear in relation to his controversial translation of "The Seafarer," and Conrad's in the first sentence of the story, "Youth."

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SECTION 2

Mediating Bodies

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Chapter 5

Reproducing Paper Monsters in Thomas Nashe

Melissa Hull Geil

Thomas Nashe made his literary reputation initially by writing prefaces to others' works, offering his hand in pamphlet battles, and parrying wits with fellow writers for the amusement of the reading public. Much has been made of Nashe's contributions to our understanding of the printed word and its relation to authorship. Jonathan Crewe offers the following succinct assessment regarding Nashe's work, "its 'whole point' lies in its exploitation of, and bondage to, the emergent technology of printing."¹ As an author, Nashe is self-conscious and aware of the ramifications of what it means to create an authorial identity based on newness – of medium, genre, and language – and he uses his acumen to create an identity for himself in an emerging literary scene, while attacking those who would criticize him and/or attempt to forge a career in a similar manner.

One of the ways in which Nashe fashions himself as an author draws upon the well-worn metaphor of textual reproduction: the printed book is the progeny of the author, whose authorial persona is, in turn, embodied by their own works.² Critical

¹ Jonathan Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 70.

² "From ancient times," Margreta de Grazia writes, "reproductive mechanisms, particularly the signet and wax, have provided a model for reproductive bodies and minds – for the conception and generation of ideas and children" ("Imprints: Shakespeare, Gutenberg and Descartes" in *Alternative Shakespeares Volume 2*, ed. Terence Hawkes [London and New York: Routledge, 1996], 90). Other works that have theorized the relationship between textual and sexual reproduction are Stephen Guy-Bray, *Against Reproduction: Where Renaissance Texts Come From* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Elizabeth Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992); Julie Sanders, "Midwifery and the New Science in the Seventeenth Century: Language, Print, and the Theatre," in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies, and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan Wiseman, eds. (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1999), 74–90; Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA and London, 1993); Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee, eds., *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity to Early Modern Europe* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001); Jennifer Wynne Hellwarth, *The Reproductive Unconscious in Medieval and Early Modern England* (New York and London: Routledge,

studies exploring Nashe and the connection between authorship and embodiment attend primarily to *The Unfortunate Traveller*.³ While I draw upon previous Nashe scholarship regarding the nature of authorship and the print marketplace, I focus on Nashe's pamphlet and prefatory writing to generate a reading of Nashe as author that registers a significant reconfiguration of the reproduction metaphor. Pamphlets and prefaces, often hastily produced with the intent of immediate print publication, are the means through which Nashe establishes his presence as a writer and, as such, provide insight into Nashe's authorial persona.

The writers of polemic pamphlets in the 1590s, including Nashe, utilize the reproductive metaphor extensively to depict the "birth" of their own texts as well as those of their rivals. Authors of the period, both in their printed and manuscript works, often depict their textual progeny as troublesome: the texts are orphans, they are deformed children, and they are monstrous offspring.⁴ Nashe refers to his own work, *Pierce Penilesse*, as a "paper monster" when describing how it was "begotten."⁵ While manuscript authors of the period do refer to their own textual progeny as monstrous, representations of monstrous birth proliferated in early modern printed works, as seen in the case of the Marprelate tracts. The association of print and monstrous birth can be seen throughout the Martinist and anti-Martinist texts, and Thomas Nashe's contribution to the pamphlet war both illustrates this connection and establishes a precedent for his employment of the monstrous birth trope in his later works.

2002); Elizabeth Spiller, "Poetic Parthenogenesis and Spenser's Idea of Creation in *The Faerie Queene*," *SEL* 40 (2000), 63–79; Douglas Brooks, ed., *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, (London and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). For more on the concept of "embodied writing," see Douglas Bruster's "The Structural Transformation of Print," in *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: the Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, Arthur Marotti and Michael Bristol, eds. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 49–89.

³ These studies include the following: Wendy Hyman, "Authorial Self-Consciousness in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *SEL* 45.1 (Winter, 2005), Mihoko Suzuki, "'Signiorie ouer the Pages': The Crisis of Authority in Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *Studies in Philology* 81.3 (Summer, 1984): 348–71; Constance Relihan, "Rhetoric, Gender, and Audience Construction in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*," in *Framing Elizabethan Fictions: Contemporary Approaches to Early Modern Narrative Prose*, Constance Relihan, ed. (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 141–52; Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, for example, describes *Arcadia* as a child he is "loth to father," cites the text's deformities, and expresses concern that it should prove a monster (*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans [London and New York: Penguin Books, 1977], 57).

⁵ Thomas Nashe, "Pierce Peniless," in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., Ronald B. McKerrow, ed. (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1904–1910): 1.161. Subsequent references to will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically within the text.

The way in which Nashe employs the metaphor of monstrous reproduction to refer to authorship in his writing illustrates a salient and relevant connection between authorial identity, print culture, and early modern understandings of the reproductive body. In the case of Thomas Nashe, the potentially monstrous nature of his textual offspring and those of his contemporaries creates a model of authorship that is volatile and uneasy, providing an unstable system of identification between author and text. We can see Nashe rendering varied versions of himself and his contemporaries as authors in his initial forays in the literary marketplace: in the prefaces of others and in the pamphlet wars begun as the Marprelate controversy.

What it means to give birth to a printed book in the early modern period relies necessarily on an understanding of what it means to give birth during the same time. As advances were made in both means of textual distribution and reproductive technology, the words used to describe these changes remained strikingly similar, although the meaning shifted. As Laura C. Stevenson remarks, “in times of social and economic change ... men frequently find themselves describing observations in the present in the rhetoric of the past ... strain[ing] their rhetorical concepts to the snapping point.”⁶ In looking at Nashe’s employment of the metaphor of reproduction to refer to textual production at the early stages of the commercial print phenomenon, we gain insight into the reconfiguration of this metaphor and its relevance to early modern authorial presentation.

For Nashe and his contemporaries, the instability of the representation of the reproductive body and its offspring necessarily destabilizes the vehicle of authorial production as reproduction. Print authorship as seen through the reproductive metaphor adds additional volatility and anxiety to an already fraught relationship between author and text. Thomas Nashe’s work, in particular, offers insight into the development of authorial identity through a metaphor whose tenor is being altered by the same emerging print culture that early modern authors such as Nashe are attempting to negotiate. Thus, in advance of discussing Thomas Nashe’s construction of himself as an author, we will look briefly at the history of early modern printed midwifery manuals in order to better apprehend the shift in both the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor of reproductive authorship.

Reproducing the Monstrous in Printed Early Modern Midwifery Manuals

The first printed midwifery manual in English, *The Byrth of Mankynde*, Thomas Raynalde’s 1540 translation of *De Partu Hominis*⁷, describes an account of

⁶ Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁷ *De Partu Hominis* is itself a translation of Eucharius Roesslin’s *Rosengarten*, which first appeared in print in Germany in 1513 went through at least one hundred editions, according to Charles Gordon’s “‘*The Byrth of Mankynde*’: The 1540 Edition.” *The American Journal of Surgery* XIII.1 (July 1931): 118–28. For more information on

conjoined twins as a monstrous birth. The text reads, “if the woman have two children at once, other else that it with the which she laboureth be a *monster*, as for example, it hath but one body and two heads, as appeareth in the xvii of the birth figures, such as of late was seen in the dominion of Werdenbergh.”⁸ The illustrations (such as the one accompanying the monster of Werdenbergh) of the birth presentations are not an invention of the printed midwifery manual. Illustrations of fetuses in the womb are a feature of women’s gynecological manuscripts, and sets of birth presentations that include multiple births date back to at least the ninth century.⁹ While these manuscripts provide advice on “unnatural” or “unkindly” presentations in the womb, however, monstrous births, like the account of the births at Werdenbergh, seem to be a feature of the printed midwifery manual and are not gleaned from their obstetrical manuscript predecessors.¹⁰

The next midwifery manual published in English following *The Byrth of Mankynde* is Jacques Guillemeau’s *Child-Birth or, the Happy Deliverie of Women*, printed in London in 1612. The English version combined translations

the textual history of *Byrth of Mankynde*, see J.W. Ballantyne, “*The Byrth of Mankynde*: Its Authors and Editions,” *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire* (Oct. 1906, Sept. 1907, and Oct. 1907), 297–368; L. Chousand, *History and Bibliography of Anatomical Illustration*, trans. Mortimer Frank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917); Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982). Quotes will be taken from the 1560 edition.

⁸ *The Byrth of Mankynde*, 1560, fol. liiii, emphasis mine.

⁹ The Codex Bruxellensis, from the ninth century, contains several multiple birth presentations, including one which displays “nine well-developed, overweight homunculi bunched together at the mouth of the womb, ready to go out head first, while their two siblings squat patiently on either side, obviously resigned to a long wait” (Rowlands, 39). According to Rowlands, the birth figures are assumed to have been derived from Soranus’s *Gynecology* (39). For more information on birth presentation illustrations, see Karen Newman, *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996); E. Ingerslev, “Roesslin’s *Rosengarten*: Its Relation to the Past (the Muscio Manuscripts and Soranos), Particularly with Regard to the Podalic Version,” *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire* 15 (1909): 1–25; 73–92; and Peter Murray Jones, *Medieval Medical Miniatures* (London: The British Library, 1984), esp. 52–54. An example of a manuscript in the English vernacular containing birth presentations illustrations and instructions is British Library manuscript Sloane 2463 which, according to Rowlands, predates *The Byrth of Mankynde* by almost one hundred years (Rowlands, 39). Of the instructions regarding the birth presentations, Rowlands writes that they were “remarkable for their detail, and they appear to be the starting place in the vernacular for recommendations that are to be repeated not only in *The Byrth of Mankynde* but in more popular chapbooks, such as Aristotle’s *Masterpiece*” which “describes many of the fetal positions given in Sloane 2463 and offers similar advice on how to adjust the child in the womb.” The thing that distinguishes Sloane 2463 from either of these texts, however, is the absence of monstrous births.

¹⁰ Jones refers to “unnatural” birth presentations in his discussion of the Codex Bruxellensis and “unnatural” is also the term used in Sloane 2463. The “unkyndly” “coming forth of the child” is described in British Library MS. Sloane 3164, ff. 37b.

of Guillemeau's *De l'hereux accouchement des femmes* and *De la nourriture et gouvernement des enfants*, published in France several years earlier. During the sixty-seven years between the first publication of Raynalde's *The Byrth of Mankynde* and Guillemeau's work in English, substantial amounts of work had been printed on monsters, anatomical science, and also on midwifery. Numerous broadsides and ballads telling of monstrous births in England and abroad flooded the print market. These accounts also made their way into books of surgery and midwifery, and spawned a market for books on curious wonders of the natural world.¹¹ For example, French surgeon Ambroise Paré published an entire work devoted to monsters and prodigies, aptly titled *Des monstres et prodiges*, Jacob Rueff's 1573 *De Conceptu et Generations Hominis*, published in 1554 in Germany,¹² contains a chapter on monstrous births and imperfect children, and Pierre Boaistuau's 1560 *Histoire Prodigieuses* focuses primarily on monsters, wonders, and prodigies.¹³

In their book *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park describe what they see as a rise in the documentation of monstrous births and prodigies beginning in the late fifteenth century.¹⁴ Kathryn Brammall, in her article about the polemical exigency of monstrous rhetoric in Tudor England, suggests that this trend continues through the sixteenth century, citing evidence that the 1550s and 1560s produced more accounts of monstrous births than earlier in the century.¹⁵ And while these increases in monstrous birth accounts can be and are linked to causes such as the Reformation, political use-value, and social interest in curiosities, a major factor in this surge of interest is the fact that these accounts became more widely available through print technology.¹⁶ Daston and Park

¹¹ For more information on the ballads and broadsides, see Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1993); Kathryn Brammall, "Monstrous Metamorphosis: Nature, Morality, and the Rhetoric of Monstrosity in Tudor England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27. 1 (Spring, 1996); and Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹² Published in England in 1637 as *The Expert Midwife*.

¹³ Paré's work on monsters and prodigies appears in English in 1634 in *The Workes of that famous Chirurgeon Ambrose Parey*.

¹⁴ Daston, Lorraine and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 177–78.

¹⁵ Brammall, 8.

¹⁶ Regarding the Reformation, see Daston and Park, esp. 192; Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1993); William E. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, politics and providence in England 1657–1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Jerome Friedman, *The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies: Miracles and the Pulp Press during the English Revolution* (London: University College London Press, 1993); Tessa Watt, esp. 152–54; Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). Regarding

corroborate this claim, writing “[t]his multiplication of monsters sprang at least in part from the new technology of printing, which greatly facilitated the spread of news through pamphlets and broadsides.”¹⁷ In their discussion of “monstrous bodies” and “and political monstrosities,” Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan Landes also remark that the “print revolution that characterized the early modern period” facilitated the “dissemination of the monstrous.”¹⁸ While attention has been paid to the accounts of monsters and monstrous births in broadside ballads and, to some extent, scientific studies of the seventeenth century, there has been little investigation of the proliferation of monstrous birth accounts as they appear in midwifery manuals.

The prevalence of monstrous birth accounts in printed midwifery manuals normalizes the lexicon of monstrosity, while simultaneously affecting a shift in what constitutes “normal” birth procedures and outcomes in the early modern period. By the time Nicholas Culpeper’s *A Directory for Midwives: or, A Guide for Women, in their Conception, Bearing, And Suckling their Children* appears in print in 1651, the recognition of the regularity and ordinary inclusion of monstrous birth accounts in various sources prompts Culpeper to include a caveat before he offers his own reading of these narratives in his section “Of Imperfect Children”:

Many are the Forms, which Authors have left to posterity, of monstrous Births; some altered in respect of Sects, as *Hermaphrodites*, in form as beastial; some

political use-value, see Brammall; Burns; Crawford; and Knoppers, Laura and Joan Landes, eds., *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). For social interest in curiosity and monstrous births, see Daston and Park; Findlen, Paula, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Bondeson, Jan, *A Cabinet of Medical Curiosities* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999); Benedict, Barbara, *Curiosity: A cultural history of early modern inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Daston and Park, 178. This idea is also stated by Norman Smith in his essay “Portentous Births and the Monstrous Imagination in Renaissance Culture,” in *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger, eds. (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Studies in Medieval Culture XLII, Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 273–83. Smith writes “The advent of print in the sixteenth century created a great need for sensational materials to be broadcast, and this need caused ideas that formerly had been lurking only in dark recesses of men’s minds to come floating to the surface” 280–81. While I disagree with Smith’s application here of Marshall McLuhan’s concept of “hypertrophy of the unconscious” to offer explanation for the appearance and popularity of monstrous birth accounts, I concur with his assumptions about the impact of the printing press on the proliferation of these examples.

¹⁸ See their edited collection *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe*, 9.

double-bodied, some maimed, and many others, which would do me no good to write, and you as little to read of.¹⁹

Culpeper then cites anonymous authors who offer various reasons for the causes of monstrous births and then offers his own take on what he perceives to be the “greatest cause” of monstrous birth: intercourse during menstruation.²⁰ Similarly, in *Aristotle’s Master-Piece: or, the Secrets of Generation*, the writer states “that many monstrous Births have happened, contrary to the course of Nature, is evident, not only in this, but in former Ages; wherefore I shall take some pains, for the satisfaction of the Reader, to inquire into the cause of such preposterous Forms.”²¹ The tone used indicates that, in this age, the existence of monsters should be taken for granted. Moreover, the author acknowledges the reader’s expectation that information on monstrous births should be included specifically for their “satisfaction.”

In both Latin and the English vernacular, these accounts found their way into midwifery manuals, which resulted in the blurring of the boundaries between “normal” and aberrant reproductive processes. These accounts altered the format of the midwifery manual significantly, and by the time *Aristotle’s Masterpiece* appears, the midwifery manual’s focus has shifted towards a more popular and sensational format. Understanding how this shift in the portrayal of the reproductive body and the resulting offspring manifested in the early modern period offers insight as to what exactly early modern authors may be referring when they suggest they have given birth to metaphorical offspring.

Prefacing Thomas Nashe

The 1591 edition of Philip Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella* contains a preface, “Somewhat to reade for them that list,” written by Thomas Nashe (3.327). In this preface, Nashe laments Sidney’s death while simultaneously using the death to justify the need for offering Sidney’s work in print. He writes:

The Sunne, for a time, may maske his golden head in a cloud; yet, in the end, the thicke vaile doth vanish, and his embellished blandishment appeares. Long hath Astrophel (Englands Sunne) withheld the beames of his spirite from the common view of our darke sence, and night hath houered ouer the gardens of the nine Sisters, while *Ignis fatuus* and grosse fatty flames (such as commonly arise out of Dunhilles) haue tooke occasion, in the middest eclipse of his shining perfections, to wander a broad with a wispe of paper at their tailes

¹⁹ Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives* (London, 1651), 139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 140–141.

²¹ *Aristotle’s Master-Piece* (London, 1694), title page, 43.

like Hobgoblins, and leade men vp and downe in a circle of absurditie a whole weeke, and neuer know where they are. (3:330)

The absence of Sidney's work from print has left only the printed works of those Sidney himself condemns in his *Defense of Poesy*. Nashe dubs Astrophel "Englands Sunne," establishing the lover of the stars as the center around which England's literary scene revolves. In Sidney's absence, unworthy writers fill the literary marketplace like Hobgoblins with paper tails. Nashe's use of puns here – Astrophel as England's sun and son, idiots with paper tails producing paper tales – offers multiple versions of literary legacy and literary production. Without a son to produce literary progeny, creatures will reproduce out of dung. Thus, to appear in print is the only way to reproduce Astrophel and counter irresponsible and pervasive publications.

But what, according to Nashe, does it mean for an author to appear in print? Nashe's preface draws on established forms to lament Sidney's death and justify his subsequent appearance in print. Nashe also uses the image of the Phoenix, which was associated with Sidney, particularly in elegiac verse. But instead of addressing Sidney, Nashe hails Astrophel:

Deare *Astrophel*, that in the ashes of thy Loue liuest againe like the *Phoenix* ;
 ô might thy bodie (as thy name) liue againe likewise here amongst vs: but the
 earth, the mother of mortalitie, hath snacht thee too soone into her chilled colde
 armes, and will not let thee by any meanes be drawne from her deadly imbrace;
 and thy diuine Soule, carried on an Angels wings to heauen, is installed, in
Hermes place, sole *prolocutor* to the Gods. (3:331)

Nashe aligns Sidney with Astrophel, which is certainly not an unlikely or uncommon identification. Moreover, the invocation of the Phoenix as an image of rebirth is not in itself exceptionally notable in this instance. When Nashe layers these associations of Sidney, Astrophel, and the Phoenix, however, the body of Sidney and the textual body of Astrophel converge in the figure of the Phoenix: "ô, might thy bodie (as thy name) liue againe." Nashe conflates authorial and textual subject, and thus Sidney emerges in his print rebirth as simultaneously *author of* the text and *subject to* the text. Sidney's "body" cannot be resurrected as anything other than corpus. Sidney must be Astrophel in order to "liue." This concept – that an author must establish their identity in and through print – is similarly employed by Nashe to promulgate his own work.

Nashe suggests that the textual offspring of contemporaries fails to shine at all in comparison to England's Sunne, and thus offers his introduction as a means to criticize these writers. Lorna Hutson makes a similar case for the intended effect of Nashe's preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon*. Hutson writes,

The preface offered Nashe a pretext to conduct a spirited review of the state of English letters. Praising Greene for his adoption of an easy narrative style,

Nashe went on to deplore the degeneration in English letters from the promising early purity demonstrated by Elyot, More, and later Ascham to the contemporary state of stagnation in which authors appear to be mere retailers of classical and continental merchandise.²²

Towards the end of his preface to *Astrophel and Stella*, Nashe likens these hack writers to an “Asse” attempting to masquerade as a “great statesman in the beastes common-wealth.” The real danger, however, lies in the generation of texts by these authors. Rather than engaging in some form of controlled or monitored reproduction, these authors would populate the literary landscape with an unacceptable “breede of bookes.” Nashe writes,

Such is the golden age wherein we liue, and so replenisht with golden Asses of all sortes, that, if learning had lost it selfe in a groue of Genealogies, wee neede doe no more but sette an olde goose ouer halfe a dozen pottle pots (which are as it were the egges of inuention,) and wee shall haue such a breede of bookes within a little while after, as will fill all the world with the wilde fowle of good wits; I can tell you this is a harder thing then making golde of quicksiluer, and will trouble you more then the Morrall of Æsops Glow-worme hath troubled our English Apes, who, striuing to warme themselues with the flame of the Philosophers stone, haue spent all their wealth in buying bellowes to blow this false fyre. (3:332–333)

On the one hand, this “wilde fowle” of books depicts the reproduction of texts as something other than human reproduction. On the other hand, this representation *is* human reproduction, only the offspring is something other than human. The offspring, in print, is both human and nonhuman, identifiable by author and without parentage, and has potential yet to be delineated. Writers produce texts that are hastily bred and, once produced, range freely with only limited possibility for containment.

While Nashe expresses his concern regarding these “wilde fowle,” his own position as author offers some parallels to the writers he criticizes. Nashe demonstrates certain anxieties regarding the “proper texts” that should appear in print, but he states these concerns while “talking all this while in an other mans doore.” His recognition of Sidney’s legacy at once enables him to provide an example of the “proper” texts to appear in print while simultaneously offering a venue for Nashe to develop a position – at once precarious and precise – as an author in print. Offering a preface for a printed edition of a well-established manuscript author enables Nashe to critique others’ printed productions from an unassailable authorial vantage point. Sidney’s “unauthorized” work legitimates Nashe’s preface. Hutson correlates this idea in her discussion of the *Menaphon* preface, where she cites the contradictory nature of Nashe’s claims and intentions:

²² Hutson, 64–65.

“For all his critical independence in undertaking to write the preface to *Menaphon*, however, the Nashe who arrived in London from Cambridge in 1588 had fully intended to pursue a literary career under the auspices of patronage.”²³ Nashe’s use of an unauthorized printing of an already “legitimate” author to establish his credentials by debunking the work of his contemporaries illustrates the preface’s constellation of meaning. Positioning one’s self as a writer who pursues a career in print while simultaneously attempting to procure patronage suggests the at once careful yet impudent style of Nashe’s writing. This precarious position can be seen through Nashe’s engagement with the practice of textual reproduction in print: he advocates the practice, but expresses concern for the quality and quantity of the offspring. He then directly relates this anxiety to the state of English letters. Reproducing Sidney in print can be seen as an attempt to offset the corrupt and unregulated proliferation of the “wilde fowle.” The reproduction of Nashe as an author, followed by his own generation of textual offspring, however, encounters its own share of problems.

Nashe’s use of womb and reproductive imagery in the *Menaphon* preface highlights the problems faced by an author attempting to develop a career and a literary reputation in the 1590s. Nashe’s complex, repeated, and often paradoxical use of reproductive imagery demonstrates numerous ways in which the metaphor signifies during this time period. Through a study of the reproductive metaphors’ significations we are able to learn more about the construction of the author in print: how the author asserts agency, how the author categorizes himself in relation to a text. Moreover, we can use this metaphor to better understand the construction of the textual body, both as a printed page and as an embodiment of character. Reproduction of bodies, of texts, and authors collide, converge, and alter through their interaction with the printed page. Thomas Nashe, as an author who consciously yet conflictedly enters into this encounter, enables a wide-ranging examination of the monstrous implications of the reproductive metaphor’s encounter with print and print culture, as a brief look at a portion of the Marprelate tracts and Nashe’s own contributions to the anti-Martinist pamphlets attests.

“Hatcht of addle egges”: Pamphlet wars, mimesis, and monstrous literary production

The title page of the fifth Marprelate tract, *Theses Martinianae* (Martin Junior), issued on July 22, 1589, contains references to the lineage of the figure of Martin Marprelate. The author, Martin Junior, refers to the elder Marprelate character as the “reverend Martin Marprelate the Great,” and claims the work to include “certain

²³ Hutson, 67.

demonstrative conclusions set down and collected” by this Martin Senior.²⁴ Martin Junior describes his association with the work as follows:

Published and set forth as an after-birth of the noble Gentleman Himself by a pretty stripling of his, Martin Junior, and dedicated by him to his good neame and nuncka Master John Kankerbury: How the young man came by them, the Reader shall understand sufficiently in the Epilogue. In the meantime, whosoever can bring me acquainted with my father, I’ll be bound he shall not lose his labour.²⁵

The author’s reference to the work as an “after-birth” of Marprelate Senior, written by his “stripling,” suggests a complicated authorial relationship posited as both familial and parthenogenetic. The early tracts, written under the pseudonym Martin Marprelate, have generated both a textual and an authorial offspring. Martin Junior himself states the tract is written by two hands, and several sentence fragments within the publication suggest that it is incomplete and has multiple authors. In fact, as William Pierce writes, evidence of individuals connected with the Marprelate tracts – particularly Job Throkmorton and John Penry – are contingent “upon our interpretation of the incomplete sentences of this interim publication.”²⁶ Martin Senior serves as an amalgamation of those who participated in the writing and printing of the early tracts, and thus the authorial figure becomes distinct from any absolute category of author as defined by and connected to a physical and literal body. In creating an imaginary Martin Marprelate, the authors of the tracts solidify the correlation between author and text. Martin Marprelate does not exist outside of the text. Once this identification is in place, the textually authored author gives birth to another author, Martin Junior. In his article “The Structural Transformation of Print in Late Elizabethan England,” Douglas Bruster employs the term “embodied writing” to suggest a textual practice which increasingly places “resonant identities and physical forms on the printed page” during the 1590s.²⁷ Bruster discusses the ways in which individuals’ “social relations to the text” become transparent through the text itself, citing Thomas Nashe’s character “Vanderhulke” from *The Unfortunate Traveller* as an example of a thinly veiled caricature of Gabriel Harvey. Bruster discusses this phenomenon in terms of “the making of an author’s style into a thing (and naming of that thing after the author).” He continues:

²⁴ For more information on the authorship of *Martin Junior*, see William Pierce, *An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908) 187, 295–303.

²⁵ William Pierce, ed., *The Marprelate Tracts, 1588, 1589* (London: James Clarke, 1911), 299.

²⁶ Pierce, *Historical Introduction*, 295.

²⁷ Bruster, 50.

[T]he celebrity of authors, and the textual celebrity of characters who seemed to exist outside their works; the intensive familiarity of recent books and titles; these books' familiarity with bodies and identities: all suggest a personalization of print that changed what and how printed matter meant. Everywhere a new fluidity between person and thing characterized the relation between authors and books, between characters and persons, between readers and books.²⁸

The fluidity between persons and things, as described by Bruster, takes on even more significance when considered in the realm of reproduction and the generation of texts and authors. By enabling authors to be "things," namely, a personification of the work itself, the category of author accrues an alternate register of signification. The author, in the example of the Marprelate tracts, is subject to and the object of the text.

What does it mean for the category of authorship to become a fluid identity aligned with and inseparable from the text that the author generates? Specifically, the author, in generating the text, participates in a metaphorical self-generation. This self-generation, however, assumes legibility within an evolving print culture. Bruster claims there is a change in "what and how printed matter meant." And this change in the "what and the how" of printed matter renders authorial identity generated through the metaphors of reproduction as a category fraught with the repercussions of this new "fluidity." The unstable fluidity of authorial identity, reproduction, and printed "matter" in the 1590s is particularly evident in the anti-Martinist pamphlets written by Thomas Nashe and John Lyly on behalf of the church, and also in the subsequent pamphlet war between Nashe and Harvey.

Thomas Nashe's first contribution to the anti-Martinist campaign, *An Almond for a Parrat* (written in response to *The Protestation of Martin Marprelate*), in addition to performing its intended task – offering satiric invective against the Marprelate tracts in order to diminish their effectiveness – concerns itself with the theme of origins on several levels.²⁹ The information contained on the title page, that the text was "imprinted at a place, not farre from a place, by his Assignes of Signior Somebody, and are to be sold at his shoppe in Trouble-knaue Street," presents itself as a mockery of the printed pamphlets of the Marprelates, that were literally printed with moveable type by a moveable press by a fictitious author.³⁰ This mockery, however, takes the form of imitation: *Almond's* author remains anonymous – only identifying himself as Cutbert Curriknaue the yonger – as does the location of the printing.³¹ Archbishop Whitgift and Richard Bancroft's association with the anti-Martinist pamphlets remains obfuscated, although the pamphlet was not

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁹ Although there is no author stated on the title page, the work has been attributed to Nashe in critical history. For arguments for and against Nashe's authorship of the pamphlet, see McKerrow, 5:59–63.

³⁰ Nashe, *An Almond for a Parrat* (London, 1590), sig. A1.

³¹ Ibid., sig. F3v.

censored by the Archbishop. These texts thus voluntarily advertise themselves as without origin, as product of this moveable type. Considered in this manner, the only claim to origins that the anti-Martinist texts make is their connection to the Marprelate tracts themselves. Just as Martin Senior provided his “after-birth” for Martin Junior’s text, so does the Martinist work *The Protestation* germinate the seeds necessary for the writing of the *Almond’s* response. And despite the fact that the authors of the texts exist only through their connection to these texts, Nashe considers the dialogue itself in terms of an authorial body. Authorship, then, manifests itself through bodily metaphors, while remaining inexorably linked to the body of the text.

An Almond for a Parrat begins with a resurrection: “Welcome, Mayster Martin, from the dead, and much good ioy may you haue of your stage-like resurrection.”³² Martin Marprelate’s death, proclaimed by pamphlets including *Martin Junior*, becomes a fallacy in the wake of *The Protestation*, which claims to be written by Martin Marprelate. The title page indicates Marprelate’s investment in not bowing to the pressures of the prelates and the commitment of the Marprelate authors to continue publishing. The title page states this steadfastness:

The Protestatyon of Martin Marprelate. Wherein, notwithstanding the surprising of the Printer, he maketh it known unto the world, that he feareth neither Proud Priests, Anti-christian Pope, Tyrannous Prelate, nor Godless Catercap; but defieth all the race of them by these presents; and offereth conditionally, as is further expressed herein, by open disputation to appear in the defense of his cause, against them and theirs. Which challenge if they dare not maintain against him, then doth he also publish that he never meaneth, by the assistance of God, to leave the assailing of them and their generation until they be utterly extinguished out of our Church.³³

Marprelate not only staunchly defends his determination to continue to publish the abuses of the Church; he also states the end toward which the tracts serve as a means: to extinguish the corrupt prelates and their generation. *The Protestation* resurrects the persona of Martin Marprelate Senior with the intention of ending the generative capabilities of the corrupt prelates. This plan, however, seems to have failed, as *The Protestation* remains the last known Marprelate tract. Thus, if *The Protestation* is responsible for resurrecting Marprelate from the dead, *An Almond for a Parrat* and subsequent anti-Martinist tracts are culpable for keeping him alive. The use of the term stage-like is telling, as the tracts themselves excel in performance: they perform the birth, the death, and the re-birth of authorship, much like the figure of the Phoenix that is used to refer to Sidney. But these tracts take the metaphors of reproduction and resurrection a step further, as it is often the author himself performing these tasks.

³² Ibid., sig. B1.

³³ Pierce, *The Marprelate Tracts*, 393.

In the case of the anti-Martinist tracts, births, resurrections, and the gesture toward origins concern themselves directly with the status of the work as a text and with the connection of both the fictional and the presumed authors of the Marprelate tracts. The connection between the authorial body and text is a salient feature of the Marprelate controversy and the emphasis on birth and death occurs within these parameters. The conditional relationship of the author and text makes possible the claim that textual production itself gives birth to the author of the text. One of the ways in which this feature is demonstrated in the anti-Martinist pamphlets is in their representation of the births of the Marprelate authors.

Maria Prendergast writes of the “symbology of frequent and multiple births associated with the mechanics of print” as depicting displaced anxieties about “gender, class, and money,” with print as an “unstoppable production machine” producing a series of unnatural textual births without clear maternal or paternal origins.”³⁴ Print indeed enables reproduction to signify in new ways, and the mechanics of print renders the metaphors of reproduction to include an emphasis on unnatural, monstrous, and aberrant examples. And while Prendergast’s point about the unnatural births associated with print representing displaced anxieties is well taken, it is worth noting that these symbolologies also reflect anxieties about print itself, in addition to reflecting the uneasy status of the author, the authorial body, and authorial agency in print.

In *An Almond for a Parrot*, Nashe gives a fantastical biography of Martinist John Penry, which includes a description of his monstrous birth:

Neither was this monster of Cracouia unmarkt from his bastardisme to mischief: but as he was begotten in adultery and conceiued in the heate of lust, so was he brought into the world on a tempestuous daie, & borne in that houre when all planets wer opposite. Predestination yt foresaw how crooked he should proue in his waies, enioyned incest to spawne him splay-footed. Eternitie, that knew how aukward he shoulde looke to all honesty, consulted with Conception to make him squint-eied, & the deuill that discouered by the heauens disposition on his birth-day, how great a lim of his kingdom was comming into the world, prouided a rustie superficies wher-into wrapt him, as soone as euer he was separated from his mothers wombe: in euerie part whereof these words of blessing were most artificially engrauen, *Crine ruber; niger ore, breuis pede, lumine lustus*.³⁵

³⁴ Maria Prendergast, “Promiscuous Textualities: The Nashe-Harvey Controversy and the Unnatural Productions of Print,” in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas Brooks (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 173–196; 175.

³⁵ Nashe, *Almond*, sigs. E1v–E2. The Latin is from Martial’s Epigram 54, 1.12: *Rem magnam praestas, Zoile, si bonus es*. “Red-haired, black-faced, short-footed, boss-eyed, it’s a great achievement, Zoilus, if you’re a good fellow.” trans. D.R. Shackelton Bailey in *Martial: Epigrams*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 135.

Jonathan Crewe's discussion of this passage emphasizes the use of the "conventionalized figure of Evil incarnate," citing the biography to be a parody of a saint's life.³⁶ Another source for Nashe's description, however, would be the account of the Monster of Cracovia that appears in midwifery manuals, medical volumes, and books of wonder and curiosity, including Jacob Rueff's *De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis* (1554), Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoire Prodigieuses* (1560), and Ambroise Paré's *Des monstres et prodiges* (1573). The description of the monster, born in 1547 in Cracovia, is as follows:

a very strange monster was born, which lived three daies; his head did somewhat resemble the shape of a mans, but that his eyes flamed like fire; his Nose was long & hooked; and stood like the shin-bone of the legge, or trunk of an Elephant, in the joints of his members, near the shoulders, upon the elbows and the knees, there appeared dogs heads; his hands and feet were like unto the feet of a Goose; he had two eyes above his Navel; a tail behind like a beasts, having a hook at the end; in the sex he was a male.³⁷

The Monster of Cracovia was born this way, according to Rueff's *The Expert Midwife*, as evidence of "the detestable sin of Sodomy." Nashe solidifies his association of Penry with deformity through his use of a passage from one of Martial's epigrams, which indicates that his hair is red and his beard is black, one of his feet is shorter than the other, and his eye is distorted. Notably, Nashe remarks that the epigram has been "most artificially engraven" on Penry's exterior just after he was separated from his mother's womb, connecting the written description of Penry's birth with the birth itself. By engraving the Martial epigram on the body of the newly birthed monster, Nashe merges Penry's body with the texts he produces. Penry's monstrous birth, according to this reading, inextricably connects him with the monstrous and sodomical textual productions in which he engages. And while Nashe's obvious use of hyperbole and metaphor may seem to suggest that, as modern readers, we should not be taking this example too literally, the early modern reader would have been far more familiar with accounts of monstrous births from numerous broadsides and ballads. Thus, Nashe's use of the Monster of Cracovia contextualizes his description, as it draws from contemporary familiarity with an image in circulation, while deploying the repetition of this image as a means by which to establish credibility.

An Almond for a Parrat and other anti-Martinist works similarly cement their association of the Martinists with aberrant reproduction, monstrous births, and deformity through the process of repetition. John Lyly's *Pappe with an Hatchet* refers to the Martins as being "hatcht of addle egges" and describes Martin as "delivered by sedition, which pulls the monster with yron from the

³⁶ Crewe, 70.

³⁷ Jacob Rueff, *The Expert Midwife* (London, 1637), 157–58.

beastes bowells.”³⁸ *Martins Months Minde* states Martin is “proued a plaine Hermaphrodite.”³⁹ *A Countercuffe Given to Martin Junior* discusses the monstrous lineage of Martin and Martin Junior, which exploits further a connection between the bodily and the textual. The passage reads:

Valiant Martin, if euer the earth carried anie Gyants, as fabulous antiquitie hath auouched, which entred into wars and conspiracies against GOD, thy father Marprelat, was a whelpe of that race; who to reuiue the memory of his auncestors almost forgotten, hath broken into heauen with his blasphemies. If the Monster be deade, I meruaile not, for hee was but an error of Nature, not long liued: hatched in the heat of the sinnes of England, and sent into these peaceable Seas of ours, to play like a Dolphin before a tempest. The heads this Hydra lost in a famous place of late, where euery newe Bugge no sooner puts out his hornes, but is beaten downe.⁴⁰

Martin descends from Giants who conspired against God, and, as such, he is an error of nature, born – not unlike the monstrous births recorded in broadside ballads – as the offspring of sin. The source for Martin’s lineage here comes from “antiquitie,” which connects the monstrous nature of Martin and Martin’s pamphlets to classical sources. This is further solidified with the association of Martin with a Hydra, who continually produces new pamphlets just as a Hydra produces new heads if one is cut off. The Hydra that is the figure of Martin Marprelate, however, is being reproduced in this pamphlet through the author’s account of his birth, lineage, and progeny. If Martin’s body, as described in anti-Martinist texts, “exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation,” as Kristen Poole argues (here quoting Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*); if Martin’s depicts the “Bakhtinian grotesque body par excellence,” this body only copulates, generates, and dies through its textual body, generated through the printing of new pamphlets. The body accrues significance as a grotesque body, possessing features that merge corporeal, textual, and mythological in a palimpsest of meaning. Poole deploys Bakhtin further to describe the Martinist body as “the ever unfinished, ever creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other.”⁴¹ This

³⁸ *Pappe with an hatchet* (1589), sigs. B3, E. Although the pamphlet is anonymous, Lyly is considered to be the author, although McKerrow remains skeptical (5:50, 52).

³⁹ *Martins Month minde* (1589), sig. D3v.

⁴⁰ *A Countercuffe Given to Martin Junior* (1589), sig. A2. Although there is debate about whether Nashe wrote this pamphlet, McKerrow concludes that Nashe is not the author (5:42).

⁴¹ Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27–28.

statement could also easily apply to the Martinist and anti-Martinist pamphlets that spawn multiple, monstrous progeny through the medium of print. Indeed, Poole cites that “Martin Marprelate, by his own admission, is a source of endless reproduction; as his enemies claim, he ‘will spawne out [his] broyling brattes in euery towne to dwell.’”⁴²

The pamphlets themselves engage in a process of aberrant reproduction, having been printed without origin, with many errors, and unclear lineage. Following the above passage from *A Countercuffe Given to Martin Junior*, the author of the pamphlet compares the bolsterers of the pamphlets to “Bookes that are gilded & trimlie couered ...when they are opened, they are full of Tragedies, eyther Thyestes eating vppe the fleshe of his owne Children, or cursed Oedipus in bed with his owne Mother.”⁴³ The cannibalization of one’s own children and incestuous reproduction: while used to describe supporters of the Marprelate writers, this concept also portrays ways in which the anti-Martinist pamphlets themselves are produced. The writers, mimicking the style of the Marprelate authors, effectively reproduce Marprelate’s grotesque printed body.

The Marprelate pamphlets and their anti-Martinist counterparts reproduce monstrous, aberrant, and unnatural bodies – of authors, of texts, of characters – through two different yet related concepts. First, the uncensored beginning of the pamphlet controversy enabled the establishment of a new, unregulated genre that did not subscribe to certain conventions of manuscript and/or print culture. Thus, the textual bodies produced were themselves “new,” and exploited this newness to establish alternative depictions of textual production – of the pamphlets themselves and of the Protestant opposition – as aberrant and monstrous. Evelyn Tribble describes the Marprelate authors’ techniques as a process of parody, stating they parody “the conventions of the page, seemingly subverting them – as well as the normal codes governing discourse – in order to draw attention to the need for the reform of church government.”⁴⁴ The writers of the anti-Martinist pamphlets also engage in a process of parody, which leads to the second way in which monstrous, aberrant, and unnatural bodies are reproduced: repetition with a difference.

In Francis Bacon’s essay on the Marprelate controversy, *An Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England*, which was not published until 1640, he calls for “an end and surseance made of this immodest and deformed manner of writing lately entertained, whereby matter of Religion is handled in the style of the Stage.”⁴⁵ The performative aspects of the Marprelate tracts, having been mirrored in the anti-Martinist response, suggest that language, satire, and

⁴² Poole, 27.

⁴³ *Countercuffe*, sig. A4r.

⁴⁴ Tribble, Evelyn B., *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 102.

⁴⁵ Francis Bacon, *An Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England*. Quoted in Arber, *An Introductory Sketch to the Martin Marprelate Controversey, 1588–1590*, Francis Arber, ed. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), 146–68; 149.

invective take precedence over the religious matters to which the pamphlets claim to attend. Bacon's admonition thus understands, as Crewe explains, "the tendency of the satirist and satirized to collapse," causing Bacon to compel the censuring of the anti-Martinists, "for he finds 'these pamphlets as meet to be suppressed as the other.'" ⁴⁶ Another way of looking at Bacon's rebuke of the stage-like qualities of the pamphlets, however, exhibits his description of the anti-Martinist's "deformed manner of writing" not as repetition resulting in collapse, but repetition resulting in a style that can be recognized by its resemblance to the "original," but different enough to "perform" a parody that renders the "original" as grotesque, by virtue of calling attention to its own – and by extension the "original's" deformities.

The pamphlet controversy advocates the process of reproducing texts as a monstrous prospect through the two-step process of using the anxieties surrounding the medium of a relatively new print genre – the pamphlet – to emphasize the deformity of the church itself (in the case of the Martinists), and then performing another permutation of monstrous reproduction through the parody of this genre (in the case of the anti-Martinists). Monstrous reproduction, deformed texts, bastard births, and texts reproducing themselves: these are contributions made by the Marprelate pamphlet controversy to the formation of the reproductive body as the object of and subject to print culture.

Print, in fact, is what makes this grotesque, reproducing body possible, and also what provides us with a useful register by which we can understand how the monstrous body signifies. The language of reproduction undergoes shifts in terminology; for example, the introduction of new techniques or new practices (such as the presence of a physician or surgeon at a birth). Equally if not more important is the change in the technologies used to *represent* reproduction, namely printed midwifery and anatomical manuals. The language of reproduction, repackaged and represented in print, established this language in a new context. While ostensibly the biological processes involved in reproduction had not changed, the way in which they were constructed, depicted, and indeed treated, evolved significantly during the early modern period. ⁴⁷ As we have seen, midwifery manuals in print saw a gradual shift in content resulting in a concentrated increase in the attention paid to monstrous and abnormal births. In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century,

⁴⁶ Crewe, 121.

⁴⁷ In her book *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), Bette Talvacchia makes an argument about way in which examining the construction of past erotic and obscene culture enables new understandings of the modern self. She writes "sharing the biology of previous generations, we can look with interest to their construction of sexuality and gender roles, and to the part that the arts played in this" (xiii). Similarly, while we may "share the biology of previous generations," the nature of understanding of the reproductive process was culturally constructed and ever-evolving. As with Talvacchia's interrogation of erotic culture, an examination of reproductive culture must attend to the role of both art and science, and the media in which these things often intersect: the book.

midwifery manuals had more in common with books of curiosity and wonder than they had with their manuscript predecessors. Moreover, the proliferation of monstrous birth accounts in broadsides made them available to additional portions of the reading public. The connection between printed accounts of monstrous births and evolving embodiments of authorial personas, in addition to reflecting anxieties about print itself, also suggests a shifting understanding of the nature of the reproductive body.

Paper Monsters

One of the most salient examples of Nashe's alignment of his literary rivals with the monstrous nature of print is his lambasting of Gabriel Harvey in the 1594 *Have with You to Saffron Walden, or Gabriel Harveys Hunt is Up*, which depicts a satirical biography of Harvey's life. In one particularly curious passage, Nashe employs the concept of maternal impression (where the mother's imagination imprints images directly onto the child) to show how Harvey's mother's dreams are directly responsible for the monstrous birth of this pamphlet writer.

The story Nashe narrates of Harvey's birth is that his father thought that he would prove to be another "Saint Thomas a Beckett to the church," but his mother doubted that this would come to pass because of certain dreams that she had. Nashe writes:

For first shee dreamed her wombe was turned to such another hol-low vessel full of disquiet fiends as *Salomons* brazen Bowle, wherein were shut so manie thousands of diuils; which (deepe hidden vnder ground) long after the *Babilonians* (digging for metals) chaunced to light vpon, and, mistaking it for treasure, brake it ope verie greedily, when, as out of *Pandoras* Boxe of maladyes, which *Epimetheus* opened, all manners of euills flew into the world; so all manners of deuills then broke loose amongst humane kinde. Therein her drowsie diuination not much deceiue'd her; for neuer were *Empedocles* deuils so tost from the aire into the sea, & from the sea to the earth, and from the earth to the aire againe exhaled by the Sunne, or driu'n vp by winde & tempests, as his discontented pouertie (more disquiet than the Irish seas) hath driu'n him from one profession to another. (3:61)

In other words, Harvey's career choices, have, like these evils, been tossed on the air and spread all over the world. He trained for the clergy, then he "fell to morrall Epistling and Poetrie" and his topics of choice demonstrate further his dilettantish behavior. His mother's womb, the "*Pandoras* Boxe of maladyes" has, through her dreams, produced a devilish offspring that takes aim against Nashe as a part of the "huge Armada" of pamphlet tracts against him.

In Nashe's second account of Harvey's birth, Harvey's mother imagines she "was deliuered of a caliuier or hand-gun, which in the discharging burst. I pray

God, with all my heart, that this caliuier or caualier of poetry, this hand-gun or elder-gun, that shoots nothing but pellets of chewd paper, in the discharging burst not." In a different form of monstrous birth, Nashe links up the violent imagery of an exploding gun with the Harvey's writing of pamphlets. Harvey, who "shoots nothing but pellets of chewd paper," could potentially inflict violence upon himself in this shooting, as the gun in the dream "burst" when it was fired (3:62). The gun, bursting forth upon discharging, is not unlike the image of Harvey's mother's womb, which undergoes violence in each of the three dreams. The position of the reproducer, be it an author or a mother, in Nashe's estimation (lest we forget that he, too, could burst with the discharging of paper bullets) is one which is constantly in jeopardy, under assault, and subject to violence. The connections forged in this example, in addition to subjecting Harvey to the violent ramifications of his choosing to engage in pamphlet warfare, also indict Nashe as a reproducer of monstrous texts: a connection that he simultaneously exploits and from which, through his critiques of Harvey, he distances himself.

In the depiction of Harvey's mother's third dream, Nashe most clearly articulates his utilization of the connections between monstrous reproduction, print culture and authorship:

A third time in her sleep she apprehended and imagined that out of her belly there grew a rare garden bed, ouer-run with garish weedes innumerable, which had oneely one slip in it of herb-of-grace, not budding at the toppe neither, but, like the floure *Narcissus*, having flowres onely at the roote; whereby she augur'd and coniectur'd, how euer hee made some shew of grace in his youth, when he came to the top or heighth of his best prooffe he would bee found a barrain stalk without frute. At the same time (ouer and above) shee thought that, in stead of a boye (which she desired), she was deliuered and brought to bed of one of these kistrell birds called a wind-fucker. Whether it be verifiable or onely probably surmised, I am vncertaine; but constantly vp and downe it is bruted how he pist incke as soone as euer hee was borne, and that the first cloute he fowld was a sheete of paper, whence some mad wits giu'n to descant, euen as *Herodotus* held that the *Aethopians* seed of generation was as black as incke, so haply they vnhappyly wold conclude, an *Incubus* in the likenes of an inke-bottle had carnall copulation with his mother when hee was begotten. (3:62)

The offspring assumes two forms in this dream: a barren stalk and a bird whose only product is excrement in the form of ink. The assumption that is made within the context of the dream, however, is not that her imagination caused the birth of this bird, but that an "*Incubus* in the likenss of an inke-bottle" had carnal copulation with his mother. In a narrative that bases its construction on three examples of maternal imagination to satirize Harvey's personal and professional blights as some form of defect extant in the womb, Nashe shifts the focus on the monstrous to offer an explanation of a hybrid copulation between Harvey's mother and a demon. Harvey's mother's dreams in this scenario provide Nashe with explanations

for Harvey's entrance into print, his futile battles where he discharges wads of paper at fellow pamphlet writers like Nashe, and they offer up a comedic reason for why Harvey's literary "product" is little more than excrement. In her article "Living Images: Monstrosity and Representation," Marie-Hélène Huet proposes "the monstrous child might be said to reproduce its model without mediation. The maternal transmitted the Icon without leaving a trace. It simply allowed an imprint to be made."⁴⁸ Harvey's mother, through her dreams, has imprinted Harvey, leaving no trace of a paternal origin. What Nashe's final conjecture offers is a link to some form of paternity, albeit demonic, that reconfigures Harvey's reproductive make-up to include the contribution of a father figure. By having all of this occur within the context of a dream sequence, however, these various reproductive fantasies intermingle, as categories of maternal, bird, demon, paternal, sexual, and mechanical collapse to the point where a search for the "original" genealogy of this textual monstrosity is a ridiculous prospect. Moreover, in the deployment of maternal impression to produce Harvey as a monstrous satire of himself, Nashe has also invoked the role of a maternal figure who, by sheer force of imagination, imprints this version of Harvey and then, through the printing press, produces many exact copies of him at a rapid rate.

Nashe, however, also invokes the idea of monstrous births to refer to his own texts. In *Pierce Penilesse*, he describes the genesis of his text as follows: "These manifest coniectures of Plentie, assembled in one common-place of abilitie, I determined to clawe Auarice by the elbowe, till his full belly gaue mee a full hande, and lette him bloud with my penne (if it might be) in the veyne of liberalitie: and so (in short time) was this Paper-monster, *Pierce Penilesse*, begotten" (1:161). Directly invoking ambition as a source of inspiration for the text, Nashe does not disavow his connection to the marketplace and the fact that this form of literary production may not be as prestigious as others. But, as is typical of Nashe, when he critiques himself, he takes others down with him. He speaks of the "pride of peasants sprung up of Nothing" who are "creatures that are bred *sine coitu*, as crickets in chimneys" who assert themselves as gentlemen (1:173). He describes Richard Harvey's *Lamb of God* as "monstrous, monstrous" and as "waste paper" (1:198). Thus, one can conclude that Nashe, in his critiques of his literary enemies, paints himself with the same brush. Similar to the collective authorial identity of Martin Marprelate, Nashe's monstrous literary reproduction indirectly gives rise to a reconfiguration of authorship that blurs both producer of the text and, by rendering these textual births monstrous, complicates understanding of both what constitutes a text and what the relationship is between text and author.

The reconfiguration of authorship for which I am arguing requires a reconsideration of the medium and the meaning of metaphors for authorship in the early modern period. Studies of Nashe, in particular, have begun to make moves in this direction, by complicating previous notions of what it means to be "a man

⁴⁸ Huet, "Living Images: Monstrosity and Representation," *Representations* (Autumn, 1983), 73–87, 76.

in print.”⁴⁹ In employing the reproductive metaphor, Nashe invokes a longstanding literary tradition. When his authorial offspring is rendered monstrous, he is still within parameters of a traditional authorial conceit. The circumstances surrounding the births of these literary monsters, however, complicate our understanding of exactly how this metaphor is operating. The metaphor of reproduction as textual production changes in both tenor and vehicle. The book is no longer just a manuscript: it can be a manuscript or a printed object. And what it means to give birth has also seen a shift, due to the increasing depiction of monstrous births in printed midwifery manuals, pamphlets, ballads, and other texts. All of this semantic shifting begs the question: is the text monstrous because of its creator or did it become monstrous when it appeared in print?⁵⁰ Or perhaps, when it was printed, the text became a different kind of monster.

Nashe’s images of monstrous authorial reproduction, when examined through the lens of early modern depictions of monstrous birth, offer a deeply complicated and vexing portrayal of authorship that is inextricably reliant on past authorial conceits to express present authorial concerns. Instead of offering a depiction of Nashe as simply an author employing a common metaphor to legitimate himself in print, we can view his use of monstrous reproduction as a complex semantic negotiation, where paper monsters, begotten in blood ink, are cast out into a brave new world.

⁴⁹ This is paraphrased from Wendy Wall’s seminal *The Imprint of Gender: authorship and publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), where Wall argues that, “in the wake of the print industry’s collision with manuscript culture,” the early modern conceptualization of authorship “produced men in print” (x–xi). Recent examples of Nashe criticism that puts pressure on singular notions of Nashe as author include Maria Prendergast’s “Promiscuous Textualities” and Steve Mentz’s “Thomas Nashe and the Practice of Prose,” in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, ed. Naomi Conn Liebler (New York: Routledge, 2007), 18–32.

⁵⁰ For an analysis of the tension between ink and print production in Nashe, see Mentz.

Chapter 6

Nashe's Extemporal Vein and his Tarltonizing Wit

Karen Kettlich

The role of the clown Richard Tarlton in the boisterous, bravado-filled print war between Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey probably begins with a cruel, casual remark Nashe made about Harvey's brother, Richard, in 1592. Gabriel Harvey had just lost one brother, John, and he had been severely embarrassed by Robert Greene's attack on his other brother, Richard. In the midst of Harvey's mourning for one brother and his chagrin over the other, he found Nashe reminding readers that "Tarlton at the Theatre made jests of" Richard Harvey on the stage.¹ In his invective-filled retaliation against Nashe, Gabriel Harvey employs a forgotten word, *tarltonizing*, within a remarkable phrase: "the very timpany of his Tarltonizing wit."² The following explores what 'tarltonizing wit' meant in the works of Thomas Nashe. It analyzes the relationship between this phrase and improvised theatrical performance, as well as its connection to what Nashe calls writing in the "extemporal vein" – a form Nashe championed in his theories of writing, in the studied spontaneity of his pamphlets, in his single extant stage play, and in his prose.³ In addition to extending our understanding of Renaissance discourses of improvisation, the story of this brief reference illuminates an ambivalence in Nashe's work about the nature of spontaneity and about the possibility for originality in the art of extemporal performance.

Harvey twice employed the word "tarltonizing"; his two uses of the term encapsulate the problem of defining extemporal performance – whether onstage

¹ Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless, His Supplication to the Devil*, (London, 1592), Er. Here and elsewhere unless specified, modernizations are my own. Richard had embarrassed Gabriel Harvey more than once, but his inaccurate prognostications for the year 1583 were perhaps the most lasting embarrassment. Nashe's goading in 1592, however, came in response to Richard's inclusion of Nashe's censure of poets, published in his preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon*, in his attack on Robert Greene.

² Gabriel Harvey, "The Third Letter," *Four Letters* (London, 1592), E2v.

³ Thomas Nashe, 'Preface', in Robert Greene, *Menaphon* (London, 1589), **v. Kiernan discusses the theoretical implications of Nashe's improvisational style in Ryan Kiernan, "The Extemporal Vein and the Invention of Modern Narrative," in Jeremy Hawthorne, ed., *Narrative: From Malory to Motion Pictures* (London: Arnold, 1985), 40–54.

or in print – and the problem of delineating such instances of spontaneity from the scripted. Stage improvisation necessarily collapses the performer's momentary unscripted utterance and the "script" from which he draws, whether that script is a playwright's words, or stock rhetorical figures, or *lazzi*, or jest-book jests. So too the extemporal writer always draws on his store of commonplaces, rhetorical figures, and styles; in this sense, the extemporal is never truly "improvised" and it is never original, at least not in the way Nashe in his verbal scuffle with Harvey wants to claim that it is. Examining Nashe's reluctant indebtedness to Tarlton reveals the degree to which his writing is a scripted performance which draws on metaphors of stage practice and on stylistic stage effects, a performance which is masterful in its textual negotiation of the exchanges between page and stage and between theatrical and literary culture.

Tarltonizing Wit, Lineage, and Derivation

Long before Hamlet condemned clowns for speaking "more than is set down for them,"⁴ Richard Tarlton, with his spontaneous rhymed jingles and improvised play with audiences, was the most famous actor of the Queen's Men and of his era: the mere mention of his name became a marketing ploy for the bookstalls, and the appearance of his face from behind the curtain reportedly caused ceaseless laughter in audiences.⁵ His body and face were comic, even grotesque, and he strategically presented them and withheld them for the amusement of his audiences.⁶ There was a bawdy dimension to his act, of course. John Harrington reports that "old Tarlton was wont to say this same excellent word 'save-reverence,' makes it all mannerly."⁷ Even without witnessing the act, we can fill in the unsavory statements Tarlton might excuse with repeated use of this early modern equivalent to "pardon my French." Harrington also reports that "Master Tarlton the excellent Comedian" brought the word "prepuze" "into the Theatre with great applause." Again, without record of what precisely Tarlton said or did (which was presumably common knowledge amongst Harrington's readers), we can imagine the physical comedy that might make him "complain" about his "prepuze" and we can imagine him highlighting the humor of the moment with a spontaneous

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. 3.2.32. The injunction is perhaps in reference to the antics of another performer famous for improvisation, William Kempe.

⁵ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 65ff.

⁶ See Nora Johnson's discussion, especially her discussion of Tarlton's habit of poking his head through the curtain before fully coming on stage. Nora Johnson, *The Actor as Playwright* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 24. Nashe himself recalls seeing Tarlton's head peeping from behind the curtain in Nashe, *Pierce Penniless*, Dr.

⁷ John Harrington, *Metamorphosis of Ajax* (London, 1596), A3r.

utterance of this awkward, formal term for his privy parts.⁸ There were also more peculiar and idiosyncratic dimensions to his celebrity persona. He cultivated a reputation for drunkenness and a reputation for poverty, even though he was not poor (especially interesting when compared to Nashe's host of poverty-stricken personae).⁹ He created a rustic, at times apparently stupid persona and allowed himself to be bested by opponents – even ranting angrily in frustrated defeat – just before turning the tables to his advantage at the last minute.¹⁰ Perhaps capitalizing on the entertainment value of the role of villain, he singled out individual enemies in the audience, at times humiliating them so cruelly that they were forced to leave the theater.¹¹

Tarlton's clown character, which he appears to have played both on and offstage, was best known for the particular style of improvisation he employed: composing rhymed “jests” on whatever theme the audience could pitch him at the end of a play. As these post-play inventions could be adapted to whatever current events audiences might introduce and also seem to have been widely circulated, they were likely the setting of Tarlton's mockery of Richard Harvey (if Nashe's account can be believed on this point). The verses recounted in the posthumously published *Tarlton's Jests* (1613) give us an impression of what this spontaneous rhyming performance may have sounded like. For example, once when an audience member hit him in the face with an apple during a performance, he reportedly replied:

Gentlemen, this fellow with his face of mapple
 Instead of a pippin hath thrown me an apple
 But as for an apple, he hath cast a crab,
 So instead of an honest woman, God hath sent him a Drab.¹²

But these little verse responses were not the only spontaneous aspect of his act. He was also willing to break out of character during a play, at the expense of the scripted drama and its verisimilitude, should the opportunity for comedy arise. The speeches written for his characters probably also reflect what was recognized as his style; they are chatty, and wide ranging, and they alternate in address to characters

⁸ Ibid., C3r–v.

⁹ David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 21, 12.

¹⁰ See David Wiles' discussion in Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, 16–17.

¹¹ See the example in Anonymous, *Tarlton's Jests* (London, 1613), B2v, which particularly exemplifies the manner in which “his art lies in the juxtaposition of rapport and hostility” (David Mann, *The Elizabethan Player: Contemporary Stage Representation* [London: Routledge, 1991], 62).

¹² Anonymous, *Tarlton's Jests*, B2v.

within the plays and to the audience.¹³ His spontaneous style was distinctive, audience pleasing, lusciously low class, and after his death, his legacy dominated thinking about the stage and improvisation for generations. He was resurrected repeatedly in print. Ghosts of Tarlton appear in *Tarlton's News Out of Purgatory* (1592), Henry Chettle's *Kindheart's Dream* (1592), William Percy's *Cuckolds and Cuckqueans Errants* (manuscript, circa 1601), in *Poor Robin's Jests* (1667), and it appears from the accounts of the Stationer's Register that there were several more. More than fifty years after his death in 1588 Tarlton features in Richard Brome's *The Antipodes*, along with William Kempe, as an *exemplum* of a superior stage improviser.¹⁴ Spread across reams of Renaissance books, accompanied by tales of bawdry, mock-Puritanism, and the delights of drink, the myth of Tarlton and his renowned extemporal wit haunted subsequent clowning performances. Elegies and epitaphs and literary resurrections testify to his unsurpassable originality and to the inability of clowns – and comic writers as well – to offer anything new.¹⁵

When Gabriel Harvey accuses his University Wit opponents of “tarltonizing,” then, he might be making reference to a host of tarltonesque activities, but primary amongst them must have been mimicking Tarlton's improvising clown act. Before using it to describe Nashe, Harvey had already coined the word “tarltonizing” to attack Robert Greene in the second of his eventual *Four Letters*. Amongst a catalogue of Greene's silliest and sleaziest attributes, Harvey lists his “piperly extemporizing and tarltonizing.”¹⁶ The taunt is nestled between references to other kinds of improvisatory activity: “vainglorious and thrasonical braving” and “apish counterfeiting of every ridiculous and absurd toy,” picking fights and mimicking others, playing the *miles gloriosus* and the ape – both styles of spontaneous performance, whether on or offstage.¹⁷ Although “tarltonizing” and “extemporizing” are listed as two separate activities, in this context “tarltonizing” appears to overlap with “extemporizing” as a single accusation; perhaps the latter

¹³ See the account of Tarlton's break in character during a production of *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* in Anonymous, *Tarlton's Jests*, C2v–C3r.

¹⁴ Richard Brome, *The Antipodes* (London: 1640), D3v.

¹⁵ For example, John Davies' epitaph in *Wit's Bedlam* which opens, “Here within this sullen earth / Lies Dick Tarlton, Lord of Mirth / Who, in his grave still, laughing gapes, / Sith all clowns since have been his apes.” John Davies, *Wit's Bedlam* (London, 1617), K6r–v. Also see Nora Johnson's discussion of his originality in Johnson, *Actor as Playwright*, 27.

¹⁶ Gabriel Harvey, “The Second Letter,” *Four Letters* (London, 1592), B2r. Harvey wrote the letter in response to Greene's attack on the Harvey family in what was eventually a deleted introduction to his *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*.

¹⁷ The phrase “his apish counterfeiting of every ridiculous and absurd toy” may perhaps be another reference to Greene's acting like a famous stage clown, as it could pun on the name of the London actor Toy who was to star in Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*; Harvey calls Greene “the second Toy of London” in the same letter. Harvey, “The Second Letter,” B2r.

even supersedes the former as all extemporizing yields to the kind of improvisatory, rhyming poetry for which Tarlton was so famous.¹⁸

Harvey spoke of Greene tarltonizing in 1592, four years after Tarlton's death. Indeed, as Greene had just died at the time of Harvey's second letter, Harvey can say he has "gone to Tarlton."¹⁹ When he saw Nashe's *Pierce Penniless* and its insults about Richard Harvey (published almost at the same time), Harvey transferred the taunt of tarltonizing from Greene to Nashe and condemned the book as "the very timpany of his Tarltonizing wit." Far more than a simple insult, this reference illuminates a central tension in Nashe's work. In light of what we know about Tarlton's stage act, the phrase implies a connection to hack theatrics and audience-pleasing posturing, to low and common language, and to extemporal sing-song and mockery. In Greene's case, "piperly extemporizing and tarltonizing" seems to be an accusation of an offstage theatrical act of debased, absurd behavior; Greene in real life has been acting like Tarlton on the stage. But in Nashe's case Harvey's accusation cuts deeper, and is potentially far more damaging. Harvey claims that Nashe's wit itself is "tarltonizing." When viewed in context, it is clear that he is not accusing Nashe of simply acting like Tarlton, but instead he has expanded his accusation to one of plagiarism. Harvey grounds his claim of Nashe's tarltonizing through the evidence that *Pierce Penniless* is a reworking of Tarlton's stage play: it is, he says, "right-formally conceived according to the style and tenor of Tarlton's precedent, his famous *Play of the Seven Deadly Sins*."²⁰ The accusation applies both to the "style" and to the "tenor" of Tarlton's original work, making tarltonizing about both plagiarized content and plagiarized style. Both dimensions of tarltonizing are important, but Harvey's repeated assertions in *The Third Letter* that Nashe is generally *being* Tarlton eventually leave the subject of stolen content behind. Nashe is, Harvey says, the preeminent example of "Tarlton's amplifications" ("A per se A"), commenting on Nashe's habit of piling example upon example in a manner Tarlton would in the theater.²¹ Sometimes Harvey couples Tarlton with Aretino, sometimes with Lyly and Greene, continuing in a mock-gentle scold to Nashe: "O brave Tarlton, thou wert he, when all is done; had

¹⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word "to Tarltonize" as "to speak or act like Tarlton, a celebrated comic actor of the 16th century." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, online.

¹⁹ Harvey, "The Second Letter," B2r. Nicholl puts their publication dates at 7 September and 8 September 1592, respectively. Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984).

²⁰ Harvey, "The Third Letter," D4r. Harvey had reason to know the play, he asserts, because Tarlton himself invited him to London to see it and afterwards he had the coveted reward of besting Tarlton's wit. Harvey, "The Third Letter," D3v–D4r. The *Play of the Seven Deadly Sins* is now lost, although perhaps its structure can be somewhat discerned in the extant "plot" for 2 *Seven Deadly Sins* amongst the Alleyn Papers at Dulwich.

²¹ Harvey, "The Third Letter," E2v.

not Aretine been Aretine, when he was, undoubtably thou hadst been Aretine.”²² Nashe’s wit, he says, has been pieced together from “Tarlton’s surmounting rhetoric, with a little Euphuism, and Greenesse enough,”²³ and moreover Nashe “may thank Greene and Tarlton for his Garland.”²⁴ He so conflates Nashe with Tarlton that he asks, “who ever endited in such a style, but one divine Aretine in Italy, and two heavenly Tarltons in England?” “Two of them,” he adds, “know their local repose and seriously admonish the third to be advised how he lavish in such dalliance.”²⁵ Like so many other Elizabethan writers, he pictures Tarlton speaking from beyond the grave, this time accompanied by Aretino, to warn the “other Tarlton,” Nashe, to think with more gravity about his use of time.

Surprisingly, Harvey’s accusations about Nashe plagiarizing Tarlton strangely echo another invective conflict involving Nashe. The underground anti-Martinist campaign, in which Nashe took part, makes use of very similar language. Beginning in 1588, several anonymous pamphlets printed under the pseudonym Martin Marprelate made a scandalous commotion that lasted decades beyond their publication dates, long after John Penry was hanged at thirty years old for publishing the seditious tracts. The Marprelate pamphlets were written in opposition to the relatively new Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, and his attempts to instill conformity within the church. The Presbyterian tracts that preceded the Martin Marprelate campaign issued a call for a plain speaker to present their platform in plain speech, so that it might be available to common readers.²⁶ What resulted was not merely simple accessible language, but an outrageous example of popular, performative, tarltonizing prose.

The first of the Martin Marprelate pamphlets was printed weeks after Tarlton’s death in 1588. As the tracts proliferated, their various posturings and role-play employed Tarlton’s method of jesting to combat their opponents, borrowing the low language, the clowning, and the evocation of summer ritual from Tarlton’s bag of tricks.²⁷ They have the feeling of an improvised performance, skipping from topic to topic and addressee to addressee, jumping from high to low, and bursting forth

²² Ibid., E2r–v.

²³ Ibid., E2v.

²⁴ Ibid., E3r.

²⁵ Ibid., F4r.

²⁶ For more about the circumstances of the Marprelate debate, see Joseph L. Black, “Introduction,” *The Martin Marprelate Tracts*, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Patrick Collinson, “Religious Satire and the invention of Puritanism,” *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158–59. Also cited in Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth Maclean, *The Queen’s Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 53–54, and Robert Hornback, “Staging Puritanism in the Early 1590s: The Carnavalesque, Rebellious Clown as Anti-Puritan Stereotype,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 24/3 (2000), 31–67.

in laughter on the page.²⁸ The anti-Martinist responses they engendered, written in a similar style and probably with official government sanction, consistently point to this borrowing from Tarlton and, as Harvey does with Nashe, use accusations of printed tarltonizing to defuse the explosive texts. As one of the anti-Martinists characterizes it:

These tinker's terms, and barber's jests, first Tarlton on the stage,
Then Martin in his books of lies, hath put in every page.²⁹

In clip-clopping fourteeners that mimic the popular stage verse form, the writer imagines a direct transference of linguistic style, a lineage of debasement, from the tinkers and barbers (with their 'barbarous' language), to Tarlton's stage, to the lying Martin. The Martinists, he suggests, have translated Tarlton's stage language to prose, and with it its street taint.

Another 1589 anti-Martinist pamphlet, *Rhymes Against Martin Marprelate* (published also as *A Whip for an Ape, or Martin Displayed* and attributed to John Lyly), compares Martin and Tarlton:

Now Tarlton's dead, the consort lacks a Vice;
For knave and fool thou [Martin] may'st bear prick and price.
The sacred sect and perfect pure precise,
Whose cause must be by *Scoggin's* jests maintained,
Ye show although that purple Apes disguise,
Yet Apes are still, and so must be disdained.³⁰

Like Harvey, the anti-Martinist writers use Tarlton (who is the "Vice" of the stage, a role Tarlton is credited with adapting from the old-fashioned morality drama) to discredit their opponent. Martin, acting as Tarlton's replacement and "maintained" by the jests of the famous clown John Scoggin,³¹ is said to "ape" his predecessors. He therefore earns added "disdain" not only for employing clowns' language and performance, but also for his lack of originality.

Nashe's own role in the Marprelate scuffle has been long debated, as has the influence the Martin Marprelate pamphlets and the anti-Martinist responses had on his work.³² Many of the anti-Martinist pamphlets were originally attributed to

²⁸ Joseph L. Black discusses some of the aspects of spontaneity of performativity in the texts in Black, *Martin Marprelate Tracts*, xxvi.

²⁹ *Mar-Martine* (London, 1589), A4v, at one time attributed to Nashe.

³⁰ *Rhymes Against Martin Marprelate* (London, 1589), A2v.

³¹ See Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, and Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 158, for a discussion of Tarlton's adaptation of the role of stage Vice.

³² Quite a few scholars have argued for Nashe's indebtedness to the Marprelate tracts, including Travis L. Summersgill, "The Influence of the Marprelate Controversy upon the

Nashe and some continue to divide scholars over the question of their authorship. In *An Almond for Parrot*, the pamphlet which is most consistently attributed to him, Nashe invokes both Tarlton and the Martinists' tarltonizing and enlists them for the anti-Martinist side of the debate. He dedicates the work to William Kempe, whom Nashe calls the "Vice-gerent general to the ghost of Dick Tarlton."³³ As he makes Kempe second-in-command to Tarlton's ghost, perhaps he puns on the Vice role, recalling the connection Lyly and others draw between the improvising Vice and Tarlton. In this imagined military hierarchy, Nashe captures Tarlton from the Martinists to fight for the anti-Martinist side, and, at this point at least, Nashe appears willing to follow General Tarlton's lead.

For Nashe, then, it must surely have been all the more infuriating to have the same epithets he and his compatriots had applied to Martin turned upon himself in Harvey's letter. When Nashe, addressing Harvey point-by-point, comes to respond to the accusation of plagiarism, he bristles at any suggestion that his writing may be derivative: "Wherein have I borrowed from Greene or Tarlton that I should thank them for all I have? Is my style like Greene's or my jests like Tarlton's?"³⁴ Harvey's word "timpani" – referring not to our copper drum with its dramatic-yet-limited tonal palette, but to the pregnancy or swelling its shape suggests – adds to the insult. Harvey makes *Pierce* Tarlton's offspring, merely carried to term by Nashe, as though Tarlton's ghost were an incubus, a terror of the night, which, with illicit tarltonizing, had impregnated Nashe's wit.³⁵ Beaumont and Fletcher might have been content to share sexualized parenthood of their texts, but Nashe won't play mother to Tarlton's child.³⁶ He is careful to assert sole paternity: "This I will proudly boast, the vein which I have...is of my own begetting, and ca[ll]s no man father in England but myself, neither *Euphues*, nor *Tarlton*, nor *Greene*."³⁷

style of Thomas Nashe," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951): 145–60.

³³ Thomas Nashe, *An Almond for a Parrat* (London, 1589), A2r.

³⁴ Thomas Nashe, *Strange News* (London, 1592), K2r.

³⁵ Nashe makes his own retaliatory accusation against Harvey in Thomas Nashe, *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* (London, 1596), K2r, asserting that some people say "an Incubus in the likeness of an inkbottle had carnal copulation with his mother when he was begotten."

³⁶ For Beaumont and Fletcher, see Jeffery Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, authorship, and sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁷ Nashe, *Strange News*, K2v; for an elaboration on the sexualization of Nashe in relation to print and collaboration, see Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast, "Promiscuous Textualities: The Nashe-Harvey Controversy and the Unnatural Productions of Print" in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, Douglas Brooks, ed., (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 173–195.

The Extemporal Vein, On and Offstage

Harvey's use of Tarlton, acme of improvisers, to goad Nashe is particularly astute in light of Nashe's fierce insistence on the importance of spontaneity in writing. The "extemporal vein," as he calls it in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon*, is critical to good writing: the ideal writer is "the man whose extemporal vein in any humor will excel our greatest Art-master's deliberate thoughts; whose invention, quicker than his eye, will challenge the proudest Rhetorician."³⁸ The greatest writers, he asserts, create spontaneously perfect creations, and it is their light touch of dexterous grace which makes them great. He correspondingly condemns the heavily rhetorical, levying in the preface to *Menaphon* accusations of bad writing against playwrights and their overlabored conceits, and attacking Harvey in *Strange News* for his heavy, "over-weaponed," premeditated style, calling him the "emperor of inkhornism."³⁹ And if you credit him with co-authorship of *I Henry VI*,⁴⁰ it is worth noting that often allotted to Nashe is Joan La Pucelle's account of her divinely empowered speech:

And whereas I was black and swart before
 With those clear rays which she infused on me,
 That beauty am I blest with, which you may see.
Ask me what question thou canst possible,
And I will answer unpremeditated;
 My courage try by combat, if thou dar'st,
 And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.⁴¹

In addition to her holy makeover, Joan receives from the Virgin the ability to speak spontaneously; her "blackness" of mind, like the swarthinness of her complexion, is cleared with holy extemporal wit. And divine wit is effective; Charles the Dauphin is staggered by her "high terms," even before she overcomes him in combat.⁴²

Nashe's style is an attempt to live out the ideal conception of the extemporal vein that he outlines in these theories of writing. In a stunning passage from his response to Harvey in *Strange News*, Nashe's person and/or persona spontaneously lets forth his ire, questions spilling over without pause for an initial majuscule:

Hang thee, hang thee, thou common cozener of courteous readers, thou gross shifter for shitten tapsterly jests, have I imitated Tarlton's *Play of the Seven*

³⁸ Nashe, Preface to *Menaphon*, **v.

³⁹ Nashe, *Menaphon*, **ff; Nashe, *Strange News*, Ev, Kv.

⁴⁰ Gary Taylor argues that Nashe wrote 1.2–1.6 (or up to 1.8, depending on how the scenes are divided). Gary Taylor, "Shakespeare and Others: The Authorship of Henry the Sixth Part One," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995): 145–205.

⁴¹ William Shakespeare [and Thomas Nashe?], *Henry VI Part I*, 1.2.83–90, my italics.

⁴² Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part I*, 1.2.93ff.

Deadly Sins in my plot of *Pierce Penilesse*? whom hast thou not imitated then in the course of thy book? thou hast borrowed above twenty phrases and epithets from me, which in sober sadness thou mak'st use of as thy own, when thou wouldst exhort more effectual. Is it lawful but for one preacher to preach of the Ten Commandments? hath none writ of the five senses but *Aristotle*? was sin so utterly abolished with Tarlton's *Play of the Seven Deadly Sins*, that there could be nothing said *supra* of that argument? Canst thou exemplify unto me (thou impotent moat-catching carper) one minim of the particular device of his play that I purloin'd?⁴³

Several examples in this delightful bout of Nasherie particularly bring out his extemporal practice. First, the copiousness of his response, like "Tarlton's amplifications," is a characteristic aspect of Nashe's improvisatory writing, as he piles example upon example in a vigorous, volcanic explosion of language. The hyperbole of comparisons between his work and sermons on the Ten Commandments or Aristotle, as well as the irreverent bathos as he fluctuates between the sacred and the "shitten tapster" and "moat-catching-carper," exemplifies the light, nimble movement Nashe prizes so much, creating a feeling of spontaneity in its juxtaposition of seemingly random opposites. The volubility with which he responds implies, while fixed in print, that it occurs extempore, with no editor's pen to distill it to rhetorically balanced phrases. If the reader credits his fiction of spontaneity, his style in itself acts as a defense of his wit.

Given his extraordinary ability to craft a seemingly spontaneous barrage of verbal pyrotechnics posed as off-the-cuff, it is a particular pity that we are left with nearly none of Nashe's works for stage performance. It is perhaps not surprising that these productions all seem to have had a particularly extemporal and tarltonizing air to them. Putting his possible contributions to *Dido*, *Faustus*, and *I Henry VI* aside, there is the scandalous performance of *Terminus et Non Terminus* for which his 'partner' in crime was expelled from Cambridge; the mysterious 'comedy' that Greene (the original tarltonizer) proclaims was their joint effort; his possible hand in the violent, bawdy, raucous, and unlicensed jig-like stage dimension of the anti-Martinist campaign; and his first act of *The Isle of Dogs*, the remaining acts of which, he claims in *Lenten Stuff*, "by the players were supplied."⁴⁴ The only extant play credited solely to Nashe is *Summer's Last Will and Testament*. This play is

⁴³ Nashe, *Strange News*, H2r–v.

⁴⁴ *Terminus et Non Terminus* is mentioned the attack on Nashe attributed to Richard Lichfield and therefore may be exaggerated. Richard Lichfield, *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (London, 1597), G3r. E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage IV* (London, 1923), 229–33, collects the references to the anti-Martinists' theatrical efforts. Thomas Nashe, *Nashe's Lenten Stuff* (London, 1599), Bv. Ben Jonson may have authored the other acts, but Janet Clare also sees the possibility of improvisation in Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-Tied by Authority*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1999), 74.

both a celebration of Nashe's extemporal vein and our only opportunity to witness him apply that vein to the stage.

Summer's Last Will and Testament was also written in 1592 – precisely in the middle of the broil with Harvey. Harvey's claims of tarltonizing went to press as Nashe was presumably composing the play to be performed in Archbishop John Whitgift's household. In fact, the play may have kept him from being able to respond sooner, and Chettle's *Kindheart's Dream*, which went to press in December of 1592 after Harvey's *Four Letters* and before Nashe's *Strange News*, resurrects ghosts of Greene and Tarlton to urge Nashe not to be so "slack" in his "revenge."⁴⁵

Perhaps it is surprising, then, that despite the protestations of non-tarltonizing he would issue in *Strange News*, Nashe's wit fathered a child which might be seen as a product of Tarlton and himself: a ghost/stage clown/improviser misunderstood and rejected by those around him. Nashe's star in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* is the improvising ghost-clown Will Summers, formerly clown to Henry VIII.⁴⁶ Or, rather, he creates a character who is an actor who uses the persona of the Ghost of Will Summers as a front for his own improvisations.⁴⁷ He enters the play with "his fool's coat but half on" and a speech of casual babble. After he has completed the supposedly scripted part of the prologue, he admits

⁴⁵ In the dating, I have followed Nicholl here, who rehearses the evidence for the play's composition in September–October of 1592 in Nicholl, *A Cup of News*, 135ff, although Katherine Duncan-Jones has suggested the play was written much earlier, co-authored by Greene before his death. Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Shakespeare, the Motley Player," *Review of English Studies* 60/247 (2009): 738–9. Henry Chettle, *Kindheart's Dream* (London, 1592), Ev–E2r.

⁴⁶ Perhaps Harvey even suggested the character of Will Summers to Nashe (though Nashe would probably have begun work on the play by the time he received Harvey's pamphlet). When Harvey first turns his ire towards Nashe, he starts by attacking the "busy pens" sketching out elegies to Greene: "who can tell what doughty younker may next *gnash* with his teeth?" (italics mine). Before he actualizes the pun on Nashe's name by drawing in *Pierce Penniless*, Harvey concludes that these "busy pens" "vaunt themselves, like unto Death and Will Sommer, in sparing none." It may be worth noting too that Harvey himself sets up a fiction of extemporal writing half a page later, but this pun deflates it. "Whilst I am bemoaning his overpiteous decay...lo all on the sudden his sworn brother, M. Peirce Penniless...in a raving and frantic mood most desperately exhibiteth his supplication to the Devil," he writes, as though he had no foreknowledge of its existence, and as though he not already addressed Nashe through the pun one page earlier. Harvey, "The Third Letter," D3r–v.

⁴⁷ The speech headings in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* identify the character as Will Summers, but despite critics' various attempts to name him, the character can be accurately called neither "Will Summers" nor "Toy," the name of the professional actor assumed to have played the role. Even referring to him as "actor" or "clown" (as I've done above) conflates the person playing the role with the character. Geller discusses some of the complications in Sherri Geller, "Commentary as Cover Up: Criticizing Illiberal Patronage in Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament*," *English Literary Renaissance* 25 (1995): 165–66.

“some that you heard...was extempore.” He then refuses to leave the stage even though his part is supposedly concluded, asserting that he will remain in the play and mock it as a revenge on Nashe for not scripting more for him. The clown constantly emphasizes the improvisational nature of his performance, and through him Nashe cues audience members in the know to watch for the application of his extemporal vein to the stage.

As he improvises his way through the play, the clown at times seems to telescope three characters, Tarlton, Nashe, and clown, into a single figure.⁴⁸ As he dresses outside of the tiring house, the clown puns on his poverty: “I...use to go without money, without garters, without girdle, without a hat-band, without points to my hose, without a knife to my dinner, and make so much of this word *without* in everything, will here dress me without.” Not only does the emphasis on the claims of poverty recall Nashe’s host of poor personae (most especially *Pierce Penniless*),⁴⁹ it also recalls Tarlton’s poor-rustic shtick. At one point the clown divides the audience into parts, singling “My Lord” out from the rest, while turning to another section of the audience with the secret, “I’ll set a good face on it, as though what I talked idly all this while was my part.” It’s a move reminiscent of Tarlton’s tendency to select individual victims in his audience, and also reminiscent of Nashe’s jerky, shifting mode of address – with parentheticals for one audience, outrage for another, his indirect object always in motion.⁵⁰

The clown continues to recall Tarlton in his fearless moves outside of the play, unafraid of ruining the work with his improvisations, unlike the other actors who, he trusts, “will not interrupt me, for fear of marring all.”⁵¹ The bald lack of concern for the unity of the work as a whole and the bold challenge to verisimilitude recalls Tarlton’s mid-performance engagement with his audiences, and an ability to move in and out of the play’s fiction which was typical of the Tudor Vice (the role Tarlton is credited with adapting to the professional theater). The clown’s story of “go[ing] to Theatre and hear a Queen’s Vice” to “make her laugh, and laugh her belly-full,” seems to speak particularly of the most famous Vice/clown of the Queen’s Men.⁵² Finally, the little timid Epilogue’s description of Vulcan’s limping dance before the gods seems to contain a ghost of rustic, ugly Tarlton, peeping his flat nose through the theater curtain, mapped onto the blacksmith god: “to make you

⁴⁸ If Harvey knew the play, he may also be emphasizing this collapse of characters when, in *Pierce’s Supererogation*, he aligns Nashe and Summers: “it is some men’s evil luck to stumble in the way when Will Summers’ weapon is ready drawn.” Gabriel Harvey, *Pierce’s Supererogation* (London, 1593), T2v.

⁴⁹ The clown himself hints at this connection when he calls Nashe the “beggarly poet.” Nashe, *Summer’s Last Will*, Cv–C2r.

⁵⁰ Thomas Nashe, *Summer’s Last Will and Testament* (London, 1600), Br–B2r.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Br–B2r.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Cv.

merry...a number of rude Vulcans, unwieldy speakers, hammer-headed clowns... have set their deformities to view, as it were, in a dance here before you."⁵³

The action of *Summer's Last Will and Testament* appears to punish the tarltonizing clown, as the little Epilogue finally turns on him, stating that he "hath marred the play."⁵⁴ But of course, in experience, the play celebrates his antics and succeeds precisely because of his "improvisations." If the remainder of the company was made up of members of Whitgift's household, then the professional clowning of Toy the actor (as scripted by Nashe) showcases rather than spoils their amateur endeavors.⁵⁵ In fact, many of the scenes appear to be designed primarily to accentuate this uncomfortable relationship between the improvising interlocutor and the planned play, as in Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. At points in the play, the audience may have felt a similar impatience to that voiced by the clown, waiting through long, "scripted" speeches of pageantry for the professional "unscripted" antics to relieve them. And when the clown interrupts with his mischievous Nasherie, as he sets himself in opposition to actors and playwright, the interruptions themselves create the devious comedy they all wish to be watching.

The timing of the performance in 1592, when Nashe had yet to respond to Harvey's accusations of thieved clowning, seems to suggest interplay between the clown/ghost/improviser in *Summer's Last Will and Testament* and the ghost of Tarlton. It hints at a neat swap between the two: a substitution of Will Summers for Tarlton and thereby a rejection – and hidden celebration – of them both. As we have no more examples of anything like *Summer's Last Will and Testament* from Nashe, perhaps we might imagine that the ghost of Tarlton and the specter he may have come to represent drew Nashe away from writing scripted spontaneity for the stage. He claims in *Lenten Stuff* that in *The Isle of Dogs* he left the extemporizing to others. Instead, he appears to reserve his extemporal vein for prose. Writing scripted improvisation for the stage may have had other drawbacks for Nashe. Extemporal writing for the theater, when successful, causes the audience to wonder whether *the actor* is truly improvising. The playwright, while perhaps not removed from the equation, becomes a fractional addition. On the pages of the printed play of *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, clown and playwright seem to collapse into a single figure and even seem to share the play's final epigram, set off at the end, unclear to the reader whether it should be read as the clown's

⁵³ Ibid., I2v.

⁵⁴ Ibid., I2v.

⁵⁵ The circumstances of performance are not clear, but some, like Nicholl, assume the company was comprised of amateur actors in Whitgift's household, which would account for the specific names listed in the text – people probably known to the audience. Others have suggested, also from textual evidence, that it was performed by a boy's company. Katherine Duncan-Jones has recently suggested that it was a gathering of out-of-work professionals, free because of the theater's closure from the plague, including William Shakespeare in the role of Summer. Duncan-Jones, "Shakespeare, the Motley Player," 723–43.

parting words or Nashe's signature at the close: "*barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligorulli*."⁵⁶ But the circumstances of performance split them again in two: Nashe stands behind the scenes and the professional performer Toy stands onstage, requiring Nashe again to allow an improvising clown to eclipse his spotlight.⁵⁷

When Nashe writes *Strange News, or Four Letters Confuted* the following year, he point-by-point denies Harvey's claim that he "is" Tarlton, deftly, skipingly, sometimes railing, sometimes jesting, always with an air of mock seriousness. Despite his light and comic touch, however, the problem Harvey poses for Nashe is a real one: how to write in a manner that is both extemporal and original. Nashe's insistence on his originality, for all its posturing and comedy, suggests ambivalence about his work, and hints that Harvey has touched a nerve with his accusations. Nashe asks, "is there any further distribution of sins not shadowed under these seven large spreading branches of iniquity on which a man may work and not tread on Tarlton's heels?"⁵⁸ As he mixes metaphors with abandon in true extemporal style, he asks whether Tarlton has claimed the canopy of all sin for his subject alone. Although the question specifically concerns the overlap in content between *Pierce Penniless* and *The Play of the Seven Deadly Sins*, it may also apply to Harvey's larger accusations of derivative style. Does Tarlton somehow have a monopoly on the use of the extemporal vein? Must tarltonizing always infringe on Nasherie?

An answer, though perhaps an unsatisfying one, is that the extemporal is never purely unscripted and Harvey's two taunts of tarltonizing set out false poles of scriptedness and spontaneity. As Harvey tells it, Greene's "piperly extemporizing and tarltonizing" replicates Tarlton's improvised stage act on the one hand, and Nashe's "tarltonizing wit" replicates Tarlton's scripted stage play, on the other. But improvised performance always collapses the scripted and the improvised. Despite Harvey's patronizing encouragement to Nashe to simply find another source of inspiration for his talents ("No variety or infinity so infinite as Invention," he writes, "which hath a huge world and a main Ocean of scope to disport and range itself"⁵⁹), the fantasy of pure spontaneous creation is always in tension with other

⁵⁶ "I am the barbarian here because I am understood by no one." Ibid., 12v. Per Sivefors points out that Nashe "had a predilection for Ovidian epigraphs," and he reads this "more as a declaration of the poet's, i.e. Nashe's, situation" than that of the character. Per Sivefors, "Underplayed Rivalries: Patronage and the Marlovian Subtext of Summer's Last Will and Testament," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 4/2 (2005), 84. In light of the ban on Nashe's works the previous year (listed in the Stationer's Register), there is a chance this is an epigraph added for the printed edition in 1600 and was not included in the original performance.

⁵⁷ This separation is necessary for Geller's argument that the clown – unhappy subject to the playwright's illiberal patronage – is a stand-in for Nashe and his own relationship to Whitgift. Geller, "Commentary as Cover-Up," 163ff.

⁵⁸ Nashe, *Strange News*, H2r–v.

⁵⁹ Harvey, "The Third Letter," F4r.

Renaissance models of invention: sets of stock figures and epithets, news and gossip, jokes and tropes, packed in the storehouse of the mind for ready use.⁶⁰ The ingenuity of spectacular improvised speech is the ability to spontaneously access appropriate material from memory at the appropriate time and to assemble it into an appropriate (or pleasing, or comic, or daring, or outrageous) shape. In other words, for the well-stocked and quick wit, the readiness is all.

Nashe's inexhaustible shuffling of images and styles, of sentence structures, tenses, and voices, collapses distinctions between script and stage; his style encapsulates the overlap between the extemporal and the penned. Crowding to his readers in *Pierce Penniless*, he exalts his own spontaneity of mind: "if you only knew how extemporal it were at this instant!",⁶¹ but of course the circumstances of scripting require that they can't know how extemporal it is; he can merely invite them to believe and to share his triumph at the power of his wit and the assembly of his invention.

Aftermath

Although Nashe ultimately appears to best Harvey in invective, time brings in his revenges. Despite Nashe's attempts to clear his style from the slander of tarltonizing, in 1612 his name is again linked with Tarlton's (as well as with Martin Marprelate and the clown Scoggin) by another polemicist seeking to devalue his adversary: "he might have left such Scoggerie as he hath set out in this book to Tarlton, Nashe, or else to some Puritan Marprelate."⁶² Perhaps worse for Nashe's memory, it is Gabriel Harvey who is now honored in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the first to apply a version of the word *extemporal* to the act of writing.⁶³ With his encouragements to Nashe ignored, Harvey returns to a greatest-hits attack in *Pierce's Supererogation*: "Even when he runneth upon me with openest mouth," he sneers of Nashe, "and his spite like a poisonous toad swelleth in the full as if some huge timpany of wit would presently possess his brain...then good Dick Tarlton is dead and nothing alive."⁶⁴ Lacking Tarlton's

⁶⁰ Robert Henke discusses the nuances of this overlap between script and improvisation as he traces similarities between English clowns and Italian *commedia dell'arte* in Robert Henke, "Orality and Literacy in the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the Shakespearean Clown," *Oral Tradition* 11/2 (1996): 222–48.

⁶¹ Nashe, *Pierce Penniless*, Ev.

⁶² Thomas James, the anti-Catholic Oxford librarian, makes this attack on Robert Parsons, and the volume *Leister's Commonwealth* attributed to him, in Thomas James, *The Jesuits' Downfall* (London, 1612), H2r.

⁶³ OED online: *extemporal*, a. "Hence, *extemporally*." Lists Gabriel Harvey, *Letter Book* 55 (1577) as the earliest usage: "A few delicate poetically devised of Mr. G. H. extemporally written by him."

⁶⁴ Harvey, *Pierce's Supererogation*, E4r–v.

spirit, Harvey says, Nashe deflates, the possible pregnancy unrealized. Although the line stabs at Nashe with a reshuffled version of the “timpany of his Tarltonizing wit,” Nashe, unwinded, parries lightly in *Have At You to Saffron Walden* with the exuberant challenge that should Harvey “botch and cobble up as many volumes as he can betwixt this and doomsday,” Nashe will still “give as sudden and extemporal answers as...Friar Bacon’s brazen head.”⁶⁵ It is a strange reference, for as it appears in Greene’s text of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, the brazen head speaks none of the voluble prophecies he is supposed to, but only “Time is, Time was, Time is past.” Meanwhile, Miles the clown, probably played by Tarlton,⁶⁶ fools and fumbles until the head’s moment of enchantment has passed, paying no attention to its promise of weighty secrets or grave injunctions of temporality, preferring instead to jest with the audience. That humor and lightness is reflected in the lightness of Nashe’s extemporal vein as he combats Harvey, too nimble for Harvey’s heavy rhetoric. Despite the effect Tarlton’s ghost and Harvey’s insults may have had on the development of his voice, and despite ambivalence about sources, derivation, and lineage, Nashe’s innovation is to take Tarlton’s theatrical effects – the clowning and the extemporizing and the tarltonizing – and fuse them into his energetic romping text, joining stage-like sounds to exuberant invective, and launching them into the traveler’s errant prose.

⁶⁵ Nashe, *Have at You to Saffron Walden*, E3r.

⁶⁶ Kent Cartwright rehearses the evidence that Miles was been played by Tarlton in Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 308, note 16.

Chapter 7

Gross Anatomies: Mapping Matter and Literary Form in Thomas Nashe and Andreas Vesalius

John V. Nance

Between 1540 and 1543 Andreas Vesalius of Brussels assembled the *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, an exhaustive eight-hundred page study of the human body that quickly became the foundational text of the new anatomy in the early modern period.¹ From what little is known about Thomas Nashe, it seems that he was acutely attached to his Cambridge roots and the steady flow of Latinate fragments throughout his works indicates that he was proud of his university wit. Nashe's standing in academia – and his exposure to the social energy adjoining the new anatomy – likely afforded him contact with Vesalius's text, which by the time of his departure from Cambridge in 1588 had become the most esteemed anatomical study ever written. Investigating Nashe's alliance with anatomy is by no means a novel strategy. Recent scholarship suggests a growing interest in Nashe's literary coordination with dissection.² This chapter extends recent theories in Nashe studies by recognizing the explicit connections between Vesalian anatomy and Nashe's

¹ By the term “new anatomy,” I am considering what many medical historians observe to be a paradigm shift in the practice of dissection, where the human body was freed from the restrictions of ancient thought (namely Galen) and examined as the body itself. This formalist approach to reading the human body is reminiscent of Boris Eichenbaum's *The Theory of the Formal Method*: “Their [formalists] basic point was and still is, that the object of literary science, as literary science, ought to be the investigation of the specific properties of literary material, of the properties that distinguish such material from material of any kind, notwithstanding that fact that its secondary and oblique features make that material properly and legitimately exploitable, as auxiliary material, by other disciplines.” *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965): 100.

² For more on Nashe and the new anatomy see: Andrew Fleck, “Anatomizing the Body Politic: The Nation and the Renaissance Body in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*,” *Modern Philology* 104.3 (Feb. 2007): 295–328; Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1980); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 48–49; Richard Sugg, *Murder After Death: Literature and Anatomy in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007): 174–184; Wendy Wall,

layered and detailed style. My particular focus emphasizes the direct association of literary form with the schematics of the human body. Inspiration for this type of analysis is owed primarily to Terry Eagleton's *Criticism and Ideology*, where the literary text is seen as an object produced by the interaction of social structures, and Elizabeth Spiller's recent efforts to explore "art as knowledge practice."³ I will present an interpretation of Nashe's work that ties its form to "something specific" by situating the formal elements of *The Unfortunate Traveller* as a model for practicing Vesalian knowledge.

Andrew Fleck's significant effort and to this point, the only full-length study on Nashe's gruesome body in relation to Vesalian anatomy has been particularly enabling in the course of this project. However, I propose there are opportunities to unite Nashe and Vesalius more explicitly that have been overlooked up to this point. I contend that Nashe appropriates precise formal suggestions from the *Fabrica* in his efforts to establish a "clean different vein" from his "other forms of writing" in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (Nashe 251).⁴ The following analysis will demonstrate that Nashe's prose is a visual system derived from the *Fabrica*. His form is an artifact of an anatomical method that sanctions contact with visual and semiotic principles and associations. The power of Nashe's work to succumb to anatomical perceptions is determined by its productive relation to what Jonathan Sawday terms the "culture of dissection."⁵ By integrating a post-Vesalian anatomical consciousness of particularization and fragmentation within his innovative style, Nashe's text seemingly animates Vesalian materials according to an internal logic of their own. By simultaneously acknowledging and breaking away from other forms such as poetry, Nashe plays the part of Vesalius by slashing through orthodoxy with the meticulous scalpel of prose. Just as rewriting Galen enables Vesalius, rewriting poetry is what enables Nashe. Additionally, with the splayed human body centrally situated, both authors provide an empirical thoroughness to their respective works and assail the reader with formal excess, a stylistic similarity that strengthens the ways in which these texts interact. In short,

"Disclosures in Print: The 'Violent Enlargement' of the Renaissance Voyeuristic Text," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 29.1 (Winter, 1989): 35–59.

³ Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (New York: NLB, 1976); Elizabeth Spiller, "Shakespeare and the Making of Early Modern Science: Resituating Prospero's Art," *South Central Review* 26.1 & 2 (Winter & Spring 2009): 25.

⁴ Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, J.B. Steane, ed., (New York: Penguin, 1971). Further citations will be by page number in the text.

⁵ Sawday's culture of dissection is the tendency of "partition" to stretch "into all forms of social and intellectual life: logic, rhetoric, painting, architecture, philosophy, medicine, as well as poetry, politics, the family, and the state were all potential subjects for division. The pattern of all these different forms of division was derived from the human body. It is for this reason that the body must lie at the center of our inquiry. And it is in this urge to particularize that 'Renaissance culture' can be termed the 'culture of dissection'" (Sawday, 3).

The Unfortunate Traveller installs the early modern stylistics of *somagraphy*, a term that considers anatomical knowledge and its relationship to textual form. Somagraphy expresses how literature aligns itself with somatic conceptual logics and it contacts the ways textual and anatomical bodies are written through each other, providing a window into their enduring formal relationships.

It seems that somagraphic proclivities are present from the very beginning of Nashe's career as they heavily govern his earliest known composition. In *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), the "Stacioners shop" is transformed into an anatomical theatre where contemporary literary habits are summoned and dissected with Vesalian precision (1:9).⁶ To Nashe, all texts – like all bodies – are potential specimens for dissection and his *Anatomie* cuts apart the general corpus of early modern English literature to investigate its formal components and expose them to scrutiny. Published in 1589 but written while Nashe was still an undergraduate at Cambridge, *Anatomie of Absurditie* is a critique of early modern intellectual culture and its tendency to issue works "voide of all knowledge" and "vertue" (1:10).⁷ Akin to Vesalius's revisionary tactics in the *Fabrica*, it is Nashe's goal to "runne through," "suck up" and "select" inadequate trends saturating Elizabethan print culture (1: 10). Nashe's project is to ostensibly encourage a new model of intellectual practice that denounces vapid writing and cautiously valorizes the imitation of classical philosophers. Our scholar classifies "Italianated" texts written by his countrymen as hollow; like a "confused masse of words without matter, a Chaos of sentences without any profitable sense, resembling drummes, which being empty within, sound big without" in an attempt to negate, or remove, these components from the body of English letters (1:10). The most salient feature of Nashe's *Anatomie* is its impulse toward progressive disintegration, a characteristic that unites its formal qualities to the confusing viscera of an anatomized cadaver. As the text unfolds, the faults of bad writing develop into the "faults of the age," and the anatomy becomes increasingly messy: topical membranes overlap, the prose is delivered in fragments, organs of critical unity are severed from one another, excessive ink occludes the clarity of his analysis and, as Nashe himself recognizes, "I goe beyond my Anatomie in touching these abusive enormities" (1:37). Patrick Gant considers that "Nashe uses his talent for dismembering literature as a means of creating it," and, to carry this idea further, it would seem that Nashe fashions the

⁶ Quotes from *The Anatomie of Absurditie* and *Pierce Penilesse* are taken from *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, R. B. McKerrow, ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). Citations are by volume and page number.

⁷ Chronologically, *The Anatomie of Absurditie* is 9th in a field of 117 English literary anatomies printed from 1576–1650 (see Richard Sugg's Appendix I of *Murder After Death* for a comprehensive list). Fittingly, Nashe seems to be at the forefront of this literary trend. Sawday proposes the ubiquity of these 'anatomies' exemplifies "an urge to appropriate the language of partition" (Sawday, 44).

body of his text in a way that captures the basic experience of human dissection.⁸ Nashe's *Anatomie*, like the works it anatomizes, suggests the body and the text share material traits; they are interchangeable objects prone to dismemberment and *decomposition*. Body and text not only produce meaning and presence through a precise flow and interconnection of their internal elements, they are an assembly of devices and strategies that perform readable functions. By degrading his body/text with referents of weakness towards the end of his screed – "I know the learned will laugh me to scorne" – concurrently with metatextual instability – "and even now I begin to bethink me of *Mulcasters Positions* which makes my pen here pause at full point" – Nashe expresses concern over interiority more generally (1:48). He deploys self-referential anxieties to relate a somagraphic horror of self-anatomization. He realizes what he has done to other texts can be done to his.

Nashe carries these anatomical tactics into his most popular contemporary work, *Pierce Penilesse and his Supplication to the Divell* (1592) in an effort to dissect unbridled social abuses rampant in London life. Echoing the divisionary method in *The Anatomie of Absurditie*, *Pierce Penilesse* declares a straightforward critique – here of "Auarice" – but it quickly accelerates into a convoluted breakdown of numerous sins, overwhelming the reader and the author himself – "so I breake off this endlesses argument of speech abruptlie" – with excessive particularization (1: 245). Attempting to elevate his wit to profitability, Pierce's preface announces his determination to "clawe Auarice by the elbow, till his full belly gaue me a full hande, and lette him bloud with my penne (if it might be) in the veyne of liberalitie" by writing a letter to the devil in the grim hope of Satanic justice (1:166). Somagraphic referents in this passage relating the technology of handwritten text to a bleeding vein seemingly mark the author's incision into the body of "Auarice" through writing and it prepares the audience for yet another Nashean dismemberment. The handed procedures of an anatomist's scalpel and the author's pen are here united to demonstrate that writing has a dissective function. For Nashe, the respective energies of writing and anatomy share similar impulses to "look within" and "describe" a subject, and such a correlation is sustained in the supplication itself when Pierce defends the integrity of theatre: "In Playes, all coosonages, all cunning drifts ouer-guylded with outward holinesse, all strategems of warre, all the cankerwormes that breede on the rust of piece, are most lively anatomiz'd" (1:213). Whether in the print shop or the scriptorium of the theatre, plays are inherently textual, they are an effect of writing and have the power to dissect – in a way most "lively" – cultural phenomena and expose them to inspection. The most effective use of anatomical form in Nashe's work occurs after Pierce's preface – a clever rendering of paratext in the body text itself – in which he defines the purpose of his note and searches for a proper courier to deliver it. Pierce's prefatory matter most readily recalls Genette's "threshold," where paratextual material:

⁸ Patrick Grant, *The Transformation of Sin: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1974): 37.

offers to anyone and everyone the possibility either of entering or of turning back. 'An undecided zone' between the inside and the outside, itself without rigorous limits, either towards the interior (the text) or towards the exterior (the discourse of the world on the text), a border, or as Philippe Lejeune said, 'the fringe of the printed text, which in reality controls the whole reading.'⁹

Concluding the preface, the "knight of the Post" opens the letter (after revealing himself as a suitable agent for the cause) and reads it. The opening of Pierce's supplication and the text's attendant breach in form as it transitions to an epistolary mode registers the experience of "entering" or going further "inside" the body text. It marks the crossing of Pierce's paratextual threshold into the supplication and such an opening authorizes correlations with the unfurling of a cadaver. Following the pen-stroke incision (where quills are scalpels), Pierce's letter is opened like human skin in a dissection. Pierce's preface declares "Auarice" to be the topic of his plea, the flesh of his petition, and when the letter is unfolded the preface membrane – or general subject – is discovered to be the precursor to a densely stratified catalogue of component parts. What follows the 'opening' is a descriptive overflow of transgressions that are seemingly held together by the fusing power of greed: "Niggardize," pride, antiquaries, envy, murder, wrath, detractors of poetry and plays, Richard Harvey, gluttony, drunkenness, sloth, and lechery can all be seen in some way as organs of avarice as they each share self-indulgent characteristics that contribute in some way to the narrator's pitiable condition. If Pierce's preface is the skin of "Auarice" then his supplication has become an anatomy of the larger body of "Auarice." Greed is the connective tissue giving shape, unity and dimension to the corpus of abuses that Pierce analyzes in his entreaty and once the s(k)in of greed has been opened, the body of greediness is dissected to analyze how the constituent elements of avarice function individually.

Strengthening the somagraphic tendencies of *Pierce Penilesse* is the complex of the pages themselves. The mise-en-page of Nashe's text mirrors that of the *Fabrica* by installing printed marginalia referencing the subdivision and sectioning of the body text's component parts.¹⁰ Much like the *Fabrica*, the many layers of *Pierce Penilesse* require marginal matter to differentiate individual organs in a messy dissection process. Nashe's use of marginalia fragments the text according to the Vesalian method, it divides the interconnected organs into parts where they can be examined closely and read independently. To follow William W.E. Slights' study on marginalia in early modern texts – "For different kinds of books, marginal material served quite different functions" – both Nashe and Vesalius authorize marginalia to amplify, annotate, emphasize, organize, and summarize the exasperating opacity of their respective bodies.¹¹ For Slights, to use

⁹ Gérard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 261.

¹⁰ See: *EEBO* for a facsimile of the 1592 edition.

¹¹ William W. E. Slights, "The Edifying Margins of Renaissance English Books," *Renaissance Quarterly* 42 (1989): 686–87.

marginalia in this way “simplified the task of the browser seeking an epitome of the text and served as an index well before indices became a regular feature of printed volumes.”¹² In both works, marginalia functions as an information retrieval tool to orient the reader within an often bewildering array of information and provide a straightforward reference point amid complex divisionary maneuvers. Though performing on different bodies, Nashe and Vesalius are conducting anatomies that require specific textual strategies in order to present their detailed and exhaustive itemizations to the reader in an efficient way.

For his research, Vesalius used only human cadavers and such *in toto* empirical tactics become a way of seeing beyond conventional theories of anatomical order. In the *Fabrica*, the human body is read scientifically and apart from limiting mystical and political apparatuses – lenses that traditionally corrupted the science of the body – for the first time. As a result, the *Fabrica* is postured heavily against the outdated theories of the 2nd century Greek anatomist Claudius Galen:

Even though it is just now known to us from the reborn art of dissection, from the careful reading of Galen’s books, and from the welcome restoration of many portions thereof, that he himself never dissected a human body, but in fact was deceived by his monkeys and often wrongly disputed ancient doctors who had trained themselves in human dissections.¹³

Vesalius clearly believes that Galen’s anatomical authority is weakened by wayward sources, resulting in inaccurate theories of the human interior that persisted for fifteen centuries. Such details not only limit the effectiveness of Galen’s anatomical precision, they are systemic failures within the discipline that enabled Vesalius’s revolutionary amendments. Jack Wilton also speaks to the limitations of Galen in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in a brief yet damning diatribe about physicians during an outbreak of the plague: “Galen might go shoe the gander for any good he could do; his secretaries had so long called him divine that now he had lost all his virtue upon earth” (275). Suggesting that Galen’s tasks are ineffective and absurd certainly gestures towards a Vesalian understanding of ancient medical theory. Jack, like Vesalius, recognizes the “lost virtues” of Galen’s practices that have been unjustly, and harmfully reified. In his attempt to treat what he determined to be misconceptions, Vesalius dissects Galen’s body of work like a cadaver, through a “careful reading.” The dual anatomization of the body and text is important to observing how literature interacted with anatomy in the early modern period. Nancy S. Siraisi states: “In principle, though certainly by no means always in practice, the new anatomy demanded that anyone who could dissect a cadaver should also be capable of dissecting an ancient Greek text (preferably in the original language), and that anyone who wished to discuss an anatomical text

¹² Ibid., 697

¹³ Andreas Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, William Frank Richardson and John Burd Carman, eds., (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1998): 2vi.

should also be capable of dissecting a cadaver.”¹⁴ Siraisi’s insight allows one to observe that Vesalius’s approach to human dissection is not unlike the ways in which he anatomized Galenic texts. As a result, the *fabrics* of the human body and the book are united with proportionate energies; they become interchangeable objects that can be read, scrutinized and interpreted in similar ways.

A grisly carnival of the fragmented body pervades nearly every page of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, offering the reader a virtuosic prose narrative infused with historically specific anatomical familiarity. Nashe’s use of gruesome representation opens a critical vein that serves as a meeting point for the human body and literary text. The execution of Cutwolfe offers a constructive moment to observe how Vesalian references inform the arrangement of Nashe’s work. These texts cannot fail to engage. Before he is killed, the convicted murderer Cutwolfe engages in a long oration that relates in detail how he sought to extend his “murderous platform” onto Esdras’ body and soul to revenge the death of his brother (368). To ensure this double mutilation, Cutwolfe reveals how he commanded Esdras to sign a letter in his own blood relinquishing his contract with the almighty: “The vein in his left hand that is derived from the heart with no faint blow he pierced, and with the full blood that flowed from it writ a full obligation of his soul to the devil” (368). The anatomical language in this passage carries immediate resonance to Vesalius’s revolutionary theories of the heart in the *Fabrica*. Galen believed the liver to be the source of all of veins and the main organ for blood generation. He understood the liver to absorb digested food and transform it into viscous blood that traveled throughout the body. This ‘nutritive blood’ was then soaked up by the organs for nourishment. The miniscule amount of blood that reached the heart was quickly diverted into the lungs to produce “vital spirits” with the aid of oxygen from the air. Galen’s heart was an organ that generated heat for the body by “sucking” the blood produced in the liver “as a lamp would suck up oil.”¹⁵ Therefore, by pulling blood up from the liver, the heart became the engine that filled the organs of the body with warmth and sustenance. Vesalius was the first anatomist to discover that the veins, most specifically the *venae cavae*, originated in the heart (not the liver):

The portions of the vena cava and portal veins ascending from the right and left sinus of the heart to the root of the neck on. We have carefully sketched for teaching purposes the arrangement of the fibers of the venous wall. The anatomy of the parts does not support Galen on a hepatic origin, but the comparisons of the relative size of the calibers of the vessels establish the heart as the true source of the system.¹⁶

¹⁴ Nancy S. Siraisi, “Vesalius and the Reading of Galen’s Teleology,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (1997): 2.

¹⁵ Galen quoted in C.R.S Harris, *The Heart and the Vascular System in Ancient Greek Medicine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): 272.

¹⁶ Vesalius, plate 46.11.

Here, Vesalius's empirical priorities are on full display. Not content to reify Galen's theory of the heart, this moment in the *Fabrica* carefully maps the origin and destination points of the vena cava and portal veins, redefining the visual and functional matrix of the cardiovascular system. Vesalius's attention to detail presents "the heart as the true source of the system," overriding Galen's outdated paradigm with emphasis on what is seen inside the human body. Speculating on the modern significance of Vesalius's 16th century revision of Galen, medical historian James Ball indicates that: "Vesalius knew that in several particulars that the accepted physiology of the vascular system was wrong, if he could have lived a few years longer, he might have solved the great problem which was made clear by William Harvey."¹⁷ Nashe's text is careful to specify Esdras' pierced vein as "derived from the heart," indicating an early anatomical understanding of cardio-centric veins that originates in the *Fabrica*.

From this small anatomical reference, several connections can be made between the character of Cutwolfe and Vesalius. The name Cutwolfe immediately resounds with Vesalius's profession; an anatomist *Cuts* the human body, and hunts for its secrets like a *wolfe*. Knowing that Vesalius's anatomical knowledge circulates in Nashe's text from the above suggestion, one can see how "Cutwolfe" could stand as a pseudonym for Vesalius himself. By writing Vesalius and his thinking into *The Unfortunate Traveller* through the character of an executed criminal who is dismembered before an eager audience, Nashe is conducting an anatomy on Vesalius. In addition, Vesalius implies in the *Fabrica* that the heart, not the brain, is the seat of the soul due to the aetiology of the veins.¹⁸ We know from Cutwolfe's confession that his spiritual and physical violation of Esdras is rooted in the heart; the source of his vein and as a result of the letter to the devil written in his blood, the seat of his soul. This defiance of the soul and body dynamic was an anti-Galenic and decidedly anti-theological maneuver that precipitated some of Vesalius's more extreme misfortunes, culminating in his arrest for allegedly anatomizing a living nobleman in Spain. Vesalius was accused by the family of the mutilated man and put on trial. Convicted, he was forced to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from which he never returned.¹⁹ There are echoes of this arduous expedition within

¹⁷ James Ball, *Andreas Vesalius: Reformer of Anatomy* (St. Louis: Medical Science Press, 1910): 110.

¹⁸ Galen and the Church both agreed that the brain's spiritual dimensions enabled remembrance and reflection. However, Vesalius considered the heart to be the "seat of the soul" because of its ability to sustain life through blood, making reflection and memory possible. Vesalius famously blamed theologians (just as he did Galen's work) for making assumptions about the soul and body dynamic without a working knowledge of the body itself.

¹⁹ A published letter from Hubert Languet to Kaspar Peucer in 1565 describes the rumor in detail: "The story is that Vesalius is dead. Undoubtedly you have heard that he set out for Jerusalem, and the reason for that pilgrimage is a remarkable one as it has been written to me from Spain. A Spanish nobleman had been entrusted to his care, but when

Cutwolfe's confession, as he recounts his pursuit of Esdras: "Twenty months together I pursued him [...] In quest of thee ever since over three-thousand miles I have travelled [...]" (364). Cutwolfe and Vesalius then, share a similar series of unfortunate travels flowing directly from a physical interaction with the human heart and its physiological and spiritual dimensions – dimensions that originate in the text of the *Fabrica*.

It is also significant that Cutwolfe's confession and subsequent execution take place in Bologna, the site of Vesalius's public anatomies from 1540–1542 that served as the empirical source material for the *Fabrica*: "To Bologna to a merry gale we posted [...] And one day hearing of a more desperate murderer than Cain that was to be executed we followed the multitude and grutched not to lend him our eyes at his last parting" (362).²⁰ Cutwolfe's extended oration and death scene in Nashe's text gestures towards the formal structure of public dissections, where a long lecture generally preceded an anatomical exercise. Cutwolfe's confession is the lecture that precedes his own anatomy. Like the confession before an execution, the objective of an anatomical lecture was to provide orientation to the spectators and prepare them for the confusing and gross display of somatic viscera. Whether in the anatomy theatre or on the scaffold, such orations prime the audience for a drama of mutilation. It is worthy to note that Zadoch, the subject of another gruesome anatomical exercise in Nashe's work, is not given the privilege of an oration before his death. The formal distinction between the two executions allows the reader to observe the importance of Bologna in *The Unfortunate Traveller* and how it is used as a marker of Vesalian influence. Wilton describes Cutwolfe's dismemberment violently and he overwhelms the reader with somagraphic vision:

Bravely did he drum on Cutwolfe's bones, not breaking them outright but, like a saddler knocking in of tacks, jarring on them quaveringly with his hammer a great while together. No joint about him but with a hatchet he had for the nonce the disjointed staff, and then, with boiling lead soldered up the wounds from the bleeding. His tongue he pulled out, lest he should blaspheme in his torment. Venomous stinging worms he thrust into his ears to keep his head ravingly occupied. With cankers scrused to pieces he rubbed his mouth and his gums. No limb of his but was lingeringly splintered into shivers. In this horror they left

Vesalius believed him to have died, as because he was not satisfied as to the cause of his death, he sought permission of the relatives of the dead man to open the body; having obtained such permission, when he opened up the chest he found it still beating. The relatives, not content to accuse Vesalius of murder, also denounced him as impious, thus seeking to gain an even greater revenge." Quoted in Charles Donald O'Malley, *Andreas Vesalius of Brussels 1514–1564* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964): 304.

²⁰ For details on Vesalius's lectures in Bologna, see Baldasar Heselers, *Andreas Vesalius' First Public Anatomy at Bologna 1540: An Eyewitness Report*, Ruben Eriksson, ed., (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1959).

him on the wheel as in hell, where, yet living, he might behold his flesh legacied amongst the fowls of the air. (369)

Like Vesalius's visual method in the *Fabrica*, the effectiveness of this scene depends on precision of delivery; an overflow of words that "see" the event in a comprehensive way. In this moment, excess becomes significant to the formal arrangement as well as the content in the text itself. Cutwolfe is not simply executed, he is hammered, "disjointed," "soldered" with "boiling lead" and "splintered." His tongue is "pulled out," has "venomous stinging worms thrust into his ears," his "mouth and gums" are torturously ruined and he is tied to a "wheel," where his "living" opened body is put on display as infernal fodder to the birds. The sentences move rapidly and transfer thought quickly, mimicking the speed and precision of Cutwolfe's disintegration. Nashe's narrative technique fashions representational devices to construct a semblance of realistic bodily fragmentation. This death is extremely brutal, the punishment far exceeding the crime, and in Wilton's words "a truculent tragedy." As in an actual public anatomy, this scene is quite "horrific" and an exercise in gross exhibition as Cutwolfe's body is "legacied" and fêted for its semiotic exchange with the crowd. Like Vesalius, Cutwolfe is put on display in Bologna before an enthusiastic audience within the context of brutal corporeal fragmentation. Like Cutwolfe, Vesalius was tried and convicted of murder, although he was spared the rigors of execution while Cutwolfe was not. By violently partitioning the fictional representation of Vesalius – in agonizing fashion no less – Nashe subdues the anatomist with a carnivalesque inversion. The anatomist gets anatomized and Nashe asserts his wit and potency as a writer. Echoing Siraisi, Nashe is reading and dissecting the *Fabrica* as Cutwolfe's bones are "splintered" like wood and broken down into the raw materials of a book. Here, writing as a visual tool becomes as effective as anatomy, if not more so. Most readily posed in the execution of Cutwolfe is *translatio scapellum*: in fragmenting Cutwolfe, Nashe inherits the scalpel, transforms it into a pen and appropriates anatomy's unique custody of detailed observational strategies. As similarly observed in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* and *Pierce Penilesse*, writing can be enriched and empowered with the language of dissection to produce the effect of specificity. As a result, to write is to conduct an anatomy, but more of an anatomy than anatomy itself, as prose can dissect an anatomist.

The transformative effect of Cutwolfe's execution on Wilton is comparable to the phenomenological challenges Vesalius's text posed to early modern culture after its publication. After witnessing the fragility of Cutwolfe's flesh as it is effortlessly hacked into pieces by the executioner, Jack becomes fully aware – albeit afraid – of the body through the body's fragmentation, a complex and historically specific perspective on the virtues of Vesalian knowledge. After the execution, *The Unfortunate Traveller* hastens to an abrupt conclusion:

To such straight life did it thenceforward incite me ere I went out of Bologna
I married my courtesan, preformed many alms-deeds, and hasted so fast out

of the Sodom of Italy, that within forty days I arrived at the King of England's camp twixt Ardes and Guines in France, where he with great triumphs met and entertained the Emperor and the French King and feasted for many days. (370)

Wilton's interaction with Cutwolfe's (textual) body frightens him into a "straight life" forcing him to abandon his errant ways in favor of socio-normative priorities. This sudden shift from the knavish, scheming, "King of the Pages" persona marks not only a significant character change, it also registers the complex way in which Elizabethan England was forced to redefine its relationship with embodiment after Vesalius's book. Naomi Conn Liebler states: "Reading – especially reading for pleasure – became the means by which people in a range of classes and communities discovered, fashioned, knew and imagined not only 'themselves' but also the relation of those selves to a nearly infinite world of other selves both real and invented."²¹ "Reading" Cutwolfe/the *Fabrica* compels Wilton to grasp the fragility of his own body forcing him to become "mortifiedly abjected and daunted" by this new knowledge of the human frame and its "some thousand parts."²² Gazing within the body has troubled Jack into reorienting his perception of embodiment, and thus his identity. The somatophobic horror generated by Vesalius's anatomy extends even further, to the body of a book itself. As early as the dedication to the Earl of Southampton, Nashe seems to be concerned with the impermanence of his textual body, comparing his work to a "handful of leaves," that in their raw and vulnerable state, "cannot grow of themselves except they have some branches or boughs to cleave to, and with whose juice and sap they be evermore recreated and nourished" (252). Nashe fears that without the nourishment of patronage, his ink or "sap" will bleed out and his work will dry up and die. On Nashe's relationship between ink and the vulnerable body, Steve Mentz indicates that "writing with ink becomes a metaphor for the 'expense of spirit' in its sexual and spiritual senses" and I propose that in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, the fragility of Nashe's substrate goes hand in hand with the fragility of human tissue.²³ The protagonist is a 'page' named Wilton after all, which presents a pun on 'wilting' (implying the transitive verb 'wilt on') that unites anxieties of corporeal corruption for both human and textual bodies. The 'page' is a flesh and blood character and a fundamental component to the physicality of a book that share analogous material characteristics. The realistic dread produced in the margins of the *Fabrica* seems to adjust perceptions of a 'body' more generally, in all of its various and intermittent molds.

²¹ Naomi Conn Liebler, "Introduction: the Cultural Politics of Reading," in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, Naomi Conn Liebler, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2007): 4.

²² Vesalius, 2vii.

²³ Steve Mentz, "Day labor: Thomas Nashe and the practice of prose in early modern England," in *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, Naomi Conn Liebler, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2007): 22.

Just as the panic of body consciousness is visibly layered in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, so is the profound appeal of this new knowledge in the hands of a writer. The title page of Vesalius's *Fabrica* generates a portrait of curiosity) that runs rampant throughout Nashe's work and commands the formal presentation of key plot points in Wilton's story. In the famous woodcut by Jan Stephan van Calcar, Vesalius stands over a centrally positioned cadaver surrounded by throngs of eager spectators within an anatomical theatre. The aesthetically-busy frontispiece seemingly invites the reader into the performance space of the grotesque.

T. Hugh Crawford explores the social aspects of this scene, indicating that we are also entering Latour's theatre of proof.²⁴ Latour's theatre is a physical space where scientific objects – or “viscera” – by literally being “laid out on the operating table” are freed from inadequacies and previously reified theoretical deformities. By observing the staged excess of the body in gross, physical detail, the spectators in Vesalius's theatre are granted access to hidden biological processes that confront the textual authority of the ancients. Crawford hints that the crude corpse on Vesalius's chopping block, “like perspective in painting,” is what “directs the audience's gaze to a single significant object.”²⁵ The female corpse in Vesalius's lecture is the site that allows spectators/readers to produce meaning through pragmatic examination. The woman on display on the title page can be regarded as an outward sign of patriarchal ownership (by mapping her, Vesalius is taking possession). Vesalius intervenes upon the female body through a caesarian incision and the opened womb of the female subject becomes an allegory for the *Fabrica* itself: it is giving birth to new knowledge. Anatomy is being “reborn” before our eyes. Elizabeth Bronfren believes that with “representations of the dead feminine body, culture can repress and articulate its unconscious knowledge of death which it fails to foreclose even as it cannot express it directly.”²⁶ Assuming a male spectator, Bronfren indicates that the female body, as a site of radical alterity, becomes a way of representing the death that is not “mine.” The dead female in visual representation contacts an unconscious desire for mortality (*todestrieb*) and the repressed knowledge of the viewer's own death without expressing it directly. In this way, the female subject on the cover of the *Fabrica* seemingly prepares the reader (also assuming a male spectator) for an anatomical-metaphysical narrative. Because she is female, her body is an acceptable space to explore the horrors of interiority since the gross multitude of contents within her body is not “mine.” However, by gazing upon the dead female – and the contents of the *Fabrica* – the reader is participating in an unconscious desire to understand their own body much in the way Bronfren's spectator understands death. Yet the male spectator is unable to understand “his” body in this theatre, because it is the body of a woman and therefore “not his.” By utilizing the female cadaver, a literal body

²⁴ T. Hugh Crawford, “Imaging the Human Body: Quasi Objects, Quasi-Texts and the Theatre of Proof,” *PMLA*, 111.1 (Jan. 1996): 66–79.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 69

²⁶ Elizabeth Bronfren, *Over Her Dead Body* (New York: Routledge, 1992): xi.

that simultaneously functions as trope (“mine/not mine”), Vesalius’s text offers his audience access to their bodies while simultaneously making them “not their own” on the title page of the *Fabrica*, successfully articulating a metaphor for the text itself. The female corpse in the *Fabrica* marks a point of entry into the interchangeability of text and anatomy (anatomies are texts after all) and to the ways in which female death is constructed in literature like Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*, where the opening of Heraclide is ultimately used as a way for Jack Wilton to cross Genette’s threshold and commence (as this moment in the text is the cover, or beginning, of the *Fabrica*) a complex reading of his own interiority.

When the Spanish bandit Esdras suddenly invades the plague-ridden (or poetry-ridden) house of Heraclide and proceeds to rape the hostess, what follows is “a scene that horrifically mimics the blazon in its pornographic anatomy of her body” and an extreme exercise in delegitimizing the early modern dependence upon poetic forms:²⁷

Backward he dragged her, even as a man backward would pluck a tree down by the twigs, and then, like a traitor that is drawn to the execution on a hurdle, he traileth her up and down the chamber by those tender un twisted braids and setting his barbarous foot on her bare snowy breast, bad her yield or have her wind stamped out. [...] Dismissing her hair from his fingers and pinioning her elbows therewithal, she struggled, she wrestled but all was in vain. So struggling and so resisting, her jewels did sweat, signifying there was poison coming towards her. On the hard boards he threw her, and used his knee as an iron ram to beat ope the two leaved gate of her chastity. Her husband’s dead body he made a pillow to his abomination. Conjecture the rest my words stick fast in the mire and are clean tired; would I had never undertook this tragical tale. (336)

In this scene, Nashe emphasizes the brutal mining of Italianated verse represented by Heraclide. Wilton’s errant ways force him to interact with poetry at times and what follows is often a sobering and satirical demystification of poetic forms. According to Stephen Guy-Bray: “Over the course of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe’s condemnations of the dependence on literary models that he appears to see as one of the major problems for the writers of his era become one of the text’s salient features.”²⁸ Nashe’s interaction with poetry can be compared to Vesalius’s interrogation of Galen: both authors depend upon old styles to position an innovative form. The most obvious evidence of Nashe’s reaction against poetry as a “literary model” is found in his experiences in Italy. As Guy-Bray indicates, “Rome is clearly the worst place he [Wilton] visits; the text’s insistence on Rome as a place

²⁷ Fleck, 307.

²⁸ Stephen Guy-Bray, “How to turn prose into literature: the case of Thomas Nashe.” *Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading*, Naomi Conn Liebler, ed., (New York: Routledge, 2007): 38.

of horrors can be read as a deliberately anti-Virgilian gesture.”²⁹ Such a negative space can be extended to the general plague of borrowed poetic forms dominating literary culture in early modern England; and the consistent trope of plague in Nashe’s work can be seen as an allegory to the ubiquity of poetry as a diseased and dying literary mode. The graphic rape of Heraclide represents a conventional (and most uninvited) early modern violation of poetry.³⁰ Esdras embodies the labor of Nashe’s contemporaries by dragging the hostess “backward,” indicative of the rearward facing forms of writing during this period. The representation of Heraclide as a broken tree is particularly telling; as a diachronically rooted entity, the tree is a historical object. Like the poetry of old, it has achieved presence over time that is capable of being read and continuously re-examined. Here however, the tree is “plucked” and abused by the invading present symbolizing the destructive nature of imitation. The poetic body of Heraclide can be seen as a textual body desecrated by the commercial habits of early modern print culture to circulate derivative material. Continuing Heraclide’s textual characteristics, Wilton relates that Esdras “used his knee as an ironing ram to beat ope the two leaved gate of her chastity.” Here Nashe endows the hostess’s genital region, the site of violation, with leaves and a direct relationship between leaves and the pages of a text in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, particularly in reference to generation and reproduction, is provided in Nashe’s dedication to Southampton: “Your lordship is the large-spreading branch of renown, from whence these my idle leaves seek to derive their whole nourishing” (252). By raping an Italian form, Esdras signifies the habitual and sickening presence of derivative texts. The rape of Heraclide stages the Nashean attitude that poetic forms should be left alone in favor of a visceral, modern mode. As Guy-Bray indicates, “Nashe must have been galled to know that poetry that was vastly inferior to his own writing was considered superior simply because it was poetry” and I suggest Esdras’s violence is a way for Nashe to confront an unwelcome visitation to orthodox poetic styles by his contemporaries.³¹ By resting Heraclide’s body against the carcass of her “dead” husband before raping her, the bandit provides further proof of this, as a “dead” form supplies the cushion for Esdras’s interaction with the Italian body. The reanimation of her husband’s corpse, seemingly brought to life with the presence of Esdras, is unnatural (like derivative writing) and it leads to a linearity of unfortunate events for Jack, the spectator of this scene. Writing poetry is to summon the living dead. Additionally, Heraclide kills herself after the “detestable” act, suggesting the impossibility of

²⁹ Guy-Bray, 38

³⁰ It must also be considered that “Heraclide” is a feminized representation of Heraclitus, whose famous aphorism “you cannot step into the same stream twice” implies that endless movement and continuous modification are immutable traits of the natural world. In the context of the above passage it seems that Nashe advocates applying this philosophy to the realm of literature where “you cannot step into the same poem twice.” Any attempt to do so is tantamount to a brutal violation.

³¹ Guy-Bray, 45

generation – pointing here to creative thought – when such reviled advancement is enacted upon a (textual) body: “Farewell sin-sowed flesh that hast more weeds than flowers, more woes than joys. Point, pierce, edge, enwiden, I patiently afford thee a shealth” (339). Heraclide’s theatrical death, who dies by cutting herself open, serves to remind us of the similarly “enwidened” female body on the cover of the *Fabrica*. Jack’s interface with Heraclide’s maimed flesh invites the reader into the Vesalian theater of proof. Here, Nashe’s text is turned into an anatomy of the female body. Jack watches the “detestable” scene and his desire to see corresponds to Bronfren’s articulations on death: “In respect to death, one could say, it names one thing (‘I am the spectator/survivor of someone else’s death, therefore I can tell myself there is no death for me’) and means something else (‘someone else is dead, therefore I know there is death’).”³² Jack is compelled to watch because it enables him to ‘other’ the death event embodied in the abject body of the female. However, Heraclide, like Vesalius’s female cadaver, is a sign of the beginning of the anatomy lesson. Her corpse is the threshold of anatomical knowledge; her opened womb is an invitation to see within. Jack seemingly accepts this summons and thus individualizes the *Fabrica*’s progressive narrative of dissection as the plot unfolds. As if inhabiting the pages of Vesalius’s text, Jack learns to both desire and loathe the amplifying compendium of his body when he himself becomes vulnerable before the gaze of the anatomist and is forced to see himself as a cadaver on the chopping block.

Jack’s sex dream about getting anatomized while being held prisoner by Doctor Zacherie for a yearly anatomy stages the effects of reading Vesalius’s text. Jack imagines his own anatomy in terms that align him with Heraclide and the cover image of the *Fabrica*: “Not a drop of sweat trickled down my breast and my sides, but I dreamt it was a smooth-edged razor tenderly slicing down my breast and sides. If any knocked at door, I supposed it was the beadle of Surgeon’s Hall come for me. In the night I dreamt of nothing but phlebotomy” (349). Here, Jack describes the hallucination of his own anatomy with seductive language. Being forced to inhabit the role of the anatomical subject, he has *turned into* Heraclide and the female figure on the cover of the *Fabrica*. The scalpel addresses his flesh “tenderly” moving down his body like the slow and careful stroke of a lover. As Jack mistakes the “sweat” trickling on his body for the presence of a knife, the wetness and violence of sexual activity and the wetness and violence of an anatomical exercise become one and the same. This wet metal comes to him “at night” as if a nocturnal emission. Jack has seen Heraclide’s interior, he has been granted access to the objectivity of the human body in the theatre of proof. By bearing witness to the somatic viscera that was “not his,” he desires now to see his own, transforming the objective experience of the anatomical theater – and by extension – an anatomical text into a uniquely subjective experience.³³ Dreaming of

³² Bronfren, xi

³³ Describing the autoptic vision, or one’s desire to see within one’s own body, Jonathan Sawday states: “But it is, perhaps, this very impossibility of gazing within our

“nothing but phlebotomy,” Wilton seeks to empty himself of his spirits, he craves a liquid release synonymous with “enwidening” that engineers a collapse between his embodied subjectivity and the objects that constitute that embodiment. To look at the human body as a collection of signs is to occupy it through seeing. In order to fully understand the detailed continent of his body, Jack wishes to see – or read – it for himself. Jack’s need for seeing could be associated with the general use of the somagraphic gaze throughout *The Unfortunate Traveller*. Seduced by the detail and graphic display of the dissected human body in the *Fabrica*, Nashe desires to construct a gaze of equal precision and thoroughness. His text transforms into the *Fabrica* – just as Wilton turned into Heraclide – through a need to see precisely.

Acting as a stylistic mirror to Vesalius’s new anatomy, Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* rebels against ancient authority in its search for a new writing technique. In his discussion of *The Unfortunate Traveller*’s firm opposition to poetry, Guy-Bray succinctly locates this aspect of Nashe’s prose: “Central to Nashe’s thinking is the idea that literature should be original, by which he means that a text should not be too indebted to even the greatest of continental and classical authors. [...] In an era when prose narratives were very popular but not taken seriously, Nashe seeks to establish prose as equal or even superior to poetry.”³⁴ Like Vesalius’s innovative approach to the human flesh, Nashe perceives a need to break from convention in order to locate a “clean different vein” within a textual mass. The imagery of a vein that is “clean” and “different” not only corresponds to a new and original flow of words, it conjures impressions of discovering unexplored, untapped recesses of the human body, the very objective of Vesalius’s corporal quest in the *Fabrica*. As previous analysis has shown, the importance of the “vein” in this Nashean phrase cannot be emphasized enough. Like Vesalius, Nashe was not content to let antiquated modes dominate his work, opting instead to discover them anew. In addition, Nashe’s form is traditionally seen as rhetorically ingenious, a unique characteristic of his prose that separated him from his contemporaries. C.S. Lewis calls Nashe: “undoubtedly the greatest of the Elizabethan pamphleteers, the perfect literary showman, and the juggler with words who can keep a crowd spell-bound by sheer virtuosity.”³⁵ Lewis’s commentary strengthens the formal similarities between these gross anatomies; for as we know, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, like the *Fabrica*, is performative (an anatomist “performs” an anatomy) and comprehensive. Like Vesalius, Nashe’s “virtuosity” lies in his ability to layer word upon word to map a complex interior space of a textual body; a strategy of intricacy that mimics the *Fabrica*’s effort to account for the many and complex parts of the human being.

own bodies which makes the sight of other bodies so compelling. Denied direct experience of ourselves, we can only explore others in the hope (or the fear) that this other might also be us” (Sawday, 8).

³⁴ Guy-Bray, 23

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954): 411

As this study has shown, Nashe's form in *The Unfortunate Traveller* is empowered by a tactical specificity drawn from the *Fabrica*'s rich abstractions of the human frame. By historicizing Vesalius's tactics of writing the human body I have investigated the ways in which those methods leaked into the printed page. Thinking about the body and text together in this allows one to observe that *The Unfortunate Traveller* – in both content and form – is fashioned by Vesalian attitudes about how the human body coheres and 'works' from the inside. Exploring the relationship between Nashe's text and Vesalius's anatomy is central to what I have tentatively called somagraphy, or how anatomical knowledge can inform literary strategies. This project has explored how Thomas Nashe takes specific formal suggestions from the *Fabrica* in the ways that he cites Vesalian anatomical theory, questions the endurance of orthodox forms, and performs his literary labor with an empirical rigor. Nashe's stylistic emphasis on free indirect discourse (a formal directive that 'goes within') and intricate composition suggests that poetry cannot articulate a post-Vesalian phenomenological environment, only prose can. A by-product of this observable transference can relate the emergence of prose as a dominant mode of expression to the visual strategies of new anatomy more generally. How the textual body is mapped, written and defined in works like *The Unfortunate Traveller* is useful for the rejuvenation of a particular consciousness of the English Renaissance, one focused on the shifting and complex logics of somatic realism.

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SECTION 3

Trespasses of Authorship

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Chapter 8

Wit without Money in Nashe

David Landreth

Beggarly lies no beggarly wit but can invent. But I am of another metal: they shall know that I live as their evil angel, to haunt them world without end, if I have cause.

Nashe to the “interpreters” of *Pierce Penniless*, 1592¹

This essay construes the strange materiality of Nashe’s prose production in terms of the metaphysical categories of substance and privation – or, put more simply, of something and nothing. Nashe accredits his own style in *Lenten Stuff* by declaring “that’s Pierce a-God’s-name,” citing his performance here as a genuine article, the real thing (376). In naming his prose “Pierce,” Nashe is asserting the continuity of the voice of *Lenten Stuff* with that of his earlier smash hit *Pierce Penniless*, against the pretensions of imitators. Yet Nashe’s fans already know that *Pierce Penniless* is not only the desirably authorial real thing, in the register of style; *Pierce* is also a very insubstantial kind of thing, ontologically speaking – an ersatz thing, an empty vessel. His self-authorizing eponym names him as such a belittled thing, for “Pierce Penniless” sounds punningly like “purse penniless” to Elizabethan ears.² What defines both *Pierce*’s witty verbosity – his fulsomeness of style – and his trivial vacuity – his privation of substance – is the coin he lacks. Nashe uses monies made of silver and gold to chart the threshold of materiality, where substance dwindles toward, but does not yield to, nothingness. For Nashe, this metaphysical barrier is the site at once of privation and profusion, a place where immaterial multitudes of angels and devils alike impinge upon the fully material world. And this threshold

¹ I’d like to thank the editors of the present volume, the participants in the 2008 Nashe seminar at SAA, and audiences at UC Berkeley and UC Davis for their generosity (and patience) in engaging earlier versions of this argument. My epigraph is from “A private Epistle of the Author to the Printer,” prefacing the second edition of *Pierce Penniless* (in Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, J.B. Steane, ed. [London: Penguin, 1972]: 51; all citations of Nashe’s texts are to this edition unless otherwise noted, and will hereafter be given parenthetically in the text). As I note below (n. 15), Nashe apparently did not intend PP to have any prefatory material at all; this “epistle” is defensive not only against the hostile interpreters of the first edition but against the printer’s addition of an expository title and preface to it on his own initiative. I borrow the title of my essay from John Fletcher’s comedy *Wit without Money* (c.1614).

² Niel K. Snortum, “The Title of Nash’s *Pierce Penniless*,” *MLN* 72.3 (March 1957): 170–73.

is the place where “Pierce-a-God’s-name” gets made. In order to explicate how the edge of material privation works to define both the individuated uniqueness of the discursive style named “Pierce” and its profuse wit, I will compare the gleeful imagination of the demoniac possibilities of bankruptcy in *Pierce Penniless* to the homiletic outcome of a corresponding confrontation with the pettiness of small change in *Greene’s Groatworth of Wit*. The difference between these two contemporaneous pamphlets, I argue, lies in Nashe’s repudiation of an older generation’s model of authorship as the crux between prodigality and repentance. *Pierce Penniless* spurns the homiletically ethical *telos* of the prodigal’s conversion, in order to locate its verbal productivity instead in the demoniacal scenario of an unrepentantly wasteful diminution, whose *telos* is that of the material minimum of the self. I will close by briefly considering the recurrence of the idea of minimality in both *The Terrors of the Night* and *Lenten Stuff*, to show how this model of apparently perverse productivity continues to inform the wide-ranging topical and generic diversity of Nashe’s prose writing.

Taunting the small-mindedness of his misinterpreters as a “beggarly” impoverishment of wit, Nashe in the above excerpt from the preface to *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* – the manifesto of his own spectacular wit, enacted in the voice of a demoniac bankrupt – enacts the convergence among his own wit’s “metal,” the immaterial malice of his detractors, and the thoroughness of his threatened retribution, as the haunting of an “evil angel.” In the material, monetary register established by the pamphlet’s title, an “angel” made of “metal” is a large, exceptionally pure gold coin of the English mint, worth ten shillings in the 1590s, featuring the Archangel Michael smiting the dragon Satan on its face; an “evil angel” is a counterfeit of that coin, made of some baser metal for the illicit profit of the coiner. In the contrary, extra-material register of haunting and of the apocalyptic “world without end,” the evil angel is a spirit – a devil – but one defined in like wise by its originary fineness and power, made vicious in its fall.³ It has perversely repudiated its own angelic nature, its super-material goodness. Yet even after laying waste to itself, something of that nature remains – albeit within the constraints of oxymoron. Nashe’s own wit is not golden, if its “other metal” is that of an evil angel, despite its opposition to the “beggarly wit” of the nemeses whom he denounces. Rather, its substance is a negation of gold: it’s whatever drossy stuff is left behind by the wasting of angelic goodness, which

³ Elizabethans punned incessantly on the radical difference between the Mint’s angels and God’s. An instance best corresponding to this passage comes near the beginning of *2 Henry IV*:

Chief Justice. You follow the young prince up and down, like his ill angel.

Falstaff. Not so, my lord. Your ill angel is light [*i.e.*, does not have the gold content corresponding to its face value], but I hope he that looks upon me will take me without weighing, and yet in some respects I grant I cannot go [*i.e.*, am not current, am unable to circulate]. (1.2.163–8) All Shakespeare citations are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans, gen. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

persists as a demonically vituperative haunting. Nashe's posture of "evil angel" is as discursively empowering as it is materially disembodiment. It has not only diabolical power but a permanence of its own in the material world, and, Nashe threatens, beyond it, into the eternal "world without end."

Perversely evacuated of its proper nature, a goodness that coordinates the material and transcendental, the "evil angel" instead manifests an improper and effective – and delightful – discursiveness in the place of its own wasted good. Within the scope of *Pierce Penniless* and along this prefatory horizon, Nashe envisions a paradoxically productive relationship between wit and waste, and sites that relationship on the threshold between money's materiality and its openness to the supernatural. Pierce's evacuation is the condition of his "Supplication to the Devil." Though Pierce entreats the devil to pay him in gold, he submits himself to the devil as the prince of his own monetarized emptiness, that of a purse-Pierce lacking a single penny. The emptying-out of a bodily container serves Nashe as a means to contemplate its materiality as minimal: a purse deprived of its money exists as a margin of substance, something hollow, flimsy, little, and trivial that is nevertheless not quite nothing. The order of being that's left behind in the evacuation of gold stands for the marginality of all matter, reduced to the threshold of its non-existence – to being as little as possible. This material minimality is the condition of Pierce's demoniac persona, and of the "stuff" of Nashe's own insistently material prose style. Its self-consciousness knows itself through Pierce's ebullient and inexhaustible waste.

Lorna Hutson notes a persistence of material commodity even in Nashe's vision of the devastation of Jerusalem, where the mass of "witherd dead-bodies serue to mend High-waies with": "Society has collapsed, but Nashe is still turning bodies into social amenities, sinisterly promising improved communications and safer roads."⁴ This grotesque recycling of human *matériel* epitomizes for Hutson the insistent parody in Nashe's style of his culture's own insistence upon extracting 'profit' from every possible source, whether material, temporal, or discursive: she argues that Nashe's prose paradoxically enacts a Rabelasian profusion within the scope of a discourse of thrift. The fulcrum between these two opposite paradigms of value in Nashe – that of profusion and that of thrift, or what Bataille would construe as the general and restricted economies – is, I argue, that of the ontological irreducibility of matter, as that which can be neither created nor destroyed. Even in the ruins of Jerusalem, where the human works of building, social organization, and procreation are utterly undone, the stuff these things were made of persists – as corpses, as stones – and demands to be put once more to use. The resistance of matter to its annihilation, the impossibility of nothingness, fascinates Nashe. He makes it the ground of his own, peculiarly material, prose production, a production that is at once expansively profuse and minimally substantial. In the preface to

⁴ Nashe, *Christes Teares ouer Ierusalem*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, R. B. McKerrow, ed., rev. F. P. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966): 2.59; Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 16.

Lenten Stuff Nashe defines his prose as the work of making something, not out of nothing, but out of as little as possible:

Every man can say Bee to a Battledore, and write in praise of virtue and the seven liberal sciences, thresh corn out of the full sheaves and fetch water from the Thames; but out of dry stubble to make an after-harvest and a plentiful crop without sowing, and wring juice out of a flint, that's Pierce a-God's name, and the right trick of a workman. (376)

Nashe has chosen to praise the red herring precisely because it offers so meager a discursive matter for praise.⁵ The inadequacy of this apparently thin and barren matter will itself be what is spun out into the encomium's spectacular, bewildering profusion of prose.⁶ And though the local habitation of this performance is Yarmouth, it has a name originating elsewhere: "Pierce." Pierce names the continuity of Nashe's prose performance across his print career, in terms of the individuated persona through which it is enacted: though here he may be praising the herring rather than supplicating the devil, Pierce is again up to his "right trick," still giving us the same unique stuff.

In his debut performance, the *Supplication to the Devil*, the empty purse who is Pierce Penniless names himself as a material negation, a container that has been evacuated of the thing proper to it: what's left behind when the money is

⁵ The meagerness that Nashe attributes to the "Lenten stuff" of the herring is not simply due to the herring's being a mere commodity, or a mere animal, and therefore a preposterous thing to praise. It is due to the early modern estimation of fish as a sort of dietary simulacrum. To the Elizabethan palate herring was a barely-acceptable substitute for "real," terrestrial meat, one which Nashe and his contemporaries ate only when they were forced to, either by need or by the fish-day and Lenten strictures against meat eating. (The equivalent effect to modern tastes might be for a carnivore who finds vegetarianism enjoined upon her by a spouse's cooking to write an encomium of tofu.) Of recent critics of *Lenten Stuff*, James Nielson is the most attentive to questions of dietary preferences and restrictions, which he weaves into an allegory of critical interpretation as scathing as that voiced by Nashe in *Pierce's* prefatory epistle (*Unread Herrings: Thomas Nashe and the Prosaics of the Real* [New York: Peter Lang, 1993]: 3–13). The lengths that early modern Londoners would go to for the sake of eating black-market meat in Lent in preference to the mandated fish are depicted satirically in Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Act 2 scene 2.

⁶ A landmark study of *Lenten Stuff* in terms of the ontology of matter is Henry S. Turner, "Nashe's Red Herring: Epistemologies of the Commodity in *Lenten Stuffe* (1599)," *ELH* 68.3 (2001): 529–61, an essay which has greatly influenced the premises of my present argument. For a range of recent essays examining the relationships among metaphysical categories, social structures, and cultural production, see Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 2010).

gone.⁷ Pierce's emptiness of money is the means of his fulsome productiveness, generating a wit altogether voluminous, ingenious, and preposterous: his absurdity is manifest in his choice to solicit literary patronage from the devil, whom Pierce portrays as master both of gold and of vacuity. The chthonic character of money interacts complexly in Nashe's prose with the material conditions of plenitude and of privation, each of which are differently diabolical. Both value and nothingness lie just beyond the scope of Pierce's evacuated materiality.⁸ He is where money has been and no longer is, but he isn't where nothing is either: as "purse," however presently empty, he continues to exist in the terms of the absence he is built around. Pierce's is a materiality irreducible because it is minimal. What he is without money is not nothing; both his wit and his diabolism are something substantial, but something made of as little as possible.

It has become a truism over the last half-century that you can't talk about Nashe without talking about nothing. The *locus classicus* for what critics have come to call "the Nashe problem" is C.S. Lewis' assessment that,

Paradoxically, though Nashe's pamphlets are commercial literature, they come very close to being, in another sense, "pure" literature: literature which is, as nearly as possible, without a subject. In a certain sense of the word "say," if asked what Nashe "says," we should have to reply, Nothing.⁹

⁷ Lowell Gallagher has demonstrated that the paradoxical relation between emptiness and fullness is crucial to St. Paul's understanding of Christ's incarnation, which in Philippians 2 he articulates as the *kenosis* or emptying out of Christ's own divine nature to take on human abjection:

For Paul, *kenosis*, the gesture of self-emptying, describes the ultimate theological gift: the descent of God into human form. It also constitutes a radically selfless new ethics. The depiction of Christ's person as exalted in self-emptying discloses an altered concept of personhood, where personhood refers not to a historically determinate set of properties, but instead to an ongoing process of separation from familiar contours of identity, and consequent exposure to further, unexpected vistas of responsiveness and responsibility. ("Waiting for Gobbo," in *Spiritual Shakespeares*, Ewan Fernie, ed. [New York: Routledge, 2005]: 73–93, esp. 82)

¹ I don't want to claim a Christological significance for Pierce Penniless (nor even a radical sense of responsibility), but Gallagher's case for a Pauline analysis of identity as an emptying out suggests how Piers' vacuousness may be understood as the condition of his self-authorization.

⁸ For an analysis of value as a metaphysical category comparable to that of being (and non-being), see Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), esp. 59–62.

⁹ Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954): 416.

It's easy to note in Lewis' remarks a surprised recognition of Nashe as early modern high-modernist: in the continuity of "pure" and "Nothing" that posits literariness as a difficulty whose self-reflexiveness verges on self-cancellation, and in the opposition of "commercial literature" to "pure" literature." What's most interesting to me here is not the chance to historicize Lewis' critique, however, but the ways in which he expresses the limitation of the categories he's here articulating in Nashe: "Paradoxically ... very close ... as nearly as possible ... in a certain sense." These are not, I think, simply historical qualifiers arising in the encounter between one aesthetic paradigm and the artifact of an earlier aesthetic paradigm, in which the former recognizes the latter as congruent but not identical to itself. I think that these hesitations are directly about Nashe: that Lewis is recognizing that what's at stake in Nashe's prose is not so much "Nothing" as the approach to nothing – the asymptotic relation of prose to nothing as it "come[s] very close," "as nearly as possible."

Especially with the word "commercial" hard by, Lewis' "very close to ... 'pure'" implies the outcome of an industrial process of refining – that Nashe's prose might be 99.44% pure nothing, like Ivory's relation to pure soap. Refining, in which a material substance is made more and more fully itself and not something else, offers a complementary formula for aesthetic production to that of *poiesis* or "making," a complementarity very evident once we consider the object of each process to be "Nothing": the poetic maker would be working to make something *from* nothing, while the poetic refiner would be working to make something *into* nothing.¹⁰ Where the process of making is accumulative and positive, that of refining works toward its end through reduction and negation. A poetics refining itself into nothing is making its means, its process, continuous with its end. But such a poetics "coming very close, as nearly as possible," to nothing is encountering a limit upon its process in the limits of its own possibility. It encounters in itself an ineluctable margin of impurity. In manufacturing silver coins, the Tower mint defined the acceptable margin of impurity at 7.5% dross to 92.5% pure silver: this proportion or ratio is the sterling standard. But in the case of Nashe's prose, the impurity that demands such a marginal tolerance in the approach to nothing is its own something-ness.

For Jonathan Crewe, Lewis' analysis is the point of departure for a deconstruction of the ontological relation of *res* and *verba*. Where the text's "subject," to take Lewis' word, was in normative Renaissance expectations of literary production prior to its elaboration into words by the writer – prior not only in its being conceived of before that elaboration, but in its having an origin outside the moment and site of production and in its being detachable from the particular structure of words built upon it once production was complete – Nashe's writing,

¹⁰ I'm thinking here too of the conventional opposition within the visual arts of painting as additive (the application of matter to a blank surface) and sculpture in wood or stone as subtractive (the production of an elephant from marble as getting rid of everything that isn't the elephant).

Crewe argues, manages to be about itself. On the other hand, Julian Yates has more recently pointed out how indebted Lewis' vocabulary for expressing "Nothing" is to the marketplace of print, and argues that the tension at stake in Nashe is not so much that within the humanist categories of *res* and *verba* as that between established humanist practices of bodily and writerly discipline and the emergent regimes of production in the material conditions of the print shop.¹¹ Coordinating Yates' emphasis on the mutual incorporation of man and machine in the operation of the printing press, with the emphasis that Lewis and Crewe both place on the apparent insubstantiality of Nashe's style, leads me to think about prose as a kind of prosthesis – a material implement for mediating between self and world that seems both part and not part of that self, and reciprocally part and not part of that material world. "Nothing can be made of nothing," Lear tells Cordelia and his fool. Nashe may be continually testing the limits of that proverb, as a deconstructive reading such as Crewe's might suggest, but even to begin such a testing he'd first need to produce a nothing to make something out of. Can anything be made *into* nothing? Nashe, I argue, thinks the answer is "no." Instead, Nashe is interested in how close something can get to being nothing, in how much of its own materiality it may divest itself of in approaching the impossible threshold of the immaterial, and in what the selving limit of the material consists.

By citing a "selving limit of the material" I want to affirm the self-consciousness of Nashe's prose that proclaims itself "Pierce-a-God's-name," and to integrate the

¹¹ Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982): 1 and passim; Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003): 101–37, esp. 103. The topos of "nothing" has been engaged continuously in Nashe criticism post-Lewis. For James Nielson, *Unread Herrings*, Nashe's writing ostentates its nothingness for the sake of a kind of self-effacement, in order to be about "the real" (by which Neilson seems principally to mean the material, everyday, and self-evident, though Neilson animates Lacanian categories in his analysis as well). Neilson's own prose enacts what he considers to be Nashe's peculiar variety of opaque mimesis, aiming to recreate for us the repulsiveness that earlier generations felt in Nashe by imitating the style within a genre – literary criticism – that is still expected to maintain a purposive distinction between *res*, the literary text, and the *verba* of monograph, no matter how excited we are to observe that distinction breaking down within the text. For Lorna Hutson, *Nashe in Context*, the quality of nothing is ironic: what the prose "says" is the ironic relation of about-itselfness to commerce. This irony works to demonstrate the vapidness and the bad faith of the 16th century's conventional "profitable discourse" of productiveness and thrift, and rises to offer a new model of recyclical production. For Charles Nicholl (*A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984]), the nothingness of the prose is that of "Newes": it's about its own topicality, novelty, and freshness. *Pierce*, for example, coordinates its hoary topoi of the Seven Deadly Sins with a faddish posture of diabolism and a sophisticated engagement of the arguments around the emergence of the public theater, all of which place the pamphlet in the orbit of the great *succès de scandale* of the early 1590s, *Doctor Faustus*.

prose's knowledge of itself with this idea of the materially minimal and marginal. As Reid Barbour has argued, Nashe produces his prose as a tactile "stuff": a substance characterized not only by the textural consistency of its qualities, but by a materiality that is "not just rhetoric or language," that fills up spaces and produces events.¹² It's this diaphanous tangibility that Lewis identifies as the self-consciousness of a nearly "pure" literature," which is for him at once paradoxical and continuous in its relationship to "Nothing." The claim of the prose to substance is that of the irreducible minimum of materiality: the closer the prose gets to being nothing without being able to become nothing, the more ineluctably something it is – albeit not much.

Coined money does double duty in Nashe's discourse of flimsiness and triviality. It articulates the conventional standard of substantiality that is gold, and it articulates the standard of quantitative value through which qualities become remarkable or insignificant. Pierce defines his not-muchness in relation to both these standards: a penny is not much money, quantitatively, and a purse empty even of that penny holds not much of anything, substantially. The productivity of an empty purse for Nashe perhaps recalls that of Catullus' "purse full of cobwebs," out of which the poet produces a sublime perfume (*Carmina* 13); but Pierce's performance of himself is markedly different from the fulcrum between prodigality and productivity crafted by Nashe's immediate predecessors. In order to define what's remarkable about Pierce Penniless' already-wasted relation to his coins, I'll turn to a comparison that would infuriate Nashe: to the rival pamphlet *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with A Million of Repentance*, and in particular to the work of the titular groat to define this text's conversion of wasteful prodigality to vendible precept.

Groatsworth was one of three pamphlets rushed into print upon the death of the most notorious man of letters of his day, Robert Greene, in September of 1592. All three pamphlets purported to be Greene's last publication, embodying to an eager public Greene's deathbed repentance of his prodigality. Of the three it seems the least authorial: its most recent editor has argued that *Groatsworth's* present form was cobbled together by Henry Chettle, partly out of Greene's uncollected papers and partly through pastiche of the most characteristic topoi of Greene's late manner.¹³ The pamphlet has guaranteed its place in literary history by providing

¹² Barbour, *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993): 64–126, esp. 71.

¹³ Introduction by D. Allen Carroll to his edition of *Groatsworth (Greene's Groatsworth of Wit, Bought with a Million of Repentance*, attrib. to Robert Greene and Henry Chettle, D. Allen Carroll, ed. [Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994]: 1–31); I will cite this edition parenthetically in the text. Alexandra Halasz and Steve Mentz have both referred the possibility of forgery to the pamphlet's self-conscious creation of a marketable persona for print, as detached from the circumstances of whose hand inscribed the text for the printer. Mentz cites the pamphlet as "a practical form of literary criticism, a pioneering investigation into what we now call the 'author function'"; but one that, in

the earliest datable reference to Shakespeare's dramatic career: the libel against Shakespeare as "an Upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers" occurs toward the end of the pamphlet, in an open letter to three other writers, who are not named but are readily recognizable as Marlowe, Nashe, and Lodge, and in which Nashe is praised as "the English Juvenal." *Groatsworth* appeared in print simultaneously with the manifesto of Nashe's mature style, *Pierce Penniless*. Apparently at least some readers found the coincidence telling enough to suspect Nashe to be the man behind *Groatsworth* – as having exploited his friend Greene's death in order to forge a pamphlet promoting himself as the heir-apparent of Greene's mantle, the new genius of popular print.¹⁴ Nashe explicitly disclaims *Groatsworth* as "a scald trivial lying pamphlet" in the front matter to the second edition of *Pierce* that November, and remarks there that he would have liked to include among the papers his protagonist sends to Hell for the Devil's perusal a letter "to the ghost of Robert Greene, telling him what a coil there is with pamphletting on him after his death" (49–50).¹⁵

Despite the scorn Nashe claims to feel for the "trivial" rival pamphlet, *Groatsworth* seemed continuous enough with the goals, the means, the occasion,

epitomizing in the variety of its materials the great range of Greene's production across his career, seems motivated by "proliferation rather than thrift" (Mentz, "Forming Greene: Theorizing the Early Modern Author in the *Groatsworth of Wit*," in *Writing Robert Greene*, Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes, eds. [Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2008]: 115–32, esp. 116, 129; and see Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]: 38–9).

¹⁴ *Pierce* was registered with the Stationers on August 8th, *Groatsworth* on September 20th; Greene had died on September 18th. Given the exceptional haste with which *Groatsworth* was rushed into print after Greene's death, and the more typical interval between the registration of a title with the Stationers and its printing and sale, it seems likely that *Groatsworth* could have hit the bookstalls even more closely on the heels of the first edition of *Pierce* than the six-week registration interval would indicate, or might indeed have preceded *Pierce* into print.

¹⁵ The front matter to the second edition of *Pierce* is "A private epistle of the Author to the Printer," devoted both to disclaiming the front matter of the first edition as an interpolation by the printer – Nashe had intended that the book simply begin without any prefatory material for dedication or interpretation, but the printer, failing to understand the intent of that counter-intuitive omission, supplied some on his own initiative – and to disclaiming *Groatsworth*. Both elements seem in this way continuous, as together making up what Nashe considers the misleading apparatus of interpretation within which *Pierce* was wrongly enfolded in its first entrance to the print market, which has both vitiated the force of *Pierce*'s strangeness to normative publishing formulae, and made the text as susceptible as *Groatsworth* to the taste for libelous scandal. Carroll thinks it likely that Shakespeare was threatening to sue everyone who might be connected to *Groatsworth*'s publication; Chettle's subsequent publication under his own name, *Kind-Heart's Dream*, includes an evasive account of Chettle's role in preparing *Groatsworth* for the press, an exoneration of Nashe from any association with its publication, and an elaborate and courteous apology to Shakespeare for "Greene's" jaundiced account of his career.

and the medium of *Pierce* that Nashe felt the need explicitly to differentiate *Pierce* from *Groatsworth* in the second edition. The continuity across the two texts is not only that of emulous self-positioning in the print marketplace: it arises from two continuities asserted within the text of *Groatsworth*, which together impose an authorial control over the heterogeneous materials cobbled together in the pamphlet.¹⁶ The first of these continuities is a prodigal narrative, and the second is the persistence in that narrative of the titular groat. As Richard Helgerson has demonstrated, the parable of the prodigal offers a nearly ubiquitous shaping account of literary production for the generation of Sidney, Lyly, and Greene, in which writerly activity constitutes a perverse squandering of time and talent on the author's part, and the culmination of a writerly career is its own renunciation in a profitable act of repentance – an act indeed so profitable that Greene had reenacted his repentance of print in print a number of times even before the season of his death.¹⁷ In this conventional account, what the prodigal author is wasting is a kind of material resource, but one that is inverse to the scope of its realization as writing, diminishing as the text is produced. The profusion of text both enacts, and self-critically documents, the wasting of the resource: the prodigal author is reducing himself towards nothing, and producing text as the alienated fragment of his pretextual wholeness, while looking forward to the renunciation, the re-alienation, of that corrupt fragment in his conversion away from poetics to a new and profitable use. Like all Christians, he has to be born again in order to be what he was born to be. Literary activity is a kind of “unthriftiness” in this discourse – Astrophil calls it a bankruptcy audit in *Astrophil & Stella* 18 – but it's less clear what positive form that resource would take were it husbanded in a practice of thrift. Obviously it would be just as wasted, whatever it is, if it were hoarded or hid under a bushel, if the prospective writer chose to save his talent by burying it. Rather, the talent should be applied to some civic-minded activity – either the direct counsel and implementation of Crown policy, in the exceptional case of Sidney's “great expectation,” or for less grandly-born writers the advocacy of sound policy through writing – what Hutson calls the “profitable discourse” of the Elizabethan era, in which a decorous writerly activity is one that mimes, enacts, and advocates an agenda of right-minded activity that will be to the profit of the commonwealth.¹⁸

In calling the resource misspent by the writerly prodigal a “talent” I'm enacting the implicit correspondence of this resource to money, which is likewise to be

¹⁶ The generic variety of *Groatsworth*'s episodes and interpolations range from the sexual double-crossing of Italianate novelle, to a beast fable, to versified complaint, to homiletic compilations of proverb. For Carroll this diffuseness points to the work of another hand in collating disparate fragments among Greene's papers after his death; Mentz, “Forming Greene,” argues that it's the mark of a deliberate retrospection, and he includes a chart indexing the divisions of the text to the different phases of Greene's career.

¹⁷ Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976).

¹⁸ Hutson, *Nashe in Context*, 38–54.

used for “profit,” and neither to be hoarded nor squandered, as Christ’s terrifying parable of the talents details (Mat. 25: 14–30).¹⁹ That implication is necessarily everywhere in the discourse of prodigal writerliness, but it is rarely made fully explicit – rarely is writerly talent directly articulated as cash. In this way *Groatsworth*’s reanimation of prodigal clichés seems to me unusual: this text, which ostentates itself as the swan-song of Greene, the possibly-spurious summation and renunciation of his authorship, invests that authorship in a cash transaction that the discourse being summed up here had up till now largely avoided.²⁰ The title of the pamphlet announces that its reader is getting just what he paid for. A groat, a coin worth four pence, was presumably the purchase price. It’s a transaction that is ostentated as taking place between Robert Greene and the buyer of the text, eliding the mediation of the printer and bookseller as well as that of the textual medium; and it’s a symmetrical transaction, fully adequated between the quantum of wit that’s a groats-worth and the face value of the silver coin. In this symmetry the purchase of the pamphlet is opposite to the million-to-one disproportion between

¹⁹ The interpretation of the monetary talent of the parable as an individual’s particular, God-given abilities and resources was standardized by the 16th century, and this interpretive sense for “talent” was beginning to be articulated without direct reference to the literal sense – i.e., without making explicit its status as interpretation (*OED* “talent” 5–6).

²⁰ Astrophil calls himself a “bankrout... of all those goods which heaven to me hath lent” (*A&S* 18: 3–4, my emphasis; in *The Oxford Authors: Sir Philip Sidney*, Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989]: 159); he is of course too much the aristocrat to think of the presence or absence of coin as determinative of his assets. Helgerson argues that what his prodigals understand themselves to be wasting is not money but time, both in the sense of the relation of present to future that is the potential of their gifts and opportunities, and in that of the time and effort devoted to cultivating their gifts in the past:

[P]ecuniary imprudence is only a part, and not an essential part, of [their] vision of prodigality. Whetstone gives the name “The Garden of Unthriftiness” to a section of his book that has nothing to do with money, a collection of “wanton” sonnets. He is unthrifty in the pursuit of beauty and in the celebration of love; he wastes not money, but time, wit, and learning, goods that should be spent in some way “beneficial to the commonweal” and “profitable to himself.”

This ideal of thrift, which recurs in the mercantile metaphors of Elizabethan love poetry, the audits and accounts which always prove the lover a bankrupt, the “expense of spirit in a waste of shame,” is very much the product of an educational system so intent on using every hour and so convinced that it knew how to use the hours profitably. (Helgerson, *Elizabethan Prodigals*, 27)

For the ways in which not only the practice but the ethic of Elizabethan thrift were formulated in terms of credit, in preference to the terms of cash transactions, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998).

the wit Greene has gained and the repentance he has himself paid for it.²¹ Greene's relation to his life, his sins, and his God is exorbitant; his relation to his reader is tidily located and circumscribed in the modest circumference and minimal depth of a groat.

In the fiction, however, the groat operates across both these relations. The pamphlet begins as the third-person relation of the life of 'Roberto Gorinius,' the scholarly son of a rich usurer who offends his father with reproaches. The father takes the opportunity of dying to score off Roberto, disinheriting him in favor of his younger brother:

all [my wealth], *Lucanio* I bequeath to thee, only I reserve for *Roberto* thy wel red brother an old groat (being the stock I first began with) wherewith I wish him to buy a groats-worth of wit: for he in my life hath reproovd my manner of life, and therefore at my death, shall not be contaminated with corrupt gaine. (46)

The groat appears here as the site of exclusion. It's a minimum more insulting than nothing, reserved from the indefinitely enormous sum Roberto would have expected to inherit – a sum so disproportionate to the groat as not to be diminished by its exclusion. And the bequest turns the pamphlet's title from the everyday transaction of book-buying into something like the apparently hopeless quest of a fairy tale: the father is not sending Roberto round the corner to buy another admonitory pamphlet, he is taunting Roberto with the riddling impossibility of purchasing "wit" as an unmediated material quantity.²² Disinherited, Roberto turns to his "wit" for a means to live: first he tries to swindle his brother out of the inheritance by conspiring with a courtesan, but the courtesan betrays him; then he really descends into the gutter, and starts writing plays for the commercial stage. As a playwright Roberto is, the narrator assures us, a great success – his wit seems productive of groats, rather than vice versa – but his remunerations only fuel his exhaustive debaucheries, until he hits rock bottom:

²¹ The gnomic chiasmus of the transaction has a proximate source in Lyly's *Euphues*. "It hath been an old said saw, and not of less truth than antiquity, that wit is the better if it be dear bought," remarks the narrator in introducing his protagonist (*Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit and Euphues and His England*, Leah Scragg, ed. [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003]: 33). Tilley confirms the proverbiality of that formula, but it's Lyly who goes on to develop it into the terms by which *Groatworth* will define its titular transaction: "Seeing thou wilt not buy counsel at the first hand good cheap, thou shalt buy repentance at the second hand at such an unreasonable rate that thou will curse thy hard pennyworth, and ban thy hard heart" (*ibid.*, 42).

²² For Halasz, the bequest identifies the purchase of the pamphlet by the reader with the will of the usurious father: *Groatworth* "locates its value in the marketplace and identifies it with the practice of usury," even as it strives "to deny the mediation of the marketplace" (*Marketplace of Print*, 35–36).

For now when the number of his deceites caused *Roberto* to bee hatefull almost to all men, his immeasurable drinking had made him the perfect Image of the dropsie, and the loathsome scourge of Lust tyrannized in his bones: lying in extreame poverty, and having nothing to pay but chalke, which now his Host accepted not for currant, this miserable man lay comfortlessly languishing, having but one groat left (the just proportion of his Fathers Legacie) which looking on, he cryed: O now it is too late, too late to buy witte with thee: and therefore will I see if I can sell to careless youth what I negligently forgot to buy. (75)

It is at this moment, when the first of the pamphlet's title characters confronts the second, that the narrating voice shatters and the only-thinly-disguised "Roberto Gorinius" is revealed to be "I," that most glamorous and notorious of prodigal playwrights, Robert Greene. Starting a new paragraph, the narrator announces,

Heere (Gentlemen) breake I off *Robertoes* speach; whose life in most parts agreeing with mine, found one selfe punishment as I have done. Heereafter suppose me the same *Roberto*, and I will goe on with that hee promised: *Greene* will send you now his groats-worth of wit, that never shewed a mites-worth in his life: and though no man now bee by to doo me good: yet ere I die I will by my repentaunce indeavour to doo all men good. (75)

The groat serves here to materialize a continuity between an author, a narrator, and a protagonist who had until now ostensibly been disparate. The recurrence of the groat as an object in the story enables Roberto, in recognizing it as "the just proportion of his father's legacie," to recognize himself. That self-recognition takes a remarkable narratological form, turning "Roberto" into the "I" who immediately evanesces into "Greene"; and it is also a recognition of this self as a narrative form, in that the conversion of the groat into a new kind of "wit," in the form of the homiletic precepts that will make up the rest of the pamphlet's text, is the enactment of the parable of the prodigal, converting the self-destructive, alienated "Roberto" into the repentant and authoritative "I" who is "Greene." Where Roberto's story was a waste, its reformation into Greene's repentance via the groat will be profitable across both sides of the relation instantiated between audience and belated author, who will "sell to careless youth what I negligently forgot to buy."

The fulcrum of prodigal identity inheres in the almost-nothingness of the groat, its minimal materiality. For *Groatworth* this minimum is a turning point: reaching it reverses "Roberto's" trajectory of alienation, turns him into the "I" who is "Greene," and directs him to the exorbitant repleteness of a million-groat repentance. I argue that *Pierce Penniless* entails a contrary encounter with the minimal by means of money: in Nashe's version, the minimum is not the singularity of one last bit of change, but the hollowness of a purse from which even that last bit of change has vanished. Here, the minimal is not the nadir and turning point of

a story, but the point of departure for the protagonist's self-definition; the minimal is not the hinge between two forms of wit, wasteful playwrighting and positive precept, but the condition of wit's production. Nashe's Pierce is a wastrel, but he's not a prodigal, for he never repents. Rather than attempt to resume a salvific wholeness in conversion, Pierce will attempt in his supplication to the devil to perpetuate and exploit the demonic possibilities of littleness.

For Hutson, the eponymous emptiness of the speaker Pierce Penniless is a function of the hollowness of the "profitable discourse of the Elizabethans," the calcification of Henrician and Edwardian arguments for policy reform in the face of the mid-sixteenth-century's economic crisis into the next generation's political and ideological orthodoxy. Pierce belittles this discourse through the means by which he articulates it – as a hodgepodge of clichés, inserted into the context of a bankrupt's petition for favor to "the high and mighty Prince of Darkness, donzel dell Lucifer," which Pierce entrusts to one of the local demons of London, a Knight of the Post (a professional informer and go-between) (60).²³ But I'd like to suggest that, alongside the hollowness of what Hutson argues is a self-serving discourse of power within the homiletic matters of profit and loss, Pierce's self-given name as empty purse emphasizes a lack of matter (rather than the particular qualities of the matter that comes to be rehearsed) as constitutive of the persona. He is made around what isn't there. The absence of money is the ground of many a poetic complaint, Chaucer's complaint to his purse being a ready example. It's the collapse of complainer and complained, as both Pierce and purse, that's interesting from this perspective.

What's inside an empty purse? The devil's dancing school, suggests Pierce, who makes the idea that the devil should be paying him rent on this proverbial space the initial ground of his supplication, "insomuch as no man here in London can have a dancing school without rent, and his wit and knavery cannot be maintained with nothing" (60). What Pierce has to call his own is only his interiority, a present plenitude of emptiness, the condition as well as the occasion of the "Supplication"'s existence. Pierce produces a pretty impressive amount of supplication out of what he and Lewis call "Nothing," then, even as he produces his persona around and within it. Pierce's nothing is not quite void, however: it is the margin or threshold of materiality, being full of devil. The devil is a spirit, and exists on the edge of privation, but he exists. The demonic marks the threshold of the minimal, what separates the spending of Pierce's last penny from the nothingness that emptiness approaches but cannot achieve.

Pierce's emptiness is the venue of the devil's pastime, he argues, and he should be recompensed for the use of his idle vacancy; he counts his vacuity, and his "wit and knavery," as services inadvertently rendered and asks for his newfound patron's compensation. "Or, if this seem not plausible to your infernalship," he offers an alternative: that, rather than paying anything out to Pierce, the devil call in all the souls owed to him from the sinful residents of London, whose hoarding

²³ Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context*, 172–96.

has been keeping the commonwealth's gold "in long imprisonment." This general release of the prisoner, gold, will let it roam throughout the city "to help his friends that have need of him," Pierce included (60). Citing the variety of souls owed to the devil across London is the occasion for Pierce's personification of the Deadly Sins as a pageant of urban grotesques. He begins not with Pride, as this medieval topos generally had, but with the new preeminence of Avarice. Avarice itself turns out not to be a single person, but a household, the barren union of Greediness to Dame Niggardize.

Greediness scours the world outside their house for profit, either raking through "dunghills" with his shoes, "which, being nothing else but a couple of crab shells, were toothed at the toes with two sixpenny nails," or "sieving of muckhills and shop dust, whereof he will bolt a whole cartload to gain a bowed pin" (61–62). While he is getting without, Niggardize is keeping within: she "sat barrelling up the droppings of her nose . . . and would not adventure to spit without half-a-dozen porringers at her elbow" (62). There is no such thing as waste in this household's materialism: the two are unconscious of squandering time and effort in their obsession with extracting and retaining every possible value in the matter that surrounds them. Neither the trash of others, nor their own bodily excrement, is dismissible to them. What we find repulsive they find compulsive. Though nothing is to be wasted in the house, neither is there anything to be consumed, save "one single, single kilderkin of small beer," served out in "little farthing ounce-boxes, whereof one of them filled up with froth, in manner and form of an ale-house, was a meal's allowance for the whole household" (63). Their stinginess is that of a duplicitous tapster: as he cheats his customers, they cheat themselves. The ounce-box of froth is as much as they can bring themselves to commit to their meal; to put it another way, it is the minimum to which they have been able to reduce the household's material expenditure.²⁴ Their barely-substantial meal is conducted under the same conditions as Pierce's own ghostly "dinner with Duke Humphrey" – at the tomb in Paul's where penniless gallants go to pass the dinner hour, and where the demonic Knight of the Post and Pierce first find each other (58–9). Pierce's belly is empty because his purse is empty of gold, while Greediness and Niggardize keep their bellies empty that their coffers may stay full of gold.

The dollop of froth is at once the negation of everything fully substantial about beer, and the sheer persistence of its substance in the face of that negation: the froth is not much of anything, yet is not quite nothing. The ironic, slangy reformulation of going hungry into "dinner with Duke Humphrey" preserves the form of dinner as an explicitly ghostly event, an emptying-out of the meal's substance that arises in Pierce's own monetarized emptiness. His hunger is a second-order phenomenon: his body's knowledge of its emptiness derives from his identity as penniless purse. This threshold of the minimal, the ultimate and petty resistance of matter to its negation,

²⁴ The house also has an oven "about the compass of a parenthesis in proclamation print" which produces "diminutive dishes," but the food therein – which Pierce invites the reader to imagine, rather than detailing it himself – seems no more substantial than the beverage he does specify (60).

is where the almost-nothingness of Pierce imagines the devil inside himself giving dancing lessons, and it's where Pierce meets the devil's errand-master in the "waste gallery" of Paul's beside Duke Humphrey's tomb. In Pierce's imagination and in his experience, the order of being that is the minimally material – dictated to Greediness by the presence of gold, as much as it is dictated to Pierce by its absence – converges with the order of being that is the demonic.

In refuting the Manichean ascription of evil to matter, Augustine argued that evil has no positive existence.²⁵ In a world created by an omnipotent, omnipresent, and benignant God, existence is a good, a quality that all creation shares with its creator from whom existence flows, and through which all things participate in the divine nature according to their capacities. Humans, whose mental faculties more closely approach God's than do those of the beasts or plants or minerals, may be said to exist more fully thereby, in more closely resembling the total existence of God. Sin is a degradation of one's existence, a perversion or turning-away of one's own nature away from the wholeness of God to address mere nothingness. Evil is not the opposite of God, but the mere privation of the individual – the withdrawal of the individual from his participation in divine wholeness. For Augustine, perversion is a self-ruination, a process in which even a glutton who is making himself physically more massive through his sin is paradoxically reducing himself ontologically, diminishing not only his stock in God's accounts in the world to come but his own existence in the material present. Perversion also disrupts an ideal continuity between mimesis and being. The more we seek to cultivate our resemblance to God, the more we will come to share in his nature; the more we cultivate our own degraded wills, the less we will be ourselves, and the more we will be nothing at all, for our existence obtains only within the frame of that resemblance.

Two questions that arise from this continuity of material and spiritual being are of particular interest to Nashe here, in the gleeful perversity of Pierce's exercise of wit. One is that of the possibility or impossibility of void in the natural world; the other is the place of the devil. Epicureans such as Lucretius had argued for an atomistic material philosophy that anticipates our modern one, in which all matter is an interpenetration of solid and void. Renaissance orthodoxy was inclined to the opposite position, inherited from Aristotle and the Stoics, that the created universe was a plenum of continuous matter in different forms of density and diffusion, but nowhere entirely vacuous.²⁶ And though the power granted by the devil to his believers in witchcraft

²⁵ *Confessions* 6; *City of God* 11.22, 11.27–28.

²⁶ This inclination was prompted partly by the expectation that God's creation *ex nihilo* should reflect His own repleteness and leave the condition of nothing entirely behind, and partly by the general association of atomism with atheism in the reception of Lucretius. When Enobarbus says that in the otherwise-deserted town of Cydnus "the air ... but for vacancy,/ Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,/ And made a gap in nature," he is citing the commonplace impossibility of vacuum, and offering the unfulfillable desire of the air to violate the order of the plenum in order to see Cleopatra as the climax of the paradoxes of *physis* out of which her barge is built (*A&C* 2.2.216–18).

was a means of deception, a redirection of faith toward eternal ruination, any *disbelief* in the power of the devil seemed as potentially atheistic as a belief in the possibility of void. Orthodoxy demanded that the power of the devil be understood simultaneously as real, urgent, and omnipresent, and as illusory, fraudulent, and insubstantial.²⁷ As Nashe dilates these problems between *Pierce Penniless* and his next publication, *The Terrors of the Night*, these two questions, of material privation and demonic power, become the same question:

What do we talk of one devil? There is not a room in any man's house but is pestered and close-packed with a camp-royal of devils. . . . Hereunto the philosopher alluded when he said nature made no voidness in the whole universal; for no place (be it no bigger than a pock-hole in a man's face) but it is close-thronged with them. Infinite millions of them will hang swarming about a worm-eaten nose.

Don Lucifer himself, their grand Capitano, asketh no better throne than a blear eye to set up his state in. Upon a hair they will sit like a nit, and overdredge a bald pate like a white scurf. The wrinkles in old witches' visages they eat out to entrench themselves in. . . . In Westminster Hall a man can scarce breathe from them; for in every corner they hover as thick as motes in the sun.

The Druids that dwelt in the Isle of Man, which are famous for great conjurers, are reported to have been lousy with familiars. Had they but put their finger and their thumb into their neck, they could have plucked out a whole nest of them. . . .

Now for worms: . . . is there any reason such small vermin as they are should devour so vast a thing as a ship, or have the teeth to gnaw through iron and wood? No, no, they are spirits, or else it were incredible. . . .

If the bubbles in streams were well searched, I am persuaded they would be found to be little better. Hence it comes that mares, as Columella reporteth, looking at their forms in the water run mad. A flea is but a little beast, yet if she were not possessed by a spirit, she could never leap and skip as so she doth. . . . Not so much as Tewkesbury mustard but hath a spirit in it or else it would never bite so. (212–13)

The place of the devil *is* that of void, or rather that of where void would otherwise be: the apparent lacunae in the order of being are teeming with microscopic devils. Hollows, holes, and bubbles are the sites not of emptiness but of profusion. That profusion is made available by the relative lack of more substantial things in these

²⁷ See the hostile reception of Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, spearheaded by King James himself in his *Daemonologie*, for the sense that such debunking texts undermined the solidity of positive belief in portraying witchcraft as a hoax (Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Montague Summers [New York: Dover, 1972], and James VI and I, *Daemonologie* [New York: Da Capo, 1969]).

places, which allows little rooms for an infinitude of tininesses and compressibilities. The marginality of the individual spirits' substance is what allows confined and local sites of lack throughout the everyday world to be supplied with the spirits' pervasive plenitude. The spirits' presence produces from that smallness a disproportion of cause (or agent) to effect: a multitude of them, as worms, consume a great ship; one of them, inhabiting a flea, gives the insect the power to jump distances that are enormous in relation to its little body. In their minimal corporeality, the spirits bear an ironic resemblance to the minimal *corpora* of the Epicurean atomism rejected by the material philosophy of the plenum. But the influence of their disproportion is also ironized: though the spirits' effects are an order of magnitude greater than their agentive tininess, the order of magnitude traversed by the individual spirit is only that which separates the unknowably microscopic from the trivial and everyday. Faith the size of a mustard seed, Christ tells his disciples, would move mountains (Mat. 17:20); a spirit in the mustard seed makes a spicy garnish for beef or pancakes.²⁸

Trivial in themselves, the spirits achieve monstrously large effects through their profusion, acting in concert to destroy a ship or burn a town. The threshold of perception, between the microscopic and the insignificant, occupies the same place as the limit of insubstantiality within the plenum, which is also the site of profusion – the bodily surface of the skin, horrifically suffused with a verminous multitude of demons. The fulcrum between horror and triviality at the vanishing point of matter characterizes the scholarly anxieties of *The Terrors of the Night*, a text that veers back and forth between analyses of such insubstantial things as dreams as harmlessly epiphenomenal, and visions of the porous body's utter vulnerability to the influences of demonic *minima*.²⁹ The same balancing act, displaced into the persona of the preposterous wastrel Pierce Penniless, yields the demoniac hilarity of his "Supplication to the Devil." The supplication offers the exercise of Pierce's ingenuity upon a minimal materiality, articulated out of an interiority that is both explicitly defined and otherwise vacant: the least matter with the most art, in Queen Gertrude's devaluing sense of "art." The self-propulsive, heedless wit that defines "Pierce a-God's-name" within and without the pamphlet makes itself from the marginality of the stuff it works upon. It's what you make of what's left when the good stuff isn't around. In *Lenten Stuff*, the absent good stuff will be meat; but in *Pierce Penniless* that stuff is money, and in the persistence of "Pierce" as Nashe's name for his productivity across his career, the material particularities of precious coins serve to define the character of all good stuffs whose evacuation makes possible the ebullience of his prose.

²⁸ Meeting the spirit Mustardseed, Bottom comments courteously on the fame of his pedigree: "That same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devour'd many of your house. I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now" (*Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.1.192–95). The relation of mustard to pancake becomes that of honor to truth in Touchstone's first foolery in *As You Like It* 1.2.60–80.

²⁹ For the relation of dreams to the stuff of prose in *Terrors*, see Barbour, *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction*, 72–81.

Chapter 9

Nashe's Vain Vein: Poetic Pleasure and the Limits of Utility

Corey McEleney

"No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en," says Tranio to Lucentio in *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹ The two have just arrived in Padua to study moral philosophy. Tranio's comment comes at the climax of a brief speech in which he warns his master against being too severe in the study of virtue: "Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray, / Or so devote to Aristotle's checks / As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured" (1.1.31–33). A healthy diet of the arts, particularly poetry and music, he recommends, will help counteract the austerity of moral philosophy. In suggesting that poetry will be most profitable because of, not despite, its pleasurable enticements, Tranio repeats the conventional logic by which early modern writers defended the value of literature.

This essay introduces a twist to that logic: even if pleasure is necessary for the production of profit (as any number of Shakespeare's contemporaries reiterated to the point of banality), there is still no guarantee that profit will grow where pleasure *is* taken. Indeed, what interests me about Renaissance literature is its persistent, though often unacknowledged or unarticulated, suspicion that the pleasure of poetry is pointless at best, poisonous at worst, and profitless either way – a possibility that Renaissance writers suppress, even as they raise it, because it undoes the system of values on which the ideology of humanism is based. My argument is that contemporary critics have reproduced rather than interrogated this constellation of beliefs and rhetorical tactics about the value of poetry, and have done so as a way of clinging to what Lee Edelman, in a recent essay on *Hamlet*, has characterized as "a faith in the power of literature to make us better,

¹ For all their assistance and advice, suggestions and critiques, during the process of working on this essay, I would like to thank Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, and Steve Mentz; Coppélia Kahn, Jean Feerick, and Ellen Rooney; the participants of the 2009–2010 Mellon seminar on "Politics and Forms" at Brown; the participants of the 2009 Shakespeare Association of America seminar on "Nashe With or Without Shakespeare"; and audiences at the Brown English Department Graduate Colloquium as well as the Institute of Comparative Literary and Society conference on "Uselessness" at Columbia. For introducing me to Nashe when I was an impressionable undergraduate, Lowell Gallagher deserves special gratitude. Quotations are from *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, Stephen Greenblatt, gen. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

more fully human.”² In the early modern period, poetry was defended on the basis of precisely this “faith,” on the assumption that it pleases in order to instruct, and instructs not merely in the sense that it imparts knowledge or wisdom, but in the broader sense that it cultivates virtuous human subjects, preparing them (or so the hope goes) for atonement, redemption, and salvation. What happens, though, when pleasure and instruction come into conflict with each other? What happens, that is, when poetry produces an excess of pleasure over instruction?

One answer is that the writing of Thomas Nashe happens. If making sense of Nashe’s work has long been an exercise in futility, that can only be because his writing reveals the limits of the demand for utility, a demand that contemporary critics, no less than Renaissance writers, adhere to and value. In the past several decades, critics developed two general strategies for dealing with Nashe’s futlitarian style. The first was to portray Nashe as a Derridean or Bakhtinian *avant la lettre*, detaching him from his time by deeming him (and redeeming him as) ahead of his time.³ In direct response to this more theoretical mode of reading, recent critics have “reject[ed] high theory and anachronism,” in the words of Steve Mentz, aiming to resituate Nashe within the context of Renaissance humanism and the literary marketplace of Elizabethan England.⁴

Taken together, these two strategies reveal something that they cannot entirely account for on their own: the way in which Nashe is *both* a part of his time *and* ahead of his time, *both* inside *and* outside the canons and values of Renaissance humanism. As a kind of thought experiment, I want to reposition Nashe’s work neither in simple contradiction to nor in simple concert with the milieu in which he wrote. Instead, I want to demonstrate how his work’s tricky relationship to humanism reveals often unacknowledged or unarticulated differences and contradictions always already in play *within* that milieu. As many of the most groundbreaking studies of the period have taught us to see, early modern humanism quite frequently relies on the means least suited to its ends, evincing not-so-easily resolvable tensions between, for instance, copia and decorum (Cave), skepticism

² Lee Edelman, “Against Survival: Queerness in a Time That’s Out of Joint,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (2011): 169.

³ Jonathan Crewe’s *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) is still perhaps the best example of this approach, particularly in its Derridean or deconstructive strand, but see also Ann Rosalind Jones, “Inside the Outsider: Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveller* and Bakhtin’s Polyphonic Novel,” *ELH* 50.1 (1983): 61–81, and Lorna Hutson, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), both of whom read Nashe alongside Bakhtin.

⁴ Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 185. See also Georgia Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Laurie Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567–1667* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2008); and David J. Baker, *On Demand: Writing for the Market in Early Modern England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

and prudence (Kahn), practice and theory (Bushnell), narrative and example (Dolven), play and purification (Stockton) – and, I would add, pleasure and utility.⁵

As insistent as these tensions are, however, critics continue to feel the need, particularly in the case of Nashe, to resolve them anyway in order to reassert the value of the literary and the stability of humanism. In what may be taken as a paradigmatic statement, Lorna Hutson, for example, states that the “apparent shapelessness” of Nashe’s writing, its “lack of continuity and coherence, might function as a politically and morally significant aesthetic in its own right.”⁶ My own argument is directed, at least heuristically, against this sort of recuperative gesture, which tends to underlie all scholarship on Nashe (to say nothing of literary studies more generally) regardless of whether it takes a more theoretical or a more historicist approach to Nashe’s style. By reading closely some particularly inscrutable and intractable passages in Nashe’s writing, my goal will be to demonstrate the necessity – but also, it is necessary to add, the virtual impossibility – of *not* redeeming or recuperating the pleasure of Nashe’s writing within a system of value determined by commonplace notions of what the ideology of humanism intended poetry to say, be, mean, and do.

The Problem with Pleasure

Before turning to Nashe’s work, it may be helpful to outline 1) what those intentions were and 2) how pleasure throws a wrench into the system of values they reinforce. When sixteenth-century writers codified their conceptions of poetry, they joined Aristotle’s poetics to Horace’s ethics not simply to make poetry, but to make poetry safe – for consumption by civil society. As a result, they demanded that poetry be both *dulce* and *utile*: sweet and useful, pleasurable and profitable, delightful and instructive. Poets, according to Horace, “aim either to do good or to give pleasure – or, thirdly, to say things which are both pleasing and serviceable for life.”⁷ But what was, for Horace, an either/or/or construction that permitted three options for the budding poet – *either* to please *or* to instruct *or* to please and

⁵ Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Will Stockton, *Playing Dirty: Sexuality and Waste in Early Modern Comedy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁶ Hutson, 5.

⁷ Horace, “The Art of Poetry,” in *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations*, D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 288.

instruct – was hardly so flexible for English humanists such as Sir Philip Sidney.⁸ English writers recast Horace's preference for the third option as a prescription, as the *only* option. In a sentence printed on the title pages of books authored by everyone from Robert Greene to King James, Horace writes: "He who combines the sweet and the useful wins every vote" (*Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*). For these writers, though, it is clear that the sole purpose of poetry was not merely to please "and" to instruct – a simple combination of the two, as the Horace motto suggests – but to please *in order to* instruct. According to the demands of humanism, the pleasure of poetry must always be oriented toward the instruction of moral virtue, civic productivity, and spiritual salvation. The pleasure of the text is nothing more, therefore, than a means to an end – which is to say, a means justified by the value of that end. Poetic pleasure, in other words, is just a spoonful of sugar to make the moral medicine go down.⁹

Pleasure, then, may be, or must be, merely supplementary to the more valuable ends toward which it should be directed. But it is also, one must point out, a *necessary* supplement: for early modern writers, pleasure, not utility, distinguishes poetry from other forms of writing. Sidney claims, in his *Defence of Poesy*, that "of all sciences ... is our poet the monarch," because the poet not only "show[s] the way" to learning, virtuous action, and salvation, but also provides "so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste, you may long to pass further."¹⁰ The preparatory stage of enticement is crucial, otherwise poetry would be as dull as moral philosophy or historiography. Pleasure, Sidney suggests, defines poetry as poetry. In making this point, Sidney has recourse to a familiar metaphor: through pleasure, the poet "doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue: even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding then in such other as have a pleasant taste."¹¹

⁸ On this point see Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art: Studies of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), 85–86; cited in Robert Matz, *Defending Literature in Early Modern England: Renaissance Literary Theory in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

⁹ In his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* (1594), Torquato Tasso asserts that poetic pleasure "should be like the honey smeared on a cup when one gives medicine to a child," an appraisal that Sir John Harington endorses in the "Apology" for poetry printed with his 1591 translation of *Orlando Furioso*. See Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, trans. Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 11; and Sir John Harington, "An Apology for Ariosto: Poetry, Epic, Morality (1591)," in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, Brian Vickers, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 306–307.

¹⁰ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry; or, The Defence of Poesy*, Geoffrey Shepherd, ed., rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 95.

¹¹ Sidney, 95.

Given how central pleasure is to the definition of poetry as such, it is certainly reasonable to ask why it must be redirected toward, so as to serve, more useful and reputable ends. We can gain some sense of an answer to this question by broadening our perspective beyond defensive apologists for poetry, such as Sidney, and by considering instead Renaissance writers who attacked its value. Take, for example, Stephen Gosson's 1579 diatribe against poets and playwrights, *The School of Abuse*, to which Sidney's *Defence* is generally thought to be a reply. Gosson twists the traditional figure of poetry as a honey-coated cup of medicine: "where hony and gall are mixed, it will be hard to seuer the one from the other. The deceitfull Phisition giueth sweete Syrropes to make his poyson goe downe the smoother."¹² Taking this (in)version of the figure alongside its more commonplace manifestation, we may begin to see that poetry works as a drug, a *pharmakon*, in the double sense of poison and remedy that Jacques Derrida traces in his reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*.¹³ Within the textured logic of this trope, pleasure acts as the misleading varnish that prevents us from knowing in advance whether or not poetry offers useful benefits.

If pleasure defines and distinguishes poetry, and if pleasure prevents us from knowing with certainty whether or not poetry is useful, then poetry can be defined as a mode of writing that lacks any guarantee of its own utility. The relationship between pleasure and utility is therefore more contradictory, or at least more convoluted, than a conventional means/ends understanding of poetic theory might otherwise lead us to believe. Indeed, the complexity is inscribed within the very logic by which early modern writers theorize poetry and establish its value. None of this, though, should be taken to mean that textual pleasure *is* useless. The point is not that literature cannot produce useful effects, but that it always *can* not; its futility, like its utility, is an inherent possibility, not a guarantee. As a way of reconsidering the means/ends logic by which contemporary humanists, no less than our early modern counterparts, routinely and stridently measure literature, we must reckon with poetry's potential for futility.

For the Renaissance, the possibility of poetry's futility was pushed to the extreme by the genre of romance, which was problematic for early modern writers because it produced an excess of pleasure over instruction. Or so its critics firmly

¹² Stephen Gosson, "*The Schoole of Abuse*" (1579) and "*A Short Apologie of 'The School of Abuse'*" (1579), Edward Arber, ed. (London: A. Murray and Son, 1869), 20.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61–171. On literary writing as a drug, see Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* (1992; rpt. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), esp. 78: "The horizon of drugs is the same as that of literature: they share the same line, depending on similar technologies and sometimes suffering analogous crackdowns before the law. They shoot up fictions, disjuncting a whole regime of consciousness. Someone once said that literature, as a modern phenomenon dating from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, was contemporaneous with European drug addiction." See also Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

alleged. As early as 1523, in his *Education of a Christian Woman*, for example, the exiled Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives condemned the dangers of reading romance. After cataloguing over a dozen titles of such texts, from the *Amadis de Gaula* to the *Decameron*, Vives launches his attack in the following manner:

All these books were written by idle, unoccupied, ignorant men, the slaves of vice and filth. I wonder what it is that delights us in these books unless it be that we are attracted by indecency. Learning is not to be expected from authors who never saw even a shadow of learning. As for their storytelling, what pleasure is to be derived from the things they invent, full of lies and stupidity?¹⁴

Vives goes on to enumerate examples of such “lies and stupidity” – heroes who single-handedly kill twenty men, fabulous treasures that no real ship could possibly carry – but it is important to pause on the rhetorical question he asks. Given the context of his condemnation and the standard of “learning” to which he holds fiction, the answer to his question is fairly transparent: *no* pleasure should be derived from the fictions that idle, unoccupied, ignorant writers invent. Must we be compelled, though, to take Vives’s question *only* rhetorically? Considering that Vives, along with other humanists of his kind and time, was hardly successful in halting the production of romances in Renaissance Europe, it is tempting to read his question in the literal sense: what pleasure *is* to be derived from the things that poets invent? What *is* it that delights “us” in these books?

In Catholic Italy, Ludovico Ariosto’s sprawling *Orlando Furioso* provided the flashpoint for conflicts over romance.¹⁵ Ariosto’s error, as Patricia Parker summarizes the debates, “was to come too close to the *dulce* side of the famous Horatian dictum, to succumb to the attractions of diverting fable over the essential, if perhaps less interesting, moral kernel.”¹⁶ When translated into a Protestant English context, however, the potential dangers of romance become ever more acute and thus require tampering for the sake of tempering its pleasures. Sir John Harington’s 1591 translation of *Orlando Furioso* provides a case in point: in translating Ariosto’s epic, Harington trims down the unwieldy and errant plot, eliminates authorial intrusions, and includes an allegorical key that moralizes the text. These maneuvers can be read together as an attempt to reform – in every sense of the word – the poem’s romance errors for an English Protestant audience.¹⁷

¹⁴ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 75.

¹⁵ On these debates, see Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of “Orlando Furioso”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 19.

¹⁷ See Tiffany J. Werth, *The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England after the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

The *locus classicus* of Elizabethan anti-romance sentiment is no doubt the lengthy tirade against romance and pleasure reading that Roger Ascham makes in his 1570 educational handbook *The Scholemaster*. Beginning with the premise that “the readiest way to entangle the mind with false doctrine is first to entice the will to wanton living,” Ascham launches into a spirited denunciation of a past time when reading for pleasure was an English pastime: “In our forefathers’ time, when papistry as a standing pool covered and overflowed all England, few books were read in our tongue, saving certain books of chivalry, as they said, for pastime and pleasure, which, as some say, were made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton canons.”¹⁸ Ascham supplies Arthurian legend as an example of what he deplores, but then admits that “ten *Morte Darthurs* do not the tenth part so much harm as one of these books made in Italy and translated in England” (69). Romance is thus metonymically entwined here with Catholic Italy. Indeed, when Ascham figures the dangers of Italian travel as “the enchantments of Circe” (63), he uses the prototypical trope of, in, and for romance: the witch who transforms Odysseus’s men into swine. At the level of content – namely, its representation of what Ascham calls “open manslaughter and bold bawdry” (69) – and at the level of form – namely, its tendency toward loose, dilatory, errant plots – romance provides an extreme case of what early modern writers found so problematic about the pleasurable *means* of poetry.

It is no surprise, then, that English writers should wish to subordinate those means to virtuous ends. Unlike the French and English decadents of the nineteenth century, not to mention many twentieth-century modernists, Renaissance writers cannot adopt aestheticism, the doctrine of art for art’s sake, as a principle of purpose. This does not mean, however, that poetic futility was utterly unthinkable in the Renaissance. The issue, rather, is that it often cannot be articulated or faced directly, given the demands of humanism. Worries over poetic futility come into relief mainly implicitly or indirectly, like a photographic negative, or like the relationship of pictorial ground to figure, or like the anamorphic skull in Hans Holbein’s infamous painting *The Ambassadors*. The obliqueness of futility’s relationship to dominant strands of early modern literary theory requires, then, different kinds of reading practice. In order to explore how the pleasure of poetry exceeds or confounds the good intentions made on its behalf, we must first defy the recourse to intention that continues to mark literary and cultural criticism. In other words, instead of continuing to privilege what Renaissance writers *say* about what poetry does, we should redirect our attention to what Renaissance poetry actually does or doesn’t do. In using these writers’ intentions as standards by which to examine poetry, we have rendered ourselves incapable of accounting for the more unsettling effects of poetic pleasure.

¹⁸ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. Lawrence V. Ryan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press for Folger Shakespeare Library, 1967), 69. Subsequent citations are to this edition and will appear in the text.

One of those unsettling effects is an interference with dialectical understandings of the way poetry functions. I mean *dialectics* in the “classical” sense, as defined by Theodor Adorno at the outset of *Negative Dialectics*: “to achieve something positive by means of negation.”¹⁹ This dialectical means/ends logic subtends the belief that the purpose of poetry is to please *in order to* instruct. Pleasure, as I stated at the outset by way of reference to *The Taming of the Shrew*, may be necessary for the production of profit. But in the process of that production, pleasure must nevertheless be sublimated – canceled out and redirected toward more useful ends, its negativity recuperated and redeemed as a positive good – in order for that profit to be successfully gained. By simply imagining the *potential* interruption of that dialectic, and thereby infecting its narrative order with elements of contingency and irony, Renaissance texts, particularly those written in and around the mode of romance, often expose what must be abjected, wasted, or expelled in order for this dialectic to function in an effective manner. With this in mind, it is time to turn to Nashe’s work.

Bable Bookmungers

At first glance, no two Elizabethan writers could appear more different than Ascham and Nashe. Ascham was a high-minded authority on education, childhood tutor to the Tudor queen; his subject matter consisted of pedagogical strategies for reading and translating the great books of antiquity. Nashe, on the other hand, was the most notoriously prodigal of Renaissance writers; his writing topics included brothels, dildos, and the disreputable cities of early modern Italy. Ascham enjoyed positive relations with his patrons, including the supreme patron in all the land, Queen Elizabeth, who, on hearing news of his death, reportedly said: “I would rather have cast £10,000 in the sea than parted with my Ascham.”²⁰ Nashe, by contrast, went to his grave a poor man, cursing his misfortune. The pattern of dissimilarity extends to their respective styles of writing, too: where Ascham, for the most part, writes with a didactic sobriety characteristic of a man of his profession and milieu, Nashe’s style can be characterized as a slight and scintillating semiotic soup that provides not even the slightest scintilla or soupçon of sociocultural value.

Given these stark contrasts, one can be forgiven for reading a ton of significance out of any common ground the two men share. Any similarities to be found between such different Elizabethan writers may reveal something unexpected, though fundamental, about the environment in which they wrote and about the limits of humanism. It cannot be insignificant, for instance, that Ascham and Nashe share

¹⁹ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973; rpt. 2007), xix.

²⁰ Quoted in Lawrence V. Ryan, *Roger Ascham* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 1.

an alma mater: St. John's College, Cambridge.²¹ Beyond, however, these mere biographical correspondences, it's worth nothing that both men are frequently cited for their hostile attitudes toward romance. Nashe, according to Jonathan Crewe, began his career by "identifying himself explicitly with the dogmas and values enshrined in Ascham's *The Schoolmaster*."²² This identification is especially evident in Nashe's 1589 misogynistic rant, *The Anatomie of Absurditie*, in which he launches his own attack against romance:

[W]hat els I pray you doe these bable bookmungers endeavor, but to reaire the ruinous wals of Venus Court, to restore to the worlde, that forgotten Legendary licence of lying, to imitate a fresh the fantastickall dreames of those exiled Abbie-lubbers, from whose idle pens, proceeded those worne out impressions of the feyned no where acts, of Arthur of the rounde table, Arthur of little Brittain, Sir Tristram ... with infinite others.²³

The canon of Arthurian legends, the association with Catholicism ("exiled Abbie-lubbers"), the accusations of illicit desire ("Venus Court") and idleness: all these features of anti-romance discourse are commonplace to the point of being clichés, familiar from *The Scholemaster*.

When this passage has popped up in scholarship on Nashe or on romance, critics have indeed cited it as a particularly bald example of anti-romance sentiment on the order of Ascham's text.²⁴ If, however, we more closely read this passage for its style, rather than simply cite it for its content, we can catch sight of a kind of writing less austere than Ascham's, however didactic Nashe's diatribe may strive to be. Take the phrases "bable bookmungers" and "Legendary licence of lying," for instance. In *The Art of English Poesy* (a text published, as it happens, the same year as *The Anatomie of Absurditie*), George Puttenham writes that alliteration

²¹ Witness Nashe's comments on Ascham in his *Lenten Stuff*: "Well, he was Her Majesty's schoolmaster, and a St John's man in Cambridge, in which house I once took up my inn for seven year together lacking a quarter, and yet love it still, for it is and ever was the sweetest nurse of knowledge in all that University. Therefore I will keep fair quarter with him ..." In Thomas Nashe, *"The Unfortunate Traveller" and Other Works*, J. B. Steane, ed. (London and New York: Penguin, 1985), 408. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Nashe's texts are taken from this edition and will be cited in the text. On Nashe's intellectual relationship with Ascham, see Marshall McLuhan, *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time* (Corte Madera, CA: Ginko, 2005), 213–17.

²² Crewe, 23.

²³ Thomas Nashe, *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (London, 1589), sig. A2r.

²⁴ Joshua Philips, for example, writes that "Ascham's anger [toward romances] finds voice, as well, in the work of Thomas Nashe," and then goes on to quote the passage from *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (*English Fictions of Communal Identity, 1485–1603* [Farnham: Ashgate, 2010], 39). See also Roger Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 144.

occurs when a poet “takes too much delight to fill his verse with words beginning all with a letter.”²⁵ Granted, Puttenham goes on to “confess” that alliteration, which he identifies as *tautologia*, or the “Figure of Self-Saying,” “doth not ill but prettily becomes the meter.” In Nashe’s case, however, where the alliteration appears in prose, not verse, it especially exceeds any useful or purposeful telos to which it might be directed. It thus exemplifies what Crewe calls “a linguistic excess surpassing any functional explanation, any acceptable rationale, or any power of repression.”²⁶

This is not to say that functional signification plays no role over the course of Nashe’s sentence. Surely the meanings of the signifier “bable,” for instance, convey some significance. “To babble,” according to the *OED*, is to talk incoherently, childishly, excessively, and inopportunistically, and, in a transitive sense, to “repeat or utter” something “with meaningless iteration.”²⁷ The *OED* also informs us that the word *bauble* – as in a mere toy – was frequently spelled, in the early modern period, as “bale.” It would also be difficult to ignore how Nashe’s “bale” plays on the homonym “Babel,” which designates, of course, the Judeo-Christian myth of linguistic incoherence. All of this is to say that the word “bale” *means* meaninglessness and thus instantiates meaning above, or after, all. Yet even if the various signifieds attached to “bale” make sense in light of Nashe’s attempt to cast romance as senseless, we shouldn’t cast aside the possibility that the *signifier* “bale” imposes itself more on the basis of sound than of sense – not only because it alliterates with the first letter of “bookmungers,” but also because the two *bs* within “bale” stutteringly echo each other. Insofar as it distracts or drives the reader’s attention to the form or materiality of the letter that killeth at the expense of the spirit, the sense, that giveth life, alliteration, like a necromancer who disrupts the progress of a knight’s quest, interrupts the orderly flow of meaning guaranteed by the armature of syntax. Or, to put the point another way, sound robs Nashe’s sentence of sense (and soundness) as that sentence stumbles over alliterative hurdles on its way to making a point.²⁸

In Nashe’s alliterative play, we can begin to see him indulging in the kind of stylistic virtuosity – a virtuosity of excessive pleasure, of “too much delight,” as

²⁵ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesy*, Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 340.

²⁶ Crewe, 20.

²⁷ This may be an opportune moment, then, to cite Virginia Krause’s observation that early modern European humanists “increasingly likened romance to babble – volumes without end” (*Idle Pursuits: Literature and Oisiveté in the French Renaissance* [Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003], 137).

²⁸ Confirming these claims beyond any doubt I had, a reader of an earlier version of this argument commented on my own writing: “I could have done without *your* alliteration.” That is exactly the point. Alliteration, like paronomasia, is something futile and excessive – indeed, futile because excessive. It is a linguistic feature one could, and probably should, “do without.”

Puttenham phrases it – with which subsequent readers like Lewis would associate him. We can see, that is, the pleasure of the text, *even as* that pleasure is subordinated to didactic ends that resemble Ascham's: namely, an attack against the very dangers of idle poetic pleasures. In her study *Thomas Nashe in Context*, Lorna Hutson notes how Nashe "abandon[ed] the protestant-humanist notion of reading for profit ... at the very beginning of his career, even while he was busy sifting the provident profits of poetry from its licentious abuses in the didactic *Anatomie of Abuses* [*sic*]." ²⁹ However much Hutson may overstate the case – however impossible the abandonment of reading for profit may, in fact, ultimately be – it would not be a stretch to say that Nashe comes closer than any other Elizabethan writer to approaching the asymptote of absolute futility. In reading Nashe, generations of critics have struggled to grasp, and so to come to grips with, what Crewe identifies as "the phenomenon of an unreduced excess of 'rhetoric.'" ³⁰ After Nashe's themes have been catalogued, after his content has been paraphrased, after his logic has been parsed, after his irony has been ironed and, in the process, straightened out, there remains a residue of superficial superfluity, a rhetorical surplus exemplified in one form, as we have seen, by the rapid-fire bursts of functionless and valueless alliteration in *The Anatomie of Absurditie*. What Nashe, in *Pierce Penniless* (as well as of *Pierce Penniless*), calls "this senseless discourse" (139) could just as easily be applied to his entire oeuvre. In the final section of this essay, I want to consider the ways in which critics have attempted to reduce Nashe's "senseless discourse" to sense. In order to prepare the way for that discussion, I first want to pause on one more passage from his writing, a passage that will bring us as close as we can get to viewing his senselessness *as* senselessness.

A little over halfway through *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe inscribes the Earl of Surrey, his protagonist Jack Wilton's travel companion, based in part on the real Henry Howard, in what appears, at first, as a stereotypical chivalric romance tournament that evokes not only those found in Sidney's *Arcadia*, as Katherine Duncan-Jones has shown, ³¹ but also allegorical set pieces such as the parade of the Seven Deadly Sins in Spenser's House of Pride. Jack offers the reader an elaborate description of Surrey's armor and regalia, the centerpiece of which is a "rough-plumed silver plush, in full proportion and shape of an estrich," or ostrich, on his horse. In a meta-allegorical moment, Jack interprets the significance of these tournament ornaments as follows:

The moral of the whole is this: that, as the estrich, the most burning-sighted bird of all others, insomuch as the female of them hatcheth not her eggs by covering them but by the effectual rays of her eyes, as he, I say, outstrippeth the nimblest

²⁹ Hutson, 120. (*The Anatomie of Abuses* is the title of Phillip Stubbes' 1583 antitheatrical tract, whereas the title of Nashe's text is *The Anatomie of Absurditie*.)

³⁰ Crewe, 17.

³¹ See Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Nashe and Sidney: The Tournament Scene in *The Unfortunate Traveller*," *Modern Language Review* 63 (1968): 3–7.

trippers of his feathered condition in footmanship (only spurred on with the needle-quickenning goad under his side), so he, no less burning-sighted than the estrich, spurred on to the race of honour by the sweet rays of his mistress' eyes, persuaded himself he should outstrip all other in running to the goal of glory, only animated and incited by her excellence. And as the estrich will eat iron, swallow any hard metal whatsoever, so would he refuse no iron adventure, no hard task whatsoever, to sit in the grace of so fair a commander. (318)

In spite of the spate of critical interest that *The Unfortunate Traveller* continues to generate in Nashe studies, this is one of the few passages in the text that critics decline to ponder, let alone mention. Indeed, we have to rewind the clock of literary critical history a good number of decades in order to reach a moment when scholars *did* pay attention to this bit of text. Even there, though, the meaning of this passage is generally determined by an act of displacement, by viewing it as a source for a more valuable textual matter: the crux posed by Vernon's description to Hotspur, in *I Henry IV*, of Prince Hal and his comrades: "All furnished, all in arms, / All plumed like ostriches" (4.1.97–98).³² Identifying this passage as a source for Shakespeare, though, only helps us understand Shakespeare; it hardly brings us any closer to figuring out what tricks Nashe may be up to.

Critics' lack of interest in reading the meaning of this passage "in itself" or "on its own terms," as we like to say, may be a displaced textual effect, then, of the way in which the passage itself performs resistance to the act of reading meaning out of something. Were we in a romance on the order of *The Faerie Queene* or the *Arcadia*, we could reasonably expect here a pithy maxim, a *sententia* or adage fit for a commonplace book, which sums up the profitable precept to be learned from Surrey's allegorically significant armor, but Nashe inserts only a rambling sentence, a perfect instance of what Renaissance humanists called *copia*, that swallows up whatever point is to be made, such that the only point the sentence ever seems to reach is the period mark that brings it to its arbitrary conclusion. And just when we think the conclusion has, finally, been reached, Nashe extends the point beyond the bounds of the sentence, attaching *another* sentence by a flimsy conjunction, an added sentence, we should add, that adds very little to the already paltry moral content conveyed by the previous sentence.

Of course, from here it would be easy to move on to speculate about the significance of this lack of significance – to view it, for instance, as part of Nashe's general contempt for acts of interpretation made by those whom he derides, in *Lenten Stuff*, as "mice-eyed decipherers and calculators upon characters" (448–49); or to view it as a more specific send-up of the always strained attempts to fuse romance and allegory in the works of Sidney and Spenser. Indeed, one could even cite Spenser himself here, for ostriches make a cameo appearance in Book

³² On the connection between Nashe's ostrich and Shakespeare's ostriches, see C. G. Harlow, "Shakespeare, Nashe, and the Ostrich Crux in *I Henry IV*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17.2 (1966): 171–74.

2 of *The Faerie Queene*, among the description of the villains who assail Alma's castle in Canto 11:

a grysie rablement,
Some mouth'd like greedy Oystreges, some faste
Like loathly Toades, some fashioned in the waste
Like swine; for so deformed is luxury,
Surfeat, misdiet, and unthriftie waste,
Vaine feastes, and ydle superfluity: (2.11.12)

"Surfeat, misdiet, and unthriftie waste, / Vaine feastes, and ydle superfluity": this description could be applied quite easily to Nashe's writing. It would be easy too, then, to claim in conclusion that the ostriches of Spenser's romance help give meaning to the apparent meaninglessness of the ostriches of Nashe's anti-romance.

I am not going to take this interpretive route, however. The question I want to ask instead is whether we might – and, if not, why we wouldn't – view the irrelevance of this passage as mere irrelevance. I recognize, of course, that there's nothing "mere" about irrelevance, or that pure irrelevance may be impossible, for even irrelevance, as we've seen, can be dialectically recuperated as a form of relevance. The interpretation of irrelevance can be a relevant way of sidestepping or suppressing the potential irrelevance of interpretation. But as Jeff Dolven has taught us to see, the potential pleasures, and the potential dangers, of irrelevance should not be so quickly dismissed or repressed, at least where Renaissance romance is concerned. His primary example is Britomart, Spenser's Knight of Chastity, lost in a daze before the idol of Cupid in the House of Busirane; as Dolven argues, this odd pause in the allegory shows Britomart indulging in "spectatorial self-pleasuring (rather than study or moral-making). She is a hedonist of what ought to be a merely propaedeutic thrill."³³ What Spenser's poem here represents, Nashe's work so frequently performs. Following Dolven's persuasive reading, I want to suggest that Nashe teases his readers to indulge in the kind of irrelevant hedonism that Britomart briefly experiences before the demand for relevance restores the linearity of her allegorical quest. Nashe's writing, we might say, unapologetically jumps into the gap that Spenser, according to Dolven's reading, exposes within the project of humanism.

No Apologies

As these passages suggest, Nashe's improvident texts fail to practice what, according to the demands of humanism, they must preach, a point too-easily overlooked if we pay attention only to what Nashe must preach, if we therefore fail to pay attention to the rhetorical operations and stylistic textures of his texts,

³³ Dolven, 169.

independent of the stated intentions, thematic content, and commonsensical meaning that can be paraphrased and summarized with facility. As Hutson asserts, the humanist “need to inculcate responsible social attitudes through literature produced a schematically pre-fabricated or compendious style of discourse which could not but frustrate a writer whose special talent was, as was Nashe’s, for improvisation.”³⁴ But a close analysis of Nashe’s style exposes less a difference *between* Nashe and humanism than a difference *within* humanism itself: a tension, enacted throughout Nashe’s work, between a) the humanist program of poetic profitability and b) the propensity for prodigal play that was a necessary by-product of the humanists’ simultaneous emphasis on pleasure. On the one hand, pleasure is a necessary element for the production of utility and moral instruction; on the other hand, the very use of pleasure as a means for valuable ends introduces an element of volatile contingency that provides no assurance that the values of humanism will ever be entirely or successfully reinforced.

And yet, precisely because the pleasure of Nashe’s style is *so* volatile – so prodigal, outlandish, and ironic – the temptation is great to redeem, recuperate, or sublimate his writing by reinscribing it within a dialectical economy that would ensure its relevance and utility. Hence Georgia Brown argues that writers of the 1590s replaced the older humanist defense of literature – that poetry expresses moral and political values – with a newer model that reveled in poetic prodigality. This “new kind of defense,” Brown writes, “does not deny the traditional association of literature with the trivial and transgressive, but *capitalizes* upon it to uncover the paradoxical *value* of marginality, error, ornamentality and excess.”³⁵ In the context of this model, Nashe is Brown’s exemplary writer: she writes that “while Nashe was associated with the unbridled excesses of satirical wit, he was also the personification of a particular kind of literariness, of an easy and highly *productive* relationship with words.”³⁶ It may be true that Nashe, like other writers of the 1590s, aimed to find “value in the valueless,” as Brown puts it, in order to assert authorial autonomy, authority, and originality.³⁷ But to adopt such an aim as the teleology of our readings would be to commit the intentional fallacy, to rely on an under-theorized Romantic notion of authorial individuality, and to overlook the fact that, from the perspective of Elizabethan literary culture, Nashe’s style was anything *but* “productive.”

Indeed, the literary market of Elizabethan England was not so kind to Nashe, a point that Brown’s study glosses over. After claiming that critics have inaccurately painted a portrait of Nashe as a victim of the patronage system, she writes in a brief footnote: “This is not to deny that Nashe led an increasingly precarious existence towards the end of his career.”³⁸ While the content of Brown’s footnote

³⁴ Hutson, 72.

³⁵ Brown, 6; my italics.

³⁶ Brown, 59; my italics.

³⁷ Brown, 22.

³⁸ Brown, 59n15.

may not altogether “deny” the difficulties Nashe faced, its very status *as* a footnote problematically minimizes those difficulties. If Nashe, as Hutson writes, “abandon[ed] the protestant-humanist notion of reading for profit,”³⁹ he also seems to have abandoned any notion of writing for profit – or rather, that notion abandoned him, as the name of his alter ego, “Pierce Penniless,” suggests. Here is Nashe, in the text that bears his alter ego’s name, depicting his own indigence:

But all in vain I sat up late and rose early, contended with the cold, and conversed with scarcity; for all my labours turned to loss, my vulgar Muse was despised and neglected, my pains not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I myself, in prime of my best wit, laid open to poverty. Whereupon, in a malcontent humour, I accursed my fortune, railed on my patrons, bit my pen, rent my papers, and raged in all parts like a mad man. (52)

Nashe can be in the “prime” of his “best wit,” but that primacy functions in inverse proportion to his ability to produce anything of value. All his “labours” turn to “loss”; his virtuosity has no virtue; and the efforts of his extemporal vein end up being “all in vaine.”

In the ongoing trial of writing that Plato instigated and that the Renaissance pushed to the extreme, Nashe, like Ovid and Aretino before him, faces some of the heaviest charges. Nashe scholars, it seems to me, feel the constant pressure to act as his defense team. The task, then, is to let the defense rest, to resist the temptation to view the pleasurable temptations of Nashe’s writing as justifiable (profitable, valuable, and productive) in the final analysis. And this task, I want to suggest in conclusion, is particularly important to undertake at this particular cultural moment. Whether *like* early modern England or *because* of early modern England (and this must remain an open question), contemporary Anglo-American critics similarly operate according to an ends-oriented understanding of literature. Such an approach may assuage our moral anxieties about the utility of literary work, especially in the face of the growing corporatization of the academy and the continued devaluing of the humanities, the arts, and literary studies. Nevertheless, our adherence to an instrumental view of aesthetics calls out for re-examination, I argue, because it diminishes rather than enhances what is most “useful” or “valuable” about poetry: namely, its distinctive ability to suspend the very use of utility as a standard for measuring cultural value. Rather than automatically defend literature against the charges of idleness, errancy, and escapism, it may be more helpful to critique the rhetorical and institutional forces that activate such defense mechanisms – and the charges to which they respond – in the first place.

In reexamining the struggles that Renaissance writers had with such issues, we may be in a better position to reconsider the current (which is to say, perpetual) crisis in the humanities and so to imagine alternatives (and the verb “imagine” is crucial) to the apologetic or defensive logic that marks current as well as past

³⁹ Hutson, 120.

justifications of literary value. In a vivid analogy toward the end of *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe himself reveals the heightened stakes, never mind the utter ridiculousness, of the logic of apology: “[I]f I, in the beginning of my book, should have come off with a long apology to excuse myself, it were all one as if a thief, going to steal a horse, should devise by the way as he went, what to speak when he came at the gallows” (141). Nashe, it should be noted, does not condemn the stealing of the horse; his skepticism is directed only against the horse thief’s unnecessarily preemptive composing of final words for the gallows, with the implication being that apologetics is a blatant instance of putting the cart before the horse. The question remains whether we can get off our high horse long enough to put that horse out to pasture.

Postscript

Nashe Untrimmed: The Way We Teach Him Today

Stephen Guy-Bray and Joan Pong Linton

When we came together as editors of this anthology, we were excited about the surge of critical interest in Nashe in the last decade or so, and what that might mean for the future of Nashe scholarship in early modern studies. We were also curious to take the pulse of professors of Nashe's texts, to see what connections can be made between teaching and scholarship. With a few exceptions,¹ the paucity of studies that include Nashe in the teaching of early modern literature provides further incentive to include a chapter on this subject, by way of a survey that would garner the collective wisdom on current practice. While not expecting a statistically significant sample, we thought that a survey would enable us both to examine individual perspectives and to gain a broader view of motives and methods among teachers of Nashe, and what this collective experience can tell us about the teaching of Early Modern literature. The idea was to spark a continuous conversation on an author whose untimely writings, in our view, speak powerfully to the issues of interest and concern in the twenty first century and, as such, could serve as a bridge in the dialogue between early modern writers and today's readers.

The survey drew 30 participants, including one doctoral student who participated in anticipation of future courses in which he or she would teach Nashe. Despite the limited sample, many of the discursive responses are quite detailed, providing valuable insight into several areas of interest to Nashe practitioners, including what kinds of courses have been hospitable to Nashe, which texts and editions have been used and why, and how instructors and students have fared in those courses. Following a report on these areas, we would like to focus in particular on the issues of pleasure and difficulties that participants experience in their teaching of Nashe. In analyzing the comments from both groups, we are struck by the

¹ See, for example, Margaret W. Ferguson's "Thomas Nashe: Cornucopias and Gallimaufries of Prose" in *Teaching Early Modern English Prose*, Susannah Brietz Monta and Margaret W. Ferguson, eds. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2010), 119-213; and Patricia Brace's "Teaching Class: Whitney's "Wyll and Testament" and Nashe's "Litany in Time of Plague," in *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay, eds. (New York: Modern Language Association of America), 279-82.

openness and intensity with which participants addressed these issues, and the absence of any middle ground between these two positions. We should add that, while seven participants explicitly wrote about their pleasures and four about their difficulties in the responses, it is clear these feelings affected other respondents as well. In fact, a way to integrate pleasure with difficulty emerged in the course of our analysis, both drawing from the overall polling and attending in particular to participants who indicated successes with student writing.

We take this opportunity to thank participants for their contributions to this survey, and Shaksper (shaksper.net) and the Modern Language Association for permission to distribute the survey announcement respectively on their general and Discussion Group listservs. We have included the survey questions in Appendix A below. To keep track of individual responses, the notation “#1.7” refers to respondent number one responding to question number seven. For questions with multiple choice answers, the options are referenced alphabetically. For convenience, we will from time to time refer to participants collectively who have expressed pleasure and difficulty as the pleasure group and the difficulty group.

Teachers of Nashe are, for the most part, unabashed enthusiasts of his writing. “I adore Nashe endlessly,” one declares (#8.1). Another counts the ways in which Nashe entices: “The extremely transgressive nature of his poetry and fiction, provocative fantasies about sex and the body, and the raciness of his fiction which defies formalist categories. His raw and unbridled language, and the ‘gothic’ quality of his descriptions [sic]” (#18.1). Yet another proclaims “a desire to include alternative voices on my syllabi. Though I realize that there are quite orthodox dimensions of Nashe’s work, I generally present him as a kind of ‘extremophile’ and outlier who shows one aspect of what people did with their humanist educations” (#9.1). Others offer reasons: “he is an important figure in the development of English prose style” (#7.1); the *Unfortunate Traveller* marks “an important moment in the emergence of prose fiction” (#14.1); and “Hey – it’s Nashe: unbeatable prose poetry!” (#30.8).

Before looking at how and when people teach Nashe, we want to look at what texts they use. Question 4 of the survey asks the respondents which of Nashe’s texts they teach, question 5 asks what editions they use, and question 6 asks why they chose these editions. As far as Nashe’s texts are concerned, while survey participants have included *Pierce Penniless*, *Terrors of the Night*, *Lenten Stuff*, *Choice of Valentines*, and *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, *The Unfortunate Traveller* proves most popular, with 25 users out of 29, most of them assigning the text in its entirety. One finds it “a useful compendium of themes, genres and styles of the period” (#5.1). For another “it offers fascinating entry points to discuss gender and sexuality as well as early modern textual cultures” (#10.1), and so on. It is not surprising that most of the respondents to our survey answered question 5 by writing that they use J.B. Steane’s edition for Penguin from 1972, as this is the only paperback edition of Nashe’s work available; Ronald B. McKerrow’s complete edition is now both old and prohibitively expensive, and Nashe is not well represented in anthologies. In contrast, Steane’s edition is easy to order

and relatively cheap and contains a good selection of Nashe's work: all of *The Unfortunate Traveler*, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, *Pierce Penniless*, *The Terrors of the Night*, *Lenten Stuff*, and "A Choice of Valentines" and selections from *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, *Strange News*, *Have with You to Saffron Walden*, and the preface to Greene's *Menaphon*. Steane's edition thus contains examples of Nashe's work in several genres – and Nashe's ranging over genres is one of his most distinctive features and something that is of increasing interest to critics – and gives a good sense of Nashe's ability to write both seriously and comically and in various stylistic registers.

Still, the fact that most respondents use Steane's edition means that their answers to question 4 – "What text(s) by Nashe have you taught? Did you teach the entire text or part of the text?" – are to some extent predetermined. Eight respondents wrote that they use Paul Salzman's *Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (1985), a choice which further restricts which texts by Nashe can be taught – in this case, only *The Unfortunate Traveler*. Even with Steane's wider selection, professors can only teach those texts of Nashe that are in his edition and, in the case of texts represented only by extracts, only those extracts Steane judged to be important. What is more, in their answers to question 6 – "What factor(s) influenced your selection of the edition(s)?" – the respondents cite both the book's (low) cost and its introduction. While Steane's introduction usefully sets Nashe in context, it is now outdated; there is a need for an introduction that would give some sense of the considerable body of scholarly work on Nashe since 1972.

Some respondents have other solutions: seven respondents use McKerrow's complete edition (1904–05) and two even use Grosart's (1884). The correspondents all also used Steane or Salzman, and presumably all these professors created course packs. With commendable industry, one respondent used 'personal transcription' and one supplemented his or her use of McKerrow by producing an edition of *Nashe's Dildo*. It is clear to us that the majority of respondents teach a variety of Nashe's texts and are resourceful in their use of the existing options. We were surprised that the new availability of digital versions of texts does not appear to have changed the situation: only two respondents wrote that they use EEBO. This may be a result of the fact that not all universities provide access to EEBO for their professors. As well, a number of respondents approve of the Steane's modern-spelling editions, so there may be a feeling that the original editions would be too difficult for undergraduates.

We recognize – and the responses to the survey clearly demonstrate – that professors teach Nashe for many reasons. Those who teach *The Unfortunate Traveler* in a fiction course will probably be satisfied either with Steane (if they wish to give some sense of Nashe's career as a whole) or with Salzman (if they wish to place Nashe in the context of Renaissance prose fiction more generally). People teaching shorter Nashe texts may well find it easiest simply to incorporate photocopies in a course package. But for the many respondents who devote substantial time to Nashe and his works a new edition would be welcome. There is a need for an edition of Nashe, one that could include a somewhat different

selection of texts as well as an account of the many monographs and articles on Nashe that have appeared in the forty years since the publication of Steane's edition. As one of the respondents noted, "We need a modern edition of Nashe ... that contextualizes him and offers some modern commentary." This respondent specifically imagines something like a Norton Nashe; Broadview Press, which has become well known for its editions of Renaissance texts with contemporary documents would provide another kind of access to Nashe's works. There is, of course, no reason that such an edition could not also be available digitally. We feel that the resulting edition would be attractive to many people who teach one or more of Nashe's texts and would help to close the gap between the experience of teaching Nashe and the experience of doing research on Nashe.

Connecting their text and edition choices to their classroom practices, question 2 asks how often instructors have included one or more of Nashe's works in their courses. Of the 29 respondents to this question, only five have done so once a year, and only one has done so every semester. 12 selected once every two years, and 11, who marked the "other" box, have taught Nashe even less frequently, in some cases once every four or five years. But teachers of Nashe are a committed lot: "Whenever I have taught a course in sixteenth-century literature either at the undergraduate or graduate level, I include Nashe" (#5.1). With respect to question 3, which asks respondents to identify the kinds of courses in which they have featured Nashe, 20 have done so in advanced undergraduate courses, 10 in graduate surveys; 8 in undergraduate seminars, and 10 in graduate seminars; 8 in undergraduate topics courses and 11 in graduate topics courses; along with 3 dual-listed undergraduate/graduate courses.

Nashe's texts find their way into a variety of survey courses, including two graduate courses on "Renaissance Poetry and Prose" and "Introduction to the Literature of the British Isles, Pre-1600," and seven undergraduate courses in Renaissance/Elizabethan/16th-century Literature, two excluding Shakespeare. Nashe's texts also lend themselves to genre courses, from courses on satire, to courses on prose and prose fiction, and travel literature. A course like "English Prose Fiction from its (Real) Beginnings" creatively rewrites established practices that equate prose fiction with the novel emerging in the 18th century. This allows the class to "start instead with the early sixteenth century and work our way upward," reading the *UT* alongside "More's *Utopia*, Baldwin's "Beware the Cat," Thomas Deloney's proto-novels, Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, and Behn's *Oroonoko*" (#20.7). Nashe also finds a friendly home in many a topics course, 17 at the graduate level and 6 at the undergraduate, reflecting a range of critical conversations, from Renaissance humanism, Early Modern temporalities, and Wit and Humor, to the print market and the public sphere, to new worlds and issues of race, to explorations of eros, fetish, sexuality and queering, to early modern nature and urban culture. While not in danger of becoming canonical anytime soon, Nashe would seem to play a provocative role in several courses on Shakespeare as well (for course titles, please see Appendix B).

We are able to learn something of how Nashe's texts fared in these courses from responses to question 9, which asks respondents to "outline your approach to teaching Nashe, or share an instance in which students had a break-through or difficulty with a text. What do you take from this instance?" Twenty of the respondents answered this question with various levels of detail. The answers obviously depended on which of Nashe's texts were taught. Some general trends in the responses are that Nashe is often taught as a link between, for instance, native modes of satire and the more classically-influenced satires of the Renaissance or between earlier works of prose fiction such as Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* or, especially, Sidney's *Arcadia* and later prose narratives. Interestingly, the respondent who teaches Nashe's satires such as *Pierce Penniless* or *Lenten Stuff* – the only respondent to write about teaching the satires – takes the history of satire up to the present, including contemporary examples and encouraging students to write their own satires. The only respondent who wrote about teaching *Summer's Last Will and Testament* similarly connects it to later works, in this case the comedies of Jonson.

Respondents who teach *The Unfortunate Traveler* often use this text as an example of "anti-romance" or even "anti-carnival" and are likely to connect the text not only to other works of prose fiction but to contemporary debates about the status of prose narratives (#17.9; #20.9). As well, professors appear likely to use *The Unfortunate Traveller* "in exploring an approach to urban life," or to make points about our habitual distinctions between high and low literature (#30.7; #16.9). As we expected, this approach is also a feature of teaching "The Choice of Valentines." This poem is not often taught, presumably chiefly because of its sexual explicitness, with one respondent noting that some of his or her students find the poem "offensive." The use of these texts to interrogate the distinction between high and low literature and to trouble students' opinions about Renaissance attitudes towards sexuality and violence is apparently one of the most characteristic aspects of the teaching of Nashe, who is often presented as (as one of the respondents puts it) an "extremophile" (#9.1) We note a certain tension between the presentation of Nashe as someone whose texts are very different from other Renaissance texts – and especially from the canonical texts with which students of all levels are likely to be familiar – and the presentation of Nashe as someone whose texts have a logical role in a narrative of the development of English literary forms.

Nashe is also presented as exceptional insofar as he is "a writer about whom there is little scholarly consensus," to quote one respondent; the suggestion here is that this makes him an ideal writer for graduate students seeking to develop their own approaches. Indeed, one respondent wrote that one of his or her students went on to write a monograph on Nashe. While this perception may lead some to assume that teaching Nashe is a solitary pleasure and that his texts are primarily and perhaps only enjoyed by professors, we may draw comfort from a respondent who self-identifies as a graduate student, and who writes "from the perspective of being a student." This respondent first read *The Unfortunate Traveller* as an undergraduate "in a survey course on Elizabethan Literature," in which the

instructor taught Nashe's text "as an ironic involution, if not revolution, of the signs and symbols of Elizabethan culture" (#1.7). Even as the seeds of the intellect may take time to mature, a first encounter had been formative of his or her graduate work as a scholar and future teacher of Nashe. As current teachers of Nashe, then, we may in fact be reaching future Nashe scholars – or future Jon Stewarts and Stephen Colberts, for that matter.

Beyond these dramatic examples, a fuller picture of how teachers and students fared in their courses emerges in responses to question 7, which asks participants to "name the course in which you have most successfully taught Nashe's work(s)." Among the 29 respondents, one reports that Nashe hasn't been "very popular with the students in any of the courses I have taught" (#7). Lest one should jump to conclusions, our colleague is not alone in admitting difficulties. While four instructors list no course at all, several others register difficulties elsewhere in the survey while also naming courses in which they have experienced success with Nashe's texts.² For these instructors, the chief distinguishing feature of Nashe's texts in the classroom appears to be their difficulty – even, as one respondent wrote, for students at the master's level. More generally, respondents confess that their students find his texts hard to read, citing for instance the difficulties of his style. One notes: "I've only taught Nashe a handful of times. I've not been terribly successful with bringing his prose into survey classes" (#6.10). Another instructor, "a huge Nashe fan," finds that "teaching Nashe was more successful in the graduate course. My undergraduates found his prose quite difficult (which it is) and were much less patient with it" (#4.10, 7).

In striking contrast, on the other hand, among participants who report success in teaching Nashe, several associate the experience with pleasure. "I'm sorry to sound subversive," writes one, "but the success was that they [the students] had *pleasure* from reading Nashe But I stress – although I have profound moral, religious, and political convictions – I passionately believe that we need more pleasure, more delight, more intelligent humor in the university, and Nashe – for all his horrible prejudices – can provide that. He's a good weapon against academic solemnities" (#21.8). And pleasure may happen where one least expects: "I started teaching Nashe in the interest of coverage in a full-year upper-level course in Renaissance studies. Then I found that both the students and I enjoyed it, so I add Nashe whenever possible" (#16.1). This was a class in which "none of the students had read any Renaissance prose fiction before; most had no idea there was any. Many of them found Nashe's text very enjoyable and accessible" (#16.8).

One factor that may account for these divergent experiences of pleasure and difficulty is the students' levels of preparation and intellectual engagement, which can vary greatly from one class to another. The lack of control over students' level of preparedness is the cause of frustration for one participant: "Even at [the] MA

² This is understandable, since the wording "have most successfully taught" invites comparative assessment among the courses one has taught, and perceptions of success are understood to be subjective.

level I find a good many students simply don't 'get' Nashe and find him baffling and therefore irritating. These students are also the ones most apt to be upset and angered by the violence of the *Unfortunate Traveller* – so working through what is going on in the scenes of torture and violation often becomes a necessity, even though it is not the aspect of the work I set out to explore" (#8.9). It is hard to imagine, though, that instructors from the pleasure group would be so lucky as to have had only well-prepared students in their classes. The emerging impression here, then, is that while Nashe's texts are highly esteemed by professors, to students they present a formidable obstacle in courses on Renaissance literature or the history of prose fiction. This is a rather melancholy picture, one that suggests that Nashe will never occupy a more than minor place in survey courses on Renaissance literature.

At the same time, however, the comments above from the espousers of pleasure suggest that pleasure provides affective motivation for learning, and this prompts the question of how teachers might go about communicating this pleasure, especially to students who don't "get" Nashe. Here the experience of another respondent proves helpful. Although this instructor also comments that students initially "find his style almost impenetrable," he or she adds that "some like that sort of thing." The respondent goes on to write that teaching *The Unfortunate Traveller* is "helpful as an aid to teaching young students of literature that 'understanding' the text is not an absolute requirement for literary pleasure" (#14.9). In this light, then, might pleasure provide motivation that furthers understanding? We would like to say yes, though not by lecturing, as one respondent tells us: "I found that I did a lot of lecturing, both to my undergraduates and my graduate students. I don't think that any of my undergraduates actually wrote a paper on Nashe, and I certainly don't recall any break-throughs. My graduate students generated some interesting reflections, but only when they went to write; in class, they were similarly mystified" (#4.9). By contrast, one respondent who experienced success teaching Nashe writes: "I don't give students much introduction before setting them upon the text because I've found it more productive to let them discover it on their own & bring to the conversation what surprised, fascinated, or troubled them about it" (#10.9). In this light, the experience of pleasure may well be the "surprise," "fascination," "trouble," or any combination of affects that engages students in addressing elements of difficulty in Nashe's texts. As the affective dimension of learning, then, pleasure is not opposed to difficulty; rather, the two converge in a productive process that involves "conversation," not lecture.

These testimonies find correlation in some of the responses to question 8, which asks: "To what do you attribute your success in teaching Nashe in this course?" Among the multiple choice options offered, some seem less relevant because the pleasure and difficulty groups do not diverge on them. These include options (a): "Nashe's text(s) built well on preceding texts and set up well for succeeding ones," and (h): "Study of Nashe's texts helped students fulfill course objectives." On further reflection, a likely reason is that these options concern aspects of course design for which instructors themselves are responsible. The same logic applies

even to (d): “Students critically engaged with the perspectives that Nashe’s text(s) brought to the course topic,” since for students to be critically engaged teachers must provide the basis for discussion in the first place.

By extension, the relevant options are those on which the two groups diverge dramatically. These are option (c): “Students found Nashe’s texts relevant to some of our current issues,” selected by 4 of 7 from the pleasure group and 0 of 4 from the difficulty; (e) Nashe’s prose style intrigued students and invited them to analyze it (5 of 7 to 0 of 4); and (f) Nashe’s text(s) generated interest in an aspect of early modern experience (7 of 7 to 1 of 4). For these options, student engagement is crucial, and instructors from the pleasure group tend to find its motivating source in Nashe’s texts. To begin, options (c) and (e) are closely aligned in that comments on Nashe’s relevance to our time often involve attention to his language and style. For one participant, “The poem [‘A Litany in Time of Plague’] is simply one of the most beautiful ever written, and during the earlier years of the AIDS crisis it also helped people to imaginatively enter the early modern world of mortal insecurity through a familiar door” (#14.9). Here aesthetic and affective effects are united in the reader’s imaginative experience. For another, “reading Nashe also reminded them [students] of the value and possibilities of verbal play, of taking the English language and, as Nashe says, ‘writhing’ it around. Any ‘relevance’ to modern times is real but indirect” (#21.8). Perhaps it is the pleasure of linguistic play that allows Nashe to remain relevant without becoming simply a screen on which to project our current issues and concerns.

As for option (f), one respondent from the pleasure group notes, “Nashe requires less of an ‘approach’ than other early modern writers I frequently teach, like Spenser and Milton. The students sometimes have difficulties with historical context and textual allusion, but no more often than with Shakespeare” (#24.9). The course in question, “Elizabeth I and Her Times,” is an upper-level collaboration across the disciplines of English, Drama, History, and Musicology. The texts in play included *The Unfortunate Traveller*, “music about the execution of Edmund Campion; gallows speeches; and *Richard II*” (#24.7). “Less of an ‘approach,’” it turns out, is still an approach, given the cultural and historical context built into the interdisciplinary design of the course. We can imagine the conversation across disciplines, each making use of the other for contextualization, enriching the conversation in the process. In this way pleasure in the classroom can become a coproduction, however structured or makeshift, with students learning context as an interdisciplinary engagement.

It remains to point out, however, that in the overall polling only 4 of 29 participants selected option (g): “Some students wrote interesting essays on Nashe’s text(s) with visibly improved performance.” Participants #3, #5, #18, and #26 are the enviable four who selected this option, none of them belonging to either the pleasure or the difficulty group, and this warrants a closer look at the other options they have selected to see what is important to them in motivating student writing. One emerging factor relates to option (e): “Nashe’s prose style intrigued students and invited them to analyze it.” This option is selected by 10

respondents altogether: 3 of the 4 instructors whose students performed well in writing (#3; #5; #18), and 5 of the 7 members from the pleasure group (#9, #10, #16, #21, #24), and by 2 among the remaining 18 who responded to question 8.³ These findings tend to align pleasure with performance; to explain just how one moves from pleasure to performance, we turn to the pedagogical reflections of three of our enviable colleagues (the fourth did not elaborate). Doing so also allows us to see how their approaches integrate in effect the pleasure and difficulty of Nashe's writings.

We note first their attention to Nashes's language, narrative technique, and other forms of textual performance. As respondent #18 writes, "I draw attention to body violence, explicit language, the complexity of narrative technique, the richness of metaphor, and frivolously bold ideas about the body, especially the erotic body. In teaching *The Unfortunate Traveller*, I begin with a close analysis of a sample of text. In teaching poetry, I encourage students to read it in its own right, as erotic/pornographic poetry, but also alongside other poetry of desire in order to highlight the difference in Nashe" (#18.9). The respondent has named two courses – an advanced undergraduate course on "Sixteenth Century Non-Dramatic Literature" and a graduate seminar on the "Queer Renaissance" – and is discussing possibly one or both. The approach presented here is quite similar to the approaches articulated by other respondents for their undergraduate and graduate classes, and this suggests – reassuringly perhaps – the extent to which our teaching practices across diverse institutional settings can coherently bridge the levels. The pedagogical challenge, of course, as mentioned before, is the difficulty of Nashe's style, a challenge respondent #5 takes up in connection with student writing.

Regarding the graduate seminar, "Satire, Libel and Controversy in Early Modern England," respondent #5 writes: "I like to teach Nashe as a writer about whom there is little scholarly consensus, and whose texts are full of critical and interpretive problems." In pointing out that "Nashe is difficult and full of paradoxes, challenging some basic interpretive assumptions," this instructor approaches "difficulty" in a way that differs from the instructors in the difficulty group – not as a deterrent but a motivation to inquiry – and offers an approach to active engagement with Nashe's texts that is in effect an exercise in restraint: "For me, one of the main lessons to gain from this is caution against a stylistic essentialism and an appreciation for the insights provided by micro-historicist contextual readings" (#5.9). Instead of championing any one interpretation of Nashe, this approach suggests that our students' difficulties with Nashe's texts are often rooted in too insistent a desire to get a "fix" on Nashe's protean wit and

³ A potentially significant factor relates to question 8, option (b): "Nashe's text(s) generated lively discussion." The option is unanimously selected by our four enviable instructors, suggesting the importance of lively discussion in preparing students for writing. However, since this option is also selected by 16 of the remaining 21 respondents (roughly 3 out of 4), we conclude that lively discussion is an indicator that becomes significant only when combined with option (e).

mercurial performance. By extension, we as instructors may make of students' difficulties with Nashe an occasion for enlarging their critical awareness, enabling them to question the assumptions underlying and constituting various forms of literary criticism. This, in turn, requires us to examine how the authority structure of our English classrooms shapes expectations about the transmission and transformation of knowledge, and the implications this has for teachers and students. Finally, in attending to Nashe's difficulty as an interpretive challenge, respondent #5 in effect reframes difficulty as a kind of pleasure – the intellectual pleasure of meeting Nashe at his textual games, however tentative at first, in which students may engage in the kind of writerly co-creation with Nashe that Roland Barthes calls the “pleasure of the text.”⁴ In this relation, it is not coincidental that two essays in this collection should call for revaluation of Nashe's textual performance, especially in *Pierce Peniless* and *The Unfortunate Traveller*, as a “minimal” materialist poetics of pleasure that challenges the literary and religious essentialisms of his time. The centrality of pleasure in our dealings with Nashe's texts is of paramount importance to the editors and is one of the main reasons for the present collection, and it is something of a wonder to see both in these essays and in the reflections offered by our survey respondents such a convergence on pleasure.

Apart from their attention to language and style, we note a second feature common to our four colleagues that may relate to students' improved written performance, namely, the way their courses enable dialogue between early modern and current cultural concerns. Among the courses in which they have taught Nashe with most success, the “Queer Renaissance” (#18) and “Shakespeare and Urban Culture” (#26) speak most directly to twenty-first century issues and concerns, but the courses on “Satire” (#3) and “Satire, Libel and Controversy in Renaissance England” (#5) are equally relevant to our public discourse today. Satire being Nashe's métier, it is easy to see how locating his texts in the dynamic tradition of the genre's transformations and subversions can enable students to appreciate the singularity of his performance. As respondent #3 points out, such historical and generic knowledge provides the necessary grounding for students to engage on their own with any of Nashe's texts, whether “to connect its ideas to contemporary culture (or, in my Presentist way, to use modern examples of this kind of irony to illuminate the more obscure parts of Nashe's work)” (#3.9). A certain presentism can motivate engagement by empowering students to bring their own knowledge of, and interest in, current issues to the study of early modern literature and culture. Conversely it allows early modern texts to educate the present by providing a historically distanced perspective from which to examine our own cultural issues.

⁴ Barthes discusses the idea of the “writerly” reader and the pleasure of the text in his essay, “The Death of the Author,” which appears in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 49–55. Barthes further develops these ideas in *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

The cultivation of such dialogic skills will prove both challenging and, we hope, rewarding. To return to our survey findings, in overall polling, 15 of 29 respondents selected question 8, option (c) "Students found Nashe's texts relevant to some of our current issues and concerns"; and 18 of 29 selected option (f): "Nashe's texts generated interest in an aspect of early modern experience." These findings suggest that we have much ground to cover; at the same time, they also suggest that the opportunity exists for rethinking our teaching of early modern texts, and the place of our fellow traveler in this rethinking, as we venture abroad with him into the Age of Thomas Nashe.

Appendix A: Teaching Thomas Nashe: A Survey

Accessible at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3T7GGVX>

1. In general, what motivates you to include Nashe in your course(s)?

2. How often have you included one or more of Nashe's works in your courses?

- ☐ Every semester
- ☐ Every quarter
- ☐ Once a year
- ☐ Once every 2 years
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

3. In what kind(s) of courses have you taught Nashe's work(s)? Please check all that apply and provide course titles.

- ☐ Introductory undergraduate course
- ☐ Advanced undergraduate course
- ☐ Undergraduate Seminar
- ☐ Graduate survey
- ☐ Graduate seminar
- ☐ Topics course: graduate
- ☐ Topics course: undergraduate
- ☐ Other (please specify below)

4. What text(s) by Nashe have you taught? Did you teach the entire text or part of the text? (If parts, please specify which.

5. What editions of these text(s) do you use? Check all that apply:

- ☐ The Complete Works of Thomas Nashe, 6 vols. A. B. Grosart, ed. (1885)

- ___ The Works of Thomas Nashe, 3 vols. R. B. McKerrow, ed. (1904–1905)
- ___ The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works, ed. J.B. Steane (Penguin, 1972)
- ___ Elizabethan Prose Fiction, ed. Paul Salzman (1985)
- ___ Other (please specify in box below)

6. *What factor(s) influenced your selection of the edition(s)? Check all that apply:*

- ___ cost
- ___ modernized spelling
- ___ original spelling
- ___ annotations on the same page
- ___ provides glossary
- ___ provides commentary
- ___ good introduction
- ___ good contextual materials
- ___ provides critical essays
- ___ other (please use box below)

7. *Name the course in which you have most successfully taught Nashe's work(s). Briefly describe the course level, learning objectives, and texts included.*

8. *To what do you attribute your success in teaching Nashe in this course? Please check all that apply and explain further in the text box below.*

- ___ Nashe's text(s) built well on preceding texts and set up well for succeeding ones
- ___ Nashe's text(s) generated lively discussion
- ___ Students found Nashe's texts relevant to some of our current issues & concerns
- ___ Students critically engaged with the perspectives that Nashe's text(s) brought to the course topic
- ___ Nashe's prose style intrigued students and invited them to analyze it
- ___ Nashe's text(s) generated interest in an aspect of early modern experience
- ___ Some students wrote interesting essays on Nashe's text(s) with visibly improved performance
- ___ Study of Nashe's texts helped students fulfill course objectives
- ___ Other (please specify)

9. Briefly outline your approach to teaching Nashe, or share an instance in which students had a break-through or difficulty with a text. What do you take from this instance?

10. Further Comments:

Appendix B: List of Courses

(the # indicates individual respondents by number; the asterisk indicates courses in which Nashe was most successfully taught; G denotes Graduate; and U denotes Undergraduate)

- #1 participant was a graduate student when responding to this survey
- #2 *"Questions of Race in Early Modern England" (G topic)
- #3 *"Satire" (U/G cross-listed topic/survey)
- #4 "Origins and Originality: Renaissance and 17th-century Literature" (U advanced)
*"Renaissance Temporalities" (G seminar)
- #5 "Sixteenth-century Literature" (U advanced)
"The Public Sphere in early Modern England" (G)
*"Satire, Libel and Controversy in Renaissance England" (G seminar)
- #6 *"Renaissance Satire" (U/G dual-listed seminar)
- #7 "English Literature 1500-1660" (U advanced)
"Studies in English Renaissance Literature" (G seminar)
- #8 *"New Worlds, England and Beyond, 1536-1611" (G survey)
- #9 *Renaissance Humanism" (G seminar)
*"The Representation of Emergency in the Renaissance" (U senior seminar)
- #10 *"Renaissance Poetry and Prose" (G survey)
- #11 *"Renaissance Economies" (G seminar)
- #12 *Graduate Survey of Renaissance Literature (G survey)
"Fetish/Renaissance" (G topic)
- #13 "Early Modern Travel Literature" (G topic)
- #14 *"Dream and Dream Interpretation, 1200-1750" (G seminar)
"History of Fiction" (U advanced)
- #15 "Trans-Atlantic Literature in English, 1600-1800" (U survey)
"Shakespeare and What Counts as Context" (G seminar)
- #16 *"16th-Century Narrative" (U fourth-year honors seminar)
"Studies in 16th-Century Literature" (U advanced)
"Renaissance Studies" (U advanced)
- #17 *"Literature of the 16th Century" (U mid-level survey)
- #18 *"Sixteenth-century non-dramatic literature" (U advanced)

- *"Queer Renaissance" (G seminar)
- #19 *"Early Modern Travel Literature" (G seminar)
- #20 *"English Prose Fiction from its (Real) Beginnings" (U or G, level not specified)
- #21 "Elizabethan Literature" (U junior colloquium/senior seminar)
- *"Wit and Humor in the Renaissance" (G lecture/seminar)
- "Eros in the Renaissance" (G lecture)
- #22 *"Non-Shakespearean Dramatic Works, Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods" (U advanced)
- *"Religion, Religious Change and the Theater in the Period 1500-1642" (G seminar)
- #23 *"Heroic Quests in Early British Literature" (U non-major survey)
- #24 "Renaissance Sense of Time" (G topics course)
- *"Elizabeth I and Her Times" (U advanced interdisciplinary course)
- "Introduction to the Literature of the British Isles, Pre-1600" (G survey)
- "English Literature, 1588-1625" (G seminar)
- #25 *"Rise of the Novel" (U advanced)
- #26 *"Shakespeare and Urban Culture" (U/G dual-listed)
- "*King Lear* and the Poetics of Nature" (G topic or seminar)
- #27 *"Late Shakespeare" (U advanced)
- "Sexuality in Renaissance Literature" (G seminar)
- #28 *"Early Modern Travel Literature" (G topic)
- #29 *"Sixteenth-Century Literature (Excluding Shakespeare)" (U advanced)
- #30 *"Literature of London" (G topic)

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