

*Thomas Nashe and the Processing
of Urban Experience*

Near the start of what would become his most popular work, Thomas Nashe, ever the opportunist, laments over the neglect of the learned writers of the age by calling upon that paragon of Elizabethan virtue, Sir Philip Sidney. In what will become *Pierce Penniless's* most common refrain, Nashe decries his poverty and the more general mistreatment of scholarly authors at the hands of “cormorant” patrons. After a boisterous attack on the “gross-brained idiot[s]” whom he sees dominating the print market, Nashe turns on a tonal dime to call piously on Sidney’s memory:

Gentle *Sir Philip Sidney*, thou knewst what belonged to a Scholler, thou knewst what paines, what toyle, what travel, conduct to perfection: wel couldst thou give every Vertue his encouragement, every Art his due, every writer his desert: cause none more vertuous, witty, or learned than thy selfe.

But thou art dead in thy grave, and hast left too few successors of thy glory, too few to cherish the Sons the Muses, or water those budding hopes with their plenty, which thy bounty erst planted.¹

Nashe here draws on Sidney’s incomparable reputation as learned patron and practitioner of the arts, elegizing the famed aristocrat as the symbol of a lost golden age of support and appreciation for cultured writing. The passage’s doleful and nostalgic complaint about the underappreciation of scholarship aligns closely with the pamphlet’s governing attitude, an attitude, it should be noted, that will become *Pierce Penniless's* most prominent legacy in the years after its release. Despite its numerous digressions and odd interpolations, Nashe’s supplication invariably returns to its central theme, the inability of educated and scholarly authors to secure a comfortable living and to gain a patron’s attention amidst the throng of ambitious hack writers now populating London. Inserting a posthumous address to

¹ Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904–1910), 1: 159. All further references from Nashe’s works are taken from the McKerrow edition and will appear by volume and page number.

Sidney early on to correlate his death with these complaints seems a strategic, if obvious, choice by Nashe. By 1592, six years after his death, Sidney's shadow loomed large over the nation's collective psyche as he was memorialized as a Protestant martyr, England's greatest aristocrat and poet. Nashe's paean to the dead nobleman echoes countless other commemorations of the peerless Sidney and seems to use his cultural status to buttress Pierce's claims of mistreatment at the hands of an unlearned and degenerate elite.

I would posit, however, that we should not take Nashe's praise at face value here. In fact, despite Nashe's seeming straightforward praise for Sidney in *Pierce Penniless*, it will be my contention in this chapter that Nashe was busy creating and advocating for a novel role for the urban writer that also assumed an innovative set of aesthetic principles that we associate with the metaphysical and that was directly antagonistic to Sidneian humanist ideals. The dissatisfaction that Nashe felt at his lack of advancement as a member of the supposed intellectual elite contributed to his deeply skeptical outlook on reality and on the efficacy of humanist writing more specifically, an outlook that found ample expression in his prose and most direct outlet in his feud with Gabriel Harvey. What's more, as I detail in this chapter, the precise quotidian realities of Nashe's existence in London in the 1590s pushed him to formulate a novel advocacy of contention even as he pushed away the noisiness of the urban public world, an entirely ambivalent stance towards the city embodied in Nashe's obsession with corners in his prose. In formulating a writing approach that corresponded with his objections to Sidney (and more directly Gabriel Harvey) and his urban reality, Nashe innovated his prose style into something less mimetic (a Sidneian model) than affective, a style that foregrounded a speedy and digressive aimlessness, as well as a heterogeneous mixtures of materialist images. That is, Nashe's prose takes up the very features that we now call the metaphysical, and it is in line with *his* style that Donne and his fellow Inns men write in the following years. While current critical consensus clearly identifies Nashe as an urban writer, no study has linked his concerns and his style so specifically with the details of its spaces, nor has any study identified the origins of the metaphysical style in the urban aesthetics he developed in his disagreements with and innovations from those writers before him.²

² In fact, one of the studies that links Nashe's texts closely to the conditions of their production, Georgia Brown's *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, argues both that Nashe was a "midwife" to the Sidneian revolution and that he remained an inveterate searcher for the truth even in his digressive and indirect statements (*Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53–101).

Before exploring in more detail Nashe's innovations in the rest of the chapter, I would like first to detail more thoroughly his insincerity in the praise of Sidney above, both to clarify his skepticism over Sidney's humanist project overall as well as to provide an example of the affective and indirect ways in which his skeptical prose responds to urban existence. Admittedly, there is little in the sentences on Sidney above to suggest insincerity or irony; and it would take a certain kind of recklessness to satirize publicly such a universally well-regarded figure. Nonetheless, a careful reader, one familiar as well with Nashe's prior writing, might have reason to doubt his effusive address to his aristocratic better. Shortly before the elegiac remarks on Sidney's virtues, the dead poet had actually already made an allusive appearance in the opening paragraph of *Pierce Penniless*. In these opening moments, Nashe depicts Pierce struggling to express his frustration in writing: "Whereupon (in a malecontent humor) I accused my fortune, raild on my patrones, bit my pen, rent my papers, and ragde in all points like a mad man" (1: 157). Nashe here humorously evokes, albeit subtly, Sidney's famous opening to his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* where his speaker sits "biting my truant pen" as he attempts to express his desire. While this single reference to Astrophil might seem too passing to be intentional, Nashe reinforces the link a few clauses later as Pierce notes that he "resolved in verse to paint forth my passion," another seeming allusion to Sidney's Sonnet 1.³ It should be remembered that Nashe himself had just finished editing and writing a dedicatory preface to the pirated edition of Sidney's sequence in the prior year and would have had the verses near to hand and mind. Thus, in the opening to the very next pamphlet Nashe produces after this edition, he equates his distressed and satiric persona Pierce with England's great defender of literary taste and value, an equation that the Sidney family surely would not have appreciated (or perhaps would have appreciated as much as they seemed to appreciate his overwrought preface to the unauthorized edition of *Astrophil and Stella*).⁴ With its conjuring of the exemplar of the English protestant writer, the beginning of *Pierce Penniless* becomes a tongue-in-cheek attempt to raise Pierce's stilted verses and his later irreverent plea to the devil to the level of Sidney's ostensibly pious poetry and prose.

³ Laurie Ellinghausen has also argued that Nashe was parodically alluding to Sidney's sonnet in her *Labor and Writing in Early Modern England, 1567–1667* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 45.

⁴ That is, not at all. The Sidneys made every effort to recall the unauthorized edition published by Thomas Newman in 1591 to which Nashe's preface was attached. For more on the publication of this edition and Nashe's preface, see Steven Mentz, "Selling Sidney: William Ponsonby, Thomas Nashe, and the Boundaries of Elizabethan Print and Manuscript Cultures," *Text* 13 (2000): 151–74.

In fact, judging from this earlier preface to Sidney's sonnet sequence, Nashe seemed distinctly skeptical of such moral claims for his predecessor's poetry, and is even mocking these pretensions as he praises the poetry. Certainly, the pious Countess of Pembroke would not have relished reading that her brother's poetry was a "Theater of pleasure ... a paper stage streud with pearle, an artificial heav'n to overshadow the faire frame, & christal wals to encounter your curious eyes, whiles the tragicommodity of love is performed by starlight" (3: 329). The description of Sidney's sonnets, with its implicit connection of his poetry to drama, a form Sidney notably mocked as lowbrow, and its overelaborate emphasis on the verse's artificiality and abundance, seems designed deliberately to poke at Nashe's potential patrons.⁵ Later in the same preface, Nashe will admit ironically that he does not have the talent for sonnet writing since his style "cannot daunce trip and goe so lively, with oh my love, ah my love, all my loves gone, as other Shepherds that have beene fooles in the Morris time out of minde" (3: 332). The satire of sonnet culture is more direct here; Nashe's false humility serves as an excuse for him to mock the labored and overemotional style of sonneteers, including Sidney, and to differentiate his more materialist and vigorous prose from the dominant poetic mode of the 1580s and 1590s. Even as he sought to market Sidney's poetry and to gain the favor, however unlikely, of the Sidney family, Nashe could not resist lampooning sonnet culture, suggesting at the very least his distaste for the romanticized imagery and attitudes found in the poems that followed.⁶ Across this preface and *Pierce Penniless*, then, we might find Nashe taking up a more ironic and distanced stance towards the contemporary representative of Elizabethan poetics.

Overall, Nashe's at times effusive praise at times satiric lampoon of Sidney signals a writer deeply interested in undermining his own assertions, in producing an ironic distance from all that he writes that we can consider as an affective reaction to Nashe's urban quotidian. Given the full context for his remarks on his poetic forbear, it is nearly impossible to identify a clear tone in the elegiac praise of Sidney found in *Pierce Penniless*. Even the overt sincerity of the praise itself raises doubts considering the highly satiric and vulgar mode that Nashe had deployed before and will deploy consistently throughout the rest of the pamphlet. The effusiveness of these sentences, instead of rising above the rest of the humorous grotesqueries in

⁵ Mentz, 166–67.

⁶ Nashe will return to this satire of sonnet culture in his depiction of Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey in *The Unfortunate Traveler*, on which see Elizabeth Rivlin, who argues that Nashe's depiction of the ineffectual Surrey is indirectly a lampoon of Sidney as well (*The Aesthetics of Service* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 55–72).

Pierce, leaves us primarily with a feeling of uncertainty. It is this feeling of uncertainty that I argue is one of the predominant affective states in which Nashe's prose places its readers. Repeatedly in his writing, as he does above when he praises Sidney, Nashe takes a seemingly sincere position, only to undermine that position with a satiric digression or self-conscious parody of the very vocabulary or norms for which he had just advocated. In these ironic turns, we might see an almost instinctual resistance to serious pronouncement, an intellectual gag reflex against categorical truths. It is this seeming gag reflex that causes different critics to conjure entirely contradictory versions of Nashe (conservative/radical, capitalist/traditionalist) from the same texts. As Nashe scholars, we are all fond of citing C. S. Lewis's well-known pronouncement: "If asked what Nashe 'says', we should have to reply, 'nothing,'" but it would be more accurate to state that rather than saying nothing, Nashe believes nothing he says.⁷ Throughout Nashe's prose, he leaves his readers wary – wary of a surprising or digressive shift in affective register, of an ironic turn that unsubstantiates everything that they have just read, of disingenuousness at all turns. This constant potential for disingenuousness signals a specifically skeptical strain of thought in his writing: readers see a mind incapable of allowing demonstrative statements to stand, a mind insistent on casting doubt on his own propositions.

It is a skepticism born of the intellectual moment, but it is also one born not unrelatedly of the particular social and geographic circumstances in which Nashe lived in London in the 1590s. While Lorna Hutson especially has identified a skeptical strain of thought in Nashe's writings, I would suggest that not only does Nashe's epistemological doubt align with broader intellectual trends, it also speaks to the specific geographic and everyday realities of living as a struggling, if elite, intellectual in the metropolis in the 1590s.⁸ For Nashe, epistemological doubt manifests itself in the persistent ironic distance from all categorical statements that I have described above; it is a distance, first of all, designed to satirize and dismantle humanists' insistence on the utility and service that they believed academic writing should provide.⁹

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 416.

⁸ Lorna Hutson in her seminal study, *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), stresses Nashe's skepticism.

⁹ For more on Nashe's turn against humanist intellectual ideals, see Jennifer Turner, "Jack Wilton and the Art of Travel," in *Critical Approaches to English Prose Fiction 1520–1640*, ed. Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1998), 126, which speaks specifically to *The Unfortunate Traveler*; on this rejection more broadly in Nashe, see Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons from the English Renaissance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 101–38, and Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 37–62.

Like many of the educated intellectuals that came to London in the 1590s, such as the Inns satirists that followed him, Nashe rejected these humanist ideals seemingly out of frustration as the opportunities for service and advancement for university-educated men disappeared.¹⁰ As a result of the dearth of opportunity, Nashe, along with other recent university graduates, consistently struggled to find decent work during his years in the metropolis, living an itinerant life marked by short stays at a variety of shared, crowded, or haphazard dwellings, interspersed with brief sojourns in the back rooms of noblemen's households. Considering this existence alongside the increasingly crowded and inscrutable public spaces of London, we can also read Nashe's persistent ironic distance as enacting an imaginative fantasy, an attempt to keep everything and everyone at arm's length, a desire to avoid being closely involved with anything. Nashe's skepticism, that is, is an affective response to the press of the city he felt so keenly due to his marginal and unsettled existence in London as much as it is a reaction to the intellectual currents begun by Montaigne and Marprelate.

In what follows, I will continue to explore the ways in which Nashe affectively processed the precise quotidian conditions of the city in his prose. In looking closely at the locations of his various residences, his successes and failures in securing patronage and their effect on his financial state, and the public spaces that he frequented, I aim to detail the particulars of the city life of this young and struggling university-educated writer and how these particulars demanded a specific set of thematic and aesthetic reactions from him.¹¹ Nashe represents himself as the victim of a distinct form of academic failure and in his literary afterlife he will epitomize this failure for a group of male intellectuals that follow him. In the process of such self-creation, Nashe developed in his prose a novel set of ideas about writing's place in the changing realities of the metropolis that sought to counter and take advantage of the privileged sense of precarity that he felt, and that others would see in themselves shortly thereafter. It is this self-creation as struggling intellectual, as well as the theories on the purposes of

¹⁰ For a snapshot of this group of frustrated young men, see P. B. Roberts, "Underemployed Elizabethans: Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe in the Parnassus Plays," *Early Theatre* 2 (2018): 49–70. These frustrations of university graduates moving to London had been brewing for some years, as seen in the attitudes of the university wits writing in the earlier 1590s. However, I would distinguish this later community by its much higher level of skepticism and cynicism towards the systems from which they were consistently excluded.

¹¹ For a study similar in approach but that looks at the influence of the city on Nashe's prose's treatment of sexuality, see Georgia Brown, "Sex and the City: Nashe, Ovid, and the Problems of Urbanity," in *The Age of Thomas Nashe: Text, Bodies, and Trespasses of Authorship in Early Modern England*, eds. Stephen Guy-Bray, Joan Pong Linton, and Steve Mentz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 11–26.

writing that he developed in tandem with this self-creation, that became the immediate legacies of Nashe's prose. Of course, Nashe created his persona alongside a distinctive and self-conscious style, a "metaphysical" aesthetics that also responded to the circumstances which he specifically faced in the city. In the last section of this chapter, I turn to the details of his style to show how it fulfills both what Nashe believed writing should do in 1590s London as well as how, in its particular ordering of experience, it developed a way of writing that would serve his urban descendants so well.¹² In its emphasis on motion and speed, on digression and obscurity, on the visceral and the often grotesque, Nashe's aesthetic inaugurates a style common to a series of writings in the 1590s, from the Inns satires to Donne's love lyrics, that I am calling the urban metaphysical.

Humanism, Patronage, and an Itinerant Nashe

As evidenced by the lack of consensus from scholars on Nashe's relationship to his patrons and to patronage more generally, Nashe held varying and ambivalent attitudes towards the system through which men like him sought their way in 1590s London. The sheer number of attitudes towards the patronage system attributed to Nashe by critics shows at once its centrality to his thinking as well as his contradictory stances on it. While many have presented Nashe as the first writer to fully embrace the sordidness of the English capital print market, others have maintained his commitment to and immersion in the very system about which he complained publicly in his writings.¹³ In my reading of Nashe's writing, this ambivalence sits at the center of his response to patronage, an ambivalence that, we shall see, directly correlates to his shifting everyday circumstances in London in the 1590s. Due to his itinerant existence across a variety of

¹² On the aesthetic and everyday experience, see Lauren Berlant *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 1–22.

¹³ See especially for the former argument Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82–113, and David Baker, *On Demand: Writing for the Market in Early Modern England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 35–61. Rivlin, in *The Aesthetics of Service*, argues that Nashe's prose reacts to and advocates for the capitalist rearrangements of service enacted in the late sixteenth century, 55. For the latter argument, see Charles Nicholls, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1984), passim, as well as Peter Holbrook, *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 41–64, and Tamsin Badcoe, who, in her exploration of the fear of violence in Nashe's writing, argues that "For Nashe the professional author, the human touch most desired seems to be that of a patron" in "As Many Ciphers without an I': Self-Reflexive Violence in the Work of Thomas Nashe," *Modern Philology* 111 (2014): 404.

disparate spaces across the city, some comfortable, some more strained, Nashe necessarily developed a shifting and skeptical stance towards the economic system that underwrote his physical circumstances. Ultimately, this skeptical participation in the patronage world led Nashe to a more radical rejection of the humanist model of writing linked unequivocally with this form of support. While Nashe has generally been grouped with the “Elizabethan prodigals” of the late 1580s, writers who used this disolute persona to endorse ultimately humanist practice, Nashe’s wholesale dismantling of humanist utility aligns him far more closely with the writers that followed him, writers such as the Inns satirists John Marston and John Donne. What we can see emerging in Nashe’s turn away from the Sidneian model of authorship is a writer firmly invested in the visceral and ephemeral rather than the structured and the didactic.

Most immediately, Nashe’s *Pierce Penniless* specifically presents itself as a wide-ranging and sustained satire on the economic necessities that authors faced in the rapidly growing metropolis of the early 1590s. Nashe’s ironic appeal to the devil that frames the whole pamphlet simultaneously signals the extent of his persona’s frustration over securing aristocratic support and suggests the true nature of the bargains that writers must strike in order to curry favor. While the frame is infused with Nashe’s typical ironic playfulness, the pamphlet itself insistently return to gripes over the unfairness of this system –the failure of proper scholars to gain favor, the tightfistedness of the wealthy, the advancement of undeserving “carterly upstarts.” Together, these complaints point to a writer critical of the hierarchical and fickle restrictions of an outdated sociocultural institution, a writer who embraces rather the freedoms of a capitalist and open print market.¹⁴ These laments about the inequities of the patronage system in *Pierce* have often been attributed to the autobiographical nature of the text and Nashe’s own very real difficulties procuring aristocratic support throughout his writing life. While I do think it worth hesitating over equating *Pierce*’s sentiments with Nashe’s, it is also evident that *Pierce Penniless* shows a writer responding to and criticizing the failure of an aging cultural institution to deal with the rapidly changing economic and social circumstances of the metropolis in the 1590s.¹⁵ It was a failure Nashe himself felt acutely as he struggled to

¹⁴ For such arguments, see the sources cited in fn. 13 above.

¹⁵ It should be noted that Nashe’s contemporary readers did not hesitate to equate the *Pierce* persona with the real Nashe, as evidenced by the Parnassus plays and later pamphlets such as Thomas Middleton’s *The Black Book* (1604). Jonathan Crewe, in *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 53, notes how much “loss and victimization” was a part of Nashe’s public personae.

attain stable patronage, and thus a stable living, through his writing, even with his turn to the public print market. This lack of stability forced Nashe to move his lodging frequently while in the city; he most likely resided at some point in Shoreditch, Smithfield, and Blackfriars, as well as, if printed reports are to be believed, Coldharbour near the Steelyard and the seedier areas around Clerkenwell.¹⁶ With this itinerant existence in mind, it is hard not to draw the autobiographical parallel when Pierce decries the greedy “cormorant” patrons who have made the “poore Scholers and Souldiers wander in the backe lanes and the out-shiftes of the Citie, with never a rag to their backes” (1: 204). Despite the most likely exaggerated self-pity in this description, Nashe’s life in its mobility did resemble a mostly privileged version of the unsettled existences of many urban inhabitants in the 1590s.¹⁷ Given the presumably shared nature and lack of privacy of many of Nashe’s lodgings, such as John Danter’s printshop in Smithfield where he lived for some months in 1594–1595, we should not be surprised by Nashe’s skepticism towards the humanist model of scholarship and writing most closely associated with the patronage system.¹⁸ This model necessitates the contemplative space and material resources, including stable access to a collection of books, that Nashe almost certainly lacked as he moved from tenement house to tenement house in the neighborhoods of London. With the material conditions prerequisite for humanist scholarship out of reach or ever tenuously held by Nashe, in *Pierce* he turns to satirize the results of intellectual ideals that no longer matched the realities of some of the young university men living in the city.

However, even in 1590s London, an early modern low point for the patronage system, young writers still keenly sought aristocratic support even as they criticized and attacked the system’s shortcomings. Nashe was no exception. *We might* read the sharply satiric supplication to the devil in *Pierce Penniless* as a wholesale rejection of the patronage system in favor of a novel vision of writing as commodity on the open print market. However, Nashe also very much spent his writing life pursuing and

¹⁶ Nicholls’s biography adduces much of the contemporary evidence concerning Nashe’s circumstances. For two illuminating articles on Nashe’s movements in 1592–1594, see C. G. Harlow, “Thomas Nashe, Robert Cotton the Antiquary, and *The Terrors of the Night*,” *The Review of English Studies* 12 (1961): 7–23, and “Nashe’s Visit to the Isle of Wight and His Publications, 1592–4,” *The Review of English Studies* 14 (1963): 225–42.

¹⁷ See Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) and Lena Cowen Orlin, “Temporary Lives in London Lodgings,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71 (2008): 219–42.

¹⁸ For more on the ubiquity of these shared spaces, see Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

securing the patronage of important figures, including Archbishop John Whitgift, Ferdinando Stanley, the Earl of Derby, George Carey, Baron Hunsdon, and Robert Cotton. While much of this employment fizzled, often it seems due to Nashe's tactlessness, he still saw himself as a participant in this system and a member of the elite intellectual culture that it supported.¹⁹ Nashe's relocations not only included moves to shared quarters in the crowded neighborhoods listed above, but also, it seems, brief sojourns at Whitgift's Croydon Palace south of the city, George Carey's Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, and Robert Cotton's house in Huntingdonshire. A full account of Nashe's living conditions during these years, then, must include both these more comfortable, spacious, and materially luxurious visits away from the city as well as his temporary lodgings in some of early modern London's more questionable areas. The inconsistent, short-term, and divergent nature of Nashe's residencies was a direct result of the exigencies of Nashe's continued search for patronage.

Even in *Pierce Penniless*, his most sustained critique and satire of the patronage system, Nashe seems to be, at least partially sincerely, working for favor. The pamphlet ends with effusive praise for his "Amyntas," the Earl of Derby; and, earlier, in the midst of a diatribe against chroniclers, Pierce promises that "if any *Mecaenas* binde me to him by his bounty, or extend some round liberalitie to mee worth speaking of, I will doo him as much honour as any Poet of my beardsse yeeres shall in *England*" (1: 195). All this is to show that his statements in *Pierce Penniless* demonstrate a deep ambivalence, or perhaps purposeful trickery, concerning the patronage system. So, even the promise to his hypothetical Maecenas above is tinged with irony since it is preceded immediately by a garbled Latin phrase "caret tempus non habet moribus," suggesting a lack of learning, and is followed by an Aretine-inspired threat to excoriate publicly those who send him "away with a Flea in mine ear" and a lengthy attack on the Harveys (1: 195).²⁰ While this ambivalence aligns closely with his skepticism over all certainties, it also more viscerally arises out of the varied material circumstances under which he subsisted due to his inconsistent success in aristocratic circles. With its roots in the lived material experiences of his daily life, experiences whose qualities shifted markedly from year to year, Nashe's ambivalent attitudes towards the patronage system run throughout

¹⁹ See, Nicholls, *A Cup of News*, passim, for Nashe's numerous successes and failures at patronage.

²⁰ For more on Nashe's imitation of Aretine's treatment of his patrons in print, see Wes Folkert, "Pietro Aretino, Thomas Nashe, and Early Modern Rhetorics of Public Address," in *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, eds. Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 68–80.

his writings, driving his conflicting views on the ideal circumstances for writing, on the benefits of private and public space, and ultimately on the proper aesthetics to match these lived material experiences.

Despite his perhaps necessary ambivalence towards securing patronage during his writing life, Nashe was more direct in his evaluation of the older and what he saw to be antiquated modes of humanist writing that had come to embody the patron–writer relationship. His skepticism of the consistency of support afforded the learned urban writer, that is, seems to have bled over into a deep-seated suspicion of the ideological arguments made to justify the scholarly and patronized life. It is this suspicion that sits at the heart of his years-long feud with the humanist Gabriel Harvey. Literary history has not judged Gabriel Harvey kindly in his years-long battle with Nashe, with most critics taking for granted that he and his brother were on the losing end of this quarrel.²¹ Even with recent reevaluations that have noted the close similarities between the two Cambridge-educated authors and their at times similar places in the cultural memory of their near contemporaries, Harvey still is regarded as the more plodding and pedantic adversary.²² Unfortunately for Harvey, he never really stood a chance; the person who takes an argument more seriously will never be seen as the winner. Because Nashe hardly ever wrote anything without his tongue in his cheek, he could respond vitriolically to Harvey’s attacks even while seeming to stay aloof from the fray, never personally invested in the conflict. After excoriating both Harveys at length in *Pierce Penniless*, calling them all manner of insults and claiming that he will bequeath Richard Harvey’s *Lamb of God* to the privy, in what is a clear escalation of the argument between the sides, Nashe breaks off to ask his readers comically: “have I not an indifferent pritty wayne in Spurgalling an Asse? if you knew how extemporall it were at this instant, and with what hast it is writ, you would say so. But I would not have you thinke that all this that is set downe heere is in good earnest, for then you go by *S. Gyles*, the wrong way to *Westminster*” (1: 199). Whereas Harvey enters the print battle hesitantly and apologetically in *Four Letters* (1592) and *Pierce’s Superogation* (1593),

²¹ See McKerrow’s influential account of the quarrel in volume 5 of *The Collected Works*, 65–110, where even as he defends the Harveys against criticism, he presumes the predominance of negative opinions about them and Nashe’s superiority throughout.

²² For recent reevaluations, see Katharine Wilson, *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives: Euphues in Arcadia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1–10; Roberts, “Underemployed Elizabethans”; and Eric Vivier, “Thomas Nashe’s Unprofitable Satire,” *Modern Philology* 114 (2020): 423–44. See also for an argument for Harvey’s importance as prose stylist, Jennifer Richards, “Gabriel Harvey’s Choleric Writing,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 655–70.

Nashe's Pierce here (and his own persona in the later entries in the fight) takes enjoyment in creating his insults even as he claims that he spends no time thinking of them. Throughout their public feud, Nashe's speakers relish the contention with Harvey, often prolonging and belaboring a line of castigation, while pretending they write extemporaneously, a pretense that divests the attacks of any sustained intentionality or seriousness.

As with much of Nashe's prose, the reader often gets the sense that he is merely using the very public quarrel as material to produce more text. In fact, Nashe often encourages just such a feeling in his readers, drawing attention to the aimlessness of his writing. In *Strange News*, for example, amidst another scathing attack on Harvey, he interrupts his diatribe and speaks for the reader: "*Sed quorsum haec*, how doe these digressions linke in with out *Subiectum circa quod?*" (1: 314). These metatextual intrusions that question the utility of the author's direction are by no means unique to the pamphlets in his quarrel with Harvey. At various turns throughout his relentlessly digressive pamphlets, he self-consciously becomes his own interlocutor, breaking off mid-stream to complain about the lack of direction or purpose in his prose. Close to the end of *Pierce Penniless*, after the Knight of the Post's long, regurgitated disquisition on the nature of hell, the voice of an author-like figure breaks in: "Gentle Reader, *tandem aliquando* I am at leasure to talke to thee. I dare say thou hast cald me a hundred times dolt for this senseles discourse" (1: 239). The appearance of Latin in both of these moments seems simultaneously to signal nervousness in its defensive learnedness over the tendentious lightness of his concerns as well as light-hearted parody of the pretensions of other Elizabethan prose writers in its teasing use of classical learning. When reading Nashe's pamphlets, one gets the persistent sense that Nashe knows and is showing off that he writes with little purpose beyond filling the page.²³ Numerous recent commentators have explored the basically mercenary motives behind this relentless production of nothing. These critics take up Nashe's characterization of his prose as his "dirty day labor," the necessary productions of an author seeking to carve out a livelihood in the public print market.²⁴ To varying degrees, these analyses align with Lewis's assertion that Nashe's prose says nothing, and exists primarily to be sold.

²³ Among others, Jason Scott-Warren has noted this possibility in "Nashe's Stuff" in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500–1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 204–18.

²⁴ See, for this argument, Steven Mentz, "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; Baker, *On Demand*, 35–61; Scott-Warren, "Nashe's Stuff."

However, the very consistency and self-consciousness with which his writing says nothing, or says nothing seriously, has a particular and trenchant point to it.²⁵ With this insistent and ironic purposelessness, Nashe rejects other contemporary models of what writing could and should do for something at once more visceral and ephemeral. Importantly, much of what most bothered Gabriel Harvey about Nashe's prose was precisely its aimlessness and lack of seriousness. One of Harvey's many recurrent complaints about Nashe's pamphlets was that they were trifles, indicative of the empty fare that Harvey saw inundating the print market, or worse the idle talk that flooded the London taverns. In *Four Letters*, the salvo that started the full head-to-head war between the two men, Harvey complains that not only is *Pierce* filled with "divers new-founde phrases of the Tavern," it more problematically is one of the many pamphlets now "to trouble the world with trifling discourses uppon pelting matters: to disease themselves: to pleasure none, but the printer, & idle creatures, the onely busy readers of such Novellets."²⁶ Harvey takes Nashe, without a tinge of irony it seems, to task for engaging with the frivolous tastes of London readers and encouraging them to waste their time with useless books. Harvey's neologism "novellets," combing novel with pamphlet, belittles Nashe's writing both for its newness (again without seeming irony) and its ephemerality and lack of substance. Throughout his responses to Nashe, Harvey presents himself as sheepishly and reluctantly involved in what he laments is the "idle business, or rather busy idleness" of the pamphlet wars.²⁷ For Harvey, Nashe's prose is bad both because it mixes imitations of previous writers with the newest, low-brow language of the London streets, and because it perpetuates the empty arguments and pointless speeches associated with these vociferous upstarts.

While in *Four Letters* Harvey never outlines positively his ideas concerning the purposes of writing for print in his anti-Nashe diatribes, we can glean from the above that for Harvey a certain amount of utility is essential. Harvey complains about the omnipresence of "every Martin Junior, and puny Pearce"

²⁵ Aligning with this view, although coming to a different conclusion as to the "point" of Nashe's pointlessness, is David Landreth, who explores the ontological implications of Nashe's vacuities in *The Face of Mammon: The Matter of Money in English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 184–225. Corey McEleney, *Futile Pleasures: Early Modern Literature and the Limits of Utility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 65–101, argues that Nashe's writing is not so easily recuperable from the charge of saying nothing. See also Crewe's important early study on the general purposelessness of Nashe's prose, *Unredeemed Rhetoric*.

²⁶ Gabriel Harvey, *Four Letters, and Certain Sonnets Especially Touching Robert Greene, and Other Parties, by Him Abused* (London, 1592), 29, 46.

²⁷ Harvey, *Four Letters*, 44. See Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 94, for more on Harvey's fear over entering the print market.

in the print stalls of London, lamenting their willingness to enter any opinion into print.²⁸ These “trifling discourses” contradict Harvey’s belief that true scholarly writing should intervene in weighty matters; he pleads with “flourishing writers, not to trouble the presse, but in case of urgent occasion and important use.”²⁹ Harvey’s emphasis on the utility of prose aligns closely with what we understand to be his habits of reading.³⁰ As his margin notes attest, Harvey read with a pragmatic eye, culling out the most appropriate sententiae and examples for himself and his employer when he worked as secretary for Sidney. In line with his utilitarian reading practices, when he embarrassedly returns to the fray with Nashe in *Pierce’s Supererogation* (1593), he provides a lengthy litany of all the duties in which he would rather engage than defending his reputation against Nashe’s attacks:

I would, uppon mine owne charges, travaile into any parte of Europe to heare some pregnant Paradoxes, and certaine singular questions in the highest professions of Learning, in Physick, in Law, in Divinity, effectually and thoroughly disputed *pro & contra*: and would thinke my travaile as advantageously bestowed to some purposes of importance, as they that have adventurously discovered new-found Landes, or bravely surprized Indies. What conferences, or disputations, what Parliaments, or Councils, like those, that deliberate upon the best government of Commonwealthes, and the best discipline of churches; the dubble anchor of the mighty shipp, and the two great Luminaries of the world? Other extravagant discourses, not materiall, or quarrellous contentions, not availeable, are but wastinge of wind, or blotting of paper.³¹

With a high-mindedness bordering on pomposity, a tone Nashe easily satirized in his responses, Harvey’s catalogue reads like a humanist’s to-do list, entirely focused on civic duties and those tasks advantageous to the scholar and the state.³² Writing that does not engage in such matters is dismissed as “but wafting of wind, or blotting of paper.” Despite his involvement in the controversy with Nashe, Harvey in his pronouncements and in practice emphasized the Horatian obligation that writing should always be “useful,” even if pleasurable as well.

Nashe took full advantage of Harvey’s embarrassment at lowering himself to engage in personal argument, creating, especially in *Have with You*

²⁸ Harvey, *Four Letters*, 58.

²⁹ Harvey, *Four Letters*, 57.

³⁰ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy,” *Past and Present* 129 (1980): 30–78.

³¹ Harvey, *Pierce’s Supererogation, or A New Prayse of the Old Asse* (London, 1593), 4–5.

³² For more on these interests in Harvey, see Jennifer Richards, *Rhetoric and Courtliness in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

from *Saffron Waldon*, an exaggerated picture of him as a dissolute, profiteering pamphleteer little concerned with humanist ideals such as civic duty and moral advancement. Always able to intuit his opponent's sore spots, Nashe repeatedly emphasizes the uselessness of Harvey's writing, mocking him in *Strange News* as the "droane of droanes, and maister drumble-bee of non proficientes" (1: 302). Using one of his favorite terms of opprobrium for bad authors ("droane"), Nashe belittles Harvey's writing as mere noise, another indistinguishable sound amidst the tumult of the St. Paul's book stalls. In order perhaps to gall Harvey even further, Nashe often represents his own participation in this public print dispute as a waste of time for him and his readers. Before embarking on his lengthy satiric biography of Harvey in *Have with You*, Nashe apologizes in advance to his readers: "Dispense with it [the biography to follow] though it drink some inck, or prodigally dispend manie Pages that might have been better employd; for if it yeeld you not sport for your money, at the same price shall you buye mee for your bond-slave, that my Booke costs you" (3: 55). Promising only sport, not profit, from his caricature of his opponent, Nashe gives the lie to Harvey's humanist handwringing, admitting and embracing the profligacy in spending one's time reading such personal vendettas. Nashe has few qualms about producing such an unprofitable text.³³

The extent to which Nashe's embrace of uselessness in his writing represents a wholesale rejection of the humanist model of writing can be seen most clearly in his most famous pamphlet, *Pierce Penniless*. Nashe has often been characterized as a descendent of the Elizabethan prodigals and thus grouped with this rebellious but humanist set of authors who use their often fictionalized experience to convey the importance of education and morality.³⁴ These authors used the theme of prodigality simultaneously to titillate readers with tales of urban sinfulness and to advocate through the redemptive arc of their stories for the eventual utility and morality of literature.³⁵ At a glance, the open to *Pierce*

³³ For more on "waste" in Nashe, see Landreth, *The Face of Mammon*, 184–225.

³⁴ Since the nineteenth century, Nashe has been grouped with the dissolute "university wits," Greene, Lodge, Lyly, and Peele; see especially important recent accounts by G. K. Hunter, *English Drama, 1586–1642: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) and Arthur Kinney, "John Lyly and the University Wits," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–18. While Nashe certainly was close with Greene, his career took a far different arc in the 1590s and even by 1592 his style little resembled these earlier writers'.

³⁵ For the seminal account of the prodigals, see Richard Helgerson, *Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). See also Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 297–371, and Adam Hansen, who

seems to support such a reading, with Nashe's narrator taking up the repentant stance of the wayward scholar familiar to readers of Robert Greene ("having tired my youth with follie, and surfetted my minde with vanitie, I began at length to looke backe to repentaunce, & addresse my endeavors to prosperitie" (1: 157)). However, even the end of this opening sentence and its emphasis not on any morality but instead on the writer's "prosperitie" suggests a departure from his predecessors. As the narrative continues, the reader quickly recognizes that Nashe's prodigal will realize the futility of this repentance only when it comes to making a living as a scholar. In its ironic deployment of the prodigal frame, *Pierce* draws attention rather to the economic failures of a life of learning dependent on the generousities of noble patrons rather than its educational and moral benefits. This dismantling of the story of the reformed humanist scholar is reinforced later in the pamphlet when Pierce over any moral considerations defends the activities of "vagrant unthrifits" who support the metropolitan economy by attending plays, gambling at dicing houses, and drinking at vintners. These young men abroad, with their pleasure-filled lives, serve the interests of the state far better than the melancholic secluded gentlemen who "sit dallying at home" stuck in their "love-dreame" (1: 210). To be clear, Nashe is by no means consistent in his argumentation against the edifying potential of learned writing, in places defending poetry and plays for their ability to inculcate moral virtues. However, this defense, when viewed alongside Pierce's more skeptical pronouncements concerning the fruitlessness of a life of scholarship, seems at best inconsistent and at worst satiric. As if to emphasize his lack of commitment to this defense, at the end of one section championing the value of poetry and praising English poets, including Sidney, Nashe jokingly notes, after name-checking the *Wife of Bath* and Chaucer's host, that Chaucer's poem will always "be talkt of whilst the bath is used, or there be ever a bad house in Southwark" (1: 194).

The humorous deflation of tone evidenced in this mock praise of Chaucer is a recurring feature of *Pierce* that works alongside the text's ironic detachment to render all assertions equivocal. Nowhere is this more prevalent than at the end of the lengthy and mostly rote rehearsal of patristic accounts of hell and devils in the latter half of the pamphlet.

emphasizes the attractions of the underworld to these writers and their readers in "Sin City and the 'Urban Condom': Rogues, Writing, and the Early Modern Urban Environment," in *Rogues in Early Modern Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 213–39.

Here, Nashe stops his reader short to take the reader's position and criticize the disquisition on devils as "senseless discourse." The self-conscious interpolation of a supposedly critical reader makes a mockery of the numerous preceding pages where the Knight of the Post cites repeatedly from various classical and church authorities as he meanderingly answers Pierce's questions about the afterlife. While these answers seem another moment where Nashe is mercenarily filling pages for the printer, their erudite aimlessness is also a sustained parody of humanist scholarship. Similar to his dismantling of the traditional survey of the seven deadly sins in the first half of the text, the half-hearted attempt to compile authoritative opinions on the nature of devils and hell satirizes traditional and learned forms and their claims to truth. As a whole, with its incessant parodies and humorous deflations, *Pierce* enacts a decentering of truth that matches its ironic detachment from its own demonstrative statements. This skeptical derision for traditional learning and authorities is another one of the primary features of Nashe's writing that bothered Harvey so much. Tying Nashe to Marprelate's disdain for religious hierarchies, Harvey complains about Nashe's lack of respect and overvaluing of his own opinions, describing his ilk as "Every Martin junior, and puny Pierce, a monarch in the kingdome of his owne humour: every pert and crancke wit, in one odd veine or other, the onely man of the University, of the city, of the realme, for a flourish or two."³⁶ For Harvey, Nashe's incessant mockery of his predecessors leads to a fracturing of consensus, a chaotic world where every individual has an equal claim to the truth. Nashe most likely did not disagree with Harvey's fear but rather embraced it and the world of contention it created.³⁷ In *Strange News*, Nashe brazenly invites Harvey to "take truths part, and I wil prove truth to be no truth, marching out of thy dung-voiding mouth" (1: 305). In Nashe's skeptical, albeit perhaps exaggerated, response to Harvey, truth is entirely subjective, entirely dependent on the source of the statement, a test that Harvey and his "dung-voiding mouth" clearly fail in this case.³⁸

Nashe's skepticism and antihumanism can be linked both to a metropolitan intellectual culture in London increasingly interested in questions of epistemology as well as the recent pamphlet wars spurred by

³⁶ *Four Letters*, 58.

³⁷ See below for more on Nashe's open embrace of contention and rivalry.

³⁸ For more on Nashe's relativism that favored individual interpretation over consensus, see Georgia Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 86–87, and about *Terrors of the Night* specifically, Mauricio Martinez, "Terrors of Conscience: Thomas Nashe and the Interiorization of Presence," *Renaissance and Reformation* 36 (2013): 66.

the Marprelate tracts that mistrusted and parodied traditional religious authorities.³⁹ Nashe's own involvement in the Marprelate controversy shows him both as enemy to and descendent of his radical, bumptious, and satiric adversary.⁴⁰ However, the appeal to Nashe of an ironic anti-humanism also arises from this stance's implicit rejection of the entire patronage system upon which the humanist model of scholarship relied. Nashe's irony, that is, should also be read as a fashionable (or what would come to be fashionable) intellectual stance that also playfully undermines the utilitarianism that is essential to writing within the patronage system. Numerous critics have outlined the breakdown of Elizabethan patronage in the last years of the sixteenth century as more and more young graduates of Oxbridge flocked to London only to find little opportunity for employment and preferment through courtiership and this breakdown's effect on various writers, including Nashe.⁴¹ It should be noted that while these young men often struggled through financial hardship, their sense of precarity was mostly driven more by a recognition that the paths to gentlemanly success available a generation ago were shrinking than by legitimate economic distress. In *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe was one of the first to satirize directly the lack of prospects for these young university men, one of the reasons for the long-standing popularity of his *Pierce* persona amongst the educated elite.⁴² Part of this satire rested on Nashe's deconstruction of the pragmatism of humanist writing, the idea so vociferously advocated by Harvey that learned writing needed to be put into the service of important matters. This pragmatism assumes a writer invested in the *vita activa* so essential to humanism's moral imperatives, a

³⁹ See, among others on skepticism in 1590s London, Anita Sherman, *Skepticism and Memory in Shakespeare and Donne* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1–40; on Nashe's skepticism and its connections to the Martin Marprelate controversy, see Hutson, *Nashe in Context*, 68–70.

⁴⁰ For Nashe's involvement with and his style's indebtedness to the Marprelate controversy, see especially Travis Summersgill, "The Influence of the Marprelate Controversy upon the Style of Thomas Nashe," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951): 145–60. Scott-Warren, "Nashe's Stuff," 204, and Neil Rhodes, *The Elizabethan Grottesque* (London: Routledge, 1980), 51–52, also note Nashe's indebtedness to Marprelate's style.

⁴¹ See Steven Hilliard, *The Singularity of Thomas Nashe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 86–98; Rivlin, *The Aesthetics of Service*, 53–72; Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 37–62; and dealing with a slightly later set of years, Mark Curtis, "The Alienated Intellectuals of Early Stuart England," *Past and Present* 23 (1962): 25–43. Holbrook, in *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England*, 46–50, demurs on this environment leading to a "radical" Nashe, arguing rather for Nashe as defender of elite orthodoxies.

⁴² For which, see my next chapter on Nashe's popularity in the late 1590s, and Ellinghausen, "University of Vice: Drink, Gentility, and Masculinity in Oxford, Cambridge, and London," in *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice*, eds. Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 47–49.

notion of citizenship and political activity indelibly linked to the service at the heart of the patron–writer relationship.⁴³ Nashe’s energetic and immediate prose presented a new model for his fellow elite readers, one radically dismissive of the efficacy of scholarly contribution and thus so appealing to the urban, skeptical young men that would follow in his satiric footsteps.

Nashe in London

Nashe’s itinerant existence across 1590s London was by no means extraordinary, and in fact was the norm for an increasing number of servants, apprentices, and other urban laborers. To be clear, Nashe’s conditions differed from the vagrant and more indigent subjects that Patricia Fumerton has insightfully studied in her work.⁴⁴ By the mid-1590s, Nashe seems to have moved between several different communities of writers, intellectuals, and printers, including men associated with the theater, with the Inns of Court and the city’s university graduates, and the burgeoning printing houses of the city, his social mobility matching his ever-changing living situation. Despite his often more comfortable lodgings and the intermittent stability provided by his patrons, we can identify an uprootedness and instability in Nashe’s urban existence similar to that detailed by Fumerton, an existence on the whole unmoored from the stable structures of a cohesive familial or local community.⁴⁵ As Fumerton has argued, echoing early modern social historians, this vagrant experience led to a greater sense of both uncertainty and freedom in London’s unsettled population, two qualities that accurately describe the numerous ambivalences and experimentations in Nashe’s prose.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ellinghausen, *Labor and Writing*, 105–6.

⁴⁴ Fumerton, *Unsettled*, esp. 12–32.

⁴⁵ On the development of an unsettled subjectivity predicate upon this uprootedness, see Fumerton, 47–62.

⁴⁶ Fumerton, 49–53. For earlier work on vagrancy and itinerancy in early modern England, see Paul Slack, “Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598–1664,” *Economic History Review* 27 (1974): 360–79; A. L. Beier, “Social Problems in Elizabethan London,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (1978): 203–21, and *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London: Methuen, 1986). I do not want to overstate the precarity of Nashe’s finances while in the city; his was still a generally elite existence. Nor do I want to suggest that the city’s social conditions generally provided no sense of community and neighborhood to its inhabitants, against which notions see Steven Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and more recently on neighborhood identity and solidarity, Mark Bayer, *Theatre, Community and Civic Engagement* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011).

The specific neighborhoods Nashe inhabited and frequented in early modern London reflect closely the varied and changing nature of the social spaces and living conditions of the metropolis in the 1590s. In the second half of the sixteenth century, larger single-unit houses and dwelling structures, especially those within the city walls, increasingly were subdivided and repurposed as tenements to fit the rapidly growing urban population.⁴⁷ Reading through Stow's *A Survey of London* (1598, 1603), one finds a litany of instances of such divisions, such as what happened to the lodging of the Berkeley family in Castle Baynard Ward near Puddle Wharf, an "ancient building of stone and timber": "This house is now all in ruine, and letten out in severall Tenements, yet the Armes of the Lord *Barkley* still remaine in the stone worke of an Arched gate."⁴⁸ While direct evidence of Nashe's whereabouts in London is scant, beyond the near certainty that he roomed with the printer John Danter in the mid-1590s, both his enemies and followers place him in a variety of expected locales. Richard Lichfield, the Cambridge humorist/barber and unhappy dedicatee of Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron Waldon*, claimed in his reponse to Nashe that he was holed up in Coldharbour sharing a chamber (and a pair of breeches) with a companion merely identified as "Lusher."⁴⁹ By the late sixteenth century the two buildings known as Coldharbour near the river in Dowgate Ward had passed out of the possession of the noble men and clergymen who had resided there in years past and had become a mixture of tenements and businesses.⁵⁰ Ralph Treswell, who surveyed many of London's neighborhoods beginning in the 1580s, mapped both buildings, showing a mix of more spacious single-occupied rooms (some with their own chimneys) and more crowded spaces such as "a chamber divided into divers parts 22 ½ × 17" and "one other tenement wherein dwelleth diverse widows."⁵¹ Many of these did not have their own entryways or stairs. If we are to assume that Nashe also lived in Shoreditch in his early years, he would have faced similar conditions, as the open spaces north of Spitalfields increasingly were

⁴⁷ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 161–73.

⁴⁸ John Stow, "Castle Baynard warde," in *A Survey of London. Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Oxford, 1908), 11–20. *British History Online* www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/pp11-20. There are numerous similar examples throughout Stow's survey.

⁴⁹ "Againe, you remember the time when your fellowe *Lusher* and you lay in coleharbour together, when you had but one payre of breeches betweene you both, but not one penie to blesse you both" (Richard Lichfield, *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (London, 1597), C3r).

⁵⁰ Vanessa Harding, "The Two Coldharbours of the City of London," *London Topographical Record* 12 (1980): 11–29.

⁵¹ *The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell*, ed. John Schofield (London: London Topographical Society, 1987), 118–19.

filled with shared dwellings to house the spreading urban population.⁵² The contours of the dwellings in Coldharbour and Shoreditch make clear the extent to which city inhabitants such as Nashe lived in “structural codependency” with others where boundaries between residents were haphazard or nonexistent. Beds were often placed wherever there was an open interior space – in the kitchen, in the cellar, in the hall – and living quarters were often separated by the flimsiest of wainscoting or even tapestry. In these tenements, privacy, while perhaps willed into existence by some and not even considered by others, did not come from the material conditions of these urban lodgings.⁵³ For many in early modern London, the line between private and public was as porous as the physical “walls” that separated the bed or pallet they called home from their neighbor’s.

Departing from more speculative though perhaps probable areas where Nashe resided for a time, we do know that around the years 1594–1595 Nashe lived with John Danter above his printshop on Hosier Lane in Smithfield. Smithfield notoriously housed the city’s congested meat market, and as a result, also numerous victualling houses, stores, inns (the area was a critical waypoint for newly arrived visitors from the north), and the enormous annual Bartholomew Fair. Just outside the city walls, the suburb did contain large unenclosed spaces for cattle driving, but these spaces were increasingly encroached upon by housing and commercial development.⁵⁴ Treswell surveyed a number of buildings on Cow Lane, adjacent to the Smithfield pens and around the corner from Hosier Lane. These include four tenements rebuilt by a Mr. Walker as well as a former hostelry converted into a tenement house where individuals occupied

⁵² Nashe’s most recent biographer, Charles Nichols, assumes that in his early years in the city Nashe lived in Shoreditch in close proximity to acquaintances such as Robert Greene, Charles Beeston, and Thomas Watson (37–40). Stow describes the approach to Shoreditch from the city: “From the which bars towards Soersditch on that side, is all along a continuall building of small and base tenements, for the most part lately erected” (Stow, “The Suburbs without the Walls,” *A Survey of London*, 69–91, in *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/pp69-91).

⁵³ Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 163, 173.

⁵⁴ For more on Smithfield, see most directly John Stow, “The warde of Faringdon extra, or without,” in *A Survey of London*, 20–52, *British History Online*, www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/survey-of-london-stow/1603/pp20-52. See as well the lively nineteenth-century accounts from Charles Knight in *London*, 12 vols. (London, 1841), 4: 313–28, and Walter Thornbury, *Old and New London* (London, 1878), 339–51. More recently, see Janette Dillon, “Clerkenwell and Smithfield as Neglected Home of London Theater,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 71 (2008): 115–31. On the expansion of the suburbs during this period and its effect on Smithfield and other locales, see Vanessa Harding, “City, Capital and Metropolis: The Changing Shape of Seventeenth Century London,” in *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598–1720*, ed. J. F. Merritt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 117–43.

single rooms, even in the cellar.⁵⁵ Treswell's map shows lodgings with tight quarters, shared entrances, and lodgings that often backed up to the enormously loud and pungent area that housed the Smithfield meat market. The sensory landscape of early modern Smithfield was dominated by this market. The author of a 1594 plea to Londoners to observe Lenten fish days estimated that between the freemen and aliens working in the city approximately 67,500 cattle were slaughtered yearly.⁵⁶ With much of this processing occurring in Smithfield, the noises and smells coming from the cattle yards would have been prodigious. These keen sense impressions pressed insistently upon the area's inhabitants, a distillation of the general noisiness and noxiousness of the city's busier areas. In *Have with You to Saffron Waldon*, most likely written at least partly when he resided in Smithfield, Nashe evokes clearly the sheer oppressiveness of certain neighborhoods' sounds and smells when he pokes fun at Harvey's squalid residence in Paul's Churchyard during a plague outbreak: "he was so barricadoed up with graves which besiedged and undermined his verie threshold; nor to open his window evening or morning, but a dampe (like the smoake of a Cannon) from the fat manured earth with contagion (being the buriall place of five parishes) in thick rouling clouds would strugglingly funnel up, & with a full blast puffed in at his casements" (3: 87).

Overall, these descriptions and surveys emphasize the closeness and omnipresence of the outside and public world in these particular neighborhoods – the virtual impossibility of shutting out external stimuli or other inhabitants from one's daily existence. However, Nashe also most likely lived elsewhere in his wandering existence in the metropolis, including several areas and houses that would have potentially afforded him more seclusion and space. At the opening to *Have with You* Nashe envisions himself and his imaginary companions meeting in "some nooke or blind angle of the Blackfriars" for their conversation (3: 21). The reference to the Blackfriars raises the possibility that Nashe resided there at some point as he composed his attack on Harvey, a possibility heightened by the fact that Nashe's primary patron during these years was George Carey, who occupied the residence that abutted the structure that served as the space for the various iterations of the Blackfriars Theatre.⁵⁷ With its walled perimeter and four gates, its remaining undeveloped cloisters and various gardens,

⁵⁵ *The London Surveys of Ralph Treswell*, 39.

⁵⁶ Anonymous, *A Brief Note of the Benefits That Growe in this Realme by the Observation of Fish-Days* (London, 1594), n.p.

⁵⁷ Because it ultimately housed the Blackfriars Theatre and Shakespeare's King Men, there has been much work on this structure. See Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York: New

Blackfriars' five acres would have seemed at least partially closed off from the chaos of St. Paul's Churchyard to the northeast, or the crowded tenements surrounding Fleet Ditch to the west or Smithfield to the north. The precinct's spaces, and its often more spacious residences, afforded at times the room for at least relative respite and less easily distracted imaginings. However, by the late sixteenth century, the precinct had become increasingly noisy and crowded, with among other developments, thoroughfares running north-south and east-west by the mid-century, bowling alleys, tennis courts and even heaps of soil and filth, replacing the open spaces of the monastery, and tenements that were formerly great houses increasingly partitioned to allow for more tenants, shops and businesses.⁵⁸ The Blackfriars simultaneously maintained the skeletal structure and historical residue of its monastic, to some extent secluded past, even as it began to look, smell and sound more like the surrounding city.

Clerkenwell, another neighborhood in which Nashe possibly resided, developed similarly unevenly through the latter half of the sixteenth century. Four years after his death, Nashe made one of several posthumous print appearances in Thomas Middleton's satiric *The Black Book* (1604), a pamphlet that presents itself as a sequel to *Pierce Penniless*. In the opening pages, the devil finally answers Pierce's call from twelve years earlier and comes to London in search of his petitioner only to find him impoverished and settled in a dirty room in the house of a bawd in "Pickt-hatch," a notoriously sordid area in Clerkenwell.⁵⁹ "Pickt-hatch" refers to the area around the portion of Aldersgate Street in Clerkenwell that ran north from Smithfield until it turned into Goswell Street.⁶⁰ The realities of this

York University Press, 1964); the documentary history *English Professional Theatre, 1530–1660*, eds. Glynn Wickham, Herbert Berry and William Ingram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and P. M. Handover, *The Site of the Office of the Times: The History from 1276 to 1956 of the Site in Blackfriars* (London: Times Publishing Co., 1956).

⁵⁸ For more on the expansion of thoroughfares through the neighborhood, see Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 482–85; on the development of leisure spaces and the increase of waste, see Chambers, 477–78, 493–94, and Handover, *The Site of the Office of the Times* 1–10; on the division of buildings into tenements, see Chambers, 482–85, and Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse*, 59–124, *passim*, especially concerning the transformations to the old conventual buildings around the churchyard and to the south in the later sixteenth century.

⁵⁹ Middleton, *The Black Book*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, gen. eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 208.

⁶⁰ In sixteenth-century London, the section of Aldersgate Street between Long Lane and Aldersgate Bars was called Pickax Street; for more on this area generally, see "Charterhouse Square Area: Charterhouse Street and Other Streets," in *Survey of London: Volume 46, South and East Clerkenwell*, ed. Philip Temple (London, 2008), pp. 265–79, British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol46/pp265-279.

neighborhood mostly seemed to match its seedy reputation. The area to the west of Charterhouse Square, which abutted Aldersgate Street here, had become “raffish and unruly” by the early seventeenth century and was singled out in the 1620s as an area of open prostitution.⁶¹ Just to the north and on the opposite side of the central road was an area called Copthall. The recent architectural history *Survey of London* describes this section of Clerkenwell: “Several tenements had been built there by 1590, when a survey recorded such annoyances and encroachments as windows cut into the Charterhouse wall, laystalls, hog-yards, and an open sewer running near the wall.”⁶² However, because of its relative distance from the city proper, Clerkenwell still remained underdeveloped in some sections. Much of the area just to the west of Pick-hatch Street was dominated by the Charterhouse, a former monastery and its grounds, that had passed on to Lord North in 1545 and the Duke of Norfolk in 1565. Other nobility had also inherited buildings surrounding the spaces of the monastic residence as well and the neighborhood still retained its aristocratic status in the 1590s. The specific section of Clerkenwell around Pick-hatch Walk epitomized the mixed and disparate nature of many of the metropolis’s micro-neighborhoods where crowded housing units for poorer inhabitants butted up against wealthy enclaves and mansions with their own green spaces, walks, and gardens.⁶³

Judging from the existing evidence, then, Nashe generally lived in some of the more crowded and architecturally divided parts of the city, finding room to live among the shared residences of the ever-increasing number of tenements. Whether in Shoreditch, Coldharbour, or Smithfield, Nashe’s lodgings were in the midst of rapid urban development where inhabitants lived with little private space, most often surrounded closely by unfamiliar and similarly transient neighbors. The public spaces that Nashe frequented, especially places such as St. Paul’s Churchyard and Cathedral, with which Nashe was clearly familiar, would have reinforced the sense that the city and its denizens always were pressing upon one’s sensory awareness. By the late sixteenth century, the yard surrounding the cathedral was filled with printheuses, temporary shops in ramshackle sheds, and heaps of trash,

⁶¹ “Charterhouse Square Area: Charterhouse Street and Other Streets,” British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol46/pp265-279.

⁶² “Charterhouse Square Area: Charterhouse Street and Other Streets,” British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol46/pp265-279.

⁶³ Vanessa Harding uses the term “micro-neighborhood” to describe the architectural and social results of the increasingly haphazard overdevelopment throughout the city in “City, Capital and Metropolis,” 127.

while inside clerks, porters, printers, serving-men, former soldiers, and young boys jostled with visitors for business, news, and spur money.⁶⁴ In his oft-cited description of the Cathedral from a couple of decades later, John Earle lamented over its chaos: “It is a heap of stones and men, with a vast confusion of languages; and, were the steeple not sanctified, nothing liker Babel. The noise in it like that of bees, a strange humming or buzz, mixed of walking, tongues and feet: it is a kind of still roar, or loud whisper.”⁶⁵ At the same time that Nashe’s London buzzed with people and noises, he was also provided intermittent opportunities for relative solitude and space. If we are to believe that he lived under the roof of George Carey in Blackfriars, then his accommodations there would have been more secluded from the immediacies of the metropolis, partially walled off from the busier neighborhoods nearby.⁶⁶ These are the accommodations that Nashe might be evoking at the end of *The Terrors of the Night*, when after a long prose panegyric to Carey, he finishes with: “Thus I conclude with this chance-medley Parenthesis, that whatsoever minutes intermission I have of calmed content, or least respite to call my wits together, principlall and immediate proceedeth from him. Through him my tender wainscot Studie doore is delivered from much assault and battrie” (1: 375). Nashe clearly links the support of his patron to the space for “calmed content,” a stark reminder of the extent to which this system governed the existences of a number of young men in the city. That Nashe refers to his stay with the Careys as an “intermission” gestures to the specifically sporadic success that he found within this system. Because of his patrons’ support, Nashe was able to escape from the chaos of London on various occasions and retreat to the comforts of the countryside or even a Blackfriars estate; because of the inconsistency of that support, Nashe was also forced to subsist in some of the more notorious and crowded areas in the city. Viewed as a whole, the material particulars of Nashe’s life fluctuated between extremes, between the shared, congested, and noisy private and public spaces of Coldharbour and St. Paul’s and the relatively secluded, less populated, and somewhat quieter closes of Blackfriars or even Clerkenwell.

⁶⁴ See, most importantly, Roze Hentschell, *St. Paul’s Cathedral Precinct in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). For older sources on Paul’s, see W. Sparrow Simpson, *Chapters in the History of Old St. Paul’s* (London, 1881), esp. 61–96; E. F. Carpenter, “The Reformation, 1485–1660” in *A History of St. Paul’s Cathedral and the Men Associated with It*, eds. W. R. Mathews and W. M. Matkins (London: Phoenix House, 1957), 146–54.

⁶⁵ Earle, *Microcosmography, or a Piece of the World Discovered* (London, 1629), K1v.

⁶⁶ Jonson seems to be gesturing to the quieter confines of the Blackfriars neighborhood at the opening to his play set in (and performed in) that neighborhood, *The Alchemist*, where Face, Subtle, and Dol worry persistently over the loudness of their voices as they argue.

Noise, Silence, Contention

The contradictory nature of Nashe's lived experience in London goes a long way towards explaining many of the inconsistent stances, including towards patronage, that he takes up on a number of matters, both social and literary. On a more visceral level, Nashe reacted disparately to the immediacies of the city's environments, environments with which he often came into close and at times seemingly unwanted contact. On the surface, and most immediately, Nashe seems profoundly troubled and annoyed by the abundant things, smells, and noises of the city. The very materiality and fullness of Nashe's prose gestures to the closeness of existence, of the bodies, objects, and smells in Nashe's London.⁶⁷ It is telling that in *Terrors of the Night* (1593) even when imagining the supposed solitude and stillness of one's own rooms in the middle of the night, Nashe envisions a nightmarishly full world: "There is not a roome in anie mans house but is pestred and close packed with a campe royall of divels" (1: 349). Shortly after this vision that grotesquely even sees leagues of devils in the holes of a worm-eaten nose, Nashe turns to the comparatively crowded spaces of the metropolis: "If in one man a whole legion of divells have bin billeted, how manie hundred thousand legions retaine to a Tearme at *London*? If I said but to a Taverne, it were an infinite thing. In *Westminster Hall* a man can scarce breath for them; for in every corner they hover as thick as moates in the sunne" (1: 349). The hallucinatory images of a plenist spiritual world here stand in for the oppressive closeness of the teeming taverns and swarming halls of the courts during term time, places very familiar to many of Nashe's fellow recently arrived Cambridge graduates.

Of particular concern to Nashe seems to be the noises produced in these loud spaces filled with human bodies. Repeatedly, in *Pierce Penniless* and *The Terrors of the Night*, Nashe expresses a desire for silence and calm away from the messiness of both the crowded living conditions of the tenements of the city with which Nashe was so familiar as well as its public yards and squares. For example, after a swift tale (overheard of course) by Pierce, concerning a butcher and some lost calves that is shoved into one sentence, Nashe goes on in his address to the devil: "Now the owner of the Mare is in lawe with the Butcher for the losse of his Mare, and the Butcher enterchangeably endites him for his Calues. I pray ye, Timothy Tempter, [one of Nashe's playful names for the devil] bee an Arbitrator beetwixt them,

⁶⁷ Several commentators have noted the fully material world of Nashe's prose. See Scott-Warren, "Nashe's Stuff," 204–18; Landreth, *The Face of Mammon*, 210; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, 302; Hutson, *Nashe in Context*, 1–2.

and couple them both by the neckes (as the Calves were) and carry them to Hel on your backe, and then, I hope, they wyll be quiet” (1: 189). While Nashe’s plea here is specifically tied to a satiric attack on what he perceived to be an unrestrained culture of legalism, it is importantly echoed elsewhere in *Pierce*, and demonstrates an awareness of and fatigue with the press of incessantly competing voices in the rapidly growing metropolis. These complaints over the noises of the city and the attendant dreams of silence and calm are not unique to Nashe in the 1590s; we will see the same desire for stillness, for example, in many of John Donne’s lyrics (“For God’s sake hold your tongue”; “So let us melt and make no noise”) where the speaker calls forth silence in order to entertain his visions of the eternal, totalizing, and importantly private encounter between lovers. We should consider the dreams of stillness in these poems, as in Nashe’s prose, as the imaginative processing of the lived conditions of turn of the century London and its immediate environs.

Unsurprisingly for Nashe, this fatigue is connected with an animosity towards the increasingly cluttered print market of London. In one of his frequent attacks on contemporary writers in *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe evinces a sense of the ever-increasing material outputs of these London authors: “every grosse braind Idiot is suffered to come into print, who if hee set forth a Pamphlet of the praise of Pudding-pricks, or write a Treatise of *Tom Thumme*, or the exployts of *Untrusse*; it is bought up thicke and three-fold, when better things lie dead. How then can we chuse but be needy, when ther are so many Droans amongst us?” (1: 159). The materiality of the language here gives us a wonderful sense of the stuff that Nashe saw filling London’s public spaces – the books, pamphlets, and papers cluttering the bookstores and churchyards of the city. We might recall the descriptions of the crowded bays and walks of Paul’s Cathedral where clerks, writers, and printers hawked their wares. Nashe’s term of opprobrium for his competitors, “drones,” even echoes John Earle’s vivid reference to the “strange humming, or buzz” that he heard inside the Cathedral. In fact, “drones” is one of Nashe’s favorite terms of opprobrium in *Pierce*. It most overtly suggests the unthinking nature of his competitors’ work, but it also nicely evokes the low-level noise produced by this writing as these texts were advertised, read aloud, and shared publicly in places such as Paul’s Churchyard.

The harrying aggressiveness of those who sought their fortune in the areas surrounding St. Paul’s seems one object of the specific anger that Nashe maintained for the noisy argumentativeness that he felt was everywhere around him. Especially in the section of *Pierce Penniless*

focused on the sin of Wrath, a sin that gets lengthy attention in the survey, Nashe repeatedly draws satiric attention to those who will not shut up. One of his longest vignettes in this section details an irascible and loud-mouthed friar who hurls vituperations at everyone he encounters. Finally, while in the “private chamber” of a great personage, he is challenged to a contest in railing and becomes so overbearing and furious in his insults that this nobleman “caused his men to take him, and bricket him up in a narrow chimney” (1: 190–91). The climax of Nashe’s humorous tale brings the noisy friar inside, into a private chamber where he is finally punished for his voluble disruption to his companions’ peace. The nobleman notably bricks the friar up in his quarters’ chimney, a structure associated with a certain spaciousness and comfort in early modern London. The friar’s argumentative loudness is doubly indecorous, his violation of social hierarchy as he insults his betters linked closely to the inappropriate violence of his speech while indoors. The entire episode signals a concern for the porousness of indoor living spaces in the early modern city, the ease with which public dispute and clamor can invade one’s often tenuous privacy.

In this episode, and others in Nashe’s prose, the excessive noises of the city are generated most frequently by argument and verbal attack. Of course, Nashe himself participated vigorously in this culture of argumentation, both in print and seemingly in person (he was known as a biting companion and referred to as a young, angry Juvenal by several writers).⁶⁸ His concern and exhaustion over the noise that this culture produced seems a direct result of his own immersion in it as public writer and wit. In the moments where he wishes for solitude and silence, this solitude is frequently carved out from the angry and contentious outside world. In his paean to George Carey cited above, Nashe depicts Carey’s patronage as providing him the private space for “calmed content” because it protects him from “much assault and battery” that threatens him outside his “tender wainscot door.” Earlier in *Strange News*, Nashe brags of his residence at a “house of credit” where there are many “selected good Schollers” (1: 329), indirectly contrasting his condition with the comparatively squalid lodging of his print opponent Harvey. It is here that he describes himself

⁶⁸ This reputation seems to have grown over the years. In 1598 Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* calls Nashe “gallant young Juvenal” (286). In the third Parnassus play, *The Return from Parnassus, or the Scourge of Simony*, Ingenioso, the stand-in for Nashe, enters with the satires of Juvenal in hand (*The Three Parnassus Plays, 1598–1601*, ed. J. B. Leishman (London: Nicholas & Watson, 1949), 225); later in a direct description of the real Nashe, Ingenioso, notes that Nashe’s “muse was armed with a gagtooth, and his pen possest with *Hercules furies*” (245).

alone on his “prating bench” in the quiet with only Harvey’s *Four Letters* as his regular companion.⁶⁹ In each of these examples, Nashe’s dream of solitude and silence away from the fray is predicated on his social position at the time, his disdain for the noise of London expressed from the comforts of a patron’s spacious residence. Writing from a position of relative, if temporary, privilege, Nashe dismisses the aural messiness of the clamoring public world.

It is notable, however, that the door to Nashe’s imagined study in *Terrors* is made of wainscot. This material was ubiquitous in London lodgings, used, often temporarily, to divide spaces, to create bedchambers or, as above, studies. In early modern inventories of property, the material was often included amongst an individual’s moveables, a fact that suggests the entirely temporary nature of these doors and divisions.⁷⁰ The wainscot of Nashe’s imagined study, that is, betrays the elusive and ephemeral nature of such dreams of privacy for a writer intermittently employed by a wealthy benefactor, as well as more generally for those Londoners who settled where they could afford space. With Nashe moving from manse to tenement and back throughout his writing life and living in disparate or mixed neighborhoods such as Clerkenwell, his aural experience of the city would have shifted similarly. His level of close engagement with the noise of public London was equally a product of his need to participate in this world as professional writer without a patron and the physical space in which he led his daily existence. As with most else in Nashe’s thinking, with this varying level of closeness came sharply ambivalent attitudes about the urban world of debate and argument. When he writes from his solitary “prating bench” in *Strange News*, he does so to disparage and attack his arch nemesis Harvey in the public print market. And his clearest expressions of exasperation over the noisiness of public speech in *Pierce Penniless* as he surveys the sin of Wrath come immediately before his most sustained and vociferous assault of the Harveys. In both these moments, even as Nashe wishes for solitude and silence, he admits, often self-knowingly and ironically, his necessary and inevitable immersion in the clamorous world

⁶⁹ Nicholls places Nashe at Croydon House under the patronage of Archbishop Whitgift as he wrote *Strange News* (*A Cup of News*, 122–31).

⁷⁰ Orlin, “Things with Little Social Life: Henslowe’s Theatrical Properties and Elizabethan Household Fittings,” in *Staged Properties in Early Modern Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil-Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 127. We should also note the flimsiness of the separation between Nashe and Harvey when they supposedly supped at the same Cambridge tavern in 1594–1595. To emphasize the proximity of this encounter, Nashe, in *Have with You*, notes that they were merely “parted but by a wainscot doore that was naild up” (3: 92).

of public dispute and verbal confrontation. Nashe never could embrace fully a life of solitary and peaceful study away from the arenas of urban argument, his investment in this culture of argument both cause and effect of his failure to secure sustained patronage.

In fact, Nashe frequently suggests either directly or indirectly that his writing contributes to the constant chatter of print and oral debate. In all of his writing, his narrators at some point take up the voice of the public speaker, the street crier on the corner, the huckster at the door, the performer in the innyard. In *Have with You from Saffron Waldon*, Nashe shifts his address to shout directly at his audience in order to grab the reader's attention, at one point imitating a street performer silencing everyone at the start of a performance as he prepares to recite some of Harvey's book: "Hem, cleare your throats, and spit soundly; for now the pageant begins" (3: 42). The entire pamphlet is imagined as an outdoor dialogue between friends in Blackfriars, a conversation that Nashe's main speaker attempts to control repeatedly with his exclamatory interpolations that simulate the loud talking heard in the city. But it is *Strange News* that is his loudest text, filled with shouts, calls, and insults directed at his adversary Harvey. Even as he lambasts Harvey for being the "droane of droanes," for producing nothing but empty verbiage, Nashe himself suffuses his prose with empty sounds and nonsense words. After loosely citing Harvey's attack on Robert Greene and William Elderton in *Four Letters* that uses the strange verbs "flirt" and "fling" to describe the act of satirizing, Nashe brings the reader up short: "Holla, holla, holla, *flirt, fling*, what reasty Rhetoricke have we here? certes, certes, brother *hoddy doddy*, your penne is a coult, by cockes body" (1: 281). Later, he pretends to be an army of boys jeering at Harvey for his pretentious Ciceronianism: "*kulleloo, kulleloo, with whip hoo*, there goes the ape of *Tully*, tih he he, steale *Tully*, steale *Tully*, away with the Asse in the Lions skinne" (1: 290).⁷¹ In these instances, Nashe brings the sounds of the city's streets into his prose, evoking in the reader the sense memories of being outside. While several commentators have noted the vibrancy and immediacy of Nashe's writing – his ability to replicate the cadences and idioms of contemporary conversation has often been noted – no one has recognized the extent to which this immediacy corresponds to the precise realities of his lived experience in Smithfield, Clerkenwell,

⁷¹ In another example, shortly before he depicts himself at his quiet prating bench in *Strange News*, Nashe mimics the cry of the tavern patron in an ironic toast to Harvey's accusation that Nashe gets his idioms from these establishments: "Heigh, drawer, fil us a fresh quart *of new-found phrases*, since *Gabriel* saies we borrow all our eloquence from Taverns" (1: 305).

and St. Paul's.⁷² The vigorous examples above illustrate how Nashe used this immediacy playfully to grab the readers' attention, to clear space for his prose, as any hectoring corner barker in the city would. As with much else in Nashe, this loudness is tinged with an ironic self-deprecation; in *Strange News* and elsewhere, he simultaneously and self-knowingly complains over the racket that other writers and blowhards produce while making obvious his ability to drown them out with his own noise. It is nearly impossible not to see the irony in Nashe's lament in *Pierce Penniless* that "there be those that get there living all the yeere long, by nothing but rayling" (1: 190). However self-aware and ironic Nashe's loudness may be, he excelled at reproducing the rush of sounds in the urban environment, showing a deep familiarity with the habits of public speech in the neighborhoods he frequented in 1590s London. Living in the tenements of Shoredith or close by the Smithfield markets would have provided this familiarity whether Nashe willed it or no. And yet, Nashe's willingness to immerse his readers in the chaotic soundscapes of the city signal perhaps as well an awareness of the attractions of this vibrant, if profuse, world. Indeed, dreams of being holed up behind a "tender wainscot door" aside, Nashe elsewhere derides those who stay indoors. *The Terrors of the Night*, a treatise Nashe claims to have written for "my solitary friends in the country," begins with a frightening and detailed picture of the horrors we face when finally alone in our rooms at night left to ponder our sinfulness: "The table of our hart is turned to an index of iniquities, and all our thoughts are nothing but texts to condemne us" (1: 345). Nashe will return to this vision of the guilty nightmares that haunt the "solitary man" in the privacy of his bedroom several times; in doing so, the pamphlet questions the desirability of such solitude.

In the more economically minded *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe develops his skepticism over the benefits of privacy and individual space into a fascinating and completely idiosyncratic argument in favor of public wastefulness and contention. Near the pamphlet's mid-point, Nashe's narrator adjudicates a debate over who is less moral: the "idle glutton at home" who stays inside to take his pleasures or the "retchlesse unthrift abroad" (1: 209) who goes into the city to enjoy its recreations. *Pierce* unequivocally claims that the "idle glutton" is the more evil, a "house dove" and "lazier clownish

⁷² On the embodied nature of his speech, see Reid Barbour, who notes the "shocking presence" of his writing in *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 68. For the conversational nature of Nashe's prose, see Summersgill, "The Influence of the Marprelate Controversy upon the Style of Thomas Nashe," 145–60, and on its improvisational nature, Karen Kettlich, "Nashe's Extemporal Vein and His Tarltonizing Wit," in *The Age of Thomas Nashe*, 99–114.

droane” who adds nothing to the city’s economy and “does nothing but engender diseases ... and is good for none but his owne gut” (1: 209–10). On the other hand:

The unthrift abroad exerciseth his bodie at dauncing school, fence schoole, tennis, and all such recreations; the vintners, the victuallers, the dicing houses, and who not, get by him. Suppose he lose a little now and then at play, it teacheth him wit: and how should a man know to eschew vices, if his own experience did not acquaint him with their inconveniences?... Besides, my vagrant Reveller haunts Plaies, & sharpens his wits with frequenting the company of Poets: he emboldens his blushing face by courting faire women on the sodaine, and lookes into all Estates by conversing with them in publike places. (1: 209–10)

Pierce advocates here for a life of action out in the city’s spaces for the young inhabitant, a life filled with what would normally be considered the wasteful recreations (dancing, fencing, drinking, playgoing, flying) of the dissolute gentleman. According to Pierce, however, not only do these activities keep London’s economy moving, they also hone this young man’s wits and public knowledge. We can see Nashe outlining a model for city living that entails frequenting its public spaces in order to improve oneself through conversation, newsgathering, and hard experience.

This support for hardening and bettering oneself in the competitive and contentious arenas of the metropolis prompts Nashe a few pages later surprisingly to defend emulation and rivalry as positive influences. Deviating sharply from many of his contemporaries’ critiques of “contention and emulation,” most notably Shakespeare in his Roman plays, Nashe condemns instead “securitie, peace, quiet, tranquillitie; when we have no adversarie to prie into our actions, no malicious eye whose pursuing our private behaviour might make us more vigilant over our imperfections than otherwise we would be” (1: 211). Nashe suggests we all need a jealous opponent to keep ourselves constantly aware of our immorality. His feud with Harvey immediately comes to mind, especially since he had just finished lambasting the Harvey brothers at length a few pages earlier; but we are also reminded of his various other satiric attacks on his contemporaries, on lay chronographers, on lawyers, on antiquarians, on cormorant patrons. In *Pierce*, we get a clear sense of a writer who feeds off of argument and contention, derives inspiration from animadversion and antipathy. In fact, much of his writing, including the Harvey pamphlets and his darkly cynical lament over London’s sinfulness, *Christ’s Teares Over Jerusalem* (1593), was entirely driven by resentment and

indignation, feigned or not. It comes as no surprise, then, that in his last extant London writing, *Have with You*, Nashe, in the course of apologizing for the length of time he has taken to respond to Harvey's attacks, treats the need to write for patrons ("these new-fangled *Galiardos* and *Senior Fantásticos*" (3: 31)) as a mercenary distraction from his true work, which presumably includes his public print argument with Harvey. To be sure, in *Have with You* and in *Strange News*, Nashe expresses a weariness over his continued participation in the argument, calling it his "dirty day-labor" in *Strange News*; however, when he recounts his near meeting with Harvey at the Cambridge tavern, he also admits that he refused a private colloquy because he deemed it more appropriate to continue their dispute in the public forum of the print market.⁷³ Nashe rejects any notion that his quarrel with Harvey should be handled discretely as a private matter between Cambridge intellectuals, in the process willingly submitting himself to the judgments of the open and competitive metropolitan print market. Nashe clearly relished this competition from his days as an anti-Martinist onward, and his time in the contentious and voluble locales in the city, the walks of St. Paul's, the markets of Smithfield, the taverns of Shoreditch, would have habituated and inured him to this argumentative milieu.

Rather than attempt to hold on consistently to older principles governing gentlemanly behavior and the objectives of writing, as Harvey did, Nashe instead mostly embraced the contention and exchanges of public life in London. Raised in the competitive intellectual culture of Cambridge and tempered by his entrée into the Marprelate controversy when he first arrived in London, Nashe clearly relished the combat of print debate. Both forced and eager to join these debates as well as the crowded and noisy spaces of the city, Nashe in his writing develops a set of theories that maintains the benefits of quarrel and argument, of noise. These theories on the necessity of contention, as well as his insistence on the production of noise in his writing, novel at least for late sixteenth-century England, should be seen as inextricable from Nashe's intermittent but long-term immersion in both the public print exchanges of the city and the chaotic, seldom private, metropolitan environments in which he lived. His writing, in both theory and practice, arises out of the immediate and particular circumstances of his existence in 1590s London, his challenges to predominant ideologies on intellectual labor, a product of his everyday life in the city.

⁷³ It is notable that immediately after he explains his reticence to continue this argument in person, he goes into one of his most personal and biting attacks on Harvey, deriding his appearance at length.

**Nashe's Corners: Private and Public in
*Have with You to Saffron Waldon***

Whether following Pierce from Westminster to St. Paul's in search of the devil or Gabriel Harvey as he makes his sad way to Fleet Prison, Nashe's prose plunges readers into the public spaces of the city that he knew so well. While critics have long linked Nashe's writing to the city generally, in this section I would like to detail some of the precise ways in which Nashe's specific urban existence entered affectively into the themes and geographies of his prose.⁷⁴ Even as much as Nashe welcomed the chaos and noise of these spaces, judging from his ever-kinetic prose, he also signaled an abiding nervousness and even exhaustion over the city's close presence as experienced in the neighborhoods where he spent his time. The pervasive irony I detail in the first section of this chapter stands as one method through which he attempted to distance and deride the immediacies of the London sensorium. Nashe also reveals his anxieties, anxieties that London's close quarters and omnipresent population provoked, in his treatment of the people that his narrators encounter as they traverse the city. Just as in many of the Inns of Court satires discussed in the next chapter, in Nashe's prose the people of the metropolis are consistently reduced to their external appearance, or more radically, to the things that cluttered the public spaces of London. Early on in *Pierce Penniless*, as Nashe laments the stinginess of potential patrons, he complains of "Carterly upstarts, that out-face Towne and Country in their Velvets, when Sir *Rowland Russet-coat*, their Dad, goes sagging every day in his round Gascoynes of whyte cotton, and hath much a doo (poore pennie-father) to keepe his unthrift elbowes in reparation" (r: 160). The equation of these proud gentlemen with their "Velvets" is typical of Nashe; more wonderfully realized is the picture of the penurious father, where name ("Rowland Russet-coat"), appearance ("unthrift elbowes"), and action ("sagging every day") become entirely enmeshed, figuring this example forth as a collection of ill-fitted and poor garments. Notably in Nashe, phrases such as "greasy doublet" become less an effort at local description and closer to epithets, signaling the social and moral existences of their wearers. Elsewhere in Nashe's grotesque descriptions, a glutton's face becomes a "base viol"; the greedy man's belly becomes a "powdering tub"; and "our English belly-gods," the gluttonous inhabitants of the city, are transformed into "dry fats."

⁷⁴ See especially for the city's impact broadly on Nashe's writing Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, 297–371, and Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 53–101.

Nashe's grotesque, surreal transformations of people into things are in part a recognition of the extent to which ephemeral sense impressions governed reactions and interactions – governed the affective encounter – in the close and chaotic streets, markets, and squares of early modern London.⁷⁵

As with many other writers in the 1590s, including Shakespeare and the Inns of Court satirists to follow, Nashe's propensity to equate the people of the city with their clothes or food betrays an obsession with surface appearances. Aware of the increasingly inscrutable nature of social interactions in the rapidly growing city, many of these authors picked at the presumed distance between outer behavior and inner self, skeptical of all exteriors.⁷⁶ The satirists that followed Nashe repeatedly attack a range of London's inhabitants for their hypocrisy, the distance between their outward shows and true identities. With their exposure of others' hypocritical concerns over public appearance, these satirists sought to protect the supposed integrity of their own private selves, the honest consistency between who they were and what they appeared to be. On the other hand, while he does occasionally criticize the hypocrisy he sees in the city, Nashe tends instead to ridicule purely through exaggerated or grotesque description. His narrators judge their victims by their appearances, not for their appearances. Rather than suggesting a distance between exterior and interior, Nashe's equation of physical existence with inner self elides any distance between public and private, social and moral. In this elision, we can identify a clear link to the realities of Nashe's living conditions in the metropolis. Whereas the Inns satirists could escape to the spaces of the at least partially removed Inns grounds, other than when enjoying the benefits of a patron's largesse, Nashe had little room for separation from the city's crowds.⁷⁷ When Nashe was lodged in a Cold Harbour tenement, or working in Danter's printhouse in Smithfield, the line between public and private remained virtually nonexistent.⁷⁸ Tamsin Badcoe has remarked that for Nashe the boundary with the outside world was permeable, a permeability, I would

⁷⁵ For more from a philosophical perspective on the constant objectification that occurs in metropolitan life, see Georg Simmel, *Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), esp. 6–22, and Agnes Heller, *Everyday Life*, trans. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 3–7, 45–59.

⁷⁶ For more on the growing sense of the performative and deceptive nature of appearances and its origins in capitalist exchange, see Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 57–100.

⁷⁷ For more on the living conditions of the Inns satirists and their peers, see below, 102–06.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that in part “public” and “private” were both emerging categories of existence that were imagined unevenly and haphazardly by London's inhabitants; see Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, passim.

add, that can be at least partially attributed to the flimsy and haphazard borders that divided one's own quarters from public space in the city.⁷⁹ In his writing, Nashe acknowledges this permeability in his refusal to admit any difference between public appearance and private self; appearances indeed are everything in Nashe's prose. In Nashe's London, one is always being watched.

As evidenced by his vivid descriptions of the individuals that populate his prose, Nashe derives great creative energy from this acknowledgement of the ever-public nature of existence in the city. And yet, the objectification of the individual that occurs incessantly in such an environment also understandably provoked a great deal of anxiety in Nashe. Nowhere is this anxiety more evident than in Nashe's persistent materialization of his own writing, his transformation of the intellectual production of the author into paper product. Most famously, at the start of *The Unfortunate Traveler*, Nashe's picaresque narrator, Jack Wilton, bequeaths his narrative as waste paper for his readers, to keep as a "privy token," or to "dry and kindle tobacco," or to "wrap velvet pantoffles" with the pages. Nashe's time with the printer John Danter in Smithfield, and his clearly close involvement in the daily work of the print trade, made him especially attuned to the material realities of the production of books. In his sequence of jibes at Harvey in the 1590s, Nashe consistently encumbers his opponent's supposedly leaden ideas with the paper that contains them. In *Pierce Penniless* he deploys the well-known quip that Harvey's writing is only good as "waste paper"; later in the quarrel, he emphasizes the sheer weight and size of *Pierce's Superogation*, Harvey's response to Nashe's *Strange News*, noting that he "was faine to lift my chamber doore off the hindges, onely to let it in" (3: 36). The joking threat that Harvey's pamphlet will become waste traffics in standard early modern invective while also showing Nashe's awareness of the vicissitudes of the circulation of goods in the metropolis. Beyond this awareness of the harshness of market forces, however, Nashe also allows no gap between the physical qualities of the printed book and the intellectual material within. *Pierce's Superogation*, envisioned as an unwanted guest in Nashe's private chamber, is as heavy and unwieldy as Harvey's style is laborious and his thoughts are plodding. Alexandra Halasz has insightfully remarked that Nashe often "synchronizes" the discursive "field by representing the production and reception of discourse as simultaneous processes."⁸⁰ To tweak this observation slightly, I suggest that Nashe often envisions both

⁷⁹ "As Many Ciphers without an I," 391.

⁸⁰ *The Marketplace of Print*, 109.

the author and the pamphlet simultaneously out in the streets, a hybrid form that both speaks to and is consumed by readers. Towards the end of *Pierce Penniless*, after another one of his long digressions, Nashe brings the reader up short: “Here is a crosse waie, and I think it good heere to part. Farewell, farewell, good Parenthesis, and commende me to Ladie Vanity, thy mistres” (1: 241). This passage, which is not unique in Nashe, joins the movements of the prose, its wanderings, to the perambulating speaker, as both walk the streets; the prose is embodied in the truest sense as Nashe’s imaginative ambles take form, deriving their energies from the survey of both the outside world of the metropolis and the interior meanderings of the mind. Nashe’s somatic prose is thus both peripatetic author and paper material, the locus where the movement from inner thought to prose form to external thing occurs. Nashe’s self-conscious acknowledgement of this movement, his acknowledgment of the objectification of his imagination as it moves into print and literally and figuratively out into the streets, illustrates a vivid awareness of the realities of living and writing amidst the press of people in metropolitan London, where gestures and thoughts are interpreted and misinterpreted, where things take on significances and uses beyond the control of their creators.

It was this awareness of and at least partial acceptance of the relentlessly public nature of living in early modern London that drove Nashe’s cultivation of the performative voice so many critics have recognized in his prose.⁸¹ Not only did he metonymically imbue writing with a material presence as paper product, he also mimicked the physical presence of in-person conversation and argument in his narrative style. The “spokenness” of Nashe’s prose provides much of its immediacy, its self-proclaimed extemporaneity, even as it simultaneously entails an incessant posturing and ventriloquism where Nashe is constantly taking up different public roles. Nashe’s most vociferous tract was almost certainly *Strange News*, his first full-length response to Harvey in which he begins the body of the text with an announcement of his presence and a challenge: “Behold, here stands he that will make it good, on thy foure Letters bodie, that thou are a filthy vaine fool” (1: 265). Nashe creates a frisson here between private quarrelling selves, public print personae, and material book, thereby blurring the distinction between all three as his textual attacks take imaginary physical form. It is this frisson in Nashe’s thinking that accounts for those strange moments in the Harvey pamphlets where he vividly depicts himself

⁸¹ See especially Jonathan Crewe on *Christ’s Tearres* in *Unredeemed Rhetoric* and Karen Kettlich, “Nashe’s Extemporal Vein and His Turltonizing Wit,” 99–114.

lashing Harvey as he rips his writing apart.⁸² Elsewhere in *Strange News*, Nashe variously presents himself as a street crier (“Holla, holla, holla” (1: 281)), or else a judge arraigning Harvey’s writing publicly (“Text, stand to the Barre. Peace there belowe” (1: 293)). Nashe’s narrators harangue, shout at, and joke with their audience, creating an imagined setting where his speakers are plucking his readers’/auditors’ sleeves, stopping them in the street, or else clearing space on a corner to attract their attention. The fact that *Strange News* especially imagines the text as performance, as occurring in the spaces of the city, seems designed particularly to frustrate Harvey, whose first full-length entry into the quarrel, *Four Letters*, is framed in the humanist tradition as private correspondence with specific gentlemen. Harvey shows his reticence towards entering into what is for him an embarrassingly public argument with the pretense that he is critiquing Nashe (and Greene) in personal letters exchanged between the learned.⁸³ Unsurprisingly, Nashe picks up on this flimsy pretense in *Strange News*, mocking Harvey for attempting to “over-bear us as poore beggars with the great ostentation of your rich acquaintance” (1: 276). More annoyingly surely for Harvey, Nashe also proceeds to air supposedly true details concerning Harvey’s humble family background, fake academic degrees, and imprisonment due to poor finances. Done all in the socially present voice that predominates *Strange News*, these attacks show little care for keeping one’s private business out of the public eye. In Nashe’s prose, there is no space between thought and public utterance, nor any room for private niceties in an argument waged in print. All writing is performative posturing, and all details of one’s life available for public ridicule.⁸⁴

Nashe’s most sustained and lengthy response to Harvey was *Have with You to Saffron Walden*, a response three years in the making. It is also Nashe’s most complex and complete exploration of the erasure of the boundary between interior self and exterior world in the print market and public spaces of early modern London. The pursuit of his quarrel with Harvey certainly had mercenary motives, but it also allowed him to consider at length the shifting social norms governing a writer’s life in the city. In his jesting prefatory address, “To all Christian Readers, to

⁸² See, for example, in *Pierce Penniless*, where Nashe berates John Harvey and orders “off with thy gowne and untrusse, for I mean to lash thee mightily” (1: 196). In *Have with You*, Nashe crows that a friend of his inquired after Harvey since he “was desirous to see how he lookt since my strappadoing and torturing him” (3: 91).

⁸³ A pretense that he largely abandons by the third letter, where he addresses his readers directly.

⁸⁴ In *Redefining Literature*, Brown has noted the tendency for Nashe to convert his print personalities into commodity (61).

whom these Presents shall come” to *Have with You*, an address it should be noted that begins as a fictional conversation amongst print consumers (“Say, what are you reading?” (3: 18)), Nashe asks his readers to imagine a particular setting for what follows: “In some nooke or blind angle of the Black-friers you may suppose (if you will) this honest conference to bee held, after the same manner that one of these *Italionate* conferences about a *Duell* is wont solemnly to be handled” (3: 21). Even as he evokes a genteel continental tradition of disagreement, he places his response to Harvey squarely in the spatial realities of contemporary London, envisioning him and his friends meeting in an obscure, at least partially hidden, corner of a room in Blackfriars. The setting suggests an impromptu conversation, one opportunistically taking advantage of a temporary moment of privacy. Instead of at a table or around a chimney in a private residence, or even in the closed-off room of a tavern, this conference occurs in a space carved out of its undifferentiated surroundings, a space that only has two walls to mark out its separation. The semisecluded nature of Nashe’s imagined dialogue certainly matches the haphazard and uneven demarcation of interior personal quarters in many of London’s dwellings. Beyond this, it also points to the mixed status of the speech act that is the rest of the pamphlet. At times, Nashe returns to the pretense of an imagined indoor conversation between gentlemen, while at others he becomes the public declaimer of Harvey’s ills, and at others he figures himself as secluded author reading and answering Harvey’s text from his chamber. Initially framing his response as a tenuously private conference, Nashe also revels in the very public animadversions he casts at his opponent throughout *Have with You*. The pamphlet comes across simultaneously as conspiratorial and declamatory. Nashe both capitalizes on his readers’ appetite for such personal matters and highlights the ease with which corner meetings could become fodder for public consumption in 1590s London.⁸⁵

The “blind angle” of Blackfriars is not the only corner that appears in Nashe’s prose. Indeed, he places several of his characters or dialogues in this quotidian architectural feature, and it is worth dwelling on its properties a moment to better get at why Nashe seems drawn to this humble locale. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard ruminates on the ambiances associated with corners, calling them the “most sordid of all havens.” Bachelard designates the corner a “germ of a room, or of a house,” one that, because it provides a modicum of immobility, allows for silent meditation, a place,

⁸⁵ Orlin describes some of the numerous court records and witness statements that were based on eavesdropping and spying into supposedly private interior spaces in *Locating Privacy*, 152–55.

however meagre, for daydreaming. And yet, he goes on to note the strange dialectic of the corner, “part wall, part door”; each corner is both a haven to which we retreat and a potential opening to the outside world, a space that reminds us that this retreat is overimagined, a partial escape from the external.⁸⁶ Nashe seems to have intuited this dialectic in his own imaginings of corners. In *Have with You*, Nashe playfully exposes the partiality and willfulness of the privacy of his friendly corner conversation as the supposedly closed dialogue takes very public printed form. Whereas elsewhere in his writing Nashe does allow himself to dream of the solitude Bachelard finds enticingly possible in corners, when he envisions them specifically, he tends to focus on the “sordid” and temporary nature of this solitude. In *Pierce Penniless*, corners generally appear as disreputable spaces for the low-born and middling sorts whom Nashe haughtily dismisses for their pride. It is out of a “chimney corner” where they were “turning spit” that “such obscure upstart gallants, as without desert or service, are raised from the plough to be checkmate with Princes” (1: 173). Immediately before this portrait, we find “In another corner, Mistris Minx, a Marchants wife, that will eate no Cherries, forsooth, but when they are at twenty shillings a pound, that looks as simperingly as if she were besmeared, and jets it as gingerly as if she were dancing the Canaries” (1: 173). Her placement in a corner both emphasizes her humble origins and draws attention to her self-conscious performance of highborn behavior. Sitting in an at least a semisecluded area, the merchant’s wife plays her role nonetheless, her acting exaggerating further her awareness of outside perceptions in this supposedly private space. In both cases, the corner represents not a place of quiet seclusion but rather the eventual source of overweening public behaviors. Those that hide in corners do not seek removal from the external social pressures of the city, but rather cover for who they are and what they presume to be. When Nashe claims later in *Strange News* that unlike Harvey “I lurke in no corners, but converse in a house of credit,” he is both claiming access to gentlemanly patronage and privilege as well as demonstrating his admission and acceptance of the notoriety associated with their print quarrel.

For Nashe, corners embody an awareness of the impossibly public nature of urban existence. Those that inhabit them in his prose fruitlessly or dishonestly attempt to close off the gaze of the outside world. It is entirely appropriate, then, that *Have with You* is imagined to take place in the “blinde angle” of a dwelling. What is slyly fictionalized as taking place in a discrete corner is fully available for the audience’s consumption.

⁸⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 136–37.

Is Nashe's "nook," playing on the double meanings of corner as interior space or exterior intersection, perhaps even outside, at the haphazard juncture of two streets or alleyways in Blackfriars? After all, it is on such a public street corner that Nashe envisions the city youth jeering at Harvey in *Strange News*.⁸⁷ Whatever the setting, *Have with You* delights in the publicity that his quarrel with Harvey has supposedly generated. Early on in his prefatory address to his "Christian readers," Nashe admits that he writes against Harvey not because he hates him, but rather because "I would confirme and plainly shew, to a number of weake beleevvers in my sufficiency, that I am able to answere him" (3: 19). He goes on to note that Harvey only has his friends to blame for his response, since they had gone about town "urging what a triumph he had over me" (3: 19). The opening of the dialogue also claims that the argument has been the talk of the city, as Importuno (one of Nashe's Blackfriars interlocutors) tells his listeners that the "united voyce and opinion abroad" has determined that Nashe "is not able to answere him [Harvey], he hath deferd it so long, & if he doo answere him, howsoever it be, it is nothing, since hee hath been a whole Age about it" (3: 26). Importuno also complains that "in no companie I can come, but everie minute of an howre (because they have taken special notice of my love towards him) they still will be tormenting me with one question or another, of what he is about, what means he to be thus retchless of his fame" (3: 26). He goes on to note that he has tried repeatedly to defend Nashe, as has another of his conference, Bentivole, who jumps in to explain that he also has spoken for Nashe: "at divers great meetings and chief Ordinaries I have Champion-like tooke thy part" (3: 28). These opening pages establish an obvious, if fictionalized, sense of the supposed notoriety of Nashe and Harvey's print fight, at least in their circles. That Nashe foregrounds the argument's fame makes clear that he viewed it as public fodder rather than a dispute between private individuals. Indeed, it is public awareness of the quarrel itself that Nashe claims drives him to press on in print against his adversary rather than settling the disagreement over a drink in the aforementioned closed room of a Cambridge alehouse.

The framing of *Have with You* establishes the pamphlet as a semiprivate conversation amidst the gossip and news mongering of a particular group of city inhabitants. In doing so, it gestures to and embraces the way in which London's spaces and its largescale print market made these previously in-group squabbles far more widely available. Nashe seems often to have enjoyed and contributed to the exposure of private matters on the

⁸⁷ See above, 60.

public stage, an exposure that was endemic to existence in the early modern metropolis. Put another way, Nashe has little time for those who wish to seclude personal niceties from general view. As we have seen, Nashe embraces the realities of existence in early modern London by often allowing for no distance between private life and public persona. Nowhere does he revel in this lack of distance more than in his extended satiric biography of Harvey, a biography that takes up nearly the last two thirds of *Have with You* (if one includes the numerous digressions embedded within). Throughout his embarrassing account of Harvey's life, Nashe includes a wide variety of salacious, and perhaps fictional, details concerning Harvey's personal foibles and financial difficulties. Couches as a diverting entertainment for readers, this account leaves very little to their imaginations. We are allowed into Harvey's lodgings, where he spends his time "distractedly enamoured of his own beautie, spending a whole forenoone everie day in spunging and licking himselfe by the glasse" (3: 68). Later in his biography, Nashe recounts that a gentleman friend of his had to wait for Harvey when he came to visit while Harvey "stood acting by the glasse all his gestures he was to use all the day after, and currying & smudging and pranking himself unmeasurably" (3: 91). Nashe also exposes Harvey's nearly animalistic self-absorption and egotism in a digressive account of his "hobby-horse revelling & dominering" in front of the queen at Audley End. After a long description of Harvey's velvet outfit, which "worme-eaten relique" Nashe claims he continues to wear presently, and an old saddle he also has ridiculously retrofitted to wear as a case for his doublet, we are told that when he finally met the queen, Elizabeth noted that Harvey "lookt something like an Italian" (3: 76). Upon hearing this, Harvey "quite renounst his naturall English accents & gestures, & wrested himself wholly to the Italian *punttilios*, speaking our homely lland tongue strangely" (76). In this lengthy tale, Nashe treads familiar ground with his humorous depiction of Harvey's affected and dishonest self-presentation. However, he also provides detailed personal and material context concerning Harvey's recycling of garments, context to which only Nashe seems privy, that sets off more starkly his supercilious pretensions.

More direct in its disclosure of Harvey's simultaneous impecuniousness and narcissism is Nashe's account of Harvey's time living with the publisher John Wolfe. During this period, Harvey lodged with Wolfe at the publisher's cost, drinking so much that "he set him on the score for sack, *centum pro cento*, a hundred quarts in a seven-night, whiles he was thus saracently sentencing it against mee" (3: 90). Not only did Harvey take advantage of Wolfe's largesse, only putting "his hand in his pocket but to

scrub his arme a little that itcht” despite Wolfe’s expectation of repayment, he also borrowed money freely from others without repaying, including “one *Mighell* (sometimes *Dexters* man in *Powles Church-yard*, though now he dwells at *Exceter*)” (3: 88). Nashe’s off-hand inclusion of the specifics of Mighell’s condition (and Harvey’s behavior at table) is typical of the mock biography; with these details, Nashe both contributes to the illusion of his being in the know as well as the readers’ sense, no matter their position, that they also are participants in this male community. Slightly later in his near picaresque tale of Harvey’s activities, Nashe reveals how Harvey stole one of Wolfe’s prentices and made him his page, “clapping an olde blue coate on his backe, which was one of my *Lord of Harfords* liveries, (he pulling the badge off)” (3: 96). This stolen page boy stays with him “halfe a year, rubbing his toes, and following him with his sprinkling glasse & his boxe of kissing comfets from place to place” (96). As these embarrassing details accumulate, a fully realized and three-dimensional portrait of Harvey’s misdeeds and ostentation emerges for the reader, one convincing because of its rush of information and its narrative propulsion. With its wealth of vivid particulars, all casually and salaciously included by Nashe, an air of conspiratorial gossip suffuses the account. Even as readers might doubt the truth of many of these assertions (how could Nashe possibly know that Harvey pulled the badge off of an old livery?), they are simultaneously drawn into the biography due to its veneer of scandalous authenticity. Indeed, it is in those moments that we should be most skeptical, when a casual aside exposes some impossible to know secret, for example, that the narrative is at its most compelling and effective.

In his mock biography, Nashe cares little for the distinction between truth and falsehood, satire and slander. Rather, he creates a print version of Gabriel Harvey who has an entirely uncertain relationship to the actual person, even as this version takes on a reality of its own.⁸⁸ Nashe’s approach is darkly cynical in its openly casual attitude towards the accuracy of his public exposure of Harvey. This casualness aligns with Nashe’s more generally skeptical orientation, his tendency to leave his readers in a state of uncertainty even as his prose barrels from one statement to the next. In *Have with You*, Nashe seems fully aware that his readers will doubt that much of what he relays to us concerning Harvey’s life is true, but he is far more interested in creating this version of Harvey in print and releasing it to the public than in worrying about any challenges to its authenticity.

⁸⁸ It should be noted that he does the same to Harvey’s brothers, Richard and John, whom he also eviscerates here.

In fact, he even toys with readers who might question his account, breaking off in the middle of his description of Harvey's leather saddle breastplate to promise that he will not "binde your consciences too strictly to embrace it for a truth, but if my judgment might stand for up, it is rather likely to be true than false, since it [the saddle] vanisht invisible and was never heard of: and besides, I cannot devise how he should behave him to consume such an implement, if he confiscated it not to that use" (3: 74). Nashe's disingenuous and joking defense turns in on itself and rests on the reader accepting Nashe's authority as well as the unverifiable claims (that Harvey stole a leather saddle) under question. The light-hearted, if consequential – at least for Harvey – dismissal of any concern over truthfulness marks clearly Nashe's disdain for existing scholarly and intellectual norms, his flouting of authorial conventions for aspiring humanists. Alongside the persistent irony and light-heartedness of Nashe's prose lies a skeptical destructiveness encouraged by the frustrations at the lack of economic opportunity that signals a sharp turn away from earlier university writers who had come to the city. This orientation to the world, so rooted in the male intellectual and social climate of 1590s London, would become the norm for the Inns and university writers to follow such as Marston, Edward Guilpin, and John Donne.

To be sure, the kind of personal aspersions that Nashe levels at Harvey would not have come as a complete shock to the graduates of Cambridge and Oxford in London, and the Inns men associated closely with these men, reading *Have with You*. Many of the men in these communities already participated in vigorous, often harsh and aggressive, flyting matches both at university and in the halls and ordinaries of the city.⁸⁹ However, these verbal battles remained primarily contained in the social and physical structures of these institutions. Writing in the more radical and public vein of the Marprelate tracts, Nashe brings the barbs of these invectives to the print market, expanding the quips and squibs into the full-blown mock biographical narrative of Harvey that we see in *Have with You*. The publicity of his exposure of Harvey, as well as its trafficking in rumor and gossip, or even outright lies, demonstrates just how complete was Nashe's abandonment of older humanist ideals that promoted writing's civic utility and moral purpose within a hierarchical system of

⁸⁹ For more on flyting, see Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27–31, and Jessica Winston, "Legal Satire and the Legal Profession in the 1590s: John Davies's *Epigrammes* and Professional Decorum," in *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Literature 1500–1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121–41.

patronage and service. Indeed, his series of satires on Harvey in print can be seen also as attacks on the gentility and deference so prominently admired and parroted by writers such as Harvey. It was not only economic necessity that drove Nashe to continue to pick his fight with Harvey as he sought more material to sell to publishers, but also economic anger over the failures of an outmoded system to support his intellectual labors. The popularity and prominence of the Nashe–Harvey squabble within the group of city writers that followed suggests that this transformation of writing into public diatribe and personal invective appealed to these men who were also frustrated with the lack of avenues for advancement. In its very public flouting of the expected behavior of university men, the lampoon prose biography of Harvey in Nashe's *Have with You to Saffron Walden* speaks to this frustration and the new economic realities of 1590s London for these men who continued to flock to the city. In addition, as we have seen, Nashe's mockery of Harvey in his narrative here consistently refuses to distinguish between private and public selves, a refusal that was necessitated by the specifically crowded and mixed urban spaces in which Nashe existed. For Nashe, these two facts of urban existence – economic struggle and the shifting, congested conditions that were Nashe's quotidian reality – were entirely inseparable. As we can see most clearly in *Have with You*, both of these new urban realities led to Nashe's development of a skeptical, ironic, and humorously contentious orientation towards writing as well as the world immediately around him, an orientation that took nothing seriously and that both accepted and was disturbed by the incessantly public nature of metropolitan life in the 1590s.

Nashean Aesthetics: Reality in Motion

Nashe's rejection from and rejection of the standard paths for learned writers not only led him to challenge the received wisdom on the uses of writing, it also led him to experiment and innovate stylistically as well. Indeed, it is in Nashe that we can find the beginnings of the move away from the utilitarian and towards the experimental that has been identified as central to the development of the metaphysical. Long ago, Robert Ellrodt located a persistently curious cast of thought in writers such as Donne as they abandoned notions of gentlemanly public service for a restless intellectualism that lay at the roots of the metaphysical spirit.⁹⁰ We

⁹⁰ Robert Ellrodt, "Scientific Curiosity and Metaphysical Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," *Modern Philology* 61 (1964): 180–97.

can certainly see the same abandonment of public service in Nashe as well as the resultant, if more bumptious, turn towards the speculative and the strange in his writing.⁹¹ As he turned away from the patronage system, Nashe simultaneously turned away from the style necessitated by writing within this system. This turn entailed specifically Nashe's development of a distinctly materialist, digressive, and hallucinogenic aesthetic that abandoned Sidney's mimetic ideals for a more visceral, far less faithful representation of the world. This experimentation in Nashe should be seen, then, as the beginnings of a wider rejection of older forms soon to be enacted by the young and frustrated male writers of the city; and his attacks on Harvey and the older traditions and styles that according to Nashe he represented were part of what would become a fashionable dissatisfaction with an outdated aesthetic.

In his very public dismantling of Harvey's personal life in print, Nashe never overtly indicates that his openly libelous approach is a significant departure from the norms of late sixteenth-century English print culture. However, elsewhere, and at various points, Nashe signals an awareness of the novelty of his writing, its subject matter, its voice, and its style. In one of the more memorable moments in his most popular piece, Nashe claims that consumers of print force contemporary writers like himself to search constantly for new material: "Newe Herrings, new, wee must crye, every time wee make our selves publike, or else we shall bee christened with a hundred newe tytles of Idiotisme" (1: 192). Mimicking the cries of fishmongers in the city's streets, Nashe blames market forces and the insatiable needs of readers for the innovative drive of authors in 1590s London, the equation of writing to commodity itself a fresh theme throughout Nashe's prose.⁹² Even if born of necessity, Nashe embraces and praises newness throughout his prose. This valorization of novelty is perhaps most clearly seen in his attacks on writers, especially Gabriel Harvey, who, Nashe claims, crib their material from others, weighing down their prose with musty and well-worn sententiae. For Nashe, poetry and good writing must be constantly and consistently fresh. Certainly, Nashe himself could be accused of similar acts of imitation and borrowing; the central structure of *Pierce Penniless* is based upon the often-trod survey of the seven deadly

⁹¹ Philip Schwyzer asks us to think of Nashe's texts as "considered experiments" in "Summer Fruits and Autumn Leaves: Thomas Nashe in 1593," *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994): 586.

⁹² That Nashe wrote "commercial literature" has been a central insight in Nashean criticism ever since C. S. Lewis made this observation in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*, 416. For important developments and complications to this view of Nashe, see Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*; Mentz, *Romance for Sale*, 173–206; and Baker, *On Demand*, 35–61.

sins from medieval tradition, while *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* operates in the familiar register of the jeremiad.⁹³ Nonetheless, Nashe consistently defended the novelty of his prose, taking special umbrage whenever his opponents accused him of a lack of originality. Harvey's accusation that Nashe stole the entire premise of *Pierce Penniless* from Richard Tarlton's play *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1585) is met, in *Strange News*, with some of Nashe's most scorching insults: "Hang thee, hang thee, thou common coosener of curteous readers, thou grosse shifter for shitten tapsterly jests, have I *imitated* Tarletons *play of the seaven deadly sinnes in my plot of Pierce Penniless?*" [italics in original] (1: 304). Taking up one of his most defensive posture in the years' long debate with Harvey, Nashe proceeds to uphold at length and in detail the newness and validity of his methods in his famous pamphlet. Clearly Harvey had hit a nerve.

Even though Harvey correctly chastised Nashe for his use of the tired seven deadly sins structure (or "plot" as Nashe calls it), we can still see a playfulness and experimentalism in Nashe's prose style that moves it far beyond these older forms. Certainly, the various affective registers that Nashe moved between swiftly – irony, disgust, appreciation, vituperation – would have presented a bewildering combination for his readers, all the more so for these modes to appear together suddenly in a surprising digressive turn. In Nashe's prose, there is a consistent tension between what the reader expects based on generic or formal convention and what Nashe gives him or her from moment to moment. Nashe seems aware of this tension, or rather aware that his style does not match the traditional forms within which he often worked. In part, Nashe's skepticism over received truths and authorities and over accepted modes of behavior seems to have inspired the dismantling of prior forms that we see everywhere in his prose. It is because of his emphasis on stylistic experiment that Nashe takes special exception to Harvey's attack on the derivativeness of *Pierce*, responding at length to the claim that he has borrowed all of his

⁹³ Critics have struggled especially to characterize the tone of *Christ's Tears* due to its seemingly sincere investment in the high and harsh moral position of the jeremiad, a position so at odds with Nashe's playfulness elsewhere. G. R. Hibbard famously labeled *Christ's Tears* "far and away the worst thing Nashe ever wrote" and a "monument in bad taste" (*Thomas Nashe: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 122–23). Nicholls attributes the pamphlet to a mental breakdown (*A Cup of News*, "The Crackup"). While contemporary readers seemed to have taken the text seriously, later critics have attempted to place the pamphlet more comfortably in Nashe's overall work by seeing parody or playfulness. See Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric*, ch. 3; Schwyzer, "Summer Fruit and Autumn Leaves," 607–19; and Beatrice Groves, "Laughter in the Time of Plague: A Context for the Unstable Style of Nashe's *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*," *Studies in Philology* 108 (2011): 238–60.

“eloquence from Taverns.” Nashe takes the time to explain “the Methode of my demeanour in *Pierce Pennilesse*” (1: 305–6), a word (“demeanor”) that suggests a defense of his specific approach and attitude in the pamphlet, rather than the use of the seven deadly sins template. In general, Nashe shows a consistent willingness to play with readers’ expectations, to break generic conventions, to experiment with voice and with form. We can see this playfulness at the simplest level in his repeated dismantling of the typographical norms of the printed page. In his mock Epistle Dedicatorie to *Have with You*, an empty box appears at the bottom of the page (3: 12); Nashe clarifies just above this box that he has left it as a space for the reader to lay their hands to swear to a satirical grace that he writes “for the profoundest *Arcandums*, *Acarmanians*, and *Dizards*, that have been discovered since the Deluge,” that is, the Harvey brothers (3: 12). The moment is not unique in Nashe in its foregrounding of paratextual features, and reminds the reader of the material realities of the book that they hold in their hands.⁹⁴ It also is demonstrative of Nashe’s comfort operating in the print medium, his keen awareness of this medium’s ability to both insist on its own distinct and distancing presence and to mimic the immediacies of spoken conversation.

More than many authors writing in London of the 1590s, Nashe remained attuned to the embodied possibilities of the printed text, and it was partially this attention to print’s strange and still uncertain relationship to the oral and the immediate that drove many of Nashe’s formal and aesthetic experiments. As Walter Ong and Adam Fox have detailed, the remnants of an oral, spoken culture lingered long into the print revolution, especially in academic and intellectual circles.⁹⁵ Many of the scholarly books emerging from humanist circles represented themselves, in the classical tradition, as dialogues. Influenced by the renaissance appreciation for copia in argument, other authors strung together adages and sententiae as if taken directly from a commonplace book, mimicking the rhythms and protocols of oral debate and conversation. Additionally, Ong has attributed the prevalence of the reliance on traditional taxonomies and organizing structures in late Tudor prose to the formulaic nature of residual oral modes still present in printed texts.⁹⁶ All of these traditions from oral

⁹⁴ Later in *Have with You*, for example, Nashe gestures to an engraving of Harvey that has been inserted in the margins, telling his readers to “behold his lively counterfet” before commenting extensively on why Nashe had drawn him in the manner that he has (3: 38–39).

⁹⁵ Walter Ong, “Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style,” *PMLA* 80 (1965): 145–54, and Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁹⁶ Ong, “Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style,” 150–51.

communication appear in Nashe's writing, often forming the basic skeleton for his prose tracts. However, Nashe's orality at the very least plays with these older forms, as in the vociferous and vituperative colloquy in *Have with You*, and even in places dismantles and satirizes them, as in his relentlessly digressive and directionless survey of London's sins in *Pierce Penniless*. Nashe's speakers also tend to stand much closer to their readers, repeatedly using direct address and sudden and successive exclamations to jolt the reader's attention. What's more, Nashe's embodied prose is far more inconsistent in its deployment of these structures; it is also often unsophisticated and coarse. The voices that he takes up can be far from the intellectual or cultured speakers of the classical dialogue or commonplace adage.⁹⁷ We have already seen the variety of street characters that he ventriloquizes in his writing, from the young ruffians taunting passersby to the tavern dwellers ordering their drink to the ballad-makers singing bawdy. The constant presence of Nashe's speakers gestures to both the ubiquitous noise in 1590s London as well as the always public nature of urban existence. What I want to emphasize here, however, is the sheer variety of lexicons in which Nashe works in a single pamphlet, the many different ways of speaking that appear briefly and then are dropped by his print personae. The prose is not necessarily attempting to replicate and reproduce the precise realities of the city's speakers; rather, it mines these urban voices to form its own multivocal mixture. This Nashean pastiche disorients the reader as Nashe simultaneously shifts subjects and speakers, sharply reversing his tone to create a rush of divergent dialects.

More generally the most immediately noticeable stylistic feature of Nashe's writing is its speed, the swiftness with which voices, images, and phrases come incessantly at the reader. Judging from this ever-kinetic and always energetic prose, Nashe delighted in motion. In most of his major works, he promoted speed as an aesthetic virtue, bragging over his swift invention or prodding others' (particularly Harvey's) leaden-footed pace. Nashe was not alone during these years in his interest in the simulation and production of movement in his writing and its resultant effects on readers. As Angus Fletcher has argued, attendant with the period's more general concern with motion – whether mechanistic, psychological, or celestial – was a more specifically literary concern with the “intense imagistic activity”

⁹⁷ The closest analogue from classical or humanist traditions to Nashe's homespun style would have been the jestbook tale; see Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 80–148, and Anne Lake Prescott, “Humour and Satire in the Renaissance,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. Glyn P. Norton, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989–2005), 3: 282–92.

associated with imaginative writing, with the ways in which this type of writing generated motion in its reader.⁹⁸ A few years before Nashe in his *Defense of Poesy* (1589), Sir Philip Sidney, with whom as we have seen Nashe seemed to little agree, had outlined his ideals for what poetry, and literature more broadly, should do. In attempting to champion writing that he construes as generally literary, Sidney develops a complex, albeit a bit fuzzy, theory on the efficacy of this writing on its readers.⁹⁹ From the start, Sidney, like Harvey, makes clear that poetry is most importantly useful, teaching its readers virtue by representing it pleasantly in the imitative fictions of the poet's imagination. Combining several classical commonplaces, Sidney describes poetry as "a speaking picture – with this end, to teach and delight."¹⁰⁰ He makes his emphasis on moral instruction clearer a bit later in the treatise, claiming that poets "imitate" nature to "delight and teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger: ... it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by."¹⁰¹ Horace's dictum acts as a refrain in *The Defense*, with Sidney taking repeated pains to single out the abilities of poetry to teach in ways that philosophy and history cannot. For Sidney, poetry teaches best because it imitates reality, per Aristotle's definition, but only through the expansive, clarifying filter of the poet's imagination, providing a "perfect picture" of virtues and vices, "what may be and should be," not what is.¹⁰² Although Sidney remains vague on the process, it is this picture, this "fashioned image," that "moves" the reader, inculcating morality more effectively than the messy truths of history or the dry generalities of philosophy. Indeed, Sidney repeatedly explains poetry's didactic power in terms of motion. In perhaps the clearest example of his association of literary writing with movement, he avers

no man is so philosophos as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and effect of teaching.

⁹⁸ Angus Fletcher, *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1–11.

⁹⁹ That Sidney thinks beyond merely verse in his defense of "poesy" becomes clear as he enumerates examples from a variety of literary writings, not merely in verse, while clarifying that "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet" ("A Defence of Poetry," in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 81).

¹⁰⁰ Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," 80.

¹⁰¹ Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," 81–82.

¹⁰² Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," 85, 81.

For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught? And what so much good doth that teaching bring forth (I speak still of moral doctrine) as that it moveth one to do that which it doth teach.¹⁰³

Sidney's sense of movement is fairly pliable here, describing poetry's ability both to excite feelings in the reader ("if he be not moved") and to operate as a motive toward action ("as that it moveth one to do"). The close association of mental response with the beginnings of physical action reminds us of the fact that early modern thinkers generally thought of passion in a specifically embodied sense, a "biochemical state that arises *from* the material body," to use Bruce Smith's phrase.¹⁰⁴ Throughout *The Defense*, Sidney conceives of poetry's effects in physical terms; the poet has the ability to "draw the mind" of the reader effectively; tragedy is known for "stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration"; the poet brings his own "stuff" and "maketh matter for a conceit" that again is far more effective "for moving" than philosophy.¹⁰⁵ Sidney takes advantage of the close proximity of passion to movement in his defense of the aesthetic; the arousal of emotion that poetry enacts so powerfully and effectively is crucially linked to a prompting to moral action. In this way, Sidney makes clear that the proper end of poetry is to inculcate and incite morality in its readers; poetry's ability to enflame passions – notably, Sidney never speaks in such drastic terms about poetry's effects – is merely the means to this end.

Even with Nashe's involvement in the publication of the first edition of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, and his most likely overly fulsome praise of the gentleman poet and his family in the preface to this edition, we would be foolish to assume that Nashe's theories on the purposes of imaginative writing would align closely with Sidney's. It is true that a year after he was involved in bringing Sidney's own poetry to the print market, he would defend poets in similarly moral terms as Sidney in *Pierce Penniless* – these poets "the vertuous by their praises they encourage to be more vertuous, to vicious men they are as infernall hags, to haunt their ghosts with eternall infamie after death" (1: 193). However, this seems another one of the many moments in Nashe's prose where either his tongue is planted firmly in his cheek or else his own predilections towards a different aesthetic, a different sense of how poetry moves, never allow him to fully embrace these Sidneian commonplaces about the poet's ability to inculcate virtue. Aside

¹⁰³ Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," 91.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Smith, *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁰⁵ Sidney, "A Defence of Poetry," 94, 96, 99.

from the above sentence on the didactic power of poetry, his defense is primarily concerned with poetry's extension of the English language and the novelties that it introduces to the print market. We have already seen Nashe's embracing of novelty as an end unto itself, but significantly when considering the aesthetic effects of his prose, Nashe throughout associates this desired novelty with speed, with the quick-moving, associative leaps of imagination that he seemed to strive for in his own writing. When he defends poetry in *Pierce Penniless*, he contemptuously refers to its attackers as "slowe spirited Saturnists" who have no "wit to moove, no passion to urge" (1: 192). The speed of a writer's imagination is directly correlated to his or her ability to move the reader with novel associations and surprising turns of wit. Harvey suffers particularly under Nashe's aesthetic judgments based on these standards, as Nashe persistently jabs at Harvey's ponderous style; for example, towards the end of *Strange News*, Nashe complains of the influence of Harvey's style on his own reposit:

A bots on thee for mee for a lumpish, leaded heeled letter dawber, my stile, with treading in thy clammie steps, is growne as heavie gated, as if it were bound to an Aldermans pace, with the irons at Newgate cald the widows Almes.

Ere I was chained to thee thus by the necke, I was as light as the Poet *Accius*, who was so lowe and so slender that hee was faine to put lead into his shooes for feare the winde shoulde blowe him into another Countrie." (1: 322)

In Nashe's judgment, speed is a primary aesthetic virtue.

Once we recognize Nashe's prioritization of speed and novelty over other aesthetic principles, we can begin to see just how very far these principles are from Sidney's. With his prose's rush of surprising and often grotesque images, Nashe seems to care very little for creating, to return to Sidney's formulation, a "perfect picture" of "what may be and what should be." And, despite occasional protestations to the contrary, he seems even less interested in the moral import of his writing. The seven deadly sins structure to the Knight of the Post's response to *Pierce Penniless* fairly quickly reveals itself as merely a familiar means through which Nashe can exercise his extemporal wit and shock his readers as he repeatedly digresses from this structure. It is notable as well that in his preface to Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, Nashe seems little concerned with Sidney's inculcation of virtue, rather praising the poet, almost certainly to the frustration of the Sidney circle, for his lively painting of passion, his creation of a "Theater of pleasure" with a "paper stage streud with pearle, an artificial heav'n" (1: 329). Perhaps more tellingly, in this Preface, and really everywhere in his prose, Nashe's style reveals a writer unconcerned with creating

“moving pictures” that didactically clarify or represent moral truths more cleanly than other disciplines. In fact, while Nashe, like Sidney, is clearly invested in creating motion in his writing, indeed often imagines his prose as literally and physically moving through the streets and into the corners of the city, this motion is often violent in its abruptness, confusing in its perspectival shifts, disturbing in its grotesque juxtapositions. Nashe has consistently been characterized as a kind of Elizabethan eye on the streets and his writing mined as reportage representing the quotidian realities of the city.¹⁰⁶ However, while Nashe so clearly responded to and was inspired by the immediacies of London, even a cursory examination of this writing reveals only some realistic depiction. Rather than providing his readers with an accurate, clear-eyed depiction of city life, Nashe often instead fills his prose with a rush of sensory details, many of which might have emerged from the urban environment, but have since been confusingly reordered by Nashe’s imagination. In perhaps the most dynamic example, in *Pierce Penniless’s* section on the sin of greed, Nashe describes the clothing of Greediness, including his pants: “For his breeches, they were made of the lists of broad cloaths, which he had by letters pattents assured him and his heys, to the utter overthrowe of Bowcases and Cushin makers; and bumbasted they were, like Beerebarrels, with statute Marchants and forfeitures” (1: 166). By the end of this detailing, the readers have no clear picture of the actual pants being described, and instead are confronted with a confusing barrage of materials, from cloths, to cushions, to kegs, to papers, that combine into one confused heap. Here, as elsewhere, as much as Nashe’s prose is so clearly suffused with the materials of the city, these materials frequently appear in haphazard assemblages of phantasmagoric images. While Sidney envisions the poet as enhancing and clarifying reality for the moral benefit of the reader, Nashe seems intent on reconfiguring this reality mainly to produce a variety of affective reactions.¹⁰⁷

In the moments I have detailed thus far, Nashe’s style produces a disorienting welter of voices and images that rush together into a confused panoply. Throughout Nashe’s prose there is a vigorous sense of liveliness and movement with little to no direction to it. If we are to consider aesthetics as arising directly out of the material and economic conditions in which an author is writing, we may speculate on the origins of this aimless motion to Nashe’s style. Along with associating life as a patronized writer

¹⁰⁶ For which, see especially Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, passim.

¹⁰⁷ In *The Aesthetics of Service*, Rivlin also argues that Nashe had little interest in recreating Sidney’s mimetic ideals in his writing; however, Rivlin emphasizes the influence of the changing modes of service on Nashe’s rejection of a Sidneian aesthetics (55).

with silence and peacefulness, as we have seen, Nashe also justifiably associated this life with settledness, with the space to think. In defending himself against Harvey's attacks on his poor reputation and low social status in *Strange News*, Nashe takes special umbrage over Harvey's use of the phrase "base shifting companions" to describe him and Green.¹⁰⁸ Returning to the phrase four times over the course of a couple of pages, Nashe denies the accusation of immorality and poverty (these are linked by Harvey), claiming to be peacefully and securely lodged in a "house of credit" as he writes his response. Harvey's disparaging phrase and Nashe's vehement response both speak to the common early modern association of mobility with immorality.¹⁰⁹ For Nashe specifically, it is the support of a wealthy patron that allows him to avoid this instability and this taint. Conversely, the life of the sponsorless writer, such as Greene, and Nashe at other points in his career, is marked by unsettledness and motion. In one of his frequent diatribes in *Pierce Penniless* against the lack of generosity of the wealthy, Nashe laments the conditions young men face in the unsupportive world of 1590s London, complaining that "poore Scholers and Souldiers wander in backe lanes and the out-shiftes of the Citie, with never a rag to their backes" (1: 204). Not only did Nashe face the reality of a mobile existence during his years in London, he also imaginatively associated the writing life in these years with this peripatetic existence, with shifting and moving about. While I will not go so far as to argue that Nashe inhabited a form of the "low subjectivity" that Patricia Fumerton has detailed in her study of the urban poor, I will suggest that Nashe's mobility led him to see himself and the world more widely as unsettled, as filled with motion.¹¹⁰ This orientation towards the world would also have been encouraged more generally by the rush of bodies and things in 1590s London that, as we have already seen, so deeply held Nashe's imagination. The vigorous, unhinged style of prose that Nashe developed not only served as his rejection of traditional forms, forms associated with the authoritative systems on whose margins he existed.¹¹¹ Its emphasis on motion and restlessness also melded with his sense of the disorientations and uncertainties of urban existence for a writer constantly moving through the peripheries of the metropolis.

¹⁰⁸ Harvey uses this phrase in *Four Letters* (52); earlier in the pamphlet, Harvey accuses Greene of immorality, including his "continual shifting of lodgings" (10).

¹⁰⁹ See Beier, *Masterless Men*.

¹¹⁰ Fumerton, *Unsettled*, xii–xiv.

¹¹¹ Lorna Hutson has insightfully observed that Nashe's improvisations, his extemporal vein, were allowed by his freedom from the strictures and demands of the patronage networks in which other early modern writers operated ("Fictive Acts: Thomas Nashe and the Mid-Tudor Legacy," in *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*, 721).

Perhaps the most persistently disorienting feature of Nashe's prose is its relentless digressiveness. (Although the word "digressive" doesn't quite do it justice, since digression implies a deviation from an intended subject, something not always apparent in his writing.) Nashe himself enjoys drawing attention to his tendency to lose the subject at hand, frequently stopping himself short in the midst of a lengthy detour to complain of his waywardness. Just in *Pierce Penniless* Nashe stops an early digression with "But this by the way"; complains as an imaginary reader "Pish, pish, what talke you of old age and balde pates?"; cuts off a lengthy tale about a Cambridge miller and his chickens with "Hypocrisie, I remember, was our text"; stops the long disquisition on hell with "I dare say thou hast cald me a hundred times dolt for this senseles discourse"; and – most prominently – near the end cuts himself off: "*Deus bone*, what a veine am I fallen into?" (1: 171, 182, 221, 239, 240). The interpolations in *Pierce Penniless* are symptomatic and appear in similar form in nearly all of Nashe's writing. These self-conscious interjections align with his repeated gestures to the well-known "extemporal vein" within which he claims he works as a writer. By reminding his readers that he writes extemporaneously, Nashe draws attention to the digressiveness of his prose, emphasizing its spontaneity, its speed, its orality, and its formlessness. While we can certainly doubt the extent to which he wrote in such a manner, it is clear that Nashe wants his readers to think that he operates quickly and associatively.¹¹²

At an aesthetic level, the meandering nature of Nashe's prose provokes confusion and an unevenness of focus in the reader. Left to the whims of the author's capricious imagination, the reader often has little sense of the logic behind Nashe's quick shifts and lengthy and obtuse stories. Indeed, Nashe's prose often rushes forward with an associative energy that makes meandering an end in itself. Here is one particularly energetic passage in *The Terrors of the Night*:

The next plague and the neerest that I know in affinitie to a consumption, is long depending hope frivolously defeated, than which there is no greater miserie on earth; & so *per consequens* no men in earth more miserable than courtiers. It is a cowardly feare that is not resolute inough to despaire. It is like a pore hunger-starvd wretch at sea, who still in expectation of a good voyage, endures more miseries than Job. He that writes this can tell, for he hath never had good voyage in his life but one, & that was to a fortunate

¹¹² Schwyzer reminds us that Nashe actually was not an especially productive author, publishing less than one work per year ("Summer Fruits and Autumn Leaves," 586–87).

blessed Iland, nere those pinnacle rocks called the Needles. O, it is a purified Continent, & a fertil plot fit to seat another Paradice, where, or in no place, the image of the ancient hospitalitie is to be found. (t: 374)

Nashe moves here from a contemplation of the horrors of consumption; to the similar pain, according to Nashe, of the defeat of a long-held hope; to the haphazard life of a courtier; to, by way of comparison, the vagaries of sea voyages; to an admission that Nashe has only ever traveled peacefully by sea to one place, the Isle of Wight; to a panegyric on the wonders of this “purified Continent,” this other “Paradice.” This passage veers, often unexpectedly, from subject to subject, encouraging an immersion in the particular rather than a concern for a general or coherent direction. In Nashe’s wanderings, we might catch a glimpse of de Certeau’s poacher, taking shortcuts and moving in unexpected, unmapped routes.¹¹³ However, this does not quite get fully at the energies of Nashe’s associative prose. Nashe’s sentences are not often paratactic; he does not walk with a Senecan amble, and the effect generated by such passages is not exactly one of surprise. Rather, the reader is immersed in a continuous movement, is asked to focus her attention intently on a detail, on the particular, even as this detail shades into the next. Each moment is at once immediately vivid and distractingly blurry. Readers of Nashe’s prose never quite know why they are reading what they are reading even as they are invited to envision and experience the individual image clearly and sharply. Due to his continuous digressions and obscure turns of thought, an epistemological haze settles over all that Nashe writes that matches the skeptical distance with which he sees the world. At the same time, with its vibrant and specific details (“a fortunate blessed island near those pinnacle rocks called the Needles”), Nashe’s writing confronts us with a barrage of immediate and immersive details that arise and dissipate quickly.

It is in the creation of this visceral yet disorienting slew of associations that I am identifying the emergence of an urban aesthetics shared by Nashe and other writers of the 1590s and that we now identify as the metaphysical. The associative nature of Nashe’s writing, its rush of loosely linked details and stories, sits at the heart of this aesthetic. A few examples will help to enumerate the effects of Nashe’s associative style. In his short and uninvited preface to Sidney’s sonnet sequence, a place where Nashe should perhaps know better and where he seems to attempt to control himself in places, his images rush at the reader in a jumble of

¹¹³ Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91–110.

sensorimotor references. Early on in this brief preface, Nashe complains of Sidney's long absence from the poetic scene, an absence that Nashe seeks, perhaps abrasively, to rectify:

Long hath *Astrophel* (Englands Sunne) withheld the beames of his spirite from the common veiw of our darke sence, and night hath hovered over the gardens of the nine Sisters, while *Ignis fatuus* and grosse fatty flames (such as commonly arise out of Dunghilles) have tooke occasion, in the middest eclipse of his shining perfections, to wander a broade with a wispe of paper at their tailes like Hobgoblins. (3: 330)

While the sentence begins with a fairly standard commonplace equating artistic talent with the light of the sun, it quickly devolves into a mish-mash of associations that end with the reader attempting to imagine a greasy, smelly flame wandering the streets of London trailed by a scrap of paper tail. Of course, Nashe never wants us to take his images that seriously. Rather, his moving pictures, as above, are structured incrementally for local effects that accumulate sequentially over the course of his periods. There is a vertiginous, disorienting feeling to Nashe's most effective and affecting images, a feeling largely related to his fascination with speed and his emphasis on improvisation. One always has the sense at the end of a Nashe sentence that they have forgotten how they got there or why they are there. More specifically, to return to the sentence at hand, the incremental moments here evoke multiple senses (or more precisely the memories of these senses sensing) quickly – the sight of a flickering flame or a wisp of floating paper, the smell of dung or burning shit, the feel of grease. These swift and unexpected evocations of a variety of sense impressions also are designed to create sharply divergent affective responses. The details in the passage above oscillate strangely between the pleasurable and the disgusting, their vividness combining with their distinctness to create a confusing rush of visceral moments.

One of the more remarkable features of these associative torrents that appear with regularity in Nashe's prose is the sheer range of experiences that he draws on in such quick succession. The seemingly indiscriminate panoplies of phrases that populate his prose are why so often what starts as holistic description in Nashe scatters into discrete images. For example, in *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe's narrator sets out to sketch humorously a caricature of a Dane:

For besides nature hath lent him a flaberkin face, like one of the foure winds, and cheekes that sag like a womans duges over his chin-bone, his apparel is so puft up with bladders of Taffatie, and his back like biefe stuf

with Parsly, so drawne out with Ribands and devises, and blisterd with light sarcenet bastings, that you would thinke him nothing but a swarme of Butterflies, if you saw him afar off. (1: 178)

Already thrown off perhaps by the strange neologism “flaberkin,” which seems to mean swollen, the reader is then asked to compare successively the Dane’s large face obscurely to one of the four winds (perhaps alluding to Aeolius’s bag?), his cheeks uncomfortably and crassly to a woman’s breasts, and the clothing on his back incongruously to a stuffed roast. While much of the description wallows in the linguistic register of foodstuffs and bodily functions (along with the above references we have “bladders of taffety” and “light sarsenet bastings”), it also works in and links sexual, classical, and natural allusion. The constant shifts in reference are punctuated by the final clause where the bodily evaporates in the comparison of the Dane and his apparel to an airy “swarme of Butterflies.” On the whole, Nashe includes a series of vivid moments, moments that might activate a variety of sense impressions, from touch, to taste, to smell; however, when taken together, we are left with a jumbled, hodgepodge vision of what this Dane actually looks like. There is an obscure materialism to this description, as with many of Nashe’s descriptions, and we might consider this obscurity alongside the epistemological uncertainties occasioned by the sensorium of the city. Already intellectually attracted to an increasingly fashionable skepticism, Nashe was also immersed in the chaos and immediacy of the urban spaces that he inhabited. The constant clutter of things in Nashe’s writing speaks to the closeness of Nashe’s specific existence in 1590s London, the way in which the city’s inhabitants and stimuli seem to have pressed in on him. Further, the bizarre, motley creations that Nashe forges out of these things speak to both the speed and the confusions of the urban quotidian, especially in such busy and messy locales as Smithfield or St. Paul’s Cathedral.¹¹⁴ Nashe’s style, the swiftness with which particular encounters vividly and immediately arise and dissipate, reveals a writer acutely aware of the excessive and elusive meanings created by the spaces of early modern London.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ In *Rhythmanalysis*, Henri Lefebvre observes that urban life is polyrhythmic, consisting of a constant tension and dissonance between the rhythms of the linear and the cyclical, the social and the biological. We might see in Nashe’s emphasis on speed in his prose a dawning recognition of the distortions that urban existence enacted upon human timescales (*Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*, trans. Gerald Moore and Stuart Elden (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)).

¹¹⁵ In this characterization of the urban everyday, I am deeply indebted to Henri Lefebvre’s vision of the quotidian in *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (New York: Verso, 2002), esp. 18–41, 44–47, 58–61, and 65–67.

In these hallucinogenic descriptions filled with heterogeneous images, surely some of the most memorable moments in Nashe's prose, we can see him attempting to render aesthetically the social and sensory realities of the city. Neil Rhodes has outlined in detail the grotesque mode in which Nashe frequently operated; what I wish to emphasize here is this mode's close relation both to the physical realities of urban existence and to the metaphysical mixtures soon seen in Marston's satires and Donne's lyrics.¹¹⁶ As is clear from his fascination with the scatological seen above in the passage from the preface to *Astrophil and Stella* and many places elsewhere, Nashe made a distinct effort to produce disgust in his readers. Indeed, this disgust is often produced through the unfortunate and distasteful merging of unlike sense memories. Near the open of *Pierce Penniless*, Nashe draws a satiric and fantastical picture of a usurer that Pierce encounters at the Exchange, capped with this grotesque and prejudiced vision: "A fat chuff it was, I remember, with a gray beard cut short to the stumps, as though it were grimde, and a huge, woorme-eaten nose, like a cluster of grapes hanging downewardest" (1: 163). The gross details of the usurer's clothing provide much of the revulsion here, but even more disturbing is the close and quick association of a polyp-ridden and reddened nose with something as natural, as edible, and as pleasantly lush as a cluster of grapes. The curious mixture of the pleasurable and the sordid invites a visceral reaction from the reader, one that asks us to incorporate disparate sense memories into our reading experience, to incorporate memories importantly connected with an imagined projection of one's body and its variegated experiences of the world. Nashe was arguably the Elizabethan writer most attuned to early modern assumptions about the deeply physical bases of emotional and imaginative states. We can see this in the specifically material terms (spice, ink, vomit) with which he imagines his and others' writing. His disturbing intermingling of pleasurable and disgusting affective registers is another way in which he actualizes his intuition that writing is physical, that it has distinctly material effects on its readers. With its dissociative speed, its confusions of sense memories, its crowding of surprisingly disparate affects, Nashe's prose works to move its readers in specifically corporeal ways.

The overt physicality of Nashe's writing, both its fascination with representing the material as well as its interest in inducing visceral reactions

¹¹⁶ Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque*, ch. 4, although I would demur on Rhodes's characterization of Nashe's writing as "satirical journalism" since I do not think Nashe's intent was journalistic in the most direct sense of the word.

from its readers, signals a distinct aesthetic shift away from the genres and modes, for example, Petrarchan sonnet or prose romance, that dominated the literary world in the years prior. While Nashe was not working overtly within these forms, he certainly saw himself as part of this culture and his writing as conversant with his literary contemporaries. To be sure, Nashe's interest in the bodily was not entirely unique; both the Marprelate tracts as well as the jestbook tradition often relied on physical imagery for their effects. However, more than any other English author in the early and mid-1590s, Nashe was intent on creating and dwelling upon the grotesque and the disgusting in his writing, inaugurating a mode taken up to a greater or lesser extent by his contemporaries. Benedict Robinson has recently argued that the novel interest in disgust at the turn of the seventeenth century in part arose due to the inadequacies of older humanist cultural forms in comprehending and representing the rapidly growing city.¹¹⁷ Robinson locates this turn primarily around 1600 and in writers such as Jonson; however, Nashe very much took part in, even anticipated, this turn. His motley grotesqueries represent a demonstrative rejection of humanist aesthetic principles such as those laid out by Sidney in *The Defense of Poesy*, a rejection made all the easier by Nashe's sporadic exclusion from the social structures that undergirded these principles. And in his self-conscious gestures to the novelty of his style, Nashe makes his readers aware of the need for new imaginative forms to match the daily realities of the city.

As we shall see, the writers that followed Nashe, such as the Inns of Court satirists, tended to utilize the grotesque in their writing in order to distance themselves from the city that surrounded them. Their ability to evaluate and dismiss their satiric targets with disgusting description allowed them to clarify their social elitism at a time when this elitism and the boundaries (both social and geographic) of their own position in the changing city was under question. Nashe did not have the walls of the Inns or its institutional ideology (however porous) to separate himself from the rest of the city. As a result, his descriptions that rely on a grotesque, plenist aesthetic tend to be less evaluative and more illustrative. To be sure, the jumbles of disturbing heterogeneous images in Nashe's prose are often put in the service of elitist satire; we are meant to feel averse to Nashe's targets, such as the Dane or the usurer above. However, in Nashe there is little of the overt moralizing and intellectualizing that we find in his successors. Instead, within his descriptions, Nashe's images fly at the reader quickly enough without commentary while they simultaneously merit

¹¹⁷ Benedict Robinson, "Disgust c. 1600," *English Literary History* 81 (2014): 561–62.

enough close individual attention that they often seemingly become the point of the passage. Much of the pleasure of these fast-moving and vivid depictions lies in the comparisons that come quickly at the reader and that evoke distinct and separate visceral reactions. Nashe seems to revel in detailing the various materials that crowd into his writing. Rather than standing at a superior moral distance from his targets and the city that they represent, he embraces the physical world with which his imagination connects, even, and perhaps especially, in all of its disgusting detail. The joke is not so much on Nashe's subjects in the prose but rather on the reader, who, immersed in Nashe's heterogeneous, dissonant images, attempts to make sense of the chaotic jumble before them (although "joke" may be too harsh here, since Nashe seemingly wants his reader to take as much pleasure as he does in his plenist hallucinations).

In the next chapter, I will turn to the Inns satirists that followed in Nashe's footsteps as they drew upon his materialist and haphazard aesthetic even as they exaggerated and magnified its abusiveness and its elitism. In closing here, I would like to draw attention to the remarkable similarities between the primary features of Nashe's aesthetic, an aesthetic forged out of the material realities of his London experiences, and those that are associated with the metaphysical style as it has been described in our literary histories. In their digressions, their obtuse and surprising comparisons, their physical and often grotesque images, Nashe's texts insistently draw attention to the writer's imagination, his idiosyncratic recreation of experience. His writing is a radical and experimental reordering of the external world, one born of his perceived precarious social standing, his intellectual curiosity, and the closeness of the urban sensorium with which he held a lifelong fascination.