Preedy, Chloe Kathleen and Rachel Willie eds. *Thomas Nashe and Literary Performance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024. 224 pp. ISBN 9781526149466. $140.00 hardback.

"Euphues I read when I was a little ape in Cambridge," Thomas Nashe remembers in *Strange News* (1592). As a sizar at St John's in the early 1580s he thought John Lyly's creation "*ipse ille*: it may be excellent good still, for ought I know, for I looked not on it this ten year."[1] Since his student days Nashe has changed; the imitating "little ape" has grown into a professional writer, bullishly countering Gabriel Harvey's charge of slavish debt to Tarlton and Greene by asserting his originality – "the vein which I have… is of my own begetting" (Nashe 1592). Yet Nashe's phrasing, in which *Euphues* "may be good still," implies something stranger than his own personal development. It is not his appraisal of *Euphues*, Nashe tells us, which has shifted over a "ten year" period, but *Euphues* itself. Lyly's book might still be well-written, but might have gone bad, spoiling like something perishable. The printed text is a volatile thing, uncannily possessed of its own life and errant mutability.

[1] Thomas Nashe, *Strange News*. (London: 1592), In the digital collection *Early English Books Online*. https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A08011.0001.001. University of Michigan Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 30, 2025. Nashe italicises "Euphues," indicating that he is referring to Lyly's work, and not its protagonist. But the previous sentence also italicises, in keeping with convention, "*Tarlton*" and "*Greene*," so that Lyly's text shares typographic status with two prominent cultural personae. "Ipse ille" translates to "that man himself," an idiomatic expression of distinction or vividness. (In standard Latin grammars these two pronouns often come together, but almost always come the other way round: in John Holt's *Lac Puerorum* (1495), for example, the list of the primitive pronouns has "ego tu sui" followed by "ille ipse iste.") But Nashe then describes the book as a neuter object, an "it" that "may be excellent good still." Here again, he sprinkles a little uncertainty: both Latin pronouns are masculine, and though a book is also masculine in Latin, the idiom might be understood fleetingly in reference to the book's hero and not the book. We see here how, at the level of grammar, a printed text's apparent mobility and vivacity pushes it toward the status, and even the gender, of one of its characters.

In each of this excellent collection's seven essays Nashe emerges as a writer fascinated by questions and effects of presence. Imitation, that aping of authorities so foundational to Renaissance humanist education, strikes him as absurd or even grotesque: imitators are all surface, costumes composed of stolen fragments. Printed texts are personified, but also made mobile, as Nashe dresses up *The Anatomy of Absurditie* (1589) in its own sheets and sends it walking around town. Print's capacity to preserve and replicate a writer beyond death creates not so much a consoling stability as an uncanny ghostliness: literary London, both during and after Nashe's lifetime, becomes a spectral marketplace, an imaginary sphere in which writers can contest, collaborate and form virtual publics. Yet this writerly communing appears to Nashe no stranger than the ordinary encounter between a text and its implied readers; he satirises reading as a weird interaction, often perilous and always perverse, posing as something ordinary.

Although these variations of interpersonal or para-personal meeting occur on the page, they are most fruitfully understood in terms of performance. This volume is part of Manchester University Press's *Companion Library* to the *Revels Plays* series, and in their introduction Chloe Preedy and Rachel Willie note the turn in recent criticism towards Nashe's "dramatic output" (8): his collaboration with Marlowe on *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, probably with Shakespeare on *1 Henry VI* (where he filled a perhaps habitual role as a first-act specialist, a starter-up of plays); among several lost plays, his notorious *The Isle of Dogs*, co-authored with Jonson, and his surviving *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (published in 1600).[2] This volume builds on recent investigations into Nashe the dramatist by, for example, Andrew Hadfield and Steve Mentz,[3] finding theatricality throughout Nashe's prose, and observing a "suggestive continuity" between "the theatrical qualities Nashe celebrates" and the "performative techniques that he utilizes in his prose works" (9).

Yet this is not a simple case of prose endeavouring to turn itself into drama; the relation is two-way. In their introduction Preedy and Willie linger on Will Summer's first entrance onto the stage, complaining that he cannot very well be "Will Summers Ghost" when he has "not yet supt," and cursing the "Idiot" author who stuck him here (12). Like Will's actor, struggling into his "fooles coate" (12), Nashe seems

[2] Chloe Kathleen Preedy and Rachel Willie, eds., *Thomas Nashe and Literary Performance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024), 8. Subsequent page references in parenthesis.

[3] Andrew Hadfield, "Marlowe and Nashe," *English Literary Renaissance* 51 (2021): 190-216. Steve Mentz, *The Age of Thomas Nashe: Text, Bodies and Trespasses of Authorship in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2013).

uncomfortable with conventional theatre, the smooth fusion of the signifying body with the part signified. His determination to peel these two layers apart creates a different kind of performance, replacing the publicity of the commercial stage with the sidelong wink of an inside joke. Nashe's prose tends to theatricality, but his versions of theatre tend contrarily to the enigmatic intimacy of the page.

Portraying Nashe in this light, the collection links scholarship on Nashe's theatricality with recent investigations into the creation of literary persona in Elizabethan England such as Samuel Fallon's *Paper Monsters* (2019). The personae who populated the English literary landscape in the last two decades of the sixteenth century were a diverse bunch: sometimes conscious creations; sometimes accidents of virality or hostile terms of abuse; sometimes – as in the case of Nashe's Pierce – a combination of all these. Blurring the boundaries between author and feigned person, the literary persona also sits between the categories theatrical and the textual, a space which this collection expands.

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Nashe figures the insubstantiality of the literary persona, Preedy argues in her own first chapter, as a kind of airiness. He depicts himself as a literary Mercury, made of something lighter than flesh, elusive and difficult to pin down. Preedy draws out the cultural connotations of breath and circulation in sixteenth-century England, observing the centrality of lungwork to the actor's trade, as well as the deep collective suspicion towards trapped or stagnant air bequeathed by the miasmic theory of disease. But here Preedy gestures at an intriguing tension. Airiness in the material world is a virtue, dispersing disease, but much more suspicious in the intellectual realm, where it stands for the flightiness of the fancy which must – if it's to support virtue – be subordinated to right reason. Celebrating the quicksilver lightness of his prose, Nashe rejects this commonplace denigration of fancy – and in doing so, Preedy argues, furthers his "wider resistance to neoclassical poetics" (26). Gabriel Harvey might write more substantially, but substance can only weigh him down, clogging his pedestrian style with "bogginess and heaviness" (32); Nashe, meanwhile, presents his own invective as sharply purgative, an "enkindling" (33) cure.

Preedy's chapter concludes with a careful discussion of stylistic windiness as a metaphor for forms of pride – pomp, self-importance, or (as *Have With You* has it in

1596) "bragganisme" (34). Fashioning himself in the image of Mercury, running rings around lumberers like Harvey, is Nashe not just as guilty as his opponent of self-inflation? Preedy suggests a distinction between two kinds of wind: the "thick accumulation of trapped words" (Harvey) (35) and the "penetratingly windy discourse that might disperse this miasmic fug" (Nashe) (35). It's telling, however, that in most of the analyses in the following chapters, precise distinctions of this kind prove difficult to draw. In this instance, Nashe keeps his penetrating airiness apart from Harvey's fug. But elsewhere, compulsively, he implicates both himself and his style in the objects of his satire.

Two chapters focus on Nashe's preoccupation with reading, his ambivalence about the transmission of information by paper monsters to unspecified publics, and the failure of established structures of authority to regulate that process. Exploring Nashe's treatment of "surface reading" (68), Douglas Clark observes that Nashe satirises the multivalent superficiality of his age while shamelessly exhibiting his fascination with "concepts of ornamentality and excess" (68). Clark quotes Nashe's characterisation of his recent *Anatomy* in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589), walking about "Paules, shaped in a new sute of similarities" (73) and advertising itself for employment like a successful apprentice. This image points us to the deep ambivalence exhibited in *Pierce Penniless* (1592) towards a London filling with people who are hard to place, knowable only by apparel often designed to deceive. But in Clark's account Nashe's critique of surface reading is more original than a self-implicating satire of a metropolitan culture increasingly obsessed with appearances. According to Nashe the Horatian dictum, *ut pictura*, and more generally the mimetic poetics popularised by Sidney, is scandalously and multiply superficial: there are too many witless painter-poets (like the "foolish painter in Plutarch" [71] who appears in the *Anatomy*'s dedication to Charles Blount, and whom Clark links assiduously to the 1581 translation of the *Moralia* by John Marbeck). Furthermore, despite the fantasy of deep reading of painterly images in search of their buried moral precepts, in practice painterly writing is "alluringly facile" (75). Like Preedy, Clark positions Nashe as a writer questioning – like Samuel Daniel in *Musophilus* (1599), though Nashe writes in a more satiric key – the sacredness of exemplarity in late sixteenth-century English poetics.

Kirsty Rolfe, in an appropriately wide-ranging chapter, considers Nashe's response to the proliferation of news across Europe. Rolfe begins by tracing the

"Country Plowman" of the *Anatomy*, who "feareth a Calabrian floodde in the midst of a furrowe" to his source, a 1587 pamphlet called *Strange News Out of Calabria* by the fictional "John Doleta" (43). She notes a boom in the 1580s for publications of sensational news from unfolding situations on the continent, especially in France and the Low Countries. As a print genre news was related to an early 1580s vogue for "prophetic and 'wonder' literature" (46), and inseparable from the activity of prediction: texts like Richard Harvey's *Astrological Discourse* (1583) which Nashe would satirise so savagely, claim knowledge of the future on the basis of mastery of present circumstances. Nashe decries the way news culture distends the present, displacing all other temporalities and topics of interest; "newe, we must crye," he says in *Lenten Stuffe* (1599) in an observation quoted by Clark, "every time we make ourselves publique" (76) – as if the novelty of news is really just an attention grab in a marketplace incapable, paradoxically, of seeing beyond or escaping the present. Yet as Rolfe notes, Nashe's pamphlet war with Harvey in the early 1580s feeds the tyranny of topicality, even as the two writers "resist the other's accusation they are topical" (61).

Nashe satirises the gullibility of news audiences – the simple figures of the Plowman and Shepherd in his *Anatomy*, out of their depth as they try to make sense of the flood of information from far-off places, "interpreting their everyday rural environments as sites of disaster" (55). Yet he avoids, characteristically, a straightforward invective against the uneducated. Real gullibility, he suggests, is self-reflexive, epitomised by Harvey's absurdly vain pretence to certain knowledge of the future. The sensation and confusion sown by news among less discerning readers, furthermore, is not so much an effect of personal gullibility as a demonstration of commercial print's disruption of traditional systems for disseminating information. Rolfe reminds us usefully of the *Anatomy*'s resistance to Ramism, with its attempt to "overhaul the traditional, Aristotelian university curriculum" (53). The crisis of exemplarity reflects, perhaps, a wider crisis of authority. Nashe is describing a world not unlike our own, in which the breathless eyewitness account trumps, on the reliability index, traditional forms of authority and expertise.

Rolfe and Clark uncover in Nashe's early works a conservative critique of many aspects of late sixteenth-century culture: its superficiality, its short-sightedness, its weakness for sensation. What is radical about Nashe's satire is its wholesale, cheerful contamination by the very qualities it laments: an obsession with the present world down to its most superficial detail, and a sensationally indecorous prose. This is

something other than the aping of style we associate with conventional satire, where a text adopts the form of its opponent with careful and conscious irony. Nashe's satirical self-implication is less overt and ironic, something closer to self-pollution.

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At the heart of commercial print's disruptive power, these first essays propose, is the strangeness of the literary persona: the printed text's capacity to project its own life, and the potent fascination of authorial figures who exist principally on the page, and in the virtual space of an imagined literary community. Chris Salamone's chapter on *The Terrors of the Night* argues powerfully that, in this light, we might break with a recent critical assumption of "an interchangeable connection between the author's name and body, and their printed output and style" (116). We should think less of the "text as body" and more of the "text as ghost"; not so much *corpus-text* as, perhaps, *umbra-text*.[4] Similarly, many of the essays in this collection point us away from a purely materialist approach to Nashe's texts and their cultural valency. This is not to imply that these essays reject materialist analysis: there has been a wealth of recent research, for example, on waste paper, and it influences Salamone's own chapter.[5] But understanding the printed book as a (private, perverse, failed or improvised) performance surely suits Nashe better than an approach that treats the book as an object. The work of Jennifer Richards, who provides the Afterword, is especially illuminating here; her suggestion, in *Voices and Books in the English Renaissance*, that a printed text is "less a material object than a live experience" reads like an invitation to fresh thinking which these essays accept.[6]

Given the collection's direction of travel away from the materiality of the text, and towards its live performativity, an anchoring effect comes from Lena Liapi's analysis of Nashe's popularity. Her chapter begins with an empirical consideration of Nashe's works in terms of commercial viability. Noting his fondness for texts which occupy a no-man's-land between the shortness of popular sermons and the dilated length of substantial books, Liapi finds Nashe eschewing the self-advertising techniques of his friend Greene, whose name repeats metronomically in the titles of

[4] For an extended discussion of the "corpus-text," and its theological and theoretical roots, see Lowell Gallagher, "The Place of the Stigmata in Christological Poetics," in McEachern and Shuger, eds., *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 93-115.

[5] See, for example, Anna Reynolds, *Waste Paper in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

[6] Jennifer Richards, *Voices and Books in the English Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 232.

his works, and whose catch-all subtitles snake across the page, promising something for everyone. Nashe's frustration at the "long-tayld Title" (93) of the unauthorised first edition of *Pierce Penniless* indicates, Liapi argues, his determination to find literary fame through a strategy other than popularity. The motif of simple reading, of a popular audience doggedly searching for substance and profit where there is only hot air and self-promotion, returns. Instead, Nashe uses his gift for ruffling feathers in print to construct a public image "based on notoriety" (90). He is not quite popular and not quite recherché; at once entertaining and rebarbative, adapting the "traditional framing devices" of jest-book and anatomy, only to pull the rug from under his readers' feet, refusing them the populist comfort of familiarity.

Liapi quotes Anna Bayman's argument that Nashe occupies a "literary middle ground" (97), though her own analysis suggests that this middle ground was a place still under construction. She evokes a "tightrope" Nashe was trying to walk, between the cultural zones of the "sufficiently learned" and the "street-savvy and print-savvy" (94-5). Wit, we could say in light of this observation, becomes for Nashe the ability to hold the high and low in a single mediating thought or sentence. Liapi's chapter concludes with a consideration of how Nashe became, in the decades following his death, a "synonym for gall in print" (98). As his notoriety hardens into a posthumous brand, a humoral caricature, the middleness of Nashe's style and his place in English literary culture fades from view.

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Nashe's afterlife looms large in the final three chapters, all of which dwell on the uncanny ability of print to preserve a literary persona beyond the death of their literal, flesh-and-blood creators. Salamone's analysis of the place of spirits in Nashe's work ("obscured" for critics, he suggests, by their focus on "materiality" [106]) roots itself in an assured and subtle understanding of how spirits changed in the Reformation. Officially, Protestantism allowed for "only diabolic or rational explanations of ghosts" (108); in practice, however, this new binary understanding "percolated only slowly" through a patchwork of "local habits of thought and custom" (108), and the ghosts of ghosts lived on – shifted, as Salamone argues in Nashe's case, "towards fiction and the figurative" (122), and thus towards the theatre. This is not to imply that the uncanny power of the Catholic ghost is neutralised. As Salamone observes in his discussion of

Terrors of the Night, Nashe routinely combines "both the diabolic explanation" for the existence of spirits and the "moments of foregrounded fictionality" (112). Stripped of their ontological security, spirits become more devious rather than less, acquiring a "shape-shifting" (111) tricksiness that allies them to the fraudsters and confidence men by whom both Nashe, in *Pierce Penniless*, and Greene in his cony-catching pamphlets were disturbed and stimulated. Once again, the gullibility of simple audiences presents itself as a problem: the work of a vexatious spirit is to convince the gullible subject to believe the fictional exaggerations of its own mind.

Addressing Nashe's afterlife in print, Willie's chapter picks up from where Liapi and Salomone, with their glances ahead to Nashe's posthumous reputation, conclude. Willie surveys Nashe's part in the Marprelate controversy of the 1580s, and in passing characterises it usefully as a gamble by church authorities which paid off in the short term but backfired chaotically in later years – an indulgence of commercial prose which backfired, perestroika-style, allowing "a liminal space to be created… beyond the traditional boundaries of authority" (154). However, when controversy about church government consumed English Protestantism again a few decades later, the paradoxes inherent in Nashe's position – supporting the bishops in anarchic, anti-foundational prose – were smoothed over. As Laudian reforms polarised English and Scottish culture in the 1630s, Nashe's ghost was invoked by supporters of Laud such as John Taylor. This time, however, the figure of Nashe stood not for edgy vivacity but authority of an almost laureate kind. Again, Nashe's print afterlife sees the real-time writer of the 1590s – airy, changeful, unpredictable – flattened into something as reliable and static, however contested, as a brand.

As Willie says, "the ripples of the Marprelate controversy" (148) spread not only across England's regions in the 1580s, but also through seventeenth-century literary history. Willie's analysis of Nashe's involvement concentrates not on the *An Almond for a Parrot* (1590), but on the poem *Mar-Martine* published anonymously a year earlier, traditionally attributed to Nashe and/or Lyly but re-attributed solely to Nashe by Joseph Black in the forthcoming Oxford edition. Willie's analysis, and Black's editorial work, invite us to pay more attention to this strange and formally restless poem – and, more generally, to the enduring impact of the Marprelate controversy on Elizabethan and Stuart literary culture, as well as on Nashe's career. The radical quality of Nashe's writing to which these essays return – his willingness to pollute his style with the objects of his satire – surely has roots in his first published work. One of

the best things about this collection is the way it avoids a teleological framework for understanding Nashe's career as a gradual progression towards maturity (a notion which might have struck him as, in more senses than one, pedestrian). The prominence of the *Anatomy* in the early chapters demonstrates the wisdom of taking Nashe's early work more seriously than juvenilia. Streaks of puerility and maturity run through all his published work.

Kate De Rycker's chapter begins where Willie and Salomone end, with the motif of the spectral literary afterlife. Before situating them in their sixteenth-century contexts, De Rycker links these Elizabethan hauntings to Jacques Derrida's explorations (most extensively in *Spectres of Marx*) of the ghostliness of writing. Like all communication technologies, writing confers "material permanence on the absent writer" (129), whose absence is made into something more liminal, an absent presence. But it also moves with a seeming life of its own. In the 1590s, De Rycker argues, Elizabethan writers harnessed these ghostly, uncanny qualities not just to figure afterlives, but also to construct virtual communities. These networks were formed in opposition, strengthened by mutual disputes or differentiation. In *Strange News*, De Rycker observes, Nashe presents the London ballad-writers mourning the loss of William Elderton as a "counter-public" to his own group, recently bereft of their equivalent in Greene. His vexed relationship with the ballad, its form and its proponents, seems especially significant in light of *Mar-Martine*.

De Rycker proposes three interlinked motifs by which a writer implicated themselves in a publicly visible network, its members variously living and dead: haunting, possession, and vengeance. Living writers are not merely troubled by their absent-present predecessors; they act on their behalf, with "the agency moving from the dead author, and on to the living ones" (141). On several occasions the dead writer burdens the living one with revenging work, the defence of a reputation or the taking up of a neglected cause. From a judicious survey of the spectral literature which influenced the virtual publics of the 1590s – Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, the *Mirror for Magistrates* and the Senecan revenge plot – the ghost emerges as an ambivalent figure, insistent and impotent, urging his audience to the action he cannot perform. Nashe himself, and his persona Pierce, become such ghosts, haunting Middleton's *Black Book* (1604) and Dekker's *News from Hell* (1606). Noting the slippages in persona between these two memorials, De Rycker suggests another paradox: something about the forcefulness of a satirist like Nashe, the fierceness of his

style, leaves him strangely appropriable after death. The satirist who had many enemies can easily become, in death, friend to all.

The Senecan ghost's question to the avenging hero – what will you do to redress the recent past? – is urgently personal. In the early seventeenth century events of living memory become mythologised in a statelier, more collective manner. Jonson's affectionate invocations make Nashe's circle a witty company, swapping learned wisecracks at the tavern. (Taverns, as well as the churchyard of St Paul's, acquire their mythic status as social spaces in English literary history very early, De Rycker notes.) During its own life, however, Nashe's scene appears to have resisted this tendency to classicise the recent past. As De Rycker shows us, writers delighted instead in the uncanny strangeness of virtual publics that crossed the boundary of living and dead. The public assembled by Henry Chettle's *Kind-Harts Dream* (1592) is an edgy, contemporary alternative to the canon of the humanist schoolroom, the page where Cicero, Terence and Virgil compose a single pageant of *sententiae*. But for Nashe there had always been something absurd, or even creepy, about the flattening of those classical authors into a uniform set: in *The Unfortunate Traveller*, De Rycker reminds us, Cicero's own ghost appears, "conjured up by the polymath and magician Cornelius Agrippa" (131), in a literalising parody of emulation. We come back to the schoolroom, to aping: even the most sanctioned, most profitable form of interpersonal exchange turns out to be a kind of ghostly perversion.

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One of the many virtues of this collection is the way it points to the macroscopic cultural critiques implicit in Nashe's apparently targeted satires. Throughout his work Nashe seems convinced in equal measure by the absurdity and indispensability of humanist education. There are no boundaries to be drawn, this collection suggests, between the perverse literary manoeuvres of the avant-garde and the learned scholarly invocations of the schoolroom. Thus it invites us to pay renewed attention to Nashe's relationship, at once serious and irreverent, with European humanism.

It's surprising, given the centrality of imitation in all its forms here, that *Christs Tears Over Jerusalem* (1593) is discussed only in passing. Nashe's most avowedly serious work is also his most prosopopoeic and, in that sense of person-feigning, his most theatrical. Its switch halfway through from the voice of Christ, his biblical

parallelisms always threatening to break out into Nashean flights of invective, to a more recognisably Piercean narrating voice, reads like a parody of disguise: it was Nashe speaking, the whole time; who'd have guessed?! Beatrice Groves's 2011 article on that work's "Unstable Style," and its absorption of theories of laughter, is cited in passing more than once, indicating the fruitfulness of thinking about *Christs Tears* as the work in which Nashe the person-feigning allegorist meets Nashe the anarchic comedian.[7] More generally, the great range of this collection, with its particular generosity towards Nashe's earlier work, means that there is less sustained close reading than there might have been, especially since many chapters move towards conclusions about Nashe's style. This is not a flaw but only a limitation, since these chapters clear new ground within which more microscopic close readings might be performed, and portray Nashe's complex style in the attractive (or repulsive) colours it deserves.

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The performativity of Nashe's writing, not only in his dramatic work but also in his prose, is a richly generative topic. One of the most successful public-facing initiatives of the recent "Penniless?" project on Nashean precarity was a theatre piece, "Propa Penniless," devised by the Newcastle-based company Cap-a-Pie.[8] Within "Propa Penniless" the relationship between performers and text shifted: in some moments Nashe's grotesque characters were simply brought to life; in others the actors seemed to burlesque the text in its digressive, non-dramatic knottiness. In discussions with the actors Nashe emerged as both relatable and absurdly remote – somehow, as Jennifer Richards's afterword observes, both serially "unpopular" and insistently immediate. Like "Propa Penniless," this collection sheds light on the pedagogical and scholarly possibilities of bringing semi-dramatic writing into touch with the theatrical.

Joel Dungworth's paper at the most recent British and Irish Spenser Seminar broached the possibility of this kind of performance: what if the pageant of rivers in

[7] 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): 338-260.

[8] On the "Penniless?" project, see https://research.ncl.ac.uk/thethomasnasheproject/pennilessproject/. On "Propa Penniless?," see Archie Cornish's report on the project, *Precarity Now: A Report from the 'Penniless?' Project*. 2024. Accessed November 30, 2025. https://research.ncl.ac.uk/media/sites/researchwebsites/thethomasnasheproject/Precarity%20Now.pdf.

The Faerie Queene IV.xi were one day performed? Spenserians reading this collection will be struck by how profitably its framework of literary performance might be applied afresh to Spenser's poetry. Historicist criticism, both old and New, has provided us a rich understanding of Spenser's self-fashioning as a court and later laureate poet. But Salamone's chapter indicates how productively we might think of what happens *within* Spenser's fictions as performances. Perhaps the most salient quality of the allegorical personages that populate *The Faerie Queene* is their ontological vagueness: the indeterminate lag before they are named; their tendency to spread themselves around with rhetorical guile, more than with physical force; their determination to break the confines of their habitat and crop up again elsewhere. Like Nashe's terrors, Spenser's allegorical personages derive their tricky shape-shifting quality from the dubious ontology they had acquired in contemporary thought, their intermediate status between external realities and mental projections. Discussing the "May" eclogue in the first episode of *Occasion of the Season*, Kat Addis's recent podcast series on *The Shepheardes Calender*, Joe Moshenska points out the weirdness of the "Ladde" who guards the flocks of Piers and Palinode while they drift into the story of the "credulous kidde."[9] Previously unmentioned, and silent throughout, the "Ladde" seems to flicker into being just as he is narratively required. Spenser and Nashe both make theatre from anti-dramatic situations, where it can't quite be known whether the audience is listening, or whether the actors are acting.

More particular correspondences with Spenser arise within individual chapters. Preedy's discussion of breath and airiness brings to mind the multiple images of inflation in *The Faerie Queene*: Orgoglio as a proud windbag, with "blustring *Æolus* his boasted sire" (I.vii.9.2), but also the narrating poet who swells with disdain at the start of III.iv, as if to remind us that a little pride can be healthy; air, after all, may be the base material of airs and graces, but it's also the stuff of life. The focus on news, meanwhile, alerts us to the importance of "tydings" in the poem, a delightfully vague strategy by which narrative information travels between the interlaced threads of the poem's plots. Derrida last figured prominently for Spenser critics in his traditional guise as deconstructor of narratives and allegorical systems, but De Rycker prompts us to bring his hauntological insights to Spenser's personages as well as his meaning-making structures. Spenser's literary afterlife and his appeal to poetic authorities,

[9] For more information about this podcast, and to listen to episodes, see https://occasionoftheseason.substack.com/.

meanwhile, has long been a topic of discussion. But perhaps the Nashean sense of imitation as perverse and hauntological might return us productively to the details of Spenser's proems and hailings of the muses. Spenser is not a satirist, and unlike Nashe he does not seem especially interested, after the *Calender* at least, in negotiating wittily between the low and high. But these generic differences, like the legacy of the Nashe-Harvey quarrel, have obscured some deeper similarities of intellectual and moral sensibility. Spenser and Nashe, in light of this superb collection, seem more and more to suit one another's company.

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