

—— Per Sivefors, »'Painting Forth the Things That Hidden Are': Thomas Nashe's 'The Choise of Valentines' and the Printing of Privacy«

—— A B S T R A C T ———

This essay argues that the Elizabethan author Thomas Nashe's (1567–1601) erotic poem »The Choise of Valentines« explores early modern senses of distinction between manuscript writing and print. In his dedication and in subsequent responses to critique against the poem, Nashe invokes a sense of intimacy with his patron and his audience – an intimacy that is associated in his texts with manuscript writing but is enacted by references to, and directly in, the medium of print. In other words, »The Choise of Valentines« constructs a fiction of privacy that is rhetorically and commercially exploited in the medium of print – which is, in turn, constructed as the public opposite of the intimate, private medium of manuscript writing.

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■ — »PAINTING FORTH THE THINGS THAT
HIDDEN ARE«: Thomas Nashe's »The Choise
of Valentines« and the Printing of Privacy

■ — As critics have frequently acknowledged, few writers of the early modern period offer a better example of the complex relationship between the written and the printed word than Thomas Nashe. This is especially so since his career in the late sixteenth century has often been thought to embody a new, rising idea of the author as a person who makes a living from publishing his work at the marketplace instead of being dependent upon patronage.¹ However, such generalizations all too often tend to obscure the fact that the professionalization of authorship was everything but a sudden event and that writers at the time did not necessarily oppose patronage and professional writing to each other. Similarly, whereas much research has tended to see writing and print in terms of sharp paradigmatic breaks, recent scholarship has argued for a more nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between manuscript and print in the early modern period, suggesting that readers and writers saw these media as complements to each other. Nashe can be said to embody this equivocation between different patterns in the sense that his authorial self-definition did *not* imply a preference for the professional author at the total exclusion of patronage – or a preference for the printed, published word at the cost of the handwritten.

But this is not to say that there existed no sense of difference between the two media with respect to whom they reached and what kind of audiences that were considered suitable for either of them. As D.F. McKenzie points out, there is a difference in the degree of presence between manuscript and print – manuscript retains a clearer sense of physical closeness between writer and reader than print does. Moreover, early modern authors did express an awareness of manuscript writing as »private« and hence qualitatively different from printed books.² One mode of expression that becomes particularly relevant from such a perspective is that of erotic writing, and this is the more relevant for my purpose as I will be dealing with one of the most notorious erotic texts in early modern England, the manuscript poem by Nashe known to us as »The Choise of Valentines«. ³ Crucial to my argument when discussing this

poem is that it exploits a sense of distinction between the public and the private and negotiates that distinction in different ways in manuscript and print.⁴

In the case of Nashe, this distinction becomes interesting especially since his work is so frequently thought to embody a professional and hence public authorial persona. However, this assumption brings in two more general discussions in recent scholarship on the early modern period. Firstly, there is the notion of an early modern »public sphere«, which has been fairly intensely debated. Indeed, research has done a lot to modify Jürgen Habermas' well-known suggestion that the public sphere was essentially created in the eighteenth century. As Kevin Pask insists, »the English Renaissance indeed possesses a public sphere: pulpit, print, theater«, and the concept has been brought to bear on the early modern period in discussions by for example David Norbrook and – interestingly from the point of view of Nashe – Alexandra Halasz.⁵ Secondly, there is the association of the public sphere with the medium of print – an association which is problematic since it presumes that print and manuscript were distinct media that »belonged« to the private and public realms respectively. True, manuscript transmission did belong – in the words of Michael Bristol and Arthur Marotti – »to a culture that valued personal intimacy, sociality, and participation, if not also intellectual and social exclusivity – all features that distinguished it from print transmission«.⁶ At the same time print can be utilized – as Nashe demonstrably did – to reach a select audience who is clever enough to understand the dense web of references in the texts.⁷ The values Bristol and Marotti mention are therefore addressed in different ways in the media of manuscript and print.

Erotic writing constitutes an area in which the relationship between private and public as well as manuscript and print becomes particularly visible. It may perhaps seem unsurprising that erotic writing was associated with privacy, hiding away from the public eye and so on, if it were not for the fact that scholars have resisted such categorizations. In a fascinating study called *Before Pornography* Ian Frederick Moulton suggests that erotic writing in the early modern period is bound up with all sorts of political, theological and social considerations – sometimes even literally so, since a manuscript collection such as the one containing the longest version of »The Choise of Valentines« also features such rather less racy matter as the Countess of Pembroke's translation of the Psalms and a set of Latin verses to King James by the Lord Chancellor of Scotland.⁸ According to Moulton erotic writing was different from pornography in the modern sense because it did not construct a »fiction of privacy« that set sexuality apart from broader social concerns. Manuscript writing, then, did not necessarily suggest eroticized privacy; the borderline

between public and private did not exist in the sense that it does today. This lack of boundary between private and public is, according to Moulton's view, what largely characterizes early modern erotic writing.⁹

However, while I would agree with Moulton's general claim that »pornography« is a problematic term to apply to the early modern period, his rejection of a sense of »privacy« in erotic writing needs further discussion. True, for Nashe as for other writers in the period, manuscript and print are not distinct spheres but rather mutually constitutive ones.¹⁰ Yet in Nashe's texts there is a strong sense in which the wavering between a »private« sphere of eroticism in manuscript writing and the »public« repentance for it in print can be used to forge an authorial persona. There is in other words both a sense of a borderline between the public and the private and an awareness that this borderline can be transgressed. The offensiveness of the poem constitutes a subject matter that Nashe is able to exploit, rhetorically and financially, both in manuscript and print, using the salacious matter as a way of establishing a bond with his audience. Crucially, this exploitation is built upon figures of concealment and show, hiding and displaying, and in that specific sense Nashe's later responses to criticism against his erotic poetry are based on an awareness of a distinction between private and public – indeed, they deliberately explore such a distinction. As the present paper will argue, Nashe's tantalizing way of referring to his own manuscript poetry in print becomes a way of attracting a print audience as it explores concealment from view as a viable rhetorical and commercial position. At the same time, his erotic manuscript poem employs the contrast between hiding and displaying but does so as a means of establishing a bond between patron and poet. Indeed, Nashe's dedication of »The Choise of Valentines« to his patron establishes print as a public medium in contrast to the intimacy of his own manuscript communication. In that sense, the poem, and Nashe's later comments on it, illustrate the equivocation between different strategies employed in the different media, and the various senses in which the contrast between private and public is negotiated. Hence, by looking at Nashe's dedication and his responses to criticism against the poem I offer a small corrective to the view that early modern erotic writing habitually cuts across our modern distinctions between private (handwriting) and public (print).

The poem might itself be said to hark back to the days of manuscript culture both in the sense that it was never printed and in the sense that it relies on a self-consciously old-fashioned diction, such as the diminutive name »Tomalin« for the protagonist.¹¹ As Katherine Duncan-Jones points out, »Matching the nostalgic and mildly archaic style of the poem, [Tomalin] was an old-fashioned form of the name, encountered

in the early fourteenth century«. ¹² Faintly Chaucerian in tone, the poem tells the story of a young man who sets off to the city in quest for his sweetheart, only to find her in a brothel, where she, after finding the young man to be impotent, satisfies herself with a dildo instead. ¹³ The transmission history of the poem is highly complicated, for not only do the preserved manuscripts differ considerably in wording, phrasing, and so on, they also in some cases omit parts of the story (notably, the dildo episode). ¹⁴ Moreover, far from all of the six known manuscript copies contain Nashe's name, although the authorship issue has rarely been a matter of debate ever since R.B. McKerrow's magisterial edition of Nashe's works assigned the poem to him with the words »There can, I fear, be little doubt that this poem is by Nashe«. ¹⁵

However, despite all the uncertainties brought about by the different manuscript versions and the absence of a printed copy, the dedication of the poem – which the present discussion will focus on – seems to produce a relatively stable authorial voice that describes the relationship between poet and dedicatee very much in terms of hiding and showing. The poem is inscribed to the lord S., which may possibly stand for the Lord Strange. ¹⁶ While the present discussion is not specifically concerned with the identity of the dedicatee, it is obvious that the dedication of the poem is imbued with ideas of private versus public, concealment versus display. Before the poem itself is a sonnet that begs the patron not to reject the poem because it is about »hidden« matter:

— Pardon sweete flower of matchless Poetrie,
 And fairest bud the red rose euer bare;
 Although my Muse deuor'st from deeper care
 Presents thee with a wanton Elegie.
 Ne blame my verse of loose unchastitie
 For painting forth the things that hidden are,
 Since all men acte what I in speache declare,
 Onelie induced by varietie.
 Complaints and praises euerie one can write,
 And passion-out their pangu's [*sic*] in statelie rimes,
 But of loues pleasure's none did euer write
 That hath succeeded in theis latter times.
 Accept of it Dear Lord in gentle gree,
 And better lynes ere long shall honor thee. (3:403)

It is of course conventional talk in a dedication to present one's work as a trifle (»my Muse deuor'st from deeper care«). However, Nashe is perfectly forthright about the »wantonness« of his poem, and his controversial subject matter is introduced as a new subject (»none did euer write«). As Georgia Brown has demonstrated, here and elsewhere Nashe explores his marginal

position as a mode of authorial empowerment.¹⁷ Yet Brown does not discuss the way in which concealment and display are part of such a picture. »Painting forth the things that hidden are«: this is arguably the key to Nashe's success not only since it describes something that »all men act« and hence suggests something that poet and patron have in common. Indeed, the »painting forth« is described in terms of closeness between poet and patron (»what I in *speache* declare«), as a communication reminiscent of an intimate conversation and explicitly contrasted to other writers who »passion-out their pangs in statelie rimes«.¹⁸ Literary success is very much implied to be the result of successful competition for intimacy with the noble patron. Moreover, the dedication conceives of literature – Nashe's own poetry, at least – in terms of conversational metaphor and therefore adds to the idea of concealment that is inherent in the offensiveness of the poem's subject matter.

This motif is developed in an epilogue, which also revolves around the distinction between public and private and also brings the notion of printing and manuscript writing into play.

— Thus hath my penne presum'd to please my friend
 Oh mightst thou lykewise please Apollo's eye.
 No: Honor brooke's no such impietie;
 Yett Ouids wanton Muse did not offend.
 He is the fountaine whence my streames doe flowe.
 Forgiue me if I speake as I was taught,
 A lyke to women, utter all I knowe,
 As longing to unlade so bad a fraught.
 My mynde once purg'd of such lasciuious witt,
 With purifide word's, and hallowed verse
 Thy praises in large volumes shall rehearse,
 That better maie thy grauer view befitt.
 Meanwhile yett rests, yow smile at what I write,
 Or for attempting, banish me your sight. (3:415–16)

Here, the first line mentions the pen as a source of pleasure in its alliterative connection with »please« (a word repeated in the next line), but it also introduces a semi-rhyme on »pen« and »friend«, as though implying that the pen is connected with both pleasure and friendship.¹⁹ Rather than being self-consciously deferential, the poet refers to friendship and mutual pleasure as the foundation for the production of manuscript writing. As Alan Stewart suggests, the display of learning »could also be a potential route for inscribing oneself as a friend«, and the poem – despite, or precisely because of the author's ostentatious denial of its learning and quality – could be said to enact manuscript sharing as creating an intimate bond of friendship as much as a hierarchical power relation.²⁰ Such intimacy is articulated in opposition to public life, for in

the second stanza the poet turns directly to the patron and asks forgiveness for having spoken »a lyke to women« (with all the suggestions of intimate confiding rather than public speech this implies). As in the dedication, poetry is conceived of in terms of speech, though not as a public, oratorical event, but rather as intimate, gossipy confessions of the heart (»longing to unlade so bad a fraught«). Thus, the two first stanzas seem to represent the same situation of privacy as the dedication.

What comes next can be seen as a turning point, for the poet proceeds to imagine large – and presumably printed – volumes that offer more suitable public representations of the patron. This is, however, a somewhat paradoxical promise: Nashe never produced costly volumes of this kind. As Brown points out, he consistently describes his work in terms of waste paper, of rubbish. Moreover, the volumes he did publish were significantly *not* »large«. ²¹ Quite plausibly, then, the invocation of »large« volumes – referring apparently to the folio format as opposed to the quartos Nashe actually did publish – could be seen as an in-joke that explores Nashe's position as a marginalized producer of waste. There is also a suggestion here of the interplay between the private and public in the relation between poet and patron. The large volumes can in themselves be said to be »public«: they are too bulky to hide, unlike manuscripts and small pocket-sized volumes. In accordance with their format, they consist of »purified words«, and the patron is described as having a »graver« view that goes along with the scrutiny of words made public. This is presumably, then, in opposition to the private self that reads erotic poetry. At the same time the intimate »thy« is used, as if implying that this is in fact not the real situation but something that might – or might rather not – happen in the future. ²² In any case, closeness is sustained until the end in the hope that the patron meanwhile »smile at what I write« or else »banish me your sight«. It is arguably on the »meanwhile« of this situation, not on the realization of the promises of bulky tomes, that Nashe's position as a writer rests.

This is of course not to say that Nashe's production of writing or his attitudes towards it can be seen in isolation from other writers or literary forms. Critics have pointed out that »The Choise of Valentines« sends up both Petrarchanism (in its use of the sonnet form and its postponement of sexual fulfillment) and Chaucerian pastoral (in the archaizing language of the dedication, which even seems to parody Spenser). ²³ Perhaps an even more obvious point of reference here is Ovid, since the Roman poet is explicitly mentioned as a role model for Nashe. ²⁴ Indeed, his use of Ovid can be said to highlight the relationship between the private and the public under discussion here. I have argued elsewhere that for writers of Nashe's generation, the poetry of Ovid came to suggest a sexualized sense of

privacy that is partly distinct from the public realm.²⁵ In a monologue in Christopher Marlowe's play *Edward II*, for example, the king's favourite Gaveston offers an erotically charged vision of royal entertainment in terms fetched from the *Metamorphoses* – a vision that presents Gaveston as being on intimate terms with the king in watching the spectacle:

— I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits
Musicians that, with touching of a string,
May draw the pliant king which way I please.

In thus invoking »wanton« poets (a term Nashe uses both in his own poem and for Ovid's muse), Gaveston acts as the procurer of homoerotic titillation for the royal patron, providing views of »a lovely boy in Dian's shape« who uses »an olive tree / To hide those parts which men delight to see« and an onlooker, who, »like Actaeon, peeping through the grove, / Shall by the angry goddess be transformed«.²⁶ The tenor of such »sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows« is arguably close to Nashe's »painting forth the things that hidden are« because both present the interplay between hiding and showing as an eroticized game that creates an intimate bond between patron and patronized.

Such intimacy, however, had inevitably to be renegotiated once it was referred to in the medium of print. One such way of negotiating it was in the form of public regret. As Richard Helgerson has shown, Nashe and other late Elizabethan authors frequently explored and based their authorial persona on a prodigal narrative – the author repenting in his later writings for his youthful sins such as writing wanton love poetry.²⁷ Indeed, this figure of thought surfaces frequently in the covert references Nashe himself later makes to »The Choise of Valentines« (if this is indeed what he refers to, for here and elsewhere he never says anything explicitly). Nashe makes such references in dichotomized terms: private sin/manuscript writing on the one hand and public repentance/print on the other. For example, he introduces his admonitory pamphlet to the sinful city of London, *Christs Tears over Jerusalem* (1593) by a reference to St. Augustine's *Confessions*, claiming to atone for his own secret misdeeds in public: »Into some spleantive vaines of wantonnesse heeretofore haue I foolishlie relapsed, to supply my priuate wants: of them no lesse doe I desire to be absolved than the rest, and to God & man doe I promise an vnfaigned conuersion«.²⁸ McKerrow cautiously speculates that Nashe's formulation »may refer to such productions as *The Choise of Valentines*«, although this can of course not be proven.²⁹ What is more obvious is that the apology for »priuate wants« is not only carried out in public but specifically in the print medium, as Nashe advertizes: »Two or three triuiall

Volumes of mine at this instant are vnder the Printers hands, ready to be published, which being long bungled vp before this, I must craue to be included in the Catalogue of mine excuse«. ³⁰ Pace Helgerson's claim, it may seem at this point as if Nashe lapses into an unambiguous public declaration of guilt. Yet, in the second impression of the book, issued in 1594 at the height of Nashe's quarrel with Gabriel Harvey, he seems to suggest that his previous reconciliatory strategy has been an aesthetic rather than moral choice. The repentant attitude towards Harvey »seemd at the first most plausible and commendable, and the rather because I desired to conforme my selfe to the holy subiect of my booke«. ³¹ The »repentant sinner« attitude therefore seems to be acknowledged as a deliberately fashioned persona, which can be withdrawn should needs dictate so.

It is arguably this wavering between positions, and the ever-present sense of an audience that goes with it, that furnishes the basis for Nashe the published author. For that reason, critical analysis of *Christs Tears* that does not acknowledge the role of the prefaces tends to read the repentance part as too much of an established fact. For example, Jonathan Crewe draws parallels between the projection of loss and repentance in *Christs Tears* to the projection of male impotence in »The Choise of Valentines«, but I believe he exaggerates the pessimism of this stance when he claims that »what Nashe's rhetorical personae always embody is a consciousness of loss and victimization«. ³² However, to Nashe the relationship between private sin and public repentance is also to some extent what empowers him, makes his »authorial persona« possible, for the organization of the author's self into a private and a public self makes it possible for the former to be a source of titillation and commercially viable denial in the latter. Differently put, the »private self« provides fuel for the gossip spread by the public one.

This awareness of how the image of the author can be fashioned through a two-fold emphasis on concealment and show can be seen from the already-mentioned quarrel – or rather pamphlet war – between Nashe and Gabriel Harvey in the 1590s. In his own accusations against Nashe, Harvey sometimes alludes to Nashe's production of indecent writing, and he does so in a way that accentuates the idea of hidden – and unpublished – matter: »I will not heere decipher thy vnprinted packet of bawdye, and filthy Rymes, in the nastiest kind: there is a fitter place for that discouery of thy foulest shame, & the whole ruffianisme of thy brothell Muse, if she still prostitute her obscene ballatts, and will needes be a younge Curtisan of ould knauery«. ³³ The references to prostitution and brothels certainly fit in with the theme of Nashe's poem, but more importantly the tension between published and unpublished is becoming an issue for Harvey, who clearly sees the status of

Nashe's poetry as an aggravating circumstance. Not only is Nashe's poetry bawdy, it is unpublished too.

But Nashe's response is not based upon loss or victimization. Indeed, when the poem is alluded to in print, the result is simultaneous denial and acknowledgment. Here, in his pamphlet *Have with you to Saffron-Walden* (1596), Nashe refuses to give any clear answer on whether he is really the author of the »baudie rymes« Harvey has accused him of writing: »Are they *rimes*? and are they *baudie*? and are they *mine*? Well, it may be so that it is not so; or if it be, men in their youth (as in their sleep) manie times doo something that might haue been better done, & they do not wel remember«. ³⁴ Of course, in its flurry of conditionals and hilarious refusal to say anything at all, the strategy employed could be that of a politician trying to cover him- or herself fully in front of the TV cameras: on the one hand I deeply regret it, on the other hand I can't remember a thing. But this fidgeting is not necessarily an indication that Nashe was »somewhat embarrassed by *Valentines*« or any other of his writings. ³⁵ Instead it can be seen as an empowering rather than bashful rhetorical strategy that does not so much apologize to the audience as win it over by comical means. The phrase »it may be so that it is not so« is clearly a favourite of Nashe's, as it occurs in very similar form about a hundred pages earlier, also in the context of Harvey's accusations for salacious writing: »prostituting my pen like a Curtizan, is the next *Item* that you taxe me with; well it may and it may not bee so, for neither will I deny it nor will I grant it«. ³⁶ Nashe's phrasing – and the fact that the formulation is repeated, as if in a wink to his audience – can be understood as a performance of embarrassment rather than embarrassment as such. As Stapleton says of »The Choise of Valentines«, »sexual comedy often relies upon the device of the blunderer who lacks the good sense to keep his mouth shut about his intimate adventures«, and it is arguably this device that Nashe explores, hinting that his poem is itself an »intimate adventure« which can be simultaneously acknowledged and denied. ³⁷ His erotic writing is, like Gaveston's »parts which men delight to see«, a secret which is revealed precisely to the extent that it is concealed; the simultaneous denial and acknowledgment creates a bond between author and audience, and Nashe clearly knows as much. ³⁸ As Halasz points out, the very dialogue format of *Have With You to Saffron-Walden*, with five men discussing Harvey between them and with Nashe himself as »Respondent«, presents the author as a performing persona: »Nashe represents the author as an orator speaking *ex tempore* before an actively engaged audience«. ³⁹ This impression is reinforced by the continuation of the defence, in which Nashe admits that he actually does prostitute his pen »twise or thrise in a month« for lack of money, although poverty is immediately enacted as public performance, with reference to one of his

earlier works: »many a faire day agoe haue I proclaimed my selfe to the worlde *Piers Pennilesse*, and sufficient petigrees can I shewe to prooue him my elder brother«.40 Obscenity is cause for hilarity, but also – given the author’s poverty – for sympathy.

In other words, while Nashe suggests the prodigal motif in which he as an author repents for his covert (manuscript) sins, he also realizes that this motif is, literally, a profitable rhetorical position. Nashe rejects Harvey’s imputation that he lives off the publishers – he has not, he says, had anything printed over the last three years – but once he does publish something, he intends to be financially rewarded, unlike Harvey, who merely pays others to gaze at him: »when I doo play my Prizes in Print, Ile be paid for my paines, that’s once; & not make my selfe a gazing stocke and a publique spectacle to all the world for nothing, as he does, that giues money to be seene and haue his wit lookt vpon, neuer Printing booke yet for whose Impression he hath not either paid or run in debt«.41 The »publique spectacle« of playing one’s »prizes in print«, then, comes literally at a price; it is in the awareness of the effort and rewards involved in moving from one sphere to another that Nashe’s constitution of his authorial persona should be seen.

It is then necessary to bring my argument back to the initial remarks I made about the interrelation of the different media and their dependence upon each other. If anything, Nashe’s writing shows that the written and the printed word were conceived of in complementary rather than mutually exclusive terms. On the one hand, erotic writing is habitually apart from the public eye in the early modern period. On the other hand, erotic writing furnishes ample opportunities for discourse, dialogue and endlessly deferred acknowledgment of responsibility once the rumor is embodied in print. Yet Nashe constantly returns to the distinction between these two arenas, as I have shown. From this complex relationship, Nashe’s writing is constituted and perpetuated. His »prostituting« his pen is not so much a chosen profession as a fundamental aspect of his writing: going public with what is simultaneously acknowledged to be private, erotically charged, and by implication, handwritten. Seen along such lines, »The Choise of Valentines« becomes not so much a marginal phenomenon in Nashe’s output as a central text for understanding what his and much other late Elizabethan writing is about: an interplay between hidden and displayed, private and public, written and printed – and an acknowledgement of the fundamental interdependence of all these aspects. ■

■ — ENDNOTES —

1 Among more recent discussions of Nashe and his relation to the print medium, see especially Alexandra Halasz,

The Marketplace of Print. Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 1997), 82–113; Georgia Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge, 2004), 53–101; Steve Mentz, »Day Labor. Thomas Nashe and the Practice of Prose in Early Modern England«, in Naomi Conn Liebler (ed.), *Early Modern Prose Fiction. The Cultural Politics of Reading* (New York, 2007). Some of the most important material on Nashe has been usefully re-issued in Georgia Brown (ed.), *Thomas Nashe* (Farnham, 2011).

2 See D.F. McKenzie, »Speech–Manuscript–Print«, in D.F. McKenzie, *Making Meaning. »Printers of the Mind« and Other Essays* (Amherst, 2002), 247.

3 Up until fairly recently, critics used to treat this poem with silence or as a footnote to Nashe's other work; this is true even for studies that claim to engage with Nashe's oeuvre as a whole, such as G.R. Hibbard's *Thomas Nashe. A Critical Introduction* (London, 1962) or Lorna Hutson's groundbreaking *Thomas Nashe in Context* (Oxford, 1989). Recent decades have seen an upsurge of interest in the poem; among important discussions, most of which are from the 1990s and later, are Bruce Boehrer, »Behn's 'Disappointment' and Nashe's 'Choise of Valentines'. Pornographic Poetry and the Influence of Anxiety«, in *Essays in Literature* 16:2 (1989), 172–87 ; M.L. Stapleton, »Nashe and the Poetics of Obscenity. *The Choise of Valentines*«, in *Classical and Modern Literature* 12 (1991), 29–48; Ian Frederick Moulton, »'Transmuted into a Woman or Worse'. Masculine Gender Identity and Thomas Nashe's 'Choice of Valentines'«, in *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (1997), 57–88. A revised version of the latter text can also be found in Moulton's *Before Pornography. Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 168–93.

4 For the distinction between public and private in the early modern period, see especially Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca, 1994). Orlin's identification of »the private« with the household (4) can be said to have a bearing on Nashe's relation to his patrons, as he for example lodged with the Archbishop of Canterbury when writing his play *Summers Last Will and Testament*.

5 See Kevin Pask, »The Bourgeois Public Sphere and the Concept of Literature«, in *Criticism* 46:2 (2004), 241. David Norbrook discusses Milton and the public sphere in Richard Burt (ed.), »*Areopagitica*, Censorship, and the Early Modern Public Sphere«, in *The Administration of Aesthetics. Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, 1994), 3–33; but see also the »Afterword 2002« in Norbrook's *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2002), 287. For Nashe and the public sphere, see Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 82–113.

6 Michael D. Bristol and Arthur F. Marotti, »Introduction«, in Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (eds.), *Print, Manuscript, Performance. The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus, 2000), 13.

7 Among the number of critics who discuss Nashe's relationship to the print medium, Steve Mentz specifically brings up the contrast between private and public but is relatively silent on the issue of manuscript culture; what he does say seems to suggest that manuscript writing was seen as more imperfect and less public than print: »Against the manuscript tradition in which the written word is a poor stand-in for personal interaction, Nashe (and the newly-educated class of readers to whom he appealed) values printed invective over private reconciliation« (Mentz, »Day Labor«, 23). However, manuscript and print cut across each other in terms of both audience and privacy in the period, not least so in Nashe's texts.

8 Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 40.

9 As Orlin points out, while there was a general sense of difference between the public and the private, there was also a tendency to blur it, especially in the emphasis on the continuity of proper governance between micro and macro levels (Orlin, *Private Matters*, 73).

10 See for example the discussions in Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print* 82–113; Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, 1995).

11 References to Nashe's poem are to the edition in R.B. McKerrow (ed.), F.P. Wilson (rev.), *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford, 1958), 3:397–416. Page references will appear parenthetically in the text.

12 Katherine Duncan-Jones, »City Limits. Nashe's 'Choise Of Valentines' and Jonson's 'Famous Voyage'« in *Review of English Studies* 56:224 (2005), 240.

13 For a discussion of the historical taboos and attitudes surrounding the use of the dildo, see Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals. Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton, 2007), 143–44.

14 For more detailed discussion of the textual history, see Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 188–93.

15 See the commentary in McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 5:141. As McKerrow points out, the reference to »your Dildoe & such subiects« in the pamphlet *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (1597) seems to identify Nashe more certainly as the author.

16 Charles Nicholl is characteristically certain on the matter: »Strange is [...] the 'Lord S' to whom Nashe dedicated his dirty doggerel *The Choice of Valentines*, popularly known as 'Nashe's Dildo'«; see Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning. The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (Chicago, 1995), 225. However, to my knowledge no one has actually produced any hard

evidence for this. McKerrow argues for the plausibility of Lord Strange on the grounds that he was known as a poet and the dedication refers to the patron as such. See the commentary in McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 5:141.

17 Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 74–75.

18 As McKenzie points out, speech is more characterized by presence than either manuscript or print, so it is significant that Nashe brings out this aspect of intimacy by way of referring to speech. See McKenzie, »Speech–Manuscript–Print«, 247.

19 Of course, given its salacious subject matter, the poem might also suggest a pun on »penis«; at least, as Mentz suggests, »the penis becomes a surrogate pen but an unwilling one« (»Day Labor«, 24).

20 Alan Stewart, *Close Readers. Humanism and Sodomy in Early Modern England* (Princeton, 1997), 129.

21 See for example the preface to *The Unfortunate Traveler* (1594), in which the protagonist is said to have »bequeathed for wast paper here amongst you certaine pages of his misfortunes«. To drive the point home, the narrator suggests – in an italicized pun – that the readers »keepe them preciously as a *priuie* token of his good will towards you« (*Works*, 2:207). For Brown’s discussion of this passage, see Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 54–55.

22 It is of course not possible to draw far-reaching conclusions from a usage of pronouns that was inconsistent in Nashe’s time – a fact which seems exemplified by the change to »yow« in the very next line of the poem. For a short but informative summary of the problems surrounding usage of »you« and »thou« in Elizabethan England, see J.M. Pressley, »Thou Pesky ‘Thou’«, at <http://www.bardweb.net/content/thou.html> (accessed 11 June 2011).

23 See Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, 74; Stapleton, »Nashe’s Poetics«, 38. As Newman suggests, Nashe’s showy use of different styles and references in the poem can even be said to create a bond to an »elite urban readership that can enjoy Nashe’s literary tumbling act« (*Cultural Capitals*, 145).

24 Stapleton discusses Nashe’s indebtedness to Ovid at length (39–48), contextualizing it in terms of humanist *imitatio*. For an analysis of Nashe’s use of Ovid elsewhere in his work, see Per Sivefors, »‘This citty-sodoming trade’: The Ovidian Authorial Persona in Thomas Nashe’s *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem*«, in Per Sivefors (ed.), *Urban Preoccupations. Mental and Material Landscapes* (Pisa, 2007), 143–57.

25 See Per Sivefors, *The Delegitimised Vernacular. Language Politics, Poetics and the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Göteborg, 2004), 152–74.

26 Christopher Marlowe, *Edward the Second*, ed. Charles R. Forker (Manchester, 1994), 1.1.50–52; 1.1.63–64; 1.1.66–67.

Nashe's reference to Ovid might itself have a bearing on Marlowe, as the »cursed hemlock« refers to a potion that causes impotence in Ovid's *Amores* 3.7, which Marlowe had recently translated (Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 175). Nashe certainly knew Marlowe's version of the *Amores* since he quotes it in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (*Works*, 2:238).

27 Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley, 1976).

28 McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 2:13.

29 See the commentary in McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 4:215.

30 Ibid.

31 McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 2:180.

32 Jonathan Crewe, *Unredeemed Rhetoric. Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore, 1982), 54.

33 Gabriel Harvey, *Pierces Supererogation or A new prayse of the old asse* (London, 1593), F4^r.

34 *Have with you to Saffron-Walden*, in McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 3:129.

35 The phrase is Stapleton's in »Nashe and the Poetics of Obscenity«, 31, citing Stephen S. Hilliard, *The Singularity of Thomas Nashe* (Lincoln, 1986), 199.

36 McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 3:30.

37 Stapleton, »Nashe and the Poetics of Obscenity«, 47.

38 As Stapleton argues, the narrative voice of »The Choise of Valentines« emulates Ovid's epigrammatic jocularly and thus establishes a bond between male poet and male audience (Stapleton, »Nashe and the Poetics of Obscenity«, 45). If so, Nashe's comments on the poem and its reception can be said to develop this strategy of bonding even further in the medium of print.

39 Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print*, 108.

40 McKerrow (ed.), Wilson (rev.), *Works*, 3:30, 3:31.

41 Ibid., 3:128.