Oral Tradition, 24/2 (2009): 373-392

On Speech, Print, and New Media: Thomas Nashe and Marshall McLuhan

Neil Rhodes

2006 was a good year for Marshall McLuhan. He finally got his Ph.D. dissertation published, 63 years after completion, and the *Times Literary Supplement* ran a lead review article by Paul Barker on a new collection of his work with a cover illustration featuring Chantelle, a manufactured celebrity from the *Big Brother* TV program (Barker 2006:2-3). The full page close-up of Chantelle's bleached blond hair and crimson pout was not what *TLS* readers might have expected from this highbrow publication, but the image (and its context) were undoubtedly, as the caption stated, "Pure McLuhan." McLuhan himself, of course, was not around to enjoy this triumphant moment, having died in 1980, but it was an eloquent sign of his continuing modernity. Since other intellectuals who made their reputations in the 1960s have not worn very well in recent years, that is a remarkable achievement, and anyone reading McLuhan today will be struck by the extraordinary prescience of his observations on the media and the way they shape our cultural environment. It is difficult to believe that the statement "The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village" could have been made in 1962, long before the advent of the personal computer and the Internet. This is among his most famous pronouncements, but it is also entirely typical. Typical, too, is its formulation as a soundbite, a term that he did not invent but that nonetheless captures a wide range of McLuhanite themes: oral and aural media, the TV interview, acoustic space, and knowledge as aphorism.

What I want to focus on here, however, is not the subject of the *TLS* article, which was a boxed set of twenty pamphlets from various points in McLuhan's career, but the subject of his Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, the Elizabethan writer Thomas Nashe. Since Cambridge University Library will not lend out the thesis in any form, and also imposes a strict embargo on quotation from it, this work has understandably not featured much in discussions of McLuhan and his subsequent intellectual development,[1] but it does raise some very interesting questions both for early modernists and historians of the media. Why Nashe? What continuity is there between Nashe and the themes of McLuhan's later work? How might this early investigation of late sixteenth-century cultural conditions point us towards McLuhan's future role as the founding father of media studies?

---

[1] McLuhan's biographers (Marchand 1989; Gordon 1997) do, of course, discuss his Ph.D., and it is referred to in Renaissance literary scholarship by Kinney (1986:315-19) and Norbrook (2002:286).

McLuhan went to Cambridge to study English in 1934 and was able to experience the development of "Cambridge English" in its dynamic early phase. The most important influence on him there while he was doing his Tripos (the undergraduate degree course) work was I. A. Richards, and he was to acknowledge his intellectual debt to Richards in correspondence with him later in life (Gordon 1997:332). At the time of his arrival in Cambridge, Richards had recently published *Practical Criticism* (1929), one of the seminal texts of modern English Studies. This book set out the techniques of literary close reading, focusing on the words on the page, but Richards also stressed the performative aspects of language, something that is evident from records of his teaching. In January 1935 McLuhan enrolled in Richards' "Philosophy of Rhetoric" class, which had been conceived as a sequel to the "Practical Criticism" class, but with prose passages rather than poems set for close analysis. It was probably this coursework that provided the immediate stimulus for his Ph.D. topic. What he originally proposed to write was a thesis called "The Arrest of Tudor Prose," consciously reworking R. W. Chambers' *The Continuity of English Prose*, which had appeared in 1932, but like many embryonic Ph.D. proposals he found that it was going off in different directions: "Abandoning, therefore, my original thesis, I turned to consider Nashe the journalist" (McLuhan 2006:3).[2]

McLuhan's consideration of Nashe, however, only occupies the last quarter of the thesis. The rest of it is devoted to a history of the trivium—the arts curriculum covering grammar, logic, and rhetoric—from antiquity through to the early seventeenth century. Nashe is taken as a representative of a cultural moment at the end of this period. McLuhan explains: "if Nashe appears to be a kind of appendix to a chapter in the history of education, he is really intended to be a focal point. Bacon or Donne would have served this function better in some ways than Nashe" (*ibid*.:6). This is certainly an odd kind of admission to make. If Nashe is unsuitable to act as a representative figure, and most readers of him would agree that he is a rather strange choice for this purpose, then why choose him? Again, McLuhan explains: "Nashe's sophisticated awareness of the precise nature of his activity and function as a writer gradually impressed itself upon me. His pretence of drawing only on his 'extemporal vein,' his appearance of unstudied coruscation is not only a pose, but a conventional pose" (4). He illustrates the conventionality by pointing out Nashe's debt to the highly mannered rhetoric of Lyly's *Euphues*. This is true, but only just. Nashe imitated Lyly in his first work, *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), and thereafter struck out on his own highly experimental course. What I want to argue is that while McLuhan presented Nashe in his Ph.D. thesis as the conservative defender of the traditional arts curriculum, he was also deeply impressed by the extraordinary vitality of Nashe's style and realized that some of its features could be updated for a modern, freewheeling approach to popular culture and the media. From *The Mechanical Bride* (1951) onwards, McLuhan cultivated his own "extemporal vein," emulating Nashe's showmanship, his preference for oral forms of expression, and his appearance of improvisation. What Nashe called "gallimaufry" (motley, medley), McLuhan called "mosaic": "*The Gutenberg Galaxy* develops a mosaic or field approach to its problems," runs the opening sentence of that book (McLuhan 1962). Nashe, I would argue, is the model for the paradox of McLuhan's ultra-conservatism and ultra-modernity.

---

[2] I cite the published text of the thesis. Its title, "The Classical Trivium," is an addition to the original thesis title, "The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of his Time."

The experimental quality of Nashe's style, with its mixture of neologism, acoustic effect, and a sliding between high and low elements, has prompted comparisons with much later writers, notably Joyce. These comparisons may be specious or misleading, but the point here is that they show that Nashe may give the *appearance* of modernity to the modern reader. As far as education was concerned, however, Nashe himself was eager to assert his conservatism, praising the traditionalist values of his alma mater, St. John's College, Cambridge, and its luminaries such as the Greek scholar and ardent Ciceronian, Roger Ascham. So when McLuhan uses the terms "pretence" and "pose," and refers to Nashe's "sophisticated awareness" of what he was doing, he points to a fundamental contradiction in the literary persona that Nashe adopted for himself. Here is somebody who took pride in his elite academic and social status (he advertised himself as "Thomas Nashe, Gent" on the title-page of *Pierce Penilesse*), but also wanted to create the impression of being sharp, street-wise, and avant-garde—the cutting edge of the London literary world in the 1590s.

He did this by simulating oral techniques drawn from contemporary culture. It is true that Euphuism was one early influence on Nashe, but his involvement in the Marprelate controversy was another (Summersgill 1951). "Martin Marprelate" was the name adopted by the Puritan author(s) of a series of satirical pamphlets attacking the bishops, printed at secret locations between September 1588 and October 1589. The effectiveness of these satires was largely due to their aggressive use of low speech idiom, designed to ridicule inflated episcopal style. The pamphlets are a cornucopia of oral forms and other elements of popular culture: jokes, insults, ballads, maygames, parodies of formal rhetoric, and clever impersonations. Martin tells his readers that the Bishop of Winchester has a face "made of seasoned wainscot, and will lie as fast as a dog can trot" and threatens to "bumfeg the Cooper," while his "father," in the persona of "Martin Senior," relates how the parson of Stepney "played the potter's part in the Morrice Dance" ("Marprelate" 1911:72, 230, 369). The arena of religious debate becomes a fairground where we are treated to the verbal equivalent of fire-eaters and dancing bears, and what is on show is a performance of the arts of the trivium, dumbed down, as it were, for popular entertainment. Martin Senior acts as showman for his son, promising the audience that they will "see such grammar, such art, such wit, and conveyance of matter, as for the variety of learning, and the pleasantness of the style, the like is not elsewhere to be found" (*ibid.*:363). The Marprelate pamphlets are a series of oral performances that reconstruct the formal arts in terms of popular culture.

Clearly alarmed by the success of Martin's ridicule, the authorities decided to employ some young professional writers to a respond in a similar manner, among them Lyly and Nashe. Exactly who wrote what has not been firmly established, but it seems likely that Nashe was responsible for *An Almond for a Parrat* (1589), which is dedicated to the clown, Will Kemp, and alludes to "that merry man Rablays" (Nashe 1958:III, 341). Although he is suitably indignant about Martin's "intemperate style," Nashe shows that he can master the idiom at least as effectively as his opponent, complaining about "his auncient burlibond adiunctes that so pester his former edition with their unweldie phrase, as no true syllogisme can haue elbowe roome where they are" (*ibid.*:347). At the same time as he attacks Martin for his abuse of rhetoric and logic, Nashe's own demotic style tips the language of the classroom out on to the street. Lyly's likely contribution to the battle, *Pap with a Hatchet* (1589), does something very similar, though

in a more sinister way, vowing that he and the other Martinist writers won't stop until "we have brought *Martin* to the ablative case, that is, to bee taken away with *Bull's* voider … O here were a notable full point, to leave Martin in the hangman's apron" (Lyly 1902:III, 404). (Bull was the Tyburn executioner, and the man identified as Martin, John Penry, did indeed meet that fate.) Lyly adds grammar to Nashe's rhetoric and logic, and together they translate the three parts of the trivium into the kind of concrete, physical expressions that characterize the language of popular culture. Many people at the time found this contamination of high with low extremely offensive, though on account of the debasement of religion, of course, not the dumbing down of the trivium. Francis Bacon, for example, thought that it was dangerous "to intermix Scripture and scurrility" and observed (in Latin, appropriately enough, though with a following translation) that "there is no greater confusion than the confounding of jest and earnest" (Bacon 1857-74:VIII, 77). But for Nashe the controversy provided an ideal brief. It enabled him to practice new writing strategies—invective toughened by the idioms of popular culture—while maintaining a conservative political position, working for the establishment. He was also able to see how his earlier model, John Lyly (Oxon), inventor of Euphuism, could slum it in style.

Nashe's negotiations between elite and popular cultures are reflected in his agile interweaving of features from oral and print media. Again, this is a tactic that he may well have picked up from Martin, who used the print convention of the marginal insertion not for academic glossing, but as a vocal intervention, where the author becomes the shouting bystander: "Ha, priests, I'll bang you, or else never trust me"; and he produced absurd colophons such as "Given at my Castle, between two whales; neither four days from Penniless Beach, nor yet at the West End of Shrovetide" ("Marprelate" 1911:44, 101). Commenting on the relationship between theatrical performance and printed text, D. F. McKenzie observes that "we have to think of other essentially theatrical places—the fairground and the market—for example—to recall that some oral modes are even less compatible with print" (McKenzie 2002:240). Yet translating the language of fairground and market into print is exactly what Nashe, and Martin before him, do. Street cries, for example, become book titles, such as Martin's *Hay Any Work for Cooper,* and Nashe grumbles about the book market's constant demands for novelty in similar terms: "Newe Herrings, new, wee must crye, every time wee make our selves publique, or else we shall bee christened with a hundred newe tytles of Idiotisme" (Nashe 1958:I, 192). McKenzie (2002:240) rightly points out that in these popular arenas speech is accompanied by physical action, props, and other rhetorical supports that cannot be reproduced in print, but Martin and Nashe do nonetheless try to recreate a vigorously physical environment in print form where adjuncts (that is, epithets) are burliboned and syllogisms have elbow room.

The figure who most completely blends the speech performances of fairground and market is the mountebank or charlatan, the traveling salesman who sets up his platform in places of popular resort in order to peddle cures, potions, and other marvelous nostrums. Antidote for snakebite was a favorite product, while some of the more ambitious performers claimed knowledge of alchemy. But whatever they were selling, they attracted audiences who came to enjoy their speech skills. Although the alternative term for the mountebank—charlatan—is now used only of someone who fakes professional knowledge, its derivation from the Italian *ciarlare*, to chatter or "spin a line," indicates how closely the role is identified with a particular kind of

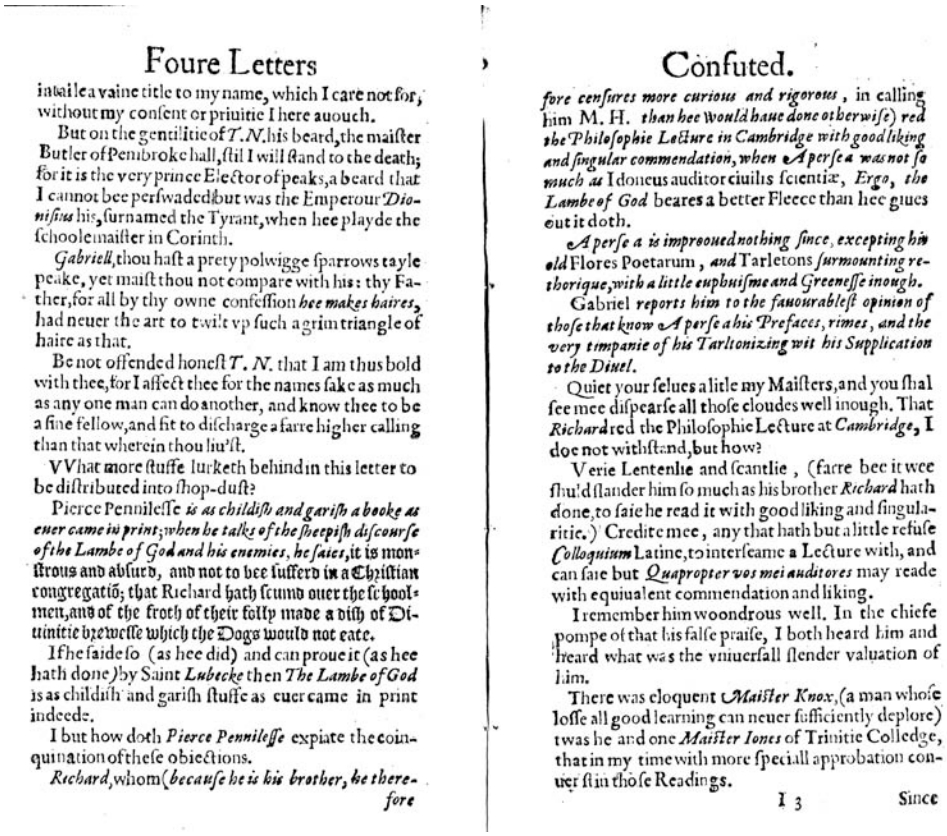
oral performance.[3] The same is true of the "quacksalver," another term for "mountebank," which derives from Dutch *quacken* (to prattle) and *salve* (ointment). The Italians themselves were thought to be masters of charlatanry, especially by the English. The traveler Thomas Coryat records how he "often wondred at many of these naturall Orators" and admired their "extempore" performances (C. Clark 1979:540-41), while the gullible Sir Politic Would-Be in Jonson's *Volpone*—a fictional version of Coryat, perhaps—describes them as "the onely languag'd-men of all the world" (3.2.132; C. Clark 1979:540-41). Shakespeare's Coriolanus, on the other hand, is disgusted at having to "mountebank" the crowd by advertising his wounds and selling himself through speech in the marketplace (3.2.132). Either way, Elizabethan writers used mountebank eloquence as the type of a particular form of commodified speech, and its basic elements were well-known: the incomparably efficacious power and sovereign virtue of this hitherto unavailable medicine was one, but other features of the oration, in addition to these superlatives, included travelers' tales (to emphasize the exotic nature of the product and the difficulty with which it had been obtained) and the issuing of challenges to competitors. Since all this is sales talk, it is ultimately directed to a purpose, but as Carol Clark has pointed out, mountebank rhetoric is "not so much the art of persuading or of speaking well, as simply the art of keeping going" (545). The remarkable feats of improvisation assume an almost magical aura, which the mountebank hopes will be transferred in the minds of the audience to the product itself.

In his descent from highbrow Latinate eloquence, nurtured at Cambridge, to what Alexandra Halasz (1997) has described as the marketplace of print, mountebank rhetoric offered itself to Nashe as a model of popular oratory. But as far as he was concerned, it was one to be strenuously avoided. In an attempt to dissociate himself from the taint of charlatanry, he began *Pierce Penilesse* (1592), the work that made his name, with the disclaimer that he had no intention of making "a tedious Mountebanks Oration" (Nashe 1958:I, 153), but the form that his pamphlet takes of "news from hell" clearly connects it to that ignominious model. In Rabelais, for example, Epistemon brings back news from hell after his beheading and subsequent reheading following the application of a wonderful resuscitating ointment (C. Clark 1979:544). It is a form that combines travelers' tale and magical remedy in characteristic mountebank style, and despite Nashe's disclaimer his work goes on to reproduce distinctive features of the mountebank *spiel.* The exotic sights and happenings of *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) are a natural amplification of the travelers' tale *topos*. The title of *Strange Newes* (1592) is a variation on the same theme, while its content, like its sequel, *Have With You To Saffron-Walden* (1596), has very much to do with the issuing of challenges to competitors, mainly Gabriel Harvey, the Cambridge academic who is the butt of both these polemics. It is Nashe's last work, however, *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), that produces his most sustained piece of charlatanry. Framed as a eulogy to the town of Great Yarmouth, where Nashe hid out to avoid arrest in the autumn of 1597, *Lenten Stuffe* is an elaborate advertisement for the town's staple product, the red herring (as well as being a work in praise of digression). In true mountebank vein, all sorts of marvelous qualities

[3] "Charlatan" was, in fact, a term frequently applied to McLuhan himself. With regard to his performance techniques the label is not unjustified, but he did of course make it his business also to analyze sales talk and the language of advertising. Paul Barker does not address the point directly, but he concludes his article with the observation, "[h]e was never *only* a snake-oil merchant" (2006:4).

are attributed to this lowly fish: "it will embrawne and Iron crust [a person's] flesh, and harden his soft bleding vaines as stiffe and robustious as branches of Corrall"; it will act as a prophylactic against the stone; and it even has alchemical qualities (Nashe 1958:III, 191; 221). The virtues of the red herring are extolled in extravagant hyperbole interlaced with digressions into the exotic and the fabulous, and this continues for more than seventy pages. Whatever else it is, Nashe's final fling is certainly a masterpiece in the art of keeping going.

But it was designed for print, not performance. Paradoxically, this most oral of writers, who plied his trade during what is probably the most exciting decade in the history of the English theater, was only marginally interested in drama. If it is true, as Lukas Erne (2003) has argued, that his most famous contemporary, Shakespeare, wrote literary dramas for the reading public that were then revised and stripped down for oral performance, what we have in the case of Nashe is almost the reverse: an academically trained rhetorician who deliberately uses print to reconstruct the kinds of popular oral forms that D. F. McKenzie (2002) regarded as most intractable for that purpose. He is, in fact, highly alert to the ways in which type might be used to create a sense of vocal performance, perhaps most obviously in the polemics against Gabriel Harvey.[4] In *Strange Newes* he mixes Roman, italic, and black letter fonts to signal quotation within quotation and mark out the different voices of Gabriel Harvey, his brother Richard (whose book Nashe had ridiculed in *Pierce Penilesse* in a passage quoted again here), and Nashe himself.[5] In *Have With You*, Nashe takes the vocalization a step further. Here, various characters are assembled who take it in turns to extract passages from Harvey's book, *Pierce's Superogation* (a lengthy and pedantic reply to Nashe's attacks), which are highlighted in italic



Foure Letters

intaile a vaine title to my name, which I care not for, without my consent or priuitie I here auouch.

But on the gentilitie of *T. N.* his beard, the maister Butler of Pembroke hall, stil I will stand to the death; for it is the very prince Elector of peaks, a beard that I cannot bee perswaded but was the Emperour *Dionisius* his, surnamed the Tyrant, when hee playde the schoolemaister in Corinth.

Gabriell, thou hast a prety polwigge sparrows tayle peake, yet maist thou not compare with his: thy Father, for all by thy owne confession *hee makes haires*, had neuer the art to twilt vp such a grim triangle of haire as that.

Be not offended honest *T. N.* that I am thus bold with thee, for I affect thee for the names sake as much as any one man can do another, and know thee to be a fine fellow, and fit to discharge a farre higher calling than that wherein thou liu'st.

VVhat more stuffe lurketh behind in this letter to be distributed into shop-dust?

Pierce Pennilesse *is as childish and garish a booke as euer came in print; when he talks of the sheepish discourse of the Lambe of God and his enemies, he saies*, it is monstrous and absurd, and not to bee suffered in a Christian congregatiõ; that Richard hath scumd ouer the schoolemen, and of the froth of their folly made a dish of Diuinitie vnewelle which the Dogs would not eate.

If he saide so (as hee did) and can proue it (as hee hath done) by Saint *Lubecke* then *The Lambe of God* is as childish and garish stuffe as euer came in print indeede.

I but how doth *Pierce Pennilesse* expiate the coinquination of these obiections.

Richard, whom (*because he is his brother, he therefore*

Confuted.

fore censures more curious and rigorous, in calling him M. H. *than hee would haue done otherwise*) *red the Philosophie Lecture in Cambridge with good liking and singular commendation, when A perse a was not so much as* Idoneus auditor ciuilis scientiæ, *Ergo, the Lambe of God* beares a better Fleece than hee giues out it doth.

A perse a is improoued nothing since, excepting his old Flores Poetarum, *and* Tarletons *surmounting rethorique, with a little euphuisme and Greenesse inough.*

Gabriel *reports him to the fauourableste opinion of those that know A perse a his Prefaces, rimes, and the very timpanie of his Tarltonizing wit his Supplication to the Diuel.*

Quiet your selues a litle my Maisters, and you shal see mee dispearse all those cloudes well inough. That *Richard* red the Philosophie Lecture at *Cambridge*, I doe not withstand, but how?

Verie Lentenlie and scantlie, (farre bee it wee shu'd slander him so much as his brother *Richard* hath done, to saie he read it with good liking and singularitie.) Credite mee, any that hath but a little refuse *Colloquium* Latine, to interseame a Lecture with, and can saie but *Quapropter vos mei auditores* may reade with equiualent commendation and liking.

I remember him woondrous well. In the chiefe pompe of that his false praise, I both heard him and heard what was the vniuersall slender valuation of him.

There was eloquent *Maister Knox*, (a man whose losse all good learning can neuer sufficiently deplore) twas he and one *Maister Iones* of Trinitie Colledge, that in my time with more speciall approbation conuer sin those Readings.

I 3 Since

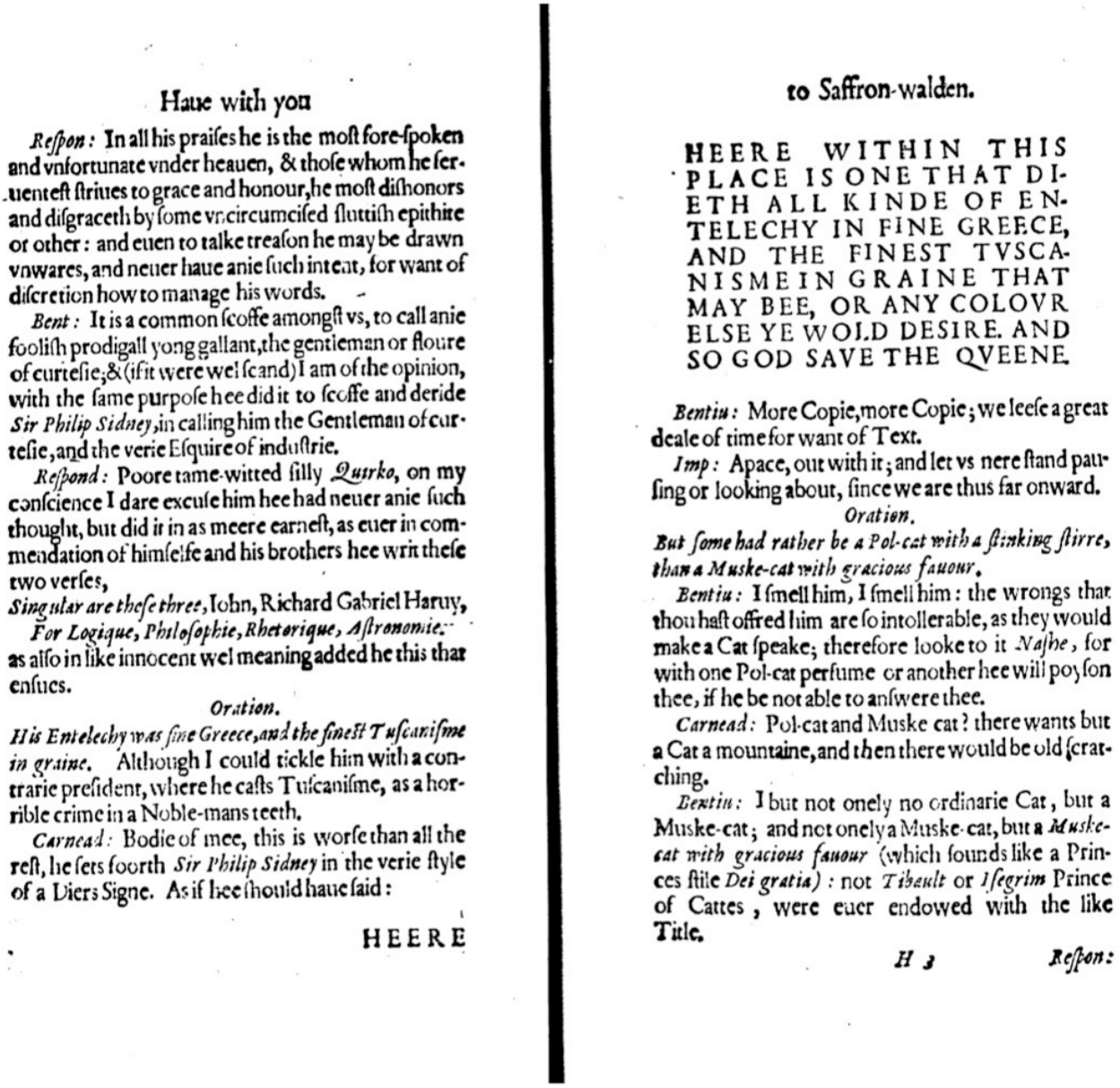
Thomas Nashe, *Strange Newes* (1592), sigs. I2v-I3v

[4] Alexandra Halasz also points out Nashe's awareness of "the graphics of the page" (1997:97).

[5] Images 1-4 are reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California and the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database.

and then subjected to facetious comment. These comments are presented as vocal interpolations from a set of disputants and we shall return to them in a moment.

Nashe's awareness of the semiotic possibilities of print is not limited to the simulation of oral forms of expression. A little later in *Have With You* he uses a block of Roman capitals to re-create one of Harvey's "sentences" in marketplace terms as a dyer's sign.



Haue with you

Reſpon: In all his praiſes he is the moſt fore-ſpoken and vnfortunate vnder heauen, & thoſe whom he ſeruenteſt ſtriues to grace and honour, he moſt diſhonors and diſgraceth by ſome vncircumciſed ſluttiſh epithite or other: and euen to talke treaſon he may be drawn vnwares, and neuer haue anie ſuch intent, for want of diſcretion how to manage his words.

Bent: It is a common ſcoffe amongſt vs, to call anie fooliſh prodigall yong gallant, the gentleman or floure of curteſie; & (if it were wel ſcand) I am of the opinion, with the ſame purpoſe hee did it to ſcoffe and deride *Sir Philip Sidney*, in calling him the Gentleman of curteſie, and the verie Eſquire of induſtrie.

Reſpond: Poore tame-witted ſilly *Quirke*, on my conſcience I dare excuſe him hee had neuer anie ſuch thought, but did it in as meere earneſt, as euer in commendation of himſelfe and his brothers hee writ theſe two verſes,

Singular are theſe three, Iohn, Richard Gabriel Haruy,
For Logique, Philoſophie, Rhetorique, Aſtronomie.

as alſo in like innocent wel meaning added he this that enſues.

Oration.

His Entelechy was fine Greece, and the fineſt Tuſcaniſme in graine. Although I could tickle him with a contrarie preſident, where he caſts Tuſcaniſme, as a horrible crime in a Noble-mans teeth.

Carnead: Bodie of mee, this is worſe than all the reſt, he ſets foorth *Sir Philip Sidney* in the verie ſtyle of a Diers Signe. As if hee ſhould haue ſaid:

HEERE

to Saffron-walden.

HEERE WITHIN THIS PLACE IS ONE THAT DIETH ALL KINDE OF ENTELECHY IN FINE GREECE, AND THE FINEST TVSCANISME IN GRAINE THAT MAY BEE, OR ANY COLOVR ELSE YE WOLD DESIRE. AND SO GOD SAVE THE QVEENE.

Bentiu: More Copie, more Copie; we leeſe a great deale of time for want of Text.

Imp: Apace, out with it; and let vs nere ſtand pauſing or looking about, ſince we are thus far onward.

Oration.

But ſome had rather be a Pol-cat with a ſtinking ſtirre, than a Muske-cat with gracious fauour.

Bentiu: I ſmell him, I ſmell him: the wrongs that thou haſt offred him are ſo intollerable, as they would make a Cat ſpeake; therefore looke to it *Naſhe*, for with one Pol-cat perſume or another hee will poyſon thee, if he be not able to anſwere thee.

Carnead: Pol-cat and Muske cat? there wants but a Cat a mountaine, and then there would be old ſcratching.

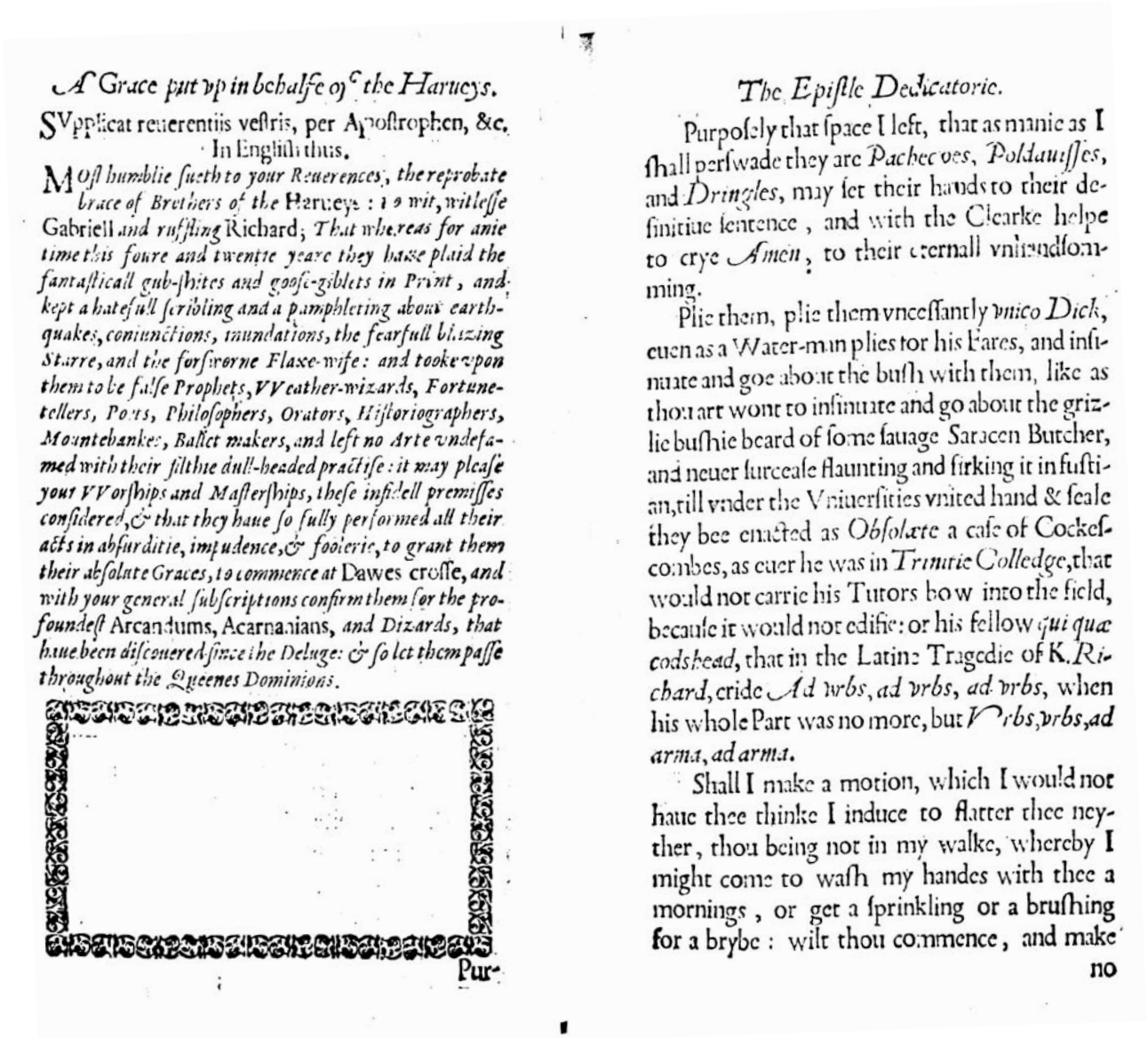
Bentiu: I but not onely no ordinarie Cat, but a Muske-cat; and not onely a Muske-cat, but a *Muske-cat with gracious fauour* (which ſounds like a Princes ſtile *Dei gratia*): not *Tibault* or *Iſegrim* Prince of Cattes, were euer endowed with the like Title.

H 3 *Reſpon:*

Thomas Nashe, *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* (1596), sigs. H1v-H3v

This is the visual equivalent of the street cries, and if fairground and market are important contexts for understanding the oral character of Nashe's writing, they are also important in determining its material form in print, as they show him experimenting with what we would now

call multimedia. The most remarkable instance of this is the blank space inserted in the epistle dedicatory that preludes *Have With You*.[6]



A Grace put vp in behalfe of the Harueys.

SVpplicat reuerentiis vestris, per Apostrophen, &c.
In English thus.

MOst humblie sueth to your Reuerences, the reprobate brace of Brothers of the Harueys: I o wit, witlesse Gabriell and ruffling Richard; That whereas for anie time this foure and twentie yeare they haue plaid the fantasticall gub-shites and goose-giblets in Print, and kept a hatefull scribling and a pamphleting about earthquakes, coniunctions, inundations, the fearfull blazing Starre, and the forsworne Flaxe-wife: and tooke vpon them to be false Prophets, VVeather-wizards, Fortune-tellers, Poets, Philosophers, Orators, Historiographers, Mountebankes, Ballet makers, and left no Arte vndefamed with their filthie dull-headed practise: it may please your VVorships and Masterships, these infidell premisses considered, & that they haue so fully performed all their acts in absurditie, impudence, & foolerie, to grant them their absolute Graces, to commence at Dawes crosse, and with your general subscriptions confirm them for the profoundest Arcandums, Acarnanians, and Dizards, that haue been discouered since the Deluge: & so let them passe throughout the Queenes Dominions.

Pur-

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

Purposely that space I left, that as manie as I shall perswade they are *Pachecoes*, *Poldauisses*, and *Dringles*, may set their hands to their definitiue sentence, and with the Clearke helpe to crye *Amen*, to their eternall vnfrendfomming.

Plie them, plie them vncessantly *vnico Dick*, euen as a Water-man plies for his Fares, and insinuate and goe about the bush with them, like as thou art wont to insinuate and go about the grizlie bushie beard of some sauage Saracen Butcher, and neuer surceasse flaunting and firking it in fustian, till vnder the Vniuersities vnited hand & seale they bee enacted as *Obsolete* a case of Cockescombes, as euer he was in *Trinitie Colledge*, that would not carrie his Tutors bow into the field, because it would not edifie: or his fellow *qui quæ codshead*, that in the Latine Tragedie of K. *Richard*, cride *Ad vrbs, ad vrbs, ad vrbs*, when his whole Part was no more, but *Vrbs, vrbs, ad arma, ad arma.*

Shall I make a motion, which I would not haue thee thinke I induce to flatter thee neyther, thou being not in my walke, whereby I might come to wash my handes with thee a mornings, or get a sprinkling or a brushing for a brybe: wilt thou commence, and make

no

Thomas Nashe, *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* (1596), sigs. B3v-B4v

Here Nashe invites his audience to add their own abuse of the hapless Harveys: "that space I left, that as manie as I shall perswade they are *Pachecoes*, *Poldauisses*, and *Dringles* may set their hands to their definitive sentence" (Nashe 1958:III, 13). We might see this in staunchly Elizabethan terms as an analogue of the stocks, though Nashe reminds us that "[s]pittle may be wip't off . . . but to be a villaine in print . . . is an attainder that will sticke by thee for euer" (Nashe 1958:III, 27). Or we might imagine the blank space as a wall waiting to be covered

[6] Nashe may well have borrowed the idea from the 1590 edition of Sidney's *Arcadia*. Here Basilus composes an "Epitaphe" for Amphialus, which is represented by a decorative border that occupies three-quarters of the page but with no content (sig. Rr7v). In the 1593 edition, it is filled in. (I am indebted to Alex Davis for this point.)

in graffiti. But if we give due credit to the resourcefulness of Nashe's manipulation of the media, then its true analogue would be the Facebook message board.

Nashe's inventiveness embraces both rhetorical and material form, and while it may be a little fanciful to present him as an Elizabethan precursor of Web 2.0, we can certainly see him as a practitioner of polyphonic technique. This is evident in the attacks on Harvey, as we have seen, and he provides an explicit account of his oral method in *Have With You To Saffron-Walden*: "I frame my whole Booke in the nature of a Dialogue," he explains.[7] The four disputants who share this dialogue are termed "interlocutors," while Nashe himself appears as an additional character in his "Piers Penniless" persona: "These foure, with my selfe, whom I personate as the Respondent in the last place, shall . . . clap up a *Colloquium* amongst them" (Nashe 1958:III, 23). We are back again in the world of fairground and market as Harvey's text is turned into a faux "oration" introduced by Nashe as "respondent": "Hem, cleare your throates and spit soundly; for now the pageant begins, and the stuffe by whole Cart-loads comes in." The interlocutors who throw in their abusive comments ("Marke, marke, a sentence, a sentence," "Theres two; keepe tally") also shout back warnings to the author himself: "looke to it, *Nashe*, for with one Polcat perfume or another hee will poyson thee, if he be not able to answere thee" (Nashe 1958:III, 42-43, 50). *Have With You* is peculiar in the lengths that it goes to in transforming written text into oral context, and it is polyphonic in the most obvious terms. But this polyphonic quality is apparent throughout his writing, including the proto-novelistic *The Unfortunate Traveller* (Jones 1983), which is structurally very different from the anti-Harvey polemics. Here Nashe interrupts his narrative with asides that are both oral: "There did I (soft, let me drinke before I go anie further)"; and physical: "my principal subject plucks me by the elbow." At one point, in a sudden flight of fancy, he switches into the persona of a church warden trying to get the bell ringers to stop pealing away: "Peace, peace, there in the belfry, let the service begin" (Nashe 1958:II, 209, 266, 234). Even as he calls for silence, Nashe conjures up the background clamor of his crowded, noisy texts.

Nashe's experimentation with the media of speech and print is intimately connected with his highly unstable relationship to both elite and popular culture, and I am certainly not suggesting that we should identify the oral only with popular culture. It would be quite wrong to think that in the sixteenth century there was a simple, hierarchical relationship between orality and literacy, and perhaps even more wrong to imagine a one-way direction from orality to literacy in terms of education. People who were unable to read nonetheless had access to printed texts and the extensive cross-fertilization between oral and literate cultures has been richly illustrated in studies by Adam Fox (2000) and by Fox and D. R. Woolf (2002). But we are also confronted by the paradox with regard to media evolution that the age in which rhetoric enjoyed its highest prestige since the early Roman empire coincides with the development of print culture in Europe. So there is not only a cross-fertilization between oral and literate cultures at the lowest level, in the market for printed ballads, for example, but also at the highest level, in the form of the academic disputation and the printed oration. University examinations were conducted orally. Some of the earliest books printed in England were collections of sayings.

[7] The Marprelate pamphlets are also referred to as a "Dialogue" in *Pasquill and Marforius* (1589), possibly also by Nashe (1958:I, 103).

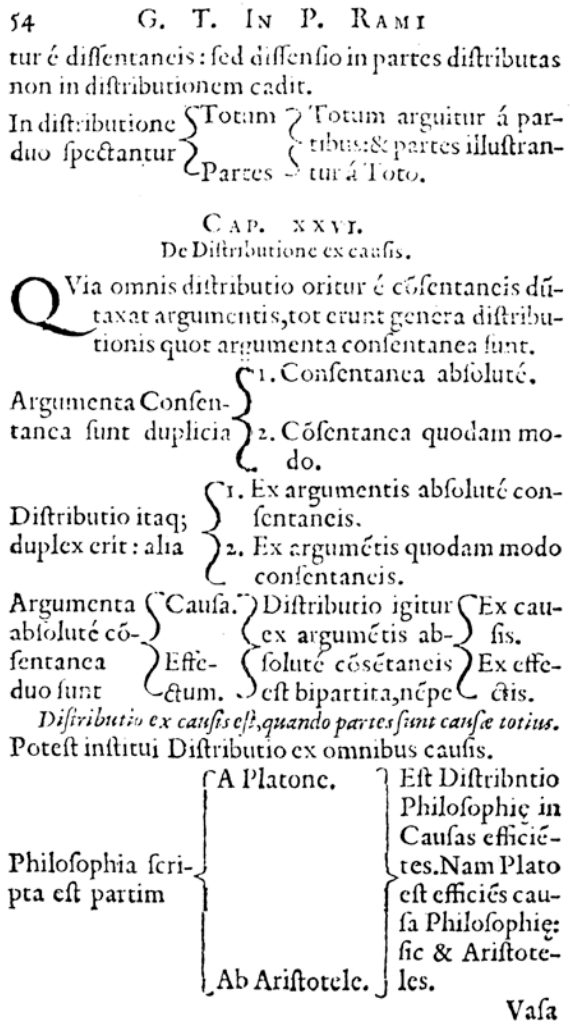
Erasmus's great publishing project, the *Adagia*, represented the full social range of this protean form from elite, well-chiseled aphorism to gloomy peasant wisdom.

All this is well known in general terms. The point of emphasizing it here, in the context of Nashe, is to show that while he might at first seem far too idiosyncratic to function as a representative figure in the way that McLuhan intended, his negotiations between elite and popular cultures and between orality and print in fact make him almost an exemplary figure for late sixteenth-century England. On the one hand, he can confide in the reader that "When I was a little childe, I was a great auditor of . . . aged mumping beldams as they sat warming their knees over a coale" (Nashe 1958:I, 369), advertising his delight in oral tradition. On the other hand, he can proudly lecture the students of Oxford and Cambridge on the "perfect methode of studie" advanced by scholars such as Cheke and Ascham (Nashe 1958:III, 317). What is surprising as far as McLuhan is concerned is that his interest in Nashe at this stage was largely confined to the elite aspects of his work. Certainly, he recognized the oral character of Nashe's writing. He begins the section on Nashe and rhetoric with the statement that "Nashe regarded himself as a professional orator and so did his contemporaries" (McLuhan 2006:235). But his Ph.D. shows little awareness either of Nashe's devotion to old wives' tales or of his more sophisticated simulation of popular oral forms in print. Instead, he quotes Nashe's claim to be "*tragicus Orator*" and asserts that "wherever one looks in Nashe, one encounters the figures of the high style" (Nashe 1958:III, 152; McLuhan 2006:242). For the young McLuhan, then, the importance of Nashe did not lie in his complex engagements with popular culture.

Coming to McLuhan's thesis with knowledge of all his subsequent interests in popular culture and the media, this will seem rather paradoxical. He does, after all, begin by calling him "Nashe the journalist." But a key sentence of the introduction to the thesis points us to an explanation: "When we have witnessed the extraordinary anti-Ciceronian movement which emerges in Machiavelli, Vives, Ramus, Montaigne, Muret, Lipsius, Descartes and which gives us our post-Renaissance world, we shall have completed our survey of the revolutions in education and culture which carry us from Isocrates to Nashe" (McLuhan 2006:8). What McLuhan wanted to do was to trace the development of a humanist curriculum based upon the language arts from antiquity through to the late Renaissance. Nashe represented the continuity of that tradition, and McLuhan claimed, revealing his Catholicism, that "Nashe's writings present an almost uninterrupted texture of patristic implication" (213). In the list of writers McLuhan identifies as being responsible for the post-Renaissance world, the important one in the present context is Ramus. McLuhan saw Nashe as the defender of patristic humanism against Ramist dialectic and its Puritan supporters. It is Nashe's anti-Ramist stance that provides McLuhan with the main theme of his final chapter, from the quarrel with Harvey onwards. In fact, despite apparently changing the subject, you could say that he did write his original "Arrest of Tudor Prose" thesis after all.

It is true that Nashe was fiercely antagonistic to Ramus. He attacks his "newe found toyes" and his "rayling" in *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (there is undoubtedly a case of the pot and kettle here); he mocks him for taking sixteen years to write his *Dialectic* in the preface to *Menaphon*; and, assuming that Nashe is the author of *An Almond for a Parrat*, one of the accusations he makes against John Penry, the man he identifies as Martin Marprelate, is that he has been "such a new-fangled friend unto Ramus" (Nashe 1958:I, 43; III, 313; 368). For

McLuhan, Ramus is the key to the quarrel between Nashe and Harvey: the latter was "tied to the scholastic Ramus, whereas Nashe belonged to the party of the ancients who were defending the cause of the reformed grammatical theology of Erasmus" (McLuhan 2006:211).[8] What Nashe was defending, in McLuhan's view, was the essential unity of the trivium, which had been broken up by Ramus when he transferred the first two parts of rhetoric (invention and distribution) to logic: "Nashe marks out for especial attack the Ramists 'who woulde separate Arts from Eloquence,'" McLuhan writes (Nashe 1958:I, 45; McLuhan 2006:214). The threefold unity of the trivium held special significance for McLuhan because it mirrored the Holy Trinity, a resemblance implied in the phrase "grammatical theology." Theology provides the backbone of McLuhan's argument that Nashe stood for the wholeness of the arts curriculum, now under threat from Ramus, and it also permeated his later ideas about media and environment. Here, though, the crucial point has to do with orality and literacy.



54 G. T. In P. Rami

tur é diſſentaneis: ſed diſſenſio in partes diſtributas non in diſtributionem cadit.

In diſtributione duo ſpectantur { Totum / Partes } { Totum arguitur á partibus: & partes illuſtrantur á Toto.

Cap. xxvi.

De Diſtributione ex cauſis.

QVia omnis diſtributio oritur é cõſentaneis dũtaxat argumentis, tot erunt genera diſtributionis quot argumenta conſentanea ſunt.

Argumenta Conſentanea ſunt duplicia { 1. Conſentanea abſoluté. / 2. Cõſentanea quodam modo.

Diſtributio itaq; duplex erit: alia { 1. Ex argumentis abſoluté conſentaneis. / 2. Ex argumẽtis quodam modo conſentaneis.

Argumenta abſoluté cõſentanea duo ſunt { Cauſa. / Effectum. } Diſtributio igitur ex argumẽtis abſoluté cõsẽtaneis eſt bipartita, nẽpe { Ex cauſis. / Ex effectis. }

Diſtributio ex cauſis eſt, quando partes ſunt cauſæ totius.

Poteſt inſtitui Diſtributio ex omnibus cauſis.

Philoſophia ſcripta eſt partim { A Platone. / Ab Ariſtotele. } Eſt Diſtribntio Philoſophię in Cauſas efficiẽtes. Nam Plato eſt efficiẽs cauſa Philoſophię: ſic & Ariſtoteles.

Vaſa

Petrus Ramus, *Dialecticae libri duo* (Cambridge, 1584), p. 54

One remark of Nashe's that neither McLuhan nor Nashe's great editor, R. B. McKerrow, commented on is the apology he makes to his readers at the end of *The Anatomie of Absurditie*, "for setting down such Rams horne rules of direction" (Nashe 1958:I, 48). This is surely a pun on "Ramus" and it seems to allude to Ramus' other most famous innovation, which was the introduction of "method" whereby the arts were separated according to their special functions through a series of binary divisions. In printed textbooks the most characteristic feature of Ramist method is the profusion of curly "rams horn" brackets.[9] We have seen how Nashe used typography to reconstruct an apparently oral medium, something that McLuhan was to emulate in his 1960s publications. Here, however, Nashe's reference to the ram's horn brackets points in exactly the opposite direction: to the emergence of a print culture that would obliterate the old

[8] The text of the Ph.D. reads "party" here (McLuhan 1943:354).

[9] There are other ways of reading the image: Ramist brackets resemble the horns of highland cattle more closely than they do rams' horns, which spiral like the "at" sign of an e-mail address. If Nashe is imagining the latter, then "Rams horne rules of direction" would take you round in circles. However, the phrase seems to me more likely to suggest linearity. I am grateful to Sarah Knight for pointing out that hornbooks used rams' horn, which is almost certainly part of the pun.

oral world. This is ultimately what was at stake in McLuhan's thesis, but it was not McLuhan who pursued the point to that conclusion. He wrote his thesis not at Cambridge but at St. Louis University, where he had secured a post in the English department. There in 1937 he supervised the young Walter Ong for his Masters thesis on sprung rhythm in Gerard Manley Hopkins and then saw him off to Harvard with the germ of an idea for a quite different topic.[10] This work, eventually published as *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958), is the source of the now familiar ideas (ones that have been frequently re-examined, I should add) that the print medium created a new sense of space, developing the visual at the expense of the oral, encouraging linear thinking, closure, and the interiorization of the world. "From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason" was the subtitle of Ong's influential work. But it was McLuhan who suggested Ramus to Ong in the first place, and it was Nashe who suggested Ramus to McLuhan. Nashe is really the source of the central theses of what is sometimes called the Orality/Literacy school.

Four years after the appearance of Ong's work, McLuhan published *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, where both Nashe and Ramus resurfaced in strikingly antithetical roles. Ramus' exploitation of the new medium of print had a "homogenizing" effect on students, he claimed: "students processed by print technology in this way would be able to translate every kind of problem and experience into the new visual kind of lineal order" (1962:146). Linearity is what Nashe himself detected in his reference to those ram's horn *rules of direction* [my italics], and McLuhan adopted what he called his "mosaic" approach in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* specifically to do battle against the great enemy of linear thinking. Here, Nashe is his champion. McLuhan represents him with the bravura passage on the drowning of Leander from *Lenten Stuffe*, comparing it with a Louis Armstrong trumpet solo. The analogy develops the point about Nashe's "extemporal vaine" made at the very start of his thesis at the same time as it translates Nashe's writing into sound effect in precise contrast to the new visual order for which he holds Ramus responsible. The headline for his section on Nashe runs "The oral polyphony of the prose of Nashe offends against lineal and literary decorum" (1962:201-2).[11] This is McLuhan's last word on Nashe, the distillation of his entire Ph.D., twenty years on, after its premises had been filtered through Ong's research on Ramus and McLuhan's own thinking about the modern media. But it also takes him into new territory, completely unexplored in the thesis. The oral polyphony that McLuhan recognized in Nashe, and which we glanced at earlier, is what Bakhtin recognized first in Dostoevsky and later in Rabelais as he merged his own theory of polyphony with a concept of the carnivalesque. But McLuhan seems to have reached this point quite independently of Bakhtin, since his Rabelais study was first translated into English in 1968 and Dostoevsky in 1973.

The Gutenberg Galaxy was the book that launched McLuhan as a 1960s intellectual celebrity. In 1968, at the radical climax of the sixties, Penguin published *McLuhan Hot & Cool*, subtitled "a primer for the understanding of . . . McLuhan," which offered a symposium of

---

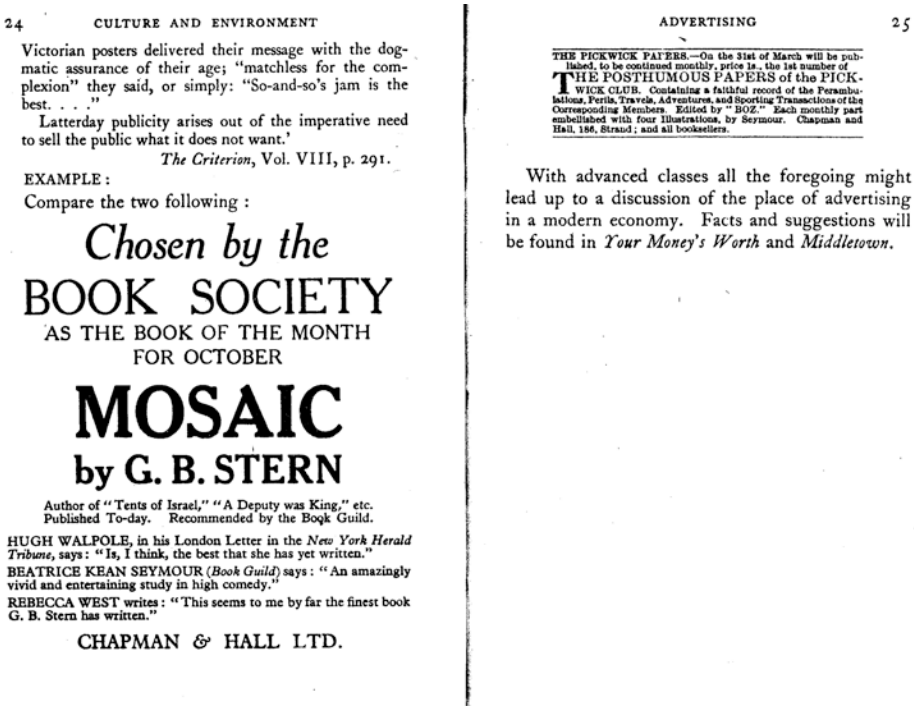
[10] Ong dedicated his *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (1958a) to McLuhan and recalled McLuhan's early days as a teacher of English in Sanderson and Macdonald (1989).

[11] The previous section is captioned "The divorce of poetry and music was first reflected by the printed page."

commentary on the semiotics of popular culture, media and society, the death of the book, and the new orality of the electronic age (Stearn 1968). The following year, in an interview with *Playboy* magazine (which had some intellectual pretensions in those days), McLuhan himself commented on the apparent discrepancy between his earlier self and his re-invention as an exponent of media and popular culture (McLuhan and Zingrone 1995:265):

> For many years, until I wrote my first book, *The Mechanical Bride* [on the semiotics of advertising, in 1951], I adopted an extremely moralistic approach to all environmental technology. I loathed machinery, I abominated cities, I equated the Industrial Revolution with original sin and mass media with the Fall. In short, I rejected almost every element of modern life in favor of a Rousseauvian utopianism. But gradually I perceived how sterile and useless this attitude was . . . I realized that artistic creation is the playback of ordinary experience—from trash to treasures. I ceased being a moralist and became a student.

This is a rare moment of insight into the two sides of McLuhan—his extreme conservatism and his ultra-modernity, his devotion both to high art and to popular forms of expression. The origins of this division can be traced back to McLuhan's Cambridge period and, in particular, to Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment* (1933). This book laments the "Loss of the Organic Community" and explains that "the great agent of change, and from our point of view, destruction, has of course been the machine," and it is almost certainly this that McLuhan was recalling in the *Playboy* interview (Leavis and Thompson 1933:3; Marchand 1989:35). But *Culture and Environment* is also centrally concerned with the language of advertising and applies close reading techniques to this aspect of modern mass culture. What is more, it reproduces examples of commercial typography to support its arguments. This book is undoubtedly a source for McLuhan's first foray into media studies with *The Mechanical Bride*, but it is quite possibly, and fortuitously, also a source for McLuhan's adoption of the term "mosaic" in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (see image 5).



24 CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

Victorian posters delivered their message with the dogmatic assurance of their age; "matchless for the complexion" they said, or simply: "So-and-so's jam is the best. . . ."

Latterday publicity arises out of the imperative need to sell the public what it does not want.'

The Criterion, Vol. VIII, p. 291.

EXAMPLE:

Compare the two following:

Chosen by the
BOOK SOCIETY
AS THE BOOK OF THE MONTH
FOR OCTOBER
MOSAIC
by G. B. STERN
Author of "Tents of Israel," "A Deputy was King," etc.
Published To-day. Recommended by the Book Guild.

HUGH WALPOLE, in his London Letter in the *New York Herald Tribune*, says: "Is, I think, the best that she has yet written."
BEATRICE KEAN SEYMOUR (*Book Guild*) says: "An amazingly vivid and entertaining study in high comedy."
REBECCA WEST writes: "This seems to me by far the finest book G. B. Stern has written."

CHAPMAN & HALL LTD.

ADVERTISING 25

THE PICKWICK PAPERS.—On the 31st of March will be published, to be continued monthly, price 1s., the 1st number of THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS of the PICKWICK CLUB. Containing a faithful record of the Perambulations, Perils, Travels, Adventures, and Sporting Transactions of the Corresponding Members. Edited by "BOZ." Each monthly part embellished with four Illustrations, by Seymour. Chapman and Hall, 186, Strand; and all booksellers.

With advanced classes all the foregoing might lead up to a discussion of the place of advertising in a modern economy. Facts and suggestions will be found in *Your Money's Worth* and *Middletown*.

Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment*, pp. 24-25

There are other, more general kinds of overlap between McLuhan's

traditionalist and modern personae. He himself reminded his audience from time to time that there is really no great contradiction in studying both classical communications theory and the modern media; in the end, it's all rhetoric. He was, anyway, halfway there when he referred in his thesis to "the revolutions in education and culture that carry us from Isocrates to Nashe," where to many ears "Nashe" might have sounded a note of *bathos* in such elevated company. Nor did he put this work behind him after discovering modern popular culture. His son, Eric McLuhan, recalls that in June 1974, after bursting a blood vessel and being admitted to hospital with spectacular bleeding, his father still wanted to go back to the Ph.D.: "Between nurses, we went through Nashe" (Gordon 1997:275).

Although Nashe himself disappears from view in McLuhan after *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, the effects of his early immersion in Nashe's writing can be seen to pervade his work in ways that go far beyond the rather limited role assigned to him in the Ph.D. Perhaps the most specific link between McLuhan's thesis and his later interests lies in the concept of secondary orality. The term itself was invented by Ong, but the idea is fundamental to much of McLuhan's commentary on the modern media. It appears in Ong's book, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology*, where he uses it to distinguish between the pristine orality of pre-literate cultures and the kind of orality produced by the electronic media in advanced technological cultures (1971:20; 285), and the distinction is at work throughout his later, summative volume, *Orality and Literacy* (1982). What I want to argue here is that Nashe uses print itself as a form of secondary orality. That he does so will be apparent, I hope, from my discussion of the anti-Harvey pamphlets where Nashe reconfigures his own book as performance in order to contrast it with the ponderous materiality of Harvey's printed tome. But as well as using print to reveal oral literary form, Nashe is also interested in print as a medium for communicating the aural qualities of speech—in the sound effects of print, in fact. Ramus's rules of direction point towards the silent reader, but Nashe's polyphony creates voices in the head. Rhetoric had always recognized the importance of sound effect in the importance it attached to *pronuntiatio*, but even when it was designed for writing instruction and for print, rather than for speech performance, rhetoric retained its oral and aural character. Ong himself recognized this when he wrote that the styles of both Lyly and Nashe "are clearly devised for their effect on the ear and thus are oral in a real sense, but . . . titillation of the ear is not necessarily residual oralism: it can be a new and conscious sophistication" (Ong 1971:42). Though he does not say so, this *aural* sophistication, delivered through print, is what he defines elsewhere as secondary orality, and it is succinctly illustrated in McLuhan's characterization of Nashe's prose as jazz.

The work of both McLuhan and Ong has been attacked from very different positions. On the one hand, anthropologists such as Ruth Finnegan have claimed that it represents a kind of technological determinism in which orality is viewed as an essentially primitive condition to be superseded by writing and print, which are then claimed as the precondition for democracy, individualism, and all the other characteristics of Western civilization (Finnegan 1988:141, 146). Literary scholars, on the other hand, have tended to see—for good or ill—an underlying sentimentalization of the oral in McLuhan and Ong. David Norbrook, for example, writes rather acidly: "Literary critics seem particularly susceptible to the charm of an era before the curse of mass literacy. The writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, Marshall McLuhan and Walter J. Ong have given renewed authority to the argument that the best features of Renaissance literature derived not

from intellectually innovative currents, but from residual elements of the old 'oral' culture" (Norbrook 2002:8). The point about "the curse of mass literacy" is well made, and Norbrook is right to see affinities between McLuhan and Bakhtin. But it also attributes a naivety to both McLuhan and Ong that is unwarranted. Ong stated quite clearly in his most widely read book: "Orality is not an ideal, and never was. To approach it positively is not to advocate it as a permanent state for any culture. Literacy opens possibilities to the word and to human existence unimaginable without writing" (1982:175). McLuhan's own self-appraisal with regard to the unspoiled wholeness of pre-technological man is evident in the *Playboy* interview.

A more extensive critique of the Orality/Literacy school has been offered by another literary scholar, Timothy Clark, from a Derridean standpoint. Clark argues that the idealization of oral culture by McLuhan and Ong derives from late eighteenth-century ideas about communal forms of expression and cultural wholeness that combine with print culture to produce "a kind of internalised oratory" (T. Clark 1999:62-63).[12] This Romantic reinstatement of the oral as the basis for restoring our fully human selves is predicated upon an "essentialist anthropocentrism" that our modern understanding of the relationship between biology and technology must now deconstruct (67). Clark's argument is historically detailed and much of his discussion of McLuhan and Ong is persuasively aligned with the proto-Romantic cult of the oral in Rousseau, Herder, and elocutionists such as Thomas Sheridan. His account of the conflation of oral "affect" with the internalizing features of print culture in the later eighteenth century is particularly deft. But his conclusion that Ong refused to countenance "a potentially deconstructive understanding of the human as an unstable hybrid of the psychic and the technic" through the advance of prosthetics could not fairly be extended to McLuhan (*idem*). McLuhan's premise was that "speech was the first technology," and he also recognized that "the very instantaneous nature of co-existence among our technological instruments has created a crisis quite new in human history. Our extended faculties and senses now constitute a single field of experience" **(**McLuhan 1964:63; 1962:5**)**. And there are many points where McLuhan explicitly resists the charge that Clark makes against Ong; for example, "You are the content of any extension of yourself, whether it be pin or pen, pencil or sword, be it palace or page, song or dance or speech . . . . The meaning of all these is the experience of using these extensions of yourself" (McLuhan and Zingrone 1995:280). McLuhan was a Catholic, like Ong of course, but it would certainly be untrue to suggest that he was unaware of the implications of technology for our very concept of the human. Indeed, the subtitle of *Understanding Media*—"The extensions of man"—is an indication of how central the idea of the prosthetic was to McLuhan's thought.[13]

This would seem to have taken us a long way from Nashe, but it was Nashe who pointed McLuhan in this direction and the experience of reading him in depth for his Ph.D. had a slow burn. Nashe's opposition to Ramus helped to formulate the oral culture/print culture distinctions of both McLuhan and Ong, while Nashe's own experiments with print culture had an impact on McLuhan's later ideas about the oral and acoustic aspects of the media and (as Ong termed it)

---

[12] For Ong's own critique of Derrida on words as sounds and words as signs, see Ong 1982:75-77.

[13] The essay "The Gadget Lover: Narcissus as Narcosis" is an especially good source of illustration: "With the arrival of electric technology, man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system itself . . . . Man becomes, as it were, the sex organs of the machine world" (McLuhan 1964:47, 51).

"secondary orality." Nashe's oral personae of showman and mountebank, derived from fairground and marketplace, do not simply provide stylistic models for McLuhan (though they probably do that too); they also direct him toward popular culture and the language of advertising. It is Nashe who informs McLuhan's understanding of textual polyphony. And when we put McLuhan's thesis in the context of 1930s Cambridge English, with I. A. Richards on close reading and Leavis and Thompson on culture and environment, it is not difficult to trace the path that led to what might have seemed a complete intellectual makeover. It would be stretching the point too far to suggest that Nashe, even with his blank message board, was responsible for McLuhan's anticipation of the electronic interdependence of the global village, though other aspects of his thesis, such as his interest in the medieval Book of Nature, point very much in that direction.[14] Ultimately, perhaps the most fundamental affinity between Nashe and McLuhan lies both in their complex relationships with both elite and popular culture and in their ability to face in opposite directions at the same time: backward to the imaginary wholeness of oral tradition and the world of discourse and dialogue, and forward to the world of secondary orality and the modern media.

University of St. Andrews

References

Bacon 1857-74 — Francis Bacon. *The Works of Francis Bacon*. Ed. by James Spedding, R. L. Ellis, and D. D. Heath. 14 vols. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts.

Bakhtin 1968 — Mikhail Bakhtin. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. by Hélène Iswolsky. Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press.

Bakhtin 1973 — _____. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Trans. by R. W. Rotsel. Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis.

Barker 2006 — Paul Barker. "Medium Rare." *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 March:3-4.

Chambers 1957 [1932] — R. W. Chambers. *The Continuity of English Prose.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

C. Clark 1979 — Carol Clark. "'The Onely Languag'd-Men of all the World': Rabelais and the Art of the Mountebank." *Modern Language Quarterly,* 74:538-52.

T. Clark 1999 — Timothy Clark. "Technology Inside: Enlightenment and Romantic Assumptions of the Orality/Literacy School." *Oxford Literary Review*, 21:57-72.

[14] On McLuhan and the Internet, see Levinson 1999; on the Internet and the Book of Nature, see Rhodes 2000.

Erne 2003 — Lukas Erne. *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Finnegan 1988 — Ruth Finnegan. *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Fox 2000 — Adam Fox. *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fox and Woolf 2002 — _____ and Daniel Woolf, eds. *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Gordon 1997 — W. Terrence Gordon. *Marshall McLuhan: Escape Into Understanding*. New York: Basic Books.

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

Jones 1983 — Ann Rosalind Jones. "Inside the Outsider: Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* and Bakhtin's Polyphonic Novel." *English Literary History,* 50:61-81.

Jonson 1998 — Ben Jonson. *Volpone and Other Plays*. Ed. by Lorna Hutson. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Kinney 1986 — Arthur F. Kinney. *Humanist Poetics: Thought, Rhetoric, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century England.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Leavis and Thompson 1933 — F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson. *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Levinson 1999 — Paul Levinson. *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium.* London and New York: Routledge.

Lyly 1902 — John Lyly. *The Complete Works of John Lyly*. Ed. by R. Warwick Bond. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Marchand 1989 — Philip Marchand. *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger.* New York: Ticknor and Fields.

"Marprelate" 1911 — *The Marprelate Tracts, 1588, 1589*. Ed. by William Pierce. London: James Clarke.

McKenzie 2002 — D. F. McKenzie. *"Printers of the Mind" and Other Essays*. Ed. by Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, S. J. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

McLuhan 1943 — Marshall McLuhan. "The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time." Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Cambridge.

McLuhan 1962 — _____. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McLuhan 1964 — _____. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Routledge. Rpt. 2001.

McLuhan 2006 — _____. *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time.* Ed. by W. Terrence Gordon. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press.

McLuhan and Gordon 2005 — _____ and W. Terrence Gordon, eds. *Marshall McLuhan Unbound*. Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press.

McLuhan and Zingrone 1995 — Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, eds. *Essential McLuhan.* New York: Basic Books.

Nashe 1958 — Thomas Nashe. *The Works of Thomas Nashe*. Ed. by R. B. McKerrow. Rev. by F. P. Wilson. 5 vols. Oxford: Blackwell.

Norbrook 2002 — David Norbrook. *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ong 1941 — Walter J. Ong. "Hopkins' Sprung Rhythm and the Life of English Poetry." M.A. Dissertation, Saint Louis University.

Ong 1958a — _____. *Ramus and Talon Inventory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ong 1958b — _____. *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ong 1971 — _____. *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ong 1982 — _____. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word.* New York: Methuen.

Rhodes 2000 — Neil Rhodes. "Articulate Networks: The Self, the Book and the World." In *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*. Ed. by Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 181-93.

Richards 1929 — I. A. Richards. *Practical Criticism.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.

Sanderson and Macdonald 1989 — George Sanderson and Frank Macdonald, eds. *Marshall McLuhan: The Man and His Message*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.

Shakespeare 1997 — William Shakespeare. *The Norton Shakespeare*. Ed. by Stephen Greenblatt. New York: W. W. Norton.

Stearn 1968 — Gerald E. Stearn, ed. *McLuhan Hot and Cool.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Summersgill 1951 — T. L. Summersgill. "The Influence of the Marprelate Controversy upon the Style of Nashe." *Studies in Philology*, 48:145-60.

This page is intentionally left blank.