

The Terrors of the Night, or, a discourse of apparitions

The first public reading, 20th May 2017, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

Script by Thomas Nashe, Kate De Rycker, and Jason Morell

Introduction

First of all, I'd like to say a huge thank you to all of you for coming along to this 'Read Not Dead' event today, and for taking a chance on a little known author. I promise you, you are in for a treat! My name is Kate De Rycker, and I am the editor of Thomas Nashe's *Terrors of the Night*, which (as well as being today's 'Read Not Dead' script) is one of the texts being published in a new scholarly edition of Nashe's complete works. The opportunity to speak to you today is really thanks to the two leads on the 'Thomas Nashe Project', Professors Jennifer Richards and Andrew Hadfield, who are not only responsible for this 6 volume edition, but have planned this and other events like it to bring his writing off the page. This is going to be a really significant edition because it will be the first time that all of Nashe's works will be edited and annotated since before the First World War.

Before we hear the script, I'd like to give an introduction to Nashe's 'Discourse of Apparitions'. Let me take you back to February 1593. Nashe is 26 years old, and he has made a name for himself on the London literary scene with *Pierce Penilesse* (a satire about a recent graduate who finds himself overqualified and underpaid) as well as becoming famed for his pamphlet war with Gabriel Harvey, which revealed his mercilessly caustic wit. He is invited to visit a friend out in the fens, in an area of Huntingdonshire which had become notorious for a recent investigation into witchcraft. While there, Nashe hears a story that, before the death of his friend's father, the man had been visited by a series of ghosts. Nashe, seeing the opportunity for a good story, heads back to London and registers the title *Terrors of the Night* with the Stationer's Company. This is maybe the oldest part of the essay we now have, which is why I've moved it to the front of today's script.

For some reason, Nashe drops this idea, and instead publishes a religious pamphlet called *Christs Teares over Jerusalem* in October 1593. This was to be a controversial pamphlet because it included accusations of financial corruption by the London authorities, and Nashe was sent to Newgate prison as a result in November 1593. Luckily for Nashe, Sir George Carey (who would go on to become the patron of Shakespeare's acting company, the Chamberlain's Men) came to his rescue and paid for his release, as a letter written by Carey to his wife explains. Here's an excerpt: "Nashe hath dedicated a book unto you with promise of a better. I will dispurse 10 nobles in your reward to him, and he shall not find my purse shut to relieve him out of prison, where he is presently in great misery, maliced for writing against the Londoners in the 83rd leaf of *Christ's Teares over Jerusalem*." This is just conjecture, but Nashe's recent experience in prison does seem relevant when he writes in *Terrors of the Night* about convicted men left alone with their thoughts, and afraid of the darkness.

The Careys invited Nashe to spend the Christmas holidays with them in Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight. It was after this visit that Nashe decided to substantially revise *Terrors of the Night*, ultimately transforming it into a discussion about the possible spiritual and physiological causes of dreams. We know from that same letter by George Carey that the topic was under discussion in aristocratic circles; he writes to his wife that the “games at Court” are: “likes and dislikes by letters, dreams and interpretations of them; prophets, causes why they prophecy, and what they mean.” As the governor of the Isle of Wight, Carey was also known to chuck out lawyers and quacks from the island, so Nashe’s mocking of con-artists claiming to cure illnesses may also be a targeted piece of satire.

Bursting through Nashe’s overall rationalisation that dreams reflect the interior fears of the subject, are instances of Nashe’s nostalgia for the old-wives tales of his youth, and his barely repressed disgust for female sexuality, a combination which foreshadows Mercutio’s unsettling ‘Queen Mab’ monologue from *Romeo and Juliet*. No wonder, then, that the psychoanalyst Ernest Jones sent Sigmund Freud a copy of *Terrors of the Night*, as an example of a text which anticipated Freud’s ‘interpretation of dreams’ centuries before.

I hope this reading of *Terrors of the Night* will be an enjoyable glimpse into the weird and wonderful world of Nashe, but as you may already suspect, there is also a geekier reason why the Nashe Project is interested in hearing this text in performance. To reflect the divided personality of Nashe between his rational, public persona, and his more impulsive, darker side, I have divided his words between the two actors. They have had only 7 hours to rehearse this text, so you are hearing a fully live text for the first time in over 400 years!

Nashe is an incredibly dramatic prose writer. Sometimes this is conveyed through vividly grotesque scenes, in which you can almost hear the crunch of bones as he describes an execution. At other times he uses a conversational tone to give the illusion that he is there by the reader’s side, asking them to excuse him while he takes a sip from his drink. So, for those of you who have read something by Nashe before, I ask: does hearing *Terrors of the Night* being spoken out loud, rather than being read in silence, change the way you approach his writing? And for those of you for whom Nashe is a novelty, how does his language compare to that of Renaissance plays or books you have previously heard or read? We’d love to hear from you, so if you have some time at the end of the reading, please do fill in our feedback form or send me an email.

Finally, I would like to say a big thank you to our collaborators who will now be bringing Nashe’s words to life: actors Peter Hamilton Dyer and Caroline Faber, musician Ansuman Biswas, and the director, Jason Morell. And with that, let me introduce to you: *The Terrors of the Night*.

The reading

Music cue

Nashe 1:

A little time to beguile time idly discontented, and satisfy some of my solitary friends here in the county, I have hastily undertook to write of the weary fancies of the night, wherein if I weary none with my weak fancies, I will hereafter lean harder on my pen and fetch the pedigree of my praise, from the utmost of pains!

I will tell you a strange tale; whether of true melancholy or true apparition, I will not take upon me to determine. It was my chance in February last to be in the country some threescore mile off from London, where a Gentleman of good worship and credit falling sick, the very second day of his lying down he pretended to have miraculous waking visions, which before I enter to describe, thus much I will inform ye by the way, that at the reporting them he was in perfect memory. A wise, grave, sensible man he ever was reputed, and so approved himself in all his actions in his life time. Believe it or condemn it, as you shall see cause, for I leave to be censured indifferently.

The first day of his distemperature, he visibly saw (as he affirmed)

Music cue

all his chamber hung with silken nets and silver hooks, the devil (as it should seem) coming thither a fishing.

Nashe 2:

With the nets he feared to be strangled or smothered, and with the hooks to have his throat scratched out and his flesh rent and mangled.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

At length, he knew not how they suddenly vanished and the whole chamber was cleared.

Music cue

Next a company of lusty sailors (everyone a sharper or a swaggerer at the least) having made a brave voyage, came carousing and quaffing in large silver cans to his health.

Music cue (under)

Nashe 2:

Fellows they were that had good big pop-mouths to cry “port a helm saint George!” and knew as well the best what belongs to falling on the star-board buttock.

Music stop

Nashe 1:

But to the issue of my tale: their drunken proffers he utterly put by, and said he highly scorned and detested both them and their hellish disguisings, which notwithstanding, they tossed their cups to the skies and reeled and staggered up and down the room like a ship shaking in the wind. After all they danced lusty gallant, and a drunken Danish lavolta or two, and so departed.

Music cue under**Nashe 1:**

For the second course ran in a number of stately devils, bringing in boisterous chests of massy treasure betwixt them. As brave they were as Turkish janissaries, having their apparel all powdered with gold and pearl, and their arms as it were emailed with rich chains and bracelets.

Nashe 2:

But faces far blacker than any ball of tobacco, great glaring eyes that had whole shelves of Kentish oysters in them and terrible wide mouths, whereof not one of them, but would well have made a case for Molenax's great globe of the world. These lovely youths and full of favour, having stalked up and down the just measures of a sinkapace, opened one of the principal chests they brought and out of it plucked a princely royal tent, whose empearled shining canopy they quickly advanced on high, and with all artificial magnificence adorned like a state.

Nashe 1:

Which performed, pompous Lucifer entered, imitating in goodly stature the huge picture of Laocoon at Rome, who sent unto him a gallant ambassador, signifying thus much:

Nashe 2:

that if he would serve him, he should have all the rich treasure that he saw there, or any further wealth would desire.

Nashe 1:

The Gentleman returned this mild answer, that he knew not what he was, whether an angel or a wicked fiend, and if an angel, he was but his fellow servant, and no otherwise to be served or regarded. If a fiend or a devil, he had nothing to do with him, for God had exalted and redeemed him above his desperate outcast condition, and a strong faith he had to defy and withstand all his juggling temptations. Having uttered these words, all the whole train of them invisibly avoided, and he never set eye on them after.

Then did there for the third pageant presenting themselves unto him,

Music cue**Nashe 2:**

an inveigling troupe of naked virgins, thrice more amiable and beautiful than the bright vestals that brought in Augustus' testament to the Senate, after his decease.

Nashe 1:

But no vestal-like ornament had they about them, for from top to toe bare despoiled they were, except some one or two of them, that ware masks before their face and had transparent azured lawn veils before the chief jewel houses of their honours.

Nashe 2:

Their hair they wore loose unrolled about their shoulders, whose dangling amber trammels reaching down beneath their knees, seemed to drop balm on their delicious bodies,

Music cue

Nashe 2:

And ever they moved to and fro, with their light windy wavings, wantonly to correct their exquisite mistresses.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

Their dainty feet in their tender bird like tripping, enamelled, as it were the dusty ground, and their odoriferous breath more perfumed the air than ordinance would,

Nashe 1 and 2:

that is charged with amomum, musk, civet and ambergris.

Nashe 1:

But to leave amplifications and proceed.

Nashe 2:

Those sweet

Nashe 1 and 2:

bewitching naked maids

Nashe 2:

having majestically paced about the chamber, to the end that their natural unshelled shining mother-pearl proportions might be more imprintingly apprehended, close to his bedside, modestly blushing they approached,

Music cue

Nashe 1:

and made impudent proffer to him of their lascivious embraces. He obstinately bent to withstand these sinful allurements no less than the former, bade them go seek entertainment of hotter bloods, for he had not to satisfy them.

Nashe 2:

A cold comfort was this to the poor wenches no better clothed, yet they hearing what to trust to, very sorrowfully retired and shrunk away.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

Lo in the fourth act

Music cue

Nashe 2:

there sallied out a grave assembly of sober attired matrons, much like the virgins of Mary Magdalen's order in Rome, which vow never to see man. With no incontinent courtesy did they greet him, but told him, if so he thought good they would pray for him.

Nashe 1:

Thereupon, from the beginning to the ending he unfolded unto them, how he had been mightily haunted with wicked illusions of late, but nevertheless, if he could be persuaded that they were angels or saints, their invocations could not hurt him. Yea, he would add his desire to their requests, to make their prayers more penetrably enforcing.

Nashe 2:

Without further parley, upon their knees, and for half an hour never ceased to intercessionate God for his speedy recovery.

Nashe 1:

Rising up again on the right hand of his bed, there appeared a clear light, and with that he might perceive

Music cue

Nashe 2:

a naked, slender foot offering to steal betwixt the sheets in to him.

Nashe 1:

At which instant, entered a messenger from a knight of great honour hereabouts, who sent him a most precious extract quintessence to drink, which no sooner he tasted, but the thought he saw all the forenamed interluders at once, hand over head

Nashe 2:

leap, plunge and drown themselves in puddles and ditches hard by

Music cue

Nashe 1:

and he felt perfect ease.

Nashe 2:

But long it lasted not with him, for within four hours after, having not fully settled his estate in order, he grew to trifling dotage, and raving died within two days following.

Nashe 1:

God is my witness, in all this relation, I borrow no essential part from stretched out invention, nor have I one jot abused my informations, only for the recreation of my readers, whom loath to tire with a coarse homespun tale, that should dull them worse than Holland cheese. Here and there I welt and gard it with allusive exornations and comparisons...and yet methinks it comes off too gouty and lumbering.

Be it as it will, it is like to have no more allowance of English for me. If the world will give it any allowance of truth, so it is; for then I hope my excuse is already lawfully customed and authorised,

Music cue

Nashe 2:

since truth is ever drawn and painted naked and I have lent her but a leather patched cloak at most to keep her from the cold;

Nashe 1:

that is, that she come off not too lamely and coldly. Upon the accidental occasion of this dream or apparition (call or miscall it what you will, for it is yours as freely as any waste-paper that ever you had in your lives) was this Pamphlet (no bigger than an old Preface) speedily botched up and compiled.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

Are there any doubts which remain in your mind indigested, as touching this incredible narration I have unfolded?

Nashe 1:

Well doubt you not, but I am mild and tractable, and will resolve you in what I may. First, the house where this gentleman dwelt, stood in a low marish ground, almost a rotten a climate as the Low Countries, where the misty air is as thick as mould-butter, and the dew lies like frothy balm on the ground. It was noted over and besides to have been an unlucky house to all his predecessors, situated in a quarter not altogether exempted from witches.

Music cue**Nashe 1:**

The abrupt falling into his sickness was suspicious, proceeding from no apparent surfeit or mis-diet. The outrageous tyranny of it in so short a time bred thrice more admiration and wonder than his disclosed dream or vision might seem probable reason to confirm it,

Nashe 1 and 2:

since none have such palpable dreams or visions, but die presently after

Nashe 2:

A number of men there yet be living, who have been haunted by their wives after their death, about forswearing themselves and undoing their children, of whom they promised to be careful fathers,

Nashe 1:

whereof I can gather no reason but this: that women are born to torment a man both alive and dead.

Nashe 2:

I have heard of others likewise, that beside these night terrors, have been (for whole months together whether so-ever they went or rid) pursued by weasels and rats and oftentimes with squirrels and hares, that in the travelling of three hundred miles, have still waited on their horse heels.

Nashe 1:

But these are only the exploits and stratagems of witches, which may well astonish a little at first sight, but if a man have the least heart or spirit to withstand one fierce blast of their bravados, he shall see them shrink faster than Northern cloth and outstrip time in dastardly flight.

Music cue

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Fie, fie was ever poor fellow so far benighted in an old wives' tale of devils and urchins? Out upon it, I am weary of it, for it has caused such a thick fulsome serena to descend upon my brain, that now my pen makes blots as broad as a furred stomacher, and my muse inspires me to put out my candle and go to bed. I bid you all good night.

Music cue**Lights out**

PART 2:

Short interlude. Music. Candles.

Nashe 1:

As touching the terrors of the night:

Music cue

Nashe 2:

they are as many as our sins.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

The night is the devil's black book wherein he recordeth all our transgressions. Even when a condemned man is put into a dark dungeon, secluded from all comfort of light or company, he doth nothing but despairfully call to mind his graceless former life, and the brutish outrages and misdemeanours which have thrown him into that desolate horror.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

So when night in her rusty dungeon has imprisoned our eyesight, and that we are shut separately in our chambers from resort, the devil keepeth his audit in our sin-guilty consciences, no sense but surrenders to our memory a true bill of parcels of his detestable impieties. The table of our heart is turned to an index of iniquities,

Nashe 1:

and all our thoughts are nothing but texts to condemn us.

Much I wonder how treason and murder dispense with the darkness of the night, how they can thrive themselves to it and not rave and die.

Nashe 2:

Methinks they should imagine that hell embraceth them round, when she overspreads them with her black and pitchy mantle.

Nashe 1:

The rest we take in our beds is such another kind of rest, as the weary traveller taketh in the cool soft grass in summer, who thinking there to lie at ease, and refresh his tired limbs, layeth his fainting head unawares on a loathsome nest of snakes.

Nashe 2:

Well have poets termed night “the nurse of cares”, “the mother of despair”, “the daughter of hell”. Some divines have had this conceit: that god would have made all day and no night, if it had not been to put us in mind there is a hell as well as a heaven.

Music cue**Nashe 2:**

The devil is a special predominant planet of the night. The names importing his malice which the Scripture is plentiful of,

Nashe 1:

I will here omit lest men should think I went about to conjure.

Nashe 2:

Sufficeth us to have this heedful knowledge of him, that he is an ancient malcontent, and seeketh to make anyone desperate like himself. Like a cunning fowler to this end he spreadeth his nets of temptation in the dark that men might not see to avoid them. As the Poet saith “Too open nets even simple birds doo shun.” Therefore in another place (which it cannot be but the devil hath read) he counsaileth thus: “By night time sin, and cloak thy fraud with clouds.”

Nashe 1:

When hath the devil commonly first appeared unto any man but the night? In the time of infidelity, when spirits were so familiar with men they called them Dii Penates, their household gods or their Lares, they never sacrificed to them till sun-setting. The Robin-goodfellow, elves, fairies and hobgoblins of our latter age which idolatrous former days and the fantastical world of Greece ycleped fawns, satyrs, dryades and hamadryades, did most of their marry pranks in the night. Then ground they malt, and had hempen shirts for their labours, danced in rounds in green meadows, pinched maids in their sleep that swept not houses clean, and lead poor travellers out of their way notoriously.

Nashe 2:

The devil can transform himself into an angel of light, appear in the day as well as in the night, but not in this subtle world of Christianity so usual as before. If he do, it is when men’s minds are extraordinarily thrown down with discontent, or inly terrified with some horrible concealed murder, or other heinous crime close-smothered in secret.

It will be demanded why in the likeness of one’s father or mother or kinsfolks, he oftentime presents himself to us? No other reason can be given of it but this: that in those shapes which he supposeth most familiar to us, and that we are inclined to do with a more natural kind of love, we will sooner harken to him than otherwise. If any ask why he is more conversant and busy in churchyards, and places where men are buried than in any other places,

Nashe 1 and 2:

it is to make us believe that the bodies and souls of the departed rest entirely in his possession.

Nashe 2:

A rich man delights in nothing so much as to be incessantly raking in his treasury, to be turning over his rusty gold every hour. The bones of the dead the devil counts his chief treasury, and therefore he is continually raking amongst them, and the rather he doth it, that the living which hear it should be more unwilling to die, insomuch as after their death

Nashe 1 and 2:

their bones should take no rest.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

What do we talk of one devil? There is not room in any man's house, but is pestered and close-packed with a camp royal of devils. Hereunto the Philosopher alluded, when he said: "Nature made no void in the whole universal", for no place

Nashe 2:

(be it no bigger than a pockhole in a man's face)

Nashe 1:

but is close thronged with them, infinite millions of them will hang swarming about a worm-eaten nose. Don Lucifer himself their grand Capitano, asketh no better throne than a blear eye to set up his state in. Upon a hair they will sit like a nit, and over-dredge a bald pate like a white scurf.

Nashe 2:

The wrinkles in old witches visages they eat out to entrench themselves in.

Nashe 1:

The druids that dwelt in the Isle of Man, which are famous for great conjurors, are reported to have been lousy with familiars.

Nashe 2:

Had they but put their finger and their thumb into their neck they could have plucked out a whole nest of them.

Nashe 1:

If in one man a whole legion of devils have been billeted, how many hundred thousand legions retain to a term in London? If I said but to a Tavern, it were an infinite thing. In Westminster Hall a man can scarcely breathe for them, for in every corner they hover as thick as moats in the sun.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

There be them that think every spark in a flame is a spirit, and that the worms which at sea eat through a ship are so also, which may very well be, for have you not seen one spark of fire burn a whole town, and a man with a spark of lightning made blind, or killed outright? It is impossible the guns should go off as they do, if there were not a spirit either in the fire, or in the powder.

The spirits of the fire which are the purest and perfectest are merry, pleasant and well inclined to wit but nonetheless giddy and inconstant. Those whom they possess, they cause to excel in whatever they undertake. Socrates' genius was one of this stamp, and the dove wherewith the Turks hold Mohammed their prophet to be inspired. What their names are and under whom they are governed

Nashe 1 and 2:

“The discovery of Witchcraft”

Nashe 1:

hath amplified at large, wherefore I am exempted from that labour.

Those spirits of fire, however I term them comparatively good, yet they are not simply well inclined, for they be by nature ambitious, haughty and proud, nor do they love virtue for itself any whit,

Nashe 2:

but because they would over-quell and outstrip others with the vainglorious ostentation of it. A humour of monarchising and nothing else it is, which makes them affect rare qualified studies.

Nashe 1 and 2:

Many atheists are with these spirits inhabited.

Nashe 1:

To come to the spirits of the water, the earth, and the air: They are dull phlegmatic drones, things which have much malice without any might. Drunkards, misers, and

Nashe 1 and 2:

women

Nashe 1:

they usually retain to. Water (you all know) breedeth a medly kind of liquor called beer: with these watery spirits they were possessed, that first invented the art of brewing. A quagmire consisting of

mud and sand, sendeth forth the like puddly mixture. Greedy vintners give hospitality to a number of them, who having read no more scripture than the miracle of Christ's turning water into wine in Cana, think to do far stranger miracles than ever he did, by turning wine into water.

The spirits of the earth are they which cry "all bread and no drink!", that love gold and a buttoned cap above heaven; the worth in nought they respect, but the weight. If with their earth-plowing snouts they can turn up a pearl out of a dunghill, it is all they desire. There is no city merchant but is haunted with a whole host of these spirits of the earth.

Nashe 2:

As for the spirits of the air, which have no other visible bodies or form, but such as by the constant glimmering of our eyes is begotten, they are in truth all show and no substance, deluders of our imagination, and nought else.

Nashe 1:

Carpet knights, politic statesmen and

Nashe 1 and 2:

women

Nashe 1:

they most converse with. Carpet knights they inspire with a humour of setting big looks on it, being the basest cowards under heaven, covering an ape's heart with a lion's case, and making false alarms when they mean nothing but a May-game. Politic statesmen they privily incite, to blear the world's eyes with clouds of commonwealth pretenses, to broach any enmity or ambitious humour of their own, under a title of their country's preservation. To make it fair or foul when they list to procure popularity, to stir up tempests round about and replenish heaven with prodigies and wonders, the more to ratify their avaricious religion.

Nashe 1 and 2:

Women

Nashe 2:

They under-hand instruct to pounce and bolster out their brawn-fallen deformities, to new parboil with painting their rake-lean withered visages, to set up flax-shops on their foreheads, when all their own hair is dead and rotten, to stick their gums round with comfits, when they have not a tooth left in their heads to help them chide withall....

Nashe 2:

The spirits of water feed on the foggy-brained melancholy, and engender thereof many uncouth terrible monsters. The grossest part of our blood is melancholy humour which in the spleen congealed whose office is to disperse it, with his thick steaming fenny vapours casteth a mist over the spirit and clean bemasketh the fantasy. And even as slime and dirt in a standing puddle engender

toads and frogs, and many other unsightly creatures, so this slimy melancholy humour still, still thickening as it stands still, engendreth many mishapen objects in our imaginations.

Sundry times we behold whole armies of men skirmishing in the air. Dragons, wild beasts, bloody streamers, blazing comets, fiery streaks with other apparitions innumerable.

Nashe 1:

Whence have all these conglomerate matters but from fuming meteors that arise from the earth?

Nashe 2:

So from the fuming melancholy of our spleen mounteth that hot matter into the higher region of the brain, whereof many fearful visions are framed. Our reason even like drunken fumes it displaceth and intoxicates and yields up our intellective apprehension to be mocked and trodden underfoot, by every false object or counterfeit noise that comes near.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

Of the effects of melancholy I need not dilate,

Nashe 2:

or discourse how many encumbered with it have thought themselves birds and beasts with feathers, and horns and hides;

Nashe 1:

others that they have been turned into glass

Nashe 2:

others, that if they make water they should drown all the world:

Nashe 1:

others, that they can never bleed enough. Only it shall suffice a little by the way to handle one special effect of it

Nashe 1 & 2:

which is dreams

Music cue

Nashe 1:

A dream is nothing else but a bubbling scum or froth of the fancy, which the day hath left undigested, or an after feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations.

Nashe 2:

How many sorts there be of them, no man can rightly set down

Nashe 1 and 2:

since it scarce hath been heard there were ever two men that dreamed alike.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

Diverse have written diversly of their causes, but the best reason among them all that I could ever pick out, was this: that an arrow which is shot out of a bow is sent forth many times with such force, that it flyeth far beyond the mark where at it was aimed, so our thoughts intuitively fixed all the day time on a mark we are to hit, are now and then over-drawn with such force, that they fly beyond the mark of the day into the confines of the night. There is no man put to any torment, but quaketh and trembleth a great while after the executioner hath withdrawn his hand from him. In the daytime we torment our thought and imaginations with sundry cares and devices.

Nashe 2:

All the night-time they quake and tremble after the terror of their late suffering, and still continue thinking of the perplexities they have endured.

Music cue /Slow lower of chandelier

Nashe 1:

To nothing can I more aptly compare the working of our brains after we have unyoked and gone to bed, than to the glimmering and dazzling of a man's eyes when he comes newly out of the bright sun into the dark shadow. Even as one's eyes glimmer and dazzle when they are withdrawn out of the light into darkness, so are our thoughts troubled and vexed when they are retired from labour to ease, and from skirmishing to surgery. You must give a wounded man leave to groan while he is in dressing: dreaming is no other than groaning, while sleep our surgeon hath us in cure.

Nashe 2:

No such figure of the first Chaos where out the world was extracted, as our dreams in the night.

Nashe 1 and 2:

In them all states, all sexes, all places are confounded and meet together.

Nashe 2:

Our cogitations run on heaps like men to part a fray, where everyone strikes his next fellow. From one place to another without consultation they leap, like rebels bent on ahead. Soldiers they imitate at the sack of a city, which spares neither age nor beauty: the young, the old, trees, steeples and mountains, they confound in one gallimaufry.

Of those things which are most known to us, some of us that have moist brains make ourselves images of memory, and on these images of memory we build in the day, comes some superfluous humours of ours, like a jackanapes in the night, and erects a puppet stage, or some ridiculous idle childish invention.

Music cue starts

Nashe 1 and 2:

A Dream is nothing else but the echo of our conceits in the day.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

One echo borrows of another

Nashe 1 and 2:

so our dreams

Nashe 1:

the echoes of the day

Nashe 2:

borrow of any noise we hear in the night.

As for example, if in the dead of night there be any rumbling, knocking, or disturbance near us, we straight dream of wars or thunder. If a dog howl, we suppose we are transported into hell, where we hear the complaint of damned ghosts.

Music cue stops

Discontent also in dreams hath no little predominance: for even as from water that is troubled, the mud dispersingly ascendeth from the bottom to the top, so when our blood is chafed, disquieted and troubled, all the light imperfect humours of our body ascend like mud up aloft into the head. The clearest spring a little touched is creased with a thousand circles. As those momentary circles for all the world

Music cue

Nashe 1 and 2:

such are our dreams.

Nashe 1:

When all is said, melancholy is the mother of dreams, and of all terrors of the night whatsoever.

Music cue:

Nashe 2:

Of all countries under the sky, Persia was the most addicted unto dreams. Darius king of the Medes and Persians before his fatal discomfiture, dreamt he saw an ostrich with a winged crown over-running the earth, and devouring his jewel coffer. That jewel-coffer was by Alexander surprized, and afterwards Homer's 'Works' in it carried before him, even as the Mace or Purse is customably carried before our Lord Chancellor.

Hannibal dreamed a little before his death, that he was drowned in the poisonous Lake Ashpalites,

Music cue

when it was presently his hap within some few days distance to seek his fate by the same means in a vault under earth..

Nashe 1:

In India the women very often conceive by devils in their sleep

Nashe 2:

In Iceland (as I have read and heard) spirits in the likeness of one's father or mother after they are deceased, do converse with them as naturally as if they were living. Bondmen in Turkey or Spain are not so ordinarily sold, as witches sell familiars there. Far cheaper may you buy a wind amongst them, than you can buy fair words in the Court. Three knots in a thread, or an old grandame's blessing in the corner of a napkin, will carry you all the world over.

Nashe 1:

More might be spoken of the prodigies this country sends forth, if it were not too much erring from my scope.

Nashe 2:

Admirable (above the rest) are the incomprehensible wonders of the bottomless Lake Vether, over which no fowl flies but is frozen to death

Music cue

not any man passeth but he is senselessly benumbed like a statue of marble

Music continues underneath

Nashe 2:

All inhabitants round about it are deafened with the hideous roaring of his waters when the winter breaketh up, and the ice in his dissolving gives a terrible crack like to thunder, when as out of the midst of it (as out of Mont-Gibel) as sulphurous stinking smoke issues,

Music cue stops

that it well nigh poisons the whole Country.....

Nashe 1:

A poison light on it, how come I to digress to such a dull, Lenten, Northern clime, where there is nothing but stockfish, whetstones and codsheads? Yet now I remember me, I have not lost my way so much as I thought for my theme is "The terrors of the nights", and Iceland is one of the chief kingdoms of the night, they having scarce so much day there, as will serve a child to ask his father blessing. Marry with one commodity they are blessed, they have ale which they carry in their pockets like glue, and ever when they would drink, they set it on the fire and melt it. Farewell frost: as much to say, as farewell Iceland, for I have no more to say to thee.

Music cue.

Nashe 2 retreats to top of balcony.

Nashe 1:

Come, come, I am entranced from my Text I wote well, and talk idly in my sleep longer than I should. To make a shaft or a bolt of this drumbling subject of dreams, from whence I have been tossed off and on I know not how, this is my definitive verdict: That one may as well by the smoke that comes out of a kitchen guess what meat there is on the broach, as by paraphrasing on smoky dreams predominate of future events. Thus far notwithstanding I'll go with them: physicians by dreams may better discern the distemperature of their pale clients, than either by urine or by ordure. He that is spiced with the gout or the dropsy, frequently dreameth of fetters and manacles, and being out on the bilbows, that his legs are turned to marble or adamant, and his feet are fast locked in quagmires.

Dreams in my mind if they have any premonstrances in them, that preparative fear of that they so premonstrate and denounce is far worse than the mischief itself by them denounced and premonstrated. So there is no long sickness but is worse than death, for death is but a blow and away, whereas sickness is like a Chancery suit, which hangs two or three a year ere it can come to a judgment.

O a consumption is worse than a Capias ad Ligatum, to nothing can I compare it better, than to a reprieve after a man is condemned

Music cue

Nashe 2:

or to a boy with his hose about his heels, ready to be whipped

Nashe 1:

Or rather it is as a man should be roasted to death,

Nashe 2:

and melt away little by little, whilst physicians like cooks stand stuffing him out with herbs, and basting him with this oil and that syrup.

Music cue stops

Nashe 1:

The glasses of our sight (in the night) are like the prospective glasses one Hostius made: in Rome which represented the images of things far greater than they were:

Music cue starts.

each moat in the dark they make a monster and every slight glimmering a giant.

A solitary man in his bed in his bed, is like a poor bedridden lazer lying by the highway-side,

Nashe 2:

unto whose displayed wounds and sores a number of stinging flies do swarm for beverage. His naked wounds are his inward heart griping woes, the wasps and flies his idle wandering thoughts,

Music cue stops

Nashe 1:

who to that secret smarting pain he hath already, do add a further sting of impatience. Any terror, the least illusion in the earth, is a Cacodemon unto him.

But this is nothing (you will object) to our journeys end of apparitions. Yes altogether! For of the over-swell in superabundance of joy and grief, we frame to ourselves most of our melancholy dreams and visions. There is an old philosophical common proverb: "Everyone shapes his own fortune as he lists." More aptly may it be said:

Nashe 1 and 2:

"Everyone shapes his own fears and fancies as he list."

Nashe 2:

In all points our brains are like the firmament, and exhale in every respect the like gross mistempered vapours and meteors, of the more feculent combustible matter whereof affrighting forms and monstrous images innumerable are created. And as the firmament is still moving and working, so uncessant is the wheeling and rolling on of our brains, which every hour are tempering some new piece of prodigy or other, and turmoiling, mixing and changing the course of our thoughts.

Nashe 1:

Those that will hearken any more after Dreams, I refer them to Artimidorus, Synesius and Cardan, with many others which only I have heard by names, but I thank God had never the plodding patience to read, for if they be no better than some of them I have perused, every weatherwise old wife might write better.

I have heard ancient mumping beldams as they sat warming their knees over a coal scratch over the argument very curiously, and they would bid young folks beware on what day they pared their nails, and show how many years a man should live by the number of wrinkles on his forehead. Him that had a wart on his chin they would confidently ascertain he should have no need of any of his kin: marry they would likewise distinguish between the standing of the wart on the right side and on the left.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

When I was a little child, I was a great auditor of theirs and had all their witchcrafts at my fingers ends, as perfect as good morrow and good even.

Nashe 1:

of the signification of dreams, whole catalogues could I recite of theirs. I remember they would very soberly affirm

Nashe 2:

That if one at supper eat birds, he should dream of flying, if fish of swimming; if venison of hunting, and so for the rest, as though those birds, fish and venison being dead and digested, did fly, swim and hold their chase in their brains, or the solution of our dreams should be naught else but to express what meats we eat overnight.

Nashe 1:

What sense is there that the yolk of an egg, should signify gold, or that everything must be interpreted backward

Music cue

Nashe 2:

as witches say their paternoster,

Nashe 1 and 2:

good being the character of bad and bad of good ?

Nashe 1:

Oh lord, I have heard many a wise Gentlewoman say

Nashe 2:

“I am so merry and have laughed so heartily, that I am sure ere long to be crossed with some sad tidings or other.”

Nashe 1:

all one as if men coming from a play should conclude “Well, we have seen a Comedy today, and therefore cannot choose but be a Tragedy tomorrow.”

Music cue/Bell

Nashe 1:

I care not much if I dream yet a little more, and to say the truth,

Nashe 1 and 2:

all this whole tractate is but dream

Nashe 1:

for my wits are not half awaked in it.

And yet no golden dream, but a leaden dream is it, for in a leaden standish I stand fishing all day, but have none of St Peter’s luck to bring a fish to the hook that carries any silver to the mouth.

And yet there be of them that carry silver in the mouth too, but none in the hand, that is to say: are very bountiful and honourable in their words, but except it be to swear indeed, no other good deeds come from them. Filthily Italian complement-mungers they are who would fain be counted the Court’s Gloriosos, and the refined judges of wit, when if their wardrobes and the withered bladders of their brains were searched, they have nothing but a few moth-eaten cod-piece suits in the one, and a few outlandish proverbs in the other. These alone do buckler them from the name of beggars and idiots.

PART 3

Reconfiguration. Nashe 2 in upper gallery.

Music cue

Nashe 1:

Rare adorned mistress,

Nashe 1 and 2:

give me leave (though contemptible and abject) once more to sacrifice my worthless wit to your glory

Nashe 1:

As touching this short gloss or annotation on the foolish

Nashe 1 and 2:

“Terrors of the Night”

Nashe 1:

you are partly acquainted from whose motive imposition it first proceeded, as also what strange sudden cause necessarily produced that motion.

Will you have the sum of all? Some subtle humorist, to feed fantastic heads with innovations and novelties first invented this trifling childish gloss upon dreams and physiognomy, wherein he strove only to boast himself of a pregnant probable conceit beyond philosophy or truth. Let but any man who is most conversant in the superstition of dreams reckon me one that hath happened just, and I'll set down a hundred out of histories, that have perished to foolery.

Music cue

Nashe 1 and 2:

There is no certainty in dreams:

Nashe 1:

they are but according to our own devisings and meditations in the day time

Could any man set down certain rules of expounding of dreams, and that their rules were general, holding in all as well as in some,

Music cue

Nashe 1 and 2:

I would begin a little to listen to them

Nashe 1:

but commonly that which is portentive in a king is frivolous fancy in a beggar, and let him dream of

Nashe 2:

angels, eagles, lions, griffins, dragons

Nashe 1:

never so, all the augury under heaven will not allot him so much as good alms.

Music cue stops

The Greek and Roman histories are full of them, and such as stir they keep with their augurers and soothsayers, how they told long before by dreams and beasts and birds entrails, the loss of such a battle, the death of such a captain or emperor. An easy matter was it for them to prognosticate

treasons and conspiracies, in which they were underhand enlinked themselves, and how ever the world went it was a good policy for them to save their heads by the shift.

This trick they had with them besides, that never till the very instant that any treason was to be put in execution, and it was so near at hand that the prince had no time to prevent it, would they speak one word of it. But you will ask why at all as then they should step forth to detect it? Marry, to clear themselves to his successors, that there might be no revenge prosecuted on their lives.

Shall I impart unto you a rare secrecy how these famous great conjurors and cunning men ascend by degrees to foretell secrets as they do?

First and foremost they are men which have had some little sprinkling of grammar-learning in their youth. These, I say, having run riotously among harlots and make-shifts and spent the annuity of halfpenny ale that was left them, fall abeating their brains how to botch up an easy gainful trade, and set a new nap on an old occupation.

Hereupon presently they rake some some dunghill for a few dirty boxes and plasters, and of toasted cheese and candle ends, temper up a few ointments and syrups, which having done, far North or into some such rude simple country they get them, and set up.

Scarce one month have they stayed there, but what with their vaunting and prating, and speaking fustian instead of Greek, all the shires round do ring with their fame, and then they begin to get them a library of three or four old rusty manuscript books, which they themselves nor anyone else can read.

To knit up their knaveries in short (which in sooth is the hangman's office, and none else) having picked up their crumbs thus prettily well in the Country, they draw after a time a little nearer and nearer to London, and at length into London they filtch themselves prively.

The brute of their cunning thus travelling from alehouse to alehouse, at length is transported to some good tavern where it is no sooner arrived, but is greedily snatched up by some dapper Mounseieur Diego, who lives by telling of news and false dice, his compass being able at all times to discover a new passage to Virginia.

This needy gallant (with the qualities aforesaid) straight trudgeth to some nobleman's to dinner, and there enlargeth the rumour of the new physician. With strange tale the nobleman inflamed, desires to be acquainted with him. The hungry druggier, ambitious after preferment to court he goes, where being come to interview, he speaks nothing but broken English like a French doctor pretending to have forgotten his native tongue by travel, when he hath been no farther than either the Low Countries or Ireland, enforced thether to fly either for getting a maid with child, or marrying two wives. Suffiseth he set a good face on it, and will swear he can extract a better balsum out of a chip than the balm of Judea. But in case he can be called to practise, he excuseth it and will not encounter an infirmity, but when by some secret intelligence he is thoroughly instructed of the whole process of his unrecoverable extremity, he comes gravely marching like a judge and gives peremptory sentence of death, whereby he is accounted a prophet of deep prescience.

All malcontents intending any invasive violence against their prince and country run headlong to his oracle. Contrary factions embosom him to their inwardest complots, whilst he like a crafty Jack of both sides, as if he had a spirit still at his elbow, reciprocally embowelletth to the one what the other goes about, receiving no intelligence from any familiar, but their own mouths!

I have rid a false gallop these three or four pages; now I care not if I breathe me, and walk soberly and demurely half a dozen turns, like a grave Citizen going about to take the air.

After these night's revels I solemnly bid you good night, as much to say, as tell you how you shall have a good night, and sleep quietly without affrightment and annoyance.

First and foremost drink moderately, and dice and drab away your property not prodigally, and then forswear yourselves to borrow more. You that bear the name of soldiers, and live basely swaggering in every alehouse, having no other exhibition but from harlots and strumpets: seek some new trade and leave whoring and quarrelling, least beside the nightly guilt of your own bankrupt consciences, Bridewell or Newgate prove the end of your cavaliering.

You that are married and have wives of your own, and yet hold too near friendship with your neighbour's, set up your rests that the night will be an ill neighbour to your rest, and that you shall have as little peace of mind as the rest.

Music cue

Nashe 2:

Therefore was Troy burnt by night, because Paris by night prostituted Helena, and wrought such treason to Prince Menelaus.

Nashe 1:

You that are Machiavellian vain fools, and think it no wit nor policy but to vow and protest what you never mean, that travel for nothing else but to learn the vices of other countries, and disfigure your English faces that God hath given you with Tuscan glicks and apish tricks: the night is for you with a black saunt or a matachine except you presently turn and convert to the simplicity you were born to.

And finally, oh you judge and magistrates, if there be any among you that do wrest all the law into their own hands by drawing and receiving every man's money into their hands, and making new golden laws of their own, which no prince nor parliament ever dreamed of; that instead of their books turn over their bribes for the deciding of causes, adjudging him the best right, that brings the richest present unto them. If any there be I say (as in our commonwealth I know none, but have read of in other states) let them look to have a number of unwelcome clients of their own accusing thoughts and imaginations,

Music cue

Nashe 2:

that will betray them in the night to every idle fear and illusion.

Nashe 1:

This I shut up my treatise abruptly, that he who in the day doth not good works enough to answer the objections of the night, will hardly answer at the day of judgement. Sleep well.

Nashe 1 leaves. Nashe 2 remains. The candles go out.