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THOMAS NASHE

The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works

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Thomas Nashe, a contemporary of Shakespeare, was writing in the 1590s, the zenith of the English Renaissance. Rebellious in spirit, conservative in philosophy, Nashe's brilliant and comic invective earned him a reputation as the 'English Juvenal' who 'carried the deadly stockado in his pen.' In its mingling of the devout and the bawdy, scholarship and slang, its brutality and its constant awareness of the immanence of death, his work epitomizes the ambivalence of the Elizabethans. Above all, Nashe was a great entertainer, 'his stories are told for pleasure in telling, his jokes are cracked for the fun of them, and his whole style speaks of a relish for living.'

In addition to *The Unfortunate Traveller*, this volume contains *Pierce Penniless*, *The Terrors of the Night*, *Lenten Stuff*, and extracts from *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem*, *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, and other works.

The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works Details

Date : Published July 27th 1978 by Penguin Classics (first published 1620)

ISBN : 9780140430677

Author : Thomas Nashe , J.B. Steane (Editor)

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, European Literature, British Literature



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From Reader Review The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works for online ebook

Arukiyomi says

Here's a funny old book. Not very long, for which I am thankful, and possibly the only Tudor 'novel' on the 1001 list, for which I am also thankful.

It's a picaresque novel and arguably one of the first and this has earned it a place on the 1001 Books list. It's almost definitely the shortest because writers of picaresque novels never know when to shut up. It's a genre which I'm grateful has dropped out of favour with modern readers and writers.

I can barely remember what happened, not least because my edition was a reprint of the original text complete with original spelling which, compared to modern standard spelling, requires some lateral thinking to process. Then there's vocabulary which we simply don't use anymore for which the Internet was essential.

Then there's a story which isn't as straightforward as simply a guy going on a jaunt overseas (why must picaresque novels always head overseas?) There were twists and turns of 'plot' and the obligatory japes and close calls. I say 'obligatory' but, of course, Nashe was one of the first to do this. The popularity of the form in later years testifies to his influence, at least on the English novel.

I wouldn't bother rushing out to get a copy of this unless you are a real die-hard lit fiend. Having said that, if you are, you've probably already read it. What did you think?

MJ says

(from Wikipedia) There are multiple candidates for first novel in English partly because of ignorance of earlier works, but largely because the term novel can be defined so as to exclude earlier candidates:

Some critics require a novel to be wholly original and so exclude retellings like *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Most critics distinguish between an anthology of stories with different protagonists, even if joined by common themes and milieus, and the novel (which forms a connected narrative), and so also exclude *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Some critics distinguish between the romance (which has fantastic elements) and the novel (which is wholly realistic) and so yet again exclude *Le Morte d'Arthur*.

Some critics distinguish between the allegory (in which characters and events have political, religious or other meanings) and the novel (in which characters and events stand only for themselves) and so exclude *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *A Tale of a Tub*.

Some critics require a novel to have a certain length, and so exclude *Oroonoko*, defining it instead as a novella.

Some critics distinguish between the picaresque (which has a loosely connected sequence of episodes) and the novel (which has unity of structure) and so exclude *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

Due to the influence of Ian Watt's seminal study in literary sociology, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957), Watt's candidate, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), gained wide acceptance.

James Violand says

This is a difficult critique because of the sorrow the reader encounters as he reads words from a decaying mind. Nashe had a wonderful gift for the written word. He also was very impressed with his superior education. Considering that he died fairly young and never succeeded in his aspiration to greatness but suffered from penury, Nashe became a bitter, unstable man. His wit is impressive, sometimes brilliant, but then it degenerates into a pitiful screed. From his brief biography, I wonder if he died - exact time and whereabouts unknown - in a syphilitic delirium.

Olivia says

this book is boring and thomas nashe is not a feminist

Timothy Taylor says

There are a number of works, in whole or in part in the volume. The language throughout is pyrotechnic and worth reading for its vocabulary alone (especially the invective). The eponymous work is highly memorable, if a little hard to stomach: scenes of scurrility and deception alternate with descriptions of torture and execution, along with elements of sexual violence which seem proto-Sadean. But the overall effect, which appears casual on the surface, is not amoral, and certainly not immoral (although the morals of the protagonist are certainly loose and questionable at many points). Of particular note is the amazingly well controlled, and therefore viscerally highly shocking, description of a rape. Somehow this is handled quite graphically while avoiding prurience or any hint of the pornographic (and this is not something to do with the distance between modern and sixteenth-century English). The scene takes the part of the woman, though from a helpless descriptive distance. The scene is set in Italy, the perpetrator a habitual rapist and brigand, and we experience, along with the author's fictional protagonist, both a sense of culture shock (this is the unfortunate thing about travelling, it would seem), and - this seems almost contradictory - a feeling that it is all far too human and familiar. Nashe leaves the reader not so much atavistically disgusted as deeply disappointed that such behaviour is possible, while having shown exactly what kinds of almost unremarkable yet basically flawed social structures have allowed it to flourish. (This leaves one feeling that, most depressingly, the description can be transposed wholesale to far too many modern settings). Nashe died very young (in his early thirties, around 1601) and one can only wonder what he might not have written, given longer. Like von Kleist, he has the rare gift of making us acknowledge our joint humanity while shaming us over the essentially human drives that produce the gross imperfections of our various societies.

Andrew says

I am a reader in the 21st Century. Let's start with that.

This is a hard one to put a finger on... it's such an alien experience-- a 16th Century martial picaresque written by an Elizabethan convict. It has its funny bits (hey, what to do in Rome, pee on Pontius Pilate's

house).

But I can't get into it. There's just so little for me to hook onto. I could "get" Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Browne without too much difficulty, but this is just not my world.

Valerie says

To be honest, I only bought this book for *The Unfortunate Traveller*.

Although the beginning of the novel is bit of a slow start, it really picks up after Jack reaches Italy. There, his life certainly gets interesting (or well, more interesting than it was considering all his previous pranks) and the descriptions of events get more vivid (and morbid). This isn't a novel in the usual way we think about them nowadays with a clear plot and climax, but it's evident why this could be considered to be a precursor to modern ones. It has rising actions which increase tension, even if there isn't a specific climax the book seems to be building up to. In addition, it contains certain elements of a bildungsroman, and even ends in a circular fashion. While *The Unfortunate Traveller* doesn't exactly resemble a modern novel, it's enjoyable nonetheless and an interesting example of early fiction.

Yrinsyde says

It took me awhile to read as it was part of a collection of works and I read the entire book. I really enjoyed it and I'm glad that I joined the 1001 Books challenge as otherwise, I wouldn't have discovered this author. I enjoyed reading him - he was great at characterisation and you can see where Dickens was influenced. The *Unfortunate Traveller* itself is full of violence, but it is very much removed from our contemporary life so it doesn't jar too much. There are a lot of laugh out loud moments in his works - especially in Lenten Stuff. I really enjoyed his use of language although his circumlocutions annoyed me somewhat. He was very much a show-off but in a winning, artless way. His combat with Harvey is also very amusing. Overall, a fun author.

Alex says

Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* was a major influence on the development of the novel, and also a major influence on horror: Nashe shares his contemporary Philip Marlowe's taste for the lurid, but he takes it to places even Marlowe shied away from.

Degrees of Elizabethan Nastiness

Janet nasty

Ben Jonson

[probably all the other dudes I haven't read]

Shakespeare

Marlowe

Nashe

Miss Jackson nasty

Dude's like "I dared not let out a wheal [pop a zit] for fear through it I should bleed to death." Ew, Nashe -

and that's the nice part. That scene at the end is rough going, friends, and I wouldn't blame you for stopping at the word "firmament." That means ass, and the dude definitely dies so you can skip the rest. Unless you've toured the Tower of London and seen the torture exhibit and you're super curious about what they did with all those tongs, in which case here you go.

But before that, we get what amounts to a fairly standard Elizabethan plot, with some decent moments. You have your mistaken identities, your cross-dressing, your false imprisonment, your star-crossed lovers, your evil Jew (Marlowe's Jew of Malta is clearly an influence). It's perfectly good fun. Nashe was a pamphleteer by profession, and it shows: he switches tone and style wildly, from storytelling to sermonizing to satire with some godawful poetry in between. Some parts work better than others. Some of it is very boring. Sometimes you get blindsided by a rape scene.

So the thing is, as a book it's not really 100% successful. But it gets four stars because some of the prose is *amazing*: what it has going for it is Nashe's batshit lexicon. Here are some words I think we should all start using:

Drumbling: Idling, time-wasting

Finigraphical: Fastidious, finicky

Dunstically: in the manner of a fool or dunce

Gallimaufries: a confused jumble or medley

Quean: A hoyden; an impudent or ill-behaved girl

Pontificalibus: Splendour

And, I mean, this sentence in general: "Why should I go gadding and fizgigging after firking flantado amphibologies?" It means something like, "Why should I go chasing after rhetorically showy, bullshit prose?" Which is funny because rhetorically showy, bullshit prose is totally Nashe's whole thing. No book can be all bad that contains that sentence, and I haven't run across many authors in the world with this sort of flair for made-up words.

Top Five Nine Authors Who Are Just Making This Shit Up

9. Roald Dahl
8. Stella Gibbons
7. David Foster Wallace
6. Anthony Burgess
5. Thomas Nashe
4. James Joyce
3. Lewis Carroll
2. Rabelais
1. Shakespeare

"Unreprovable perisheth that book whatsoever to waste paper, which on the diamond rock of your judgment disasterly chanceth to be shipwrecked," says Nashe, and here is the diamond rock of my judgment: so as long as I get words like this in my life, I'm down for this book.

But skip the ending.

Hannah says

I preferred Piers Penilesse

Joyce says

more than the sum of its parts, with steane's loving introduction and essential notes (although the recurrence of "meaning unknown" or just "nonsense" gets funny) this becomes an essential experience for any reader, especially in my old gaudily orange pocket size edition. i have a great affection for nashe, a brawling wildboy who batters at the limits of language (he is also the subject of my favourite academic essay for its batshit (but well supported) claim he only faked his death and re-emerged as thomas dekker to avoid controversy, aided by other writers in a masonic conspiracy)

and of course the unfortunate traveller is a true novel, because the novel is more than the dull stultifying so called realism of defoe and richardson who saw how much fun nashe had and felt they had to put a stop to it

Roman Clodia says

Thomas Nashe was one of the 'university wits' of the late sixteenth century and was at Cambridge from c.1581-1588 where he would have known Christopher Marlowe and, possibly, John Donne. He is supposed to have collaborated with Marlowe on his Dido, Queen of Carthage though it is impossible now for us to identify his contributions.

This collection does justice to the wide range of his writings from the picaresque prose work that gives this its title to the actually very dirty and quasi-pornographic The Choice of Valentines.

Far less well known outside academic circles than his peers and friends, Nashe is just one of the Elizabethan writers who has been pushed aside for the more canonical writers but is well worth discovering. The Penguin edition is a good sample of this fascinating, funny, bawdy and entertaining writer - who also reveals serious issues about the Elizabethan way of thinking, not least about gender distribution.

Buck says

Thomas Nashe wrote no masterpieces. In the big leagues of English literature, he's a utility player among steroidal superstars. As a scrounging Elizabethan journalist, he turned out a few pamphlets, some pornographic verse, a novel and a play, before dying, in obscure circumstances, at thirty-four or so. Although he continues to hover around the fringes of the canon, almost nobody reads him but the odd scholar, and that's as it should be, I think.

And yet, sentence for sentence, Nashe is one of the most outrageous stylists in the language. The editor of the Penguin miscellany compares him to the later, logomaniacal Joyce. Like Joyce, Nashe was an incorrigible show-off, clapping together Latinate nonce-words and mixing academic flimflam with the billingsgate of fishwives. For whole paragraphs at a time, he goes off on verbal spending sprees, seemingly

intent on burning through the riches of the English language, while his ostensible subject, poor thing, sits at home darning socks.

What saves him (sometimes) from empty virtuosity is his comic flair. He speaks of a certain kind of ‘small beer, that would make a man, with a carouse of a spoonful, run through an alphabet of faces’. Libeling an over-prolific rival, he invents a rumor that ‘an incubus in the likeness of an ink-bottle had carnal copulation with his mother when he was begotten.’ He imagines ravenous mice falling upon a cod-piece, ‘well-dunged and manured with grease, which my pinch-fart penny-father had retained from his bachelorship’ (don’t ask). Instead of saying that a bunch of old skinflints lived to regret their stinginess, he writes: ‘Those greybeard huddle-duddles and crusty cum-twangs were struck with such stinging remorse of their miserable euclionism and snudgery…’

He's not always this much fun, however. His longer writings are shamelessly padded with second-hand narratives and medieval pseudo-scholarship. There are many passages of exuberant unintelligibility, duly footnoted with an editorial shrug. When Nashe is really humming, though, his combination of hilarious invective and pedantic tomfoolery is unlike anything else I've read.

Markus says

Thomas Nashe (1567 ? 1601), qualified a « minor » classic of Elizabethans, (the major beeing Shakespear, Marlowe, Spenser, and Johnson).

He was educated at St. John’s College, Cambridge, where he got his deeply penetrated religious knowledge and belief.

All he's works reflect a religious background, with God and all his saints and angels promising felicity above and Lucifer and all his devils threatening with torment in hell below.

But in his writings, he is also a satirist, a jester, a moralist, a preacher, a storyteller, a poet, an entertainer and a journalist.

His language and vocabulary are extraordinarily rich, witty, humourous and funny.

Many old English expressions and phrase constructions take some getting used to and slows reading progress, but it is really worth the while.

The Unfortunate Traveller, (1594)

Jack Wilton tells his own tale as a journalist.

It is an adventurous voyage from England to The Netherlands, to Germany and to Rome, Italy. Times are rough in those days, everywhere is lawless, everybody is stealing, cheating, lying and fighting for survival. Beeing rich and powerful is the only aim and even those who have succeeded get poisoned by the envious who want their position.

The story includes many historical events that have taken place here and there, like Tomas Moore meeting Erasmus in Holland, or the battle of Agincourt, where he visits the battlefield and 'sees more arms and legs scattered in the field, that will be gathered up till Doomsday, and where he sees a bundle of bodies fettered together in their own bowels' and more the like.

In Rome due to his own careless and inexperienced acts of trying his luck in amorous adventures he ends up in dramatic conditions in prison and expects to be tortured or executed any. A resident exiled Englishman saves him and his friend.

We then assist at least two public executions of criminals in the worst process of cruelties, not meant for the fainthearted reader, and Jack Wilton now really gets scared and hurries back to the green meadows of

England. In fact, he is really a fortunate traveler.

Throughout this story is a background of religious implications and consequences of the acts doings of everyone around.

It is entertaining literature and a good reminder of many important events of history.

Sara says

"In 1593 Nashe published Christ's Tears Over Jerusalem, a pamphlet dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Carey. Despite the work's apparently devotional nature it contained satirical material which gave offence to the London civic authorities and Nashe was briefly imprisoned in Newgate. The intervention of Lady Elizabeth's husband Sir George Carey gained his release." -- Wiki

"Nashe's defense of poetry leads him to the conclusion that the best art is the most obscure and idealized. He aspires to sound like Edmund Spenser, George Chapman, or Roger Ascham: the purpose of true poetry is moral reformation, but only eloquence, strengthened by learning and experience, can effect such reform. The orator or poet must navigate between the extremes of brevity and windiness, but in all cases "persuade one point thoroughly, rather than teach many things scatteringly." In much of this apology for poetry, one thinks of Nashe's favorite extemporal vein only by contrast. Although he can moralize and obscure, Nashe typically aims for prose with the solidity of a pudding, the power of a tempest, and the focus of a schoolchild. In *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, however, he attempts a grand style in his praises for Elizabeth, in his dedication of the work to Charles Blount, and in the description of Deucalion's flood: "the springs broke forth and overflowed their bounded banks, the watery clouds with pashing showers incessantly sending down their unreasonable moisture, augmented the rage of the ocean, so that whole fields and mountains could not satisfy his usurping fury." In theme and style, his satires against women are heavily euphuistic." — Reid Barbour, University of North Carolina, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/t...>

Euphues (1580)

"Euphues" is Greek and means "graceful, witty". John Lyly published the works *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wyt* (1578) and *Euphues and his England* (1580). Both works illustrated the intellectual fashions and favourite themes of Renaissance society — in a highly artificial and mannered style. Its essential features had already appeared in such works as George Pettie's "A Petite Pallace of Pettie his pleasure" (1576), in sermon literature, and Latin tracts. It was Lyly who perfected the distinctive rhetorical devices on which the style was based.

The euphuistic sentence followed principles of balance and antithesis. John Lyly set up three basic structural principles:

phrases of equal length that appear in succession;
the balance of key verbal elements in successive sentences;
the correspondence of sounds and syllables, especially between words that are already balanced against each other.

Lyly's style influenced Shakespeare (Polonius in Hamlet; Moth in Love's Labour's Lost; Beatrice and

Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*). Many critics thought that Llyl overused comparisons as well as alliterations; Philip Sidney and Gabriel Harvey castigated his style. Euphuism was, however, taken up by the Elizabethan writers Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Barnabe Rich.
