msan
Marlowe Society of America Newsletter

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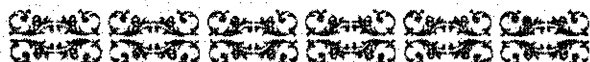
CHANGE ON EXECUTIVE BOARD

Paul White has left the MSA executive because of commitments elsewhere. All academics know how pressing time commitments can be and we express our gratitude to Paul for his expertise as former editor of the MSA Book Reviews and Membership Chair.

Our new Membership Chair is Georgia E. Brown. A longtime member of the MSA, Georgia has presented successfully at previous MSA conferences, contributing an essay on *Hero and Leander* to *Marlowe, History and Sexuality* ed. Paul White (AMS, 1998). She has another essay on *Hero and Leander* in the new collection on Marlowe edited by Downie & Parnell. (See "Recent Studies" in this issue.)

FROM THE EDITOR

Photographs in this issue are courtesy of Bruce Brandt. MSAN has very little backlog and depends upon the membership for its contents. We welcome reviews of films or productions of Renaissance (especially Marlovian) drama, brief articles and notes on Marlowe or other matters of interest to Marlovians, announcements and calls for papers, and ideas or experiences related to teaching Marlowe. The address and deadlines appear on page 2. Inquiries to the editor are welcome.



REINVENTING MARLOWE'S LIFE AND DEATH

An abstract of the paper presented by Martha Tuck Rozett, State University of New York, Albany, at the MSA session, "Marlowe and Intertextuality," Washington, DC, 2000.

Martha Tuck Rozett

This paper discusses the historiographic metafictional strategies employed by three writers who reopen the mystery surrounding Marlowe's death: George Garrett, *Entered from the Sun* (1990), Charles Nicholl *The Reckoning* (1992), and Anthony Burgess, *A Dead Man in Deptford* (1994) Although *The Reckoning* is non-fiction, it has much in common with the two novels, particularly in the way all three construct worlds of shifting allegiances, espionage, and entrapment. The three texts assume a learned reader with knowledge both of Elizabethan England and of Marlowe's plays. Moreover, unlike conventional fiction or biography, these texts resist the impulse to provide neat resolutions.

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MSA Newsletter publishes reviews of Renaissance, and especially Marlovian, drama; notices of recent and forthcoming publications; announcements; and brief articles or notes of interest to Marlovian scholars. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect that of the MSA. The editor reserves the right to refuse items, to ask for revisions, and to make stylistic changes that he deems appropriate. The deadline for the Spring issue is March 1 and for the Fall issue Sept. 1. Send inquiries, announcements, and submissions to:

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MSA Book Reviews publishes reviews of books on Marlowe and his period. Send reviews, suggestions for reviews, and inquiries to the *Reviews* Editor:

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THREE MARLOWE REFERENCES IN *THE ANIMAL KINGDOM, PICCADILLY JIM*, AND *ONE TOUCH OF VENUS*

These movies have literary origins, two of them having been made from plays and one from a successful Broadway musical. This probably explains why they display a deft use of quotations from Marlowe--as well as other authors--in ways which are central to their plots and themes.

The Animal Kingdom is based on Philip Barry's play, which has been described by John Gassner as "an unconventional comedy which showed an understanding mistress to be more truly a wife to a rich idealist than the parasitic woman of his set to whom he had bound himself in the eyes of the law." Tom Collier (Leslie Howard) runs the aptly named Bantam Press, which specializes in small market, quality books such as the one he has written entitled The Fine Art of Printing. In the past, Tom failed at practically everything he attempted, earning the thorough dissatisfaction of his wealthy, controlling father. The only things he has done right are the establishment of the publishing house, which gives him a sense of pride and integrity, and his longstanding affair with Daisy Sage (Ann Harding), whose names convey her natural charm and wisdom. However, Tom forsakes her for the "unheavenly" Cecilia Henry (Myrna Loy), who, in fact, represents everything that Tom hates but inexplicably now thinks he wants. In short order, Cecilia separates him from his friends, uses sex as a controlling weapon, and, finally, convinces him to sell his company to a lowbrow company and to move in with his father, who would provide them with a mansion and a fortune as part of the deal.

The scene where Tom finally declares his independence from C, as he calls her, occurs in their well-appointed, but low-ceilinged and claustrophobic living room. Ostensibly, he and his wife are celebrating their coming good fortune, drinking champagne, and preparing to make love. Red Regan (William Gargan), Tom's raffish, ex-pug, drunken butler, whom C

hates and vice versa, pours their drinks, and Tom, in a whimsical and sarcastic mood, tells him to pour some more as he recites, "Oh, the little more and how much it is!", which comes from Browning's Home-thoughts, from the Sea . As he drinks, Tom looks at the glass and around the room and disdainfully remarks "Infinite riches in a little room." After C remarks that he has "the quotes" tonight, he concludes with Blake: "Little lamb, who made thee? Regan, dost thou know who made thee?" Thoroughly disgusted with her materialism and sexual ploys, Tom uses Barabas' exultant declaration of his riches in a dismissive fashion. He sees the living room as the confining and stultifying materialistic prison from which he must escape. C wants to use the champagne to entrap him, but he refuses to drink any more, because it already has made him see too clearly. He "sees" through C's ploys and decides to leave with Red. He signs over his father's lucrative check to her and leaves it on the mantlepiece between two golden Cupid figures, in a mock remembrance of how he would leave his money on the mantlepiece after visiting Flora Conover's "Florentine" brothel. Tom puts on his coat, pulls his collar up, and declares that he is going back to "my wife, my wife." We hear the door slam à la Ibsen's A Doll's House, and the camera lingers on the room which remains empty, although filled with expensive bric à brac.

Piccadilly Jim (1936) was made from a book by P.G. Wodehouse, and it contains the Jeeves-like butler Baylis, who is played by the inimitable Eric Blore. Jim Crocker (Robert Montgomery) is an English cartoonist, and his father (Frank Morgan) is an impecunious Shakespearean actor, who quotes Shakespeare at will but often needs the aid of Baylis to complete them correctly. The father wants to marry the American Eugenia Pett (Billie Burke), but her nouveau riche sister is snobbish and does not want her to marry an actor. Nesta (Cora Witherspoon), wife of the rag king, is a comic counterpart to the Greek King Nestor, who was noted for his wise advice and for his participation, despite his advanced age, in the Trojan War. By contrast, Nesta's advice is always intrusive and invariably wrong. Mr. Crocker wants his son to act like a great artist to impress the Petts, and he recites the opening lines of Richard III with the sense that his son represents the hope of his life, unlike Richard's intention to mock his royal brother as a false summer. But the strategy backfires, and Nesta continues to block her sister's marriage.

Meanwhile Jim has a Helen-of-Troy vision when he meets Ann Chester (Madge Evans) who, unknown to him, is the niece of Eugenia and Nesta. Jim is roaring drunk at a nightclub when he sees her enter with her fiancée, the redoubtable Lord Priory. She wears an ermine coat with an heraldic crest, a shimmering silver gown, a glittering bracelet, ring, locket, a sparkling jewel on her belt, knots on the straps of her gown, and her blonde hair in ringlets. Jim is immediately besotted--his drunkenness is meant to suggest the onset of a kind of poetic frenzy--with her bejewelled image, which is reflected in the mirrors surrounding the bar. He dances with her and attempts to make a date for the next day, but she is going riding with Priory. Jim returns to his equally drunk friend Macon (Robert Benchley) and somewhat offhandedly remarks, "That might be `the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium' and she has a date with a horse on the bridle path" (with a pun on bridle-bridal and a possible allusion to the Trojan horse).

For the rest of the movie Jim obsessively pursues the mysterious Ann; he is Paris, trying to rescue his Helen from Priory, who has the "longest pedigree in England," and he is also Faustus, the enraptured artist attempting to consummate his love/lust for Helen. When she discovers that he is the one who is lampooning her family in a popular newspaper cartoon series from which he has gained fame and fortune, she is even more determined to reject his advances.

Jim vows to continue his assault on this citadel as he waves his walking stick and mounts the stairs in a comic martial assault. He pursues her to America on the Wodehousian S.S. Monomania, and on the voyage her young nephew wears a navy cap inscribed with the S.S.

Frenzy. Jim's pursuit ends successfully when they meet each other halfway on the ship's gangplank and embrace. This cinematic version of the Trojan War results in marriage not only for Jim and Ann but also for his father, who had disguised himself as Count Osric of Denmark to continue his pursuit of Eugenia aboard the S.S Monomania.

The final Marlowe reference occurs in One Touch of Venus, which is based on the successful Broadway musical that had sixteen songs by Kurt Weill, Mary Martin as Venus, and a book by S.J. Perelman and Ogden Nash, who also did the lyrics. The movie retains only three of the original songs, including "Speak Low," but they have new lyrics by Anne Ronell. The original musical took place in an art gallery, while the movie setting is transferred to Savory's department store, owned by millionaire playboy Whitfield Savory (Tom Conway).

The movie parallels, in some ways, Marlowe's Dido Queen of Carthage, in which Venus helps her son Aeneas achieve his destiny as the founder of the new Troy in Italy. Venus (Ava Gardner) comes to earth to help the feckless window dresser Eddie Hatch (Robert Walker) achieve true love. But while Dido ends with the triple suicide of frustrated lovers, in Venus, the goddess's arrival on earth results in a trio of happy and well-matched lovers.

Savory has finally purchased his long sought after Anatolian Venus and plans to exhibit it in his store. He tells Hatch to prepare the statue for display, but after Eddie kisses her Venus comes to life à la Pygmalion and Galathea and declares that he is now under the protection of the Olympian gods. However, he is also pursued by the police for stealing the statue, which, of course, turns up missing when Savory attempts to display it. Savory says to the assembled crowd, just before the abortive unveiling, that the "Trojan War started with 'I love you,' showing the power of Venus." His quip anticipates the later Marlovian reference to Helen of Troy.

When Eddie is arrested, Venus, who is now perceived by the others as a divinely beautiful woman but not a goddess, goes to Savory's skyscraper penthouse apartment, which is depicted as an empyrean realm bought by earthly riches and inhabited by the department store magnate/divinity. The roué expects to seduce her with booze, Debussy, and beautiful literary quotations. As Venus, dressed in a satiny black gown and feather headpiece, walks across the room, he utters Byron's "She walks in beauty like the night," apropos of her black evening wear, and she supplies the second line--"Of cloudless climes and starry skies." Calling his approach poetic, she coyly asks if he learns the whole poem or just those parts he can whisper to women. Finally, she offers two lines from Marlowe which she thinks will be effective in his amatory pursuits. They are from Dr. Faustus when the doomed necromancer praises the beauty of Helen: "O thou art fairer than the evening air,/Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars" (5.1.104-05). Savory gratefully responds "I'll make a note of that." But, the Faustian Savory never seduces Venus because she is enamoured with the thoroughly un-Faustian Eddie. However, she does encourage Savory to woo his loyal, long-suffering, and loving secretary Molly (Eve Arden), who is the right person for him. She is the moly, the magical herb given to Odysseus by Hermes to protect him from Circe. Venus "gives" Molly to Savory to enable him to love a real woman and not continue his nugatory pursuit of vampish Circes. Similarly, Eddie knows Venus is a goddess but learns to love her as a woman, which is what she is at the end of the movie. Although Venus has been called back to Olympus, Venus Jones, her earthly counterpart, appears as a new employee at Savory's, and it is destined that she and Eddie will fall in love.

Frank Ardolino University Of Hawaii

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Piccadilly Jim. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard, 1936.

MARLOWE'S INTERROGATIVE DRAMA: *TAMBURLAINE*, *FAUSTUS*, and *EDWARD II*

An abstract of the paper presented by Sara Munson Deats, University of South Florida, at the MSA session, "Marlowe and Intertextuality," Washington, DC, 2000.

Sara Munson Deats

Although the interrogative nature of early modern drama has long been a critical commonplace, the scholarship on this topic has focused on Shakespeare's plays, largely ignoring Marlowe's contribution to this mode. In this paper, I argue that before Shakespeare created his famous dual aspect characters, Christopher Marlowe, the rival playwright, anticipated Shakespeare's famed complementarity, etching rabbit/duck portraits every bit as multifaceted as those limned by Shakespeare. I also seek to demonstrate that Marlowe's plays in general, but *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward II*, in particular epitomize the interrogative drama so popular during the early modern period.

A number of explanations have been offered for the popularity at this historical moment of highly ambiguous dramas but I focus on only two. Joel Altman situates the problematic dramas of the period within the rhetorical tradition of arguing on both sides of the question. Altman posits that the interrogative plays so popular during the early modern period are constructed from a series of statements and counter statements, both equally valid, thereby imitating the form of a sophistical debate in which thesis provokes antithesis yet without resolving synthesis. Conversely, Ernest B. Gilman links the early modern admiration for multiple perspectives in literature to the period's fascination with dual aspect paintings that shift their form with a shift in position. In these anamorphic paintings, the perspective is distorted and skewed, so that when viewed directly the picture becomes almost impossible to decipher; only when seen from an unconventional vantage point does the image become intelligible. Therefore, as Altman and Gilman persuasively show, the early modern period, like our postmodern one, was fascinated with ambiguity and multiplicity. I briefly discuss *Tamburlaine Parts I and II*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward II* as exempla of the dramatic arguments on both sides of the question discussed by Altman and the dramatic perspective puzzles examined by Gilman.

Tamburlaine, Parts I and II, was Marlowe's first theatrical success, and I begin discussion by examining this dramatic dyad—for purposes of condensation generally referred to as a single play—as one of his most intriguing perspective puzzles. Meander summarizes the paradox of Tamburlaine which has sparked heated critical debate for over four hundred years: "Some power divine, or else infernal, mixed / Their angry seeds at his conception." Analyzing the dramatic dyad as an argument on both sides of the question, *Part I* could be seen as celebrating Tamburlaine and his warrior creed (thesis), *Part II* as deflating the conqueror and his martial code (antithesis). However, such a reading reduces the complexity of the play. In my interpretation, both parts of *Tamburlaine* dramatize the oxymoronic blend of the godlike and the devilish in the personality of the colossal Scythian conqueror. Surveyed from multiple perspectives, therefore, Tamburlaine

composes an anamorphic portrait, shifting from godlike to monstrous. Observed from the vantage point of the heroic romance, the play celebrates the glories of conquest and the supremacy of the human will; conversely, viewed from a tragic perspective the play dramatizes the poignant waste inseparable from conquest as well as the inherent limitations of human aspirations. Or, to adopt a different methodology, viewed from a masculinist position, Tamburlaine, despite his violence, remains a magnificent Mars; through the feminist gaze, however, he becomes a terrifying gorgon. In Marlowe's dramatic speaking picture, the contradictory images balance without reconciliation.

Perhaps even more than *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* has traditionally invited multiple responses. Establishing the polarities of this response are Una Ellis-Fermor and George Santayana, at one extreme, and Leo Kirschbaum, at the other. Fermor and Santayana, the prototypic heroic expositors of the play, identify Faustus as the "most nearly Satanic tragedy that can be found" and Faustus as "a martyr to everything that the Renaissance prized—power, curious knowledge, enterprise, wealth, and beauty." Kirschbaum, a leading Christian interpreter, insists that "there is no more Christian document in all Elizabethan drama" and that Faustus is a fool who gives up the greater for the lesser good. I argue that here, as with *Tamburaline*, Marlowe has penned a drama that brilliantly argues on both sides of the question. Faustus, like Tamburlaine, pits the magnificent world against the ignoble or, in this case, inane deed. Those listening with a sensitive ear to Faustus' sonorous rhetoric while turning a blind eye to his foolish escapades will adopt a heroic reading. Conversely, those turning a deaf ear to some of the most soaring poetry of the Elizabethan theatre and seeing only the often trivial action on the stage will judge Faustus not only as fatally flawed but also as something of a fool. Spectators able both to hear and to see simultaneously, and thus to perceive both the swan and the crow of Marlowe's anamorphic painting, will probably achieve the fullest experience of Marlowe's tragedy.

Marlowe's history play *Edward II* explores the tension between personal fulfillment and public responsibility while, like *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, arguing on both sides of the question. Although the debate largely follows the play's antithetical structure, with the first half primarily condemning Edward (thesis) and the second half exonerating him (antithesis), the typical Marlovian ambivalence toward the hero and the values that he represents permeates the entire drama. Moreover, like the perspective puzzles so popular at this period, Edward appears differently when regarded from different positions. Viewed from a conventional perspective, *Edward II* offers a prudential warning against the dangers of transgressing traditional rubrics of gender, sexuality, and status, dramatizing the disastrous consequences of royal responsibility and excessive passion. However, viewed from an unconventional position (in this case from a gay or feminist perspective), the figures in this grand anamorphic tableau assume very different forms. Thus critics sympathetic to Edward deny that the play is a caveat against sexual indulgence and royal irresponsibility, positing that Marlowe radicalizes his play by devaluing such concepts as duty and honor while also presenting the most sympathetic treatment of homoerotic passion in the early modern drama. My paper discovers an agonized ambivalence inscribed throughout this drama in which the contrarieties between personal fulfillment and public responsibility, between love and duty, balance precariously and are never resolved as the drama argues both sides of the question.

DIDO QUEEN OF ENGLAND

An abstract of the paper presented by Deanne Williams, York University, at the MSA session, "Marlowe and Intertextuality," Washington, DC, 2000.

Deanne Williams

Why did Elizabeth I not marry? Was it due to the lack of suitable suitors or to her profound sense of independence? Was it the rational choice of a canny ruler or the defensive response of a psychology damaged by childhood trauma? From Sir Philip Sidney to Sir Roy Strong, the issue of Elizabeth's marriage has fascinated and perplexed observers while the discourse of courtship and courtiership, which it generated, has defined the terms of Elizabethan politics and theatricality. *Dido Queen of Carthage*, performed by the Children of Her Majesty's Chapel, was Marlowe's contribution to the discussion.

Drawing upon Elizabeth's identification with Virgil's "Elissa," the Carthaginian queen seduced and abandoned by her feckless suitor, Marlowe transforms his Virgilian material into an example of the ruinous effects of love and desire for marriage upon an otherwise competent (and glamorous) queen. Marlowe's Dido is the victim of a spell that transforms her into a version of Juno: frantic, jealous, obsessed with marriage and commitment. Aeneas fares no better: Virgil's noble and eloquent hero becomes, in Marlowe's hands, the unquestioning vessel of the gods. At a time when, as Elizabeth reached her fifties, the question of marriage had been finally laid to rest, Marlowe's characterization of Dido's "female drudgery" implicitly praises Elizabeth for remaining, at least officially, above desire. At a time when England was beginning to imagine its own future as a colonial power, Marlowe undermines Aeneas's claim to the status of Ur-imperialist, leaving open the grand Virgilian themes of divine right and colonialist expansion for Elizabeth to appropriate (as she did with so many things) for herself.

In *Dido Queen of Carthage*, Marlowe translates the classical tradition in which he had been schooled into court entertainment, transforming a traditional celebration of masculine prerogative into a sophisticated courtly compliment. Reworking Virgil's exploration of the competing claims of work and marriage, and the conflicting claims of erotic desire and professional duty to compliment a queen who faced such challenges herself, Marlowe also transformed English reception of Virgil. Shakespeare's engagement with Virgilian material in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry V*, and *The Tempest* constitutes a sustained response to Marlowe's version of the story. After *Dido Queen of Carthage*, the *Aeneid* was never the same.

POLITICAL FALL OF MARLOVIAN PROPORTIONS

In a letter to the "Daily Telegraph" (27/1/01), Ralph Berry anatomizes the recent disgrace of high-level English politician Peter Mandelson , former Minister Responsible for the Millennium Dome and Northern Ireland Secretary:

Sir,

The pattern of Peter Mandelson's fall was laid down by Marlowe in *Edward II*. The monarch takes a court favourite, Piers Gaveston, who

excites the jealousy and hatred of the nobles. Gaveston delights in Dome-like splendours:

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
Musicians, that with touching of a string
May draw the pliant king which way I please;
Music and poetry is his delight;
Therefore I'll have Italian masques by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies and pleasing shows.

Gaveston cuts a dash about court: "He wears a lord's revenue on his back," favouring Italian and Tuscan styles. Created "the liberal Earl of Cornwall," the favourite has a gift for getting up people's noses:

Thus leaning on the shoulder of the king,
He nods, and scorns, and smiles at those that pass.

So he has to go, and is exiled to Ireland to run it as "Chief Secretary": "Be Governor of Ireland in my stead." When he returns, Gaveston still retains the favour of the king: "They love me not that hate my Gaveston." Not least of the complaints is the sheer expense of the man:

The idle triumphs, masques, lascivious shows
And prodigal gifts bestowed on Gaveston
Have drawn thy treasury dry, and made thee weak,
The murmuring commons, overstretched, break.

In the end the nobles, supported no doubt by the "murmuring commons," get him. Gaveston dies game:

I thank you all, my lords; then I perceive
That heading is one, and hanging is the other,
And death is all.

If there is a moral in all this, it is that one has to take great care in choosing a court favourite.

Ralph Berry
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwicks.

RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE

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