

msan**Marlowe Society of America Newsletter****Vol. XXII, No. 2, Fall 2002****MSA ANNUAL MEETINGS
NEW YORK, 2002****Marlowe's Anatomies, Marlowe's Wounds,
Marlowe's Eyes**

Saturday, 28 December, 10:15-11:30 a.m.,
Regent Parlor, Hilton Session 155. Presiding:
Robert A. Logan, University of Hartford.

- 1 "Marlowe's Anatomies," J. Duke Pesta,
Oklahoma State University.
- 2 "Marlowe's Wounds," Matthew A.
Greenfield, College of Staten Island, City
University of New York.
- 3 "Marlowe's Eyes," Tanya Louise Pollard
Macalester College.

**Christopher Marlowe: Old Traditions and
New**

Monday, 30 December, 1:45-3:00 p.m., Sutton
North, Hilton Session 776. Presiding: Bruce E.
Brandt, South Dakota State University.

- 1 "Under My Hands...a Double Duty":
Printing and Pressing Marlowe's *Hero and
Leander*," Robert F. Darcy, Ithaca College.
- 2 "The Space of Writing in *Doctor Faustus*,"
Georgia E. Brown, Cambridge University
- 3 "Marlowe as Translator and Interpreter of
Ovid," Maurice Charney, Rutgers University.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Marlowe Society solicits papers for its
December 2003 open-topic session at the MLA
Convention in San Diego. Send abstracts or
papers of fifteen-minute length (no e-mail
submissions) to Professor Robert A. Logan,
MSA President, 23 Dockerel Road, Tolland, CT
06084-3602. Deadline: March 1, 2003.

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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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"THE CLOCK STRIKES ELEVEN": LANGUAGE AND THE POWER OF FAUSTUS'S FINAL MOMENTS

An abstract of the paper presented by Jeffrey Galle, University of Louisiana, Monroe, at the MSA session, "Doctor Faustus: Confronting Key Issues," New Orleans, 2001



Jeffrey Galle

Between the striking of the eleventh hour and the arrival of the devils, Faustus contemplates his fate. But then "contemplates" may be too serene a word to describe the agony that he experiences. Indeed Faustus's last moments (5.2.144-200, B-text) have provided playgoers and readers of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* with a rich, complex, and for some, perplexing final scene. Most agree that, despite the critical issues it raises, the scene is powerful, dramatic, even riveting, for the incredible intensity of psychological suffering that Faustus experiences here is rare in early Renaissance drama. While not so compelling at times, the critical response has definitely been diverse. I have counted some dozen different explanations for Faustus's fall. A few of these attempt to explain the pathos of his fall in terms of some combination of despair (Gardner), gluttony or sloth (Barber, McCullen), poor logic (Brockbank, Hoy, Cole, Giamatti), blind pride (Heilman), faulty theology (Mahood), or true theology (Kirschbaum). But none of these

seems to account for the intensity of the psychological suffering of Faustus. Rather, they take up the question of cause after the fact.

Setting aside these various explanations of cause, I will apply two distinctly different interpretive strategies to a close (and even closer) reading of this scene to demonstrate that the power of these moments in *Doctor Faustus* is not contained or adequately described by either approach. Helpful though inadequate, these two critical methodologies inform two readings of the scene: 1) an analysis of what is there in the lines; and 2) an analysis of what is not.

The two approaches I employ are fundamentally distinct: 1) a rhetorical analysis of style and 2) a deconstructive process of detecting countercurrents of meaning. The former examines rhetorical patterns, tropes and figures, and the style of the text, in order to determine or account for what makes it what it is; the latter, through an even closer reading, undertakes to point out why this first reading cannot be a good one. The particular deconstructive reading I employ is largely a Lacanian one with its emphasis on the presence of the unconscious in the text. The rhetorical analysis used will not be the stylistic, statistical type (the study of sentence length and syllable count), but rather the traditional formalist approach.

What I hope to illustrate through the juxtaposition of these contrary readings is that the dramatic power of the scene and the language problems that arise in interpretation are distinctly different issues, the latter being more a stimulus to intellectual curiosity than essential to the impact of the play itself. Then the dramatic power of Faustus's suffering can be foregrounded against the restless questioning of the critic's study of words, of character, and of other language issues in the play. Whatever the clever critical orientation or posited cause or meaning of Faustus's fall, the cumulative dramatic effect of the scene always speaks more eloquently and poignantly.

UNSEEMLY GESTURES AND LAVISH TONGUES: REFIGURING RHETORIC AND THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY MODERN THEATER

An abstract of the paper presented by Hilary J. Binda, Evergreen State College, at the MSA session, "Marlowe and Genre," New Orleans, 2001



Hilary J. Binda

Marlowe's fascination with spectacle is certainly of a piece with early modern England's passion for the stage. My reading of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is situated within an examination of the surge in dramatic activity at the turn of the sixteenth century which has long been understood, in light of the Reformation's antipathy toward the visual image, as a manifestation of a powerful and resistant vestigial Catholicism in an only recently reformed England. Aligning the English theater with the Catholic mass and other ritualistic and sacramental performances, many Protestant extremists went so far as to figure the stage as a site of idol-worship. More recently, Huston Diehl and James Siemon have fundamentally reshaped our understanding of English drama as a reformed and reforming genre by suggesting that drama flourished at this time in part because it became this culture's most lively site for the negotiation of anxieties elicited by images that the religious reformers and humanists had explored earlier in the century. I propose more

specifically that the Reformation ideology organizing the early modern stage is apparent in English drama's interrogation of the relationship between images and words, a relationship that is also negotiated in the bi-medial emblem genre and in the humanist rhetoric tradition. Further, all three of these literary forms exhibit an anxiety surrounding the signifying operations of images and words that manifests itself in the desire to define these terms in opposition to one another and thereby to privilege words over images, echoing the discourse of religious reform.

I begin with a consideration of Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, which, while undoubtedly a celebration of figures in language, contains an anti-figural or iconoclastic argument for linguistic decorum. Wilson (and the rhetoric tradition more broadly) implies that language can be *either* figural *or* non-figural. Marlowe's hyper-rhetorical *Tamburlaine* also addresses this relation between image and word but shows instead that language can never be divorced from the logic of figure, the logic of the body. Engaging this tension, played out in the relationship between images and words, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* overturns humanist rhetoric's insistence on their congruence as it shows that both rhetoric and the theater effect the inevitable rending of the seam between gesture and oratory, body and text. This breaking down of the distinction between image and word produces an excess or incongruence that is apparent in *Tamburlaine's* "goodly shows," such as the Damascan virgins and his chariot kings; *Tamburlaine's* spectacles foreground their status as images, effecting the denaturalization or iconoclastic shattering of theatrical illusion.

Through *Tamburlaine's* idol worship, however, Marlowe does not simply present a reforming critique of theater as a Catholic, idolatrous genre but also offers a critique of reform in his analysis of the relationship between the discourse of images and sexuality. *Tamburlaine* expands our understanding of iconoclasm to include not simply the shattering of church figures but also, more broadly, the effort to manage the *hermeneutic* anxieties elicited by the complex relation between—or indeed the collapse of the paired terms—word and image, text and body, literal and figural, rhetoric

and theater, and, analogously, masculinity and effeminacy. Building on Alan Shepard's persuasive study of soldiers' desire in *Tamburlaine*, I suggest that Marlowe foregrounds this collapse or undecidability in *Tamburlaine's* self-wounding. In the context of this exploration of the broad ramifications of the discourse of iconoclastic reform this reading of the figure of the wound argues that for Marlowe the wound may be understood as a figure for figuration itself.

"Kinde Kit Marlowe" in Old Acquaintance (1943)

One of the chief pleasures in searching for Marlowe allusions in films is that you never know when one will appear. It came as a complete surprise that by watching Vincent Sherman's Old Acquaintance (1943), which is based on John Van Druten's 1940 play, I would see a version of the Marlowe-Shakespeare rivalry recast in a Warner Brothers women's film.ⁱ The "old acquaintances" of the title are Katherine "Kit" Marlowe (Bette Davis) and Mildred Watson Drake (Miriam Hopkins),ⁱⁱ whose names are essential to the recovery of the Marlovian subtext. In the original play, Katherine was surnamed Markham, but in the film, Van Druten, who did the screenplay along with Lenore Coffee, renames her Marlowe. All the other major character names remain the same.

Van Druten not only changes her name, but he also emphasizes the literary rivalry between the two old friends and extends it over a longer period of time. The play covers a month in 1942, while the film traces their friendly rivalry over a period of twenty years, beginning with the day—May 22, 1924—that the successful writer Kit Marlowe returns to her hometown of Birchfield to visit her old friend Mildred. In the play, both women are already successful writers with different audiences: Mildred is the prolific writer of intense and sappy romances, and Kit writes

finely crafted novels, which she produces at the rate of one every five years. However, the movie shows us how Mildred, who has always been intensely jealous of Kit on every level, has secretly written two manuscripts which she hopes to publish and regain the high ground in her ongoing skirmish with her old acquaintance.

With the change from Markham to Marlowe, Mildred's full name now also helps to establish the subtext. Her last name is used in one scene as an Elizabethan allusion, which does not appear in the play. Mildred goes to a hotel to confront her estranged husband Preston, who has left express directions not to be disturbed by anyone. She demands to see him, declaring that she is Mrs. Preston Drake. Whereupon, the literate concierge retorts, "I don't care if you're Admiral Drake." After she departs, her husband returns to the lobby to meet his bootlegger, who identifies himself by whistling the Ben Jonson song "Drink to me only with thine eyes," a pertinent allusion to another rival playwright which does not appear in the play.

Mildred's middle name also fits the subtext because it recalls Marlowe's tempestuous friend Thomas Watson and the duel Marlowe undertook against William Bradley, their mutual enemy. As Marlowe and Bradley were dueling, Watson entered the fray and dispatched Bradley, thus earning jail time for Marlowe and himself. In the movie, Mildred serves as a joint "friendly-enemy" Shakespeare/Watson figure who has been, is, and always will be jealous of Kit Marlowe, who remains nevertheless a good friend free from such emotions.

When we first meet them, Kit is dressed in a somewhat masculine way (for 1924) with close-fitting brown jacket, tie, matching skirt, and no-nonsense hairdo, while Millie is all butterfly with jewelry, a little girl's party dress, high-pitched voice, flirtatious and histrionic manner, and a high swirl hairdo. Kit is the important writer being fêted by the local college's women's literary club for her newest and controversial novel, Bury My Soul. Kit lives for her career as the author of highly artistic novels, and Milly, by contrast, has stayed in Birchfield, married well, is pregnant and seems to be happy with domesticity.

But she has written two unpublished novels, which she wants Kit to read and evaluate. When they are published, she achieves instant commercial success, the kind which has always eluded Kit.

As a writer, Mildred is flighty, selfish, materialistic, and cocksure. She knows what she wants and goes directly for it. As a result of her immediate success, she, like Shakespeare, buys the best house in town and relishes every aspect of her acclaim. She writes from her own life, which she takes pains to treat as an unending soap opera consisting of over-the-top emotional explosions which she then recasts in her unending series of romances. She is insular, competitive, and manipulative, a thoroughly unlikable Shakespeare figure.

Kit, on the other hand, is a noble soul who renounces the material pleasures of being an author for the more aesthetic rewards, although at times she does lament her small reading public. In an experimental mood, she writes a play, which, although it will be performed on Broadway, she does not publicize as much as she should. As a result, the prima donna actress in the lead role has assumed more importance in the production of the play than its author. In other words, diffident Kit Marlowe has been upstaged by an "upstart crow," and "been put off the map by an actor," as she puts it.

As Mildred grows more and more successful, she loses contact with her husband Preston, who has fallen in love with Kit. She appears to love him as well, but she refuses to betray her old acquaintance--although later Mildred shrilly accuses her of doing just that--and sends Preston away, ultimately to marry a younger woman. During the war, Kit becomes a patriot, reading her stirring speeches on the radio for the Red Cross (St. George) as the means of solace for a country at war. She also serves as a well-liked and revered mother-figure to Deidre, Preston and Mildred's twenty-year-old daughter. But, ironically, Deidre and Kit become rivals for the affection of Major Kendall, who is somewhat younger than Kit but wants to marry her because he admires her so much. However, when Kit realizes that the young couple is in love, she

relinquishes any claim on Kendall, and even extricates Deidre from a near seduction by the lothario Lucian Grant. Thus, in this cinematic version of Marlowe's life, the Marlowe figure emerges as a selfless and noble artist who always performs the grand gesture, even rescuing her rival in love from a Luciferian seducer. I know that contemporary critics have been campaigning for a less sensationalistic Marlowe, but in its overwrought portrait of "kinde Kit Marlowe," Hollywood anticipated this trend and then some.ⁱⁱⁱ

The movie concludes with the two old acquaintances, somewhat battered by their rivalry over the years, sitting alone in a hotel room pledging undying fealty to each other and the continuation of their lifelong relationship. Milly coyly says that the novel she has been writing will have to be changed to an unhappy ending since both of them have been left alone. Kit replies that perhaps Milly will have the artistic failure she has always wanted. However, Milly asserts that her adoring fans will never accept an unhappy ending; moreover, their ending will not be unhappy because they will always have each other. She asks if she should call the work-in-progress Auld Lang Syne, but Kit suggests Old Acquaintance. Whereupon, they toast the book and each other.

The status of the ending remains ambiguous. Are they tragic figures left only with themselves for mutual solace as they age into crusty, deaf, old writers, which Kit flippantly suggested earlier? Or are they fortunate friends who have their old acquaintance and rivalry as an ongoing source of stimulation and happiness. In the movie, they are, like Marlowe and Shakespeare, two writers of different temperaments and styles locked into friendly competition forever. In the play, Van Druten ends on a sadder note as the two "look at each other and begin to laugh. The laugh is not very far away from tears" (181).

Frank Ardolino, University of Hawaii

ⁱ John van Druten, Old Acquaintance (New York: Random House, 1940). Van Druten (1901-1957) was the author of a number of works which were made into films: Voice of the Turtle (1943/1947); I Remember Mama (1944/1948); Bell, Book and Candle (1950/1958); and I Am a Camera (1951), which was remade into the very successful Cabaret (1972). In turn, Old Acquaintance was remade unsuccessfully as Rich and Famous (1981), George Cukor's last film. Vincent Sherman (b.1906) was primarily a Warner Brothers old pro who directed such melodramatic women's films as In Our Time (1944), Mr. Skeffington (1944, starring Bette Davis), Nora Prentiss (1947), The Unfaithful (1947), and Harriet Craig (1950).

ⁱⁱ Davis and Hopkins "warmed up" for their contesting roles in Old Acquaintance in Edmund Goulding's The Old Maid (1939), which was set in the 19th century and concerned the arch rivalry between two cousins.

ⁱⁱⁱ I offer this only as a conjecture, but it is possible that Van Druten's creation of the Marlowe subtext in the movie may have resulted from the influence of the publication in 1942 of John Bakeless' two-volume biography, The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Fifth International Marlowe Conference, Cambridge University: June 30 to July 4, 2003. Send abstracts proposals or papers on any topic relating to Christopher Marlowe to Professor Robert A. Logan, MSA President, 23 Dockerel Road, Tolland, CT 06084-3602. Tel: 860 768-4137; Fax: 860 768-4940; email: logan@mail.hartford.edu (no attachments please).

RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE

Burnett, Mark Thornton. *Constructing Monsters in Shakespearean Drama and Early Modern Culture*. (Palgrave: forthcoming Nov. 2002). [MSA member Burnett notes that his new book draws upon popular practices, vernacular literature, and neglected archival deposits, to argue for the crucial place of the "monster" in the early modern imagination. An extended discussion of *Tamburlaine* may be of interest to members.]

Knowles, Ronald. "The Political Contexts of Deposition and Election in *Edward II*." *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001): 105-21.

Kuriyama, Constance Brown. *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Kuriyama, Constance Brown. "Second Selves: Marlowe's Cambridge and London Friendships." *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 14 (2001): 86-104.

Last, Suzan. "Marlowe's Literary Double Agency: *Doctor Faustus* as a Subversive Comedy of Error." *Renaissance and Reformation* 25.1 (Winter 2000): 23-44.

Leonard, John. "Marlowe's Doric Music: Lust and Aggression in *Hero and Leander*." *English Literary Renaissance* 30 (Winter 2000): 55-76

Orgel, Stephen. "Tobacco and Boys: How Queer Was Marlowe?" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian And Gay Studies* 6 (2000): 555-76.

Pincombe, Michael. "Cupid and Eliza: Variations on a Virgilian Icon in Plays by Gager, Lyly, and Marlowe," *The Iconography of Power: Ideas and Images of Rulership on the English Renaissance Stage*, ed. Gyorgy E. Szonyi and Rowland

Wymer (Szeged, Hungary: Jate, 2000). 33-52.

Streete, Adrian. "'Consumatum est': Calvinist Exegesis, Mimesis and *Doctor Faustus*." *Literature and Theology* 15 (June 2001): 140-58.

Webb, David. "The Interrogation of the Heavens in *King Lear* and Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*." *Cahiers Elisabethains* 61 (April 2002): 13-29.

Wessman, Christopher. "'I'll Play Diana': Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the 'Actaeon Complex'." *English Studies* 82 (Oct. 2001): 401-19.

FROM THE EDITOR

Photographs appear courtesy of Bruce Brandt. Members are reminded that *MSAN* has no backlog and is interested in printing reviews of films or productions of Marlovian drama, brief articles and notes on Marlowe or other matters of interest to Marlovians. Address and deadlines appear on page 2. Inquiries to the editor are welcome.

