

msan

Marlowe Society of America Newsletter

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Edward II



Isabella of France

For a review of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's *Edward II*, see p. 3

Letter from the MSA President

Freshly energized by the success of the Sixth International Conference in Canterbury (30 June–July 2008), members of the Marlowe Society of America have much to look forward to in the months to come, most immediately the two sessions sponsored by the society at MLA 2008.

The MSA Website provides photographic evidence of the spectacular setting of the conference and its dual pleasures of scholarship and recreation. Here, I add personal witness. The University of Kent was a first-rate host, and the city of Canterbury a charming and beautiful environment. The plenary speakers were superb, providing stimulating readings of Marlowe on the page and plausible models for his plays on the stage. The sessions were chock-full of excellent papers with a wide range of scholarly perspectives on the man and his world. The UALR players gave us a terrific original interpretation of four plays, compressed and adapted to an all-too-short hour of performance. The reading of *Edmund Ironside*, sponsored by *Shakespeare Bulletin* and the Master's Program at Mary Baldwin College, was great fun. We learned that, with enough liquid accelerant and cheers from the audience, a lot of us are willing to make fools of ourselves. The accommodations were comfortable, the food good enough (quite good at the Monday buffet), and the weather exceptional, except for a few showers

during the nostalgic Marlowe Walk, bravely led by our Constance Kuriyama. The banquet was a fitting festival ending, intensified by the pastoral setting of the Campanile Gardens for the reception and the spirited epilogue of madrigal singers.

Our next opportunity for such dual pleasures is the annual meeting of the MLA in San Francisco, 27–30 December 2008. Our sessions promise to be outstanding (for details, see the advertisement on the following page). As many of you know, two significant changes in the MSA at MLA are looming. One involves the timing of the annual meeting, which will remain post-Christmas in 2009 but shift to early January in 2010 (making the date, in fact, in 2011). The second is the decision by the MLA Program Committee to reduce the number of guaranteed sessions for all affiliate organizations, of which we are one. In December 2009, at the MLA meeting in Philadelphia, both timing and number of sessions remain as they have been for years: late December and two sessions. But after that, we meet in January with one guaranteed session.

As president, I welcome suggestions from the MSA membership on how “open” we want that session to be. Please use the Website blog, or e-mail, to participate in a conversation the members of the executive committee will be having on whether that one guaranteed session should be “open

Any and all inquiries, announcements, or submissions regarding the website, listerv, or Newsletter should be wrapped around a 1604 quarto of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* and sent 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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MSA THEATER REVIEW



A Doc Martens *Edward II*: Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Edgy Adaptation

The Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production of Christopher Marlowe's great play created considerable buzz this fall among the city's theater community. Marlowe is always buzzworthy, as *Newsletter* readers know well, but in this case two specific reasons stood out: the show represented the CST's premiere staging of a Marlowe play, or any play by a contemporary of Shakespeare's. Moreover, it was staged by Sean Graney, one of the city's most acclaimed young theater talents. (He has worked locally with the Goodman, Steppenwolf, and Court theaters, and in recent years has been named "Chicagooan of the Year" in directing and "Best Avant-Garde Director.") For all of the hype preceding this production, I admit to some skepticism about what a self-consciously "edgy" up-and-coming director/playwright savant might do with our cherished Elizabethan playwright. As it turned out, I saw a powerful show, both celebrating the play and also properly provocative (if such a phrase makes any sense). Marlowe and *Edward II* were well served by Graney's overall sensibility, not despite but because of his oftentimes brazen directorial choices.

Graney's insistence on the play's lengthy title was misleading in two ways, but indicative in at least one case. First, the dueling characters in the title reflected his initial emphasis on the drama's "twinned protagonists" – Edward II and Mortimer – turning in opposition like "points on a wheel" (a

phrase from his director's note). I saw this comment before the performance, and frankly found the emphasis puzzling: the underdevelopment of Mortimer, Queen Isabella (despite a forceful turn by Karen Aldridge), and others was a significant limitation to the show's success, however much Graney's considerable cutting of text and streamlining of action necessitated it. (I later heard from a friend at CST that Graney did indeed move away in rehearsals from this initial "paired" focus.) Second, the original title shouldn't have gotten purists' hopes up for an original-practices approach or a Shakespeare company's respectful bow to the text; on the contrary, Graney and his designers presented a scaled-down, 75- to 80-minute show, furious in pacing and theatrical effect, modern-dress and aggressively anachronistic (or better, synchronistic), and bold if sometimes unsubtle in its characterizations and plot reductions. Contributing to this impression of onslaught, and the most discussed aspect of the performance in the press, was Graney's choice of promenade staging, whereby the audience moved about the main playing space and viewed from changing perspectives the unfolding actions, which themselves occurred throughout the Blackfriars-like space of the CST's Upstairs Theater. (Graney has previously experimented with promenade staging as founding artistic director for the theater troupe *The Hypocrites*.) A single row of gallery seats surround the stage, but the majority of the audience ("groundlings" as it were) stood in as extras, courtiers or medieval townspeople witnessing this or that scene. Two quick impressions: the actors handled their constant "trafficking" amid the audience superbly, gently clearing out spaces about to be occupied. I was also concerned that this ground-level experience would feel incomplete, blocking out sightlines or leaving speeches unheard. The opposite was the case—the staging was highly engaging. It demanded a constant awareness of space and frequent involvement in the intensifying action; at times you'd shift with the crowd, and other times you'd be surprised to find actors performing inches away. Graney hoped the atmosphere would resemble "a rock concert or a crowded art gallery."

Graney's preference for *Edward II*'s full title more accurately announced a certain defiant, unafraid-to-be-unwieldy production. The set deserved some description: the audience entered the space to find rose petals scattered on the playing space and, looking upstairs, tables covered in white linen with black-gowned hosts nearby. Offsetting this elegance were rows of benches near the middle of the floor, and upstage, a broken-down piano with a great pile of chairs upon it. These properties had a grey, corroded look—think an abandoned hall from Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. A dead tree to the right reinforced this view, and beside it, the throne, which upon further inspection turned out to be a rusted, elevated life-guard stand. Gaveston soon carried on this vibe of youthful dilapidation, first appearing in bohemian dress (black or grey stocking hat, scarf, duffel bag) to learn of his invitation to court. The poor men seeking his service resembled post-apocalyptic stormtroopers. "These are not men for me," Gaveston (La Shawn Banks) declared, but gone were many of the exquisite following lines, "Acteon peeping through the grove" and so on. Graney emphasized Edward's and Gaveston's sexuality and the English nobles' homophobia (surely by now a customary

decision) and foregrounded that tension, as if nodding to our own season of elections and contested propositions. The lovers openly kissed, and shortly Gaveston appeared at court in a diamond tiara, purple corset, and white mink. The nobles spoke derisively of “fairies” and a “faggot tyrant,” one of a few obvious additions to the text. Lancaster (played by a burly, bearded Chris Sullivan), later captured and supremely humiliated, was wheeled onstage tied up in a tattered dress, running mascara, and blond wig, a prom queen fresh from the “lakes of gore” threatened by Edward. Yet the show didn’t overlook the class issue. We first saw Edward in pin-striped slacks, awkwardly equating with the nobles’ old-moneyed militarism. A typical nobleman’s costume included green fatigues and a Burberry’s hat, or a rum-colored banker’s suit eventually replaced with body armor. Mortimer, played by Scott Cummins and resembling a lawyer in a suit vest, attacked the “basely born” Gaveston, while Mortimer Sr. (Kurt Ehrmann) most strikingly announced the play’s swift descent to wartime: he changed at a bureau, putting aside his appearance as a tweedy Mark Van Doren for Pattonesque military gear.

Edward and Gaveston were by turns playful and peevish. Jeffrey Carlson, playing Edward, drew laughter when chewing bubble gum during a standoff with Mortimer. Elsewhere his expression of grief was clear: “How fast they run to banish him I love.” He was as persuasive in his affections for his favorite as he was otherwise abrasive and abjuring at court. When he harshly negotiated with Isabella, he gave the impression that his truest passion was not even for Gaveston, but for simply getting what he wants, whatever it be. Isabella’s following curse atop the pile of chairs felt warranted. Early skepticism about Carlson’s Edward prepared the way for that revelation of sympathy soon to be encountered in the “cave of care” that is Killingsworth.

As rebellion and warfare erupt, the theater quickly filled with ominous signs – crowbars, glaring red lights, alarms – and opposing sides charged in and out with bullhorns. Increasingly a shower-curtained space in the room’s left corner was put to use: it was a killing room, and all of the numerous deaths occurred there, behind the drawn curtain. Gaveston’s executioners beheaded him with hedge shears, and emerged with blade dripping and a head in a plastic, happy-face bag (one of the play’s more flamboyant properties). After more shootings and sword thrusts, blood covered the room’s white walls and sink. (I was often standing near this fatal space, and it too often reminded me of a Jaycees haunted house in miniature.) Graney’s penchant for ritualistic effect was present after each death: a requiem mass played, and each victim emerged from the killing room in slow motion, led away by a hunched, bell-tolling figure. (One reviewer called it a “Death Raven,” but it also evoked Marlowe’s own plague-time setting and even – via a white mask with an elongated, hooked nose – a Venetian masquer.) Edward received this macabre proof of Gaveston’s death while on a huge iron chandelier, fallen down to the floor. The wheel-of-fortune association was clear enough, but this tableau also infantilized Edward, as if he were on a playground carousel or, since the chandelier moved gently, a swing set. Conversely, the king’s son, whose first appearance brought to mind Beaver Cleaver, was ruthlessly made to grow up; his

coerced shooting of Spencer in the killing room was one of the play’s most disturbing moments, one accentuated by the terrifyingly manic Rice ap Howell, big-eyed and decked out in a Robin Hood hat, cub ears, and furry cod piece.

Edward’s appearance and apprehension in the gallery space signaled the play’s final movement. His all-white costume suggested the martyr, and its continual soiling became a visual record of his deprivation. Running his hands through his hair, Carlson was at his height as the captive king: “But what are kings when regiment is gone” was delivered powerfully, as was his resistant abnegation (“Take it” he growls, bowing to the bishop.) His plaintive, “Commend me to my son,” sounded like last words. One of the more disarming interactions arose with Matrevis and Gurney. As the king lamented, one jailor turned to the audience and said, “He does go on doesn’t he?”, and even offered some of his cheese sandwich to one onlooker. The sandwich was refused, but the laughter generated made all the audience complicit. Lightborn appeared as a mugger – black ski mask and hooded sweatshirt, sneakers – and intimidated a “braver way,” nor did Graney shy away from *Edward II*’s most notorious, harrowing scene. The shaken, shrunken king, wearing heavily stained painter’s pants, was led to a mattress on a table. Lightborn’s “You’re overwatched, my lord, lie down and rest” became something more like a fatal lullaby – “Sleep this night, my little prince, / Your nightwatcher watches thee / Sleep this night till morning becomes.” An exclamation soon accompanied his own death: “You sick motherfucker!” These modern interpolations were certainly noticeable, but they did not occur so frequently as to be irritating or distracting from Marlowe’s text. Typically they brought directorial punctuation. The killing of Edward, face-down on the table with mattress atop him, was of course hard to bear. His extended shrieking and Lightborn’s almost surgical slowness heightened this difficulty, but most affecting was the suddenly natural lighting, as if the killing were somehow beyond the limits of theatrical representation itself. Without the bright stage lights, the horrified expressions of audience members were far more apparent. But resolution came quickly: after Mortimer’s head is delivered in a blood-stained cake box, Edward III led his father’s funeral cortege. The remaining cast joined in the hymn, “How great thou art.” Graney, not unlike Derek Jarman in his film version of the play, searched for a more hopeful conclusion: the coffin and attendees were all in white, as was the familiar Death Raven figure, who lifted his hooked mask to reveal—Edward II. Pondering this last gesture afterward, I noticed three elderly theatergoers inspecting the carnage of the killing room, while one punkish fellow told his friend, “Pretty intense!” George Bernard Shaw famously dismissed William Poel’s 1903 production of *Edward II* by saying, “There’s nothing in it.” Though open to criticisms, Sean Graney’s CST production was certainly something. It delivered on the “blood poetry” promised at the very beginning, a promise delivered in the style of a prize-fight announcement. Over the top? You bet, but entirely befitting this energetic, sawed-off vision of Marlowe’s play.

Brett Foster
Wheaton College

The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward II, King of England, with the Tragical Fall of Proud Mortimer
by Christopher Marlowe
Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Navy Pier
Chicago, IL.
October 1-November 9, 2008

Sean Graney, Director; Todd Rosenthal, Sets; Alison Siple, Costumes; Philip S. Rosenberg, Lighting; Kevin O'Donnell, composer; Michael Griggs, sound.

The cast included: Jeffrey Carlson (Edward II); La Shawn Banks (Gaveston/Lightborn); Karen Aldridge (Isabella); Scott Cummins (Mortimer); Chris Sullivan (Lancaster/Rice ap Howell); Kareem Bandedaly (Bishop of Coventry); Lea Coco (Kent); Zach Gray (Prince Edward); Kurt Ehrmann (elder Mortimer/Marevis); John Lister (Bishop of Canterbury); Erik Hellman (Spencer)

Past Presidents' Forum, Part 1

Editor's note: At the Sixth International Marlowe Conference, held in 2008 at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, four past presidents of the MSA gave presentations reflecting on the state of Marlowe scholarship. *MSA Newsletter* is delighted to be able to print the first two of these, from Bruce E. Brandt and Robert A. Logan, on the following pages; please keep in mind that these were written to be presented as part of a roundtable.

Scholarship and the MSA



Bruce E. Brandt
South Dakota State University
Past President, MSA

As the Marlowe Society of America celebrates its 32nd anniversary, it is interesting to ponder its impact upon Marlowe scholarship. Jean Jofen and a small group of likeminded Marlovians founded the Society on February 1, 1976. They became an allied organization of the MLA that same year and were listed on the MLA program for 1976 as holding an open business meeting to discuss the Society's constitution and to elect officers. Jean was chosen as the Society's first President.

What has resulted from that birth? The MLA Program for 1977 lists a business meeting and says that papers will be presented, but none are listed in the program. Three papers were presented in 1978 and 4 in 1979, including papers by myself and

by Matt Proser, who was to become the Society's second President. In 1980 there were 9 papers on the program and in 1981 there were 8. Those accustomed to the timers, flashing red lights, and MLA session checkers may find it difficult to envision such a freewheeling and over-scheduled approach to session planning, which was made possible by scheduling a social event in the same room immediately following the official meeting time. In 1982 we officially had two sessions at the MLA for the first time, and a total of 8 papers were presented. In 1984 and 1985 we had single 2-hour sessions, with 5 and 4 papers respectively. Starting in 1985 until the present, our MLA presence has been to sponsor two sessions with three papers each, although once we had a two-paper session and once a four-paper session. Unfortunately, it appears that our MLA presence will be diminished in future years. Nonetheless, we have at this point sponsored 185 papers at the MLA. To that we can add the 356 papers, presentations, and panel discussions presented at our International conferences, including this one. That makes a total of 541 papers that were presented under the auspices of the Marlowe Society of America.

If we take 1979 to be the first year in which papers presented at our meetings could have appeared in print, the MLA bibliography indexes 1023 publications under "Marlowe, Christopher." If we were more realistically to use the time frame of 1980 to the present, the number of articles indexed by the MLA drops to 994. It would be interesting to know the extent to which the Marlowe Society's 541 papers contributed to those 994 (or 1023) publications. One aspect of this question is easily answered. Four anthologies of criticism drawn largely from our international conferences have been published: *"A Poet and a filthy Play-maker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gil, and Constance Kuriyama; *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, edited by Paul White; *Marlowe's Empery: Expanding His Critical Contexts*, edited by Sara Deats and Robert Logan; and *Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Fresh Cultural Contexts*, also edited by Sara and Bob. The 61 articles in these collections represent approximately 6% of the articles published since the founding of the Marlowe Society. If we consider only the period since 1988 when the first of these anthologies was published, the percentage rises to 8%.

The larger question of the degree to which the Marlowe Society's 541 papers have contributed to published Marlowe scholarship is much harder to answer. The chief difficulty is that when a conference paper becomes part of a larger article or book, the original title is often altered or lost in the process. Also, a book often incorporates more than one conference presentation. The connection may be clear within the introduction or notes, but tabulating these debts would be incredibly labor-intensive. If and when Google puts the entire texts of all books on-line, perhaps such searches will be feasible. However, if anecdotal evidence counts, I can say that for many years I both maintained the Society's membership rolls and twice yearly contributed a survey of recent publications on Marlowe to our Newsletter, and that the names I saw on the first list were often seen on the second. This should not be surprising. Academics generally have publication in mind. I presume that few have chosen to write on Marlowe solely because the Society

exists, but I do think that creating the opportunity and the venue for such papers has encouraged their production. Without solid statistics to support the claim, I would venture to say that at one time or another, virtually all of the most important North American Marlowe scholars have been members of the Society, as have a fair number of British and continental scholars. I do think, therefore, that the 541 papers written for us have contributed significantly to later publication. The downside of this observation is that many do not remain members after their own Marlowe work is done. That is, I think, the biggest challenge that confronts us as we solicit our next 500 papers.

* * *

Marlowe Scholarship: The Current Scene



Robert A. Logan
University of Hartford
Past MSA President

My purpose in reviewing the current scene of Marlowe scholarship, apart from any informational value it might have, is to initiate a discussion of the directions that Marlowe scholarship and criticism might profitably take in the future. Therefore, at the close of this brief survey, in our discussion of Marlowe scholarship in general, I will ask you to offer your suggestions.

It almost goes without saying that in any survey of scholarship, one needs to acknowledge the simultaneous existence of traditional and non-traditional perspectives. In order to understand what this distinction means in Marlowe scholarship, I found it helpful to take a quick look at the larger context of relatively recent publications. More specifically, I went back to 1990 and surveyed the published books on Marlowe and the individual essays—meaning, both articles and chapters in books. When I arrived at 2002, I began to take into consideration *everything* that was published, including fictionalized accounts of Marlowe's life; and, for the past five years, I added to the list of published books and essays unpublished material—primarily, dissertation abstracts and conference papers. I did not take into systematic or statistical consideration the many collected and single editions of Marlowe's works or the stream of reviews, novels, plays, radio and television dramas, and educational or commercial films that treat the man and his works; nor did I pay any serious attention to those writings that suggest that Marlowe wrote Shakespeare's plays and poetry.

For the purpose of grounding our discussion, I want briefly to cover three topics: first, speaking quantitatively, the tendencies in twenty-first century Marlowe scholarship; second, patterns in the approaches and content of this scholarship; and, third, places where I think future scholarship might profitably dig. I'm sorry to say at the outset that very little of what I have tracked will probably surprise you.

Throughout Marlowe scholarship and certainly in the period I'm covering, the two subjects of most interest and scrutiny have been *Doctor Faustus* and Marlowe's biography. During the twenty-first century, the next most popular subject of study has been the *Tamburlaine* plays. *Edward II* and *Hero and Leander* have, on occasion, enjoyed a good bit of examination and even controversy. Clearly, *Hero and Leander* receives the lion's share of attention in the studies of Marlowe's poetry, and, as Stephen Booth, one of the plenary speakers at this conference has demonstrated, scholarly interest in the poem has remained constant. *The Jew of Malta* has generated scholarly activity with some persistence but with fewer entries than the works I have just mentioned. *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and Marlowe's other poems and his translations have been the least frequently examined. Collections of essays have become increasingly popular (I count 10 since 1991), and new editions of individual plays, especially of *Doctor Faustus*, seem to appear with some regularity. Three new editions of the complete poems and translations have appeared since 2000. Book-length biographies of Marlowe appeared in 1992 and 1995; then, from 2000 through 2005, there was at least one book-length biography each year; this burst of scholarly activity has subsided somewhat, although the 1992 biography was revised in 2007 and several articles dealing with biography have appeared during the past few years.

Without counting the individual and collected editions of the plays and poetry and not taking into consideration those books that contain significant bits and pieces or even chapters on Marlowe, I find that, since 1991, one to four books a year have been published on the life of the man and his works. For example, in 2000, there were three books published; in 2001, two; in 2002, a banner year, four books; from 2003 through 2005, two books each year; in 2006, large chunks of two more books; in 2007, one book; and so far this year, one book—but in the pipe line for later this year or early next year is Patrick Cheney's *Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime*. The total number of publications dealing exclusively or in part with Marlowe in 2007 was twenty-two; in the year before, there were twenty-one publications and also five dissertations. The point of such tedious list-making is to affirm that the number of publications, whether books or individual essays, continues to be constant and varied, and that, happily, this trend shows no signs of changing.

But what about patterns in content and approaches or focus? I've already mentioned that the chief subjects have consistently been *Doctor Faustus* and Marlowe's biography. Whether the focus has been on Marlowe's works or on his life, there have, of course, been such traditional concerns as his religious attitudes, his moral perspective, his political affiliations, and his sexual orientation. Dramaturgical and poetic techniques have taken a back seat to the substance of his works,

to metaphysical issues in particular. There are at times flare-ups of special interests in Marlovian scholarship—for example, in 2005, there was a noticeable concern with textual study and matters of print culture—a concern that this conference once again reflects. And, for the past three years, there has been a keen interest in exhorting scholars to rely on documentary evidence and to accept the limited knowledge we have of the playwright and of the biographical implications in his works.

Although New Historicism seems never to have gained much of a foothold in Marlowe scholarship, it is no secret that critics have been experimenting with fresh perspectives, especially those that we might call “broadly cultural.” Gender issues opened one door to this tendency in the last quarter of the twentieth century, inviting feminist and queer readings of Marlowe’s works. More generally, poststructuralist notions of Marlowe’s works as socially constructed and collaborative efforts have gained considerable credence. As you might expect, the trajectory of new approaches has been challenged by those who do not want to abandon the humanistic, transhistorical focus of older modes of criticism. This fact elicits—and not without some measure of pride—the truism that, in spite of a predominance of historical and cultural approaches in the last 25 years or so, there is no recognized fixed or established perspective from which to view Marlowe’s plays and poems. This assertion applies to biographies of Marlowe as well, especially when speculation moves us beyond documentary evidence. The most marked tendencies of the past five and a half years have been the following:

- 1) one, to fuse traditional methodologies with present-day interests; for example, in a recent publication, Deborah Willis traces the complex history of our understanding of addiction through a close examination of the B-Text of *Doctor Faustus*.

- 2) A second tendency has been to refocus criticism on some of the thoroughly humanist, transhistorical aspects of Marlowe’s works. A 2007 book article entitled “Tamburlaine’s Domestic Threat,” an essay on maternity in Early Modern England, exemplifies this tendency.

- 3) Still another current scholarly activity, fostered and demonstrated by the Marlowe Society of America, as several of the papers at this very conference indicate, has been to link Marlowe with contemporary dramatists and writers other than Shakespeare. The connection with Shakespeare’s dramas and poetry has long been of abiding interest, but, as this conference handily demonstrates, this interest is beginning to burgeon and expand.

- 4) In general, one notices an increasing multiconsciousness on the part of critics, a reluctance to affirm the validity of an approach that is exclusive or, much less, reductive. Concomitantly, there is a healthy fearlessness in the face of complexity. And, as always, diversity predominates.

Perhaps the most up-to-date indication of the current state of Marlowe scholarship comes from viewing the range of topics presented at the past five years of MLA Marlowe sessions and here at the International Conference. From these two sources, one can conclude that

- 1) The aforementioned tendencies are continuing—that is, the interest in both fresh and traditional approaches and the focus on *Faustus* and on Marlowe’s biography.

- 2) There is a greater realistic acceptance of what we don’t know and can’t know.

- 3) There is more interest in documents—manuscript and textual studies in particular.

- 4) There’s a surge of interest in stagecraft and the pragmatics of dramaturgical strategies.

- 5) There’s a clearly defined interest in Marlowe’s reach—considered geographically, backwards in time to connections with classical writers, and down through the ages.

That’s pretty much what’s going on in Marlowe scholarship now. It certainly doesn’t lack imagination, variety, or excellence.

I might also mention that in two up-coming conferences, the 2008 MLA and 2009 RSA, the same mix of familiar and less familiar approaches prevails—for example, a paper entitled “Christopher Marlowe as Theatrical Innovator” follows a traditional course and a paper entitled “Marlovian Texts and Early Modern Pronunciation” follows a more uncommon path; in the panels of these two conferences, the works covered are all seven of the plays, *Hero and Leander*, and the translations of Ovid’s *Elegies*.

Given the current scene, where might we find new places to dig? The obvious general answer is that Marlovian scholarship would do well to enlarge its focus. Let me begin our discussion of future scholarly endeavors by suggesting four examples of what a wider focus might include:

- 1) Since ambiguity has been widely acknowledged as a major artistic device in Marlowe’s plays and in *Hero and Leander*, isn’t it time to attempt a revised version of a close reading of the texts, one that takes more into account Marlowe the professional strategist well aware of the effects of dramaturgical and poetic techniques? For example, wouldn’t some discussions that focused on the properties and uses of language in Marlowe’s works considerably enhance our understanding of his texts?

- 2) I’d like to see more concentration on audience reception, an area that Alfred Harbage initially sparked interest in but more recently Ruth Lunney and Charles Whitney have weighed in on.

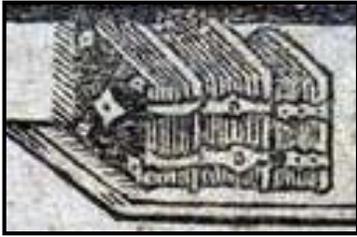
- 3) A tendency just beginning to emerge but that would do well to be kicked into high gear—Marlowe’s links with contemporary dramatists and writers apart from Shakespeare.

- 4) Perhaps scholarship has been most lacking in Marlowe’s connection to the wide range of matters pertaining to theater and stage history. To be sure, this conference, more than any other I’ve attended in the past few years, has done well to bring Marlowe and theater history into the foreground; and I’m happy to report that Roslyn Knutson is currently working on issues of pre-1593 Marlovian repertory and that Paul Menzer has embarked on an examination of matters pertaining to Marlovian texts, projects that will move Marlowe scholarship forcefully in this direction. Let’s hope this is the beginning of a major trend.

What is clear and salutary is that Marlowe scholarship is at present in a healthy state, constantly renewing itself and developing. But there are, undoubtedly, other approaches and subjects of focus that could lead to new alternatives and fresh imaginings.

Therefore, let me close by asking you how *you* would like to see Marlovian scholarship and criticism refashion itself? What do you feel would keep it vibrant and even make it ineluctable?

* * *



MSA BOOK REVIEWS Charles Whitney, Editor University of Nevada at Las Vegas

Deats, Sara Munson, and Logan, Robert A., eds.
Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Fresh Cultural Contexts. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Xii + 256 pages.

This volume, the fourth Marlowe anthology published under the aegis of the MSA and the first one to be published by Ashgate since Darryll Grantley's and Peter Roberts's *Christopher Marlowe and English Renaissance Culture* (1996), collects papers given at the 2003 MSA conference in Cambridge in addition to contributions to the MLA convention in 2005 and the Shakespeare Association of America conference at Bermuda, also in 2005.

As its title suggests, the volume does not seek to impose a single, common theme on the various chapters on Marlowe. Nevertheless, there is an agenda clearly announced in the editors' introduction: "If since the late 1980s, biographical scholarship on Marlowe has tended to steal the spotlight, the present volume offers a forceful counterpoise to this tendency, revealing a strong desire to deepen and complicate our understanding of the playwright's dramas" (2). However, I'm not entirely convinced that this is what the volume does; in fact, it frequently points to the relevance biography has as one—though not the sole determining—cultural context for our understanding of the plays. (For example, in her discussion of Marlowe and Shakespeare in the volume, Constance Brown Kuriyama asks "Does it matter who is speaking?" [191] and answers the question in the affirmative—a perspective that I feel is shared by most contributors, even when biographical aspects are not at the obvious center of attention.) What the book certainly does is to demonstrate both the diversity and the

richness of current scholarship on Marlowe, in providing perspectives that both locate the plays in their own time and in later historical contexts, as is demonstrated by chapters on Marlowe's relevance in the seventeenth, nineteenth, or even twenty-first centuries.

The book as a whole is divided thematically into four sections. Appropriately for a study on the cultural contexts of Marlowe's plays, the theater comes first, with chapters by Sara Munson Deats, Ruth Lunney and Stephanie Moss that work well together in that they focus variously on three different but obviously fundamental aspects of theater—the plays themselves, their audiences and the actors. Deats's chapter is a welcome contribution to the discussion on the metaliterary aspects of Marlowe's plays; while these aspects have been much debated, relatively little attention has been paid to whether *Doctor Faustus*, with its prominent displays of magic and the occult, can be said to contribute to the sixteenth-century polemic on the theater. Lunney, on the other hand, focuses on the expectations of Marlowe's audiences and the ways in which his plays, especially *Edward II*, disrupt those expectations and cast theatrical experience "adrift from the old moralizing generalities" (36). Moss, finally, deals with the actors, or rather one particular actor, although her piece also moves the cultural context to the nineteenth century and the significance of anti-semitism to Edmund Kean's 1818 production of *The Jew of Malta*.

Section 2, "Marlowe and the Family," works even better in terms of coherence between individual chapters, although its focus is in fact narrower than the title suggests as the three chapters deal exclusively with one aspect of family relations, parent and child. (What about, for example, siblings in Marlowe, such as Tamburlaine's sons, the Earl of Kent in *Edward II*, or the complex genealogies of *The Massacre at Paris*?) Lagretta Tallent Lenker rightly suggests that the father/daughter bond in Marlowe is ignored, despite the fact that *The Jew of Malta* prominently thematizes it in the characters of Barabas and Abigail. From a more general point of view, Lenker also points out that there was a dearth of criticism on literary daughters until the advent of feminist scholarship in the 1970s – a point also valid for literary mothers, whose incarnations in Marlowe (along with their sons) are the theme of Joyce Karpay's chapter. Karpay's discussion of the actual plays may be somewhat compressed (one wishes for more detailed treatment of her pertinent claim that for Isabella in *Edward II* "a conflict occurs between the woman's role as mother and her desire for power" [88]). Yet her essay valuably sums up the status of current scholarship on the issue, also hinting that a comprehensive study on maternity in early modern English literature remains to be written. Merry G. Perry's chapter draws on contemporary work in masculinity studies to cover the father/son relation in Marlowe, and argues that plays such as *Tamburlaine* offer a "trenchant critique" (93) of early modern notions of patriarchy and masculine values. While the subject of masculinity in early modern England has received considerable scholarly attention in recent years, Perry, in focusing on one particular aspect in one particular playwright, is able to excavate a wide range of possible views on patriarchy within Elizabethan culture.

The next section, “Marlowe, Ethics, and Religion,” is perhaps the least thematically consistent one, even though, true to the overall perspective of the volume, it offers re-evaluations of Marlowe that are “fresh”—as in both “new” and “refreshing.” Rick Bowers, in a characteristically witty and wide-ranging piece, seeks to understand the relevance today of Faustus’s performance (in, predominantly, Judith Butler’s sense) as an “almost famous” scholar - a tragic irony that, Bowers contends, he also shares with the (post)modern professional academic. If Bowers contextualizes Faustus from the perspective of posthumanist skepticism and doubt, William M. Hamlin takes skepticism right back to its early modern roots in juxtaposing Marlowe’s Barabas to Montaigne’s *Essays*. While this may seem an unlikely coupling, Hamlin concludes that Barabas’s dissembling projects not so much an amoral universe as a conscience structured by the language of morality—a stance that seems closer to Montaigne than expected. Deborah Willis’ discussion also emphasizes historical specificity in discussing early modern notions of “addiction.” Observing that early modern addiction was used in a wider, partly different sense than today, Willis focuses on Faustus’s addiction not only to magic, but to fantasies and simulations of power, which, Willis contends, become more important than power itself to Faustus. Indeed, even God seems to become a simulation—which is of course not to say that religion becomes irrelevant to an understanding of *Doctor Faustus* or other plays. Christine McCall Probes’s chapter in fact takes issue with criticism that has ignored Biblical allusions in *The Massacre at Paris* (a play that has until recently been neglected in most other respects too). In this play, Probes argues, the evocation of the senses, (Protestant) writing, liturgical symbols, and theological allusion come together to create what she terms a *locus terribilis* of controversy and sectarian violence. Religious controversy, although located in a different political climate, also was a subtext for Heywood’s 1632 revival of *The Jew of Malta*, according to John Parker. From this perspective, Marlowe’s Barabas may have provided a convenient springboard for criticism against Catholic tendencies in Stuart England—convenient precisely because the play could easily be dismissed as “old” and therefore irrelevant.

The final section covers familiar ground—Marlowe’s relation to Shakespeare—though here too, we find fresh perspectives. As previously noted, Constance Brown Kuriyama takes issue with the notion that the author is “theoretically irrelevant” and seeks to re-establish Marlowe as a playwright in relation to the Bard. To me, the substance of her discussion lies in her demonstration that Harold Bloom’s view of Shakespeare as the inventor of human depth is simplistic, notably from the perspective of *The Jew of Malta* vis-à-vis *The Merchant of Venice*. Robert A. Logan’s contribution charts territory similar to that covered in his recent *Shakespeare’s Marlowe* (advertised on the back of the here reviewed volume), but focuses on *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest* in order to argue, convincingly, that Shakespeare continued to be influenced by Marlowe even decades after the latter’s death. The final chapter, by David Bevington, considers the growth and development of the English history play and concludes that Marlowe and Shakespeare, separately or in deliberate competition, came to

fashion a new, experimental mode of expression between them: theatrical representation with a consistent focus on “history,” which also serves as the appropriate conclusion to a volume that accentuates the idea of historical specificity.

As this overview shows, the volume covers a wide range of issues, angles and texts, and as an indicator of where Marlowe criticisms currently stand (note the plural), it is certainly very highly commendable. Of course, some absences rather leave the reader wanting more—for example, one could have wished for more extensive treatment of *Dido, Queene of Carthage*, which is dealt with briefly in the chapters of Karpay and Perry but could have merited an essay of its own. On the other hand, some of the work in the volume points not only to cultural contexts for Marlowe, but in fact extends to wider and more far-reaching issues of early modern culture. Examples include Willis’s chapter, which clearly could be (and is, I suspect) part of a more general study on addiction, and the entire section on “Marlowe and the Family,” which adds nicely to the work already done by historians and literary critics on family relations in early modern Europe. Moreover, the work of the editors in conferring a sense of unity and consistency on the book’s multiplicity of perspectives is nothing short of exemplary. Some very minor details could have needed qualification or seem superfluous (for example, readers of a book of this kind are probably unlikely to need the information that John Donne was a “sixteenth-century poet,” 80), but on the whole this anthology provides both erudition and variation. “View but his picture in this tragic glass / And then applaud his fortunes as you please” (*Tamburlaine I*, “Prologue” 7-8): Marlowe seems himself to have anticipated the diversity and richness of the response to his plays, and if so, this well-crafted volume certainly does not disappoint.

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Bowers, Rick. *Radical Comedy in Early Modern England: Contexts, Cultures, Performances*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. X + 122 pages.

This often insightful and occasionally problematic analysis of “radical comedy” and performance in early modern texts offers an initially rather puzzling collection of texts for study, some of which don’t seem comical and some of which don’t seem performative. The texts under discussion are *The Second Shepherds’ Play*, Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, Dekker’s *The Wonderful Year*, Harington’s *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*, Marston’s *Antonio* plays, Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, and Jonson’s “middle comedies,” especially *The Alchemist* and *Barthomomew Fair*.

This is a rather short work, so each text gets little more than a cursory treatment, but the analysis often achieves quite provocative readings of some of the texts. Ironically, the strongest chapters are the ones proving the existence of comedy in texts one would not automatically assume to be funny (*The Jew of Malta*, the *Antonio* plays, and arguably *The Wonderful Year*), and in the process Bowers offers new ways of looking at

and thinking about the texts. The comparison of *The Jew of Malta* to modern professional wrestling, for instance, is both persuasive and enlightening. On the other hand, and equally ironic, the treatment of texts that would be read as more conventionally comic (Harington's *Ajax* and Middleton's *Chaste Maid*) is almost humorless by comparison. Perhaps because the comedy in these texts is self-evident and does not need the elaborate (even spectacular) efforts to establish, Bowers focuses instead on less humorous uses and applications (social, cultural, political) of the comedy.

Bowers has a fertile and eclectic sense of humor and succeeds at establishing the comic effects of the various texts, but, in a volume published in Ashgate's series "Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama," the treatment of the element of performativity is patchier. The chapters on Dekker's *The Wonderful Year* and Harington's *Ajax* have their own virtues, but there is nothing notably "performative" about the texts, except in the broadest rhetorical sense. It is an absence perhaps partly made up for by the "excessive" theatricality in the plays under consideration. Arguing that "[c]omedy thrives on excess" (23), Bowers points frequently to the ways spectacular excesses (especially theatrical excesses) produce parody, burlesque and farce. It is essentially the carnivalesque excess he sees in the texts that supports his claim of a "radical comedy" that challenges conventions, both literary and political.

In a book as brief as this one, one might expect a very tight thematic focus to be sustained throughout, but, except for the fact that all the texts are arguably funny, there's no evidence of shared ground among them. Each chapter is a pleasure to read, but they can all be read independently of each other, which is perhaps not surprising since four of the six chapters were published independently prior to the publication of the book. The stylistic approach is ultimately that of a stand-up comic (a comparison Bowers might not object to) where points are made less by elaboration than by juxtaposition. In fact, this episodic style of analysis is especially evident in the chapter that will be of greatest interest to the readers of this newsletter. For instance, Bowers argues for an apparently conventional notion of dramatic catharsis in *The Jew of Malta*: "Overwhelmingly theatrical and theatrically overwhelming, conflict in *The Jew of Malta* is calculated to intensify the collective bile and suffering of the audience and divest it of its pain" (24). But the catharsis is not the result of a tragic crescendo that has been prepared for through a coherent narrative. It arises repeatedly in independent scenarios: "As in professional wrestling, the creation of extreme local effects with the audience is as important as overall narrative consistency" (32). Readers have often objected to the apparent irrationality of Barabas's shifting allegiances at the end of the play, but Bowers sees the lack of continuity not as a weakness but as the defining strength of the play:

the play wrestles with itself to create moment-by-moment intelligibility. It bypasses generic categories to highlight theatrical effects, effects that suggest the provisional, contingent, and performative nature of reality (35).

There are a few themes or ideas that recur throughout the book: Bakhtin's theory of carnival makes an appearance in every chapter, for instance, as part of the argument for the "radical" element in the comedy of each text, and indeed most of the comedy treated in the book is celebrated for its liberating, anti-hierarchical energies. Bowers' work, however, is more suggestive than theoretically rigorous, and he is more interested in the exemplary instance than in the overarching theme. As he says in the Introduction, he is interested in comedy "where role reversals abound, identity is fluid, unlikelihood insists on setting terms, and confusion enjoys license at the same time as it tests new senses of personal and political assertion" (2).

The final chapter of the book, on Jonson's comedies, is worth mentioning because it was clearly written in an attempt to tie the threads of the book together, since the texts addressed in the earlier chapters are all mentioned in passing. But it is less a conclusion to the book than a recapitulation of the stand-up routine that characterizes the book as a whole. In a fourteen-page essay, Bowers comments on three major plays, two masques, and some non-dramatic verse in a rapid-fire way that still manages to achieve genuine insights into the texts, as the "excess" that characterized the humor of the earlier plays becomes "generosity" (108) in Jonson's more tolerant comedy. Like the comedy to be found in *The Jew of Malta*, tolerance is not the first thing one thinks of when one thinks of Jonson's satirical comedies, but a good case can be (and has now been) made for it.

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Smith, D. K. *The Cartographic Imagination in Early Modern England: Re-writing the World in Marlowe, Spenser, Raleigh and Marvell*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. 214 pages.

D. K. Smith's *The Cartographic Imagination* makes a fascinating contribution to the growing body of texts on early modern travel that have emerged in the last decade, supplementing the work of John Gillies, Andrew McRae, Bernard Klein, Rhonda Lemke Sanford, Richard Helgerson and Garrett A. Sullivan Jr., amongst others, with a fresh perspective on cartography which emphasizes the role of the individual and the imagination. Central to Smith's thesis is the role of "new mathematical and cartographic technologies" (1) and the impact of these scientific advances on both the individual's capacity to conceptualize the world (and the relationship between its parts) and the collective expectation of precision that such technologies produced in early modern England. Smith's fundamental premise is that "the new introduction of cartographic representation to a widespread, literate public, brought about a shift in the way terrestrial space could be represented and manipulated, ushering in a whole new way of thinking about the world" (6). Unlike P. D. A. Harvey's observation of "mapmindedness", Smith attempts to move beyond a mere awareness of maps to a new way of imagining the world spatially when he speaks of the "cartographic imagination." This cartographic imagination is concerned "not

simply with the ways in which the world is spatially organized, but with the way those discourses of imagined space enable other ideas and concepts to be organized and treated” (10).

Beginning with medieval maps and drama, Smith revises critical assumptions about the emergence of “a spatially conceived and organized world” (19) in Elizabethan times. A half-century earlier, he argues, in the late medieval Digby manuscript’s *Mary Magdalen*, the spatial has already begun to encroach upon the spiritual, and a cartographic awareness to intrude upon the “fundamentally ungeographic nature of pilgrimage” (36). The first two chapters (almost half the book) provide an overview of the evolution of mapping in England from emblematic senses of space to a truly spatial geography. This includes an overview of the associated expectations and epistemologies, which range from “no expectation of spatial accuracy” (in medieval times), where “the spatial was often less important than the symbolic” (3), to an “epistemology of precision and accuracy which the new spatial consciousness put into circulation” by the middle of the seventeenth century (188). Smith distinguishes his study from the majority of criticism that precedes it by shunning exclusively nationalist or political implications of this increasingly accurate documentation of the physical world and its borders. Instead he focuses on the “fundamental shift in the way space was imagined and the effects...of that new spatial consciousness on the ways people thought and wrote” (10), in particular, how “ideas and texts become subject to the same rules of organization and control that shape the understanding of the landscape” (11). Smith’s study makes a welcome addition to the wealth of literature that has chiefly attended to the mercantile, colonial or nationalistic aspects of early modern travel.

This history of cartography and the concomitant changes in the imagination lead into analyses of literary texts by Spenser (Chapter 3), Marlowe (though largely in the context of Raleigh; Chapter 4) and Marvell (Chapter 5). Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* is used to illustrate the transition from a traditional romance landscape dominated by allegorical rather than geographical or physical locations to a poetic landscape that, whilst not “an explicitly mapped space,” nevertheless permits the characters’ travels to be understood “in the coherent and comprehensive way that a map allows” (79). In Smith’s reading, Spenser is only superficially medieval; his allegorically moral landscape/mindscape actually displays evidence of the “new spatial consciousness” (87) hitherto discussed, primarily in terms of the reader’s use of memory theater to appreciate and overall arrangement of allegorical places. I found this first genuine application of the “cartographic imagination” to a literary text intriguing because it showed the extent to which cartography permeated early modern culture.

Students of Marlowe will of course be keen to read the fourth chapter, “Conquering Geography...,” but I must confess that I did not find this section quite as compelling as the rest of Smith’s excellent study. The premise of a comparative study of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* in the context of travel is an appealing one, and potentially productive, but I hasten to clarify that the Marlovian analysis, whilst generally erudite and compelling, is essentially the crutch to Raleigh’s leg. Smith’s premise is that “Marlowe was putting into cultural circulation not simply a new

knowledge of geography, but a new model of cartographic manipulation” (126) which linked power to cartographic knowledge and precision. Raleigh, *Faustus* and *Tamburlaine* are thus united by a “desire for conquest [that] expresses itself in geographical terms” (127). In his expedition to Guiana (his failed search for the fabled *El Dorado*) Raleigh, according to Smith, “re-situated Marlowe’s cartographic manipulations within a context of actual conquest, transforming and appropriating *Tamburlaine*’s conquering rhetoric and *Faustus*’ illusionary power” (128). There is much merit in Smith’s argument that the mathematical precision of “the new cartography provides a paradigm for a new degree of imaginative spatial mastery,” but I found myself disagreeing with Smith much more in this chapter than anywhere else. Smith’s ascription of Raleigh’s exhaustive cataloguing of New World cities to the type of “cartographic invocation that Marlowe employed” (140), whilst possible, overlooks Raleigh’s equally plausible indebtedness to the exhaustive enumerative lists which characterize the many cosmographies which precede the advent of this cartographic imagination. Similarly, when arguing that Raleigh “provides an illusion of exactitude that draws its convincing specificity from the cartographic discourse that frames it” (154), Smith overlooks equally plausible alternatives, such as that outlined in Charles Nicholl’s *The Creature of the Map*.

Having established the background and early formative stages of the “cartographic imagination,” Smith’s final chapter, originally published as an article in *The Seventeenth Century* 21.2 (2006), leaps forward some sixty years to Marvell’s “Bermudas” and “Upon Appleton House” to consider the legacy of this new epistemology. There is much to be admired here in Smith’s argument that familiarization with exotic novelty stimulated fresh perspectives of domesticity, de-familiarizing the already known. Smith is not the first to examine the domestic in the context of the foreign, nor even to examine country house poems in this context (Rhonda Lemke Sanford examined “how the country house poem...reflects the discovery and colonization of the New World through its frequent paradisiacal allusions” in *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England*, 25ff). But Smith’s argument that “[t]he cartographically inscribed exoticism and instability...is used here to destabilize the fixed and domestic estate” produces a fascinating alienation effect with which to end his book. And the examination of “Bermudas” in light of the country house poems is mutually illuminating in some unexpected and interesting ways.

At times a little repetitive--especially the recurrent dichotomy of abstract/emblematic space versus geographical accuracy/precision--Smith’s book nevertheless sets up some interesting paradigms through which to revisit familiar literature. *The Cartographic Imagination* is an engaging read which should generate fresh ways to approach early modern texts, and not simply those which are ostentatiously concerned with travel or cartography.

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Lisa Hopkins. *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist*. Renaissance Dramatists' Series. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. X + 179 pages.

Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist is an informative, approachable introduction for students. Lisa Hopkins presents a Marlowe who is intensely interested in ideas and people, a “scholar-dramatist” and “horizon-stretcher” attuned to “the central cultural and religious issues of his day” (166), including ones which still matter now. I enjoyed reading the book and imagine students would too—Hopkins’s writing is always lively, clear, and engaging—but I must also admit to being troubled by some of its directions and conclusions.

The book, one of a series on “Renaissance Dramatists,” is structured effectively for student readers, treating biography, canon, and theatrical contexts, before considering Marlowe’s interest in old and new branches of knowledge, his transgressions against “established norms and values,” and the major issues of critical discussion. The text is prefaced by a chronology of significant dates from 1564 (birth of Marlowe) to 1637 (death of Jonson), under the headings of “Plays and playwrights” and “Theatre and politics.”

The first chapter, “Marlowe’s Life and Death,” considers context and reception (3) rather than reading the works “in simple biographical terms” (2). The “disputed facts” (20) of this “unusually interesting and eventful life” (3) are rehearsed, with some leaning towards the Charles Nicholl version of events. As for atheism and homosexuality, the Baines accusations probably had “some inherent credibility” (17); and “Marlowe’s reputation as a homosexual” continues to influence the reception of his works (21). In summation, “this was a man who rebelled, who thought for himself, and who liked to shock” (22).

The works are consistent with the man. In Chapter 2, “The Marlowe Canon,” Hopkins explores sources, historical contexts, and contemporary political allusions. She offers lucid, concise accounts of topics such as religious conflict, French and Maltese history, and the *translatio imperii* (from Troy to Britain via Rome). All the plays are covered, with some commentary on the poems and translations. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* receives more attention than usual: “to its original audience [it was] full of dangerous resonances in the present” (40). For Hopkins, plays, poems, and translations “can all be seen as daring, political, and edgy works, which collectively challenge Elizabethan orthodoxies on a wide range of fronts” (50).

Chapter 3, “Marlowe on Stage, 1587–2007: Theatrical Contexts and Dramaturgical Practice,” offers a general survey of theatrical conditions and the dramatic inheritance before commenting selectively on modern productions. This chapter does not fulfill the promise of the Renaissance Dramatist series to provide “a focus on plays in performance on stage and screen.” *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* are treated sketchily. Some detailed attention is paid to the impact of child performers in *Dido*, but most (ten out of seventeen pages) of the section on “How the plays work on stage” is given over to two controversial examples: the Derek Jarman film of *Edward II* (1991) and the David Farr version of *Tamburlaine* (2005).

Chapter 4, “Marlowe as Scholar: Old and New Knowledges in the Plays,” considers Marlowe as a “scholar-dramatist,” with his plays offering audiences “knowledge as well as entertainment” (82). The aspects covered are classical knowledge and geography, with brief comments on medicine and cosmology. Hopkins’s observations are always interesting, sometimes provocative. Marlowe is fascinated by the East, but also by America. The latter represents wealth (“desire of gold”), exploration, the future, and the contemporary crisis of religious faith. Indeed, “in Marlowe, questions of religious belief are insistently linked with questions of geography” (98).

Transgression rather than learning is the subject of Chapter 5: “Marlowe the Horizon-Stretcher: Daring God out of Heaven and Conquering New Worlds.” As Hopkins comments of the “dramatic energy” invested in Mortimer, “it is transgression which really fuels his plays” (139). The chapter deals variously with the equation between religion and violence (“for Marlowe, religion, at least as he sees it practiced in contemporary Europe, is violence” [115]); the “exploration of extreme psychological states” (106), including all that arm-cutting; and, not least, the heroes, representing “what, in Elizabethan terms, would have seemed more like a rogues’ gallery than a collection of suitable heroes for literature” (141). These heroes both “defy the norms and values of their own societies” and threaten those of the contemporary audience (129). Hence Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas “refuse to accept” their “allotted” roles of shepherd, lowly person, outsider (129); Dido is female and foreign, which “fundamentally transgresses norms” (131) as well as theatrical practice; the Guise is a cuckold, and Edward less vital than Gaveston or Mortimer. Faustus is the most admirable in conventional terms (he is heterosexual and opposes Spain), but “Marlowe, with typical perversity, apparently sets him up simply for us to condemn, calling into question the very concept of a tragic hero” (136).

Chapter 6, “Critical issues,” offers a brief but useful survey of criticism, revealing an increasing diversity of response to Marlowe. Hopkins identifies the recurrent issues as the relationship to Shakespeare, the relationship between life and works—and Marlowe’s supposed inabilities: to write comedy, create female characters, or differentiate between characters. The closing discussion is centered on the last two of these, in Marlowe’s “women” and Marlowe’s “men,” with Hopkins suggesting that both male and female characters function allegorically. The plays were thus written not as self-indulgence or display, but “to examine some of the central cultural and religious issues of his day” (166).

Would I recommend this book to my students? Yes, on a reading list: for its liveliness and accessibility, for its wealth of information, for its skill in presenting a variety of critical opinions, and as a stimulus to discussion. Hopkins takes the intellectual content of Marlowe’s works seriously, realigning discussion from biography to issues and ideas—but ideas always with “attitude.” Her bibliography encompasses most Marlowe scholarship, except for examples of performance criticism. I would add some of these to my list as well as a student guide such as Stevie Simkins, *Marlowe: The Plays* in the Palgrave series *Analysing Texts* (2001). Students need to

look closely at, read aloud, and even perform the play-texts they are encouraged to have lively opinions about.

Another reservation concerns the “transgression” that is held to “fuel” Marlowe’s works. Drama has always been a transgressive art and—as at most other times—the most memorable characters and scenes in sixteenth-century plays were likely to be ones that challenged the complacent or conformist in the audience: Hieronimo’s revenge is decidedly antisocial. Nor is Marlowe alone in his “exploration of extreme psychological states,” to instance *Titus Andronicus*—not to mention Kyd, Greene, Jonson, Middleton, Webster, and Anonymous. And perhaps there are dubious assumptions behind the notion of “suitable heroes for literature.”

More generally, I am troubled by what Lukas Erne describes as the urge to “sell” (who hasn’t felt it?) “the commodity called “Marlowe.”¹ Do we need to present Marlowe as the quintessential Elizabethan bad boy to gain our students’ attention? What do we gain (or lose) by insisting on “transgression” or indeed “relevance”? How close after all *is* the parallel between Tamburlaine and the present-day terrorist? Or between sixteenth-century and modern religious conflict? That Marlowe could matter nowadays for other, less “relevant” reasons was seen earlier this year in the performance of *The Marlowe Project* by the young people of Little Rock at the Sixth International Conference at Canterbury, a performance which demonstrated a response to the theatrical power of the plays, their verbal eloquence and sheer narrative excitement.

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¹ Lukas Erne, “Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe,” *Modern Philology* 103 (2005): 30.

Editor’s Note. *MSA Book Reviews* provides descriptions and evaluations of recent publications on Marlowe and his period. It gives both new and established Marlowe scholars a forum for expressing their views from a variety of critical approaches. Although reviews of books are the norm, appraisals of recent articles on Marlowe are also welcome. The reviews should be no more than 1000 words in length and should cover the book’s purpose, contribution, scholarship, format, and success in achieving its purpose. The editor reserves the right to ask for revision and to make stylistic changes thought appropriate. The substance of the review and its judgments remain those of the review’s author (and do not necessarily express the opinions of the MSA). Reviewers should be members of the MSA. Contact information for the editor can be found on page 2.

A Renewed Plea to MSA Members

We would like to be a better resource of information and notices for all things Marlowe, and to make better use of our listserv. But to do so we must rely on the support and involvement of our members. So if you know of a performance, or event, or any other tidbit of Marloviana, please pass it on to us. The most efficient way is to email Pierre Hecker directly with your news: phecker@carleton.edu

We would love to expand our range of contributors; if you’ve got an idea for a piece or a review, please get in touch.

