

Dear Seminarians:

We've had a chance to go through your essays and identify topics that speak to the general aims of the seminar as expressed in the program description. These are, again:

- The critical tradition linking the two writers incorporates a mythology of influence and rivalry. Shakespeare scholarship has largely determined Marlowe's reception. Was this inevitable?
- Have Marlowe studies reciprocally framed the reception of Shakespeare?
- Why has "value" been privileged, with Shakespeare as Marlowe's "superior," Marlowe as Shakespeare's "equal"?
- Our seminar's primary subject is the conception of influence—as a process rather than an end in itself—and evidence of its existence between the two authors. [How is it a process?]

Although we don't want to limit or circumscribe your own reading and discussion ideas—please feel free to suggest—we thought that we might begin with the following questions as a kind of program or plan until the discussion at the table takes on a life of its own, as we intend. We hope everyone will take a turn and feel comfortable speaking.

Although one of us plans to bring a camera to take pictures for the website (which we're going to leave up for a few years), we'd appreciate it if one of you would do the same, just for the sake of backup.

As we mentioned in our previous correspondence, we've arranged a nightcap for approximately 9.45 p.m. on the 2nd in whatever hotel venue seems appropriate. Once we've had the opportunity to find out what the Hyatt has to offer when we both arrive in Chicago, we can be more specific about the lounge. We'll be joined by the president of the Marlowe Society of America, Roslyn Knutson, and we hope you can attend.

We've posted a copy of this letter on the Letters and Deadlines page of the site for your convenience. Both of us look forward to seeing all of you in a few weeks. Let us know if we can be helpful in the meantime.

Best wishes,

Sarah and Michael

QUESTIONS

1. Sh. seems to be reprocessing, revising, reanimating M. How is Sh. doing this, theatrically? Would M recognize this activity if he were in the audience, or even collaborating on a production?

Background: Barbara's analysis of the intricate parallels between *Hamlet* and *Faustus*, in which both seem to parody the Lutheran conversion experience, validate Reformation propaganda that

depicts Roman Catholicism as demonic and its rituals necromantic, and critique Calvinism at the roots.

2. Is Marlowe-Shakespeare “comparativism” better divorced from the idea of performance, only suited to the *métier* of scholarship?

Background: Jacob’s essay on “the plotting of chance” in *MV* and *JM* and the viability of one as commercial theater perhaps dictating the composition and production of the other; Ann’s report on the four recent attempts to produce *MV* and *JM* together: an implication of her findings is that in practical theatrical terms, audiences are not interested in the sorts of convergences that occupy us as academics, or even much in Marlowe.

3. The dissonances between frequently compared plays seem instructive, such as *R2* and *E2*, as well as *JM* and *MV*. What is the best way to investigate these differences in terms of influence, rivalry, or reception?

Background: Robin’s investigation of the construction of England as place in the two histories via the Helgersonian “forms of nationhood” thesis: why does M not seem that interested in the “cosmic” aspects of kingship and nationalism that Sh. seems to prize in *R2*?

4. Even at the end of his career (contra the arguments of Brooke, Rossiter, Brooks), Sh. does not seem to have transcended or to be “done with” M. Why is this?

Background: Jim’s analysis of Sh.’s invocation of Faustus in Prospero, as well as the critical tradition of doing so. Can we understand Bate’s commentary on the Sh.-M debate to resonate at all with an idea such as this one? M “*is the only contemporary whom Shakespeare overtly alludes to rather than subliminally absorbs*”; “Shakespeare’s works are antithetical readings of Marlowe’s precursors; . . . they *are* his anxiety about Marlowe [and] some of his most characteristic thinking about reading, writing, and theatricalizing occurs during his engagements with Marlowe” (104).

5. The dual perspective some sense in Sh.’s protagonists seems to have been inherited from M. Is this kind of imitation reproductive and sacramental or dialectical and competitive, more like emulation?

Background: Sara D’s argument that Sh., seeking a hero to “embody . . . his own ambivalent feelings toward war and conquest,” chose Tamburlaine as a model for Henry V: M is model for Sh. at midcareer, also. Just as M does not seem to provide moral judgment on a man who slaughters virgins and Turks indifferently, still beloved by the fair Zenocrate, Sh. the same with Hal. Is such dual perspective somehow metaphorical of M-Sh. line of influence? The playwright maintains an ironic distance from his multifaceted and flawed hero who is nevertheless popular with audiences who may not be aware of such subtleties.

6. How does Sh. learn from M, in political and personal relations? How is this reflected on the page? The stage?

Background: Matthew's idea that the "debasement of family" informs both *Faustus* and *Othello* and connects them; John's thesis that M's plausible intention to portray Ithamore and Barabas as a subtle same-sex-desire relationship a prototype for the intense bond between Iago and Othello, esp. in misogyny.

7. Some ligatures seem insignificant but loom large, even to the extent of stage properties. Why make such small things agents of metatheatricality?

Background: Brett's argument on books and Lizz's on music: Sh. alive to the minutiae of stage properties and music in M and how they inform the thematics of a given play—in this case, books and music, intellectual activity, worlds of ideas, harmonies, consorts—what does Sh. invite audiences to consider in recalling these things? Is it necessarily Marlovian?

8. Both M and Sh. parody—and even desecrate—their classical, medieval, and early modern literary antecedents, often the very same authors they both venerate elsewhere. Does Sh. do this in the same way that M does? How?

Background: Sarah R's essay on M and Sh.'s appropriation of iconic classical epic as campy drama, calling attention to itself as parody (cf. John Waters and David Lynch savaging *American Bandstand*, *A Summer Place* and *The Wizard of Oz*). Would *Tro.* have been possible without the Marlovian antecedent of *Dido*? what is it about these two stories esp. that raise the antennae of both playwrights, not just to their source materials, but to the possibilities as drama?

9. Some say exotic locales seem to matter very much in M (Rome, Hell, Paris, Malta, Dardanelles, Asia Minor), maybe not so much in Sh. Is this true, and if so, why?

Background: Annette's argument that eschatology and geography "haunt" both Sh. and M: why should Sh. be haunted? Does Sh. also interest himself in M's "globalism"? If not, why not?

10. If necessary, we can explore the topics we had included in our original proposal:

- If in the rivalry narrative the "survivor" was indeed perceived the "winner," does this mean that M necessarily suffered by comparison, or is this merely another metamorphosis in the myth?
- Is the renewed interest in M, one that champions him as a major author with an identifiable opus that can be read "intratextually," merely a reaction to the theory of Sh.'s superiority?
- In spite of clear evidence of Sh.'s collaboration with Middleton and Fletcher, there is probably no early modern author whom we associate with him more than Marlowe. Why has this speculative connection endured, and the more evidentiary one not developed more?

- Why has it seemed not just important but essential for many to seek, qua Logan, “uncomplicated explanations” for the idea of influence, or fail to heed his caveat that such study is indeed a process and not an end in itself?

SELECTED CRITICAL BACKGROUNDS

1. Three important interrelated concepts introduced in the middle of the last century have informed subsequent comparative study such as Garber’s and Shapiro’s reinvigoration of the venerable theory of artistic rivalry (1979, 1991), and Logan’s alternative conception of Sh. as pragmatist, artistically and commercially (2007), a little too shrewd for allegories of open conflict as Garber said of Hal (Sh.) and Hotspur (M), or M and Sh. as competitive card players:

- it is naïve to assume Sh. simply a receiver and improver of M, and it is better to conceive of them as interacting so that it is actually possible to say M learned from Sh. (Rossiter, Wilson);
- Sh. sometimes derives characters and rhetorical modes that lack his predecessor’s sophistication (Brooke);
- Sh. consciously referring to M, or at least making his audience aware he remembers him (Wilson, Brooke, Brooks).

Rossiter: “Here I get a quite definite impression that the dependence is the other way about: Marlowe has seen a dramatic opportunity in another man’s work” (66). Rather than the influence going one way, Sh. from M, that M from Sh, too, who learned from *Henry VI* and showed it in *Edward II*, and Sh. shows this double debt in *Richard II*. That their influence mutually interpenetrating, working playwrights together.

Wilson: Sh. aware certainly of the variety and sophistication of M’s verse, and does not always match it, but again seems inspired to emulate, to compete (30).

According to Brooke, Tamburlaine shows up not just in parodic forms, such as Pistol or Morocco, but crucial for development of Othello. “It suggests a deliberate closeness to Marlowe’s very distinctive manner which must involve an attitude to his equally distinctive moral values” (34), i.e., Aaron the Moor and Tamburlaine. That is, Sh. an emulator. In recalling Marlowe in his early plays, and even into the middle period, he demonstrates “a process of invoking the literary criticalness of his audience to expose attitudes in the kinds of utterance that identify them,” a “technique” that may derive from earlier “imitation and parody” (41). Julius Caesar’s intractability before he is murdered, and then the hyperbole later on by Antony and Brutus. Sh. even on occasion tends to simplify M’s effect. “Against that tendency, the periodic eruptions of Marlowe stand as a vital force, disturbing always in their implications”; “Marlowe seems to have been for Shakespeare not only a great poet, as his tributes imply, but the inescapable imaginative creator of something initially alien which he could only assimilate with difficulty, through a process of imitative re-creation merging into critical parody” (44). Since “the process of assimilation is complete,” Sh’s later plays show no great dependence on M as a result, because “The provocative agent has taken his seat in the establishment” (44).

Brooks: Sh. more heavily indebted to M than previously claimed: Sh. learned traditional native dramatic forms, implementation of classical materials; characters who speak their minds directly as well as soliloquize; aspiring protagonist, somewhat like Levin's "overreacher." Of all fellow playwrights, only M was "a poetic dramatist of genius."

Have we progressed from this point? If so, how?

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Bate, Jonathan. *The Genius of Shakespeare*. London: Picador, 1997.

Garber, Marjorie. "Marlovian Vision / Shakespearean Revision." *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 22 (1979): 3-9.

Logan, Robert A. *Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

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Shapiro, James. *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

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