



# Marlowe Society of America Newsletter

Vol. XIV, No. 1, Spring 1994

## ROMA GILL PRIZE

The American Marlowe Society's 1991-92 Roma Gill Prize for outstanding contribution to Marlowe scholarship has been awarded to Professor Debra Belt of Hillsdale College for her essay "Anti-Theatricalism and Rhetoric in Marlowe's Edward II," published in English Literary Renaissance, 21 (1991): 134-160. Gregory W. Bredbeck of the University of California at Riverside has been awarded an Honorable Mention for his book Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). In evaluating the plethora of Marlowe scholarship published during 1991-92, the committee gave preference to those works that significantly deepen our understanding of Marlowe's texts and of the cultural milieu that helped to produce them.

Debra Belt's valuable essay clarifies the strategies and conflicts of Edward II by embedding the play within the topical controversies of the period, brilliantly demonstrating how the ambiguities and contradictions fueling the anti-theatrical debates of the time inform Marlowe's play. According to Belt, "the motifs and slogans of the campaign against plays mounted by the tract writers of the 1580s and 1590s pervade the work," and constitute the structural underpinnings on which the text is built. Central to Belt's thesis are two basic assumptions. "The first is that Edward II is best seen as a study in the ways of moving, of the relationship between suggestion and perception; the second, that Edward himself should be viewed primarily (although not exclusively) in his kingly role as audience to the court performances that all the factions in the play are engaged in putting on." Belt thus argues persuasively that Edward II is more than an examination of friendship, homosexuality, kingship, imagination, invention, or psychology (traditional readings of the play), but is also centrally concerned with rhetoric and its effect upon theatrical audiences. The committee praised Belt's essay for the originality of its approach and the thoroughness of its scholarship. By skillfully orienting Edward II within its cultural context, Belt's essay illumines significant aspects of the play that have been frequently overlooked.

The committee commended Gregory W. Bredbeck's

book for its bold and imaginative discussions of Edward II and Hero and Leander. Like Belt, Bredbeck locates Marlowe's texts within their cultural milieu, in particular relating them to early modern discourses on sodomy and to contemporaneous treatments of Edward II's reign. Bredbeck shows how the construction of the sodomite as disorderly can be read against the Elizabethan political notion of the monarch's body natural and body politic, arguing convincingly that instead of directing his attention primarily to the body natural as other writers of the period do, Marlowe depicts Edward II as a participant in both bodies and, hence, as a rebel against his own body politic. In his analysis of Hero and Leander, Bredbeck reveals how the poem undermines orthodox heteroerotic assumptions. Moreover, in pointing out that homoeroticism "defines what can be used to undo the system constructing it," he explains how it exposes "the very real, very central sociopolitical power that is—always—the end(s) of the erotic." The committee felt that in both discussions Bredbeck presents us with a cultural context and a perspective on gender that is challenging, candid, and complex, convincingly demonstrating that a strong sensitivity to gender is at the forefront of Marlowe's work.

These two critical works should provide Marlowe scholars both profit and delight, and each of these studious artisans should be congratulated for their valuable contributions to Marlowe studies.

The Roma Gill Prize carries a cash award of \$250, and the Honorable Mention a cash award of \$100. Since the officers of the MSA administer the prize, they are not eligible to receive the award themselves.

## MSA ELECTION

The winner of last fall's election for Secretary is Viviana Comensoli, of Wifrid Laurier University.

## MEMBERSHIP FEES

Rising costs have forced the Society to raise its membership fees (see p. 2), and it was affirmed that conference participants and contributors to the Newsletter and Book Reviews should be members of the Society.

## MARLOWE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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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. Send inquiries, announcements, and submissions to Professor Brandt at the above address. The deadline for the fall issue is October 1, 1994.

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

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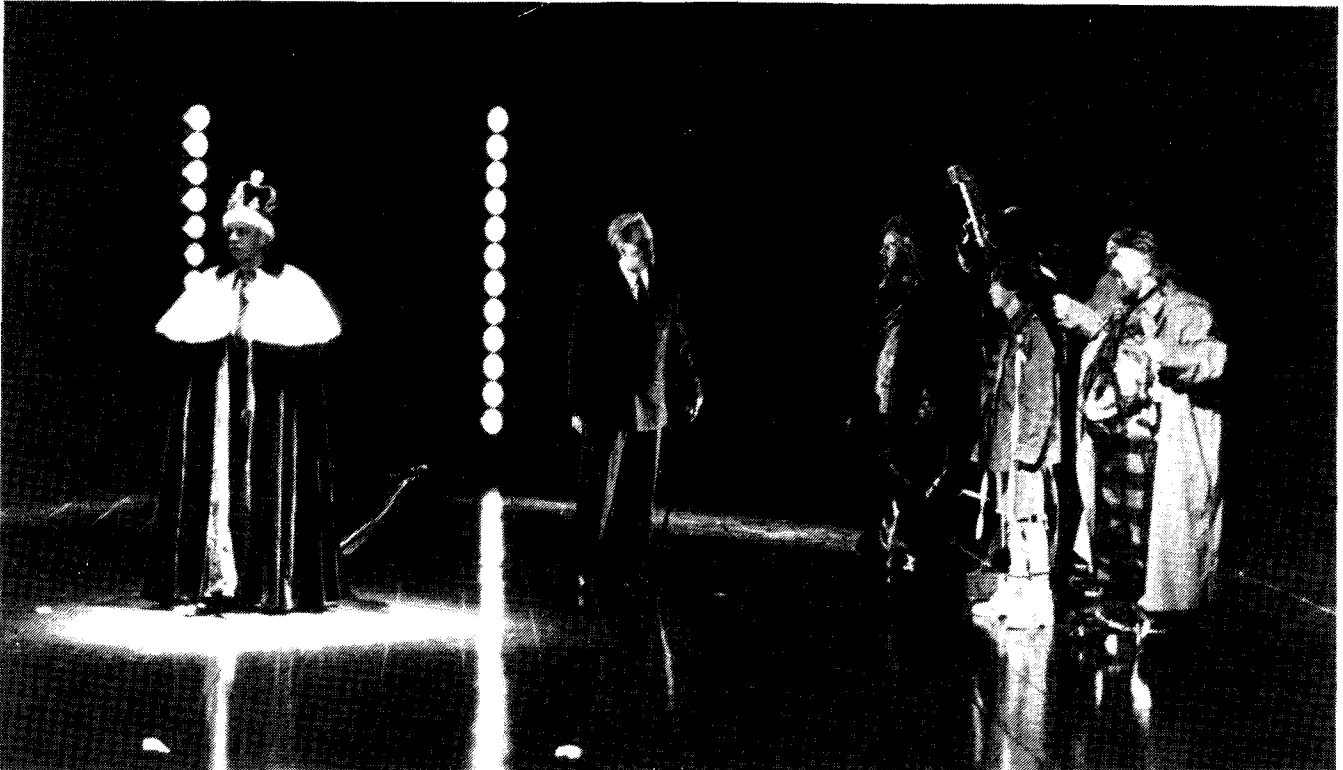
## HENRY IV: PARTS I & 2

Presented by The American Repertory Theatre, November, 1993 to January, 1994, Cambridge, MA. Directed by Ron Daniels. Sets by John Conklin. Costumes by Gabriel Berry. Lighting by Frances Aronson. Music/Sound by Bruce Odland. Associate Director: Steven Maler. Dramaturg: Peter Scanlan. Henry IV: Alvin Epstein. Prince Hal: Bill Camp. Falstaff: Jeremy Geidt. Hotspur and Warwick: Royal Miller. Prince John and Ralph: Christopher Johnson. Northumberland and Shallow: William Young. Glendower, Douglas, and York: Herb Downer. Lady Percy and Doll: Maggie Rush. Mistress Quickly: Remo Airaldi. Thomas and Gadshill: Mark Boyet. Worcester Gower, and Silence: Noble Shropshire. Westmoreland and Chief Justice: Will LeBow. Humphrey and Mouldy: Todd Peters. Bardolph: Thomas Darrah. Poins and Davy: Phillip Munson. Mortimer, Fang, and Wart: Karm Kerwell. Lady Mortimer: Jessica Walling. Vernon and Pistol: Benjamin Evett. Page: Nathaniel Gundy. Peto and Feeble: Robert McDonough. Francis and Shadow: Vontress Mitchell. Hastings: Jack Willis. Mowbray: Kevin Waldron. Bullcalf, Coleville and Snare: James Farmer.

It takes good acting to overcome bad direction. Fortunately, the acting in the ART Henry IV sequence was excellent. And it must be said that Director Ron Daniels moved his actors crisply within the large spaces of the Loeb stage--with one notable exception--and achieved a crackling pace. Like so many productions of Shakespeare, however, this one was fortunate to survive the "bright idea" that Daniels imposed upon it.

The court and battle sequences occurred somewhere along the spectrum from the American Civil War to World War I and featured a confusing medley of hammerlock Springfields, sabers, and 45-caliber pistols, with machine guns punctuating the soundtrack at Shrewsbury. The King and party wore "Student Prince" outfits, while Hotspur affected a riding outfit out of Frederic Remington. Glendower was a shaman living in a Native America far from the Wild West of Wales. This mishmash was not as insulting as that regularly inflicted on us by Michael Bogdanov, but "concept" made it difficult, for example, to enjoy Royal Miller's (Hotspur) puncturing of Herb Downer's (Glendower) pretensions. Glendower was merely a butt here and was robbed of his lines about musicians hanging "in the air a thousand miles from hence." Native Americans should be picketing outside the theatre! The Welsh lady's song did create, as always, a parenthesis of serenity between the plans for war and the civil butchery that ensues.

The tavern scenes were placed in the Jersey City of the 1970s. This was to sever any links between this "world" and previous history and to cut the tavern completely off from the world of the court, that is between the pragmatic politics which Bolingbroke must now practice after his seizure of the crown



American Repertory Theatre, Henry IV, Part 1

Photo: Richard Feldman

and murder of Richard and the lower world, which is also based on thievery and opportunism and has at its center a prince who has perfected the scheme of invisibility that his father outlines as the basis for his career. It is just that Hal, by being seen too often, will be "wonder'd at" (as both King and Prince say) when he does appear just as his father was. The two historical times do not inhabit the same world, as would, for example, a group of youngsters eagerly awaiting an appearance by Glenn Miller at the Hotel Pennsylvania and their elders soberly watching the ticker many blocks below on Wall Street. The first tavern scene gave us Hal watching Tom and Jerry on TV and munching from a box of Cap'n Crunch as Falstaff slept. Lost was the fact that Hal agrees to join Poins's counter-plot as part of his own scheme-within-a-scheme to "redeem . . . time when men think least" he will. The crucial soliloquy was undercut by Hal's groping in the cereal box and coming up with a plastic prize. The issue of a prince and power was reduced to that of a boy and a toy.

During rehearsal, Dramaturg Robert Scanlan tells us, "director Ron Daniels repeatedly pointed out to the cast [that] there is no way for the characters to know how things will turn out" (Program Note 8). The playwright knows where his play is going, but the characters do not, and that is particularly true in a history play, where individuals are subject to events that they may initiate—like Bolingbroke's return to England before Richard seizes his inheritance—but which they cannot control once set in motion. It is simply not true, however, as Scanlan goes on to say,

that "The very real possibility exists . . . that the ungoverned Prince Hal will become a disastrous tyrant once in power. . . . There are urgent reasons of state for disrupting any order which will bring the likes of Hal to power" (8). This is to be taken in by Hal as many are—Henry IV, the Lord Chief Justice, Falstaff, but not Vernon who twice reports positively on Hal from the wrong side of history and not Warwick, a shrewd political realist who glimpses Hal's purpose. The motive of the traitors, moreover, is to depose a monarch who has not rewarded them properly and to replace Henry IV with Mortimer, a motive that reaches powerfully into Henry V and to the Yorkist conspiracies in Henry VI. Suffice it that, in the play, Prince Hal is not a rallying cry for rebellion. "[S]omehow out of this agitation and chaos, by blind intuition and good luck, stability is groped for and, eventually found," Scanlan goes on (9). To make that thesis work, the production does have to destroy Hal's soliloquy, which this one does effectively. Here is a case of a dramaturg rationalizing a director's concept rather than helping him understand the script.

David Bevington struggles gamely to justify Daniels's "bright idea": "the world of the aging King Henry IV [is] an older and more traditional society of stern authoritarianism and of a nation divided against itself. The other (that of young Prince Hal) is a mod world of youthful rebellion, drugs, sexual permissiveness, and the exploration of pluralistic values. These theatrical fictions are technically distant from the immediacies of Shakespeare's history" (News, 3). Shakespeare's histories, as Moseley says, used his

"audiences' attitude to their past" (79) as part of the energy of response that any dramatist invites. That audience made sense of its present through a dramatic review of events that stood, for them, at about the same remove as the American Civil War does for us. "History" demands some conceptual space within which we can understand and evaluate. The closest that Shakespeare's history—and I am not talking about The Merry Wives of Windsor—gets to his own time is probably Othello, possibly Love's Labours Lost, each set in a locale other than England. That Elizabethan audiences created allegories out of Shakespeare's histories is probably true, but it was between past and present. The present is never allegorical. Time and the history it engenders create the "second" meanings to be discerned in the past, as Shakespeare constantly suggests in these plays. He shows powerful men dictating allegories, of course, as Henry IV does in changing Richard's "the mounting Bolingbroke" to "my cousin, Bolingbroke," a convenient "recollection" that changes Icarian ambition to close relationship. To contemporize one part of a play and to "historicize" another is to create a distracting competition between the two elements, one that obscures the competition that does exist between them and that denies Hal's decision-in-advance for instant success in the political realm. Hal can read his soliloquy as a "discovery," as David Gwillim did, or as a statement of cold political intention, as Keith Baxter and Gerard Murphy did. However it comes at us, it serves as a filter through which we observe all subsequent scenes. We share Hal's detachment even as we enjoy his game with Falstaff. And that is not an "interpretation." Soliloquies mean what their speakers believe themselves to mean as the words are spoken. In this case, Hal knows who he is, who he will be, and how he will get there.

The other problem with the punk-rock motif, with its spiky, dyed hair, leather jackets and chains, is that it does not create a place for Falstaff. He cannot be a deboshed nobleman, so he is a street person tolerated—who knows why?—by the denizens of the dive. He has no background against which to project his self-aware self-fashionings, thus must be a victim of a delusional system and of deinstitutionalization, admittedly a madman with remarkable verbal skills, though this Falstaff (Jeremy Geidt) was robbed of such amusing qualifications as "as ancient writers do report." Given even a neutral "modern" setting, Geidt's Falstaff, with splendid eye movements and glances to assess his on-stage audience and to plan his rhetorical escapes, could have extemporized from a prior career in the long-ago world of Gaunt and Edmund Langley, Duke of York. Critic Kevin Kelly suggests that the punk rock "idea has weight precisely because it's presented then left alone" (53). That is fair—we were not blasted from our seats by punk rock. The problem is, however, that the idea once presented left Falstaff in a vacuum. An irony is, I must admit, that this tavern did create space for Remo Airaldi's

wonderfully funny Mistress Quickly.

A less blatant setting, however, might also have permitted us to see that Bill Camp's brilliant Hal was using Falstaff as more than a "foil." Falstaff, who can dissolve "reality" with a word, represents the most formidable of opponents for Hal in a world of necessarily improvised politics. As Bevington says, Falstaff represents to Hal "a means of trying out various roles . . . various identities to see what kind of king he might eventually be" (13). What Hal does, consistently, is to try to trap Falstaff. King Henry V finally shuts the trap (as it were) by denying Falstaff any lines to speak: "Reply not to me with a fool-born jest." This production would have been as fooled by Hal as Falstaff was had not Camp known what Hal was up to.

I suggest, furthermore, that the world of Bolingbroke should remind us of our own Tricky Dicks and Slick Willies and is thus closer to us than are the transitory antics of any sub-culture. But my statement reduces the script to banality, as this production tried to do by attempting to prove Jonathan Yardley's thesis that "we have become imprisoned by immediacy" (36).

The best scene in Part One was the confrontation between Henry IV and Hal, played in front of the proscenium with only a chair and a glass of water as props for the King. We got our only glimpse of a Henry IV who might have been a Bolingbroke, albeit a pompous one, pumping himself up on "pontifical" and playing at grief. He stood down right while Hal was in the more vulnerable down left position. The King moved toward Hal as the former compared himself to Hotspur. Hal's superb command of rhetoric pulled our attention to him. Hal moved toward the King as the former said "Percy is but my factor." Hotspur was the force that was making them move, a fact nicely captured here in the fitting of action to word. While all the scenes could hardly have been played this way and while this scene benefited from its contrast with other full-stage sequences, the scene was powerful partly because it was not burdened with a concept. We experienced Hal ultimately controlling the scene and thus glimpsed the future. The scene would have been even more effective had we been allowed to watch Bolingbroke's manipulation in the opening scene. He already knows—though we do not—that his crusade will not occur, but goes ahead with lengthy piety. We learn, however, that Sir Walter Blunt had already informed the King about Holmedon and thus that the latter's opening was a phony. This production took Henry V's heavily-edited opening at face value. His son, Henry V, will develop his own skills so completely that he will convince even the most skeptical of critics that he is indeed "the mirror of all Christian kings." Suffice it that the similarities and the contrasts between this father and son could have been drawn more clearly.

The one actor who needed help was Maggie Rush, whose Lady Percy made confusing pauses in her pleas to

Hotspur (II.3) and whose pathos was swallowed up by the large bare stage which Hotspur could dominate easily. The point may be that women are victims of male intention, but Rush was a victim of bad direction.

Some Hotspur's "speak . . . thick" (as Lady Percy says, but did not say here, in Part Two). Miller's Hotspur did, driving out those recalcitrant "w's" with an angry stamp of his foot. This device of characterization suggests that Hotspur should think before he acts as he must pause before he speaks. Here, of course, he was impatient with himself as he is with the world in which he is an anachronism, a man who should be living back in the time of the Black Prince but is trapped in a politics of expediency. Hal could parody Hotspur effectively, and the payoff for Hotspur's impediment came after Hotspur died upon a struggle with a "w" and Hal completed the sentence: "For worms, brave Percy."

A lot of the wonderful pre-dawn discussion was cut from the Gad's Hill sequence, but the robbery was conducted like a "happening"—in the auditorium. I lost some lines—"Young men must live" and "They hate us youth," for example—but the trade-off was an exciting sequence that invaded our space. The robbery, Hal and Poins brandishing water pistols, was conducted in front of the partially lowered fire-curtain. That Bardolph donned a Richard Nixon mask for the robbery was amusing and permissible since we are experiencing a farce that parodies Henry's seizure of the crown.

Falstaff's disquisition on honor was splendid, but hollowed-out by editing that robbed Hotspur of his earlier, contrasting speech in I.3. To deny that that other world exists—the one in which Hotspur might have been a soldier of the king—is to deny the context against which the more cynical attitude that Falstaff describes can be understood.

The finale featured two armies on either side of the stage—a technique often used at the end of Richard III—with each army singing. Hotspur's troops sang "Tenting Tonight," while the King's forces crooned of home and mother. The effect was a pre-battle dissonance, presumably intentional. It makes little sense for Henry IV to complain of having "his old limbs . . . crush[ed] . . . in ungentle steel," if he is sitting there in his general's suit. Douglas was at one point surrounded by three masked "kings"—a suggestion that kingship is at once an illusion and a fact that will survive this effort to destroy it and divide England into three principalities. The final battle was conducted in and around a set of steel picket fences which echoed the many fences that became the sites of slaughter during the American Civil War. Bardolph roamed through the battle picking pockets, a borrowing from Branagh's *Agincourt*. Part One ended with Worcester and Vernon swinging up on the tug of the hangman's nooses.

The actors were the reactionaries here, attempting to unify, integrate, find meaning within Daniels's

effort at disintegration—what Kelly calls the "now standard with-it anachronism" (51). Fortunately, the actors won.

Daniels's Hamlet—for RSC—gave us an armored Ghost and an armored Fortinbras. Hamlet's embassy to the future failed. There we got a concept surrounding the inner action and showing us a tragedy neatly absorbed by the status quo. The ghosts of the past entered and took over at Elsinore, easily incorporating the now-dead Hamlet into their agenda. In Henry IV, Part 1 the director's simplifying metaphors complicated things for the actors.

Part Two built from unpromising beginnings to one of the most convincing final sequences that I have ever experienced in the theatre. We began with a reprise of the end of Shrewsbury. Henry IV sentenced Worcester and particularly Vernon with more vigor than he had at the end of the previous play, and gave his peroration against a rising cacophony. The inner curtain rose on a riot featuring a burning Ford Escort. Then Falstaff and the Boy entered for the confrontation with the Chief Justice. Gone, then, was Rumor's Induction and the wonderful scene in which the truth about "Coldspur" comes to Northumberland, Shakespeare's dramatic essay on how the gap between an event and the reporting of that event works. Northumberland's line "Let order die" was scrawled on the Escort, a time-saving elision no doubt, but a disappointment, since the seldom seen scenes were not here to be wondered at.

The "concept" here was to take Northumberland's nihilistic vision and extend it to "the world of the play" and to that "globe of sinful continents," Falstaff. Falstaff is the energy that Hal/Henry V must learn "how to handle," as he says, an anarchy as challenging as Hotspur's was in Part One. The problem, of course, is that this Falstaff is just an old bum in the world that Daniels creates around him. While the rustic world of Shallow and Silence is wonderfully convincing, we cannot credit Falstaff's being accepted as "a friend at court," anymore than we can believe that Falstaff has been given any charge at all, of horse or of foot. This modernization divorces Falstaff from the world that John of Gaunt describes at length in Richard II, of which Falstaff, like Hotspur, is an ironic reminder. Here, references to Gaunt tended to be cut, as was Mowbray's long apologia for his father. The latter excision was necessary for streamlining, of course, but symptomatic of the lack of contact with their own "historicity" that each production demonstrated. Mowbray, incidentally, was executed summarily, by gunshots, as he moved angrily towards Christopher Johnson's oily and self-righteous Prince John after the trap at Gaultree had been sprung. Coleville's surrender to this "Sir" John made no sense, assuming that Coleville is seeking an enemy captain to whom to surrender, nor was anything made of Coleville's defiance of John, an attitude that probably prompts John's order for immediate execution. A good moment was lost for the sake of emphasizing

John's brutality.

The last tavern scene was more generalized than those in Part I, but did not show that Falstaff turns the tables on Hal one last time by inverting the hierarchy ("I dispraised him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him.") thus forcing the Prince to praise the denizens of the Boar's Head—that is "to say that which his flesh rebels against." Hal sets Falstaff up, of course, by anticipating Falstaff's defense ("You knew I was at your back, and spoke it on purpose to try my patience"). The scene should play against the coming rejection, which shows an overconfident Falstaff rushing towards the new King's reassertion of hierarchy. "King Hal" is suddenly an oxymoron, as Falstaff, the last character to say "Hal" is immediately to learn. Clearly, the "dramaturgy" followed the director's cue in the final tavern scene, rather than helping him to inform and enrich the possibilities of the script.

The final sequences, however, transcended Daniels' earlier failures and were splendidly directed. In the crown sequence, Camp's Hal pressed real grief past Epstein's histrionic King and gave a convincing demonstration of how much the Prince had learned from Falstaff in this analogue to the "play extempore" in Part I. We noticed that Hal wore his gold cross again, earlier merely a piece of jewelry to contrast with his leather and to conflict with the huge cross at which his father had been discovered praying at the beginning of Part One, now an object that Hal took at more than just monetary value. The King was carried to Jerusalem in a cortege in front of the inner curtain from stage left to right. The curtain opened to Gloucestershire and a wonderful slow-down that fast-pacing permits as the old men mused about death and the price of ewes. Falstaff entered to the tune of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again," as played by the local high school band. Wart, Shadow, and Feeble were decorated as local heroes. A country festival ensued, the band being fed immediately while the rest sat at a long table upstage under a welcome home banner. The feast continued as, back in London, Hal confronted the Chief Justice. Camp showed that he already knew what he was going to do but permitted the Chief Justice to make his case, by which Hal could pretend to be persuaded. The stage captured simultaneity superbly here. Pistol brought his news to Gloucestershire—an echo of the Northumberland scene that had been cut—and Falstaff charged on London. Mistress Quickly and Doll were carried off to gaol, a signal that "law and order" had returned to London. The new King appeared upcenter—the position of power—and marched forward as a long, blue-velvet train trailed behind him. His "I know thee not" was not compromised as his "I know you all" had been. He measured Falstaff's grave as he had measured Hotspur's ("two paces of the vilest earth is room enough"; "the grave doth gape/ For thee thrice wider than for other men") and marched off to history. Most of the rejection speech had been delivered down front, Henry

V looking straight ahead, with an occasional glance at Falstaff, who stood down left. We, then, the almost 600 people sitting in front of Henry V were the kingdom. His was the power. The point was made simply by Henry V's position on stage, by Camp's vigorous delivery of the words, and by the fact that no "crowd" was represented on stage. This is a great scene, of course. Its strength here was a result of the simplicity of its staging.

Falstaff's "Master Shallow, I owe you a thousand pound" was not just a sign that he is so shattered that he speaks truth for once but also a sentence to fill a silence. He was suddenly one of the old men tossing a few words out this side of oblivion. This was well done, even if the context for this Falstaff did not allow him to deliver the steely smile that Welles gave to Baxter's King, suggesting that Falstaff could appreciate even in disaster how well his protegee had mastered the lesson. Camp did not wince as Pennington had done in the Bogdanov—as if he just hated to be doing this. Camp's Hal had known what he was doing all along, regardless of the cereal box he had been given to obscure his purpose early on. At the end his Henry V was an icon and Falstaff and company were "sweaty, quirky, living people . . . given their orders and left behind" (Saccio 2).\*

I hope that Camp will consider doing Hamlet. He has the voice and the emotional range to be a great Prince of Denmark. He will be neither as antic as Mark Rylance nor as somber as Kenneth Branagh—two fine recent Hamlets—but he will find his own way into the role and could become one of the best American Hamlets of modern times.

H. R. Coursen

Bowdoin College

\*Those familiar with my Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992) will recognize my attack on "Director's Theatre," particularly as directorial approaches obscure the issues in the admittedly "generically unstable" history plays. Those familiar with my The Leasing Out of England (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986) will recognize my analysis of the Henry IV plays, rendered in far greater specificity there than in this review. On the possible ways of performing the executions of Vernon and Coleville see my "Vernon and Coleville," Shakespeare Bulletin, Winter 1990, 36-37.

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### THE USE OF SHAKESPEARE IN DEAD POETS SOCIETY

Dead Poets Society. USA 1989. Touchstone Pictures.  
Prod. Steven Haft, d. Peter Weir, scen. Tom Schulman,  
mus. Maurice Jarre, ed. William Anderson, des. Wendy  
Stites, ph. John Seale. w. Robin Williams (Keating),  
Robert Sean Leonard (Neil), Ethan Hawke (Todd), Josh  
Charles (Knox), Gale Hansen (Charlie), Dylan Hussman  
(Cameron), Kurtwood Smith (Mr. Perry), Norman Lloyd  
(Mr. Nolan). Color. 128 minutes.

In Dead Poets Society, the analogies to A Midsummer Night's Dream and, more subtly, to King Lear are used to establish the major theme of generational conflict between fathers and sons. Mr. Perry demands that his son become a doctor, but Neil, a student at Welton (Welltown) Academy, wants to be an actor. However, he suppresses his thespian ambition until he meets his charismatic English teacher John Keating (Keats), who exhorts his students to "seize the day." When Neil gets the role of Puck in the Henley Hall production (Henley recalls the street on which John Shakespeare was born) he knows "for the first time in my life . . . what I want to do and I will do it no matter what my father says."

However, after his first rehearsal, he returns to his room at Welton repeating the line "But, room, fairy! here comes Oberon" (3.9.57), only to meet his irate father who forbids him to continue in the play. This confrontation introduces the three analogies between the film and A Midsummer Night's Dream. First, Neil is controlled by his father just as Puck is dominated by Oberon, king of the fairies. Secondly, Neil is the changeling boy who causes the struggle between his father as Oberon and John Keating, unknowingly, as Titania. Thirdly, Neil is an analogue to Hermia, whose father Egeus demands that she marry Demetrius, although she loves Lysander. Egeus appeals to Duke Theseus to determine his daughter's romantic choice under threat of death or lifelong celibacy. Mr. Perry uses his power, as represented at Welton by the headmaster Mr. Nolan (with emphasis on the no), to keep Neil out of the play. Hermia escapes into the forest and enchanted love, while Neil plays Puck despite his father's objection.

All of Neil's friends and Keating attend the opening night's performance and are awed by his acting. Neil wears a chaplet of leaves which represents Puck's natural qualities, Neil's regal stage aura, and, as a foreshadowing of his impending doom, a crown of thorns. Ironically, as Neil recites the same line he repeated earlier when he found his father in his room—"But, room, fairy: here comes Oberon"—his irate father enters the back of the

theater and remains there, a disapproving presence, throughout the rest of the play. When Neil delivers Puck's epilogue—"If we shadows have offended, / . . . If you pardon, we will mend" (5.1. 430,437)—he directs the lines to his brooding father who, however, offers no forgiveness.

Mr. Perry summarily takes Neil home and delivers the decision that he will be sent to military school and after that to medical school. When his father says that he will allow Neil to state his opinion but it better not concern acting, Neil now becomes Cordelia and says "Nothing," which his father repeats quizzically. Neil (whose name resembles nihil) has nothing more to say and decides to commit suicide later that night. He strips to his waist, dons his crown of leaves, stares out the window at the snowy landscape, then removes his crown and goes to his father's den where he shoots himself with Mr. Perry's pistol. When his father discovers his body on the floor behind his desk, he cradles him in his arms and cries out: "O Neil, O my God. O my son . . . my poor son," recalling the final image of Lear cradling the dead Cordelia. Mr. Perry indirectly caused his son's death through his unwillingness to accept Neil's attempt to do something he wanted to do and not what his father demanded he do. Peter Weir completes the Lear analogy with the tragic death of Neil and the figurative death of Mr. Percy, who futilely seeks signs of life, forgiveness, and release from suffering. The Shakespearean analogies in Dead Poets Society enhance the tragic effect of the generational conflict and demonstrate a multileveled relationship between film and text.

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### TEACHING MARLOWE INTERACTIVELY

Our head of department swears that the most useful question for establishing interview candidates' teaching abilities is "how would you differentiate between teaching the same text or author to first year and to final year students?" This year I am doing exactly that, because both Doctor Faustus and The Jew of Malta now appear on the "Drama 1590-1700" course which is compulsory for all our first year students, and I am also teaching both Parts of Tamburlaine on my specialist third year option, "Tragedy of Blood." The principle difference so far is that I am doing considerably more hand-holding for the first years, almost all of whom have never sampled any Renaissance dramatist other than Shakespeare and tend to have very little idea of the background to Marlowe's works. Moreover, we are attempting to change the delivery of our courses this year to free more research time for ourselves, and this has led to the replacement of half of our previous two hour seminar time by the introduction of what are called "interactive lectures," where students work on seminar type activities in small groups in the lecture room, with a feedback section at

the end. In order to do this we have had to devise short packs of student-centered learning materials, supplemented by multiple copies of selected articles which are specifically held in the library (copyright laws permit this). I was briefed to design the study materials for The Jew of Malta.

I wanted primarily to give students some idea of the relevant historical, political, and intellectual contents of the play, so I began with a map of the Mediterranean and the surrounding countries in the sixteenth century which highlighted the Turkish conquests from 1481 onwards and which also showed the territory controlled by the Holy Roman Empire. The exercise I set students was to attempt to deduce the strategic and mercantile significance of Malta, and its likely cultural affiliations. They did this very well indeed, particularly some mature students with military or seafaring experience who pointed to significance in terms of trade routes and naval control. My only failure was with our one blind student—it proved impossible to braille the map.

For the second part of the exercise, I assembled some accounts of the Turkish siege of Malta. I found these in a rather obscure source—Francesco Balbi di Correggio's The Great Siege of Malta, translated from the Spanish by Major Henry Alexander Balbi and published by Captain O. F. Gollcher and Dr. Ole Rostock in Copenhagen in 1961. This reproduces contemporary accounts, but is presumably hard to get hold of; I obtained a photocopy through the good offices of my parents, who visited the island (I also lived there as a child). More accessible is Ernle Bradford, The Great Siege: Malta 1565 (Hodder and Stoughton, 1961, reprinted by Penguin, 1964). The students were told to read between the lines of the account to glean what they could about the Turks, the Knights of Malta, and the Maltese themselves. Again, their responses were good: they pointed out that the defense of Malta was clearly a matter of pan-European concern, and found language which clearly indicated the contemporary demonization of the Turks.

The third section of the exercise consisted of an extract from The Prince. I chose the section on "Those who come to power by crime" because it seemed to offer a representative view of Machiavelli, and invited the students to consider a) whether morality is in fact a relevant issue at all for Machiavelli and b) how his views compared with those of the various characters in the play. Most of them were able to point out telling similarities not only with Barabas but also with Ferneze, the subtleties of whose characterization had previously been tending to elude them. Largely as a result of this, I was able to persuade them that the play was not merely an anti-Semitic rant which was too offensive to merit attention.

Building on this idea, for the final part of the session I relaxed the idea of context a little and let them return to the more familiar ground of compare-and-contrast by giving them Shylock's "Signior Antonio, many a time and oft . . ." and letting them

consider at their leisure how Shakespeare's presentation of Jewishness compared with Marlowe's.

Obviously, there are limitations to this method of presenting so complex a play as The Jew of Malta. I did feel, however, that this contextualizing approach, backed up by more conventionally literary commentaries by Stephen Greenblatt and Simon Shepherd which I lodged in the library, paid dividends in the shape of a clutch of informed, engaged essays on the play.

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