

msaa**Marlowe Society of America Newsletter****Vol. XXII, No. 1, Spring 2002****THE ROMA GILL PRIZE**

The Marlowe Society of America is pleased to announce the winners of the Roma Gill award for the best critical study on Marlowe written during 1999-2000. These two years saw a number of significant publications on Marlowe, but in the committee's assessment two books were particularly outstanding: J.A. Downie and J.T. Parnell's *Constructing Christopher Marlowe* and Ian MacAdam's *Irony of Identity: Self and Imagination in the Drama of Christopher Marlowe*. The two works are very different from each other. Downie and Parnell's very fine anthology of original criticism embodies the latest emphasis on removing the biographical from consideration of the texts, while MacAdam's psychoanalytic approach not only incorporates the biographical but includes a lucid and thought-provoking critique of critical approaches that have been highly influential during the last two decades.

The first-place winner, with an honorarium of \$500, is *Constructing Christopher Marlowe*. As its title suggests, the Downie and Parnell anthology focuses on Marlowe's "construction," the ways in which ideas and assumptions about Marlowe have molded critical discourse about his works. This focus on construction includes essays that call into question the ways in which Marlowe has been constructed in earlier criticism and other essays that suggest how we might now construct him in light of current theoretical approaches. The volume has a wide scope, including a salutary reminder of how little we know for certain about Marlowe's life, a reexamination of the meaning of magic during the Renaissance, an analysis of Marlowe's importance to New Historicism, and consideration of Marlowe's depiction of women, sexuality, text and performance. The items in the collection represent a number of different approaches that work well together and

engage with Marlowe in creative, provocative, and unexpected ways.

The second-place winner, with an honorarium of \$250, is *Irony of Identity*. MacAdam's approach is based on Kohut's formulation of a pre-Oedipal psychology, but his approach is neither doctrinaire nor reductive. Rather, MacAdam utilizes theory as a flexible guide to understanding. His theoretical targets include New Historicism, social constructivism, and Foucault, while his discussion of Marlowe's work leads continually to insightful and nuanced interpretations. It is a book that will likely engender strong reactions in its readers, and it is also one to which readers will return often in their thinking about Marlowe.

Bruce E. Brandt, MSA

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

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

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**CONSUMMATE PLAY:
GENDER, GENRE, and SEXUALITY in
THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD and
TAMBURLAINE**

An abstract of the paper presented by Judith Haber, Tufts University, at the MSA session, "Marlowe and Genre," New Orleans, 2001.



Judith Haber

Writing about Marlowe generally recognizes a tension between lyric and narrative modes. Too often, however, critics have tended unthinkingly to privilege narrative, viewing it as more reflective of "reality." While such a valuation may well reflect the judgment of certain segments of Marlowe's culture—and certainly reflects the dominant judgment of our own—it does not do justice to Marlowe's complex deployment of the tension between genres. Throughout his works there is a clear connection between conventional, causal narrative structure, which is productive of meaning, and other forms of orthodoxy, particularly conventional re-productive sexuality. And, *pace* the current tendency automatically to associate an interest in the aesthetic with an investment in the status quo, for Marlowe "pointless" aestheticism and "pure" lyric (insofar as they can be imagined) offer means of thinking outside the constructions (sexual and otherwise) of his culture, for evading, if never wholly avoiding, their seemingly immutable truths. I explore these connections by looking briefly at

Marlowe's lone lyric *The Passionate Shepherd* and then reconsidering the force—and the sexual politics—of lyric and narrative in *Tamburlaine*.

Douglas Bruster's influential essay on *The Passionate Shepherd* provides us with an excellent example of the critical distrust of lyric. The lyric invitation, Bruster claims, hides the "truth" of the speaker's potential for violence and rape—a truth that is uncovered when the lyric is placed in a dramatic context in Marlowe's plays. The privileging of linear narrative here goes hand in hand with a straightening out of erotic possibilities. Not surprisingly, Bruster neglects the influence of Virgil's second eclogue in which the shepherd Corydon pines for the beautiful—and male—Alexis.

In contrast to Bruster, Bruce Smith is acutely aware of both the importance of Virgil's influence and the homoerotic potential of Marlowe's poem. In his fascinating and persuasive study of the image of the Passionate Shepherd in early modern England, he goes so far as to argue that the addressee of the poem may very well be a man, that the clothes described (particularly the kirtle) could, and probably would, be seen as male. But Smith's argument seems to me to approach the problem from the wrong angle. The primary suggestion here, I believe, is not that the clothes are "really" masculine, or that the beloved is "really" a man, but that gender, insofar as it exists, inheres *only* in clothes—just as sexuality is diffused through aesthetics. This is not to deny the "presence" of homoeroticism in the poem, but to suggest that it is present only by inference, that it is, indeed, equivalent here to inference, to lyric ellipsis.

What is "queer" about *The Passionate Shepherd*, I argue, is precisely its flattening out of hierarchies, its celebration of the artificial, its suggestion that desire has no necessary or natural end. The poem conflates two images that are frequently juxtaposed in Marlowe's dramatic and narrative works: the image of a female beloved in which conventional desire is presented as wholly rhetorical, as aestheticized

and necessarily unconsummated, and the image of an eroticized male, which similarly diverts desire from its expected end. One thinks, for example, of the blazons at the beginning of *Hero and Leander*, or the matching persuasions of Zenocrate and Theridamas in *Tamburlaine*. The presence of narrative necessarily unpacks the equations that are present in the poem, turning the lyric into something like Bruster's reading of it. In Marlowe's plays, however, the tension between lyric and narrative is more extreme, and I turn to *Tamburlaine* to examine this tension in one of its earliest and most striking forms.

The Passionate Shepherd at the Movies

The most popular cinematic citation of Marlowe is the opening lines of "The Passionate Shepherd to his Mistress." The movies containing a quotation or echo of this work adapt its meanings for their own purposes. This adaptiveness most probably results from what Harraway (189) and Cheney (68), among others, have identified as the intertextuality of the original. Marlowe borrowed from Theocritus, Ovid, and Virgil, and then echoed his own poem in at least fourteen places in the rest of his canon (Forsythe 701). Cheney also noted the protean quality of the lyric, which is not just a simple sexual invitation but also an Elizabethan carnivalesque poem in the May Day tradition, with elements of poetic rivalry, epic subversion, politics, patronage, imperialism, oriental fantasy, and the illusion of conquering time through the Shakespearean mythos of "boy eternal" (68-87). Swinburne called it "[o]ne of the most faultless lyrics . . . in the whole range of descriptive and fanciful poetry" (qtd. in Cheney 288). Rowse has stated that it is not a true countryman's poem, but "it reaches down to the levels of the unconscious, of desire and dream; it has pathos along with extreme beauty . . ." (125). For these qualities and others, the poem, as Suzanne Woods and R.S. Forsythe have demonstrated, has exercised a continuing

influence on poetry and popular songs--and on movies.

Of the five films to be discussed, the first three are connected, directly and indirectly, with Marlowe's milieu. The first concerns a famous family of Shakespearean actors who are shown in various roles from his canon. The second is a film version of a stage production of Shakespeare's Richard III, and the last one of this group is Nevill Coghill and Richard Burton's Oxford version of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, a production which by its use of intertextuality illustrates the main point I will make about "The Passionate Shepherd to his Mistress." The last two films are Marlovian offshoots; one contains a soapy pastiche of the lyric which in turn fostered its own, even more, sentimental parody, and the final film uses "The Bait," the last entry in the Marlowe-Raleigh-Donne lyric trilogy.

The Prince of Players, directed by Philip Dunne in 1955, has a literate script by Moss Hart based on the book by Eleanor Ruggles, and stars a young and effective Richard Burton as Edwin Booth. The movie traces the troubled history of the Booth family, which consists of great actors who are beset by alcoholism and madness. The stern patriarch Junius Booth (Raymond Massey) ultimately loses his memory and self-control, but manages nevertheless to pass his Shakespearean mantle to his son Edwin, who unfortunately also continues the family legacy of tragic flaws. But Edwin is rescued from this vicious cycle by Mary Devlin (Maggie McNamara), who plays Juliet to his Romeo onstage and continues to woo him offstage, finally overcoming his reluctance to afflict her with his family's curse. Mary helps Edwin to gain stature as a person and an actor.

When Edwin plays Hamlet, Mary attends the play and sits in a box above the stage. Before his appearance in the play, he rushes into the box and recites "Come live with me, and be my love, / And we will all the pleasures prove" as a declaration of their love. Then he is chased away by his anxious agent (Charles Bickford) to resume his role, but he quickly sneaks back to reclaim a final kiss. The Marlovian lines are used as a declaration of the separateness of their society, their ability through their love to form a

union of two in their own small world--as symbolized by the box--in which they celebrate their sacrosanct relationship. But by the end of the performance of Hamlet, the box is ominously empty. She has left, ill from her pregnancy, and later dies from the complications of giving birth. In her memory, he orders that her box remain empty whenever he performs. At the end of the film, when his brother John Wilkes Booth (John Derek) has disgraced the family name by assassinating Lincoln, Edwin sits on stage in costume as Hamlet and silently suffers the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune as the enraged crowd pelts him with garbage. In the beginning of the film, he was ridiculed by an angry audience for daring to claim that he too was a Booth by substituting for his incapacitated father, and now he is attacked for being a Booth. However, he gains endurance by gazing at the empty box, and soon the crowd cheers his perseverance and he departs finally cleansed of the Booth taint.

Richard Loncraine's Richard III (1996) uses the lyric in an ironic musical setting. The invitation to love is, in fact, an invitation to death, and the poem/song serves as the choral thread connecting Richard's murderous plots and actions. The film opens with Richard (Ian McKellen) reciting his soliloquy into a microphone on a bandstand. The occasion is the grand ball celebrating the Yorkist ascendancy, and Richard's remarks serve as a victory speech with each line interrupted by applause, while a sultry singer delivers the big band rendition of Marlowe's lyric (performed by Stacey Keal and the Vile Bodies; music composed by Trevor Jones, arranged by Colin Good). Willson astutely remarks that her rendition epitomizes the deception and cynicism of the new regime: "[She] intones 'Come live with me and be my love' as if it were an invitation to a one-night stand, not everlasting pastoral bliss. This derisive commentary on entertainers in service to cynical politicians sets the tone for the film's questioning of representation and its confronting of the audience by a radical recontextualizing of familiar material" (39).

The singer's mesmerizing voice carries throughout the palace, and she keeps repeating

the opening lines in an incantatory manner. She also skips stanzas two and four, substituting stanza one of Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply," and concludes with Marlowe's final stanza. By adding Raleigh's acerbic reply to the shepherd, she further undercuts the lyric's invitation to a world of pastoral pleasure. As Simkin argues, Raleigh dismantles Marlowe's poem line by line, showing the transience and mortality beneath the glittering lines (217). Similarly, by presenting the song in this manner, the movie shows that its seductiveness is an invitation to death as witnessed in Richard's wooing of Lady Anne in the bowels of a gruesome morgue. She accepts his proposal and becomes a drug-ravaged wretch engaged in a sado-masochistic marriage to this fiend.

As Richard grows more powerful and bloodthirsty, he puts on a recording of the song while he lies on a couch and avidly reviews a stack of papers pertaining to the people he will eliminate. And the song plays softly in the background when he finalizes his plots against his ill-fated nephews. However, his power to create his world of death is undermined when he meets with Queen Elizabeth in a boxcar and proposes to her beauteous daughter. He appears to succeed as he did with Anne, but as soon as the queen is free of him and outside the enclosed space he used as his wooing place, she whisks her daughter away to be married to Richmond.

In Dr. Faustus (1967), when Faustus begins to waver in his devotion to Lucifer, the devils calm his restive soul by producing a show of the seven deadly sins as enacted in an earthly Garden of Delights. Faustus enters the paradise through a bower-like tunnel and is introduced to the cavorting cast of characters by a masked Lechery. Avarice appears locked up in his golden cage--"Infinite riches in a little room"--and then Faustus sees an enactment of the myth of Diana and Actaeon to the accompaniment of a voiceover reciting Gaveston's opening lines to Edward II about the Italian masques he will stage for the pliant king. The movie changes Gaveston's homoerotic vision into one of heterosexual lust. Elizabeth Taylor, who, until the final scene in which she welcomes Faustus to hell with a

piercingly sardonic laugh, silently plays all the femmes fatales in Faustus' feverish imagination, appears in the garden of delights as a bizarrely gilded Diana who is lusted after by the doomed Actaeon and the equally bedazzled Faustus. After gazing on her charms, Faustus dismisses all of the pleasures promised by the passionate shepherd, except for lust: "Why to this all pleasures fancies be/ For all my life I'll live for lechery." As Judith Crist quipped, the film "turns out to be the story of a man who sold his soul for Elizabeth Taylor"(Halliwell 310).

The Valley of the Dolls (1967) changes the words of "The Passionate Shepherd" and places it in a musical setting (by Dory Previn; adapted by John Williams) which epitomizes the doom awaiting the soap-operaish characters in Jacqueline Susann's notorious novel. The lyrics are so deliciously apt that it is necessary to quote them:

Come live with me, and be my love,
 If only for a day.
 Come live with me and see my love
 How fast it fades away.
 Love is a flower that lives for an hour
 Then withers and dies.
 Where is the prize?
 Forgive me if I deride love,
 But, darling, I've tried love,
 And so I say, "Come live with me for just
 awhile."
 Who cares if love is long or as brief as a
 star?
 Darling, I never would want you forever
 to stay,
 But, darling, if you could love just me,
 Come live with me for today.

This version is actually closer to Raleigh in its insistence on the transitoriness of love, and it fits the troubled relationships of show business aspirants, who succumb to pills, alcohol, and adultery in their frenzied attempts to "make it." Tony Polare (Tony Scotti), a nightclub singer, first sings the lyric in the club when he directs his charm toward the beauteous Jennifer North (Sharon Tate). They fall in love and marry, but their love is doomed because he suffers from an incapacitating disease which forces him to live in

a sanitarium. After a series of her own travails, including an abortion, a mastectomy, a stint as a porno star in Paris, and pill addiction, Jennifer overdoses on the "dolls" and dies hearing the haunting strains of "Come live with me" as first sung by her husband.

Meanwhile, Neely O'Hara (Patty Duke), the Judy Garland analogue, is hospitalized for her various addictions in the same sanitarium as Tony, who does not know she is there. One night, she sings Tony's song for the other residents, and Tony is wheeled in and completes the tune with her. For a moment they achieve harmony, but the song is sung by two doomed figures who know only stunted and tragic forms of love. Seeing Tony's sad condition does spur Neely's rehabilitation, but she later dies hopelessly addicted to the dolls. No one escapes doom, except Anne Welles (Barbara Parkins), who journeys back to where she came from, rejecting the invitation to "Come live with me, if only for a day."

Beyond the Valley of the Dolls (1970), the infamous "non-sequel sequel" directed by "nudies pix" pioneer Russ Meyer and written by Roger Ebert, is a spoof of the original and as such it contains an even more inane parody of "Come live with me," entitled "Come with the Gentle People" (music by Stu Phillips and Bob Stone; sung by the Sandpipers). The plot contains more of the same sad tales of degradation as in Valley of the Dolls, except that at the end a mock sermon is delivered by a pious voiceover who reviews what each survivor who has progressed "beyond the valley of the dolls" has learned in the process. Harris, who crippled himself in a suicide attempt, is led by Kelly, "who by her pain . . . will never forget those who love her," into a sylvan landscape, actually more like a desert, and as they emerge into a new awareness, the tepid song "Come live with me and we will be above in the land of love," is heard (with all due apologies to Marlowe).

The final movie, Jason's Lyric, directed by Doug McHenry in 1994, concerns a young African-American man who wishes to escape the mean streets of the Houston ghetto he feels trapped in. Jason (Alden Payne) dreams of flight

but is paralyzed by the guilt he feels over his shooting of his abusive father. Jason is encouraged to leave by his girlfriend Lyric (Jada Pinkett). After they make love in a pastoral bayou setting, Lyric describes the bliss she experienced to her friend Marti, who salutes their love with the opening lines of "The Bait" and ends with an academic flourish by naming Donne and his dates (1572-1631):

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove,
Of golden sands and crystal brooks,
With silken lines and silver hooks.

When Jason meets Lyric at their departure rendezvous, the dock at the bayou, she repeats the first lines of Donne's lyric as the means of enticing him to leave with her. But his guilt and their respective brothers' crime spree prevent them from doing so, until a blood bath leaves his brother dead and her brother arrested. Then Jason is free to leave with his Lyric, who has been the bait to move him to experience some new pleasures and places.

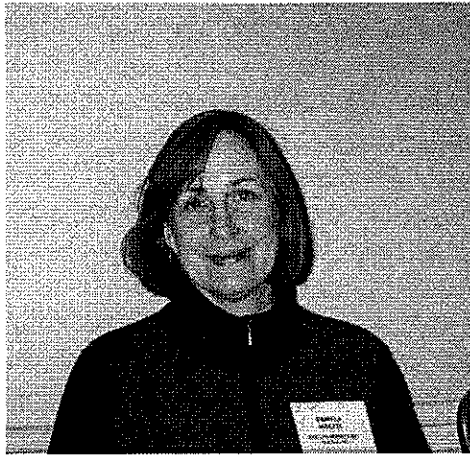
Frank Ardolino, University of Hawaii

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THE OVIDIAN *RECUSATIO* IN MARLOWE'S *HERO and LEANDER*

An abstract of the paper presented by Pamela Royston Macfie, University of the South, at the MSA session "Marlowe and Genre" New Orleans, 2001.



Pamela Royston Macfie

Early in *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe's narrator suspends a promised revelation of Leander's fleshly beauty with a protest: "but my rude pen / Can hardly blazon forth the loves of men, / Much less of powerful gods" (I.69-71). More than a formulaic gesture of humility, Marlowe's full protest unfolds in three distinct stages: it identifies Leander as the property of a god "whose immortal fingers did imprint / That heavenly path with many a curious dint / That runs along his back" (I.67-69), it exposes the poet as growing mute before the evidence of such mastery (I.69-71), and it anticipates the poet's embrace of a "slack Muse [who] sings of Leander's eyes" (I.72) rather than his love-marked flesh. The final term in this series, the "slack muse," is charged with double meaning. On the one hand, this image suggests that Marlowe's narrator is disempowered; that the erotic signature already pressed into Leander's back slackens the poet's phallic pen, mutes his confidence, and necessitates his description of a lesser subject. On the other hand, the image privileges the poet by identifying him with the

ancient poets of the *recusatio*. Defining his muse as "slack," Marlowe incorporates himself within a poetic genealogy that reaches from Callimachus to Ovid. Marlowe effects this identification, moreover, at a highly strategic juncture: he embraces the "slack muse" just as he discovers that his writing of Leander is haunted by an earlier writing that recalls, in its association with a "powerful god," the "divine Musaeus" named in I. 52. Invoking the "slack muse" upon the heels of this discovery, Marlowe dramatizes a crucial, programmatic turn: a turn from the example of Musaeus to that of Ovid, whose *recusatio* in *Amores* 1.1 significantly informs Marlowe's *recusatio* in *Hero and Leander*.

Marlowe's "slack muse" seems doomed to pursue a subject considerably less heightened than that of Leander's love-marked back; in the end, though, Marlowe, like Ovid, seizes the opportunities afforded by an unexpected discovery to display poetic virtuosity. Marlowe's "slack muse" does not merely sing of Leander's eyes. He also celebrates Leander as a new Narcissus: a Narcissus who dies (unlike his enervated Ovidian predecessor) by leaping into the water in order to kiss his shadow. Referencing, and yet departing from, the example of *Metamorphoses* 3, Marlowe's allusion to Narcissus advances a poetics of revision that denies the primacy of a single source. The allusion, in keeping with the agenda of the ancient poets of *recusatio*, weaves together several strands of literary tradition. Marlowe's erotic elaboration of Narcissus' watery leap had been anticipated in a famous sonnet by Ronsard, "Je vouldroy bien richement jaunissant," that had been translated by Gorges in the late 1580s and reinterpreted by Lodge in sonnet 34 of his 1593 *Phyllis*.

Concluding the alternative song attributed to his "slack muse," Marlowe's transformed allusion to Narcissus functions as a telling coda to the *recusatio* in *Hero and Leander*. Like Ovid's examples of gods who take on new powers, Marlowe's revised image of Narcissus displays independence and invention. Imagining Leander as a new Narcissus, Marlowe moves beyond even the

poetic confidence that informs the close of *Amores* 1.1. Although Ovid orders his verse to rise and fall in elegaic measure and commands his Muse to crown herself in myrtle, his poet, as Barbara Weiden Boyd points out, still lacks a subject matter (a beloved) beyond that of poetry itself. The situation with the poet of *Hero and Leander* is different. At the close of the *recusatio* sequence in *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe reimagines Leander in such a way that he displays Leander as uniquely his own.

New Directions in Biographies of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson

King Edward VI School, Stratford-upon Avon, 22-23 September, 2001

Some conferences seem to be centred around a promising idea but somehow fail to cohere. At others, papers that would have gone well together are split into different sessions, and ideas fail to spark off each other. However, the recent conference on 'New Directions in Biographies of Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson' saw a hundred and twenty delegates, including some who had bravely made it from the US not two weeks after the terrorist attacks, to meet, share, listen, learn, and, certainly in my case, profit enormously from a genuine dialogue between different approaches, disciplines, and authors. Impeccably organized by Takashi Kozuka, a postgraduate student at the University of Warwick, the conference was held in the 'Big School' of King Edward VI school at Stratford-upon-Avon, the classroom in which, we were told with varying degrees of certainty by various people until it became a running joke, Shakespeare himself was taught.

The question of certainty about biographical information was inevitably at the heart of this conference. In the opening lecture, 'What Can We Really Know about Shakespeare?: A Plea for Documentary Discipline', Alan Nelson made many of us hang our heads in shame by exhorting us never to

quote a document we had not personally looked at. Professor Nelson is currently at work on a biography of Oxford, and offered in passing some insight into the current state of Oxfordianism, which is flourishing so vigorously that it, rather than Marlowe-was-Shakespeare, might presently be said to be the dominant mania. He was followed by Stanley Wells on 'Young Shakespeare: the Stratford Years', which offered an implicit rebuttal to the Oxfordians by detailing how much is in fact known about Shakespeare's life. The afternoon focused on Marlowe. David Riggs talked about Marlowe's education, whetting the appetite still further for his forthcoming biography, and I spoke on 'Was Marlowe going to Scotland when he died, and does it matter?', in which I argued that whether or not Marlowe was in Deptford because he was heading for Scotland (which seems a possibility), he was certainly showing increasing signs of interest in Scottish politics in his plays, and that this went along with a new, almost Sidneian, interest in the political rôle of literature. To end the first day, Peter Holland, who is writing the *New DNB* entry on Shakespeare, talked about the old entry by Sidney Lee, and Lloyd Davis spoke on 'The Love Life of Ben Jonson'.

The second day also mixed and matched authors, starting with Katherine Duncan-Jones who, taking a lead from Aubrey's anecdote that Shakespeare killed calves 'in a high style', discussed most fascinatingly the possible influence of John Shakespeare's profession on his son's works. She was followed by Helen Cooper on the possibility of an allusion to Shakespeare in the anonymous play *Guy of Warwick* and by Blair Worden on 'Shakespeare and Jonson: Life and Art'. In the afternoon, Charles Nicholl, who is currently preparing a second edition of *The Reckoning*, talked about new discoveries concerning Thomas Drury, which confirm Drury as a habitual procurer of false testimonies and thus might well serve to cast further doubt on the reliability of the Baines Note. Finally, Richard Dutton talked about 'Shakespeare and the Queen's Men', and Richard Wilson spoke on "Secret as a Dumb

Man": Shakespeare's Silence – as always, an inspired performance, though the dependence on the acceptance of the Houghton theory did sit slightly oddly with Alan Nelson's earlier appeal for documentary discipline.

Indeed, it was notable that speakers' attitudes to Shakespeare diverged far more widely than did those of the three Marlovians, possibly because none of us had a geographical stake in our author. (There was quite a bit of byplay about the picture painted by those based in Stratford of Shakespeare the family man devotedly attached to Stratford, compared with the picture offered by those at the University of Lancaster of Shakespeare the Houghton man whose writing was haunted by the Lancashire coastline.) It was also unfortunate that Jonson received relatively short shrift owing to the unexpected absence of a key speaker who had suffered concussion when some books fell on his head. This seems somehow appropriate for a Jonsonian, but I hope we are not all going to start succumbing to accidents typical of the authors we are working on, or the future looks bleak for Marlovians. Jonson also lacked something that both the other authors had, for representatives of two separate television companies, one preparing a four-hour documentary on Shakespeare and the other preparing a programme on Marlowe, were present throughout the conference – so keep an eye on your screens.

Lisa Hopkins, Sheffield Hallam University

RE-PRESENTING HELEN OF TROY

An abstract of the paper presented by Laurie Maguire, Magdalen College, Oxford, at the MSA session, "Doctor Faustus: Confronting Key Issues," New Orleans, 2001.



Laurie Maguire

In *Tristram Shandy* Sterne presents the most beautiful woman in the world: Widow Wadman, earlier associated with Helen of Troy. But instead of a prose description, Sterne provides a blank page on which the male reader is invited to paint beauty. Sterne here realizes the problem of describing indisputable beauty: providing details renders that beauty disputable. Homer circumvented the problem in a less extreme way, by avoiding concrete description of Helen, concentrating instead on her effect on others. Most classical authors follow suit.

Drama, however, cannot avoid representing Helen, and she appears in a number of early modern plays. How has twentieth-century stage tradition represented Helen? The answers are various, from cultural icons such as Marilyn Monroe to grotesque exaggerations of an aged hag.

With slides showing eight interpretations of Helen in art from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and eight stage representations of Helen in *Doctor Faustus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and Euripedes' two Helen

plays (*Helen*, and *Women of Troy*), this paper begins by assessing the responses of artists and directors to the challenge of representing Helen. A brief discussion of relevant theoreticians on beauty leads to a re-interpretation of the dialogue about beauty which, I argue, links *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine*. Faustus, the cerebral academic, has a very physical response to beauty: he desires sex with Helen of Troy. Tamburlaine, the martial conqueror, on the other hand, interrupts battle with a lengthy metaphysical meditation on the meaning of female beauty. Anchoring my discussion in the *Faustbook's* vastly differing view of Helen, I relate Faustus' and Tamburlaine's views of beauty to theoretical and more familiar Marlovian topics: desire, deferral, overreaching.

A Course On Marlowe

Does anyone teach an undergraduate course solely on Marlowe? Both the person and the plays of Marlowe hold a potential fascination for undergraduates, but our department had never offered a course devoted to him, at least since the 1960s, until the fall of 2001. Our undergraduate major has recently allowed any course in English literature before 1900 to replace the usual "Beowulf to Burns" survey (Shakespeare remains an additional requirement), so I think it was both the new option and interest in the subject that drew 27 students to my class under the "Major Author" rubric. Our principal texts were Mark Thornton Burnett's new editions, *The Complete Plays* (London: Everyman, 1999) and *The Complete Poems* (London: Everyman, 2000), and I found it helpful to use Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning* as a vivid, if selective, account of the playwright's life and times. One could do worse than Nicholl as an undergraduate introduction to late Elizabethan history, in fact, especially in its more colorful dimensions: its plots and paranoia, its eccentric characters (the Walsinghams, Topcliffe, Baines, Dee, the sinister cast at Eleanor Bull's house), above all its violence touching every level of society. This

experience with history entailed some oral reports on reviews and critiques of Nicholl, and most students (I think) found the history one of the unexpected intellectual rewards of the class. Indeed, Marlowe mostly wrote historical drama, three of his plays touching on the conflict between the West and East--with, needless to say, chilling relevance when we found ourselves deep into *Tamburlaine* on 11 September. Following the order of plays in Burnett's edition, we stopped for breath midway to spend a week or two with Marlowe's Ovid and Lucan, poets little known to American students. A detour through these two authors offered yet another kind of literary education. Some time went to appreciating the Ovidian speaker, especially the role of the "praeceptor amoris," who would survive in Donne and later seventeenth-century poetry (plenty of handouts and overheads here). Reading these shorter poems also offered a chance to talk about translation, and to compare Marlowe's work with that of poets in the Restoration and twentieth century. Lucan, so wrongly neglected in modern classical education, so admired in the Renaissance, introduced the figure of the evil epic hero, as well as the technique of apocalyptic imagery already encountered in some of the plays we had read by this time. We appreciated Marlowe's important role as an innovator in English verse by studying his uses of iambic pentameter couplets and blank verse to translate Latin elegiac distichs and dactylic hexameters. We returned to stylistics at the course's end, with "Hero and Leander." Here again I brought in two poets for comparison, the first being Donne, whose metaphysical conceits and paradoxes Marlowe so often anticipates in his delightful sallies (a point made long ago by Rosemund Tuve, though now sometimes forgotten). The second was Pope; the heroic couplets of *The Rape of the Lock* juxtaposed with those of "Hero and Leander" show how much future English verse extends from this late Elizabethan poet. "The Passionate Shepherd" encouraged comparisons with Donne's and Raleigh's reprises, and I wish I had thought to bring in the scene from McKellan's *Richard III*

where Marlowe's poem is set to a 'thirties-style pop tune.

Brief oral reports gave most students a sense of contributing to the class, these reports being chosen from a long list of topics--Marlowe's education, the historical Timur Lan, sixteenth-century apocalypticism, Elizabethan Catholicism, different critics' treatment of such cruxes as the murder of Calyphas, early modern atheism, and so on. Three omnibus reference works toward which I often steered students for reports were Arthur Kinney and David Swain's *Tudor England: An Encyclopedia* (David Bergeron's article on homosexuality in this resource was valuable as the most succinct and informed discussion of that subject available), A. C. Hamilton's *Spenser Encyclopedia*, and Paul Grendler's *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*. Many students, however, found their way into the more specialized books in our research library. Two students (probably dabbling in the Internet) unfortunately discovered Calvin Hoffman's theory that Marlowe became Shakespeare. Having seen a segment from Jarman's *Edward II*, we heard an excellent presentation from a hitherto delinquent film major on the film's place in Jarman's career (the same student followed up with an astute paper comparing Marlowe and Brecht on *Edward II*). We took advantage of my friend and colleague Frank Baron of the German Department, who brought to bear his internationally acclaimed work on the historical Faustus.

Having read at least a few Shakespeare plays, most students found that reading Marlowe deepened their understanding of his contemporary. What do they know of England who only England know? Lines jump out from the page--"Caesar will go forth" in *Massacre*, or the adumbrations of Clarence's dream recollection in

the waves about him wound
And pulled him to the bottom, where the ground
Was strewed with pearl, and in low coral groves
Sweet singing mermaids sported with their loves
On heaps of heavy gold.

("Hero and Leander" 643-47)

To help us appreciate more fully this dimension of Marlowe, I brought in Jonathan Bate's chapter, "Marlowe's Ghost," from *The Genius of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), which I had chanced upon only recently and would recommend to anyone as the premiere comparative essay on this often-covered subject. One of the best long papers compared the Edward and Richard plays at a level of detail one would have thought impossible for a sophomore. This was the same student who unsettled me after the first day of class by saying that her ambition for the past three years had been "to direct a production of the A-text of *Faustus*"--and she's going to do it, too, come next Holy Week.

When I teach the course again, I'll do some things differently. The name of Kyd and the example of *The Spanish Tragedy* occurred often enough that I think I would work that play into the course, or if not that, a translation of a tragedy by Seneca. Marlowe's plays, all of them, continue to be staged, and thanks to the Internet and my collection of *MSA Newsletters* I was able to photocopy many reports and reviews of performances. But I regret the unavailability of any filmed Marlowe other than the Burton *Faustus* and the Jarman *Edward II*. Surely someone has filmed a staged production or two somewhere. The *Everyman Complete Plays* marked a textual advance over its predecessor; but the new edition lacks the old one's running heads for acts and scenes of plays, so it's not always easy to find your way around in class discussions, or to track the notes at the back, which are keyed to act and scene. Despite these and other minor problems, I'm grateful for an updated Marlowe. And I emerge from the experience not just reconvinced of Marlowe's artistry but newly aware of his capacity to "teach" the Renaissance all by himself--its literary currents, its international politics, its religious tensions, even its art history.

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