

The Marlowe Society of America

Marlowe Society of America Newsletter

Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 2016



In Memoriam: Dr. Brett C. Foster, Wheaton College (1973-2015)

A Note from the Editor

1. As you can see, we've had a long hiatus from publication. 2015 is the first year in over three decades in which the MSA hasn't published a *Newsletter*. The reasons are not far to seek. There simply wasn't much to report, since we received very little material to include. We are not gatherers or collectors of news. We merely broadcast what our members send us. If you have an idea for an article or review, please pass it along and we will try to include it. If there is a conference, symposium, significant publication, call for papers, seminar, theatrical production or any other Marlowe-specific event, we would be more than happy to make that known, in this medium and on the Society website. However, if you have nothing to contribute, there is no reason to bring out a *Newsletter*.

2. *Marlowe Studies: An Annual* expects to bring out its 2015 issue by the end of the year. The editors welcome contributions for 2016. For information about submissions, please see <http://www.marlowestudies.org>

3. The annual Marlowe session at MLA in the first week of January is devoted to *Edward II*. See the details below, and if you plan on attending the convention, we hope you will turn out for the presentations. Suggestions and proposals are welcome for 2017 and 2018. Please pass these along to Kirk Melnikoff at kbmelnik@uncc.edu

4. Traditionally, January is the month in which members are asked to renew their memberships. For details, see

7. We mourn the loss of our colleague, Brett Foster, a longtime member of the MSA. In the second half of this issue, we include a reminiscence, two of Brett's essays that he

<http://users.ipfw.edu/stapletm/msa/Membership.html> on the website. We ask that you use the PayPal option rather than writing a check and sending it in for the time being.

5. The next International Marlowe Conference will occur in 2018. One suggested venue is Wittenburg, Germany. Any suggestions here would be welcome.

6. In early December 2015, a ballot was sent by email to the membership that listed the candidates for the five offices on the MSA Executive Committee. These were, respectively:

President: Kirk Melnikoff, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

Vice-President: Lucy Munro, King's College, London (UK)

Secretary: David McInnis, University of Melbourne (AUS)

Treasurer: Claire M. L. Bourne, Virginia Commonwealth University

Membership Chair: Darlene Farabee, University of South Dakota

Performance Editor: Eoin Price, Swansea University (UK)

published in earlier editions of the Newsletter, and some of his poetry, since he thought of himself as a poet first. We only regret that we cannot do more than this to mark his passing.

conference year). She reported that 2015 membership is looking strong.

Treasurer (Melnikoff): Accounts for 2014 were circulated. The financial state of the MSA is very healthy, even when the payment of one-off costs associated with the renewal of our non-profit status is factored in.

3. Roma Gill Award (Menzer)

McInnis reported that the award committee considering work published in 2011-12 had awarded first prize to Chloe Preedy's *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism* (Arden, 2012) and second prize to Jeffrey Masten for his essay 'Bound for Germany: Heresy, Sodomy, and a New Copy of Marlowe's *Edward II*', *TLS*, 21 and 28 December 2012, 17-19. The Executive committee thanked McInnis and his fellow committee members, Jeremy Lopez and Bruce Brandt.

4. Election (Menzer)

Menzer's term as president will finish at the end of 2015, and other positions on the committee are also due for renewal. Munro agreed to chair the nominations committee; members will be invited via email to nominate candidates for the posts of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer,

MSA Executive Committee Meeting, 4 April 2015: Minutes

Present: Knutson, McInnis, Menzer, Munro

The meeting was called to order by the President at 12 noon on 4 April 2015 in the Roof Top Restaurant, Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver.

1. Announcements

MLA: The MSA panel at MLA 2015, "Marlowe's Queer Futurity," was a great success; many thanks to our speakers, Jeffrey Masten, Stephen Guy-Bray and Judith Haber, and to Garrett Sullivan for chairing. The MSA panel at MLA 2015, in Austin, TX, will focus on *Edward II*; it will feature papers by Andrea Stevens, James Siemon and Lucy Munro and will be chaired by Kirk Melnikoff.

2. Reports

Membership: Scott circulated her report via email ahead of the meeting. The MSA had 99 members for 2014, 11 of which are lifetime members. This is a reduction from 123 in 2013 (a

Membership Chair, Book Reviews Editor and Performance Editor. The slate and voting procedure will be published in the Fall 2015 newsletter.

5. International Marlowe Conference

Melnikoff is scouting locations for next International Marlowe Conference (2018) this summer. Suggestions for plenary speakers were discussed.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Lucy Munro

King's College, London

Abstracts for 2016 MLA Session in Austin

389. *Edward II* on Place and in Time

[Friday, 8 January, 3:30–4:45 p.m.](#), Austin Convention Center, 4BC

Program arranged by the Marlowe Society of America
Presiding Kirk Melnikoff, Univ. of North Carolina, Charlotte

1. James Simeon, Boston University: “Over-Peered” or “(Un)equal at last”? Conforming Transgression and Rank in *Edward II*

Despite its vividly evoked Marlovian themes, including individual aspiration and alienation, *Edward II* is remarkable for the frequency with which it invokes recognized ranks and degrees of nobility and traditional forms of deference. While criticism has emphasized the play's elements of outright “class transgression” in the figures of Edward's low-born companions, this paper will draw attention to the remarkable frequency with which the play invokes recognized ranks and degrees of nobility. It will argue that the play's instantiations of orthodox distinctions are pervaded by often subtle ironies of tone and usage, features that suggest Pierre Bourdieu's notion of “conforming transgressions” and which manage to register complex multi-level social competitions and antagonisms.

James Siemon is the author of two books on Shakespeare and numerous articles on early modern drama. He has edited *Richard III* (Arden), *Julius Caesar* (Norton), *Jew of Malta* (New Mermaids), and he is currently editing *Shakespeare Studies* and working on an edition of Thomas Preston's *Cambyses* (Routledge). He is Professor of English at Boston University.

2. Andrea Stevens, University of Illinois: “People are frightened of this play. It is long, and there is homosexuality in it”: *Edward II* in Performance”

The title of my paper is taken from the Royal Shakespeare Company's press materials for Gerard Murphy's important 1990 production of the play. Calling Edward ‘the first modern Gay Lib man’, Murphy acknowledged potential backlash against his vision of *Edward II* and, in interviews and director's statements, tried to justify to audiences what might have been perceived as his production's anachronistically ‘modern’ representation of homosexuality as fidelity to the text: in other words it is Marlowe's play, and not Murphy's production, that presents identifiably twentieth-century notions of homosexuality. Is *Edward II* indeed somehow presciently ‘modern’—was it so in 1990, a time of fervent gay, lesbian, and AIDS activism in the US and the UK, and can it be so in 2015? This paper will explore this question as it surveys the play's contemporary stage history, noting how key productions have moved from the elision of explicit homoerotic content (for example, in William Poel's 1903 revival) to an increasing emphasis upon the affective relationship between the King and his favorite, Piers Gaveston—a focus especially in evidence in the wake of Derek Jarman's influential film adaptation. So too will the paper explore the complicated history of homophobia in the archive of theatre reviews of contemporary productions.

Specializing in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, **Andrea Stevens** is Associate Professor of English, Theatre, and Medieval Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her published research appears in such journals as *English Literary Renaissance*, *Theatre Notebook*, and *Shakespeare Bulletin* and in the essay collections *Thunder at a Playhouse*, *The Effects of Performance in the Theatres of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, and *Shakespeare on the University Stage*. Her book *Inventions of the Skin: The Painted Body in Early English Drama 1400-1642* examines a crucial aspect of the visual field of the early modern stage: the painted body of the actor. Recent teaching awards include the LAS Lynn M. Martin award for Distinguished Women Teachers (2014-2015)

and the Campus Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching (2014-2015).

3. Lucy Munro, King's College, London: "Alarums: *Edward II* and the Staging of History"

This paper will examine Marlowe's *Edward II* in the contexts of performance and print, taking as its starting point the play's successive publication in 1594 and 1622, and considering its capacity to speak to contexts beyond its initial late-Elizabethan composition. Focusing on questions of theatrical, generic and acoustic style as they affect Marlowe's dramatization of political and erotic history, it will explore the ongoing life of *Edward II*, and the nature of its influence on the shapes of dramatic history on page and stage.

Lucy Munro is a Reader in Shakespeare and Early Modern Literature at King's College London. Her books include *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and *Archaic Style in English Literature, 1590-1674* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), and editions of plays by Sharpham, Shakespeare and Wilkins, Brome and Fletcher. Her edition of *The Witch of Edmonton* is forthcoming with Arden Early Modern Drama. Her published work on Marlowe includes essays in *Shakespeare Bulletin* and *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge University Press, 2013); in 2011 she was part of a panel at the Shakespeare Association of America annual conference on "Marlowe's Vitality".



MSA Book Reviews · David McInnis, University of Melbourne ·

Book Reviews Editor

David K. Anderson. *Martyrs and Players in Early Modern England: Tragedy, Religion and Violence on Stage*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. x + 241. [Hardback ISBN 978-1-4724-2828-8](#) (\$109.95); [eBook PDF ISBN 978-1-4724-2829-5](#); [eBook ePUB ISBN 978-1-4724-2830-1](#).

In this extensively researched and annotated monograph, David K. Anderson considers the genre of tragedy on the early modern English stage, attributing its popularity to the culture of Reformation-era religious persecution. Tudor-Stuart dramatists created scenes of violence which reflected their "blood-soaked culture," in which religious dissenters were regularly executed and mutilated in public; however, Anderson looks closely at William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* in order to trace what he identifies as a widespread social ambivalence toward state-sanctioned violence.

In Chapter 1, "Violence against the Sacred: Martyrdom and the Doctrine of the Persecuted Church," Anderson considers the history of violence relating to the Reformation; in so doing, he refers to a long list of both secondary and primary sources—most notably John Foxe's highly influential *The Acts and Monuments*, or *The Book of Martyrs*, which "relentlessly equated suffering with the Church of Christ and persecution with the church of antichrist" (27). He includes captivating

anecdotes from the period to illustrate how "[t]he imperatives of doctrine and obedience were in conflict with the imperatives of mercy—often, we must assume, within the same breast" (73), so that religious execution had become "an unreliable tool" of intimidation and enforced unity by the time Elizabeth assumed the throne.

In Chapter 2, "The Tragedy of Gravity," Anderson looks closely at Shakespeare's *King Lear*, asserting that the work demystifies suffering and death, offering no palliative hope of transcendence. In the author's words, *Lear*—especially in the death of Cordelia—"shows very little confidence in Christianity's metaphysical claims and promises but which in its understanding of suffering and violence is strongly marked by the doctrine of the persecuted church" (21).

Anderson next considers John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, a play which he calls "the most sustained study of persecution in all of Renaissance tragedy" (133). In Chapter 3, "Tragic Participation," he notes that the playwright presents his audience with a tragic heroine who is only guilty according to the letter of the law, but is morally innocent. The audience's sympathy for the Duchess denies them the satisfaction of *catharsis*, thereby calling into question the concept of sacrifice.

Chapter 4, “Tragic Complicity,” takes the reader back in time to Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. While Shakespeare and Webster condemn human brutality, Anderson asserts that here Marlowe does not confront his audience with acts of great violence; the sins which Faustus commits are those of heresy and *hubris*. Marlowe instead “positions the protagonist himself before the audience as a potential object of sacrificial exclusion... Marlowe implicates the audience, making us aware of the inclination to scapegoat, upon which the tragic effect of the drama is predicated” (22). As he considers contemporary Calvinistic doctrine and the concept of predestination, Anderson leaves us wondering whether Faustus could have attained salvation through his own means, or not. Although Faustus’ “better angel” encourages him to repent and be saved, Anderson notes that his audience itself would have been wrestling with the idea of predestination, and this uncertainty would raise pity for the protagonist. Anderson notes the irony inherent in Christian doctrine, commenting that in *Faustus*, “Marlowe offers his patrons a reprobate who sells his own soul before our eyes, while also raising the possibility that he does not do so under his own agency but under that of the God of love they are required to worship” (181). This irony “widens the cracks in a self-justifying cultural narrative that complacently separates the heroes from the villains and the saved from the damned” (181).

Finally, in Chapter 5, “Tragic Ambivalence,” Anderson jumps forward in time to the late seventeenth century and John Milton’s closet drama *Samson Agonistes*, which he calls “the final poetic work of John Milton’s career, the final tragedy of the English Renaissance, and one of the most difficult, disturbing and controversial literary products of the century” (183). Anderson performs a nuanced analysis of this troubling play, whose protagonist murders thousands of his enemies, along with innocent people and himself. In the process, the author traces Milton’s own part in his country’s civil war and religious debates of the century and asserts, in opposition to many other critics, that the play ultimately expresses ambivalence toward the concept of sacrificial violence.

In formulating his arguments, Anderson has not only employed extensive research into both historical sources and the work of other literary critics, but he also has performed close readings of the plays at hand. While his work is detailed, it remains engaging, and his ultimate assertions about Tudor-Stuart culture impress the reader with their own resonant gravity.

Rachel Wifall
Saint Peter's University



• **Ann Basso, University of South Florida** • **Performances Editor**

Review of *Doctor Faustus*, by Christopher Marlowe, adapted by

David Briden and Andrei Belgrader, at Classic Stage Company, New York, NY. Dir. Andrei Belgrader. June 2- July 12, 2015. Wednesday, July 8, 7:00 p.m.

For its 2014-2015 season, Classic Stage Company sought to create “buzz” with some celebrity casting, including Peter Dinklage in Turgenev’s *A Month in the Country*, Peter Sarsgaard as Hamlet, and Christopher Noth as Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. While these productions did receive attention, none was reviewed in glowing terms in prominent publications—including the Marlowe adaptation which, while not thrilling, did have its merits...and its surprises. Christopher Noth, best known for his work in the television series *Sex and the City*, *Law and Order* and *The Good Wife*, cut a respectable figure as Doctor John Faustus, clothed in quasi-Elizabethan dress and sporting both a dark goatee and eyeliner, which lent some mysterious depth to his countenance. While his performance was competent, however, it was lackluster. Perhaps because of his extensive history in television acting, Noth’s delivery was too subdued: although *Faustus* is a man obsessed with knowledge and thirsting for power, Noth conveyed little passion. He was not helped by the direction of the production, either, as he delivered most of the opening scene—one which should illustrate the troubling doubts and insatiable desires of a brilliant man with seemingly boundless energy—while seated. Alexis Soloski of *The*

Guardian agrees that Noth “has an oddly casual manner and no real connection to the story,” and Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* opines that “Noth’s *Faustus* comes across as a man who doesn’t actually have a soul to sell.” On the other hand, Zach Grenier, also of *The Good Wife* fame, successfully portrayed a wry and weary Mephistopheles who would be the perfect antidote to a passionate *Faustus*. It was easy to believe him when he informed the naïve *Faustus*, “where we are is hell.” Lucifer (Jeffrey Binder) was intimidating, in his flashy white mobster suit and eerie bright blue contact lenses; while his character appears only briefly in the play, he provided living proof of the existence of the diabolical—along with some special effects, including the periodical appearance of a strange tree trunk containing an array of human skulls. While not explained within the production, this prop may have been a nod to the yew tree associated with the goddess Hecate and the afterlife, or the Epilogue, which encapsulates the moral of the play:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
 And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
 That sometime grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
 Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
 Only to wonder at unlawful things,
 Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
 To practice more than heavenly power permits.

Director Andrei Belgrader and co-adaptor David Briden made considerable changes to Marlowe's play to bring us this version of the Elizabethan morality tale, cutting and altering many scenes and much dialogue, and inviting actor improvisation and audience participation. Not all of this editing was a bad idea, as sections of the original play (such as Faustus' interminable squabbling with the vengeful Horse-courser and the doubting knight Benvolio) would certainly prove tedious for a contemporary audience. Because the script did not completely adhere to the original, the cast was able to deliver unexpected comedy and other surprises, including a sultry Helen of Troy (Marina Lazzaretto) stepping out of her dress to appear completely nude and make out with Faustus (a stunt which, while perhaps gratuitous, did get the audience's attention!). While much of the Chorus' commentary was cut, helpful translations of Faustus' Latin expressions were provided; the verbal description of Faustus' cosmic flight which eventually lands him in Rome was maintained by necessity, illustrated by flying puppets and a paper model of the Vatican (which trick this critic found to be charming). This adaptation not only maintained, but even expanded the comic subplot featuring servants Wagner, Robin and Dick (named Ralph in the A Text of the play). Robin (Lucas Caleb Rooney) and Dick (Ken Cheeseman) were endearing and entertaining in their antics, which were clearly lowly, slapstick reflections of Faustus' loftier preoccupation with domination and acquisition. These scenes—some of them completely

original—generally worked, but they perhaps embarrassed an audience member a bit too much in their persistent pleas for her to “get naked” (foreshadowing what Helen of Troy would later do). It might have been fun to see Robin turned into an ape by Mephistophilis (which event is in the play but was omitted in this production), rather than the scene in which Faustus strangely eats a cart-load of hay and grows a third leg (which was retained). Some other improvisations and calls for audience participation were at times belabored too, as in the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins (during which it became increasingly difficult to watch Gluttony smear his face with a cream-filled donut, or Lust writhe around provocatively on the floor).

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* remains a moving and controversial meditation on the strivings and limitations of humankind; it is also, however, a problematic work to produce for contemporary audiences, with its medieval moralizing, supernatural elements, and quasi-comic digressions (as Isherwood notes, “By today's standards, unfortunately, the wicked fun and games Faustus and friends get up to don't appear particularly naughty or even enjoyable.”). It is good to see that artists are still willing to grapple with this complex work in 2015, even if their efforts fall short on some levels.

Rachel Wifall
Saint Peter's University

Brett C. Foster: A Refreshingly Marlowe Summer (Reprinted from 31.1, Fall 2011)

By the time you are reading this, I hope to be fully recovered from leading a seven-week, summer study-abroad program in England for the college where I teach. I had my first experience on such an excursion as the third “apprentice” faculty member a few years ago, but this was my first time as a co-director, and let me tell you, to have a role of leadership and responsibility for 35 students overseas – involving their educational goals, tourist's contentment, and personal safety – is to occupy a very different travel universe. It has been deeply enjoyable, but also very exhausting, from the student who didn't realize she was supposed to retrieve her suitcase at the Heathrow baggage claim (!) to the bus that never showed up on a (thankfully) sunny Monday morning. An hour in, we took turns getting coffee to lift our spirits, and when our wait topped three hours, the group made the best of it and recited poems together. The coach company cited a motorway accident, a water-main break on Edgware Road, and London traffic generally. Really, who knows? But enough— you likely know at least the rough shape of this particular beast of condensed summer curriculum and experiential learning, and some of you may have had firsthand experience directing or teaching on such a trip. When you are fortunate enough to have the coach arrive as scheduled, it feels a little like being a part of the latest Rolling Stones tour, and after only a couple of visits, the mass affliction of “over-cathedraled” doldrums can hit a group hard. Truly, it's the sort of naïve, disaster-

inviting academic enterprise that leaves you wondering why the great satirists of our profession, Kingsley Amis, say, or David Lodge or Jane Smiley, have never bothered to immortalize it, bad meals, sandal blisters and all.

The other day, preparing for our program's visit to Stratford, where we were going to visit some Shakespeare landmarks and see the RSC's *Macbeth* that evening, I mentioned a stop at Anne Hathaway's Cottage. “Anne Hathaway has a cottage in England?” asked my 12-year-old daughter. I was temporarily stunned into silence, wondering why she would suddenly show so much interest in this particular facet of literary history. And then I realized she was thinking of the young American film actor. “No, honey, not *that* Anne Hathaway,” I answered glumly. Despite her tweeny disregard, Shakespeare of course continues to do quite well as touristy England's literary icon. The *Much Ado* performance we attended at The Globe was sold out, and at one point I counted *five* different productions of *As You Like It* onstage throughout the UK. I have seen his mug, courtesy of the ubiquitously reproduced Chandos portrait, faintly smiling from many a DK guide book this summer, and the number of “Shakespeare University” or “Shakespeare College” store-front language-center signs in and around London may lead one to believe that he was England's precursor to John Dewey, rather than its greatest Renaissance playwright— greatest from Stratford, anyway. In

Stratford itself, on the other hand, there is a clear push to make the lately unveiled, still debated Cobbe portrait, with its fresh-faced, more gentlemanly sitter, the new iconic image of the Shakespeare industry. It appears on the official Birthplace Trust guidebook, and is featured prominently in the exhibit therein. Only one thing this summer has overshadowed Shakespeare, one book, and no, it's hardly the King James Bible, which is enjoying various 400th-anniversary exhibitions throughout the UK and stateside. It's that other cultural pillar—*Harry Potter*, the final film of which opened here in early July. My daughter has seen it. Twice. She tells me Anne Hathaway does not appear in it. Neither of them.

But now to the optimistic point: as an enthusiastic Marlovian, I am pleased to say that amid my classroom scrambles and hapless pathfinding I have been repeatedly pleased to notice various tell-tale signs this summer of Christopher Marlowe and his works. Most prominently, The Globe Theatre's season featured a new production of *Doctor Faustus* in repertory, directed by Matthew Dunster. I will defer comment on the performance itself to the separate review in this newsletter, but what a pleasure it was to see the visuals everywhere on display—fliers facing front and back, creating little portrait duels between Paul Hilton as Faustus, brooding with hands crossed, and Arthur Darvill as Mephistopheles, starting intently with challenging look, with opened hand revealing a ball of fire. The program features "Some Key Dates in the Life of Christopher Marlowe," as well as short essays by Neil Rhodes, Martin Wiggins, Farah Karim-Cooper, and Kirsten Shepherd-Barr.

If it is unusual enough to see a Marlowe play staged at The Globe, try for a minute to wrap your mind around the fact that there were *two* productions of *Doctor Faustus* occurring on Bankside this summer, something that was not true even in the late 1580s or early '90s. Because of a matinee showing at The Globe on the night our group attended that *Much Ado* performance, we signed up for a tour that focused on the excavations of the Rose, located down Bear Garden and around Maiden Lane. Stepping off the street, we entered the cramped, unfinished box-office area of the current Rose playing space, and were met with various portraits of Marlowe, on the wall, on a guide of the Rose excavations, on fliers for its current *Faustus* production, everywhere. We proceeded to a landing that looked over the darkened excavation space, consisting of a semi-circular trail of red lights, as in an airplane aisle, faintly marking the measurements of the Rose's stage dimensions. As I backed away from the railing, I realized that the current Rose company's stage was right here, however modest, in this wooden space resembling a backyard deck: a desk was at stage right, and an empty bookcase sat to the right, against the railing. We were standing on the stage of the summer's other *Doctor Faustus* in London. A little while later, I caught word of a show called *Dark Angel*, not by Marlowe but about him, staged by the troupe Nobody's Perfect and playing in Lichfield.

Other excursions with our students led to other Marlovian encounters. It was my first time in Westminster Abbey for several years, and so I finally saw in person the controversial

window dedicated to Marlowe in Poets' Corner. The pane weighs in on the conspiracy theories surrounding Marlowe's death by inserting a "?" beside his year of death, 1593. My students, who were discovering Marlowe and reading *Faustus* for our Shakespeare course, took delight in this sign of critical hubbub. In Canterbury, we dedicated most of our time to the cathedral and St Augustine's Abbey nearby, but I could not resist dropping by the King's grammar school and showing our group where the young Marlowe was first learning his Latin and putting to memory many mythological characters and names of exotic locales. Seeing the place, they appreciated better how this Kentish provincial had stormed the London stages with *Tamburlaine*. Marlowe was scarce, of course, in Stratford, unless we count the curiously present "Marlowe's" restaurant on High Street, or the occasional book to be found here or there—*Who Killed Kit Marlowe?* (Sutton) or, even more randomly and minimally, at the RSC bookshop, a black-and-white illustration on the UK edition of James Shapiro's *Contesting Wills*, which features on its cover a gallery of possible candidates for the "real" Shakespeare. Marlowe finds himself among Mary Sidney, Francis Bacon, the Earl of Oxford, and others. We have not visited Cambridge yet, but following our scheduled visits at King's College Chapel and the Trinity's Wren Library, I plan to march my class over to Corpus Christi College, where I hope to point out the memorial to its former student and fiery writer.

Finally, it has been heartening to find so many Marlowe items on display, and overall they remain far more prevalent in UK bookshops compared with American booksellers. Whether at new or used bookstores, in England one regularly encounters copies of Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning*, and various Marlowe biographies. Even more centrally, the drama sections frequently have multiple copies and editions of *Doctor Faustus* available, reflecting that play's still privileged place as an exam text in the English curriculum. I noted for the first time, at Foyles on Charing Cross Road, the New Longman edition, featuring on its cover Jude Law, and including within photo stills from the same production. At various Waterstones stores around London, the New Mermaids edition was displayed in the "Drama" section to tie in with the current Globe production. Finally, at Blackwell's Books in Oxford, I discovered a *Doctor Faustus* production available in DVD, filmed live at Greenwich Theatre and a part of the Stage to Screen series. It stood next to a copy of Derek Jarman's *Edward II*. I was pleased in each case to see testimony to Marlowe's resilience, but also humbled to be reminded, for example, how less central *Faustus* is in the American curriculum, or to consider fully how fairly marginal the examples are, however much I do appreciate them and, I trust, how much others will as well.

Brett Foster, Review of *Only Lovers Left Alive*

**Written and directed by Jim Jarmusch
Sony Pictures Classics
DVD, 2014**

(Reprinted from 34.1, Fall 2014)

If I were asked to name one living figure from our present age who resonates most with Christopher Marlowe's life and works, I think I would say Edward Snowden, the former NSA analyst who is now in exile in Russia for disclosing secret documents relating to domestic and international surveillance operations. His actions, whether you valorize or condemn them, have given us a glimpse into a vast, active system meant by its nature to remain undetected, "a shadowy world," as Margaret Atwood put it in a New York Times opinion piece, "of which you, innocent taxpayer, understand nothing. It is better that way." So far, Snowden seems to be faring better than Marlowe did with his transgressive, secret intelligence activity, the kind of which one's superiors soon grow tired. Given the central computing and media components to Snowden's story, Marlowe scholars may too easily imagine it all as a meeting between Francis Walsingham and Thomas Pynchon. (Now wouldn't that be something!)

However, if I were also asked to provide a runner-up candidate, I might just select the longstanding outsider director and indie darling Jim Jarmusch, for decades now as much associated with a cinemagraphic avant-garde as with a voluptuousness, lyrical filmmaking. He is a director of cool who revels in the techniques of his craft. Sound familiar? Thus a happy, Marlovian convergence occurs in Jarmusch's latest film, now available on DVD, *Only Lovers Left Alive*. It is a vampire film, whose goth-glamorous undead couple is played by Tilda Swinton and Tom Hiddleston, but don't write it off quite yet. These lovers are too artful and elegant to go in for the biting of necks; Adam, played by Hiddleston and living in a dilapidated mansion in one of Detroit's abandoned neighborhoods, procures his sanguinary foodstuff from a black-market doctor and drinks it from a dainty aperitif glass. When he dresses up in medical scrubs to make his visit to a hospital less noticeable, Adam's nametag reads "Doctor Faust." And Eve, played by Swinton, receives her blood supply from an all-night café in Tangiers. The supplier will be of interest to Marlowe Newsletter readers: it is Christopher Marlowe himself, who in Jarmusch's homage-giving imagination transforms our playwright into an older, tired-looking, messy-haired vampire, played charmingly by John Hurt. (At first I mistook him for Ian McKellen, speaking with a higher voice than I expected.)

At first I thought this review would be merely a short note alerting Marlovians to this curious inclusion of Marlowe in a film cameo, but in fact he plays a bigger role. He remains a minor character – the vampire couple in many ways is the film – but he appears in multiple scenes throughout the film. Marlowe is Eve's main artistic confidant in Tangier, and when she travels to Detroit to comfort her depressive husband Adam, Marlowe's prior presence is countered by the far more problematic arrival of Eve's combustible sister Ava (Mia Wasikowska). Marlowe, in contrast, is a benign inspirer and intellectual friend to Eve when she is at home in Tangier, a kind of early-modern version of Paul Bowles. Eve in her own

right is a supreme literature lover. (And, incidentally, wouldn't the formidable Tilda Swinton make a terrifically cold Isabella in some hoped-for future production of *Edward II*?) We see her speed-reading old books in various languages, and sense that she has been a vampire in the living world for a long, long time). When she is packing to visit Adam, she brings two metal suitcases, both loaded with books. I noticed *Don Quixote* and *Infinite Jest* among them.

In their first scene together, Marlowe arrives at the café and delicately places before Eve a "pharmacie" bag – her grocery shopping, we might say. When she addresses him, he nervously says, "Never call me that name in public," as if Marlowe's lethal Deptford company may be vampires, too, and still on his trail. She soon asks Kit (as she affectionately calls him), "We're never going to let the cat out of the bag?" and speaks of the "most outrageously delicious literary scandal in history." This signals Jarmusch's mischievous interest in not only including Marlowe as a kindred-spirit vampire to the lovers, but also the familiar if fanciful story, which he alludes to throughout the film, that Marlowe was the actual author of Shakespeare's plays. On her flight to Detroit, Eve recites lines from Shakespeare's sonnet 116, and upon finishing the poem, exclaims "Ah, Marlowe..." Jarmusch also uses the Marlowe-as-Shakespeare story to indicate that Marlowe, like the vampire lovers, is at heart an expatriate. He may be in Tangier now, but at one point he informs Eve he once resided "in Italy actually, but that was four hundred years ago."

One of the final scenes, when the lovers have returned together to Tangier, finds Marlowe, alas, on his deathbed from having drunk contaminated blood. "What a piece of work is man," he says upon Adam's arrival, and I'd like to think there is some sickly ogling going on here. Adam replies, out of respect for this author of *Hamlet*, "What is this quintessence of dust." Adam notices an in-progress manuscript near Marlowe's bed, and comments that the writer has still been "scratching" at some lines. "Ah, you know," Marlowe replies, "Here and there, over the centuries." There resides in the exchange the titillating implication that Marlowe may be more than an inspiration for later writers, but in effect an unacknowledged ghost-writer, or vampire-writer. In one interior shot, we see a wall of artists' portraits – Poe, Twain, Wilde, Kafka, Buster Keaton and Iggy Pop – and one suspects this his the director's way of providing his character Marlowe with fitting company, almost certainly others highly regarded by Jarmusch. In the director's wild vision, maybe Marlowe helped some of these fellow "rebel" artists in later centuries. Then again, there is something savory in Marlowe's clear disdain for the author whose fame he has enabled, referring to a portrait of Shakespeare on the same wall as an "illiterate zombie philistine!" "Zombies" are the vampires' term for vulgar humans; A. O. Scott, in his review of *Only Lovers Left Alive*, deftly refers to the vampire couple a "a kind of aesthetic aristocracy" and "ideal critics." Despite being a cobbler's son, Marlowe, as Jarmusch presents it, fits their haute, exacting company wonderfully. Despite wishing that Jarmusch might have given screen time to Marlowe's own mighty lines instead of crediting him for overfamiliar lines by Shakespeare, any

Marlovian can still take pleasure in Adam's reassuring comment to the finally dying Marlowe: "The game paid off though, Kit. You still got the work out there."

Three Poems by Brett Foster

1. Five Citations on Our Hope and Predicament

Remind me again: we are all of us mixed blessings, as John Updike quipped in an interview, and I suppose it'll likely remain so. I also guess that same 'all of us' will arrive one day in the center of our living having received with terrible awareness what Saint Paul once called 'an answer of death' in ourselves. It will leave us like him grieving 'out of measure passynge strengthe' (the odds are good), bearing in our bodies that singular dying. And just as the much-discussed Kingdom of God, which is made so much of in the Gospels, is better thought of as already instituted, inside us maybe, or at least signaling to us, blinking, ever present in our frailties, rather than some messianic finale merely, some coup of triumphalism yet to come (even as we await a promised coming), even so is that inescapable end, no matter any hopeful sequel or aftermath. We, all of us, not only must look into it eventually, effaced, passing through something like Dante's wall of fire, but within the fly trap of our consciences we carry it around, like a black and battered metal lunch pail that once felt the steel mills' extremities, or, if what William Matthews says is right, death always flickers in us like a pilot light.

(Taken from the journal "Letters," issue #2, Spring 2014)

2. Avery da Vinci, Our Lady of the Western Suburbs

In the upper room that is her bedroom, she spends her sick-day, part fevered, part bored. It's hard to remember that you're adored by those who love you when you're thirteen. Life's doomed, or at least it's gloomily slow for her today, already grounded before she grew ill. So she reads her fill of graphic novels sent by a kind friend from my grad-school days,

who knew her as a toddler, saw a glimmer of vision in her doodled pictures even then. Better to serve the Sforzas of Milan than be a teen, painting by the body's timer.

Upstairs, she works with daring on her art assignment, which is to adapt a given masterpiece. She's transforming da Vinci's Last Supper into a full-blown birthday party,

leaving the apostles to rave with the best. I love her subversive genius in the pious suburbs, fancy it a legacy. (I'm biased.) Grant her happiness, O Lord, and give her rest.

(Taken from the journal "Letters," issue #2, Spring 2014)

3. West on I-70 Across the Land of Lincoln

Dear one,
one we had to leave in Boston,

I wish I could say more about Illinois (or at least the eastern part) than "It's there." No prolixity of praise disguised here. Maybe the statement's unfair, my eye lazy: the landscape cries out for the observant one who can ponder the miles of tattered shoulders of corn stalks, deep green field dusted with disheveled husks, the stranded oak and ash in islands at the field's edge. Their dark foliage is streaked with blighted leaves. Maybe there's energy in me yet—No. Short of water, diseased, or heat-blached, what does it matter? They're there and painless will remain, but we, we are always moving, and so maintain our distance—Korea, California. We joke about the tribal, how we'd like to reinstate that people-ness. I hope we mean it, too. Long hours across the plains ahead, awaiting us beyond the sunset, enduring lane that's growing narrower. I need to believe it, that we'll inhabit the same block someday, in some forgotten town—one of these—not even of our own choosing. What would it matter? Once again together, we'd have no reason to decline. "Anywhere" could be no better. We'd be where we were.

There's color too in the very character of all that's been constructed, little towns we pass through, Greenup, Brownstown, Greenville, and local color of the faded billboards: Wickiup Motel, Nuby's Restaurant, a foot-high pie at the Blue Springs Inn. Once fed and boarded, our fresh attention

turns to commerce: Fostoria's glassware,
which makes me look twice, a clearance sale
to kill for at the Buck knife outlet store:
SPECIALS FOR THE LUCKY HUNTER!
Adjacent, a plywood jack-in-the-box,
Ronald McDonald's insidious smile,
sinister as ever as he gestures
with mad waves to entice the wandering
cravings in the minds of children.

She cried twice just this afternoon, I think
you ought to know these things. The first time sprung
out of nowhere. We were worrying about
those boring moving practicalities,
then a pause, the hum of car noise—
lost in her eruption of sobs, too soon
to explain, though she tried with stunted words.
I interrupted, like an oaf, "What?! What?"
It startled me, I thought I'd hit a dog
or something, or had forgotten the cat
back in Boston and now realized the fact.
I should have known. I believe I heard it
in the tone of her grieving, to arrive
and not find you there, to be less alert,
despite the belligerence of the heart.
She resumed later, but this time softly,
as if arranging sadness on the staff
of your friendship. The first, a violence
to answer the ecstatic moments or
revenge their absence, and its successor
nearly inaudible, yet sent to echo
in its way the tenderness between us
still present somewhere, imparted from you
toward my wife, shaken in this burdened car.
"What is the city but the people?"
She just found this in Coriolanus.
This afternoon, I thought you ought to know

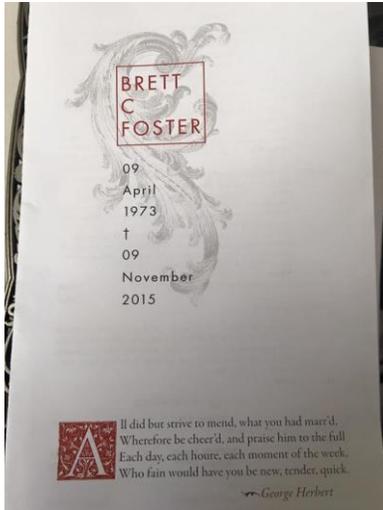
From the high point of the highway we seem
to hover above the squat, fiberglass
prayerhouse near the Cross of Victory Church.
A large sign says Porn Destroys the Family
and stands immodestly at the forefront

of the property; thirty seconds later
we see the reason why: adult book store
farther along the access road. What good
the location? A late-night terminus
for lonely truckers? I can only wonder
as it vanishes in the mirror. I'm stirred
by such mysteries, layers of culture.
Due north of here, the ancient arrowhead
mounds of Cahokia, the small museum
a hokey, field-trip reminder of this state
in a state of nature, from which all this
has grown. Then as now, so faintly but as sure,
the land leads us to our own conclusions,
allows for our peculiar revelations,
how the roadside detritus of business
differs little from that of my home state,
fast approaching just beyond the Gateway
to the West. But there I cherish or gainsay
each embarrassment like a yearbook portrait:
Cafe Presley, and that dirty warehouse
abounding with concrete lawn ornaments,
or Itchy's Flea Market outside Creve Coeur.
It's not about them, but seeing them again,
just these. They witness to the native pull
of familiar soil, where even the most
ridiculous can gloss the Beautiful.
But you know what? I'm coming to discover
that this is, finally, untrue. Nothing more
than a favorite stretch to be passed just once
or once before, a garish nostalgia
diminished now by the light of higher
matters, other losses we must learn from:
age, action, changes of fate, commitments
that insist we're here, you're there, and that's that.
Will write again when we get there.

Yr
brother

Taken from *Terrain.org: A Journal of the Built and Natural
Environments* 24 (2009)

Brett: A Reminiscence



My first encounter with Brett was ten years ago, in the spring of 2005. He was a candidate for a position at my school, in my field, and someone who could certainly help me in my titled chair-professorship as I hoped to mentor him. It is remarkable that we attracted a candidate of his quality, since the search itself was and

continues to be probably the most incompetently run I ever hope to see, featuring a search chair who knew nothing about early modern studies and who was churlish and truculent on top of that. But Brett was terrific. He talked a blue streak, as he always did, and spoke to me about his interest in *Doctor Faustus*, Reformation theological rhetoric, and his real love, which was writing poetry. He would have been a wonderful addition to our creative writing faculty and an asset to the community, as we like to say in scenic Fort Wayne, Indiana.



Brett, Avery, Gus, Anise

on a career. (That a small community to the east of us in Indiana is also named New Haven was a subject of some hilarity for both of us. Moving from one New Haven to another.) We ended up over at my house on a somewhat raw and cloudy afternoon, drinking coffee and finding out how much we had in common. We had both married women from Texas, for example. I loved writing poetry too, but had quit long ago because I just didn't think I was decent enough at it. He suggested that it would be good for me if I were to take it up again, and I encouraged him to keep on with his scholarship no matter where he settled. From that point on, we

In that initial meeting, Brett and I agreed that we should break protocol and talk about things as they were rather than observing the customs usually required in the search process. He freely and endearingly volunteered his family information, talking about his wife, Anise, and his children, Avery and Gus. He confided in me about his financial and academic situation, and his eagerness to escape New Haven and get going

thought of ourselves as related, but we weren't sure exactly how.

When Brett told me about his other "flyback" opportunities, I recognized one of them as an academic chamber of horrors from which unsuspecting young professors tended to eject themselves after a year for the sake of their mental health and self-esteem. I bit my tongue. Another was Wheaton College in Illinois, to the west of us. When he told me about the school's mission, its atmosphere, its housing allowance for faculty (since this western Chicago 'burb features home prices starting at a mind-fracturing half-million dollars), I asked him if he wanted my opinion. Naturally, he did. So I was honest with him. I told him how much we would love to have him, but that Wheaton had much more to offer him than we did. I added that I myself would be delighted to work with someone of his caliber, but that the difficulties I had encountered to that point at my institution weren't worth putting him through. As the proverb runs, the devil you know is better than the one you don't.



Anise and Brett on their 20th wedding anniversary



Brett as a BMX racer, 1991

We connected again three years later at the International Marlowe Conference in Canterbury. By that time, his work on his poetry and his scholarship had truly borne fruit in the form of publications. Out of that meeting came the opportunity to edit a collection of essays devoted to the playwright-poet, and we eagerly commissioned Brett to contribute. He presented us with an excellent essay on *Faustus* and the Reformation, which broke

new ground and was eloquently written and was aed to the teeth with footnotes. He cheerfully submitted to my overzealous editing, and we began a regular correspondence and a series of get-togethers at academic meetings and in his residential area.



Avery with Dr. Samuel Johnson (Sammy)

In December of 2011, I made a presentation about the New Variorum *Julius Caesar* to the Wheaton faculty, and enjoyed watching him teach his own courses on

the same afternoon. During my trip, I received the third of three speeding tickets I had incurred that year, which was a bad one indeed. This time, the Illinois State Trooper bored through a gap in the retaining wall on the Illinois Turnpike and cut off other vehicles in traffic to get me in a spot that had no speed limit signs and handed me a citation that could not document how fast I had been driving. We laughed about that, and commiserated about the interesting interpretations of the law by the state police to which one might be subjected in the Land of Lincoln.



Manny's corned beef on rye, topped with a latke

What struck me is that this happy warrior who had so much going on and so much going for him always greeted me like an older brother whom he hadn't seen in a dog's

years. If Brett thought I would be anywhere in his region, he would go out of his way to see me, sometimes to extremes. In February of 2013, he and Gus braved a snowstorm and came down from Wheaton to Naperville where I was staying. My friend and I had driven up to Rockford near the Wisconsin border to retrieve a puppy, Lady, who I had bought from a breeder. He sat with us for several hours, which we appreciated very much. In December of 2014, he rode up with

me from Wheaton to Rockford to retrieve yet another puppy, Dr. Samuel Johnson (aka Sammy), whom he held in his arms while I drove us back to Wheaton. This was extraordinarily kind of him. Being kind and thoughtful was one of his many talents. I learned later that another one was his prowess with a BMX bike when he was a teenager. He could have gone professional but chose college instead.

This was the kind of person he was. Earlier that fall, he had confided in me about his Stage 4 diagnosis of colon cancer and the surgeries he had endured, a calamity that he bore in good humor and with great bravery. He and his family were supposed to spend the year at UC-Santa Cruz while he served as poet-in-residence. During the ride up to Rockford in 2014, he spoke more about it to me, and confided the grim diagnosis provided by his physicians. There was no trace of bitterness, self-pity, or fear, only the observation that he had lost his father at a young age and hoped that Gus and Avery would not be subjected to the same fate, losing a beloved parent while a teenager. I myself have had the unfortunate experience of witnessing the impersonal cruelty of the disease at close range: my first mother-in-law thirty-five years ago, and my father in 1990. For these reasons, I dreaded the inevitable, which then dreadfully occurred.

I wanted to check in on Brett this year and see how he was doing, but did not want to pester him or his family and friends. In late October of 2015, we exchanged emails in which he was immensely apologetic about not keeping in touch because he had endured further surgeries that summer. He asked if I would come and see him, and I was anxious to do so. He explained that he wouldn't be able to ride around much since his illness forbade travel or jostling, and that I was welcome to visit him at his home in Wheaton and sit with him over the course of a few afternoons, depending on how he felt.

I heard about Brett's passing the day after. There were three small consolations for me. He had been at home rather than in the hospital. A mutual friend and his fellow poet told me that his students had been reading his poetry up at the college in tribute to him on the very afternoon of his passing. A third was that the news of the arrangements and services arrived quickly. I departed for Wheaton almost immediately.

Although Brett was the least formal or pretentious person one could imagine—in marked contrast to myself—I wanted to observe his passing at the wake, church, and graveside in my most dignified and traditional funeral attire. My brother-in-law had been killed two weeks before in an accident in the forest, so such sober sartorial garments were near at hand. I thought that Brett would appreciate that my gesture represented the way that I myself could best endure the sheer awfulness of his passing, even though virtually no one else would be dressed up in the same way for the entire experience. It was, I noted ruefully to myself, exactly the kind of thing about which he would write a poem.



Brett's gravesite, Wheaton Cemetery

Seeing him at his wake affected me more than any similar experience I had previously had, of which there have been many, even the visitation of my own father so many years before. I saw someone at the casket who appeared to be as stunned and as afflicted as myself, and she was kind enough to speak with me and console me. Afterward, I had to repair to another room,

take a seat, and look out the window at the traffic. When I next glanced at my watch, forty-five minutes had passed. I had become lost in a reminiscence.

I recalled a summer day two years before when I was in Chicago to visit an old friend. Brett, having heard I would be nearby, insisted on taking the METRA train in from Wheaton in order to spend the afternoon with me. It was quite warm, and on meeting him and exchanging greetings, he proposed that it would be an excellent idea for the two of us to walk down to a famous deli near the University of Illinois-Chicago Circle campus, Manny's, at which any patron is welcome to order a sandwich as big as his head. This sounded terrific, but as it happened, Manny's was nearly three miles away, one way. We set out nevertheless, and after our pastrami lunch, I discovered the real reason for my friend's enthusiasm for our



Manny's, Chicago

walking tour. There was a Powell's Books very close to Manny's, and anyone who knew Brett understood that there

was never a used bookstore that he didn't like, or wouldn't insist that we look into. My hidden agenda was to reverse roles and seek his advice about a problem rather than the other way around, but we dispatched that matter quickly and talked about all that really matters anyway, poetry.

M. L. Stapleton
Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne



Leaf from Norway maple that watches over Brett

