

msan

Marlowe Society of America Newsletter

Vol. VII, No. 2, Fall 1987



SECOND
INTERNATIONAL
MARLOWE
CONFERENCE

OXFORD
ENGLAND

IMMEDIATE ACTION
REQUIRED

DETAILS, P. 8

1987 MLA
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A VICTORIAN
FAUSTUS
P. 5

Alun Armstrong as Barabas

Courtesy RSC

MSA MEETINGS
SAN FRANCISCO
MLA 1987

ANNUAL MEETING: MARLOWE'S THE JEW OF MALTA: RECENT CRITICAL APPROACHES

Dec. 29, 3:30-4:45 pm, Lassen, Hilton. Presiding: Matthew N. Proser, University of Connecticut.

1. "Metadrama in Marlowe's The Jew of Malta," Sara Deats, University of South Florida, Tampa.
2. "The Jew of Malta and the Discourses of Colonialism," Emily C. Bartels, Harvard University.
3. "Marlowe's Copiousness and Jonson's 'Infinite Riches': The Jew of Malta and Bartholomew Fair," Maurice Charney, Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

REFRESHMENT HOUR

Please remain in the Lassen room (Hilton) after the annual meeting for food, drink, and conversation: Dec. 29, 5:15-6:45 pm.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE WORKSHOP: MYTHICAL MARLOWE

Dec. 30, 8:30-9:45 am, Lombard, Hilton. Presiding: Constance B. Kuriyama, Texas Tech University.

1. "Forces of Overrule: Fate, System, and Instinct in Marlowe," Robert A. Logan, University of Hartford.
2. "Mediating Myth: The Art of Marlowe's Hero and Leander," Theresia de Vroom, Occidental College.
3. "Marlowe and the Politics of Nineteenth-Century Canonization," Thomas Dabbs, University of South Carolina, Columbia.

CALL FOR
PAPERS
MLA 1988

MSA solicits papers for its December 1988 meetings at the MLA in New Orleans. Send abstracts or papers of fifteen-minute length by February 15 to Matthew N. Proser, President, MSA, English Department, U-25, 337 Mansfield Rd., University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268; (203) 486-2583.

MARLOWE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Matthew N. Proser, President
Constance B. Kuriyama, Vice President
Sara M. Deats, Secretary
Robert A. Logan, Treasurer
Bruce B. Brandt, Membership Chairman and
MSA Newsletter Editor
Edward L. Rocklin, MSA Book Reviews Editor

All business and organizational correspondence except for memberships should be addressed to the President:
Professor Matthew N. Proser, President
Marlowe Society of America
Department of English, U-25
University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT 06268

New memberships, renewals, and contributions to MSAN should be sent to the Membership Chairman:
Professor Bruce B. Brandt
Membership Chairman
Marlowe Society of America
English Department
South Dakota State University
Brookings, SD 57007

MSA Newsletter publishes reviews of Renaissance, and especially Marlovian, drama; notices of recent and forthcoming publications; announcements; and brief articles or notes of interest to Marlovian scholars. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect that of the MSA. The editor reserves the right to refuse items, to ask for revisions, and to make stylistic changes that he deems appropriate. MSAN reviews are usually around 800 words long, but may occasionally be longer. The beginning of a review should identify the company, the dates of performance, and the director. MSA members are encouraged to announce publications and other items or meetings of interest to the membership. Materials for the next issue of MSAN should be received by April 1, 1988. Send inquiries, announcements, and submissions to Professor Bruce B. Brandt, Editor, MSAN, at the above address.

MSA Book Reviews publishes reviews of books on Marlowe and his period. Reviews, suggestions for reviews, and inquiries should be sent to the Reviews Editor:
Professor Edward L. Rocklin, Editor
MSA Book Reviews
Department of English and Foreign Languages
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MARLOWE'S "AMBIGUOUS IRONY"
AND THE NATURAL DEATH
OF CALYPHAS

An abstract of the paper presented at the MSA Marlowe Workshop, New York 1987, by Richard F. Hardin, University of Kansas.



One of Wayne Booth's time-honored tests for irony--the conflict between an author's beliefs and those expressed by his character--will not work for Marlowe, his beliefs being irrecoverable. Most dramatic works (Booth strangely neglects drama) leave us uncertain of the author's beliefs. Booth's project is largely to separate irony from ambiguity, much more easily done with Elizabeth Bennet and D'Arcy than with Folly or the persona(e) of Montaigne or the characters of Marlowe. Yet while the critic can easily escape "closure" (and seems nowadays obligated to do so), the theatrical director and actor cannot. In the scene where Tamburlaine murders his son Calyphas, actor and director must settle whether the youth dies a craven coward or silent Stoic. Critics are often of two minds on this scene; not being obligated to settle the issue in production, they can remain so. Poirier sees in Calyphas "a strange mixture of cowardice and wisdom," and the strangeness is echoed in Mahood, Steane, et al. Surely a father's murder of his son is one of those moments Booth refers to when he says that "some of our most important literary experiences are designed precisely to demand flat and absolute choices, saying that in fact the sudden plain irreducible 'no' of the first step in ironic reconstruction is one of our most precious literary moments." Yet often the ironies of Renaissance literature (Brasmas, Cervantes) require that we say "no" to that "no." Frederick Bogel writes that it is the very nature of irony to maintain

uncertainty, no matter how marginal. We are uncertain not about the evil of Tamburlaine's deed, but about the reconcilability of the nature which he embraces with the wisdom that Calyphas praises. "Nature" and "wisdom" are complex words in the play, and may be employed in the test for irony proposed by McAlindon for Faustus, whereby such words (e.g., "resolve," "perform," "gaze" in Faustus) are shown to dance in fascinating patterns throughout. The famous speech about "Nature that framed us of four elements" contrasts with Hooker's or Spenser's nature as divine handmaiden, though the other characters fail to understand this. (Cosroe says a few lines after that speech that Tamburlaine and his crew are "the strangest men that ever nature made," indicating that he has not understood a thing Tamburlaine said about nature's inherent violence.) Calyphas is one of several characters, like Abigail in The Jew of Malta, whose moral revulsion over their world drives them to seek refuge in a wisdom antithetical to nature (again, the natural bonds are focussed in the father-child relationship). The scorn that many critics disclose toward Calyphas indicates how easily we fall into Tamburlaine's way of seeing things. If Calyphas' mental resources are a futile refuge, the proper response would seem not to be contempt but pity for him in his moral isolation.

TAMBURLAINE AND THE
RENAISSANCE CONCEPTION
OF HONOR

An abstract of the paper presented at the MSA Marlowe Workshop, New York 1987, by Mark Thornton Burnett, Wolfson College, Oxford University.



Critics have recognized that honor is a major thematic concern in Shakespeare, but have not noticed that it is as important an issue in Marlowe's plays. In Tamburlaine, honor is a principle that dictates the behavior of many of the characters. Tamburlaine's enemies refer to honor to justify rebellion and the pursuit of power. Tamburlaine himself, in his liberality and the importance he attaches to military success, draws on the ideal of the honorable man which was celebrated by contemporary writers. Honor, for Tamburlaine, is a means to legitimize his ambitions and achieve immortality. Agydas, Bajazeth, and Olympia also conceive of themselves in terms of honor, and their deaths prompt us to question our relationship with the central protagonist. The scenes involving the Virgins of Damascus and Calyphas have a similar effect. Although the positive aspects of honor in Tamburlaine are stressed at the end of the play, Marlowe's own position remains difficult to determine. Explanations for the prominence of honor in the play can be suggested, but no stable, clear-cut concept of honor is provided.

"MARLOWE AND THE POLITICS OF DEMYSTIFICATION"

An abstract of the paper presented at the MSA Marlowe Workshop, New York 1987, by Thomas Cartelli, Muhlenberg College.



Marlowe's indebtedness to Machiavelli is evident both in his presentation of political and religious contention as the largely self-interested wrangling for power, and in his treatment of the pursuit and exercise of power as the most desirable of activities for the

"aspiring mind." It is discernible as well in the notorious Baines deposition where we find represented Marlowe's capacity at once to anatomize and celebrate the workings of power in a manner that virtually demonizes his appropriation of Machiavelli's penchant for demystification. Questionable as they may be, the articles call attention to Marlowe's fascination with belief systems and to his indifference regarding the effects of their manipulation on "a gross and rude people." They also bring into focus Marlowe's tendency to demystify one embodiment of authority only to identify with another.

The intricacy of Marlowe's approach to received ideas and the structures of power is revealingly dramatized in the opening and closing movements of Edward II. In the first scene of the play, Marlowe pits the insidiously attractive Gaveston against the more modest ambitions for employment of three poor men. While the lines of audience sympathy appear clearly drawn, Marlowe actually attempts to subvert the conventional moral preference for the normative and condemnation of the deviant or unusual. He makes Gaveston the seductive champion of values that are antagonistic to the mainstream concerns of the poor men which he portrays as products of a limited and limiting consciousness of life's possibilities. Cynical and clever, unawed by the mystifications that restrict the imaginative range of their contemporaries, both Gaveston and Marlowe conceive and invent "pleasing shows" of the erotically charged Ovidian variety. They share an anti-populist contempt for the common man, and aspire to an anti-humanist position of power unmediated by conscience or concern for the commonweal.

Marlowe's identification with power and contempt for the powerless leads, in the closing scenes of the play, to his remarkably clinical presentation of Lightborne's execution of King Edward. Lightborne's refinement of brutality recalls Gaveston's refinement of eroticism with the king, as Actaeon, being seduced into a death that is not simply apparent. Lightborne's craft also insidiously recalls the the craft of the playwright himself, as does his goal, which involves not only the violation of the king's body but the demystification of the royal prerogatives that made that body appear kingly.

Discernable here, as at the end of Doctor Faustus, is a studied withdrawal of the playwright from the very space of human suffering he has so assiduously cultivated, mediated by a sustained focus on the exacting symmetry of punishment and retribution. That the same scenario does not occur in either of the two parts of Tamburlaine may be attributed to Marlowe's unqualified commitment to a protagonist who, as a self-styled scourge of God, exists to render others powerless and is, until his understated death, never rendered powerless by anyone nor demystified by Marlowe.

A LOWBROW VICTORIAN FAUSTUS

The perilous notion of securing terrestrial advantages by making a pact with the Devil outlived, of course, Faustus and his century. A splendidly down-to-earth one (no high-falutin' aspirations about becoming great emperor of the world or knowing the secrets of astronomy) comes to hand in that indispensable volume for Victorianists such as myself, the amply titled Annals of Our Time: A Diurnal of Events, Social and Political, Home and Foreign, From the Accession of Queen Victoria, June 20, 1837, to the Peace of Versailles, February 28, 1871: A New Edition Carefully Revised, by Joseph Irving (London: Macmillan, 1880).

Under the July 16, 1856 diurnal, Irving records the sad case of William Dove, a Leeds man accused and found guilty of murdering his wife "by administering strychnia in medicine." His innate love of cruelty was not, according to this report, his only motive for uxoricide; Dove himself declared, after conviction, that the guilt for his criminal act really belonged to a wizard from Leeds (Mephostophilis improbably disguised as a misogynist Yorkshireman?) whom he was in the habit of consulting, and who told him that he would never have any happiness until his wife was out of the way. Dove's concept of happiness, at least when under arrest and on trial, was agreeably basic. He wrote a letter, in his own blood, in these terms:

Dear Devil, - If you will get me clear at the assizes, and let me have the enjoyment of life, health, wealth, tobacco here, more food and better, and my wishes granted till I am sixty, come to me tonight. I remain your faithful subject,
WILLIAM DOVE.

Dove's petition alerts one, maybe for the first time, to Faustus' surprising failure to secure in his contract with the Devil a steady lifelong supply of tobacco products.

The Devil was predictably disobliging: Dove did not live to see sixty. The assize verdict had recommended him for mercy on the ground of defective intellect, but the Home Secretary did not regard him as daft enough, even by Yorkshire standards, for his strychnining his wife to be in anyway condoned, so Act V, Scene ii of this Victorian Doctor Faustus took place on the Gallows.

Philip Collins

University of Leicester

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

"Teaching Shakespeare: Text and Performance," a conference for college and secondary school teachers of

Shakespeare, will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, February 26-27, 1988. Requests for final program information should be sent to:

Professor Andrew M. McLean
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
Box 2000
Kenosha, WI 53141-2000

RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE

Burnett, Mark Thornton. "Tamburlaine: An Elizabethan Vagabond." Studies in Philology 84 (1987): 308-323.

Empson, William. Faustus and the Censor: The English Faust Book and Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. Ed. John Henry Jones. Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Briksen, Roy T. The Forme of Faustus Fortunes: A Study of The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus (1616). Oslo: Solum Forlag A.S./Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987.

Briksen argues the textual and authorial integrity of the B Text. Placing Faustus in the context of the Calvinist-Augustinian debate over free will, he sees Faustus' rebellion against this theological dilemma in terms of the moral philosophy and rhetorical strategies of Giordano Bruno. He finds that the textual patterns of Doctor Faustus reflect textual arrangements in classical and Renaissance poetry and suggest Marlowe's awareness of continental compositional techniques, especially those of Tasso. The scenes at the imperial court are seen as a play-within-the-play that comments on the main plot and contributes to a "literary typology" that helps to unify the play. He ends by adducing new internal and external evidence to support the argument that the B Text represents Marlowe's final conception of the play.

Gill, Roma, ed. The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe. Vol. 1: All Ovids Elegies, Lucans First Booke, Dido Queene of Carthage, Hero and Leander. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

In the first volume of this three-volume old-spelling edition, Gill reevaluates the order and relationship of the early volumes of the Elegies and argues that Hero and Leander is not a fragment, but is complete as Marlowe left it.

DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Presented at Magdalen College, Oxford, by the Oxford University Dramatic Society, June 20-25, 1987. Directed by Campaspe Lloyd-Jacob and Matthew Banks.

The Oxford University Dramatic Society's Doctor Faustus, lavishly produced and boasting distinguished patrons and specially composed music, took place outside in one of the main quadrangles, appropriately enough, of Magdalen College, Oxford. Once seated, the open-air audience noted the spires reminiscent of Marlowe's Cambridge or Faustus' Wittenberg and also the more unusual and incongruous spirits, looking like earth demons, clustered silently and impassively about the College walls.

The production got off to a good start, and the opening scenes were exciting and enjoyable. A prancing John-Paul Whyatt brought comedy to his Chorus and Wagner, leaping and tumbling like a medieval jester. The slimy Valdes (Mark Senior) and Cornelius (Claire Taylor) entered, death-white, more like ghosts than conjurers. Faustus (Piers Gibbon) appeared high above us on the top of the clock tower with flaming torches in each hand to begin his incantations.

Many particularly fine moments enhanced the evening's performance. The good and evil angels were played as disembodied, internalized voices racking the conscience-stricken Faustus. Mephostophilis (Mark Roberts), in red, managed powerfully to convey the impression of a tormented soul, while the mood of eeriness was further reinforced by the spirits in the background coming to life, crawling towards Faustus and vomiting a substance to which he promptly set fire. But there was laughter, too, reminding us that much of the main plot is as entertaining as the comic scenes. The explanation of the movement of the planets was presented to Faustus in the form of a show including a pouting, seductive Venus. Later, Faustus and Mephostophilis scaled the walls to watch an outrageous Pope (Mark Senior) stage an elaborate display of rock-and-roll dancing.

The treatment of some scenes shed new light on neglected areas of the play. When Wagner turned the tables on the scholars and referred to "this wine," one realized he was drunk and that his swearing by the bottle was a kind of sacrilegious oath. Subtle effects were achieved by doubling: Mark Senior combined as Valdes and the Pope (which of them is the more corrupt?); John-Paul Whyatt slipped out of his Wagner costume to become Lechery and to direct the Seven Deadly Sins. The morality elements and many shows and plays-within-plays struck me as an important part of Marlowe's interest in his dramatic medium, in the self-consciousness of theatrical performance.

Disappointing interpretations, however, accompanied those that were illuminating or inspired.

Appalling liberties were taken, with Lucifer (Mark Senior) deviating so widely from the script that he invented his own, saying, "Think about hell, Faustus, won't you?" An additional problem was the directors' obvious inability to decide on either A or B as their play-text. Helen appeared not as a ravishing beauty but a figure in clay, which made nonsense out of Faustus' rhapsodic apostrophe. The final stages were further marred by Piers Gibbon's failure to capture Faustus' anguish of indecision as his last hour approached.

What put the nail in the coffin was something the cast could not have anticipated--the intervention of fate. Even before the interval, a steady drizzle had begun to fall. By halfway through, this had developed into a torrent. Wagner cheekily put up an umbrella, but the unfortunate members of the audience who had come unprepared (and they were the majority) could do no more than huddle into their light summer coats. An outsider might have been forgiven for thinking that all this looked more like Wimbledon than Marlowe. The end of the play was literally drowned in rain, although Magdalen's clock chiming the hour to coincide with Faustus' final speech was still chillingly effective. It was difficult to believe in the reality of hell-fire, however, when cast and audience were so bedraggled. There were no cracking fireworks at the close of this production, only a few damp squibs.

Mark Thornton Burnett

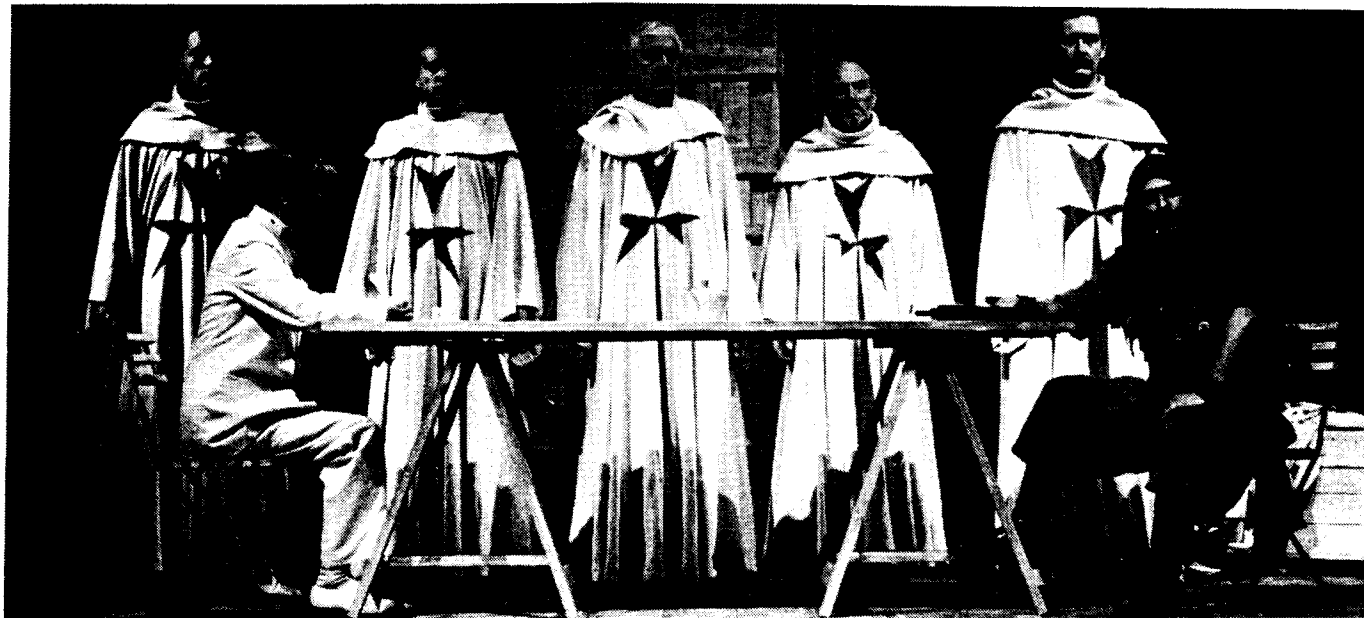
University of Geneva

THE JEW OF MALTA

Presented at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, by the Royal Shakespeare Company, July 15-December 1, 1987. Directed by Barry Kyle.

The Jew of Malta at the RSC is full of conflicting images: a map of the world on the stage promises untold riches while next to it is placed a bare trestle-table and a pile of crates. Machine-guns sit side by side with bibles and prayer-books. Monks talk with soldiers in military dress, and crucifixes are held aloft with the same enthusiasm and regularity as truncheons.

This is the police state that Barabas (Alun Armstrong) inhabits, ostensibly founded on religion but depending in reality on violence and the desire for material advancement. Barabas is in his element here, a bearded Jew in a hat amassing wealth and wrapping himself up in his map like Tamburlaine in a shrunken setting. Armstrong immediately established a rapport with us, thanking the more learned members of the audience for getting the "Iphigen" joke and causing



Richard Leaf, Ian Bailey, Bill McGuirk, Dennis Clinton (Knights), James Fleet (Lodowick), John Carlisle (Ferneze), and Peter Polycarpon (Selim Calymath)
 Courtesy Royal Shakespeare Company

hilarity when rushing about the stage giving a distraught Abigail (Janet Amsbury) directions to his hidden gold. His ecstasy of delight on recovering his goods also had a comic effect which was sustained more generally in the resilience with which he surmounted every obstacle thrown in his way. Barabas was, above all, a man of many parts (from a French musician in a boater and blazer to a Turkish convert in a fez) who was consistently entertaining and unflagging in his energy and zest.

Ferneze was ably played by John Carlisle as a wily governor masking his duplicity beneath unctuous religious platitudes. His hypocrisy in robbing Barabas was highlighted by his reading from the bible in a scene made doubly comic by the Jew winning the argument with an even more apposite quotation! Throughout Ferneze was alive to shifts in the power structure and to the fragility of political agreements: "Honor is bought with blood, and not with gold," he announced, but still returned to drag off the chest of bullion remaining on the stage.

Accomplished performances from the rest of the cast completed the rogues' gallery. Calymath (Peter Polycarpou) looked like an Afghan rebel, Martin del Bosco (Michael Cadman) was a Mongol warrior smoking a cheroot, and Lodowick (James Fleet) was an ex-colonial in puttees. Glowering and sinister but also amusing was Phil Daniels as Ithamore: dark, hunched, and with a lugubrious delivery.

What, then, was the mood of this play that has been given just about every generic label in the critical repertoire? In performance, *The Jew* is slippery and elusive. It can be played realistically (as when bird droppings fall on Barabas or he squints at his

chain of office to ensure it is gold), or the comic potential can be exploited. The present production chose the latter, in the main, and the air rang with delighted laughter. The Job reference, "A counterfeit profession is better / Than unseen hypocrisy," "What, Abigail become a nun again?" and "O brother, all the nuns are dead": these lines were gleefully received and their irreverence appreciated and applauded. Then the tone could modulate into the hushed and serious--the fight between Mathias (Gregory Doran) and Lodowick--or the strangely beautiful--the lyrical address of Ithamore to Bellamira (Stella Gonet), the courtesan. All was shifting, subtle, insecure.

At the start, Machevil (John Carlisle), hissing and Italianate, rose up through the floor to address the audience. The final scene showed Ferneze tearing off a wig to reveal his true identity, Machevil, but his triumph seemed petty and tenuous. No one came out on top in this version of the play; Barabas in death merely told the governor what he already knew, a hooded Calymath faced a firing squad, and Ferneze, although victorious, looked uneasy and apprehensive. To be a successful Machiavellian, the end seemed to imply, would always be an unattainable ideal.

This excellent production is to be welcomed as it puts some old myths finally to rest. *The Jew* is not an unstructured mess that starts as tragedy and ends as comedy; it is carefully thought out, admirably and consistently sustained, and well sewn together. Nor is it a play of the "old English kind," but a modern work in its appeal, spirit, and grasp of a hostile and unstable political reality.

Mark Thornton Burnett

University of Geneva

INFORMATION FOR MSA SECOND INTERNATIONAL MARLOWE CONFERENCE

August 15-19, 1988

Oxford, England

Plans for our Second International Conference have moved forward, and we are now ready to ask for your active participation. Here are the details: the Conference will be held at Oxford Polytechnic College, Headington, Oxford, about a mile and one-half from the center of the city, overlooking its famous spires. The site is modern and comfortable with accommodations very reasonable in price. These include a conference center, food, and housing. Members of the Conference can stay for a few days before and after the meetings if they give reasonable notice.

The Conference will consist of plenary sessions, seminars, and workshops. The plenary sessions will be addresses to the entire group by well-known scholars. We see the seminars as opportunities to discuss such interpretive and theoretical issues as Marlowe and Critical Theory or Marlowe's Values, either generally or as they apply to specific works. The seminars would require individual papers which will be read by all members of a seminar before the actual session so that discussion can proceed on that basis. We see the workshops as opportunities for focusing on more technical matters such as Marlowe's Poetics or The Editing of the A and B Texts of Doctor Faustus. The workshops would have assigned texts for which the participants would be responsible, and these would serve as the basis for analysis and illustration. However, it will be up to the individual discussion leaders to determine the precise shape of the meeting and the nature of the obligation in either of these categories.

The exact size of the groups will be determined by the interest shown in them, the interrelationship of the various materials, the discrimination of the chairperson, and the nature of the task itself. Currently, we envision the seminars as consisting of seven to ten people. Alternatively, the workshop panel would consist of as many as three people who would discuss their techniques before a group of interested participants. Those who are not members of specific seminars and workshops would be free to attend them.

FEES

1. Registration: \$55.00
2. Room and Board: £20.00 per person per day
(exclusive of VAT)

Travel from the United States to Oxford is the responsibility of the individual members of the Conference.

PROSPECTIVE TOPICS AND FORMATS:

SEMINARS

1. Marlowe and Critical Theory
2. Marlowe and Performance
3. Marlovian Character and Psychology
4. Marlovian Values
5. Marlowe and Shakespeare

WORKSHOPS

6. Biography of Marlowe
7. Marlowe's Poetics
8. Doctor Faustus: A and B Texts
9. Other Textual Problems in Marlowe
10. Marlowe's Rendering of History

After examining these categories, make a selection of three of them by number and enter the numbers on one of the attached forms. The form should be returned by January 15, 1988. Every effort will be made to place participants in the category of their first choice. But MSA must retain the flexibility to make adjustments.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other features of the conference include an opening cocktail party, a closing banquet, a workshop on Doctor Faustus to be given by the Medieval Players, possible sidetrips and other diversions--and, of course, the city of Oxford itself, with its schools, museums, and cultural activities.

DEADLINES

January 15, 1988:

All Selection Forms Due

March 1, 1988:

Notification of Groups and Letters
of Invitation Sent Out

June 1, 1988:

Papers For Seminars Due to Session Leaders
Information For Workshops Sent Out

Please notice these dates carefully. It is crucial that all deadlines be observed if the conference is to be effectively coordinated.