MSA ANNUAL MEETINGS
NEW ORLEANS, MLA 1988

MARLOWE’S WORKS: THREE APPROACHES TO THREE KEY PLAYS

Dec. 27, 7:00-8:15 p.m., Cambridge Room, Hilton. Presiding: Matthew N. Proser, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

1. "Swords, Crowns, and the Femininity of Cities in Tamburlaine I and II," Kay Stanton, California State University, Fullerton.


MARLOWE WORKSHOP: EROTIC MARLOWE


CALL FOR PAPERS

MSA solicits papers for its December 1989 meetings at the MLA in Washington. Send abstracts or papers of fifteen-minute length by February 20 to Matthew N. Proser, President, MSA, English Department, U-25, 337 Mansfield Rd., University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268; (203) 486-2583.

SECOND INTERNATIONAL MARLOWE CONFERENCE

Oxford, August 15-19, 1988

Those expecting to stay in dreary dorm rooms and eat cafeteria cooking while attending the Second International Marlowe Conference were most pleasantly surprised. Accommodations at Oxford Polytechnic were quite comfortable, the staff was uniformly gracious and helpful, and the gourmet cooking made gourmets of us all. And most importantly, the program arranged by Director Robert A. Logan and Associate Directors Roma Gill and Matthew N. Proser was stimulating and enjoyable throughout. With forty-two active participants, the conference was large enough to host a diversity of opinion, and yet intimate enough to truly bring Marlovians together.

The conference included four plenary sessions. In the first, Julia Briggs of Oxford University spoke on "Marlowe and the Problems of History." At the second, James Shapiro of Columbia University spoke on "Revisiting Tamburlaine: Henry V as a Belated Armada Play." The third plenary session focused on Marlowe's biography and featured two speakers: Andrew Butcher of the University of Kent spoke on "Marlowe and Canterbury," and Constance B. Kuriyama discussed "Marlowe and Friendship." The final plenary session featured Thomas Cartelli of Muhlenberg College, who discussed "The Tamburlaine Phenomenon."

In addition to the plenary sessions, there were five seminars and two workshops. The first seminar was devoted to "Marlowe and Shakespeare." Chaired by Bob Logan, it featured presentations by Professor Logan and Lisa Suzanne Starks. The second seminar was devoted to "Character, Psychology, and Value in Marlowe, and was chaired by Professor Proser. Giving presentations in this seminar were Bruce Brandt, Mark Thornton Burnett, Larry L. Bronson, Matthew Proser, Edward Rocklin, Kay Stanton, and Grace Tiffany.

Professor Brandt chaired the next seminar, which was on "Marlowe and Performance." The
participants included Murray Biggs, Norman Jennings, Ruth Lunney, Vesna Pistotnik, and Paul W. White. This was followed by a workshop on "Doctor Faustus: A and B Texts," which was led by Roma Gill. The participants were Nancy Faass, Michael Keefer, Robert Kimbrough, Thomas Pettitt, and Christopher Wortham.

Sara Deats chaired a seminar on "Marlowe and Critical Theory," which included presentations by Frank Ardolino, Sally Bartlett, Dymphna Callaghan, Sara Deats, Rita Slaght Gould, William B. Kelly, and David Pringle. This was followed by a workshop on "Poetics and Text: Problems in Marlowe," which was led by John T. Shawcross. The participants were Theresa de Vroom, Roy T. Eriksen, Laurie E. Maguire, and Brian Stiliar.

The final seminar, led by Robert F. Fleissner, was devoted to "Specialized Approaches to Marlowe and His Contemporaries." The participants were Robert Fleissner, Louis Ule, John Baker, and Nicholas Ranson, who also served as respondent.

Other conference events included a lecture by Dick McCall of the Medieval Players, a lecture by Anne Becher on the frescoes in the Cambridge Union debating hall, a performance of A Perfectly Natural Pursuit, and musical entertainment by Sine Nomine at the closing banquet.

CALL FOR PAPERS
Southeastern Renaissance Conference, Annual Meeting, April 7-8, 1989, University of Kentucky, Lexington.

Papers welcomed on all aspects of Renaissance studies (twenty minutes reading time). Submit two copies by January 15th, 1989 to Professor Robert Entzminger, President, Southeastern Renaissance Conference, Department of English, Rhodes College, 2000 North Parkway, Memphis, TN 38112.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS
MSA members are invited to announce recent and forthcoming publications and other items or meetings of interest to the membership in MSAN. Notes and brief articles relating to Marlowe are welcome. We particularly solicit reviews of Renaissance, and especially Marlovian, drama. MSAN reviews are usually around 800 words long, but may occasionally be longer. At the beginning of the review, reviewers should identify the company, the dates of performance, and the director. Materials for the Spring issue should be received by April 1, 1988. Inquiries to the editor are welcome.

MARLOWE SOCIETY OF AMERICA
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All business and organizational correspondence except for memberships should be addressed to the President:
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MSA Newsletter publishes reviews of Renaissance, and especially Marlovian, drama; notices of recent and forthcoming publications; announcements; and brief articles or notes of interest to Marlovian scholars. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect that of the MSA. The editor reserves the right to refuse items, to ask for revisions, and to make stylistic changes that he deems appropriate. 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 E. 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
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OXFORD 1988

Photos from the Second International Marlowe Conference
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, Summer 1988. Directed by Gerald Freedman.

Gerald Freedman's exuberant direction of this delightful play shows just how light-hearted and spirited it can be. Using the Napoleonic era for its setting and costumes to justify the return of the Messinian army at its opening, the entire production was one of sunshine and happy expectancy. True, the Italian town has something of a pasteboard look to it, but it was colorful and cheerful, and when Kevin Line's Benedict bounces in between two of the houses at the opening (a routine left over no doubt from his role in The Pirates of Penzance), the audience is secure that this is not going to be a pondered Much Ado fraught with subtextual significance.

And it isn't. Quite to the contrary, the pacing is quick, the direction physical (Beatrice overhears the conversation about Benedict's love for her while ensconced in a tree!), and even the perpetual dourness of Don John is made a subject for comedy, as Beatrice's lines indicate it should be. The directoire style costumes and bonnets of the ladies and the gold-braided uniforms of the men give the play an early nineteenth-century comedy of manners look, and this is quite proper since Much Ado with its rapier thrusts of wit and elegant language anticipates the creations of Congreve and Sheridan, if in an earthier and more robust way. On the other hand, there is an element of farce in Freedman's direction, a kind of breadth and openness that would seem to derive from the American musical theater, despite the fact that only one song is sung throughout the production.

Any rendering of Much Ado leans heavily on its Beatrice and Benedict, and the Delacorte's version was fortunate to have stars as competent and energetic as Blythe Danner and Kevin Kline to take on these difficult parts. Danner adds a new dimension to her previous roles by delivering a Beatrice who is keen while being feminine, sharp while being charming, shrewd while being vulnerable, and high-spirited without seeming brittle. With her blonde hair curled in ringlets under her bonnet and her slender, elegant figure, she earns the characterization "My Lady Tongue" gracefully, while at least several times making us recognize that there is something cruel, even sadistic, in her cutting down of the brash and bullying Benedict. When she tells him that a bird of her tongue is better than a beast of his, a kind of revulsion in the word "beast" comes through that jolts Kline's Benedict into a shuddered wince, and this makes us realize just how much she actually relishes her peculiar kind of aggressive power. It is this element of feeling, the sense of warding off danger at
any expense, outside and inside herself, that Danner conveys so articulately and convincingly in her version of Beatrice. It is a departure from the blandness of some of her earlier roles, a reaching down into the self derived, perhaps, in part from her playing Blanche Dubois. This translation of wounded feeling into witty words gives Danner's Beatrice a believable three-dimensionality. She seems a little like Maggie Smith in her approach to the role, although Danner's Beatrice is enlivened by a strong sense of good fun that seems part of the American quality in this production.

Kline's Benedick complements the amusing, vicious quality of Danner's Beatrice. He is something more of a buffoon, a little less quick on the uptake, and more obviously self-deluding. His great speech at the conclusion of the ruse by Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio, where he tries to convince himself that "this can be no trick," shows a diverting Malvolian element in him, a kind of self-blinding puffery, which in fact is in the text: "Love me? Why it must be required," or "I will be horribly in love with her." Oddly, enough, such language gives Benedick (as opposed to Malvolio) a likable, human dimension as he tries to outfox his own consciousness of how he is breaking his pact with perpetual bachelorhood: "I must not seem proud. Happy are they that hear their detractors and can put them to mending." Equally, Benedick's barbs against a Claudio who newly "dedicates his behaviors to love" seem to derive from an almost touching insecurity— even vulnerability. Kline's Benedick is a blustering, bearded male (until he shaves off his whiskers), who retains a kind of innocent boyishness and charming clunkiness. He's a bit of a clodpole, either blustering or withering in Beatrice's presence.

As must be expected, those playing Claudio and Hero pale next to two such accomplished actors, not that the characters have an enormous amount to recommend them dramatically anyway. Don Reilly's Claudio is not the sort of youthling who succumbs to the artificial or mercenary values of society; nor is he a callow boy acting out predatory vindictiveness; he is merely youthfully inexperienced and somewhat naively gullible in believing the false show of Hero's dishonor put on by Don John and Company. The thing is that he is utterly convinced (as is that enigmatic figure, Don Pedro) of what he seems to see before his eyes, and it appears not completely unnatural, then, for him to put his honor first in his crass treatment of his fiancée during the marriage scene. It is in this scene, indeed, that the first signs of any larger significance begin to show, however momentarily, in this amiable production. This version emphasizes that Leonato himself accepts the story of his daughter's sojourn on the mere basis that she is a woman; so there is particular vigor (and pointed humor, too) to Beatrice's apostrophe, "O God, that I were a man!" But if this feminist thrust was meant to be the main one uniting the entire production, this should have been made more evident from the outset.

Another noteworthy performance was that of the morose Don John by long, tall David Pierce, who in his red-fronted military uniform and cutaway, looked like a pallid cockroach. Jerry Silber's Dogberry was remarkable for his N.Y. Jewish accent, an anachronism that added a yeasty "big apple" taste to this zesty stew. But the constabulary as a whole needed work. Its chief characteristic was a uniform antiquity, and this lack of variety took from away from the humorous impact of the dunderhead watch. Finally, Brian Murray's Don Pedro came through as a human, available nobleman; still, the function of this authority figure remains an unanswered puzzle in Much Ado. It is hard to divine Shakespeare's purpose in using Don Pedro as deluded functionary in the villainy of his brother, because this leaves the play without any unbesmirched authority to embrace society at the play's conclusion.

This was a truly comic Much Ado, clearly enunciated for the best impact of its many wonderful lines and with apt pauses and intelligent, meaningful phrasing. Mainly it was a version that relished life's variety of individual human personalities and celebrated it. If there was a larger message to the production, it concerned the delectable degree to which contemporary American bounce and good humor can mesh with Elizabethan pepper and wit.

Matthew N. Proser
University of Connecticut

MACBETH

Presented at the Mark Hellinger Theatre, New York City, Spring 1988.

Glenda Jackson and Christopher Plummer starred in this much criticized production of the haunted Macbeth. This reviewer was wise enough to buy tickets late in the run, for the next to the last day, in fact. By the end of June, the problems in blocking and basic technique lambasted by reviewers had been brought under reasonable professional control. At least the audience was not treated to characters rigidly mouthing speeches like figures in The Conquest of Granada. Still, the compendium of pre-Broadway woes listed in the playbill (three directors, five Macduffs, treacherous astroturf, Plummer colliding with the murderers of Banquo at the expense of a tooth, Plummer twisting and tearing ligaments and ending up in a wheelchair, etc., etc.) inevitably took their toll: the Macbeth at the Mark Hellinger was a pallid and hollow thing compared with the starkly terrifying inner vision of the Scottish tyrant done by Ian McKellan and Judy Dench in London and New York ten years ago.
And this was odd, because with the correction of the set (evidently a complete change with a humane tearing out of the treacherous astroturf), one saw the potentiality for a very large, very tragic production. The new set was constructed of two-by-four wooden studs placed beside each other like siding. Everything was covered in this material, including the platform on the main stage and two huge square columns that could be lifted up into the flies at will. At times a large, wooden, pointed throne conveyed a sense of primitive majesty. So stark and simple and yet imposing was this setting that the production sometimes gave a classical effect, as if one were watching the work of an ancient Greek tragedian. Glenda Jackson's broad, studied gestures augmented this sensation. On the other hand, at crucial points the characters seemed dwarfed by what might have passed for a giant sauna, were one not aware that it was Scotland and not Scandinavia that was the play's location.

Plummer's Macbeth was for the most part a strangely externalized representation of a figure whose inner self seems the central subject of the drama. This is not to say that Plummer did not read well. Rather one would have to claim that his Macbeth stood at a distance from any convincing self-awareness. He seemed less to be trying to hide what he was doing from himself (and others), than to be half-oblivious to his own experience. Only toward the end of the very last act Plummer bring fire to his role. His "Ring the alarm bell! Blow wind, come wrack! / At least we'll die with harness on our back" and the attendant lines were filled with hollow-eyed, desperate "valiant fury." His "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" was the jewel of the interpretation, quiet, despairing, drained of energy, yet almost lyrical, and deeply moving. Only in this last section did Plummer finally seem to reach inside Macbeth and show us his scarred, life-weary heart.

Alternatively, Glenda Jackson's version of the Thane's wife was strangely mannered, almost at times grotesque. Her studied, Sarah Bernhardt gestures--angular, taut, slightly spastic--clashed with her red-clad figure, stirring voice, slim height, and crown of auburn braids; she was always imposing. In fact, it was hard to keep one's eyes off her, particularly during the banquet scene, with its odd, but not completely ineffective playing of musical chairs to render the appearance and disappearance of Banquo's ghost. Jackson was here, she was there, reprimanding her daunted spouse, calming the befuddled guests, glaring at the "empty space" where Paul Shenar's bloody-sconced Banquo sat, red streaming from a wound as big as a doorknob in his forehead. And all this was capped by Lady Macbeth's closing upchuck in the finale of the scene. If only Jackson's electrical energy could have been drawn more often inside instead of manifesting itself as a series of eye-catching postures, we would have had a Lady Macbeth who shattered our minds with her thrilling blend of audacity and inner panic. However, at least some of this was conveyed in Jackson's version of the sleep-walking scene. Her frenetic hand-washing movements suggested the hysteria in the inner life of this secretist woman of blood and rendered visually the sickness of perverse ambition and guilt for ungrateful, bloody deeds.

There were many odd visual moves in this production (why no branches or trees of any kind during the Burnham wood attack?) and some effective bits too (the striking, naked versions of the three visions coming out of the witches' stew pot--actually the smoky trap in the stage floor). And some of the actors had fine moments: Alan Scarfe's Macduff receiving the news of his family's slaughter or revealing his birth by caesarean section. But all in all, this Macbeth, even with its wounds sewn, showed its stitches. The lack of a consistent directorial overview, a uniting concept, caused this production all too nakedly to reveal its inciting purpose as a showcase for its two stars. Alas, that even this should not have been realized: between Plummer's laid-back Macbeth and Jackson's misdirected, nineteenth-century one, what the audience mainly got was a kind of lumpy Scottish gruel, harmless enough, but thin and without much substance.

Matthew N. Proser
University of Connecticut

DOCTOR FAUSTUS


Marlovians in London had a hard time staying out of the theaters during the spring of 1988, with performances of The Jew of Malta at the Young Vic, not to mention two other versions of the Faust story: Vaclav Havel's "joyously funny (Independent) Temptation and both (sic) parts of Goethe's Faust at the Pit and Lyric Hammersmith, respectively.

At the Young Vic Faustus may have stolen the Pope's meat but the Pope almost stole the show. Jon Strickland presented a slow, almost stupid Pontiff speaking in accents that combined the Godfather with Lugosi as he rode his golden swing, slippers dangling, over the prostrated Bruno. But no one could upstage the splendid leads in this cast. Stephen Jenn's egg-bald Mephistophilis hovered, staring with red-rimmed eyes, over Peter Guinness's Faustus, who played out his twenty-four years with all the emotional range required for this complex character. Guinness has what Speech Departments call dynamic presence. If he were a lawyer, the opposition would hurry to settle out of court; if he were a teacher, as he was in the
first scene, delivering the soliloquy to a row of scholars in desks just below stage front, you wouldn't want him to call on you. At ease in his study, knees crossed, he was Russell or Huxley—hell's a fable. Mephistophilis looked as if he'd been up crying all night—what did Jenn do to his eyes??—but his was psychopathic melancholy, as we were reminded in the terrible moment when he ordered Faustus to turn his mind away from God. Such moments were enhanced by Mark Vibran's synthesizer music, full of thuds and driving, primitive cacophony, at times accompanied by the scholars (who doubled as devils), banging time with tambourines or with the hinged lids of their desks. People who have had enough of musical frenzy might have wished someone would turn down the volume, but the impact was entirely right.

Designer Kate Burnett worked well with Anthony Clark's direction, perhaps as a result of their previous collaboration. A motif of circles in the set suggested the cosmic dimensions of the play, the stage being surmounted by a circular blue firmament from which hung an hourglass inside a sphere. Prominent on stage was an ancient, tall, circular bookcase (Victorian?) maker might have had Faustus in mind. It opened and closed on casters like a giant manacle. Depending on the user's point of view, from within this circle one might be a prisoner of books or the master of all knowledge. This was Faustus's cage as well as his sphere, and at the end it became an instrument of violence when the devils remorselessly crushed the scholar between its sides. Earlier the Seven Deadly Sins moved about it like figures on a merry-go-round, presenting themselves behind fantastic stuffed-doll caricatures.

A company of ten actors handled all the parts in the play with ease and versatility, several members acting as many as six roles. Strickland was Bad Angel, Envy, Wrath, Darius, and Vanholt in addition to Pope; Virginia Radcliffe, who appears as Spike the Dog on the children's television show Allsorts, played the Second Scholar, Helen, Lechery, Paramour, Duchess, and Hostess. The comic scenes of this 8-text performance must have convinced more than one viewer that these are indeed integral to the play. Dick and Robin (Sean Cranitch and Peter MacQueen) injected the right amount of madcap vulgarity, and the Seven Deadlies reinforced the sense of the incredibility of evil in the first half of the play. To the audience's great delight, Lechery could pull a string that flapped her knees together, while good old Sloth brought laughter of recognition from everyone. Only Wagner (Peter Rumney) seemed behind step with the performance, staying glum and bored to the end.

As D. J. Palmer wrote in the program notes, Faustus "finally discovers that he has a soul by losing it." Charting this discovery, Clark and Guiness compensated admirably for the play's deficient middle by lengthening the shadows of the latter half. The emperor gave Faustus his reward, but plainly feared him and wanted him to be moving on. After Faustus sprouted a new leg, sending the terrified horse-courser running for the wings, Mephistophilis, above, tossed him down a shoe—a nice stage-bit, but also a subtle reminder of who was pulling the strings. The final return to Wittenberg brings set, scholars, and everything back to the beginning: after twenty-four years nothing has changed except for the hero's spiritual state.

Occasional stops along the way stretched the performance to three and a quarter hours. Mephistophilis, fetching Faustus something to delight his mind, staged a power fantasy with crown and gold robe. The entries of Helen and Lucifer also decelerated the action a little—and it was in keeping with the intelligence of this production that it presented Lucifer as an old king in black rather than as an Exorcist-bogey. Guiness's passionate soliloquies at the end, his frantic attempts to wrench up the floorboards in terror at his fate, were remarkably convincing for audiences who would require more convincing than did those who watched Edward Alleyne in the 1590s.

Richard F. Hardin University of Kansas

"A Poet AND A FILTHY PLAY-MAKER"


This collection of twenty-four new essays incorporates the proceedings of the Marlowe Society of America's First International Marlowe Conference, which was held at the University of Sheffield in 1983. Several other of the essays, while commissioned for the volume, were given initial presentations at MSA annual meetings. The twenty-four essays cover Marlowe's entire dramatic canon, his poems and translations, his biography, and his literary reputation. Most frequently discussed are The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II. The contents, alphabetized by author, are as follows:

Bevington, David, and James Shapiro. "What are kings, when regiment is gone? The Decay of Ceremony in Edward II." 263-278.


Shapiro, James. "'Metre meete to furnish Lucans style': Reconsidering Marlowe's Lucan." 315-325.


Stanton, Kay. "Shakespeare's Use of Marlowe in As You Like It." 23-35.


Summers, Claude J. "Sex, Politics, and Self-

Realization in Edward II." 221-240.


OTHER RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE


Fleissner, Robert F. *The Prince and the Professor.* Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1986. [Doctor Faustus.]


