1984 ANNUAL MEETING

The 1984 Annual Meeting of the Marlowe Society of America, held in December in conjunction with the MLA National Convention in Washington, was an unqualified success. Highlights included the honoring of our Past President and founder, Jean Jofen, with a plaque thanking her for her service to the Society. Sara Deats, MSA Secretary, then presented a tribute to Roma Gill, in whose honor the Society has named its biennial award for an outstanding contribution to Marlovian Scholarship. Maurice Charney presented a most interesting paper, "Titus Andronicus in the Light of Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta," which asked how we should understand Shakespeare’s literary relationship to his almost exact contemporary, Marlowe. James Shapiro followed with a different look at the problem of influence in his "Jonson, Shakespeare, and the Problem of Marlowe’s Influence." Michael Goldman provided a stunning conclusion to the proceedings with his "Marlowe and Sub-text." Paper abstracts, details of the Roma Gill award, and an abridgement of the tribute to Roma Gill follow in this issue of MSAN.

AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE REPERTORY

The American Shakespeare Repertory reports that their Marlowe Festival in January and February of this year was a great success. They produced Marlowe’s Edward II and The Jew of Malta (both reviewed in this issue) in repertory with Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew, and they were generally sold out. They plan to present another Marlowe festival in 1986, and hope to include both the seldom performed Dido, Queen of Carthage and the more popular Tamburlaine.

Next year the company plans to offer to tour with its production of Doctor Faustus. The planned cost will be $1,000 plus room, and dorm rooms are acceptable. The company describes the production as unconventional and believes that it will offer students and teachers much to discuss after the show.

Those interested in the festival or the tour may write Douglas L. Overtoom, 822 Grand Street, Jersey City, NJ 07304.
The business meeting of the Marlowe Society of America was called to order at 5:00, December 29, with President Matthew Proser presiding. Present were Bruce Brandt, (Membership Chairman and MSAN Editor), Sara Deats (Secretary), Constance Kuriyama (Vice President), Robert Logan (Treasurer), Matthew Proser (President), Edward Rocklin (MSAN Contributing Editor), and John Shawcross (Advisor). The minutes were distributed, read, corrected, and approved. Robert Logan presented the Treasurer’s report. After disbursements for the MSA Newsletter and Reviews and the reception following the meeting at the MLA Convention, the sum of $462.20 remained in the treasury.

During the one hour and half meeting, a number of topics sparked lively discussion. Consensus was reached on the following issues: (1) 1986 dues for members living in the United States will be raised to $10; (2) the Society should adopt a new logo for all MSA publications; (3) the Roma Gill prize for outstanding contribution to Marlovian scholarship will be open to all except officials of the Society and will be awarded for a significant publication either devoted to Marlowe or including him in a significant way. Articles, books, and parts of books will be considered. See the announcement in this issue of MSAN.

The location for the 1986 International Conference was not finalized although a number of possibilities were considered. Because of time constraints, discussion of the new constitution could not be completed and was postponed until a later date. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30.

HOFFMAN ANNOUNCEMENT

Legalities have been executed for a posthumous Annual Prize in Perpetuity for the best book or essay written on the theme of Christopher Marlowe’s sole authorship of the plays and poems attributed to William Shakespeare.

The endowment will be known as The Calvin and Rose G. Hoffman Marlowe Memorial Trust. The competitive award will be advertised internationally and shall take effect upon the decease of Calvin Hoffman.

Submissions based on computer, statistical, or stylistic evidence will not be eligible. The Trust will be administered by the Governors and Headmaster of The King’s School, Canterbury, Kent, England. The Annual Prize will be substantial, and the amount for each year will be announced in advertisements in literary and learned publications.

The Award will be judged by Elizabethan and Jacobean specialists of leading American and English universities. Informed academics and scholarly laypersons will be invited to contend.
THE ROMA GILL AWARD

The Marlowe Society of America announces a biennial award for a significant contribution to Marlowe studies. It shall be called The Roma Gill Award in honor of the distinguished Marlovian and Advisory Counselor of MSA, who has recently retired from teaching at the University of Sheffield, Sheffield, England. An award of $100 will be granted by the Society for what is considered by the judges to be the best article, oök, or part of book published up to two years before the official announcement date of the competition. The piece should contribute to a better understanding of Marlowe and his works, it may include reflections on or comparisons with other writers or thinkers of Marlowe's age or of the ages before or after; however, the principle subject and focus of the material must be Marlowe and his productions.

The offering of the prize will ordinarily be made in Fall prior to the year in which a competition is run and certainly no later than the early meeting at MLA. The 1985 prize has an announcement date of January 1, 1985. The judging process will take place over the Spring, Summer, and early Fall following the announcement. The name of the award's recipient will be made known at the December meeting at MLA and then again in the Spring Newsletter of the following year.

If no entry is adjudged worthy of the prize, no money will be given.

The judging process will be handled by a committee of three, selected by the Executive Committee. At least two of the judges will be society members. Executive Committee members and other organization officials may serve on this panel, but no work of a member of the Executive Committee or of an Organization Official may be considered for the prize. Officials include officers, advisors, and editors-in-chief.

The first competition, for the year 1985, is now open. Although judges will refer to appropriate bibliographical listings and catalogues to obtain the published titles to be considered, it would be helpful if individuals who have published articles, books, or parts of books on Marlowe during 1983/84 would send copies to Matthew Proser or Constance Kuriyama (See addresses inside front cover). Three copies of articles would be extremely helpful, and copies of books will be of great aid, particularly since more recent books may not have reached library shelves and publishers are increasingly reluctant to send copies.

To ensure consideration for the Award, please send copies as soon as possible. If submissions are to be returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope of suitable size and proper postage. MSA thanks all who submit their participation and cooperation.

JAMES SHAPIRO

James Shapiro at the 1984 Annual Meeting

SHAPIRO PRESENTATION


For the critic, the problem of influence becomes the problem of mimesis, of literary history and canonization, of interpersonal and intertextual relations (like Shakespeare acting in a Jonson play which recalls and twists Marlovian lines), of revision, and of parody. Jonson, the first dramatist to use the term parody in English, resorts to this device time and again in his response to Marlowe. At the heart of Jonson's parodies of Marlowe (especially in Everyman in His Humor and Poetaster) is ambivalence: his recollections simultaneously acknowledge and subvert the style of his precursor. Often, Jonson interposes poetasters through which he can confront, parody, and surpass the Marlovian model, especially through juxtaposing poetic styles (i.e., Marlovian bombast with his own naturalistic prose). Jonson's critical writings in Discoveries help clarify our understanding of his attitude toward poetic progenitors. He argues there that the poet must find a precursor, and surpass him only through becoming "a very hee."

This, in turn, leads to a brief comparison with Shakespeare's response to Marlowe; we might recall in this regard Greene's warning to Marlowe about Shakespeare as "upstart crow," aping Marlowe's "admired inventions." In both dramatists it appears that the intergenerational strife between poetic precursors and heirs finds realization in the struggle between fathers and sons in their comedies, as sons (like poets) strive to surpass progenitors, gain their inheritance, and establish a newer, more vital order.
A TRIBUTE TO ROMA GILL

Abridged from the tribute presented at the Annual Meeting by Sara Deats, University of South Florida.

Despite the mass of scholarship debating every aspect of Marlowe's more popular plays, much of the Marlowe canon has unfortunately been neglected, particularly his translations. Several significant essays by Roma Gill have helped to redress this critical imbalance. In a particularly cogent essay, published in RES in 1973, Professor Gill resuscitates an often ignored example of Marlowe's juvenalia, his translation of Lucan's Pharsalia. In this article, she not only identifies a new source for Marlowe's translation, Sulpiitus' Commentary and Text of Lucan, but she also illuminates some of the frequently ignored felicities of Marlowe's verse, also offering insight into Marlowe's poetic method. Another important essay, "Snakes Leape by Verse," published in the Mermaid Critical Commentaries on Christopher Marlowe in 1968, perceptively analyzes Marlowe's translation of Ovid's Amores, detailing both his achievements and his failures, his heterogeneous yoking together of "schoolboy howlers" and vigorous mighty lines.

Still later, in an essay published in RES in 1977, Professor Gill defends another early work against censorious, genre-bound commentators, his dramatic adaptation of Virgil, Dido, Queen of Carthage, "that perplexing compound of high tragedy and wry comedy." Her penetrating analysis of Marlowe's adaptation of his source not only reveals the playwright's dramatic strategies, but also demonstrates the shaping power of his theatrical and poetic imagination.

These three essays are pioneering efforts, attempts to rescue Marlowe's juvenalia, if not from oblivion, at least from neglect, and to restore it to its proper place in the Marlowe canon. All three also demonstrate Professor Gill's classical erudition, her sensitivity to verbal nuance, her fine ear for rhythm and cadence, and her vigorous critical method.

Although she has focused on Marlowe's often neglected early work, no play by Marlowe has escaped Professor Gill's careful scrutiny. But from the several excellent articles that she has written on Marlowe's plays, I would like to select two that, in my opinion, deserve special comment. The first, "Such conceits as clownage keeps in pay," published in The Fool and the Trickster, perceptively analyzes the often maligned comic scenes in Doctor Faustus; the second, "The Christian Ideology of Doctor Faustus," published in Theatre et ideologies, Marlowe and Shakespeare, 1982, brilliantly defends the authenticity of the A-text as well as the tragedy's Christian ethos.

Despite the significant contribution of these fine essays, it is probably primarily as an editor that Professor Gill will be remembered. For her editorial debut, Roma Gill selected perhaps the most challenging editorial assignment in English drama, editing the much debated text of Marlowe's controversial masterpiece, Doctor Faustus. Professor Gill's influential edition of Doctor Faustus was followed two years later by an edition of Edward II, and in 1971 by her critically acclaimed edition of Marlowe's Complete Plays. She has, as well, edited many non-Marlovian texts.

This prodigious accomplishment should be enough for one scholar's lifetime, but Roma Gill, like the poet-scholar who has inspired so much of her finest scholarship, is an overreacher, and her major work is still to come. She has been working on a scholarly, annotated edition of Christopher Marlowe, commissioned by Oxford University Press, since 1967. Volume I is almost ready for the publisher, and we can look forward to the entire three-volume edition of The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe before the end of this decade.

In one of her essays, Roma Gill postulates that, unlike Shakespeare, Marlowe is more the dramatic poet than the poetic dramatist. Whichever ability predominated in Marlowe's mercurial temperament, both facets are critical to his art, and Professor Gill's erudite and perceptive scholarship has helped to illuminate both aspects of Marlowe's genius. Furthermore, Professor Gill's vigorous, lucid style makes scholarship what it should be, not a duty but a recreation.
CHARNEY PRESENTATION


The paper asks how we should understand Shakespeare's literary relationship to his almost exact contemporary, Marlowe. Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus clearly owes a debt to Marlowe's Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta, two very different kinds of plays. Aaron, the villain, has both a Tamburlaine and a Barabas aspect, between which he moves with great facility. Aaron's first soliloquy, "Now climbeth Tamora Olympus top" (2.1.1), is cast in the Tamburlaine style, but Aaron is not comfortable with his high flights of rhetoric. But as Act II, Scene i, unfolds, Aaron becomes much more like Barabas and Ithamore, a sardonic Machiavel. The paper explores how Aaron keeps shifting between these styles throughout Titus Andronicus.

September 28: Conference on The Bible in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature, at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Sponsored by the Medieval Association of the Midwest. Contact: Professor John McCully, Department of English, 203 Ross Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

October 10-12: Christianity and Literature, Hammond LA. Address: James Walter, Department of English, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA 70402.

October 17-19: Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, Provo. Address: Charles G. Davis, Department of English, Boise State University, Boise, ID 83725.

October 18-19: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies: The Bible in the Middle Ages--Its Influence on Literature and Art, State University of New York, Binghamton. Address: Bernard S. Levy, Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York, Binghamton, NY 13901.


October 24-26: Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference, Columbus OH. Address: R. B. Waddington, Department of English, University of California, Davis, CA 95616.

November 7-9: South Central Modern Language Association, Tulsa. Address: Paul A. Parrish, Department of English, Texas A&M University, College Station, 77843.


Information on some of these events was supplied directly to MSA by the organizers, but thanks to Robert Logan, University of Hartford, for culling additional events of interest from the announcements in PMLA (March, 1985) and The Chronicle of Higher Education, "Events in Academia: Spring-Summer 1985."

Maurice Charney at the 1984 Annual Meeting

CONFERENCES

June 2-4: Renaissance Studies Meeting, Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies, Montreal. Contact: Conference Secretariat, Learned Societies Conference, University of Montreal, P.O. Box 1200, Côt-des-Neiges Station, Montreal H2S 2R1: (514) 343-5814.

June 6-8: Conference on Christianity and Literature, Biola University. Address: Virginia Doland, Department of English, Biola University, La Mirada, CA 90639.
RECENT AND FORTHCOMING


Thomas G. Pavel's The Poetics of Plot: The Case of English Renaissance Drama, University of Minnesota Press, 1985, applies an original theory and methodology of plot analysis to a group of Renaissance tragedies which include Tamburlaine I, The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II.

Martha Tuck Rozett's The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy, Princeton, 1984, includes readings of Tamburlaine, The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II.

James C. Bryant's Tudor Drama and Religious Controversy, Mercer University, 1984, includes Marlowe in the chapter discussing the University Wits.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

MSA members are invited to announce recent and forthcoming publications or any other items of meetings of interest to the membership in MSAN. We also solicit reviews of Renaissance, and especially Marlovian, dramas. Reviews should be approximately 800 words long and should supply the prefatory information shown here. Materials for the November issue of MSAN should be received by October 1.

PLAY REVIEWS

THE JEW OF MALTA


Few works of literature have been called as many names as Marlowe's tragical, comical, farcical dramatic hybrid, The Jew of Malta. Although the title page proclaims the work a tragedy, the drama conforms to few of the criteria normally associated with this genre, and the play's farcical and satiric elements are undeniable. Not only genre, but authorship and text, as well as the nature of both Marlowe's protagonist and his antagonist, have sparked vociferous debate. Clearly, any director undertaking to stage this dramatic conundrum must make a number of crucial decisions concerning genre, tone, and characteristics.

The American Shakespeare Repertory Company, a dynamic young off-broadway group, boldly accepted the challenge with their innovative, comedic, and often riveting production of The Jew of Malta, so far as I am aware, only the Fourth version of the play to be produced in the United States during the twentieth century. Under the direction of Douglas Overtom (and perhaps presided over by the spirit of T. S. Eliot, who first oxymoronically proclaimed the enigmatic play a savage and serious farce), The Jew of Malta became an unequivalent and caustic satire of political opportunism, religious hypocrisy, and anti-Semitism.

The drama of betrayal, subterfuge, and murder was enacted on a bare stage, decorated only with raised platforms and large canvas tapestries, the latter illustrating in vivid, grotesque, post-modernist strokes the play's central episodes. The limitations of space enhanced the claustrophobic sense of constriction and confinement that so many commentators have noted in the play, literally enclosing Marlowe's rich想象s in a little room. The costumes represented a melange of contemporary, modern, and period styles, with Barabas suited in the gray flannel attire of a contemporary business tycoon, the competing political factions accoutered in the livery of third-world military regimes (complete with similar uniforms, berets, guns, and Fascist's salutes), the religious orders garbed in traditional Renaissance habits, and Bellamira dressed (or undressed) in the slimy costume of a cabaret singer. The Weimer Republic association was further accentuated by the background beat of German cabaret music. The starkness of the set and the farrago of costume styles highlighted the universality of Malta's mercado and Machiavellian credo, as well as the topicality of Marlowe's mordant satire.

Paul Rubin enacted the difficult role of the charismatically evil Barabas with Panache and zest. The consummate impersonator, his Barabas showed no deterioration, only revelation. As Barabas roamed through his various masquerades, moving from Machiavellian tycoon, to wrathful avenger, to smirking Vice, the tone of the play modulated to an accompanying key, progressing from the trenchant satire of the opening scenes, to the broad farce with the friars and nuns, to the music hall burlesque in the bravura boasting match and the Bellamira scenes. The last acts of the play became increasingly vaudevillian, and Barabas' death (in an electric chair, not in a cauldron), although theatrically effective, was shorn of tragic significance.

Overtoom's version emphasized the interpretation of Ferneze as the authentic Machiavellian, as compared to Barabas' stage distortion, a la Gentillette. Ferneze spoke Machiavel's Prologue, and at crucial points in the dialogue donned a mask to make patent his "unseen hypnotic spell." As Ferneze, Roger K. Bechtel gave a fine performance, his controlled, sinister voice contrasting neatly with Barabas' gusto in villany.

The Bellamira-Pilia Borza-iThemore interlude was surprisingly effective. David Overtoom, a superbly inventive actor, depicted Ithamore as a demonic, tatterdemalion Ariel counterbalancing Barabas' infernal Prospero, and his wooing of Bellamira offered a lubricious but hilarious travesty of Courtly love.
The ASR version was simultaneously more comic and more pessimistic than most interpretations of the play. In the later acts, the farcical elements dominated so completely that many of Marlowe's subtle ironies were lost in the dark but slapstick hilarity. Moreover, the two most admirable characters in the play were deflated in order to maintain the burlesque tone of black comedy. Stylized choreography and the Friar's gross necrophilic abuse of her corpse (the only lapse of taste in the show) rendered Abigail's potentially poignant death risible. The honorable Calymath, the only character in the play consistently to keep his word, was reduced to a ranting demagogue.

Despite these minor flaws, the production was undoubtedly a success. This vital, professional young company should be praised for demonstrating Marlowe's mastery of theatrical effect and for showing that his plays are not dusty dramatic artifacts, but provocative and highly entertaining theatrical vehicles. Like Ithamar's Barabas, Farrow's expertise in skullduggery, applauded the ASR's production, "so neatly plotted and so well performed."

Sara Deats
University of South Florida

EDWARD II


The American Shakespeare Repertory's traditional production of Marlowe's Edward II contrasted dramatically with its experimental staging of The Jew of Malta. Whereas the limitations of its intimate theatre enhanced the enclosed ambience of Marlowe's farcical revenge tragedy, the same confinement detracted from the epic sweep of his great history play. In Edward II, Marlowe packs 23 years of political enmity into the two (or three) hour traffic of the stage (and a brisk traffic it is), chronicling the rise and fall of monarchs, minions, barons, queens, and princes in 24 galloping, action-packed scenes. The pageantry intrinsic to the play's panoramic scope simply cannot be fully realized without the resources of a large stage, preferably one with multiple acting areas. In attempting to stage Marlowe's epic chronicle in a small arena without set, the ambitious young company operated under a severe physical handicap. Nevertheless, for connoisseurs of Elizabethan drama, willing to suspend disbelief and piece out these imperfections with their thoughts, the production offered many rewards.

The creative direction of Janet Farrow coalesced all the resources of the company to reveal aspects of the play that might easily be overlooked by a reader. Costume, casting, and music functioned emblematically. Farrow mixed her color palette symbolically to amplify Marlowe's hints concerning not only the different social status, but the diverse temperaments of the two opposing factions. Both Edward II and his son Edward III were appropriately attired in varying hues of purple, the color of royalty (and of hubris), with Edward III, at the play's denouement, synchronically asserting his royal prerogative and donning his father's imperial regalia. Pastel doublets and hose reflected the frivolity of Edward's party, while the more sober, albeit somewhat sinister barons were dressed in dark, subdued blues, wines, and blacks. Queen Isabella, serving neither party, alone wore vibrant reds and golds and shimmering white. The play's cast doubled (in true Elizabethan fashion), and this device also sometimes operated emblematically, as when Geoffrey Dawe was triple-cast as Edward's "betrayers": Gaveston, the moyer, and Lightbourn. Gregorian chants in the background further accentuated the drama's atmosphere.

The most memorable aspect of this production, however, was the virtuoso performance of David Overtoom in the title role. Overtoom's doomed anarchic did not receive Manoel's through adversity from the cockerel into the lion (as have so many stage Edwarks); rather he was alternately lion and cockerel, throughout the play oscillating wildly between polarities, by turns forceful and feckless, the regal king and the petulant child. In the latter half of the play, as he plunges from power to imprisonment, our attitude toward the King should ameliorate (whether or not he actually matures), and this shift in audience alignment was elicited in this production by Christ associations: Edward broke and dispensed bread to Spencer and Ballock; later, abused and tortured by Matevis and Gurney, he stumbled under the weight of a heavy plank down his own way dolorosa; his death, although harrowingly graphic, achieved both the dignity and the pathos of a martyrdom.

Indeed, so indelible was Overtoom's mercurial Edward that he dominated the play, upsetting the delicate equipoise between conflicting personalities so carefully handled by Fully Merte. Paul Parente, as the redoubtable Mortimer, was totally overshadowed by his mighty opposite, and Geoffrey Dawe's Gaveston appeared too young and amorous to be convincing as the Machiavellian manipulator of the "pliant" King. Conversely, Cynthia Hunton created an appropriately commanding and guileful Isabella, and Farrow's intelligent direction clarified the Queen's role as prime mover of the conspiracy. One of the minor flaws of this frequently compelling production was the intrusion of jarring comic elements, particularly the burlesque treatment of Ballock as a "queen" in drag. With this one exception, however, the play's homosexual aspects were developed with candor and decorum.

The genre of Edward II, like that of The Jew of Malta, has been much debated. Is it a tragedy or a history play? Regrettably, despite a moving performance by Overtoom and able support from the enthusiastic cast, cramped space and limited resources prevented the ASR production from fully realizing either the play's tragic power or its epic scope.

Sara Deats
University of South Florida
DOCTOR FAUSTUS


Doctor Faustus is the most frequently performed of Marlowe’s plays, particularly in Oxford, where it has been produced three times in the last four years. This latest production was staged by the New College Company in the Burton Rooms, a gift from Richard Burton, whose own production of Doctor Faustus at the Oxford Playhouse in 1967 provoked such excited but controversial comment. The New Company presented a refreshingly straightforward interpretation of the play, using J. B. Steane’s version of the “B” text for the most part, but slipping in occasional interpolations from A1 and the rest of Marlovian drama. Gottfried von Bismarck played Faustus, and brought some interesting and entirely apposite Germanic speech rhythms to the part. In the opening speech, he was variously boastful, querulous, and terrified, and the abrupt changes of mood were amusing; Faustus sang out his biblical quotations merrily, and then, with a comic effect, realized the appalling gravity of their import. The production stressed the pettiness of Faustus’ rewards for selling his soul; he copulated laughingly with his “hot whore,” but was clearly dissatisfied, and expressed disappointment at the slim volume of spells, cosmography, and nature produced by Mephostophilis. Bismarck’s Faustus was lustful and power-obsessed, but also puerile and convinced of his doom, and we sensed throughout that he was the slave of the powers of darkness and would be claimed by them eventually.

It was a spare and economic production; the set was simple, draped in black, and dominated by Faustus’ magic circle. The bareness of the stage area and minimal use of props helped to underline the emptiness of Faustus’ bargain: his magic tricks were small, unspectacular, and illusory. There were also some excellent local effects: Cornelius the magician (Raymond Perrier) was a blind and deformed megalomaniac, but one wonders if the director, Simon Pearson, had seen the Lyric Theatre production of the play in 1980, in which Cornelius was similarly depicted. But the conjuring scene worked marvelously, and the interpretation was wholly original; Mephostophilis appeared as a hissing, clawing, winged demon, only to enter soon afterwards as an urbane, mellifluous, white-garbed friar. Another successful innovation was in the treatment of the good and evil angels; they were not visibly present, but we were well aware of them: their disembodied voices rang out eerily to flashing blue and red lights, and in one exchange, Faustus took their voices over to enhance the impression of the racked conflicts of his inner self. The cast was a small one, only eight actors, but the doubling that this entailed suggested a complex and ambiguous structure of meaning. For instance, Nicole Lee played the chorus, Wagner, and Pride, and rightly brought out the vein of conceit and impertiousness that characterizes all three parts. The “coup de theatre” of the evening, however, was with the presentation of the Old Man. He entered masked and heavily robed, and as Faustus began his attempts to repent, he tore off his clothing and revealed himself as a wrathful Mephostophilis (Andrew Wheale), outraged at Faustus’ having called on God. This audacious use of doubling was totally unexpected, but highly effective, and the last speech of the Old Man was delivered by Mephostophilis as a grotesque, ironic celebration of evil and damnation, rather than of the heavenly joys that should accompany repentance.

I was glad to see that many of the comic scenes had been included. The second of these showed the clown groveling before his new master, Wagner, and one was reminded of the tableau when Faustus groveled before his master, Lucifer, later in the play. The Vanholt scenes were included, too, and interpreted as a flirtation between Faustus and the lustful Duchess, with the Duke helplessly looking on as a potential cuckold. Andrew Hood put in an entertaining and outrageously “camp” performance as the overweening and tyrannical Pope. There was genuine comedy in the obsequiousness of the Cardinals, the cringing of Bruno, and the Pope’s alternating between public dignity and private terror at the feast. The seven deadly sins were magnificent, a mass of groaning, bandaged lepers controlled by Mephostophilis with a whip. Envy (Michael Preece) thoughtfully threw books into the audience, Gluttony (Andrew Hood) vomited over the stage, and Lechery (also Andrew Hood) leaped onto Faustus rampantly and departed with an interested leer at the front row. The comedy was not gratuitous; it worked in theatrical terms and constantly recalled Faustus’ own aspiration and depravity.

The final stages of the play were exciting and surprising. Helen was a ravishing figure drapered in white, performing a ballet before Faustus, but standing haughtily impassive while he kissed her; in the background, Mephostophilis smiled contemptuously. In the last speech, Faustus literally rolled about on the stage as if already experiencing eternal agonies, and the use of a strobecope imprinted stark and ghastly images on our minds. Faustus finally greeted Mephostophilis as a saviour, but as he was dragged off in a wheelchair, one realized the conviction was entirely delusive. It was a bold and imaginative end to a production that was enthusiastic, stimulating, and accomplished.

Mark Thornton Burnett
Wolfson College, Oxford

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY


It is just the music one is least happy to hear, when the lights are going down: a prolonged steady hiss; the amplified sound of a very long, already too-sharp instrument being whetted on a grindstone. Abruptly the the hi-tech curtain divides, sliced open, to reveal an empty set with the look of a torture chamber. The freshly butchered ghost of Andrea appears, accompanied by Revenge, a suave master of ceremonies. The Spanish Tragedy, electronic music by Henry Brown, set by Chris Dyer, is on at London’s Lyttleton Theatre.
Directed by Michael Bogdanov, this is essentially the same production that was such an immense success a few years ago at the Cottesloe. In that candy-box setting, Bogdanov provided an appropriate feast of poisoned lady-fingers. Now, courtesy of the cavernous National Theatre, the audience settles down to a groaning smorgasbord of calorie-laden horrors.

By way of sensationalizing the Senecan tradition, Thomas Kyd brought to the stage the sure-fire ingredients of two of the most popular spectacle spots of his day, bear-baiting and public executions. Throughout most of the current production, a multi-purpose gallows dominates the proceedings. In its shadow, Hieronimo, the scourge who will become a scapegoat, is tethered ever more closely to the stake of personal vengeance. Here he is exposed to the taunts of the super-villains and thwarted by the stubborn turns of black humor in the plot, his fury compounded with impotence. The blunt animal force of Michael Bryant as Hieronimo is admirably suited to express the anguish of such a predicament. Silver-thatched and sober, a general and a judge, practical, experienced, and honest, he is immediately set apart from the gaudy sophisticates and parasites of the court. Of course, this makes him vulnerable to just the sort of class distinction Andrea had complained of in his opening speech. And like Samson with his back against the pillars of the temple while the sybarites have their last fling, or like Gary Cooper silent with his sarsaparilla amid the card-sharks of a saloon, the initially tight-lipped old man commands our attention. Still, an actor of even the greatest homespun appeal and packed-in energy could not get much beyond halfway in the Spanish Tragedy, for Kyd takes no chances with the sympathy of the audience. His hero actively demands that sympathy, articulating his impotence and fury in soliloquies that range from tender laments to hysterical outbursts. And then, Hieronimo doubles back on the audience by becoming himself a villain. His eloquence fails him when he perfides: he murders the royal justice; he murders on sinister cunning to out-Machiavel his opponents. Actor Bryant is equally skillful in rendering the slow-motion psychology of the original, the normal Hieronimo, and the strobe light pulsations of Hieronimo the grief-striken parent and crazed avenger.

While Hieronimo may be a character round to the degree of involution, the supporting parts are two-dimensional at best. None might seem more unpromisingly flat than the Spanish king, but Jeffrey Wickham subtly builds to a grand moment in the final act when he will introduce "The Tragedy of Soliman the Turkish Emperor" to his Castillian guests and assure them that, "These be our pursuits in the court of Spain." By microscopic increments, the actor has been warming the audience with the suspicion that here is an egregious phony. Now the merest inkling of pretension in his voice ignites the suspicion into spontaneous combustion; a huge laugh.

This laughter is well-timed, for it introduces moments of genuine, if short-lived, hilarity. The actors enter for the play-within-a-play, garbed in outsized and outlandish costumes, like children who have raided their grandparents' attic. The jest turns from the ludicrous to the macabre with the murders of the Machiavellian Lorenzo (flawlessly lubricated by Stephen Brennan) and his dupe, the dumbbell aristocrat Balthazar. Then all merriment is stifled by Bel-imperia's suicide, the impassioned conclusion to Miranda Foster's performance of sustained Lorca-like glamour and intensity. The suddenness of this shift to genuine terror and tragedy, "the dark root of a scream," is still grotesque, for the pompous stage audience applauds the conviction of the heroine's death agony. It is for Hieronimo to add the finishing touches to the grand guignol scene, rounding off the mass murder gratuitously, then chewing off and spitting out his own tongue. It lands on the floorboards with a deadly plop while his mouth spouts blood.

The carnage is cleared away. The black velvet figure of Revenge (Peter Needham, a performer of extraordinary feline menace) pronounces his final, self-satisfied words to a thoroughly bemused Andrea (the wide-eyed Tom Marshall). They are alone again on the spookily barren set, which now resembles a large box emptied of gruesome toys: ropes and chains and pulleys and several hideous surprise packages are just out of sight, we know. The lid is closing on them. The fun and games, Revenge promises, are about to resume down below. But the two figures are stationary, occupying the identical positions they held in the first scene. The lights dim, the grindstone whirls, and the long-bladed implement shrieks again.

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THE REVENGER'S TRagedy


This new production of The Revenger's Tragedy took place in the fifteenth-century Gothic ante chapel of Magdalen College which provided a powerful setting for Middleton's play of court intrigue and corruption. Eavesdroppers lurked behind columns or in half-open doorways and the air was filled with the echoes of conspiracies. The play's vision of a sterile society lacking in human warmth was evocatively suggested by the chapel's dry and chilly atmosphere. Darkness gathered in the surrounding vaults and cloisters, reinforcing the sombre mood and threatening to extinguish the flickering light of the candles. We were offered an interpretation that compared the Jacobean drama to a decadent jazz age. Vindice (Peter Fraser) entered for his opening soliloquy in dark glasses and a trilby hat, puffing at a cigarette and staring insolently at the audience. The characters paraded before us in a dumb show; The Duke and Duchess worshipped at the altar and were followed by their sons dragging a puffy-faced Junior (David Pratt) across the stage. One sensed that the court's polite exterior ill concealed the rottenness and violence lying beneath. In the context of the chapel setting, these implications of religious hypocrisy and criminal activity constantly reminded us of the way in which morality in The Revenger's Tragedy is mocked or completely abandoned.
A discrepancy between appearance and reality was suggested. The Duchess (Vanessa Gibson) displayed an elegant demeanor that belied her unrequited sexual appetite. This emerged in her seduction of Spurio, played with a ruthlesslessness masquerading as apparent indifference by Tim Price. Lussurioso (Stephen Brown), in a smart summer suit, maniured his filthily skills affectedly and spoke in an aristocratic drawl, a cover, it seemed, for his dissolute way of life. Characters frequently glanced furtively over their shoulders, prompting us to suspect surface appearances and to anticipate surprises. And the underlying reality was not difficult to find. It was revealed in social injustices, Gratiana (Jenny Booth) bitterly complained of her impoverishment, and in the character of the Duke (Kenneth Mc Nab), hoarse-voiced, coughing, and syphilitic, the end result of a dedication to libertinage and the image of a "parched and juiceless luxur." All the characters shared a simultaneous vulnerability, materialistic instinct, and love of sexual license. They were victims of ambitions that could not be contained.

Peter Fraser failed to capture Vindice’s malice and vindictiveness, so we had no sense of the character’s developing enslavement to evil, but he did succeed in bringing out the humor of the part. After he had quickly persuaded his mother to prostitute Castiza, he turned with a droll expression to the audience and very properly delivered the line, "Not, I hope, already!" Comedy also characterized his bewildered realization, "I’m hired to kill myself," and his generalized pronouncements on human venality. The humor, however, was not restricted to Vindice. Lussurioso responded to the news of the affair of the Duchess and Spurio with an inappropriate and thus comic moral indignation. The Duke died in appalling agony, but the scene was comically offset by a jaunty jazz melody playing in the background. The brothers, Supercucio (Thomas Burgess) and Ambitioso (Thomas Jackson) provided considerable entertainment as a pair of bungling intriguers, squabbling over precedent and falling to blows each time their schemes suffered another collapse. Our laughter was often nervous and embarrassed, as when Castiza (Kate Fenwick), having decided to comply with her mother’s wishes, limped on in high heels as a painted whore swathed in boa feathers. And the comic tone could quickly become sinister as a repressed violence rose to the surface; in one scene, for instance, Vindice threw his mother about the stage while upbraiding her frailty. The mood of amused indulgence brought home how skilfully Middleton uses comic forms (incongruous juxtapositions and unexpected reversals) to emphasize what is a potentially tragic situation. At times, the cast could not resist the temptation to overdo the comic interpretation. The climactic masque was omitted and substituted for by a series of random stabbings that followed each other with such rapidity that all horror was lost and tragedy degenerated into farce. When the chapel bell unfortunately tolled the hour to coincide with Vindice’s “thunder claps, heaven likes the tragedy,” the last traces of seriousness disappeared.

The play improved slightly at the very end. A pool of white light shining on the red backdrop suggested that a higher divine force may be waiting to bring about regeneration.

Vindice recovered some of his dignity and delivered his final lines gloating and undismayed by the punishment ahead. But as the new faction grouped behind him, one realized that the old society had only been replaced by one equally as unscrupulous and corrupt.

Mark Thornton Burnett
Wolfson College, Oxford

CORIOLANUS

Presented at the Olivier Theatre, the National Theatre, London, by the Company, December 10–March 9. Directed by Peter Hall.

This is Ian McKellan’s first major Shakespearean role in some years, and it has been eagerly anticipated. His Coriolanus was not disappointing; it was a masterful and exciting performance in a production that drew attention to the political implications of the play. The program set the tone; quotations from Hazlitt, Marx, and Shaw suggested the interpretation was to underline the struggle of working-class movements against injustice and tyranny. At the start, the sound of sirens and gunfire reminded us of the London Blitz, and throughout, there was constant reference to a background of war. The conflict between the patricians and the plebeians was presented in terms of manor rage. Cominius (John Savident), a shrewd, manipulative general, skilled in political expediency and grooming Coriolanus for his public role, clashed angrily with Sicinius (David Ryall), a demigodic Trade-Unionist with watch-chain and clipboard, and Brutus, (James Hayes), his younger, sulky, polo-necked aide. The real innovation of the production, however, was in placing a small section of the audience on the stage itself, and obliging them to participate in the crowd scenes. Holding banners, the stage-audience recalled our own striking miners, and it was unsettling to recognize the topicality of their protests. Forced by the nature of the staging to identify with the crowd, we had to check sympathizing too closely with their views when Coriolanus seemed to harangue us for lacking discrimination in matters of political allegiance.

The characteristics of McKellan’s Coriolanus were pride and scorn. He entered athletically, white-suited and pigtailed, carrying a golden sword jauntily over his shoulder. His contempt for the crowd was unmistakable; he beat them out at the first opportunity. It was a Coriolanus, too, of absolute blood-lust. He rallied his troops outside Corioli in a bid for total power, and stripped down to the scant of a gladiator in a bloody duel with Aufidius (Greg Hicks). When he returned triumphantly to Rome after defeating the Volscics, red streamers unfurled from above us, trumpets blared, and the stage-audience clapped and chanted; it was difficult to resist being drawn to this celebration of martial achievement.

While stressing the war ethic that dominates all the characters, the production also brought out the humor of the play. Coriolanus standing on a stool wearing his gown of humility and a
battered hat, ready to address the citizens. The production was filled with humor, with some of the citizens even acknowledging their wounds. And it was a mood of comedy that laid behind Coriolanus' ripping off his satchel garments here, to reappear in the next scene as a smart, busy executive, glorying in his new, official capacity. Menenius (Frederick Treves), calm and reasoned, subjected Sicinius and Brutus to his brand of wit and sarcasm, and for much of the play, the Tribunes enjoyed a comic appeal. After Coriolanus' departure, Sicinius danced about, singing "This is a happier time," and it was a diverting and entertaining performance. Imaginative use was made of the theatre space in the production. The round stage served many needs: it was transformed easily from fighting arena to city square or senate-house. But it often seemed as if the whole theatre was involved in the action; shouts and music came from behind the audience and gave an impression of huge crowd insurgency. Aufidius and Coriolanus ran up and down the center aisle, and upon yelling, "To the Capitol!", the crowd lunged at the back stage doors with a battering-ram, and threatened to spill out into the dressing-rooms. Symmetry and contrast were effective: Aufidius in black was a formidable opponent to Coriolanus in white. The production was ritualistic and ceremonial, but also barbaric; we were never allowed to forget that in Coriolanus' ruthlessness and animalism underlie the theatricality of political affairs.

Volumnia (Irene Worth) really came into her own towards the end of the production. The wooing of Coriolanus back to Rome struck me as the play's clearest example of an act of political persuasion, and it was ironic that in the context of the society of Coriolanus, Volumnia's supplication appeared as a kind of wisdom. Coriolanus' murder was shocking, yet compelling; the enemies, he tore off his clothes in a return to primitivism, and was shot dead by anonymous gunmen who leapt out of the audience; the scene was vividly suggestive of the political assassinations of our own day. Aufidius stood glowering at the rear of the stage, an aspirant waiting to seize control. My reservations about the play were few, and they centered on McKellan's hijtrionic acting style. He tends to chop up the Shakespearean meter, sometimes to the detriment of meaning, and he will indulge in choking fits; he did it with Macbeth and Edward II, and again with Coriolanus when accused of being a "boy of tears." One wonders about the appropriateness of such effects when they are used so frequently. However, this remains a highly imaginative production, and is probably one of the best things to emerge from the National Theatre since their 1976 Tamburlaine. Indeed, in its analysis of power, tyranny, and the relationship of theatre and politics, the National Theatre's Coriolanus suggested many parallels with Marlowe's play. The production ended with the sound of trumpets and the scream of bombs, and we were once more stimulated to recognize the constant relevance of Coriolanus to our own times.

Mark Thornton Burnett
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MACBETH

The BBC television production. Directed by Jack Gold.

The recent BBC-TV Macbeth was not the worst production within the vast wasteland of this series, but it wasn't very good.

A no-frills Macbeth with only the simplest of sets--not a bad concept for the rugged highland setting and the tightly woven tarts of the period. If the focus is to be on the acting, however, it had better be good.

Here it was only adequate. Nichol Williamson bombed in a Macbeth a few seasons back in the Poisoned Apple. In the TV production, his voice varied from a timorous tadpole of a whisper to a bullfrog croak as if he had contacted croup in the murky air of the studio. Williamson blew a line: "Words to the heel of deeds too cold breath gives" should be there, but wasn't. His hand clenched and unclenched behind his back as Macduff called on the murder morning, a silly cueing of what the actor should show by other means. He added "tomorrow" number one to the end of the previous line, so that it came out "time for such a word tomorrow." He tossed his modified garbage-can-top aside on the line, "Before my body / I throw my warlike shield." That represented an absolute misreading of the script. Williamson's was not as fatuous a Macbeth as Finney's, but the former came close. Too close for comfort.

A sexless Queen of the Nile in Dr. Miller's Antony and Cleopatra a few seasons back, Jane Laporte was a bit better as Lady Macbeth. It may be that her efforts at sexuality here, although as inadequate as a maiden aunt's imitation of Theda Bara, are not as intrinsic to the role of Lady Macbeth as to Cleopatra. When Laporte suggested that Macbeth look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it, she delivered an unsolicited grope that was, fortunately, below camera range. Williamson kept a stiff upper lip. Her mad scene, delivered in the hallway that had led to Duncan's chamber, went well until she mimed her previous effort to push Macbeth out from in front of the murder chamber. That earlier moment, as Macbeth turtled on about hangman's hands and ravelled sweaters, made Lady Macbeth look as if she were trying to muscle a reluctant Maxwell towards the nearest Sinclair sign. Her "faint" worked well. It was a "feint," an obvious effort to get her babbling husband off the left hook of his own bloody rhetoric.

The principles were not up to the standard set by the sensuous Janet Suzman and the disciplined Eric Porter almost a decade ago in the "Classic Theatre" version. Suzman proved that the TV camera is no barrier to the transmission of sexual energy. As Porter delivered the too-famous "Tomorrow" speech, the camera rose above him. Macbeth shouted his nihilism towards a sky emptied only for him. His words echoed back to surround the damned spot where he stood.

This latest production lacked effective directorial touches. While we discovered the Wierd Sisters atop an outsized Ouija Board planchette (good), they registered no reaction later to Macbeth's threat to curse them eternally.
Thus was a potentially pregnant moment hollowed out. Lady Macbeth did not "keep her state" at the banquet. She sat at the table and quaffed with the paltry food Macbeth had gathered. The scene shows that neither Macbeth gets to the table, which represents a secular version of Eucharist. The banquet scene was radically low-budget, with the excuse, one surmised, that Macbeth's reign has itself grown threadbare by this time.

This production was apparitionless. Fine. Better that we be the focal point of Macbeth's clutching of the dagger than that it be a meretricious glitter a la Polonski. But then we ask, "Say, who were those three old ladies anyway?" If the nuns are primarily products of Macbeth's introverted sensibility, we need a stronger actor than Williamson to convince us. Two actors I have seen in the role on stage, Michael Redgrave and Ian McKellan, were provided with the external visions and apparitions, but could have convinced us they were there without the sensible and true avouch of our own eyes.

Director Gold did establish Seyton early as Macbeth's henchperson: third murderer, impaler of Macduff junior, a neo-fascist punk rocker. In drawing the character in our own image, however, Gold missed a chance at the Seyton-Satan equation. But then I cavil at a touch that did work in an otherwise leaden effort.

In the Polanski film, Donalbain suffered from a Richard-the-Thirdian truncated left leg. At the end of the film, we saw him shuffling off to the Buffalo Sisters, ostensibly to develop foundation support for his own career. In the latest version, Donalbain (I think it was Donalbain!) slithered in to upstage King Malcolm's final speech. The concept was wrong in Polanski, but clear. Evil was a constantly recyclable can of news. In the BBC production, however, the concept was merely confusing. Were we to take this pie-faced youth as a threat to the masterful Malcolm? If so, Macbeth had gained a kind of quirky victory, even as he cooled within his designer jeans.

A murky Macbeth. Perhaps better than no Macbeth at all. But not by much.

Herb Coursen
Bowdoin College

**KING LEAR and THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR**


In its eighth anniversary season, the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival presented Shakespeare's most titanic tragedy and his most solidly middle-class comedy. The latter was a splendid success; the former, a creditable but much weaker production.

Staging King Lear always requires a certain courage. While the myth of the play's untheatrical nature has been considerably weakened over the past decade or two, it remains a drama of extraordinarily imposing playhouse demands. The actor playing the aged monarch must convey simultaneously the weaknesses that tragically debilitated the king and the fierce strengths which make his downfall awesome. Yet, while the actor playing Lear must be overwhelming, the rest of the company cannot be overwhelmed. Especially the three daughters, the Fool, and Kent must speak with distinct and strong voices. The play's minor characters must, on stage, be genuine rocks upon which the elemental force of the major character can crash.

The Lear of Max Jacobs was distinctly anti-titanic in conception and execution. This was an aged monarch more elderly than monarchial, a Lear suffering less from the "wheel of fire" than Alzheimer's disease. Especially in the earlier scenes, we were highly conscious of Lear's physical weakness, bewildlements, and memory loss. This is not an entirely illegitimate approach, but it does tend to diminish the work in the direction of domestic tragedy.

A more serious weakness was the presentation of the three daughters. Goneril and Regan were rather flatly nasty, while Cordelia was embarrassingly overacted. Indeed, Lear's fairy tale daughter was presented with an excess of moving and powerful, being painfully reminiscent of the high school stage.

Considerably more solid performances by the actors portraying Kent, the Fool, and Edmund provided welcome high points. Lear's mad scene with the blinded Gloucester was especially well done.

With its sights set lower, the NCSF's Merry Wives of Windsor could not have been a happier contrast. Here, splendid ensemble work carried the day. One was reminded by this production of the extent to which this drama is truly a collective enterprise; while Falstaff is certainly the center about which the action turns, he is hardly more important than some dozen other characters. Indeed, a successful production will depend more upon the same solidity of the Pages and Mistress Ford and the loony antics of Sir Hugh, Dr. Caius, Mr. Ford, and Falstaff's followers than upon the character of the fat knight himself. In the High Point version of Merry Wives of Windsor, special praise was merited by John Setfon as Ford and Henson Keys as Caius. Both presented versions of their characters which were energetic, stylish, and hilarious.

Director Malcolm Morrison's Windsor was a truly suburban locale (although the Castle could be spotted in the background). The play was set just before Christmas, and began with a group of townsmen rehearsing carols. This motif was interestingly sustained, as characters sang to themselves, or hummed as they went about their business, throughout the remainder of the action. At the very conclusion of the drama, the entire cast once again broke into festive song, and snow began to fall. This rather clever device created the strong impression of a quite small town in which the entire populace was deeply and happily involved in preparations for the holiday. Such an atmosphere, in turn, bolstered the logic of the concluding scenes, in which the public humiliation of Falstaff was mostly a civic joke.

This was, in sum, a small-scale year for the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. In the case of the tragedy, the consequence was a diminishment of power; with the comedy, the result was a well-balanced evening of splendid entertainment.

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