FROM THE MSA PRESIDENT

A reflection on Membership in the MSA

For several years now the membership of the Marlowe Society of America has remained relatively constant. Each year we gain members, and each year there is attrition. Have we simply achieved homeostasis, or do we retain the potential for further growth? One part of the answer to this question is not to define too narrowly our understanding of Marlowe studies. We can define session topics that embrace other Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, and we can devote more energy to issues of textual criticism and theatre history. Members can expect movement along these lines as we strive to broaden our horizons without sacrificing our roots.

Reflecting on this question of membership also leads one to reflect on the reasons that lead people to become members of the Society. From having served many years as our Membership Chair, I know that on occasion individuals have essentially done so in error. That is, they have assumed that we will be receptive to virtually any weird theory about Marlowe, such as his being the true author of Shakespeare’s plays. For obvious reasons, our retention rate among this subset of our membership has not been high!

Clearly, though, the vast majority of us knew what we were doing when we joined the Marlowe Society, and the decision often involved seizing an opportunity. It may have been the opportunity to present a paper at the MLA or to take part in an international conference, or perhaps the opportunity to review a book or to publish a play review. These are good reasons for joining, and they reflect fundamental objectives of the Society. We exist to provide and promote scholarship on Marlowe and his works and to provide opportunities for interaction among Marlovian scholars.

In turn, we might also reflect that continuing one’s membership helps to extend these opportunities to others, and that our dues make a significant contribution to Marlowe studies. Though our dues are not large, collectively they finance the production of our newly combined Newsletter and Book Reviews, they fund the Roma Gill prize for the best work on Marlowe, and they underwrite our International conference. They have helped the Society to make a real contribution to Marlovian scholarship. Three major collections have drawn on some of the best papers from our MLA sessions and international conferences: “A Poet & a filthy Play-maker”; Marlowe, History, and Sexuality; and Marlowe’s Empery. In addition, many other book chapters and journal articles were first presented as papers at our meetings.

Thus, to paraphrase Milton, “they also serve who merely pay their dues.” To make this process easier for the volunteers who keep track of our memberships and handle our finances (the MSA has no paid staff), we have decided to follow the example set by many of the regional MLAs and have memberships due at the same time. Ultimately, this should also make it easier for individual members to remember to renew. We will begin implementing this change now so that by 2006 all memberships will be due at the beginning of the year. I would emphasize that no one’s membership will be materially changed. Members will still receive their newsletters for the full year and will be eligible to attend meetings and submit announcements and reviews to the newsletter or book reviews for the full calendar year. We merely hope to simplify the process and make it easier to remind people when it is time to renew.

Bruce E. Brandt
President, Marlowe Society of America
From the Editor

MSAN continues to publish at the University of Alberta, Canada, with me, Rick Bowers, as Editor. Wherever you see Marlowe happening, do let the society know. MSAN provides a forum for reviews of films or theatrical productions of Marlovian drama as well as other brief articles and notes of interest to Marlovians. My contact information also remains unchanged. (See address and deadlines on opposite column.) Inquiries are always welcome: rick.bowers@ualberta.ca

MSA Book Reviews appears in MSAN, providing a forum for new and established scholars to express their views on recently published scholarship. Although reviews of books are the norm, appraisals of recent articles on Marlowe are also welcome. Reviews should not exceed 1000 words. The editor reserves the right to ask for revision and to make stylistic changes thought appropriate. The substance of the review and its contents remain those of the review’s author (and do not, of course, express the opinions of the MSA). Reviewers should be members of the MSA.

All correspondence regarding book reviews should be sent to:

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MARLOWE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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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. The deadline for the Spring issue is March 1 and for the Fall issue Sept. 1. Send inquiries, announcements, and submissions to:
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“Meanwhile, peruse this book”: Marlowe, Literacy, and the Gutenberg Father

Abstract of the paper presented by
Douglas A. Brooks
Texas A&M University
At the MSA session
“Issues of Literacy and Narrative Strategy in Marlowe”
Philadelphia 2004

According to this somewhat obvious nascent capitalist and proto-McLuhanesque narrative, more than one hundred years after Caxton introduces printing into England, literacy has not only become a main point of distinction between the haves and the have-nots, but it also holds out the promise that one can rise above one’s humble beginnings. While versions of this narrative have been attractive to scholars, some of whom—no doubt—were compelled to rely on books to improve their own socio-economic status, my paper argues that such readings of Doctor Faustus obscure the play’s handling of a cultural preoccupation that belongs much more to Marlowe’s historical moment than ours. “‘Meanwhile, peruse this book’: Marlowe, Literacy, and the Gutenberg Father” reconsiders the play’s engagement with issues of literacy in order to show how Marlowe’s drama stages in some detail mythological/classical patriarchal fantasies of parthenogenesis that had been reconfigured and re-energized for the early modern era by the invention of printing. Specifically, I look closely at the ways in which Marlowe links literacy to questions of paternity, legitimacy, and origins that underwrite and structure the surface narratives of the play, and I briefly locate these dramatic/thematic elements in the context of contemporary developments in the emergent discourse of the London book trade.

Whatever else Doctor Faustus may be about, certainly one of the play’s significant thematic concerns is with books and reading. Scene I of the play begins with Faustus in his study, immediately after the opening chorus has intimated that he overcame his lowly birth “of parents base of stock” through studiousness. Time and time again Marlowe’s drama suggests that literacy is integral to what Greenblatt once famously termed Renaissance self-fashioning, culminating in Lucifer’s instructions to Faustus that he “peruse this book and view it throughly, and thou shalt turn thyself into what shape thou wilt.” This rather straightforward assertion that books facilitate acts of self-shaping appears only a few lines after one of the Seven Deadly Sins, Envy, informs us “I cannot read and therefore wish all books were burnt,” and only a few lines before two servants/clowns appear on stage—one of whom tries to convince the other that he can read.
“Profit and Delight’: Locations and Politics of Literacy in Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus

Abstract of the paper presented by
Katheryn M. Giglio
Syracuse University
At the MSA session
“Issues of Literacy and Narrative Strategy in Marlowe”
Philadelphia 2004

Desunt Nonnulla: Same-Sex Intimacy and Narrative Outcomes in Hero and Leander

Abstract of the paper presented by
James Bromley
Loyola University
At the MSA session
“Issues of Literacy and Narrative Strategy in Marlowe”
Philadelphia 2004

Coming from a craftsman’s rudimentarily literate household, Christopher Marlowe, a “University Wit,” experienced first-hand the ways in which formal literacy could assist in social mobility. His play The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus offered theatre audiences a chance to reflect upon such an experience by giving them both a prolonged investigation and pointed critique of the circulating anxieties of a non-elite reading public. This paper investigates the competition for books engaged in by overreaching university scholars, book-thieving stable boys, and the wraithlike figure of Envy who “cannot read and therefore wish all books were burnt.” Through such figures, anxieties over access to literacy are played out and poked fun at or brought to horrible devilish fruition; in this way, Marlowe’s theater can be thought of as a momentary salve to the real sores of social division that were becoming intensified in the new politics of learnedness.

James Bromley

Recently, critics of Christopher Marlowe’s Hero and Leander have viewed the poem as a satire on the conventions of erotic poetry. Instead of adding to the discussion of the content of that satire, I want to investigate the way the poem both supports and challenges the outcome-based valuations of intimacy on which such satirical readings rely.

The narrative structure of Hero and Leander, with its digressive tendencies, problematizes any reading of the poem that privileges Hero and Leander’s heteroerotic intimacy. Though the poem’s trajectory seems to be the sexual union of the title couple, the
digression recounting the story of Mercury and the country maid instructs the reader to question any interpretive reliance on narrative outcomes. Such reliance devalues the profound, though temporary, intimacy between Neptune and Leander. Depicting a struggle to resist the inequalities and possessiveness that characterize heteroerotic desire in the poem, the Neptune and Leander episode elaborates its own ethics of temporary intimacy that challenge the culturally-dominant valuation of long-term, monogamous sexual relations.

Marlowe’s poem critiques narrative practices whose focus on “living happily ever after” comes at the expense of situational and temporary intimacies. The elision of such temporary, and frequently homoerotic, intimacies serves to shore up the monogamous, heteroerotic narratives whose trajectories they impede. Therefore, the reading strategy offered by Marlowe’s poem can help recuperate, in this poem and in other narratives as well, those traces of intimacy otherwise devalued or lost altogether.

**DIDO’S DILEMMA: SERVICE TO CROWN OR THE HEART THAT LIES BENEATH?**

In his first play, *Dido Queen of Carthage*, Marlowe demonstrates that he already has an acute understanding of the requirements of classic theater. At a staging of the play this past July at The American Theater of Actors it was apparent that Marlowe could establish an absorbing central character imperative for an intense tragedy. Dido is dynamic, complex, sympathetic, pitiful, admirable charismatic, proud, vulnerable, and sad. In short, she is all that a tragic hero should be.

*Dido* is firmly rooted in classic theater. The source that Marlowe used for the familiar story is Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Jupiter, offended by the mistreatment of Ganymede, exacerbates the tension between the Gods, and very soon their human pawns are likewise at war. Aeneas, the defeated hero of Troy, flees that city and is shipwrecked in Carthage where he is taken in by the Queen. Aeneas is made to fall in love with Dido who can protect him and provide his army with resources to rebuild the fleet. So enchanted is Dido by this warrior that she forsakes all previous suitors, most prominent among them King Iarbus.

Aeneas and Dido, of course, are not free agents but playthings in the conflict between the Gods: in this case between Jupiter, Juno, Venus, and Mercury. Moreover, Cupid and Ascanius, son of Aeneas, further manipulate the affections of these mere mortals. Their duties to their nation impede their personal ardor and they suffer, for our moral edification, the eternal dilemma of whether to follow heart or duty, to have devotion to self or to the responsibilities of state.

Prior to the performance I attended, director Jeff Dailey denied any political message. “This year just a straightforward romance,” he assured me. But last year he directed *Tamburlaine the Great, Part II* wherein I saw, and reported in this space, an unnerving correspondence to the then impending war in Iraq: the terrible loss of life, the moral duplicity, the directionless landscape of Babylonian complication.

Today we know the war came, with admonitions of as yet unproven preparations for massive assault. If we are to believe Richard Clarke’s Congressional testimony, General Eric K. Shinseki’s speeches, and Anthony C. Zinni’s history book, it was also (respectively and supportively) a war pre-determined, under-resourced, and not subject to skeptical scrutiny. How then can one avoid thinking there might likewise be parallels to the continuing war in this production of *Dido*?

Let’s see. Poor Dido; she doesn’t want to be faithful to King Iarbus though he represents her domestic duty. Instead she is seduced by the siren of a distant adventure and decides to engage Aeneas. Unfortunately, Aeneas ultimately cannot abide this Carthage embrace and must leave to define in battle his new nation. Dido, having made the wrong choice, the personal choice, comes to ashes and brings her family (read “nation”) with her.
Director Dailey would have us believe there is no current political statement in this simple 400-year-old romance. Nevertheless, for me the play, written 400 years ago, brings to mind a more current national leader who is unmoved by domestic challenges and chooses rather to avenge family insult (“After all, he tried to kill my Daddy”) despite the difficult and uncertain consequences of a foreign military initiative.

At the performance I attended—one of the ten of the scheduled twelve that weather permitted in this outdoor venue—there was a helicopter stationed overhead at the very start of the play. The helicopter held in place for an uncomfortable three to five minutes. The noise was deafening, the distraction extreme. But the actors were quite professional. They neither fought the noise by shouting nor allowed it to reduce them to silence. They maintained tone, cadence, and volume.

I was a bit more unnerved myself. With the Republican National Convention coming to New York City a few weeks later, with recent headlines proclaiming the urgency of vigilant homeland security measures, with the use, here, for the second consecutive year, of a Marlowe play as a none-too-subtle criticism of Presidential policies by way of undisguised metaphors of distant quagmires willingly—even enthusiastically—entered, with the depiction of national leaders of questionable wisdom taking their nation without, or even despite, the consultation of its people or other leaders into an adventure that ultimately leads to disaster, is it possible that the helicopter might actually be performing military surveillance?

I doubt that the Bush Patriot Act sanctions such intrusion but after seeing Tamburlaine the Great, Part II last year and now Dido Queen of Carthage, I do think Marlowe’s plays warrant the attention of surquedrous heads of state.

This production of Dido was performed in Manhattan, on 54th Street just off Broadway, during the last three weeks of July by the American Theater of Actors under the direction of Jeff Dailey. The ATA was founded in 1973 by James Jennings who continues as its President and Artistic Director. It is supported by Al Pacino, Harvey Keitel, and others who honor the efforts of young actors developing their craft. This theater has provided performance opportunities for Dennis Quaid, Danny Aiello, Kevin Spacey, and Edie Falco.

Young actors Owen Panettieri (Aeneas), Rachel Axelrod (Venus), and Katie Vagnino (Ascanius) must take pride in that heritage. Morgan Antoinette Nevans honors the title role anew by making a strikingly beautiful and regal Queen Dido. In a small role, Ebony Marie Hatchett carves out a spiteful and malicious Cupid. All the actors who played the gods, influenced by Dailey’s direction to be sure, showed the proper sarcastic dillidence for having been called upon to take part in the affairs of lowly humans.

Jeff Dailey in this, his sixth production of a Marlowe play (only Edward II remains, and he will tackle that late this next spring), shows great respect for the text. The play demands it. Although it is Marlowe’s first play, and because it was published posthumously, it is often attributed as collaboration with Thomas Nashe. Dido contains some intense poetic lines which effectively communicate the most horrid depictions of war. It also has passages of lyrical beauty (“It is Aeneas’ frown that ends my days”). Dailey allows these speeches to ring. He is a gifted musician and educator. His varied experience working with schools, opera companies, and church organizations, has allowed him to develop a patience and easy-going confidence that inspires young actors. In this acting group the stage might be bare and the costumes and props may be rudimentary; but the text is supreme and with Marlowe that is strength enough for absorbing drama.

Michael Elias

(A New York City public high school teacher and a dealer in contemporary art, Elias can be reached at www.artnet.com/sightlines.html)

The second edition of this valuable companion to Renaissance drama studies adds, according to the preface, “exceptional advances in studies of theatrical companies, the lives of individual theatre professionals, the cultural circumstances of play-writing, performance, and reception” to this already considerable analysis of England’s early modern professional theatre (xv). While including abbreviated biographies and selective bibliographies for 58 playwrights from the period, ranging from the relatively unknown Robert Davenport to the well-studied Christopher Marlowe, the book concludes effectively by placing many of the works of the period in a chronological table indicating the author and company who performed the play against the significant events of the age. In addition, each chapter concludes with a beneficial “Bibliography” section referencing works that are relevant to the various topics under consideration in the chapter.

R. A. Foakes logically leads off the conversation by examining “Playhouses and players” in the first chapter, breaking the discussion down into an overview that includes mention of three of Christopher Marlowe’s plays (*Doctor Faustus* and the two *Tamburlaines*) before considering “The early private playhouses” (23), which consist of places like Blackfriars and Whitefriars. In this section, Foakes examines the impact these private indoor playhouses had on the theater scene and performance dynamics created by these spaces. This chapter continues with “The later theatres” (31), more “small, indoor playhouses” (31), which included the Cockpit (renamed the Phoenix) and Salisbury Court. Some of the theaters apparently favored a repertory of “the popular tradition of chivalry, romance, farce, history and fantasy” (36), while others preferred the new Carolinian drama, which was an antithesis of the “highly metaphorical dramatic verse” of earlier writers like Marlowe (37). The chapter concludes with a section on “Players and playing” (38), addressing some of the major actors of the period, like Richard Tarlton and Edward Alleyne (“the original Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Faustus” [42]), while considering the kinds of problems companies could encounter, problems that frequently led to the company’s demise.

In Chapter 2, co-editor A. R. Braunmuller sensibly continues the discussion by delving into “The Arts of the dramatist” (53-92). The author’s approach focuses upon “a group of technical issues and solutions clustered around impersonation and the representing of action” by the first and second generation of playwrights of the period (54). The first issue involves a repertory company’s need for new material because of the variety of plays performed in any given week, which
undoubtedly affected the accuracy with which these plays were recorded, to the point that “printed texts may significantly misrepresent the dramatist's contribution” (59). Other issues concern performance conventions with which the dramatist must work as well as the language the characters use and the arrangement of the action. Marlowe’s plays provide multiple examples to support Braunmuller’s contentions.

For Chapter 3, co-editor Michael Hattaway addresses “Drama and society” (93-130), taking an interesting approach by setting the literature of the period in an historical context while reminding readers that English Renaissance “playwrights served some of the roles of modern journalists” by incorporating current events and contemporary issues into their plays (94). In addition, the theaters producing the plays “often served the populace as instruments of demystification,” presenting the plays that could explain the processes that were giving “legitimate power” to the country’s leaders. The next section addresses “The condition of England,” which reflected a relatively “orderly and well-governed society” (98), one that included “a distinctive youth culture” and mature women (101) who appeared in the plays of the period. While discussing “The court,” Hattaway observes that “dramatists acted as intelligencers to the nation,” using The Jew of Malta as his primary example. “The city” connects the importance of court and city life to the dramatists and playgoers in order to explain the reason that the country is seldom represented in plays of the period. The section on “Women and families” looks primarily at three “deviant figures” (112): the shrew from The Taming of the Shrew, the witch from The Witch of Edmonton, and The Honest Whore. Hattaway’s admitted emphasis throughout this chapter is to remind readers “that texts are history and history is text” (123).

With Chapter 4, Martin Butler considers “Private and occasional drama” (131-163), providing a cursory overview of many of the various “plays, masques, and miscellaneous entertainments written for the court, the Inns of Court, the universities, and the great provincial aristocratic houses” (131). More important for this consideration is Chapter 5, which has Margot Heinemann turning to “Political drama” (164-196), a topic that clearly reflects “a changing, troubled, and divided society” (164), partly due to the civil war, but also largely because of “practical political tactics, … as well as immediate conflicts over taxation, foreign policy or royal prerogative” (165). Many plays are briefly referenced in this chapter, but Heywood’s I Edward IV, Marlowe’s Edward II, Shakespeare’s Richard II and Middleton’s A Game at Chess provide the bulk of the support in Heinemann’s discussion of the English history play of politics.

Chapter 6 lets Brian Gibbons reflect on “Romance and the heroic play” (197-227), both of which are interesting “hybrid” rather than “clear cut” categories of drama (197). The romance, for example, is “part folk-tale, part chivalric” story (197). Gibbons includes a discussion of Sir Clydmon and Sir Clamydes as a work that exemplifies the key features associated with the genre: primarily “the sustaining and developing of an emotional trajectory” (199). Historical events of the 1580s manifest themselves in the heroic plays of the period, with Tamburlaine included as a primary example that happens to blend romance and history. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of plays reflecting the four social divisions found in Elizabethan society: the nobility, citizens, yeomen and “poor farmers, labourers, artisans” of the fourth estate (215). The plays addressed in detail in this section include Robert Greene’s George a Greene the Pinner of Wakefield and Shakespeare’s Henry VI.

In Chapter 7, Lee Bliss turns the reader’s attention to “Pastiche, burlesque, tragicomedy” (228-253). These three genres evolved out of a “rebellion against the inherited literary forms and assumptions of high-Elizabethan culture,” and involved “wittily erotic epyllia” that was initiated by dramatists like Marlowe, Shakespeare, Marston and Beaumont (228). In part, as Bliss reminds readers, “pastiche and burlesque mockingly dissected earlier plays,
styles, even whole genres, while ... coercing something fresh out of the fragments of a ridiculed past” (228). The primary examples discussed in this category include Marston’s *Antonio and Mellida* and its companion piece *Antonio’s Revenge*, Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Marston’s *The Malcontent*, Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Philaster* and *A King and No King*, and Middleton and Rowley’s *A Fair Quarrel*.

Bliss’ explication in the previous chapter prepares readers for Jill Levenson’s consideration of “Comedy” in Chapter 8 (254-291). Beginning with a discussion of “Boundaries,” Levinson succinctly explains the difficulty that critics and playwrights have had in reconciling “theories about comedy ... with dramatic practice” (254). She then explores the “Early developments” of Renaissance comedy (256), using Heywood’s *The Four P.P.* and Udall’s *Ralph Roister Doister* as her primary examples. In the section on “Appropriation” (260), she relies upon Lyly’s *Endymion*, Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*, Chapman’s *All Fools*, and Fletcher’s *The Wild Goose Chase* for support. One class of comedies dealing primarily with the middle-classes and their social issues create what she refers to as “Urban designs” (273): for example, Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour*, *The Alchemist* and *The Staple of News* along with Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. The final section of this chapter addresses the departures from the norm that can be found in plays like Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. Overall, this analysis allows Levinson to humorously conclude that English Renaissance comedy was basically “a muggle-mangle which represented the hodgepodge of contemporary life, a gallimaufry which satisfied its age” (290).

The book concludes with Robert N. Watson’s investigation of “Tragedy” (292-343) and James Bulman’s exploration of “Caroline drama” (344-371). Watson’s chapter begins with “A theory of Renaissance tragedy” (292), which relies upon the Aristotelian definition to describe “tragedy as a narrative, often historically based, describing a fall from greatness to calamity” that carries “a warning against political or moral errors” on the part of the protagonist “or purged destructive passions from readers and spectators to allow the triumph of reason” (293). The second section of the chapter explores “A history of English Renaissance tragedy” (301), beginning with its evolution from the Catholic Mass through the morality play to the blend of stories from English history and the classics with Senecan drama. This section includes a brief foray into some of the “stock tragic figures” that have ironically been converted “into self-conscious stereotypes” (305): the revenger, the malcontent and the Machiavel. The chapter includes “brief readings of six major tragedies” divided into two sections (307), each set spanning the twenty-five years associated with the English Renaissance. The first group, which covers the revenge tragedies, consists of “The Spanish Tragedy, Hamlet, and The Revenger’s Tragedy” (307). The second group, containing *Doctor Faustus, Othello*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, has in common “a philosophical theme called theodicy—the enquiry into the nature of evil and the means by which it enters Creation” (307). Watson concludes the entire discussion by observing that “tragedy is a genre of unanswerable questions that are worth asking” (340).

Bulman continues the discussion with the plays written during Charles I’s reign, beginning with “The repertory and the audience” (344), which had economic concerns as a major issue because of the shift in the distribution of the wealth in the country. Shirley’s comedy of manners, *Hyde Park*, and Massinger’s tragic-comedy, *The Picture*, provide key examples for this discussion. While considering “The ethos of Caroline tragedy” (350), Bulman summarizes Shirley’s *The Traitor* and Ford’s *Tis Pity She’s a Whore* as exempla of the moral issues of the era. During the next section, Bulman relies upon Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* and Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* as well as Brome’s *The Antipodes* to explain how “The theatre takes stock of itself” (354). An entire section is
dedicated to “Jonson and his legacy” (360), with Marmion’s comedy *Holland’s Leaguer* and Davenport’s *The Wits* among the legacy that is discussed. The final section focuses on “The cult of neoplatonism” (366), which was being fostered at court by Queen Henrietta Maria before it became perverted and trivialized by the Cavaliers. Bulman sums up his chapter, and in a way the entire text, by observing that “like the better known drama of preceding generations, Caroline drama was a reflection on, as well as of, its age” (369).

Peggy J Huey
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The title of Nora Johnson’s study only hints at her real subject. To be sure, the book is a discussion of the actor as playwright in early modern drama, four player-authors in particular: Robert Armin, Nathan Field, Anthony Munday, and Thomas Heywood. But, essentially, the study attempts to add accuracy to the definitions and complex meanings of authorship in the early modern period, a topic of much current critical discussion. Johnson believes that, in spite of Ben Jonson’s well-known claim of authorial proprietorship, our twenty-first century notions of early modern authorship as “ownership, sovereignty, or post-Romantic subjectivity” (6) do not obtain. Instead, as her many examples illustrate, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries authorship is invariably collaborative (used in its most inclusive cultural sense) and that the various forms of collaboration arise out of theatrical practices. The two chief, overlapping practices are the actor’s attention to “the social significance of performance” (14)—that is, his concern with the responses of his audience, including his flexibility in pleasing the audience—and his attention to the commercial needs of any performance.

The introductory chapter, which sets forth Johnson’s firm sense of collaborative authorship, makes clear the organization of the four chapters that follow and defends the difficulties of pursuing Shakespeare as an actor-author in a final coda. In each instance, she acknowledges the influence of a wide range of critics who have written about the meaning of authorship or about its history as it developed in seventeenth-century England: Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Joseph Loewenstein, Jeffrey Masten, Mark Rose, Martha Woodmansee, to mention only a handful. Johnson herself accepts neither the position of authorial absolutism of Ben Jonson nor the position of those who see the powers and the function of author-authors as solely the product of material and social causes. Aligning herself with the most recent tendency among authorship scholars, she repeatedly affirms her belief in the “dispersal” (10) rather than the “consolidation” (10) of authorial authority, adamantly refuting the theories of those critics who would attribute a sovereignty of control to the function of the player-author.

Her strongest and clearest example is Robert Armin, Will Kemp’s successor and the author of pamphlets, ballads, jestbooks and either one or two plays. Like the other three actor-authors, Armin took elements of his stage personality and used them in his writings, making his celebrity status a selling point for his writings. His fluid relationship with his audiences, growing out of improvised comic moments, individualizes him “because he represents communal forms of cultural production” (17) but, paradoxically, that relationship makes him neither the “originator” (17) nor the “owner” (17) of his jests, especially as they appear in his writings. Armin “establishes authorship as an explicit form of borrowing” (12), thereby undermining the paradigm of textual ownership.

Nathan Field, the leading man for Lady Elizabeth’s Men and, later, for the King’s Men, is examined in connection with the two plays that he wrote without collaborators, *Woman is a Weathercock* (1609-10) and *Amends for Ladies* (1611). Using the mention of Field in a morally
ambigious scene in *Bartholomew Fair* (5.3.75-92), Johnson focuses on Field’s “placement on stage as an actor, his relationship to Jonson and the other poets with whom he worked, and his problematic relationship to female audiences” (57), all of which become a part of his self-fashioning as an author. The chapter concludes by using Field’s brand of collaborativeness (“theatrical exigency” [81]) and later, undistinguished critical reputation as contrasts and correctives not only to Jonson’s “fantasy” (57) of the sovereignty of authorship but also to the misunderstandings about the true nature of theatrical work that his fantasy has led to.

In her discussion of Anthony Munday, “a self-serving liar” (86) who focused on martyrdom in his pamphlets and collaboratively-written plays, Johnson explains that his consciousness was invariably that of a performer rather than a moralist, although both as an author and presumably as a player (and an execrable one at that), he worked at creating the impression of moral seriousness. Munday was embroiled in the religious politics of the time, an interest that grew out of his experience of living with recusant Catholics in Rheims and in a Jesuit seminary in Rome and his subsequent tell-all book, *English Roman Lyfe*. Rendering himself duplicitously as the object as well as the author of martyrdom, he subverts the idea of the author as “a limiting subjectivity” (13). Instead, and from purely monetary motives, he makes himself the property of his audiences, his patrons, and his playing company” (119).

Thomas Heywood, prolific as both a writer and actor, appears in his writings to want to establish his authority as an author of classical stature. But, interestingly, he does not make use of that authority to reduce the importance of audiences. As Johnson sees it, Heywood implies that “the stage is about pleasing audiences, and pleasing audiences means selling texts” (14). As such, he is one further step in the author-actor’s “process of commodification” (151), a process stemming from the theater as a capitalist enterprise.

In her final chapter, “Coda: the Shakespearean Silence,” Johnson notes that, ironically, for all their attempts at self-promotion, none of the four figures whom she has discussed has been granted the celebrity status of Shakespeare who, paradoxically, never sought it. At the same time, she considers how Shakespeare’s silence about authorship has skewed our thinking about collaborative systems of dramatic production. On those grounds alone, her study of the four author-players is of value.

In spite of the repetitiveness of her argument that authorship as a form of owning did not take hold in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Johnson’s book is not easy to read. She can be inordinately abstract and unclear. Moreover, for some readers, her criticisms of theoretical perspectives will seem like beating dead horses. Although no one will disagree with her view that neither authorial absolutism nor material and social causes alone tell the whole story, she tends to overpower us with repetition and an excess of evidence. But, at the risk of seeming contradictory, I should add that it is her array and analysis of unfamiliar evidence that I find her most impressive characteristic.

The value of this study to Marlovians is probably limited. The attribution of Nashe as a collaborator in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and the 1616 version of *Doctor Faustus* alone tell us that Marlowe and his texts were engaged in forms of collaborative authorship, even if not as a writer-player. The sequel to *Tamburlaine* further tells us that the playwright was not immune to commercial marketing practices, a form of cultural collaboration. Thus, although we can apply Johnson’s ideas to Marlowe, without more historical evidence of the ways in which his texts actually became collaborations, we may be apt to feel ultimately that her ideas generate little new thinking about his works.

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“In the current critical climate, many scholars are far more comfortable detailing their sexual histories in print than confessing to an interest in literary form” (67).

What sad commentary upon our profession. Whatever happened to literature? Why aren’t we talking about that? This is precisely the point of Mark David Rasmussen’s book. In its very first sentence, Rasmussen declares its bold, far-reaching—indeed—counter-cultural purpose: “The aim of this collection [of essays] is to encourage a shift in the study of English Renaissance literature, a shift toward a fuller and more self-conscience engagement with questions of form” (1). This “shift toward” form implies a shift away from “modes of analysis that ... tend to interpret Renaissance works as bundles of historical or cultural content, ... [modes that do not pay] much attention to the ways that their [i.e., the works’] meanings are shaped and enabled by the possibilities of form” (1).

To understand how we ended up in this mess, we have to backtrack to the early 1980’s and Greenblatt and his successors. Although Greenblatt’s early work involved some solid textual explication, his subsequent work and that of his followers has set aside such explication as its goal, in favor of the mining for evidence of cultural practices. *This later version of the new historicism takes Renaissance culture rather than literature as its central concern, dipping only intermittently into the literary text as one manifestation of that culture among many* (2, my emphasis).

Rasmussen concedes that “much of this work has been valuable” (3); however—and this is the important part—“in recent years many have come to feel that the new historicist paradigm, at least in its present orientation toward cultural studies, appears to be exhausted, its initial excitement now long since cooled” (3, my emphasis). The words bear repeating: Exhausted. Its initial excitement now long since cooled. Have we entered a post-new historicist age? “That is the situation,” Rasmussen announces, “that this volume addresses” (3). And that, I would add, is one of the book’s attractions.

Rasmussen’s book has ten essays: an introduction, an afterword, and then two sections in the middle, each comprised of four essays. The essays in the first section, “Toward a Historical Formalism,” address the ways in which form is implicated in culture (5). Stephen Cohen provides a searching theoretical essay outlining “New Historicism and the Promise of a Historical Formalism.” I believe it is the best essay in the book. It reviews the theories of cultural materialism, new historicism, and cultural studies—each as they relate to a newly-energized kind of formalism. In another excellent essay, Douglas Bruster demonstrates that a new, historicized formalism can yield exciting results when it is applied to source study. Heather Dubrow, in yet another brilliant piece, shows that the country house poem is “ hospitable to the critical approaches that recuperate formalism” (84). And Joseph Loewenstein listens to the sounds of the words in John Marston’s works, endeavoring to form a “cultural poetics of the throat,” or, in other words, “an historical criticism carefully addressed to ‘voice’” (106).

Part II is called “Renewing the Literary.” The four essayists here return to such questions as what is beauty? What counts as literary? And how do we explain the enduring power of literary language, even in our post-theoretical age? The four essayists “focus upon recovering a sense of the more specifically literary aspects of form that a predominately cultural mode of analysis tends to neglect” (5). In an amazingly-entitled (and-written) essay, “Learning From the New Criticism,” Paul Alpers thoroughly reviews the history of formal (i.e., New Critical) analysis of Shakespeare’s sonnets. Here is his rationale: “I ... think we need to return to the critical
tradition that once gave us our bearings on Renaissance lyric and still haunts our accounts of it." After pinpointing the difficulties such critics (from Ransom to Vendler) have had with Shakespeare’s sonnets, Alpers demonstrates the ways that the New Criticism “has been capable of self-adjustment and that it can still provide resources for formalist analysis” (116). It perfectly complements Stephen Cohen’s study of historical criticisms in Part I, and I rank it the second best essay in the volume.

The remaining essays in this section, unfortunately, fail to measure up to the standard set by Alpers. Mark Womack addresses Shakespeare’s puns, especially his unarticulated puns. William Flesch focuses upon “speech tags” (i.e., such phrases as “she said” or “he replied”) in Herbert, Wyatt, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and elsewhere. Elizabeth Harris Sagar, finally, writes of her experiences in the classroom teaching Renaissance lyrics, particularly such aspects as theme, meter, and rhyme. Richard Strier rounds out the volume with an afterward entitled, “How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can’t Do Without It.”

Reflecting upon the book as a whole, I find that it has several strengths. Most importantly, I like Rasmussen’s decision to create this book: he notices that since the new historicism is collapsing, we must propose a freshly energized, historically informed formalism to fill the vacuum. And this kind of formalism has the wherewithal to do it, as the volume’s best essays illustrate. Unfortunately, one of the book’s weaknesses is that it consists of more weak than strong essays, making it a generally good (but not great) book. As for the book’s purpose to—“encourage a shift ... toward a fuller and more self-conscious engagement with questions of form”—it might play a small role (1, my emphasis). Marlovians can still find this book relevant in at least two ways, even though it barely addresses Marlowe. First, it deals with topics in English Renaissance literature related to Marlowe. Second, it features excellent crash courses in literary theory (as they apply to English Renaissance literature).

After that, its relevance seems limited. I therefore recommend it with hesitation.

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This collection of nine essays represents a fresh trend in feminist studies that explores the heroic potential of the female protagonist, particularly in Renaissance tragedy, a genre synonymous with heroic action. The premise of this volume is that female tragic heroes in English Renaissance drama hold the same heroic value as their male counterparts. The volume’s contributors challenge the view that tragedy supports the patriarchal establishment by endowing only male characters with heroic roles.

In her opening essay, Naomi Conn Liebler articulates the volume’s critical methodology, distinguishing it from other feminist schools of thought. While female heroism in comedies has been acknowledged and celebrated by feminist critics, it has been overlooked in tragedies because the tragic “agon” and sacrifice of the female protagonist has been viewed as evidence of a woman’s social victimization. Ironically, the same male agon and sacrifice has always been interpreted as nobly heroic—a critical pattern that Liebler partially attributes to the popularity of the “victim feminism” approach. The essay makes clear that it is the nature of the genre, not the gender of the character, which presumes the futility of the protagonist’s struggle.

The individual essays in the volume have been ordered chronologically based on the publication date of the plays they discuss—an editorial decision that Liebler hopes will trace the construction of female tragic heroes across the Elizabethan and Jacobean period. The first four essays consider classical prototypes and their Renaissance adaptations, which often
reflected contemporary ideology. As a result, the rebellious females of classical tragedies have been metamorphosed by Renaissance playwrights into passive and obedient subjects. Robert Miola, for example, shows how Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh’s *Jocasta* (1573) strips Jocasta and Antigone of any heroic quality inherent in the Greek original, clothing them in “the early modern political and moral dress” of “a natural mother” and “a dutiful child” (48), respectively.

Likewise, Judith Weil traces the archetype of Hecuba in two Elizabethan and two Jacobean plays. Hecuba’s four Renaissance “angry descendants” (51) include Marlowe’s Isabella (*Edward II*), Shakespeare’s Constance (*King John*) and Volumnia (*Coriolanus*), and Webster’s Cornelia (*The White Devil*). Weil does not perceive tragedy “as a prop for patriarchal order” (51) and concludes on the basis of classical scholarship that “tragedies disturb the gender norms maintained by Greek culture” (52). Rather than accept Hecuba as a suffering mother figure and helpless victim, Weil views her as an avenger, and sees her maternal wrath as action. After examining early modern dramatic representations of female fury and feminine agency, Weil decides that “Renaissance playwrights often distribute the active fury of women among relatives and henchmen ... to expand a tragic investigation of how justice and creativity become damaged” (51). Marlowe’s Queen Isabella is viewed as an agent of tragic action, but her powers and the consequences of her rage have been underestimated by critics. Weil argues that Marlowe develops Isabella’s fury towards her husband and Gaveston through pollution metaphors, thus comparing her to Diana in the guise of Hecate, who also purges her realm from impurities (59).

Mimi Dixon and Kay Stanton bridge the visual and dramatic arts to demonstrate the power that Cleopatra holds over artistic imagination in three Renaissance tragedies and two paintings. By making us gaze at the captivating Egyptian Queen on canvas and on stage, painters and dramatists question “male autonomy and self-sufficiency” (87), emphasizing Cleopatra’s “visual and erotic power” as a femme fatale over her viewers (75). Theresia de Vroom and Martin Orkin expose the patriarchal hypocrisy that perpetuates the myth of the male as enforcer of social order by showing instead that women’s transgressive behavior is usually a reaction to men’s unruly conduct. According to De Vroom, in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* Heywood transforms Anne’s adultery from merely immoral and sinful behavior into “a flawed but singularly feminine act of heroism” (119). Likewise, Orkin believes that Webster stages men’s demonic sexuality while his titular female protagonists attempt “to disregard corrupt masculine authority and to enact or realize feminine desire” (158).

Linda Woodbridge compares Webster’s Ferdinand to Marlowe’s Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus: each character aspires to rise above the human only to descend into the subhuman, creating a pattern of “failed ascent followed by precipitous descent” (173). Marlowe’s Zenocrate embodies “the elevating power of beauty” that transforms Tamburlaine spiritually in Part I, but fails to mitigate his bloodthirstiness in Part II (175). Although Tamburlaine views himself as a god on earth, reinforcing his superhuman status by degrading his enemies to the animal level, his aspirations remain limited to the objects of the physical (176-77).

The crowning piece of the collection, Jeanne Roberts’ essay “Sex and the Female Tragic Hero,” proposes a list of criteria for determining a female tragic hero, which she then applies to Shakespeare’s tragedies. These nine criteria include such varied concerns as the number of lines and soliloquies that a female character has, to how she shapes her destiny and affects the world by her death (201). Based on these criteria, Juliet, Cleopatra, Tamora, and Volumnia all win the title of female tragic hero. Roberts uses Elizabeth Cary’s *Mariam* to show that “neither the unwilling sex object nor the free-thinking manipulator of men” is a satisfactory remedy to “the female problem” (215).
The Female Tragic Hero in English Renaissance Drama is a welcome addition to Renaissance studies and feminist literary criticism. The expertise of contributors, individually and collectively, helps recover the female tragic hero, restoring her to the limelight alongside her more famous male counterparts.

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**EDWARD II IN NEW YORK**

The American Theater of Actors will present Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II* at its Beckman Theater, **March 30 to April 17, 2005**. Jeff Dailey will direct the production. The Beckman Theater is located at 314 West 54th Street, New York City. For information, call: (212) 581-3044.

**RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE**


Styrmest, David. “Status, Sodomy, and the Theater in Marlowe’s *Edward II*.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 44.2 (Spring 2004): 233-53.