MSA ANNUAL MEETINGS
WASHINGTON, DC, 2005

Marlowe’s Literary and Biblical Influences

Thursday, 29 December: 3:30-4:45 p.m., Park Tower Suite 8228, Marriott Wardman Park

Presiding: Bruce Edwin Brandt, South Dakota State University.


Constructing Marlowe

Friday, 30 December: 12:00 noon-1:15 p.m., Wilson A, Marriott Wardman Park


2. “Marlowe and the World Picture,” Douglas S. Bruster, University of Texas, Austin.


CALL FOR PAPERS

The Marlowe Society solicits papers for its December 2006 open-topic session at the MLA Convention in New Orleans. Send abstracts or papers of fifteen-minute length (e-mail attachment or hard copy) to Bruce Brandt, Marlowe Society of America, English Department Box 504, South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD 57007-1397; bruce_brandt@sdsstate.edu. Deadline: March 1, 2006.

FROM THE EDITOR, MSAN

With this issue the MSA says goodbye with much heartfelt thanks to Duke Pesta, MSA Book Reviews Editor since 2001. Our goodbyes are only to Duke as editor, however, and we look forward to hearing from him as a continuing and much appreciated member of the MSA.

Charles Whitney at UNLV will be the new MSA Book Reviews editor. For Charles’s address and contact information, see p. 2 and Editor’s Note p. 19.

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 remains unchanged. (See address and deadlines p. 2.) Inquiries are always welcome: rick.bowers@ualberta.ca

MSA BOOK REVIEWS
Edited by Duke Pesta
Inside, p. 15.
Abstracts of the MSA Session,
“Religio-political Imagery in Marlowe:
Rome, Babel, and Islam,”
Philadelphia, 2004

(Photos courtesy MSA President Bruce Brandt.)

Vatican-on-Thames: Marlovian Romes and Their Dramatic Uses
By
Brett Foster
Yale University

Brett Foster

Few images appear as consistently throughout Marlowe’s writings as the city of Rome and its cultural trappings – its legends, monuments, symbols, and (more relevant to dramatic effect and characterization) what one might call its “associative potential.” This ubiquity may seem initially surprising, for different plays naturally treat the city very differently, so much so that one must quickly speak of different Romes as well. I propose to examine these “Marlovian Romes.”

Although my main subject will comprise Doctor Faustus’s court scenes, I will begin with Marlowe’s rendering of Book I of Lucan’s Pharsalia: decisions of translation reveal certain attitudes toward classical Rome, which in turn inform the setting of Dido, Queen of Carthage. That play’s subverted Virgilian overtones prepare readers for other, more contemporary treatments. Yet this temporal distinction
immediately begs the question: Elsewhere Marlowe uses Rome or the Vatican to signify by rhetorical means a worldly power generally: thus Machiavel begins *The Jew of Malta* by speaking of the attainment of “Peter’s chair,” while Edward II, in a rare moment of belligerence, threatens the city, saying he will “fire thy crazed buildings and enforce / The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground.” In dismantling Rome, Edward verbally augments his own power, but such power – being verbal – proves fatally vulnerable. Edward’s is a dramatic gesture, not a political one, and I will examine precisely how declaratory ciphers of Roman power necessarily (and from Marlowe’s perspective, strategically) efface the city’s specific historical character. In *Edward II*, for example, those papal towers may be part of the Rome of *Unam Sanctam*, in keeping with the play’s medieval fictional world, or the products of Sistine urbanism, of which Marlowe and his late Elizabethan audiences would have been well aware.

*Doctor Faustus’s* moments of “low” comedy at the papal court represent Marlowe’s most memorable Roman images, and I will contextually analyze this scene with an eye toward Leah S. Marcus’s comparison of the A and B texts of *Faustus*. Marcus seeks to uncover their different political milieu, but I will argue that the play’s “Roman moments” are meant less historically and allusively, but rather constitute a *topos* or “set piece” of Protestant travel writing and drama both before and after Marlowe. To support this claim I will introduce audience members to a handful of texts relevant to *Faustus*, from *Tragedie of Free Wyll* and *Pasquine in a Traince*, both earlier Tudor translations of colorful, Italian originals, to Thomas Nashe’s *Lenten Stuffe* and Barnabe Barnes’ *The Devil’s Charter* (1607), whose sensational hostility can be read as an attempt to “out-Marlowe” Marlowe.

“As many several languages as I have conquered kingdoms”: *Tamburlaine 2* and the Babel Topos

By

Per Sivefors

Blekinge Institute of Technology

Per Sivefors

This paper argues that what occupied Marlowe in *Tamburlaine 2* was a literary topos that has been unduly neglected by Marlowe criticism: that of the Tower of Babel and the linguistic confusion it stood for. Babel, confused with Babylon in the Geneva Bible and by subsequent literary writers such as Spenser and Sidney, was a frequent source of concern, mitigated in the Renaissance by humanism’s belief in man’s empowerment through language and by reformers like Martin Luther, who stressed (drawing on Augustine) that the Babylonian confusion and its reason, pride, was overcome at Pentecost. Tamburlaine, similarly, “brings a world of people to the field” and thus suggests at the outset that diversity can be overcome; at the same time, he is a virtual emblem of pride who does not so much erase the Tower of Babel as attempt to replace it with his own “citadel” once he has conquered Babylon.

Numerous passages in the play suggest a preoccupation, even obsession with linguistic diversity, identity and unity. The tomb of Zenocrate, with its epitaph in as many languages as Tamburlaine has conquered kingdoms, attempts to control the Babylonian confusion,
but Tamburlaine’s immediately following monologue on fortification, with its abundance of words that would have required glossing at the time, inescapably brings that confusion back into language. Likewise, the bridling of the pampered jades in the next act suggests that the diversity of human tongues can be overcome, though only at the price of relentless brutality. The famous Spenserian quote in 4.3, marking the first appearance of the victorious knight Arthur in *The Faerie Queene*, takes on a new significance in the light of the Babel topos. Spenser’s Orgoglio, the giant ‘that with his talnesse seemd to threat the skye’, and who ‘strooke so maynly mercesse, / That could haue ouerthrowne a stony towre’, is not only associated with Babylon; in a sense, he *is* the Tower of Babel. Tamburlaine, in associating himself with Arthur, the slayer of Orgoglio, seemingly becomes the opposite of the Spenserian giant; but he also resembles Orgoglio in his excessive brutality. Rather than attempting to obliterate the Tower of Babel/Babylon, Tamburlaine plans a tower of his own, a citadel to command Babylon. His subsequent burning of the Koran similarly perpetuates the idea of overcoming linguistic (and religious) diversity, although the outcome of that idea is characteristically unclear.

Renaissance theologians believed that pride could be overcome by charity, but whether Babel or Pentecost prevailed was a matter of debate. *Tamburlaine* 2 suggests that the babble of Babel is literally “without end”; it does not provide a Pentecostal solution to diversity. Indeed, for all its emphasis on monologic, gargantuan eloquence, it suggests that linguistic pluralism is and remains irremediable. In that respect, I conclude, the play moves beyond a theological interpretation of the Babel topos to an economic: the rising understanding of the Tower of Babel as a symbol of the national and international marketplace.

“Seek out another godhead”: Religious Epistemology and Representations of Islam in Tamburlaine

By

Joel Slotkin
Stanford University

Given the prominence of Islam, and western conceptions about Islam in contemporary politics and culture, it seems particularly timely for scholars of Renaissance literature to examine early modern representations of Islam. One of the most interesting uses of Islam in a major work of English Renaissance literature occurs in the second part of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great*. The morally ambivalent protagonist conquers his way through most of two plays, defying gods and men with equal impunity, until he burns a copy of the Koran, whereupon he sickens and soon dies. The episode raises questions which have prompted contradictory responses from critics. Does the burning of the Koran express Marlowe’s hostility to all religion, or merely a socially acceptable hatred for Islam? Conversely, does Tamburlaine’s subsequent distemper suggest some form of respect for religion, or for Islam in particular?

stake at any given moment, and he suggests that the variable representation of Muslim identity in Tamburlaine mirrors those shifting historical contingencies. But unlike Queen Elizabeth, who must alter her political rhetoric in response to conditions beyond her control, Marlowe deliberately constructs dramatic circumstances requiring a fluid representation of religious identity. What, then, is Marlowe trying to convey by placing characters like Tamburlaine and Orcanes in situations where they can take on a variety of religious perspectives? As noted by many critics, the play thereby calls into question simple oppositions between Christianity and Islam. Stephen Greenblatt, in Renaissance Self-Fashioning (1980), argues that Marlowe’s subversion of such dichotomies serves to establish “contempt” as “the dominant mode of perceiving the world” (205). But because Marlowe’s cynicism is so pervasive, it is all the more important and interesting to examine his potentially positive representations of religious sensibility, particularly when they occur in a figure that is strongly identified as Other.

I would like to look at the play as a dramatization of religious epistemology that has a significant strand of sincerity running through its pervasive cynicism. Tamburlaine does take seriously the perspective of someone like Orcanes who is honestly trying to understand the nature of the universe and of God. What kinds of religious ideas does Marlowe’s syncretic and contingent view of religion produce? What speculations do characters make about God that the play allows us to respect? Although Marlowe does not conclusively establish whether a divine power plays favorites with humanity in the world of Tamburlaine, the play does at least suggest that any such power would operate according to principles that transcend the difference between Christian and Muslim. The play thus takes a stand which remains just as radical in certain quarters today as it would have been in the 1580s.

Doctor Faustus
Presented by Liverpool Playhouse Company at the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre, Liverpool, England. 4th-26th February 2005. Directed by Philip Wilson. Design by Mike Briton. Lighting by Oliver Fenwick. Sound by Jason Barnes. With Jamie Bamber (Mephostophilis), Alan Barnes (The Librarian), Michael Brown (Wagner), Samuel Collings (The Good Angel), Simon Harrison (Valdes), Daniel Osgerby (Cornelius), Daniel Settatree (The Evil Angel), Nicholas Tennant (John Faustus).

Mike Briton’s set design for Philip Wilson’s new Doctor Faustus at the Liverpool Playhouse established the tone for the whole production. The three walls of the stage were covered from floor to ceiling with books. This was a library, in the oldest, university sense of a library. As the audience entered the auditorium, light streamed through a window to stage right (which, along with two others, upstage and stage left, acted as entrances) while a clock continuously tick-ticked: a sound which was present through the opening scenes and came back at the end to haunt the character and the audience. The focus of the production was the academic and the world of academia. The costumes were modern; Faustus dressed in shirt and tie, perhaps a stereotypical 1970’s professor; Valdes and Cornelius dressed in academic gowns.

The opening speech was whispered by voices around the auditorium. On stage only Faustus heard it and was visibly shocked and frightened, apparently by the voices in his head. It was an electrifying opening to a fast paced production, only lasting 90 minutes, that pitted the naïve against knowledge and experience: in Faustus’ first dealings with Mephostophilis his childlike desire for answers was conveyed with enthusiasm. Mephostophilis was played as a contrast to the stuffy atmosphere in a purple suit with trainers. He was passionate and energetic, almost dancing around the stage when he bought Faustus’ soul. This character brought ‘cool’ to the stage, modernity and illicit fun.
Neil Tennant’s Faustus proved to be engaging: although at first his egomania threatened to irritate, he became a man with deep insecurity. Tennant was the shortest man on the stage, and the height of the library shelves and other actors, especially Valdes, coupled with his unsure body language, served to show him as an intimidated, small man. The story thus became the tragedy of, literally, a little man who wanted to be big.

There was a very cinematic element to this production. Costumes and set encouraged comparison with Buffy the Vampire Slayer (not least when the first burned demon emerged from the bookshelves!), and the angels and Mephostophilis were reminiscent of characters from Kevin Smith’s Dogma. The production took on a surreal quality as Faustus travelled the world without leaving the library, meeting characters from the beginning of history, demonstrating director Wilson’s idea that “Faustus’ journeys, ultimately, are journeys of the imagination” (program notes, p.5). The characters Faustus met were dressed in their period costume: good and evil angels were classically imaged complete with wings, while other costuming took us through the Elizabethan age and eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Faustus remained in his original tweedy clothes, and these characters appearing to him in rapid succession throughout the night (the sun went down for the first meeting with the devil and did not rise again), gave a feeling that the whole experience was Faustus’ madness-induced fantasy. This was not a leap of interpretation on the audience’s part, as Faustus debated with himself in a schizophrenic manner.

Faustus and Mephostophilis shared a homoerotic chemistry—cruefully so when Mephostophilis tortured Faustus with the flame of a Zippo lighter to persuade him to sign his name. The enjoyment both found in the acquisition of knowledge was brilliantly shown as, after the scene of this disastrous ‘marriage’, the two created an image of Da Vinci’s Anatomy, one standing behind the other. The all-male cast added a homoerotic dimension to the production as a whole. This casting enabled a small company (only eight actors) but also heightened a sense of innocence corrupted, as the girls were in fact men and Faustus was shown to be even more ‘deviant’.

This production really drew the audience in and held them: when the final toll came and Faustus awaited his damnation with his briefcase held to his head for protection, the audience held their collective breath. The damnation itself was unexpected and brilliant: Faustus burned his books, suggesting an act to create his own hell. As the books burnt, flames and smoke came from under the stage, blocking the audience’s vision as Faustus went through the stage to hell and the library was destroyed, leaving the image of broken crosses, reminiscent of Gethsemane, in the background. The audience, at the end of the performance I attended, sat in stunned silence at this coup de théâtre: Faustus would burn in the fire of the books that led him astray.

Kate Wilkinson
Sheffield Hallam University

FAUSTUS DOWNUNDER

Faustus, by Robert Couch after Marlowe:
Sydney, March 17 to April 10, 2005
The Working Group Company, in association with
B Sharp Company, Belvoir St Theatre

Marlowe’s plays are rarely performed in Australia, so the opportunity to see Faustus in any form was not to be missed, especially a production that promised to be “uncompromising, irreverent and wildly theatrical” (Belvoir). In short, the new version of the play made significant changes to the story, but was nevertheless absorbing and entertaining in performance.

Robert Couch’s retelling of the Faustus story began as an attempt to adapt Marlowe’s 1604 Doctor Faustus for a small cast and bare stage, but the project soon evolved to meet other
challenges: “Could we have a play that keeps Marlowe’s starting and end points, that stays within his theatrical and political world, that retains as much of his text as is useful but is none the less the history of a very different Faustus, a man who craves – not power as Marlowe’s Faustus does – but to know and understand (as he hopes) absolutely everything!” (Author’s Note, Program).

The concept of a small cast (five actors) and bare stage survived at the Belvoir St Downstairs theatre, an intimate (80-seat) venue with a stage only six metres by four. In an unusual father-son collaboration the production was directed by Robert’s son, Joe Couch, recently the holder of a Fellowship for young directors with the Sydney Theatre Company.

In the Couch adaptation, fewer than fifty lines of the original 1604 text are retained. Most of these belong to Faustus’s final soliloquy, which is used effectively to frame the action. Joe Couch comments that the old “dated theology” is discarded, while “keeping the play’s spirit to create an incisive critique of the world’s current religious wars” (Media Release). There are hence no Angels, Sins or Old Man. Of the devils, only Mephistophilis (Annie McKenna) appears — but in female guise, at once bureaucratic and provocative in tightly-fitting business suit and red stilettos.

While many familiar faces are missing, Faustus (Eden Falk) shadowed by faithful servant Robyn (Paul Ashton) still entertains Valdes and Cornelius, torments the Pope, and conjures for the Emperor. Before dying at Rome he adds to his itinerary the battlefield of Cahors, Margaret of Prague (anticipating Goethe), the observatory of Tycho Brahe, and the snows of Russia. The other members of the ensemble, Rebecca Smee and Jo Turner, perform the play’s minor roles with versatility and much comic exuberance.

The stakes are lower for Couch’s Faustus. The market is glutted with souls, including some “twelve or fourteen” already signed up “who would be emperors of something” (Robert Couch, ms, p. 14). What is more, intellectual frustration is largely substituted for spiritual despair. Faustus, played by Eden Falk with restless and lean intensity, is thwarted at Wittenberg by the constant admonitions of old men to “Have faith.” Not confident of having an immortal soul, he is determined to acquire “all the knowledge of the world” (ms, p. 11). He rejects Mephistophilis’s offer to breathe in his ear and provide “real semblances” direct to his mind, opting instead for obsessive travel even when, blind and destitute in Russia, he can no longer be sure whether he pursues a quest or a delusion.

Damnation receives only a passing mention, but this is still a story about searching for “faith” in a meaningless world, where truth, like the perception of beauty, may “retreat into the mind” (ms, p. 26). Mephistophilis shows Faustus the dangers of “living by faith” with a scene from the religious wars in France, urging that “the passions of the mind” lead to the madness of war (ms, p. 29). Faustus responds initially with anger and confusion but, in time, he learns despair. As he pursues truth he is increasingly obsessed by the question of purpose. Marlowe’s Faustus had asked “Who made the world?” Couch’s Faustus asks “Why is the world as it is?” (ms, p. 49). The play’s closing moments evoke the possibility of reviving the old certainties of faith with Marlowe’s image of Christ’s blood “stream[ing] in the firmament” (ms, pp. 70-71). Robert Couch suggested in an interview that this makes powerful emotional sense for Faustus, even if he is actually just “seeing things.”

Couch’s Faustus inhabits a world that is part seventeenth century, part twenty-first. Its uncertainty and ambiguity are intensified by the style of performance, with the boundary constantly shifting between the “real” and performance make-believe. Even the acting space is improvisational: the action takes place on a large tarpaulin brought on by the actors, with ropes attached for making the magic circle, or for Faustus and Mephistophilis to twirl as they “fly” on missions through the air. A large trunk set down rear-stage offers ready access to costume changes and properties. Some of the latter are pointedly anachronistic: hand-held
electric torches to illuminate faces, hand-held tape recorders and viewers to provide sound effects and represent books and messages.

One rewarding feature of the Couch version is the development of the relationships between characters. That between Faustus and Mephistophilis retains the Marlovian ironies and moments of diabolical honesty while developing the contest of wits between intellectual enthusiasm and nihilism. This relationship is also marked by unresolved sexual tensions, with Mephistophilis an ambiguous figure, signified by her costume but also by numerous instances of intimacy: whispering, touching, endearments. There is less interaction between the two in the play’s second half, as Faustus rejects Mephistophilis’s lessons and declines physically and emotionally. At the end, however, she kneels and kisses him before leading him off-stage. The tensions extend to other female figures. When Margaret offers to share with Faustus an ancient feminine wisdom, a third way beyond faith and reason, what he is most apprehensive about is taking her hand. This Faustus is indeed an unresponsive lover (Helen labels him a “dull wretch” — ms, p. 63) as well as an unwilling hedonist, indifferent, even antagonistic, to “pleasures” of any usual kind.

The expanded role for Robyn, Faustus’s long-suffering servant and companion, is an especially successful innovation. With his practical commonsense, Robyn is the antithesis of Faustus, securely in touch with the ordinary reality that his master finds so confusing. Robyn lives intuitively rather than consciously (Robert Couch, interview), prepared for twenty-four years simply to accept that Faustus’s quest is “important” because Faustus has told him so: “You’re a learned man sir, and I’m nothing like it, and I didn’t think you’d tell me any lies” (ms, p. 68). But he is not merely passive and dutiful, adding that Faustus is “useless” and needs a keeper. In a memorable scene not long before the clock strikes Faustus realises his own moral blindness and sees at last how his constant searching has affected Robyn and his family. Confessing his failings he kneels to ask Robyn’s forgiveness: “You have given me your life. I am not worthy” (ms, p. 69). The play closes with Robyn declining an offer of assistance from Mephistophilis. No sensible person, it is clear, would deal with the devil.

The Couch version is less successful in its structuring of the narrative, which may indicate the particular difficulties that arise in adapting old stories for modern audiences. The Marlowe original has an episodic structure, with repeated demonstrations of magic tricks culminating in Helen; these are framed, however, by the pact with hell and its consequences. The first half of the Couch version succeeds in making its point about war and the “passions of the mind”; thereafter, however, for all the interest of individual scenes, the action alternates without much explanation between Faustus miserable and blind (or blind drunk) attempting to escape the pact, and Faustus once again in the company of Mephistophilis. Thus the scene of despair and horror in Russia (Faustus is “killed” but cannot yet die) is followed by a joint appearance to conjure at the Emperor’s court. Faustus himself perhaps spends too much of the play as the too-clever, rebellious youth rejecting his elders; it is not until the second half that we are told the story of the baker’s child killed in a chimney collapse—and appreciate the irony of those admonitions to “Have faith” and the emotional urgency behind Faustus’s search for meaning.

In the theatre the Couch version led to particular choices and challenges. The verbal style with its explicit statements and emphasis on story-telling meshed easily with the remnants of Marlowe’s text, but it meant also that the actors had to adopt a new way of delivering their lines: as Joe Couch commented, they were not accustomed to speaking their thoughts and feelings so directly (Interview). The lack of magic and spectacle (Helen, produced for an Emperor in a newspaper ruff, was merely a doll) was compensated for by the energy and pace of the action, by the distinctive moods established by the (obviously) improvised lighting and sound effects, and by the use of comedy ranging from one-liners to farce and absurdity.
The comic element was distinctively different from that of the 1604 text with its elaborate wordplay, parallel clowning scenes, and hapless victims of magic tricks. In the new version the humour, ironic or absurd, lurks near the surface of the action; as Robert Couch commented, modern audiences are more adept at looking for subtexts (Interview). Faustus’s earnest speculations are always liable to be deflated by Mephistophilis’s cynicism, or Robyn’s prosaic-mindedness, or even Valdes’s limited view of the whole affair: “If he’d only been contented to make gold out of lead . . . “ (ms, p. 71). The performance exploited the play’s ironies in inventive ways. The madness of war is as much underlined by the combatants at Cahors stabbing (real) tomatoes as by their competing recitations of the Lord’s prayer, one in English, one in Latin. At Tycho Brahe’s observatory, Faustus and Mephistophilis discuss serious matters of astronomy, mathematics, and what Faustus has learnt from his pact— while Brahe himself prowls around the stage, manic in silver nose and magician’s cloak, brandishing a curved sword (accompanied by scraping sounds) and declaiming in Latin.

As these scenes suggest, there was much that was memorable and entertaining in the performance of Couch’s Faustus, and in its new version of the Faust story much to ponder. For the most part then, the production fulfilled its promise, to be “uncompromising, irreverent and wildly theatrical.”

Ruth Lunney
University of Newcastle, Australia

The Dog in the Manger by Lope de Vega
Playhouse Theatre, London, January-March 2005

Last summer’s RSC season at Stratford-upon-Avon focussed on two themes: Shakespeare’s tragedies, and comedies from the Spanish Golden Age. Three of these comedies, including Lope de Vega’s Dog in the Manger, opened in London in January 2005, after a tour which included performances in Madrid. Although one would be hard pressed to find any acknowledgement of the fact, England was not the only country to witness the arrival of a rich, dynamic national theatre in the Renaissance. For whatever reasons, while European romanticism lionized English Renaissance drama, it largely ignored parallel developments in Spain, and, apart from a few pioneers, even Spanish scholars of the nineteenth century felt more inclined to apologize for, rather than celebrate, what was a period of explosive theatrical productivity. Lorca played an important role in bringing the Spanish Golden Age back to popular attention in the twentieth century, but there has never been anything even remotely similar to the Shakespeare industry, working its magic for Spain.

Lope de Vega was born in Madrid in 1562, two years before the birth of Marlowe, in the very year that Madrid became the capital of the Spanish empire. He died in Madrid in 1635, having produced an enormous output of poetry, prose and plays. Conservative estimates ascribe about four hundred plays to Vega and, on average, he produced one play every two months. His poetry includes La dragontea, or Drake, the Pirate, an attack on the swashbuckling piracy of Sir Francis Drake, published in 1598; La corona tragica (1627), a defence of Mary Queen of Scots for which he was rewarded by the Pope; no less than 1800 sonnets, sacred verse, and La gotomaquia, or The Battle of the Cats (1634), a burlesque account of two tomatos who are rivals for the affection of the same beautiful lady cat. The majority of plays were written for the corrales, the two permanent professional theatres, built in Madrid in 1579 and 1583, which used actresses, but segregated the audience by class and by gender, the women sitting separately from the men. A smaller number of mythological plays, including Adonis y Venus, were written for the court which became a major driving force for theatrical development, especially in the seventeenth century, when the ambition and
complexity of its productions outstripped those of the professional theatre.

Lope led a passionate existence and, like Marlowe, played to the public image of notoriety, transposing details of his multiple love-affairs into the quasi-fictions of his poetry, prose and plays. He was exiled from Madrid for eight years at the age of twenty-six, after he produced a series of seurilous lampoons attacking an ex-lover and her family. Nonetheless, he returned illegally, almost immediately, to marry the daughter of a courtier in May 1588. Like Marlowe, although with more calculation and efficiency, he invested in celebrity and exploited the value of being on everyone’s lips to the extent that the phrase, “Es de Lope,” (It is worthy of Lope) became a common saying used to describe anything that was particularly fine or excellent.

The Dog in the Manger (El perro del hortelano), probably written between 1613 and 1615, is a masterpiece of romantic comedy in which the conflict between love and honour is finally resolved by the imagination of a witty servant, a hilarious story of a miraculous return from the dead, and a slightly shady deal between the hero, heroine and witty servant in which they all agree to hide the truth of the hero’s lowly birth. The action takes place in Naples and, with the exception of a few scenes, is firmly anchored in the court of the heroine, Diana, Countess of Belflor. Diana’s father has died, leaving her a rich and very desirable woman, who is courted by a string of noble suitors, all of whom she rejects. We meet two of these suitors, each of whom is exercised by the need to maintain face in the competition for Diana’s hand: the ridiculously pusillanimous Count Federico, and the Marquis Ricardo, who spouts an unstoppable flood of bombast and lyric cliché which he mistakes for the height of romantic sophistication. The problem is that Countess Diana has fallen in love with her secretary, Teodoro, a man of grace, wit, beauty and charm, who is her social inferior. The conflict between passion and honour within Diana results in the most unpredictable and confusing behaviour, as she blows hot and cold, in parody of Petrarch’s paradox of the icy fire, and she repeatedly demeans herself, socially and morally, as she is driven to irrational behaviour by a mixture of passion and jealousy. She becomes the dog in the manger of the title, the one who will not love, but will not allow anyone else to love. Meanwhile, Teodoro who is already in love with Marcela, one of Diana’s ladies-in-waiting, at the start of the play, oscillates between his old love and his desire for Diana. What is disturbing and powerful about Vega’s play is that we are unclear whether characters say what they feel, or whether they eventually come to feel, believe and live what they say. Teodoro can dismiss Marcela in the most callous fashion:

Marcela’s a fool; I confess
that I did dare to cool my own lips
- although not without some unease –
on the lilies and snow of her hand.
(Act I. p.53. trans. David Johnston
[London: Oberon, 2004])

but the audience is uncertain whether he really did love Marcela, or whether he has now convinced himself that he never loved her, or whether he is simply lying, under pressure from Diana. In the presence of his mistress, he is constrained to deny his attachment to Marcela, and his position is remarkably delicate, as such love for a lady-in-waiting is an affront to his mistress’ honour.

Diana is undoubtedly attractive to Teodoro, and not only because he is ambitious, as he repeatedly confesses. The play is full of literal and figurative images of rising and falling, and allusions to such classical embodiments of flying pride as Phaeton and Icarus. Icarus’ wings were made from feathers, and, as a secretary, the instrument of Teodoro’s legitimate aspiration is the quill pen. However, it is also the instrument of his illegitimate aspiration as Diana schemes to turn the phallic symbolism inherent in Teodoro’s pen into fleshy reality. Vega registers with acuteness, even bitterness, the pressures of Teodoro’s dependent position, as he tells Marcela, when he rejects
her, “This house has made me what I am, / and I owe it all due respect.” The action registers the problems of secretaryship and dependence, and the difficulties of sustaining a kind of agency, when one is bound in service. Teodoro is caught between the ambition prompted by his talents and the restrictions imposed on him by his lowly social position. As he reminds Diana, when she asks him to read a love letter she has written, a letter which really expresses her desire for Teodoro himself, as her secretary and servant, he will inevitably praise her letter to the skies because “There’s a point of principle here. / A servant will fall from favour / if he proves wiser than his master.” The dilemma of service is articulated most clearly by Teodoro’s servant and comic side-kick, Tristan, who reminds us that he is nothing apart from his master. Tristan’s (and by implication Teodoro’s) moral potential is circumscribed by the fact of his dependence because, not only is he not free to choose, he has no agency beyond his master’s orbit. Tristan is Teodoro’s complement, and without Teodoro he does not even exist, he is nothing. As Tristan replies, when asked to stand up for Marcela before Teodoro:

Me? I tell him nothing.
I am the scabbard to his sword,
seal to his letter, box to his hat
I am the cloak that keeps him dry,
I am his shadow, his two-step,
the July he dreams of in February,
the courier’s horse, the summer storm
(Act II. p.64)

Like the other major characters, Marcela becomes both victim and aggressor, a tyrant tyrannized by love. The actress, Claire Cox, movingly conveyed the pathos and heartbreak of this discarded woman, but Marcela, like all the characters in a play which does not shy away from exposing the close affinity between love and less seemly feelings, like jealousy, callousness, and revenge, tries to revenge herself on Teodoro by asserting her love for and desire to marry another servant in Diana’s household, Fabio. What is particularly cruel about this sham perpetrated by Marcela’s frustrated love, is that Fabio was once in love with Marcela and still smarts from her initial rejection. In the end, Diana and Teodoro marry thanks to Teodoro’s servant, Tristan. Tristan is the wily clown who manages to get the whole of Naples to believe that Teodoro is in fact the long-lost only son of Count Ludovico. So Teodoro finds parents, social rank and money, and Diana can marry him without compromising her position. Marcela marries Fabio, and Tristan is rewarded for saving the day by being married off to Dorotea. However, just before the betrothals, Teodoro redeems himself, morally, by confessing to Diana that he is not Ludovico’s long-lost son, but an impostor. He loves her too much to lie to her and his confession introduces a conception of moral nobility that has lain dormant in the court of the Countess of Belflor. Diana’s reply is characteristic of tone of the whole play, and represents a compromise between practical and social pressures, on the one hand, and true feeling, on the other, all encased in ruthless passion:

You may be just a commoner,
but I’ve found the cover I needed,
and perhaps some of the fire as well.
Pleasure doesn’t depend on rank
or station, but on the adjusting
of that which we desire to our needs.
I will marry you, rest assured.
But we must keep Tristan’s mouth shut.
When he’s asleep I’ll have him drugged,
and they’ll brick him up in the wall.
(Act III. p.123)

At this moment, Tristan springs out from his hiding place and berates Diana’s ingratitude because it was Tristan who saved the day, even contriving to preserve Teodoro from the half-baked plan to murder him, which had been hatched by a jealous Count Federico and an equally jealous Marquis Ricardo. The solution is a deal in which Diana, Teodoro and Tristan all promise to maintain the lie that Teodoro is Ludovico’s son because they each have a vested interest in doing so.
The Dog in the Manger is an extremely funny love-story, but it is also disturbing and sour. In this respect it is very different from Shakespeare’s romantic comedy which expresses a much stronger belief in the ennobling power of love. What is interesting about The Dog is how closely love is interinvolved with other more destructive desires and drives, including jealousy, revenge, ambition, and even a kind of perversion that desires what is wrong, forbidden, or dangerous, precisely because it is wrong or, in some way, contrary. Diana, for example, only loves when she realizes she cannot have love, when she learns of the relationship between Teodoro and Marcela. Her love springs from jealousy. It can also transform itself into aggression and she strikes Teodoro, drawing blood from his nose, in this production, in a symbolic rape. Perversely, this communication of Diana’s mental pain into Teodoro’s physical pain, which Teodoro claims they both register as pleasure: “A fire and a rage beyond all normal measure, so that when she struck me, we both felt pleasure” (Act II. p.88), is registered by the spectators, including Federico and Ricardo, as conclusive proof that Diana is in love with her secretary. Love is capricious, callous and devious in this play, and is even manipulated by Marcela into an expression of revenge. Almost every character is practised in speaking indirectly, and the truth is wrapped in lies, or alluded to through classical references. Sexual desire, in particular, is articulated by invoking the classical past, so that Diana tells Teodoro that she desires physical consummation by allusions to Poppea and Messalina. The Dog plays out the cliché that all the world is a stage, with a sinister twist, as there is no, or very little, privacy in Naples, and no possibility of living a life without compromising with public demands. As Teodoro reminds Marcela, “walls have ears / and tapestries have eyes to see” (Act II.p.63), with the result that indirection is an evasion, a strategy of manipulation, but also the only safe way to address the truth.

The characters in Lope’s play are not nice people, and one of the glories of the acting ensemble was that they succeeded in making what is a collection of craven, vindictive and jealous individuals engaging, even, at times, appealing. This is true ensemble playing, where practice has imparted energy, where the actors communicate their enjoyment of each other, and of the act of playing, and where one witnesses a true collaboration, rather than a series of histrionic star-turns. There is not a single weak link in this production. Simon Trinder, who plays Tristan, has been repeatedly singled out for praise, and his performance is a model of controlled clowning which does not steal the light from the other actors. In the hands of a lesser and more egotistical actor, Tristan could so easily have unbalanced the play. The cast makes sense of these conflicted individuals who make compromises with reality and society. By turns sarcastic, and then gauche or naive, Rebecca Johnson as Diana, and Joseph Millson as Teodoro, succeeded in making these characters charismatic, if not completely admirable, and Johnson gave a sense of the erotic charge hidden under the Countess’ decorum, at times creating a powerful sense of her animalistic tension. The central story of The Dog in the Manger, where a noble lady falls (in all senses of the term) for a member of her household and her social inferior, is the same premise which lies at the heart of Webster’s Duchess of Malfi, and Lope de Vega had already based a tragedy, El mayor domo de la Duchess de Almalfi (1606), on the Bandello novella which is the source for Webster’s tragedy. The Dog in the Manger experiments with the same material from a comic perspective, but it always has the potential to melt into darkness. It was a darkness brought out most clearly by Rebecca Johnson, Claire Cox and Emma Pallant as Anarda, another lady-in-waiting, and their performances are balanced by, and set in dialogue with, the funnier and sunnier presentation of Federico, by Oscar Pierce, Ricardo played by John Ramm, Fabio played by Joseph Chance, Dorotea played by Melanie McHugh, and Teodoro himself. Set against both the darkness and the farce was Count Ludovico, played by John Stahl, a small
role, but played with such dignity and emotional commitment, that the return of the count’s long-lost son was both a hilarious parody of romance contrivance and a genuinely moving reminder of what true feeling actually is, in this world of indirection and contrivance. The minimal decor consists of a few props and a striking brass stage and backdrop, which is both hard and beautiful. The sombre period costumes are decorated with sumptuous, but muted, embroidery for the higher-ranking characters. Designer and director (Es Devlin and Lawrence Boswell) brilliantly establish a context of containment and restraint, so that the eruption of swift movement, wild passion, ludicrous foolery, and even violence, is all the more dramatic and unsettling.

For this production the Royal Shakespeare Company uses a translation commissioned from David Johnston (London: Oberon, incorporating Absolute Classics, 2004). Johnston is true to the cut and thrust of Lope’s response to popular taste. The language is modern, peppered with modern expletives, and witty. On the other hand, the barely-suppressed eroticism that characterizes many of the exchanges in the play was not really brought out by the translation nor in the performance, except by Rebecca Johnson’s Diana, but this is the only quibble I have about an extremely difficult undertaking which nonetheless succeeds in making The Dog in the Manger live on the contemporary English stage, without mangling the original.

Until the Gate Theatre, London, mounted its pioneering Spanish Golden Age season in the early 1990s, a season which involved both David Johnston and Lawrence Boswell, English culture was largely ignorant of Spanish Golden Age drama. Since then there have been a few productions of Lope de Vega’s Fuente ovejuna and Peribanez, and the RSC allowed the Austin Shakespeare Festival, in Texas, to stage this translation of The Dog in the Manger, in a production that opened at the end of February 2005. Whatever the reasons for the discovery of Spain at this moment in time, and whether or not one chooses to see this discovery as symptomatic of an attempt to reorient

England, (and Britain), towards and within Europe, the RSC’s Dog is a revelation and a celebration of the power of Lope de Vega and of the potential of ensemble acting.

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EDWARD II’s DILEMMA: THRONE OR BED?

Christopher Marlowe may have written his plays in the sixteenth century, but they still look and read very contemporary. I speak specifically now of the production of Edward II staged this past April, for fifteen performances over three weeks, at the American Theatre of Actors under the capable direction of Jeff Dailey. The play centers upon the internal conflict experienced by its eponymous King: attend to affairs of state, or to affairs of the heart? Marlowe’s king is drawn to the affections of his advisor, Gaveston, and to him he devotes his attention to the detriment of the state. Neither the importuning of his court nor of his queen can dissuade him from this romance. Once again Marlowe expertly understands and demonstrates the crucial element of classical tragedy: the hero who saves the nation loses himself through excessive indulgence of pride.

Edward II might be the last of Marlowe’s seven plays, completed shortly before his death in a knife fight, perhaps as the result of political intrigue. Dr. Dailey has now staged all seven and seems to have deepened his understanding of Marlowe. With an able cast, rudimentary but effective costumes, and virtually no set, he has staged a court drama that keeps focus on the issues at hand without diminishing the larger lessons. In this way, Dailey’s production recalls Michaels Frayn’s Democracy, which was playing its last final dates on Broadway while Edward was facing his own challenges at the American Theatre of
Actors. Edward is defeated as much by dissimulative support and weak-kneed betrayal as was Willy Brandt, the West German Prime Minister in Democracy. In both plays, putative support turns into back-stabbing treason, and the surreptitious assistance of opponents proves inadequate to sustain governance. In both plays, the leader of the nation presents a powerful face to the public while harboring doubts and experiencing depression as a result of deep uncertainty.

Marlowe presents a sympathetic portrait of the fallen king and—in this production at least—one has reason to believe that Marlowe has sympathy for the love that today finally (again?) dares to be called by its name. The scenes of homosexual embrace are staged with intimacy and with just a suggestion of sexual scandal despite the enormous political scandal attendant upon it. We do get a sense of disapproval from opposing court dignitaries, but it is usually the disapproval of an unsanctioned romance rather than a morally repellent one. The disapproval of Edward’s lover, the ambitious Gaveston, by others in the court is due to personality clashes more than moral opprobrium. Petty jealousies, hunger for power, and feelings that Edward is negligent in his command of the duties of the Crown appear to be the preeminent causes of conflict.

Last year Dr. Dailey staged Marlowe’s Dido Queen of Carthage and, despite his claims that it was not intended as a commentary on contemporary issues of war, I wrote in these pages that I saw it as a metaphor for President Bush choosing to neglect domestic needs for the sake of the adventure of a foreign war. This year in my conversation with Dr. Dailey, he disparaged a former staging of Edward II by Bertold Brecht as a corrupt adaptation of Marlowe’s play. He has instead directed a straightforward version consistent with the principles of classical tragedy: the great inevitably falter when they indulge themselves and neglect their duties. I am not one to subscribe to the veracity of a rumored romance between President Bush and his then National Security Advisor, now Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice (despite her references to him as her “husband”), but from this play it appears he would do well to forgo his personal obsessions (i.e. financial reform and religious devotion) and focus instead on affairs of state and the need to settle disputes that erupt into war and threaten his nation. For a third consecutive year, even if unwittingly, director Dailey has used Marlowe to admonish our national leader.

Much credit must be given to Dr. Dailey for his work with relatively inexperienced actors. All recite Marlowe’s verse with commendable diction and clarity of thought. Declamations of key passages are articulated well, pacing is swift, and the scenes of homosexual intimacy are handled with grace and naturalness. All the actors perform credibly. Particularly noteworthy is Matthieu Cornillon’s performance in the crucial role of Gaveston. Zachary Green is properly aggressive and smug as Mortimer, Edward’s chief opponent. And Maury Miller has the necessary imperiousness for the title character. The two women in the cast play their roles with an admirable austerity, every bit as equals to the men. Laura Ionata brings a regal bearing and an attractiveness augmented by a jeweled headdress to the role of Queen Isabella. Jessica Mills is quietly effective in a number of smaller roles but stands out as Margaret de Clare of Gloucester. Several of the players perform in multiple roles without confusion.

Marlowe again proves himself to be as much a master of amorous exclamations as political intrigue. Yes, he is effective in the sudden angry outburst, as in Mortimer’s: “I will not yield to any such upstart!” But he also has a feel for the quiet eloquence of grief as expressed, in this production, by Queen Isabella: “Earth melt to air, gone is my sovereign.” Edward’s submission near the end may bring a sensitive audience to tears: “Death ends all; and I can die but once.”

Having directed all of Marlowe’s seven plays perhaps Jeff Dailey will now take on the complete Thomas Dekker opus before he tackles the thirty-seven play cycle of that other well
known Elizabethan playwright so often the subject of revivals.

Michael Elias

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MSA BOOK REVIEWS
Duke Pesta, Editor
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In *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition* Ruth Lunney provides a new answer to the question of “how the theatrical tradition represented by The Tide Tarrith No Man metamorphosed so suddenly into Doctor Faustus and Hamlet and Volpone” (8). Marlowe has, of course, long been perceived as being central to this transformation, and Lunney would not disagree. What she argues is that we have misunderstood the ways in which his drama was most truly innovative because we have failed to see it in the context of the drama being performed in Marlowe’s own day. Instead, we have tended to see him as the start of something new, and in our emphasis on the “new,” we have neglected the “old.” She suggests that “Marlowe’s ‘newness’ lies, as much as anything, in transforming the familiar, in the way he makes use of—rather than discards—old ways and old values” (2). To understand Marlowe, then, we must understand “the ways that people perceived, watched, felt, participated, and responded in the late sixteenth-century playhouse” (2).

After the introductory chapters, each chapter treats a particular aspect of the dramatic practices of the 1580s and early 1590s, discussing both the tradition in which Marlowe was working and ways in which he transformed that tradition. Chapter 3 focuses on the emblem and the exemplum. In the late moralities and in the plays of writers such as Robert Wilson, the emblem pointed the viewer toward a conventional meaning. Lunney suggests that Marlowe learned to present such emblems in a way that challenged the conventional ways of seeing and thus led spectators to a new way of seeing. Similarly, Chapter 4 argues that Marlowe drew upon and then modified the audience’s expectation that a play like Edward II would be a cautionary tale. Using the stage techniques that his audience was used to, Marlowe posed questions rather than giving examples. Chapter 5 argues that Marlowe transformed the traditional framing rhetoric of the late morality. Despite the initial appearance of a Vice character, The Jew of Malta offers the spectator more than one competing voice, but none is clearly “authorized.” The audience is asked to experience competing ways of making sense of what it sees. Chapter 6 focuses on Doctor Faustus and Marlowe’s transformation of the psychomachia. Lunney argues that Marlowe has not merely used a traditional dramatic element, but that he has done so in a way that makes “it possible for the spectators to interpret [Faustus’s] actions in new, non-traditional ways” (12). Finally, Chapter 7 explores Marlowe’s staging of ceremonies. Lunney suggests that Marlowe’s innovative use of theatrical space did more to reshape his audience’s relationship with the action on the stage than did the spectacular stage effects that discussions of Marlowe usually emphasize.

All of these changes are changes in what Lunney refers to as dramatic rhetoric, the ways in which the elements of a play shape and influence others. The rhetoric of the plays with which Marlowe was familiar, she argues, “was enmeshed in particular ways of viewing the world and making sense of experience. Marlowe’s new rhetoric made it possible for
spectators to change their habits of perception—and perhaps to attempt, or even to arrive at, new ways of seeing” (186). It was this, she suggests, that radically changed the drama, rather than Marlowe’s “mighty line,” subversive ideas, or heroic (overreaching) characters.

_Marlowe and the Popular Tradition_ was a co-winner of the Marlowe Society of America’s Roma Gill Prize (awarded every two years) for the best work on Marlowe, an honor it shared with Constance Brown Kuriyama’s powerful biography, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

Bruce E. Brandt
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Given the considerable body of material that has been written on Marlowe’s life, anyone attempting to write a new biography of Marlowe, or at least a study of major biographical significance, must find a way to make it both novel and useful. The authors of recent biographical studies have met this challenge by various means. William Urry, whose posthumously published *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury* (1988) was instrumental in reviving interest in Marlowe’s life, emphasized Marlowe’s origins in Canterbury. Charles Nicholl, in *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (1992), tapped a trend toward freely mingling fact and fiction in contemporary writing to recast the latter part of Marlowe’s life as a spy novel and murder mystery. Lisa Hopkins’s *Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life* focused on Marlowe’s works as quasi-autobiographical documents reflecting their author’s major concerns. In _Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life_ (2002), I chose a relatively minimal, document-based approach in order to direct attention back to what we actually know—or, more often, don’t know—about Marlowe.

Roy Kendall’s *Christopher Marlowe and Richard Baines: Journeys through the Elizabethan Underground* is unique in placing considerable emphasis on Marlowe’s accuser Richard Baines. The book is described on the dust jacket as the first “full-length biography” of the author of the Baines Note, whose history will provide a “lens through which to view standard Marlowe biography . . . with a fresh eye.” Kendall revisits the valuable research he published earlier on Richard Baines, expanding on his argument that Baines was sent to Rheims as a spy, and in an attempt to undermine the seminary, made statements which closely resemble the remarks he later ascribed to Marlowe in the Baines Note. Kendall contends that Baines influenced Marlowe in a variety of ways, and may have recruited him as an intelligence operative, a suggestion first made by Nicholl.

While the detailed information that Kendall provides is useful, his suggestions about Baines’s and Marlowe’s possible influence on each other are less compelling. The irreverent remarks that Baines admitted to making are specifically anti-Catholic; the ones he ascribes to Marlowe are blatantly anti-Christian. Marlowe may well have taken inspiration for Barabas’s poisoning of an entire nunnery from Baines, who entertained the possibility of poisoning the seminary at Rheims (48). Since F. S. Boas first made this suggestion in the late 1940s, it has generally been assumed to be true. It is less likely that Marlowe’s depiction of a similar poisoning in _The Jew of Malta_ turned Baines against him (132), or that Baines’s masquerade as a priest influenced Faustus’s and Mephistophilis’s disguise as Cardinals in Rome (47), especially since this masquerade exists only in the 1616 text and was probably not written by Marlowe. Indeed, it is not at all certain that Baines was sent to the seminary as a spy and mole, although this was
what Cardinal Allen preferred to believe. Baines’s recantation suggests otherwise. What is certain is that he was or became a spy whose maladroit maneuvers got him into serious trouble.

Kendall’s book is a relatively informal extended meditation on a number of issues related to Marlowe that lends itself to leisurely reading. Kendall is at his best when he breaks new ground by supplying fresh information. He has examined the records of Waltham, Lincolnshire, for example, and found samples of the Rector Richard Baines’s handwriting—or, more precisely, found that the records during his tenure were kept in several different hands, one of which may (or may not) be Baines’s. None of these hands match the handwriting on the Baines Note, but of course the hands on the body, signature, and endorsement of the Baines Note all differ as well, as do the hands on the rough draft of the copy sent to the queen. There is no evidence that Baines wrote any of them himself, nor any compelling reason why he should have written them. The fact that they are not autograph manuscripts has no bearing on their credibility, any more than the various hands in the Waltham parish records call their credibility into question. The Marlowe records abound in documents written by someone other than the person whose words are being recorded, including a number of wills. Given the vexed history of Marlowe biography, it would be too much to hope for a simple solution based on handwriting analysis.

Kendall has also discovered Rector Richard Baines’s will and the inventory of his possessions, both crucially important documents. However, Kendall overlooks a clue that could resolve his doubt about whether the Cambridge Baines, the Rheims Baines, and the Waltham Baines are the same man. The Cambridge-Rheims Baines was apparently from Southwell, Nottinghamshire, as was his brother or kinsman Thomas Baines, son of John Baines, yeoman, who followed him to Caius College, Cambridge. Similarly, Baines’s friend William Ballard, who helped him obtain his benefice, spending £20 of his own money on Baines’s behalf in order to secure it, was also from Southwell. In his will, Rector Baines leaves “all my lands in Upton in the county of Nottingham” to his son John (320). Upton is a hamlet in the parish of Southwell. Thanks to Kendall’s research, we now know that Marlowe’s Nemesis not only escaped the noose at Tyburn, but also married a young wife, sired several children, and died leaving considerable property.

On the subject of Thomas Drury’s letter to Anthony Bacon, Kendall shares Nicholl’s view that the “articles of Atheism” Drury mentions refer to Marlowe’s “Atheist lecture,” although Marlowe is nowhere mentioned in the letter. Kendall also agrees that Drury wrote the “Remembrances of Words and Matter against Ric. Cholmeley,” describing Nicholl’s case for the latter ascription as “almost watertight” (255). And yet the documents reporting on Cholmeley make it clear that the informer was unknown to Cholmeley—which Drury certainly was not. It is implausible that Cholmeley would confide in a man he had recently turned over to the authorities, or ask him to join with him “in familiarite.” On the other hand, Kendall provides some revealing new material on Gilbert Gifford and Gifford Gilbert. The scope and depth of Kendall’s research is impressive, and for that reason alone his book merits careful attention.

David Riggs’s The World of Christopher Marlowe follows the more familiar format of the life-and-works biography, although, unlike John Bakeless’s Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe (1942), it makes no pretense of being comprehensive. Riggs’s narrative is chronological, highly readable, and inventive in its interpretations. The book is attractively and generously illustrated, while the notes are tucked inconspicuously in the back and arranged by chapters and page numbers, presumably to make the book more inviting to general readers.

Riggs places much emphasis on Marlowe’s marginal class status and the limitations it imposed on his prospects for advancement, as well as its impact on his plays,
often with illuminating results. His discussion of humanist education and its probable formative influence is similarly insightful, although I suspect Marlowe enjoyed his schooling rather more than Riggs suggests, partly because it was a sphere where class origins were no barrier to recognition and achievement. Like Kendall, Riggs occasionally glances at the subject of homosexuality, which his inclusion of in Marlowe’s works makes easier to broach. There is, of course, no direct biographical evidence of Marlowe’s sexual orientation, which is why I chose not to discuss it in _A Renaissance Life_. Certainly one of the greatest virtues of Riggs’s book is his treatment of the translations as significant literature. In general, Riggs is most persuasive and provocative when he deals with the intellectual and cultural context (such as the emphasis on Calvinistic ideas in early education) and with Marlowe’s works, least convincing in his treatment of biographical evidence. When Riggs treats historical documents with the same latitude he employs in interpreting literature, the results are often tenuous.

Riggs accepts Nicholl’s dubious interpretation of Drury’s letter to Bacon without question, arguing that the “articles of Atheism” could only refer to Marlowe’s alleged “Atheist lecture.” And yet Riggs demonstrates at length that atheism was becoming more prevalent in Elizabethan England, to the point where it was a cause of increasing concern and was a dangerous position to take openly. He also notes that Raleigh (who was himself suspected of atheism, and investigated for it) had listened to an atheist diatribe by the Earl of Oxford. Why, then, must we conclude that Marlowe was the only conceivable author of Drury’s “articles of Atheism”? The burden of proof would appear to rest with the person who claimed that he was.

According to Riggs, the Queen saw a copy of the Baines Note before Marlowe was killed, and therefore her order to “prosecute it to the full,” as Drury reports it, was in effect an order to assassinate Marlowe. To anyone familiar with the documents in question, this argument seems forced. The Baines Note exists in two forms. The fuller draft, which was prepared first, includes allegations about “tobacco and boys” and coining, as well as ending with Baines’s promise to produce more witnesses. The shorter, edited version, which, according to the endorsement, was the Note “as sent to the queen,” is obviously a rough draft of a fair copy. The shorter version concentrates exclusively on Marlowe’s religious views. It has a heading which describes the content as “horrible blasphemes,” and which also states that Marlowe died a few days after the note was delivered, a fact that would obviously eliminate the need for more witnesses.

Riggs claims not only that the Baines Note is Drury’s “articles of Atheism,” and that the queen saw it before Marlowe died; but also that the wording was added later as a cover-up. Why a cover-up was needed is not clear, since absolute monarchs, unlike elected officials, are not subject to investigation by special prosecutors. The heading was apparently part of the edited version before it was copied, and that means the edited version was seen by the Queen after Marlowe’s death. There is no evidence that the heading was a later addition, nor any reason to suspect that it was.

Unless, of course, one favors conspiracy theories, and Riggs’s biographical arguments do lean in that direction. Marlowe is compared to double agents and said to be involved in “counter-intelligence,” though it is never clear exactly what intelligence Marlowe was countering. The fight with William Bradley, according to Riggs, was a set-up in which Marlowe lured Bradley into a fight so that an obscurely motivated Thomas Watson could murder him in the guise of self-defense (a convoluted theory for which there is absolutely no evidence). And of course Marlowe was a victim of state conspiracy—also obscurely motivated. If the queen was annoyed with Marlowe, she could simply have had him tried and executed, which was the usual procedure.

Occasionally, instead of tweaking the facts into a cloak and dagger paradigm, Riggs simply gets them wrong. These slips are minor and infrequent, but distracting. William Bradley
was not “an innkeeper” (128, 249), but the quarrelsome son of an innkeeper. Marlowe was released on bail from Newgate in October 1589, about a month before, not after, the Admiral’s-Strange’s Men were asked to suspend performances (260). Queen Elizabeth’s Keeper of the Privy Seal was Sir John Puckering, not Thomas Puckering (319). Tamburlaine did not order the inhabitants of besieged cities to evacuate; he massacred and incinerated them (318). The correct reading of the “Remembrances” regarding William Parry is “he [Parry] never meant to kill the queen, more than himself [Cholmeley] had.” The second letter is clearly a secretary “e” (often mistaken in hasty reading for a modern “o”), and the loop on the end of the “v” is a standard scribal abbreviation for “er.” “Now” makes no sense syntactically. Wraight, whose transcripts and translations are not entirely accurate, misread the word (322. See also n. 322). Marlowe did not have a “substantial criminal record” (296) because he was never convicted of a crime. And last but far from least, Kuriyama never advanced a theory “that Puckering, for no apparent reason, deliberately set out to deceive Queen Elizabeth about the timing of an event [Marlowe’s death] that had already occurred” (n. 329). I have not so much as dreamt of such a theory in my biweekly Marlovian nightmares.

Taken all in all, both of these books make substantial contributions to Marlowe studies. Because their scope of discussion is necessarily limited, neither is likely to be regarded as a definitive Marlowe biography, but perhaps definitive biographies exist only in publisher’s blurbs and the ethereal realm of Platonic ideas. In Marlowe’s case especially, where so little is known, so many issues are in dispute, and so much remains to be discovered, it seems increasingly unlikely that we will ever see one.

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MSA Book Reviews
Editor’s Note. MSA Reviews appears twice yearly and serves members of the Marlowe Society of America by providing prompt descriptions and evaluations of recent publications on Marlowe and his period. It gives both new and established Marlowe scholars a forum for expressing their views from a variety of critical approaches. Although reviews of books are the norm, appraisals of recent articles on Marlowe are also welcome. The reviews should be no more than 1000 words in length and cover the book’s purpose, contribution, scholarship, format, and success in achieving its purpose. The editor reserves the right to ask for revision and to make stylistic changes thought appropriate. The substance of the review and its judgments remain those of the review’s author (and do not, of course, express the opinion of the MSA). Reviewers should be members of the MSA. The editor may be contacted as follows:

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Hutchings, Mark. “Marlowe’s ‘Scourge of God.’” Notes and Queries 51.3 (Sept. 2004): 244-247.


Pettit, Tom. “’Skreaming like a pigge halfe stickt’: Vernacular Topoi in the Carnivalesque Martyrdom of Edward II.” Orbis Litterarum 60.2 (April 2005): 79-108. [This paper was originally presented at the MSA International Conference, Cambridge 2003. Electronic oﬀprint (PDF) is available from the author: pettit@litcul.sdu.dk]

