MSA ELECTIONS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The MSA election has brought changes to the executive board, and these are complemented by new appointments to our editorial positions.

Our new President is Professor Robert Logan of the University of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut. He is well known to members of the Society, having served for many years as our Treasurer and, more recently, as Vice President.

Professor Roslyn L. Knutson of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock will continue to serve as Treasurer.

Professor Paul Whitfield White of Purdue University, who has been serving as Editor of the Book Reviews, will now serve as Membership Chair.

Professor Rick Bowers of the University of Alberta has been appointed as the new Editor of MSAN.

Professor Duke Pesta of Ursinus College has been appointed as the new Editor of the Book Reviews.

THE ROMA GILL AWARD

The Marlowe Society of America is pleased to announce that the Roma Gill award for the best critical study on Marlowe written during 1997-1998 has been jointly awarded to two outstanding contributions to Marlowe studies: Patrick Cheney's Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) and Sara Munson Deats's Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Newark: University of Delaware Press; Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1997).

In different ways, each book breaks new ground in Marlowe studies. Patrick Cheney ingeniously places Marlowe in a poetic context of Ovid and Spenser in order to set forth a cursus for Marlowe hitherto undesignated. Cheney demonstrates through what he calls the "typology of intertextuality" that we can better understand Marlowe, his career path, and his rivalry with Spenser as both a poet and a writer of English nationhood. In her book, Sara Munson Deats undertakes the first fully developed feminist approach to Marlowe's plays. Arming us with a synthesis of the best ideas of postmodernist literary theory, cultural history, psychology, and philosophy, she illuminates some of the most controversial issues of sex, gender, and desire that Marlowe's plays present.
THE JEW OF MALTA

The Marlowe Project’s production of Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* in November 1999 at Musical Theatre Works, Manhattan, proved a significant triumph for all concerned. Director Jeff S. Dailey, in a scholarly presentation, offered a traditional and gripping representation of what was a popular play in Marlowe’s time, but which has been unduly neglected today—perhaps because of its blatant anti-Semitism and its rather one-dimensional characters. Yet Director Dailey and the capable actors brought out all the subtleties possibly inherent in the text. The entire play was fast-paced and dramatic, with blackouts appropriately separating the exequies and scene-changes.

If anything, the tempo was too fast, not taking in mind a modern audience’s unfamiliarity with long Marlovian and Shakespearean-like lines. Bart Shattuck, in a virtuoso performance as Barabas, the title role, while properly emphasizing operative words and expertly introducing trenchant pauses before and after important phrases, frequently so sped through whole passages without precise enunciation that meaning could be lost; also his many asides were sometimes, in his hastened pace, not given sufficient differentiation from his main speech. But on the whole, his was a magnificent portrayal marred only by a rare mispronunciation, such as “Jacobin” and “Aesop.”

In fact, neither he nor the rest of the cast observed the grave accents of “ed” endings of past tense verbs and past participles or the extra syllables in “ion” word endings; this neglect did lead to a more modern feeling in reading the lines, but also canceled the rhythmic integrity of Marlowe’s blank verse.

Travis Taylor as the Thracian slave Ithamore, Barabas’s servant, was a perfect foil for his master. He almost stole the show with clear, even rapid, speech and erotic body movements, clad only in a loincloth and later rags, in his demonstrative and torrid love scenes with the prostitute Bellamira, an excellent and convincingly wily Eszter Biro. Especially beautiful was their scene in Act IV where Ithamore recites to Bellamira a version of Marlowe’s poem “The Passionate Shepherd.” His scenes with Barabas were intense and riveting; the recital of their misdeeds was chilling and possibly antedates Aaron’s evil catalogue on Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (V.i.124-144)—Barabas speaks of pinning a scroll to a corpse’s chest and Aaron boasts of setting a corpse upright and carving a mocking phrase into the dead man’s skin.

Another resemblance to, and possibly antedating, a later Shakespeare play was Barabas’s drinking a mandrake potion (Act V) to achieve a simulated death—the same device supplied by Friar Laurence and used by Juliet to counterfeit death in *Romeo and Juliet*. 
Splendid as Abigail, Barabas’s doomed daughter, was Dana Gotlieb, whose speech was also lucid and emotionally geared to her changes in spirit, most affectingly expressed in her deliberately paced, poignant death speech to Friar Barnadine as she was dying from her father’s poison.

Terry Schappert was an effective and believable Fernze, governor of Malta, whose speech was clear, well modulated and communicative as an official beset by Turks, represented by Gabriel Portuond in a strong performance as Selim Calymath. Bert Steinmannis did yeoman service in multiple smaller roles, including the welcome addition of Machiavel’s preatory speech to the play, although his rendition of Machiavel’s cynical lines seemed a bit too mild and forceless to depict so sinister a character. Morgan Demel was especially notable in several roles, and his speech was clear, resonant, and well enunciated. As the two young men in love with Abagail, Mathias and Lodowick, Mario Prado and Ryan Edwards, respectively, of equally tall height were extremely proficient in their portrayals and in their vigorous duel, instigated by Barabas and well choreographed by Terry Schappert.

As mentioned above, Eszter Biro was the sexily believable courtesan Bellamira. From Act III onward she came into her own, and her scenes with Ithamore were suitably steamy. Two other actors, Kelly Ann Shaman and John Squire, completed the cast of twelve.

Marian Shelly’s costumes were beautiful: the men correct in tights; the priests, nuns, and Turks in appropriately ornamental garb. Director Dailey brought in effective and ingenious props; a chain with padlock and key to be placed around Ithamore’s neck when a slave, which Barabas unlocks and removes upon declaring Ithamore his heir; and a map in Act V, when Calymath shows his bassoes the state of the sacked city.

The set was stark, with platforms for the emergence of Abigail from the nunnery with many bags of Barabas’s gold, which she tosses down to Barabas, and from behind which platform Barabas sinks to his death in a boiling cauldron, recalling Don Giovanni’s final descent into Hell. The attractively illustrated program must not go unappreciated with its varied and balanced typefaces. Music was topical 16-century instrumental ensemble recordings, which added to the ambience. The play was a totally enjoyable experience, leading one audience member to wonder why it is not produced more often.

Rather than the so-called rich Jew of Malta being inordinately wealthy, he is indeed one of the poorest men of the island—poor in his lack of probably the most significant acquisition a human being can possibly have: namely social acceptance and fulfillment.

A Jew was an unjustly ostracized, social outcast; and, naturally, to compensate, a Jew was left with the desire to amass what was possible, i.e., riches. Greed is ever a reaction to frustration. The riches thereafter are ironically cited and used as warrant and cause for further abuse, whereas they are really the result of the community’s original opprobrium of Jews. The play initially presents Barabas voicing worthy Hebrew sentiments soon corrupted to wickedness by his mistreatment by the equally greedy Christian and Moslem communities. The nunnery, for all its professed charity, was founded on a theft from Barabas, much smaller and less cruel than the community’s original theft of social approval and esteem.

Henry Traeger  
New York

A DEBT TO THE DEVIL: FAUSTUS  
AND THE FATES OF PRODIGALITY  
IN ELIZABETHAN LONDON


Nicholas R. Moschovakis, Chicago, 1999

The idea of a Satanic pact in writing had never been a convention of English witch lore, although it was a feature of the continental traditions that produced the Faust-book. Thus, as Marlowe (with his probable collaborator) refashioned the story for the English stage, he could rely on native accounts for some details, but not for the signing of the bond. Yet for this detail there was another resonant English cultural equivalent, one from the economic sphere: a contract, and in particular the kind of extortionate contract employed by unscrupulous
English lenders. This feature of the early modern economy, it is argued, is significant for Faustus's relationship to Mephistopheles. Faustus legally signs away his most precious possessions, much as a young prodigal might to a cunning usurer from an Elizabethan coney-catchers pamphlet: in the end he must render up what is, in effect, the interest due on twenty-four years' worth of borrowed time.

It is clear that Lucifer finally claims Faustus's body and soul as his legal property, according to the terms of the written contract. When Marlowe's Faustus first proposes the pact, he employs the word "surrender" in its legal sense pertaining to a transfer of goods held in reversion or remainder. Indeed, when Mephistopheles returns to demand a written title to Faustus's soul—"thou must bequeath it solemnly, / And write a deed of gift with thine owne blood, / For that security caues great Lucifer"—all the legal vocabulary has led the play's editors to suppose an ironic allusion to the lawyer's jargon of "paltry legacies"; however, the deed itself bears little resemblance to a last will and testament. Instead it bears a closer relationship to another kind of early modern property transaction, the covertly usurious contract.

Usury was legal in Elizabethan England after 1571, but only by the terms of a law that limited annual interest rates to 10 per cent. This partial legalization, which followed decades of controversial changes in state policy, was itself to stand unaltered until the Jacobean period. It reflected a general, though mostly unadmitted, acknowledgment that lending at interest was crucial to the ordinary functioning of a trade economy. In Marlowe's society, interest loans were ubiquitous, a matter of course. But they were also implicitly subject to suspicions of unethical dealing, and in fact many such contracts were craftily devised by lenders so as to circumvent the statutory ceiling of 10 per cent. This was "biting usury," conceived as lending motivated not by the needs of the communal welfare, but by uncharitable self-interest. The "biting" usurer's imperative was to ensure that all interest would be owed in a form that was actionable as legal debt, no less than the capital itself; at the same time, secondly, any interest charged over and above the legal limit must be laundered to appear invisible or part of a fair exchange or a free gift.

More significant than such details, perhaps, is the tenuouslyness of Faustus's own understanding of the consequences of his debt to the devil. In his rashness, especially, Faustus resembles contemporary representations of unwise borrowers; and Mephistopheles accordingly reminds us of those who profited by them. Usurers were most commonly represented from the insolvent debtor's perspective, as predatory monsters. Many fictional usurers, though, also took great pains to seem friendly to their victims, who were often gullible young students or heirs cast in the prodigal mold. This made the stigma on "biting usury" worse than that of being merely unnatural. The usurer was not just a transgressively ruthless businessman, but a deliberate tempter whose character was appropriately hypocritical, even diabolically so. Usurers were thus portrayed as devils (for instance, in Thomas Heywood's 1603 play A Woman Killed With Kindness), not only in virtue of orthodox sanctions against them, but also because they contributed to the dissipation and alienation of estates—a constant theme in contemporary jeremiads against the dangers of social mobility. Marlowe's young protagonist is not gentle but base-born; while on the one hand he is a typical Elizabethan prodigal (whose extravagant hope is to "fill the public schooles with silk / Wherewith the students shall be brauely clad"), on the other hand he seems to have no patrimony worthy of consideration, nothing much to lose except in the afterlife.

Doctor Faustus thus alludes to Elizabethan representations of lending at interest. Of course, Mephistopheles is not literally a creditor but a familiar spirit to Faustus, who is, literally, a witch. Nonetheless, in many ways Mephistopheles epitomizes dominant stereotypes of the creditor in early modern England. The prodigal Faustus's desire for the things of the world embodies the precarious material interests of the propertied and aspiring classes, no less than his eternal fate (if that is the word) adumbrates the spiritual insecurities of a disoriented post-Reformation people. And here it must be remarked that the theological implications of the usury analogy are intriguing; indeed, it suggests that Faustus might appeal to God, posthumously, against the legality of Lucifer's action to claim his body and soul—as an attempt to extort usury above the legal rate.

DOCTOR FAUSTUS:
SHENANDOAH SHAKESPEARE EXPRESS

The Shenandoah Shakespeare Express is performing Doctor Faustus in repertory with Richard II and Much Ado About Nothing on its 2000 Scoff and Grin Tour. The list of performance dates for Doctor Faustus originally supplied to the Marlowe Society has been supplemented with dates from the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express's web site: www.ishakespeare.com. Those interested in a particular
performance should verify the information with the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express: phone 540-885-5588; fax 540-885-4886; e-mail ssc@ishakespeare.com.

Wingate Fine Arts Center, Wingate, NC, 22 February 2000.

Clemson Shakespeare Festival, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, 7 March 2000, 8 p.m.


Centenary College, Shreveport, Louisiana, 13 March 2000, 7 p.m.; 16 March 2000, 7 p.m., and 18 March 2000, 2 p.m.

University of Alabama, Huntsville; Huntsville, Alabama, 23 March 2000, 7:30 p.m.

Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, 24 March 2000, 11 a.m.

University of Texas, Austin; Austin, Texas, 4 April 2000, 8 p.m.

University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE, 12 April 2000.

Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, 14 April 2000.

Central College, Pella, Iowa, 18 April 2000, 7:30 p.m.

Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio, 1 May 2000, Time TBA.

Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen, Glen Allen, Virginia, 6 May 2000, 8 p.m.

Northern Virginia 4-H Center, Fort Royal, VA, 25 May 2000.

Northern Virginia 4-H Center, Fort Royal, VA, 27 May 2000.

Winchester Little Theatre, Winchester, Virginia, 3 June 2000, 8 p.m.


Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA, TBA 3-8 July 2000.


Piedmont Virginia Community College, Charlottesville, VA, TBA 24-29 July 2000.


Yukon Arts Centre, Whitehorse, Yukon (Canada), 31 August 2000, 8 p.m.

University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Fairbanks, Alaska, 8 September 2000, 8:15 p.m.

St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, 18 October 2000, 7:30 p.m. and 20 October 2000, 7:30 p.m.

University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario (Canada), Dates and Times TBA (between 23 and 28 October 2000).

St. Michael’s College, Colchester, Vermont, 31 October 2000, 7 p.m.

Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School, Orleans, Massachusetts, 4 November 2000, Time TBA.

RECENT STUDIES IN MARLOWE

Boutcher, Warren. “‘Who taught thee rhetoricke to deceive a maid?’: Christopher Marlowe’s Hero and Leander, Juan Boscan’s Leandro and Renaissance Vernacular Humanism.” Comparative Literature, 52 (2000): 11-14.


1999). MSA member Burnett notes that with these two volumes, Marlowe's complete works are now available in a newly-edited, handy, scholarly, student-friendly form from the same publisher.


Funk, Robert N. "‘To stir the strife': The Use of Seneca in The Jew Of Malta's Prologue." English Language Notes 36:3 (1999): 19-23.


FROM THE EDITOR

MSAN has no backlog and depends upon the membership for its contents. We welcome reviews of films or productions of Renaissance (especially Marlovian) drama, brief articles and notes on Marlowe or other matters of interest to Marlovians, announcements and calls for papers, and ideas or experiences related to teaching Marlowe. The address and deadlines appear on page 2. Inquiries to the editor are welcome.