

Marlowe and Early Shakespeare Seminar

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Abstracts

Lara Bovilsky, University of Oregon

“Young Shakespeare’s Delight’: Marlovian and Lylian Tactics in the First Tetralogy”

While scholars like to imagine that Shakespeare eventually improved on or overcame the strong influence of Marlowe’s characters’ ambitions and thematic/stylistic juggernaut effects, they frequently approve Marlovian representations in his early works as signaling the development of a more highly valued mature style. Shakespeare’s early formal and thematic debts to Lyly, by contrast, have generally been disdained as indulgence of Shakespeare’s audience’s inferior tastes or, worse, of his own discreditable, juvenile pleasure in patterning and artifice.

By contrast, this essay argues for the value in Shakespeare’s purposeful use of Marlovian and Lylian tools in representing subjectivity and psychology in *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Shakespeare draws on Lylian rhetoric and repetition to generate vivid dramatic and emotional impacts that stage an intersubjectivity with historical implications. Such Lylian tactics both contrast and join with Marlovian stylistics (as in Richard Gloucester’s self-representation), to present theories of history and historiography. Attending to Shakespeare’s interest in his contemporaries’ methods and styles therefore clarifies some of the plays’ historical operations and helps us understand period representational practices that were meaningful for Elizabethan audiences and attractive to the author most singled out as superseding them.

Michael D. Friedman, University of Scranton

“You see, it’s all just theatre’: Religion and the Stage in Craig Pearce’s *Will* (2017)”

Writer and creator Craig Pearce’s TNT television series *Will* ran for only one season, time enough to chronicle Shakespeare’s arrival in London to begin his theatrical career. Pearce accepts recent biographical theories that Shakespeare was raised in a Catholic household, but he also portrays Will’s struggle between a commitment to his faith and his ambition to become a secular playwright. These two influences are represented in the series by a pair of major figures: Will’s cousin Robert Southwell, a Jesuit priest and eventual martyr, who attempts to persuade Shakespeare to use his talents to support the Catholic underground, and Christopher Marlowe, a tortured and degenerate dramatist, who nevertheless provides Will with a model for powerful artistic expression. Marlowe, as he struggles to compose *Doctor Faustus*, seeks spiritual guidance from Southwell, as well as knowledge of the occult from Edward Kelley, a famous magician. Through these investigations, Marlowe arrives at the conclusion that religion and devil worship, which both present illusions, are just two different types of theatre. Shakespeare, who presents theatrical illusions animated by faith, manages to reconcile the religious and the secular in his dramatic works.

Ed Gieskes, University of South Carolina

“Shakespeare and Marlowe, Historical Dramatists”

Marlowe’s entire career as a playwright was over before the “early” part of Shakespeare’s career was complete, depending, of course, on where one draws the line between the early Shakespeare and the

middle or later Shakespeare. During the period of overlap, Shakespeare produced a tragedy, four history plays (three in possible collaboration with Marlowe), and two comedies. Marlowe's six extant plays have been generally discussed as tragedies despite most of his plots having been drawn from historical materials. In my essay, I will discuss both the "early" Shakespeare and Marlowe as historical dramatists, arguing that both writers shared an interest in using historical materials as sources and that Marlowe's early death and the close association between Shakespeare and the "history play" has produced a kind of retrospective distortion of what the shape of their careers might have looked like in the early 1590s.

Heejin Kim, Florida State University

"Shakespearean Revisions of the Marlovian Portions of *The Contention* and *Duke of York*"

Recent attribution and textual studies suggest not only Marlowe's collaborative presence on the folio *Henry VI* plays but also Shakespeare's revision of quarto plays, *The Contention* and *Duke of York*, as early versions of the folio plays. The essay examines Shakespearean revision and "expansion" of quarto plays, including supposed Marlovian portions, with a particular focus on characters performed by boy actors. A transition from pre-Elizabethan times to the age of Shakespeare is visible in the presence of Marlovian adaptation of early English drama in terms of casting patterns, dramatic structure, and characterization, which were redefined by Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Men in his early career. It has been widely noted that the characterization of Queen Margaret across the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III* is discontinuous. Such discontinuity, I suggest, extends to unconformities between the quarto plays and the folio plays in terms of Margaret whose presence in quarto is closely related to Isabella in Marlowe's *Edward II*. A dramaturgical and literary intersection between Quarto Queen Margaret and Marlowe's Isabella suggests collaborative and continuous development of English history plays in the 1590s by Marlowe and Shakespeare.

Tara L. Lyons, Illinois State University

"Collecting 'Marlowe' before 1660"

After acquiring a rare copy of *Dido* in 1787 and having it bound up with other early Marlowe quartos and octavos in red morocco, Edmund Malone proudly declared, "This is, I believe, the only complete collection of Marlowe's works, now extant." Within the next forty years, the first collected editions of Marlowe's complete works appeared in print, one edited by George Robinson in 1826 and another edited by W. Oxberry in 1827. As scholars have argued, Marlowe was resurrected as an "Author" by book collectors and textual scholars in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. This paper seeks to establish the material conditions that made this "collected Marlowe" possible. Relying on book lists, library catalogues, bookseller's accounts, and provenance records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I offer a new account of Marlowe's books in collection. I show that the diachronic scenes of textual assembly before 1660 expose the variety of processes by which Marlowe's early printed plays and poems were gathered, paired, ordered, and bundled by readers, collectors, and agents of the press. Given this diversity of assemblage types and collecting agents, the principles guiding the compilation of Marlowe's books remained largely consistent over the early modern period, a phenomenon that, I propose, laid the groundwork for the later consolidation of a Marlovian corpus by the likes of Malone and his successors.

Ian McAdam, Lethbridge University

“The Secular Christ in Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare”

Marlowe and the early, contemporaneous Shakespeare experience a mutual influence which involves them both in the artistic creation of a “secular Christ,” that is, an assertive and manly appropriation of divinity, ultimately in the cause of justice and social reform. Such creation entails a recurring “translation” – at times bordering on overt parody – of the doctrine of Atonement at the heart of Protestantism’s theology of grace. The beginning of Shakespeare’s role in this process can be traced to his (and his collaborators’) attempts in *1 Henry VI* to qualify the fantasy of *Tamburlaine* with a more realistic depiction of human suffering and courageous self-sacrifice in the heroics of Talbot and his son. By tracing the use of shadow imagery, I argue for the crucial emergence of a distinction between “acting” – as hypocrisy, as misrepresentation, as self-serving manipulation – and “acting” as a necessary mode of responsible social action. Paradoxically through the outrageous villainy of Richard III, Shakespeare finally transforms Marlowe’s key description of kings in *Edward II* as “perfect shadows in a sunshine day” into a profoundly existential emphasis on the ethical significance of human inwardness.

Jennifer E. Nicholson, The University of Sydney

“Marlowe’s Language at the Edge of English”

How does Marlowe’s use of language indicate the way that early modern English theatre thought about its linguistic and national limits? This paper will largely consider the extent to which Marlowe uses “French English”, and to what ends. Put simply, “French English” words are ones that cannot be easily located on one side or the other of a French-English linguistic border. They might share pronunciation or orthography, even if they are “false friends”. Taking ideas and key words from both texts I will trace how Marlowe generates theatre at the edge(s) of English, and locate that material alongside Shakespearean and other early modern drama. Both *The Massacre at Paris* and *Edward II* are late plays within the seven Marlowe wrote, but early if taking his age into consideration. I will consider how both playwrights ask their audiences to think about the edges of English language and English identities.

Goran Stanivukovic, Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

“Young Marlowe, Earliest Shakespeare, and the Wonder Story of Magic”

I will make the counterintuitive assertion that the wonder story of St. Clement from Jacobus de Voraigne’s *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260), a prose collection of the saints’ lives which William Caxton translated from French and printed in 1483, contributed to the making of both *Doctor Faustus* and *The Comedy of Errors*. My concern is neither influence nor source, but artistry; neither textual proof nor direct contact, but soft analogue, or a set of shared concerns. Embedded in the cultural memory of post-Reformation England, the intellectually stimulating story of Clement reimagined by two dramatists early in their careers and likely around the same time, provokes an

argument about the notion of “earliness” as an aesthetic marker. In the case of the two plays, Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s careers are interlocked neither by imitation nor collaboration, but by the shared artistic appetite for romance.

Gary Taylor, Florida State University

“Textual and Political Agency: Memorial Reconstruction or Collaborative Authorship in the Early History Play”

Peter Alexander’s 1929 book on “Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* and *Richard III*” combined two claims, which shaped dominant narratives about the early history play for more than ninety years: the hypothesis of memorial reconstruction and the hypothesis that Shakespeare never collaborated. The two claims provide a binary theory about the agents that generated a series of key texts in the evolution of the canonical late Elizabethan history play. Together, they made Shakespeare the dominant agent in the evolution of the English History Play. What might have been evidence of the agency of other playwrights---and, in particular, Marlowe---was dismissed as evidence of textual corruption, created by unscrupulous actors compiling texts on the basis of their own memory of performances by Shakespeare and others. Thus, rather than Shakespeare and Marlowe working together, texts were generated by actors who performed in the plays of both Shakespeare and Marlowe, and indiscriminately mixed together memories of the two. This paper provides new evidence against both Alexander theories.