

Marlowe and Shakespeare
Seminar Leader: Sarah K. Scott and M. L. Stapleton

ABSTRACTS

Ann Basso

“Barabas and Shylock: Together on Stage”

My paper explores the performance history of *The Jew of Malta* when presented in repertory with *The Merchant of Venice*. The plays were performed together for the first time in the United States in 2007 by Theatre for a New Audience and again by the York Shakespeare Company in December of 2009. The Royal Shakespeare Company first paired them in 1964, and they have been put on together in Germany as well. Both plays center on commerce and feature a Jewish character, but do they really have that much in common, and how well do they work together when performed in repertory?

Robin Bates

“Place and Nature in *Edward II* and *Richard II*”

My paper will look at place and nature in *Edward II* and *Richard II*. History plays of this period not only depict historical events in order to investigate the qualities that constitute a good ruler, they also explore what constitutes England and what it means to be English. *Edward II* and *Richard II* have very different relationships to place, geography, and the natural world, and I plan to explore how this figures in their constructions of Englishness.

James Biester

“The Two Magicians”

The Tempest so effectively invites comparison with Shakespeare’s earlier works that we may underestimate another sense in which it can be seen as retrospective or even nostalgic: in its evocations of the work of other playwrights, in particular Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. These evocations are admittedly not the direct, verbal echoes of Marlowe that James Shapiro and others have carefully traced in the plays of Shakespeare’s early and middle career, but simply by choosing to write a play whose protagonist is a magician, Shakespeare entered what his contemporaries would have recognized as indisputably Marlowe’s territory, just as Jonson did soon after in *The Alchemist*. Unsurprisingly, what is often most striking is how differently Shakespeare handles an action, motif, or set-piece that has a demonstrable analogue in Marlowe’s play, yet through these contrasts we gain insight into one form of inspiration for a play that has unusually few sources.

Sara M. Deats

“Mars or Gorgon? Tamburlaine and Henry V”

The dialectical structure and multiple perspectives of Shakespeare’s interrogative dramas have long been a commonplace of early modern criticism. However, in my essay, “Marlowe’s Interrogative Drama: *Dido, Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Edward II*,” I argue that before Shakespeare created his famous dual aspect characters, Christopher Marlowe anticipated Shakespeare’s signature complementarity, etching rabbit / duck portraits every bit as multifaceted and perplexing as those limned by Shakespeare. My paper for this seminar will expand upon this statement by comparing the multifaceted portraits of Tamburlaine and Henry V, two ruthless and successful warriors created by Marlowe and Shakespeare respectively, both appearing on the early modern stage in times of national crisis and both, throughout the years, arousing ambivalent responses in critics and audiences alike. In this paper, I will predicate Tamburlaine, an oxymoronic blend of the godlike and the devilish, as a model for Shakespeare’s Henry V, part ideal Christian Prince, part master Machiavel.

John Ellis-Etchinson

“The Queer of Malta: Barabas’s Homoerotic Desire in Light of Shakespeare’s *Othello*”

My paper argues for the potential influence of Marlowe’s Barabas on Shakespeare’s Iago. Not only are these two characters’ motivations and demeanors remarkably similar, the relationship that Barabas builds with his slave, Ithamore, parallels the one Iago develops with his commander, Othello. In this respect, though, the latter’s roles are rhetorically inverted, with Othello, the Moor, being Iago’s social and political better. By examining Barabas’s relationship with his self-proclaimed “love” and “second self” in light of Shakespeare’s miscegenated pair, evidence mounts to support a queer reading of Marlowe’s protagonist in *The Jew of Malta*, which brings Barabas away from the realm of solely ethnic / religious Other and places him in the realm of sexual Other as well (3.4.14-15).

Brett Foster

“Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s Staged Books: Incarnate Texts and their Cruxes”

Having just finished a project on books as stage objects (and “expressive forms”) in Shakespeare’s plays, and realizing Marlowe’s influence but having little space to address it, I would like to prepare for SAA seminar #9 a short paper that considers, with a few examples from the plays, Marlowe and Shakespeare together. I will argue that there is a kind of conversation to be found within their paired texts, about books as stage properties, about their cultural influence and theatrical potential. This emphasis may reveal certain details in individual plays. Is there significance, for example, in Faustus’ last cry “I’ll burn my books,” which echoes Envy’s earlier comment? And how do

Faustian volumes get picked up by Shakespeare, in works ranging from *2 Henry VI* to *The Tempest*? I will benefit from earlier work by Frederick Kiefer, as well as James Kearney's recent study *The Incarnate Text*.

Lizz Ketterer

“‘With a Lute, Disguised’: Music as a Theatrical Tool in *The Jew of Malta* and *The Taming of the Shrew*”

David Lindley argues that though Shakespeare “actually says nothing particularly original about music,” he does say it “better than most.” This paper will consider the question of influence and originality in the use of music as a theatrical tool by examining two particular musical performances: Barabas’ lute performance in *The Jew of Malta* and Bianca’s music lesson in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The performance history of both plays in the Elizabethan theatrical world, the influence of ideas about the affective and effective powers of music in the social world of the period, and the ability of each performative moment to offer information about Early Modern theatrical practice will provide the means by which the relationship of these two musical performances shall be explored. Does Shakespeare say it “better,” or use music more originally as a theatrical tool, than Marlowe? I don’t propose to answer such a subjective question in this paper, but look forward to hearing responses to the desire to question the inherent privilege of the Shakespeare canon that animates many of my inquiries.

Sarah D. Rasher

“Trojans in Drag in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* and Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage*”

Why couldn't early modern dramatists interpret the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* with a straight face? Much has been made of the satirical, burlesque, and even camp aspects of both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and I argue that this commonality reveals a conflicted relationship between early modern drama and classical epic poetry: great reverence for Homer and Virgil, but also an inability to adapt them without sarcasm and excess. Both Shakespeare and Marlowe depict an ancient Greek world overwhelmed by emotion and erotic desire—not only a way of bringing the classical masters down to earth, but of calling into question prescriptions of masculine behavior at odds with early modern experience.

Barbara Parker

“*Doctor Faustus and Hamlet*”

My paper will argue the probable influence of Marlowe’s *Faustus* on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Both protagonists have initially studied at Wittenberg, site of radical Protestantism and the Reformation; both undergo a figurative conversion to Roman Catholicism via the agency of the Devil; and both ultimately experience an ill-fated return to Calvinism: the demonic Calvinist God solicited by the dying Faustus refuses to allay the sinner’s agony and withholds the single drop of blood that will save his soul, while Hamlet’s embrace of predestinarianism incurs his belief that Heaven enabled his murder of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; his pointless death (and multiple tangential deaths); and Denmark’s consequent takeover by a foreign prince. In both plays, accordingly, Roman Catholicism and Calvinism emerge as equally untenable, demonic, and lethal.

M.L. Stapleton

“Marlowe the Sonneteer”

I am revisiting a topic that interested me long ago: Marlowe’s rendition of Ovid’s *Amores* in both its surreptitiously published forms, *Certaine of Ovids Elegies* and *All Ovids Elegies: 3 Bookes*, was essential to Shakespeare’s conception of the sonnet sequence, especially the (un)reliability of the lover as our guide through a fractured narrative in which a man attempts to portray a woman he cannot possibly understand (through no fault of her own). Also, it seems significant that the Bishops, as part of their Ban, interdicted and burned the *Certaine* text in the same year that *The Passionate Pilgrime* was published, 1599, which contains the first versions of the Ovidian sonnets #138 and #144, something that completely escaped me the first time I wrote on the subject. This year was significant in many other ways, of course, for Shakespeare as dramatist, for Marlowe’s posthumous reputation, and for political and publication-oriented reasons, as well.

Annette Stenning

“Plotting Mortality: Marlowe’s Maps and Shakespeare’s Globe”

In *2 Tamburlaine*, Marlowe turns geographic representation of space into a dramatic plot through his use of Ortelius’ *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570) thus demonstrating a connection between mapping and the theatre as two relatively new spatial representative arts. And while early modern cartographers plotted out this world, Catholic and Protestant theologians debated the geography of the otherworld just as Marlowe’s doctor of divinity attempts to pin down constructions of the afterlife when he asks Mephistopheles (who gives no satisfaction) “where is the place that men call hell?” and similarly, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare’s questionable ghost refuses to tell the “secrets” of his

postmortem habitation. My paper will explore representations of geographical, theatrical and eschatological space in 2 *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Hamlet*, examining Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare's "distracted globe" theatre.

Matthew Theil

“‘Let me have a wife’: The Tragedy of Family in *Doctor Faustus* and *Othello*”

Debate continues about whether *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* can be considered a tragedy, whether the play succeeds as a tragedy, how the tragic action works, etc. I believe that *Faustus* and *Othello* present similar obstacles to sympathy and understanding, and I hope to illuminate the nature of the tragic in both by comparing them. Specifically, both plays seem to present a similar epistemological crisis and an impoverished attitude towards family that make them atypical as tragedies and characterize them as exemplars of a certain type of tragedy.

Jacob A. Cedillo Tootalian

“The Narratological Ventures of Shakespeare and Marlowe”

I am interested in alternative schemes for conceiving of the narratological strategies of Renaissance writers. The discourse of expressive artistry has its limitations for describing the relationship of influence between Marlowe and Shakespeare's dramatic works. In my paper, I will analyze the portrayals of commercial endeavors in *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice* in an effort to understand adventure as an ideology as much at work in the London public theater as in the mercantile sea trade. Tracing the dramaturgical implications of casting Marlowe and Shakespeare as playwright-adventurers, we can conceptualize the composition of these plays in terms of risk-driven narrative calculations in order to establish the pragmatic dimension of their dramatic artistry.

Seminar withdrawals: Susan Frye of U. Wyoming