

the important questions being investigated in each chapter to be adequately fleshed out. This means that an overall argument is not always clear. This is particularly true of the first half of the book (chapters 1-4). Too often we are provided with minute detail on a particular point that is repeated for each convent chronicle, which could have been made more succinctly. For example the detailed physical descriptions provided of the manuscripts themselves in chapter 1 could have been much more succinct and the mass of detail could have either been placed in the notes or an appendix. Part of the problem is that Lowe's methodological focus on comparison leads to much repetition and over-justification of why one chronicler compared to another did or did not do or say a particular thing. The issue of why a comparison on a particular point is significant is not addressed. It is also particularly frustrating that some chapters either begin with an introduction that is merely descriptive (chapter 3) or as is the case with chapter 4 have none at all and merely begin with a discussion of the title(s) given to the members of the different convent communities, with the rest of chapter containing a number of distinct subsections but lacking an overall contextual framework or specific argument.

There is much of value that we can learn from this book about the lived experience of nuns in Italy between 1400 and 1600, but the lack of an overall argument sustained throughout the text, sadly, diminishes its usefulness.

Natalie Tomas
School of Historical Studies
Monash University

Lunney, Ruth, *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in the English Drama Before 1595* (The Revels Plays Companion Library), Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002; hardback; pp. x, 246; RRP US\$138; ISBN 0719061180.

This is an exceptionally good and important book. It is sound, learned, uncommonly penetrating, and in a quiet, persuasive way little short of revolutionary. It should enduringly alter our perception of plays both before 1595 (with which Lunney is primarily concerned) and after.

I choose a telling example from Chapter 6, 'Looking at the Angels'. At the risk of simplification, I would say that Lunney successfully demonstrates that the really novel quality of Faustus as a character resides not primarily in his inherent attributes as a seeming person, but in how, technically, he is presented. In general,

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her book is concerned with 'dramatic rhetoric' (p. 5), which includes all those strategic devices of stagecraft, as found in the playtext and performance, which influence an audience. Thus what matters to her and should matter to all of us is not primarily the 'content' of a dramatic character, but *the way we are led to view it*. Indeed, the former is dependent on the latter. Without awareness of what the dramatist allows us to see, speculations of what the character is made of are beside the point. Thus, on p. 139, she directs us to Faustus's reaction to the two Angels:

Good Angel. Sweet Faustus, think of heaven and heavenly things.

Evil Angel. No, Faustus, think of honour and wealth.

Exeunt [ANGELS]

Faustus. Of wealth? Why, the seigniory of Emden shall be mine.

(A-text, 2.1.20-3)

We have long considered it as somehow a black mark against Faustus that his reaction to the two speeches by the Angels is one-sided and materialistic, but, not paying attention to Marlowe's technique, we have not previously realised how revolutionary that is. As Lunney explains, the tradition of psychomachia would not sanction the surprising fact that it is, for whatever psychological reason, only the statement by the Evil Angel to which Faustus pays attention. Thus the dynamics of Marlowe's construction must be seen as, for the first time in English drama, forcing us to consider just what goes on in the character's mind, because there is a disjunction (as in previous plays there had not been) between what Faustus so to speak opts for, or appears to perceive, and what to us is the total effect of the Angels' words (where, if anything, we are more inclined to value those of the Good Angel). While earlier dramatic characters had been transparent, in the case of Faustus we are offered what Lunney terms a new 'debatable' character, 'about whom the audience asks psychological questions ("why?") rather than ethical ones ("should?")' (p. 12).

It is perhaps especially in the area of character creation that one must agree with Lunney's claim that Marlowe developed something altogether novel. But, as Lunney demonstrates, he also offered originality in a number of other areas which she appropriately discusses as elements of 'dramatic rhetoric'. Her common theme is 'how Marlowe's plays utilise traditional materials, but thereby change the ways that early audiences might see and interpret the action on stage' (p. 10). The shift which he introduced was 'from the theatre of proof and example to the theatre of story and experience' (p. 34), thereby involving the audience actively and

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satisfyingly in the contemplation of an altogether more complicated and suggestive playworld than had previously been presented. As Lunney views matters, Marlowe empowered his audience to make its own contribution by inviting and stimulating it to make sense of what it saw and heard rather than offering merely what was perfectly obvious and undemanding.

Thus she shows convincingly how Marlowe managed to 'redirect the emblematic away from its traditional didacticism. Images such as the cauldron in the *Jew*, for example, have a theatrical impact that can only partly be explained by their iconography' (p. 56). She writes superbly about Faustus's signing of his bond: 'Faustus may perceive his blood's congealing as an emblem in need of a commentary ("What might the staying of my blood portend?" [2.1.164]), but he can give no sufficient answer. Mephistopheles may be able to explain, but does not' (p. 59). In general, she contends, 'the dramatic emblems of Marlowe's plays broke the link for spectators between the visual sign and traditional perspectives and values' (p. 66).

His handling of the exemplum was no less transformative. The King's death in *Edward II*, for example, 'is often cited as an exemplum of poetic justice, and perhaps many of the early spectators accepted it as a "manifest signe"' (p. 71). But, while this may be one function of the incident, 'the spectators are first distracted, and then absorbed, by the spectacle of the King's suffering' (p. 84). And subsequently, when Edward's son assumes power and avenges his father's death, 'the audience is called upon to view his actions as a victory for legitimacy and order over usurpation and disorder. In consequence, Edward's death must be reinterpreted as undeserved, as the result of treachery rather than providential justice' (p. 87). Yet, as Lunney points out, the ending of the play has itself a number of features which make us re-examine this interpretation as well. The theatrical dynamics of Marlowe's art, therefore, force us to experience, probe, and reflect: that is also why no 'critical theory' can do justice to the power and richness of his plays.

Similarly with the 'framing rhetoric' which 'sets up the boundaries and contexts for theatrical experience' (p. 93). For example, through Machevil's prologue and Barabas's soliloquy the *Jew* 'in effect offers its spectators not merely multiple perspectives but colliding ones, not merely an enrichment of theatrical experience but a challenge to its coherence' (p. 111).

Last but not least, Lunney is equally impressive in her account of Marlowe's handling of theatrical space. She rightly takes issue with the prevailing view that it was the structure of the large new playhouses which was all-important. For

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although such 'new technology' did offer new possibilities, plays continued to be performed in other venues as well, and, as she contends, what mattered most, in this aspect of Marlowe's art, was his grouping of the actors on stage. She is unusually aware of the impact of such a matter on the audience.

Towards the end of *Faustus* the nature of the space between the figures changes, and the audience expectations built up by earlier spaces are overturned. When Faustus breaches the 'magic' space to embrace Helen, his action signals the loss of the play's connecting spaces, the loss of all bonds, all relationships (in effect) except the bond with hell (p. 180). Personally I believe that Faustus can still be saved even after this transgression, but it certainly is a major one, and the stage action provides striking evidence of that fact.

I unhesitatingly recommend this book to anyone interested in Renaissance drama generally; it will come to be seen as a truly outstanding and seminal work in the field.

Joost Daalder
Department of English
Flinders University

McDonald, R. Andrew, ed., *History, Literature, and Music in Scotland, 700-1560*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002; cloth; pp. xx, 234; RRP C\$45, £28; ISBN 0802036015.

The eight essays gathered for this volume are prefaced by a ninth. In this editor R. Andrew McDonald first charts the growth in interest in medieval Scotland, giving some plausible reasons for it besides *Braveheart*, including recent Scottish political changes. He next looks chronologically at the burgeoning scholarship on medieval Scotland (interpreting that term rather loosely), considering in some detail its changing character. McDonald then refers to the multi-disciplinary symposium on medieval Scotland held at the University of Toronto, 1998, that was the origin of the present volume. From it came two of the book's articles, with the remaining six specially commissioned. It is important to note this; in keeping, McDonald offers the book as 'a multi-disciplinary contribution to the study of medieval Scottish civilization' (p. 11) and not as an attempt to redress a scholarly imbalance or lacuna identified in the earlier part of the essay.

The essays are indeed varied in time, theme and approach, but there are links. Several have in common a highly dexterous use of source material. For instance

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