

preface but are excluded from the appended bibliography, Wylie Sypher and Arnold Hauser. The fountainhead of this now ignominious tradition, Heinrich Wölfflin, is not even mentioned. Instead, we get frequent references to the current authorities on all literary matters: Foucault, Lacan, the Cultural Materialists, the New Historicists, the Postcolonialists, the Gender Study pundits, etc. While some of these admittedly create a meaningful sociopolitical perspective, I cannot help feeling that it is as monocular as any preceding one and that the tyranny of theoretical vogues in our days is more absolute and intolerant than ever. Alison Thorne's study is a good illustration of this situation. Its inescapable indebtedness to a school that has become unquotable is concealed under a number of less relevant but mandatory acknowledgements. The author should know this better than anybody else, for her book contains an in-depth discussion of decorum.

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*Marlowe's Soldiers: Rhetorics of Masculinity in the Age of the Armada.* By ALAN SHEPARD. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate. 2002. viii + 248 pp. Price: £40.00 hb.

The main contention of this book is that 'Marlowe's plays generally work on one important level as figurative antidotes to the martial atmosphere that permeated London in the six years or so he was active as a playwright' (p. 175). Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to state that, for example, Shepard labours more to make us aware of what he takes to be implied authorial criticism of the soldiers in 1 and 2 *Tamburlaine* than that he is much interested in what one might say in their support.

I must confess that although I see myself as on the whole a true Marlowe fan, I have never liked the *Tamburlaine* plays much, despite the extraordinarily high level of poetic skill Marlowe exhibits, which I presume Marlowe saw as not incompatible with the barrenness of the military world of which he offers us such an unattractive picture. My difficulty with *Tamburlaine* has always been that I have admired its poetic beauty, but felt that the author wastes it on a hero whom he seems to respect but I detest. Accordingly I was interested in Shepard's attempt to argue that Marlowe himself in various ways punctures the general militaristic thrust of this two-part drama.

As Shepard has it, 'Even in the midst of its apparently sincere celebration of war ... *Tamburlaine the Great* quietly attends to the philosophical horror of war' (p. 23). He believes that we have to dissociate ourselves from *Tamburlaine's* famous words, 'Nature, that framed us of four elements / Warring within our breasts for regiment, / Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds (1-2.7.18-20)' (p. 25). He contends, throughout his book, that we have to see such an 'essentialist' statement as misguided, and that militarism is ultimately - not only in Shepard's eyes but also in Marlowe's -- merely a matter of 'culture' (not 'nature'). But, however strong Shepard's own convictions, he does not appear

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to me to present sufficient evidence to establish that *Marlowe* saw matters this way. And the evidence for his contention that we are to see military murder as a replacement for sex appears to be equally unsubstantiated, although he keeps returning to this fanciful notion again and again. Thus, for example, he speaks of `Usumcane's implicitly homophobic expression "I long to pierce his bowels with my sword", which hints at the fusion of sexual longing, anal sex, and murder' (p. 30). Unless I have overlooked evidence to the contrary, in Shepard's opinion swords are inevitably and always to be seen as phallic. But the question is whether Marlowe, or Marlowe's audiences, would have seen them that way. Admittedly, there are instances in Elizabethan literature when the word *sword* is used for bawdy wordplay (as authors like Eric Partridge and Gordon Williams have amply demonstrated), but that does not justify the notion that every sword was thought to represent a penis.

By contrast, Shepard seems to me to have a point in arguing that the murders of Calyphas, Olympia, and Agydas are used, by Marlowe, to undermine `the soldiers' efforts to impose their deadly, monolithic vision of the world on everybody else' (p. 36). Yet the implied authorial criticism does not, unfortunately, seem to me to be strong: Agydas, for example, tries to persuade Zenocrate to disapprove of Tamburlaine, but she does not, and thus this incident comes to support Tamburlaine rather than do the opposite. Even so, these apparently marginal characters do to some extent make us pause and question what happens.

In *Edward II*, to take another example from Shepard's argument, the homosexual king and his lover Gaveston are according to him to be seen as undermining the emotional barrenness of Mortimer and other soldiers. As an example of the shortcomings of the military men, Shepard speaks of 'the homosexual camaraderie of soldiers whose marriages, even as they prove to be distractions from military obligations, cover up the men's triangulated, mimetic desire for other soldiers' (p. 96). Again, I find a confident assertion like this unconvincing and not well enough supported to pass muster. And a more general and more significant difficulty that I have with Shepard's approach to this play is that although like him I disapprove of Mortimer and his faction, I do not believe that Edward and Gaveston are held up for our admiration or used as a vehicle for showing what is wrong with militarism, even though it is possible to feel some sympathy for Edward when he is 'raped' (Shepard's word, p. 97) with a burning iron poker. (But my sympathy almost disappears when Shepard tells me soon after: 'The manner of Edward's death, in other words, punishes his preferring the literal phallus over its metaphorical extension, the sword'.)

Last but not least, *Faustus*. Here again, it seems to me, similar difficulties occur in what Shepard says. Unbelievably, he sees the moralistic Old Man, who very properly castigates Faustus at the end of the play, as playing an important sexual role: he is 'perhaps standing in for "weak" Menelaus's claim on Helen' while Faustus chooses the 'deeply problematic role' of his rival Paris. Thus we have to view Faustus as 'competing with "weak Menelaus" [the Old Man] for the affections of a succubus [the virtual Helen]' (pp. 187-8). Whatever the interest of such a scenario for Shepard, I am certain it is far removed from Mar-

lowe's mind, and would have seemed purely fanciful to Marlowe's audiences.

More significantly, Marlowe does use Faustus, I agree, to make us aware of e.g. the Pope and Catholicism's defects, as well as those of a knight like Benvolio. Although Faustus's 'art' is, of course, devilish, his magical pranks are turned with vigour against such patriarchal enemies (perhaps to be seen as representing authority rather than militarism). Also, as Shepard contends, Faustus's magic makes us ask significant questions about e.g. 'the Roman Church's claim that its rituals alone enjoy an authentic and exclusive status' (p. 207). Thus, although ultimately I disagree with most of what he argues, he does offer some valid and probing points here and there, and certainly leads one to re-examine the texts for oneself.

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*The Creation of the Self in Autobiographical Forms of Writing in Seventeenth-Century England: Subjectivity and Self-Fashioning in Memoirs, Diaries, and Letters.* By BRIGITTE GLASER. Heidelberg: C. Winter. 2001. 300 pp. Price: DM 68.00.

Brigitte Glaser proposes that self-writing in the second half of the seventeenth century, positioned between a historical event (the English Civil War) and the emergence of a new genre (the novel), displayed unprecedented levels of subjectivity. Showing how this was brought about by 'social and political upheaval' as well as 'the new sense of self evoked by changes in science, philosophy and religion', the author gives a convincing reading of contemporary cultural reality as instrumental in bringing about this new quality in autobiographical writing (5). Though the period is best known for its religious autobiographies, Glaser has chosen to base her study on secular forms, since she believes that 'the seventeenth century marked the beginning of a separate, "secular tradition" of writing about the self'(6). Gender-based differences in thematic and linguistic composition, whilst noted, do not constitute the basis of Glaser's approach; this sets her study apart from most recent work on autobiographical genres, in which 'theorists ... were, and still are, often unwilling to allow for similarities rather than differences'(66).

The main part of the study is divided into three sections, devoted respectively to actual autobiography, written retrospectively (the memoirs of the Duchess of Newcastle, Lady Ann Fanshawe, and Lady Anne Halkett), diaries (John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys), and letters (Dorothy Osborne and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester). The generously