

Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe. Mathew R. Martin. Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. viii + 194 pp. \$104.95.

This book offers intriguing perspectives on Marlowe's dramatic works by utilizing early modern understandings of audience reception — such as Sidney's conception of tragedy as a genre that opens wounds — as a means to historicize modern theories of trauma in an era that precedes our contemporary sensibilities. Martin's study is sharpest when it carefully implements such earlier habits of thought in order to establish points of contact between notions of trauma developed by current thinkers (including Dominick LaCapra and Elaine Scarry, among others) and the hypothetical experiences of playgoers in Marlowe's London. This approach is combined with Freudian and Lacanian readings, providing fresh psychoanalytic interpretations of Marlowe, with recourse to Žižek, Deleuze and Guattari, and Kristeva. Indeed, Martin provides a theoretical tour de force or whirlwind, which features Derrida, Benjamin, Jameson, Williams, Kierkegaard, and Hegel, while also delivering an incredibly comprehensive and masterful knowledge of Marlowe scholarship. As a result, Martin's work is thoroughly researched, and his keen attention to issues of chronology and

bibliographical scholarship exemplifies his extensive and impressive previous editorial work on Marlowe for Broadview Press. This book, therefore, will prove valuable to anyone who has an interest in Marlowe's dramatic output, who wonders about the applications of trauma theory to the early modern stage, and who is amenable to psychoanalytic approaches to the canon.

The implementation of Freud and Lacan might strike the reader as a bit flippant in its frequent presumption of a synchronic historical model of the psyche, but Martin's plausible outlook results in a playful style that yields important findings or interesting outcomes. Moreover, Martin does wrestle with "the charge[s] of anachronism" that psychoanalytic critics face, specifically Greenblatt's opposition (6n2). Although it might have been beneficial for Martin to have engaged with more recent caveats, particularly Gary Taylor's *Castration: An Abbreviated History of Western Manhood* (2000), he nevertheless provides a convincing rationale. However, at times the work appears to shift from a historically informed inquiry to a psychoanalytic reading that lacks the conscientiousness required when examining a different era. An example of this tendency occurs in Martin's chapter on *The Jew of Malta* when he states that for "the friars and the play's early modern audience . . . Barabas's uncanniness has a psychotic rather than neurotic structure" (101). Although the application of these terms is fruitful, the statement will likely strike the reader as incorrect in its claim that the friars and audience were at all cognizant of the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny or the science's distinction of a neurotic from a psychotic.

The book's contribution on *Edward II* is its strongest piece. Martin's adoption of Jameson's claim that "history hurts" to examine the notorious trauma that Edward experiences onstage leads him to an excellent analysis of Edward's tortured body and the ways in which Christological subjectivity informs our understandings of that body in pain. In this manner, history is "the sense we make of what hurts" (103). This chapter is the most cohesive, and it astutely combines literary theory with a rich historical investigation. Martin's most important contribution, however, is his chapter on *The Massacre at Paris*, which offers an impressive and apt alternative to the work of previous critics who have tended to look unfavorably on the text. Examining the play as comprising two halves, Martin historicizes the monarchy's imposed silence concerning the massacre as a way of comprehending the manner by which the characters are taciturn regarding the event, leaving "the massacre unspoken while registering its dark density" (135).

These two chapters are also effectively linked by their common focus on audience reception and Jameson's notion that history hurts. Martin's chapters on the *Tamburlaine* plays and *The Jew of Malta*, on the other hand, offer intensive studies of their protagonists' psyches. These continuities lead the reader to wonder if the connection Martin draws between his readings of *Dido* and *Doctor Faustus* through a Derridean lens indicates that these chapters should be grouped together as well. Still, Martin instead chooses to bring us back to where we began by leaving us with a dazzling final chapter that concludes the book, as Marlowe often does, with an interrogative

question. This lingering uncertainty reminds us of the psychological wound Marlowe's tragedies inspire; hence, Martin's lack of a conclusion mimics the lack Marlowe's plays generate.

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