

Christopher Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*, ed. Mathew R. Martin (Manchester: Manchester University Press/The Revels Plays, 2021), hb, ISBN 9781526117755, £80.00.

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The Revels Plays series is known for producing editions of early modern dramatic works that are at once scholarly and designed for readers. Mathew R. Martin's 2021 edition of Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* is a welcome addition to this catalogue. Although *The Massacre at Paris* is probably more familiar to present-day readers than some works in the series, it is still the case that few single-edition or dual-edition texts of Marlowe's play are available; thus, even as critical interest in *Massacre* has grown, the play has remained comparatively inaccessible in print. This new Revels hardback edition may remain outside the budget of some readers, but it represents fair value for a focused single-play study, providing a reliable text and thorough, up-to-date editorial commentary; we can hope that a paperback version will also be available soon, with comparable texts in the Revels series priced at around £20.00. The latter would be especially welcome for those looking to teach *The Massacre at Paris*, as Martin's clear and detailed edition is well suited to undergraduate and postgraduate study. Indeed, as Martin observes, the recent theatrical popularity of Marlowe's play reflects its "considerable power to impinge upon the present" (43), as a work preoccupied with religiously inspired violence, the crises of a brutal civil war, and the processing of traumatic memories.

Martin has previously edited no fewer than five of Marlowe's seven plays for the Broadview Press, in addition to authoring a well-received monograph on *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Ashgate, 2015; Routledge, 2016). This extensive experience informs his latest editorial project. Martin's introduction to *The Massacre at Paris* is concise but thorough, providing readers with a knowledgeable and interesting guide to the play's composition, thematic concerns, and reception history. In accordance with the Revel series' usual practice, the introduction opens with a brief biographical account of Marlowe's life and literary output. Critics are not short of good stories when it comes to the author of *Doctor Faustus*, *Tamburlaine*, and *The Massacre at Paris*, and Martin utilises some telling details to good effect: biographical parallels between Marlowe and the real-life inspiration for one of his play's central characters, Henry III, provide an engaging note, although Martin is careful not to force the comparison too far.

Subsequent sections outline the sixteenth-century French history that Marlowe dramatises in the *Massacre*, including the notorious 1572 St Bartholomew Day's Massacre(s) in which thousands of French Protestants lost their lives, alongside Marlowe's main sources and key trends in the critical reception of *The Massacre at Paris*. For the most part, Martin does an excellent job of collating this disparate source material into succinct contextual accounts. Readers new to the complex history of France's sixteenth-century Wars of Religion should be aware that key historical figures (such as King Henri III) are often referred to by anglicised first names alone following an initial mention of their status and significance, and that Martin at one point includes an untranslated French quotation to illustrate a claim; however, the import of such references can be inferred from the surrounding context and should not present any great difficulty.

As Martin explains, *The Massacre at Paris* has in the past been frequently neglected or even attacked by literary critics, who have accused the play of sensationalism, ideological bias, structural flaws, and inconsistent characterisation. Martin provides a nuanced survey of the main debates that ultimately demonstrates the richness of Marlowe's approach. In particular, Martin suggests that the play's stylistic "incoherence" "is not an aesthetic flaw but rather a feature of [...] the play's traumatic aesthetics" (16). Drawing upon present-day trauma theory, Martin contends that the contrast between the staged massacre's almost overwhelming visual and aural impact in the first half of the play and its subsequent suppression rehearses a contemporary "policy and practice of *oubliance*" (23), or conscious forgetting, that at once enacts the traumatic legacy of a recent historical event and complicates the ethical position of the theatre audience, especially for those experiencing Marlowe's tragedy during the 1590s. This persuasive reading, which develops from Martin's 2015 monograph on Marlowe's dramatic treatment of trauma, is complemented by an intriguing discussion of Marlowe's interest in the potential and limits of religious tolerance, which was associated during this period with Poland, the Ottoman Empire, and with the historical figure who had inspired Marlowe's earlier war drama: Tamburlaine. The final two sections of the introduction then consider the *Massacre*'s limited performance history, including the original staging and seven productions between 2000 and 2018, and the state of the play-text: Martin, who has consulted all ten surviving copies of the original octavo, concurs with a broad critical consensus that this text contains evidence of memorial reconstruction.

Martin's version of the text is clearly presented and designed to be accessible to undergraduate students as well as more experienced scholars. I have always liked the Revels

convention of printing collation notes and glosses at the bottom of the relevant page, and Martin's commentary is informative without being overwhelming. His textual collation is comprehensive, as noted above: in addition to recording the expected textual variants, Martin provides notes on the spelling of character names and significant punctuation variants. His explanatory glosses similarly range from brief definitions of terms that may be unfamiliar to modern readers to comparatively detailed historical or literary contextualisation: examples include an interesting gloss on Marlowe's term "pyramidès" (2.42); a nuanced evaluation of potential staging options for Admiral Coligny's murder (23.1 SD, 32.1 SD); and a detailed interpretation of the complicated figurative language used by Navarre as he prepares for battle against the Catholic League (16.20–25). Another advantage is that Martin typically incorporates quotations from the historical or literary sources he cites into the notes themselves. This approach adds to the length of individual entries, limiting how many allusions Martin can gloss, but the selection is well-judged, and having ready access to these comparative examples within the notes enhances the edition's accessibility, especially for readers without institutional access to such sources. Martin's provision of short scene introductions is equally helpful, providing additional guidance for readers new to the play. In fact, my only minor reservation about the text and notes is that the font is quite small, which is a publisher policy that is standard for the series and is the case in most scholarly editions.

Martin concludes his edition with an edited transcript of the so-called Collier Leaf. This manuscript extract from *Massacre* records an expanded version of the first sixteen lines of scene 19 and Martin's appendix also features some thoughtful commentary notes on the extra material, although the edition does not include an image of the manuscript leaf itself. The edition index that follows is unfortunately rather less helpful: there are omissions where I expected to find entries—for instance, the author of one of Marlowe's possible sources and the first company known to have staged *Massacre* are not listed—while other entries refer only to individual glosses on the play-text, and are unlikely to assist readers much with navigating the edition. There is also some variance between how French historical events and persons are named in the introduction and commentary and how they are indexed: for instance, pages relating to the 1572 St Bartholomew's Day massacres appear under the heading "Massacre at Paris," while the index entry for "de Valois, Marguerite" directs to pages in which she is referred to as "Margaret Valois." These are minor details, especially given that the edition is otherwise very clearly set out, but could potentially challenge readers new to the period or the play.

Massacre at Paris *review*

Overall, Martin's edition of *The Massacre at Paris* is an excellent resource for scholars and students looking to familiarise themselves with one of Marlowe's most neglected works, at a time when its thematic preoccupation with religious conflict, civil violence, and traumatic memory still resonates. Martin's well-presented text and thorough notes are complemented by an engaging and informative introduction, which draws thoughtful connections to Marlowe's other works. It is a pleasure to see *The Massacre at Paris* featured in the Revels series, and it is my hope that this valuable edition will further advance critical and theatrical interest in an intriguing and underappreciated play.