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Ruth Lunney, ed. *Dido, Queen of Carthage, by Christopher Marlowe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, The Revels Plays, 2023. Pp. 294. Hardback £85. ISBN 9781784993986.

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The last Revels edition of Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, edited by H.J. Oliver in his double-play edition of *Dido* and *Massacre at Paris*, was published in 1968, more than half a century ago. Much has happened since then, and Ruth Lunney's new single-volume Revels edition of one of Marlowe's least studied plays provides a necessary, refreshing, and updated edition that will be welcomed by scholars and students alike. Given its conventional placement at the beginning of Marlowe's dramatic career — before he burst onto the London theatre scene with his *Tamburlaine* plays (1587 and 1588) — scholars often dismiss the play as juvenilia. (If the conventional dating is correct, Marlowe was only around twenty years old when he wrote the play.) In her introduction and throughout her commentary on the text, however, Lunney makes a compelling case for *Dido*'s significance not only within the context of the children's companies in the 1580s but also within the context of the overall trajectory of Marlowe's dramatic oeuvre.

Lunney's well written introduction is lengthy and is broken down into seven subsections: text, authorship, dating, early performance, sources and influences, criticism, and modern productions. The section on the text covers all of the pertinent bibliographical information, from the play's early publication history to the details of its printing to a brief survey of modern editions of the play. Here it is surprising to discover that, as Lunney observes, '*Dido* has never been issued in English as a single volume before the present edition' (4). The section on authorship moves the reader into a more contentious area of scholarship on the play. The title page of the 1594 quarto (the only extant early modern edition of the play) attributes authorship of the play to 'Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe, gent'. What exactly the nature of Marlowe and Nashe's collaboration was has been the subject of much scholarly debate, as Lunney outlines. If at the beginning of the twentieth century the consensus was that Nashe had no hand in the play, the pendulum later swung in the other direction, with Oliver detecting various Nasheisms in the play and Wiggins, following Oliver, influentially concluding that the play was co-authored. Lunney mounts a detailed and meticulous critique of the arguments for co-authorship, drawing on her own previous computer-aided

stylistic analysis ('Who Wrote *Dido, Queen of Carthage*?', co-authored with Hugh Craig), and concludes that 'Nashe is not the co-author of *Dido*. That is the conclusion the evidence leads to, whether old or new, verbal or computational: Christopher Marlowe wrote the play' (15). As Lunney admits, however, 'This finding does not explain Nashe's name on the title page' (15). The explanation that Nashe's name is on the title page because he had some role in bringing the play to the press after Marlowe's death in 1593 is implausible, Lunney argues, and she suggests that 'The possibility of an error on the title page cannot be excluded' (17). Early modern notions of authorship were more fluid than our own, however, so it might be helpful to consider Tiffany Stern's reminder that 'Given the necessity of a good plot to a good play it seems that on occasion someone who had only plotted the text was still thought of as an active co-author — and even sometimes as the "main" or "real" author, a fact that should be borne in mind when looking at collaborative plays. Given the nature of plotting and the esteem in which it was held, an "author" named on a title page might not be responsible for any of the sentences in the play at all'.[1] This might apply only to plays written for professional adult companies, but even so it suggests that there might be other viable explanations than error for the appearance of Nashe's name on the play's title page.

The dating of the play is no less contentious than its authorship, and Lunney again critiques recent arguments, specifically Martin Wiggins's 2008 dating of the play to 1588 — a dating that he repeats in volume two of *British Drama: 1553–1642* (Oxford, 2012) as 'Best Guess' — labelling that assessment 'unsustainable' (19). To the contrary, Lunney asserts, '*Dido* was written early in Marlowe's career, in 1584 or 1585, while he was a student at Cambridge. This estimate is based on details of his biography and an assessment of the early 1580s theatrical context' (17), with which, as Lunney outlines in her section on its early performance, the play resonates deeply. Lunney then turns to survey Marlowe's classical, medieval, and Renaissance sources and influences, remarking throughout on the ways in which Marlowe does not merely imitate but transforms his sources. She comments, for example, that 'Even when making most use of the *Aeneid*, Marlowe transforms the Virgilian story. In *Dido*, Marlowe aspires beyond imitation: he writes, not as Virgil, but as himself' (36). Particularly insightful in this section is Lunney's assessment of the play's influence on Shakespeare, from *Hamlet* to *The Tempest*. The following section on criticism of the play will be useful to those who are new to the area and concludes with the important caveat that the play 'is resistant to tidy critical analysis' (49). Indeed, it remains a field fertile with innovative critical possibilities, which Lunney's new edition will indubitably

facilitate. The final section of the introduction is devoted to modern performances. After providing an overview of the play's modern performance history, the section focuses on four professional twenty-first century American and British productions and one British amateur production: 'Shakespeare's Globe (2003), American Repertory (2005), National Theatre (2009), and Royal Shakespeare Company (2017)' (57), and the 2013 production of the play by Edward's Boys in Stratford-upon-Avon and Oxford (67). Lunney concludes her introduction with an emphatic statement of the play's significance: 'As a children's play of the 1580s, written by Marlowe in 1584–85 after the success of John Lyly at court, *Dido* was revolutionary: in its dominant female role, its blank verse experiment, and its refusal to moralise. *Dido* emerged from the schoolroom and study, but it was more than a pedagogical resource: what the play achieved was an imaginative retelling of one of the great legendary stories, furnished with the riches of classical learning but in touch with literary fashion and its contemporary culture' (69).

When readers move from the introduction to the play itself, they will encounter a well edited text accompanied by a scholarly apparatus comprising collation notes and comprehensive commentary notes (which frequently refer the reader to more extended commentary in a Longer Notes section immediately following the text). The commentary notes can roughly be divided into five types: basic word glosses; glosses of classical and other literary allusions and parallels; interpretative comments; comments documenting the play's adaptations of its two major classical sources, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides*; and performance commentary. The interpretative comments, touching on everything from the pervasive eye imagery in the play to the subtle emotional and rhetorical shifts in Aeneas's lengthy recounting of his flight from Troy to Dido in act 2, scene 1, might occasionally seem overbearing, but they generally reveal the play's richness and sophistication. The notes documenting the play's adaptations of Virgil and Ovid are thorough, detailed, and accompanied by illuminating analysis. They fully substantiate Lunney's claim that Marlowe transforms his classical sources. The performance commentary notes provide helpful details on aspects of the play's initial performance context and interesting conjectures upon potential performance possibilities. The Longer Notes section that immediately follows the text of the play allows Lunney to elaborate upon some of the commentary notes without completely overwhelming the text of the play with annotation.

The edition contains three appendices after the Longer Notes section. The first appendix 'evaluates the verbal evidence put forward for Nashe's presence in *Dido*' (263), specifically the 'Nasheisms' adduced by the previous Revels editor of the play, H.J. Oliver, as the basis for his suggestion that Nashe co-authored the

play. The second appendix offers a list of modern productions of the play from 1959 to 2018. The third appendix is a list of the plays and entertainments to which Lunney refers in her introduction and commentary notes, cross-referenced to Wiggins's *British Drama*. Two indexes follow the appendices, one of terms and the other of names and topics.

Overall, Lunney's new Revels edition of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is cause for celebration. Students new to the play will find in this edition a comprehensive introduction to the play's major aspects, and scholars already familiar with the play will find much to enrich their thinking.

Notes

1 Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009), 29–30.