(p. 124) is as an argument that the play is ambivalent. Mebane tells us that the "ultimate effect of the opening scene," which contains the lines allegedly enticing the audience to respond sympathetically to the magician, is to unsettle the audience and cause them "to raise questions concerning the limits of human nature, to make them wonder whether the individual does, after all, have the right to make his or her own decisions concerning philosophical, scientific, or religious truth" (p. 124). On the contrary, I would argue that an audience that has just viewed Faustus confusing Aristotle with Ramus, misquoting Justinian, assuming that the words of a prescription are as efficacious as the medicine itself, and, finally, totally mis- construing the New Testament, all the while presenting himself as the compleat philosopher, lawyer, physician, and theologian would be highly sceptical of Faustus’ ability to get anything correct. Moreover, as Mebane notes frequently, the occult philosophers “believed that magical power was derived from the magus’s ability to purify the soul, to return it to its prelapsarian condition” (p. 135). Faustus makes no discernible effort to accomplish such a purification, and the often flippant and selfish uses to which he applies his magic imply that he certainly does not possess the requisite purity. The play does not really suggest that such purification is impossible (Mebane, p. 135) since it is not even sought after. Marlowe’s Faustus attempts an illegitimate shortcut, namely witchcraft. The story of Faustus need have no implications at all concerning Marlowe’s presumed attitude to occult philosophy proper. I would have liked to have seen Mebane also tackle Robert Greene’s Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, a play which addresses many of the concerns of his book: magic which seems efficacious in some ways, but also morally suspect; the temptations of sensual delights; politics; and the theme of commitment to vs. escape from the normal human community.

This book is attractively printed and illustrated, but there is the following rather mystifying annotation in the bibliography: “Argues that Shakespeare responds in The Tempest to the aesthetic of both Dr. Faustus and The Tempest.”

J.M. RICHARDSON, Lakehead University


Robert Sidney is hardly a well-known name today. Yet in his own time he was a distinguished man. Governor of the strategic town of Flushing for Elizabeth and James, Lord Chamberlain of Queen Anne’s household, ambassador on several important missions to Scotland and France, he was rewarded by James with the titles Viscount Lisle and Earl of Leicester. The younger brother of Sir Philip Sidney, he
was a friend of the Earl of Essex and a patron of Ben Jonson— the owner of Penshurst Place when Jonson wrote his famous poem eulogizing the house and its family. He was also a poet in his own right, a devoted husband and father, and an enthusiastic amateur gardener. All these aspects of his varied life are documented in hundreds of letters, accounts and other items on deposit in the Kent County Archives, many of which have been calendared in the Historical Manuscript Commission Reports on the Dudley and De L’Isle papers. Together they make up a detailed picture of the life of an Elizabethan and Jacobean courtier, and it is not surprising that they have attracted the attention of at least one biographer to this interesting and little-known man.

Hay takes a thematic, rather than a strictly chronological, approach to Sidney’s life. Thus, after preliminary accounts of his family background, youth and education, we find three chapters on his military life at Flushing, one on his career at Elizabeth’s court, and one on his career at the court of James—the last two separated by chapters on his “Domestic Life and Personal Business” and on his activities as “Poet and Patron”. The format invites the readers to turn to the section that interests them most, and skip or skim the rest.

The book will be most useful to anyone interested in England’s involvement with the Low Countries during the 1590’s and early 1600’s. Hay gives detailed, thorough accounts of daily life in the garrison at Flushing, the difficulties involved in reconciling Dutch and English interests in a tenuous position, and the various military encounters in the area in which Sidney was involved. These engagements were not always to Sidney’s credit. His abrupt departure from Prince Maurice’s side just before the battle of Neweport caused considerable damage to his reputation, and Hay works hard—perhaps too hard—to justify it, asserting vehemently that it is “unquestionably not a possibility” that Sidney retreated out of cowardice (p. 108). Sidney did have good reasons for his decision, but Hay’s determination to shield him from all blame is offputting. If she seems to protest too much here, however, her final assessment of Sidney as a “competent but not a brilliant military commander,” who was “too temperate” and “cautious” by nature to be a great soldier, is probably accurate, and the chapters on Sidney’s career in Flushing give us a clear and fairly balanced view of an important part of his life (pp. 139, 109).

Later chapters are, unfortunately, less successful. It is reasonable to discuss Sidney’s life in the Netherlands separately from his activities in England—even here Hay’s format tends to obscure the fact that he was constantly travelling between the two countries, and during the years that he was governor of Flushing he spent over half his time in London or Kent. Sidney’s life in England is much less easily compartmentalized, and Hay’s effort to treat her subject thematically results in many repetitions, confusions and omissions. In Chapter 7, she details Sidney’s pursuits of various titles and positions at Elizabeth’s court, but says nothing about his maneuvering for possession of the royal manor of Otford—which represented
political as well as financial gains — until Chapter 8, where she deals with it as "personal business". This is confusing, and creates a distorted view of the nature of Sidney's "private" life. The marriages of his children were made, at least in part, for financial and political advantage; Sidney's oldest daughter Mary, who seems to have been one of his favourites, was married at 18 to a man 45 years her senior, who was of good family and income. Penshurst Place was certainly a haven for its owner from the tedious routines of the court and Flushing, yet it was never entirely removed from the ambitious political maneuvering of Sidney's "court" life — the hospitality which Jonson praised was extended to influential guests who might be able to help Sidney's advancement; the fruit which grew "that every child may reach" in its gardens was presented every year to the royal family and Sidney's friends at court. Hay is not unaware of this; she recognizes that Sidney's plans to enlarge the deer park at Penshurst were probably made in the hopes of attracting the king to hunt there, and gives an intelligent analysis of the political implications of his choice of godparents for his children (pp. 187, 178–180). Her compartmentalizing approach, however, precludes any serious consideration of the intermingling of the public and private spheres in Sidney's life.

If Hay's treatment of Sidney's "domestic life" seems inadequate, her discussion of Sidney as "poet and patron" is even less satisfying. Her simultaneous attempts to explain Sidney's sonnets biographically and to shield him from charges of an adulterous passion are forced, and unfortunately take the place of the sort of biographical discussion which might have been really interesting. Early in the book Hay discusses Philip Sidney's military and diplomatic career in a lengthy preamble to Robert's, yet she says almost nothing about the more famous man's poetic career or its possible influences on his younger brother. She never asks what contact the young Robert might have had with his brother's famous group of literati, or what influence his literary sister, the Countess of Pembroke — to whom Robert, as well as Philip, dedicated his work — might have had on him. Just as disappointing is Hay's treatment of Sidney's acquaintance with Ben Jonson. If Robert is most easily identified today as Sir Robert Sidney's younger brother, his next claim to fame is as the owner of Penshurst at the time when Jonson wrote his famous poem. His relationship to this literary giant — who also wrote poems to Sidney's daughter Mary, and in whose masques Sidney and his family took part with delight — deserves more attention than the cursory paragraph or two Hay gives it.

The book is not free from factual inconsistencies and errors; Hay describes Lady Warwick as Robert Sidney's sister and Lady Huntingdon as his sister-in-law, but reverses the relationships in her genealogical chart in the appendix; similarly, she gives Sir Robert Wroth one death-date in the text and another in the chart (pp. 18, 186, and appendix). She seems to have done much of her research from the Sidney letters published in the Historical Manuscripts Commission's Calendar of the Dudley and De L'Isle papers, and occasionally to have referred to the original
documents. This is unfortunate, as the Calendar does not reproduce every letter in
the collection, often paraphrases or abbreviates the letters' contents, and is not
always accurate in its transcriptions.

The picture of Robert Sidney which emerges from this book is in the end much
less interesting than it might have been. Indeed, it could be argued that we are hardly
left with a coherent picture of him at all. The many confusions engendered by Hay's
topical approach, the absence of an introduction or a concluding chapter to give us
an overview of his life (the book ends abruptly with the date and manner of Sidney's
death), the lack of even a simple time-line mean that even the basic facts of Robert’s
life are scattered throughout the text, and its broader patterns remain unassessed.
Hay's habit of referring to Sidney by his title rather than his name is indicative - he
is Sidney, Lisle, Leicester, but never a single character or a whole life. Robert Sidney
is not one of the legendary personalities of the Elizabethan era; and perhaps his life
will always be more interesting for what it tells us about his times than for its own
sake. But we need to see it as a coherent whole in order to learn from it, and Hay
does not allow us to do that.

MARTHA KURTZ, Long Island, New York

Shimon Markish. Erasmus and the Jews, translated by Anthony Olcott, with an

Shimon Markish, the son of a noted Yiddish poet executed at the orders of Stalin,
had made a name for himself as a devotee of the works and ideas of Desiderius
Erasmus before his emigration from the Soviet Union. He is currently a lecturer at
the University of Geneva, and although he reads a wide range of European lan-
guages, he still writes in Russian. This book, translated directly from a Russian
manuscript, has already been published in a French translation.

One of the most interesting writings of the late Professor Guido Kisch of Basel
was his Erasmus’ Stellung zu Juden und Judentum (Tubingen: Mohr, 1969), a little
book which, when taken together with his Zastius und Reuchlin: Eine rechtsges-
chichtlichvergleichende Studie zum Toleranzproblem im 16 Jahrhundert,
Pforzheimer Reuchlinschriften, vol. 1 (Constance: Thorbecke, 1961) and his brief
essay “Toleranz und Menschenwurde,” in Paul Wilper, ed., Judentum im Middelal-
4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1966), 1–36, laid the foundation for a scholarly
discussion of the treatment of Jews by humanists in the German Renaissance. Since
neither Kisch’s essays nor several other important contributions on the subject have
been translated (mostly from German), it is good to have the present study by