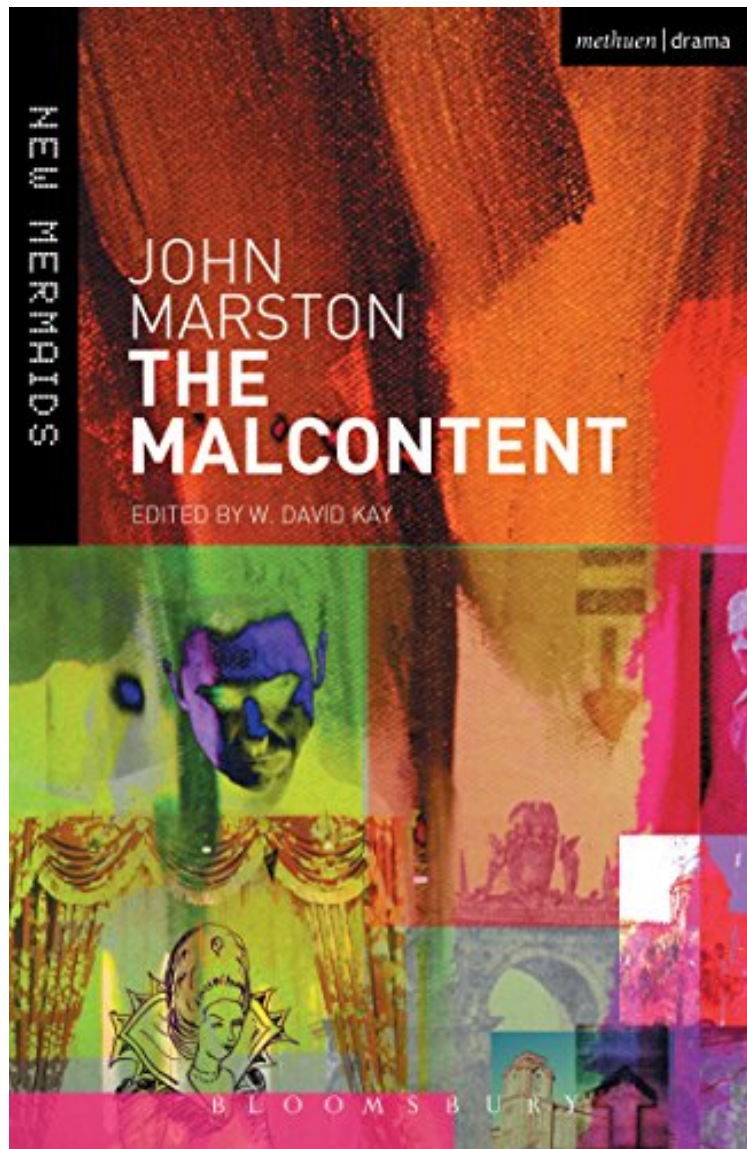


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## The Malcontent (New Mermaids)

*John Marston*

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**John Marston : The Malcontent (New Mermaids)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Malcontent (New Mermaids):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Marston's Satirical Drama Provides Useful Contrast to HAMLET.By Edgar L. ChapmanA nice version of an important, though lesser, Elizabethan play. Marston's protagonist is an angry and alienated man with similarities to Hamlet, but Marston's main character is more a voice for the satirist in Marston than a great character in his own right.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The best version I foundBy WestsiderI needed to read this extremely dated play for work, and found this to be a good edition. Better notes than

most of the editions. It's not a great play, and its language is arcane even by classical theater standards, but if you want to read it, go ahead and read this version. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Good Reading - Betrayals and Unexpected Twists By Michael Wischmeyer In 1601 John Marston, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and George Chapman were described as "the best and chiefest of our modern writers". Today, only English majors are likely to be acquainted with John Marston's works. Even his most popular play, *The Malcontent* (1604), is seldom encountered. *The Malcontent* is often categorized as a revenge play, although it is quite unlike Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, or *The Revenger's Tragedy* (uncertain authorship). Even though deceit, betrayal, disguises, and attempted murders are essential elements of the plot, *The Malcontent* lacks the brutality that characterizes other Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge plays. Unexpectedly, as the play develops, Malevole, the disguised Duke of Genoa, shows some willingness to forgive others for their past injustices. The recovery and restoration of character becomes more important than revenge. *The Malcontent* makes good reading. Cascading betrayals and unexpected twists maintained my interest throughout all five acts. Unlike many contemporaneous plays, the plot is not complicated by extraneous subplots. The action, although sometimes convoluted, is all tightly connected. All in all, I found *The Malcontent* to be easier reading than most Elizabethan and Jacobean plays.

**Induction:** Act I is preceded by an Induction by John Webster, a six page witty discussion among five of the Globe Theatre actors (including Richard Burbage) regarding the author's intentions and recent modifications to the play itself. Apparently, *The Malcontent* had been previously staged by a rival theatre, the Children of the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars. While of interest to scholars in unraveling the early history of Marston's play, this induction is not germane to the plot itself.

**Staging:** In the introduction Bernard Harris, the editor of the New Mermaids edition, describes *The Malcontent* as "a theatrically ambitious and bewilderingly active play, rich in details of staging." Scenes require attendants, pages, lights, ladies, processions, music, dancing, costumes, jewelry, feasts, and even the devising of a masque.

"This Malevole is one of the most prodigious affections that ever conversed with nature: a man, or rather a monster, more discontent than Lucifer."

About the Author George K Hunter is Professor of English and Renaissance Studies at Yale University