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Marlowe's Medievalism: Subversion and Medieval Literature in Christopher Marlowe's Drama

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Submitted for The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Arts)

National University of Ireland, Cork.

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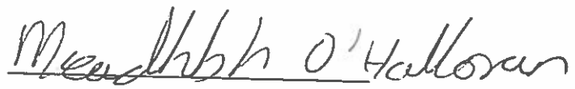
Declaration

This thesis is the candidate's own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed,



Meadhbh O'Halloran

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Signed:

Meadhbh O'Halloran

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Abstract

This thesis is the first sustained study of Christopher Marlowe's strategic handling of medieval literature. This study identifies and explores Marlowe's subversive use of a range of medieval material, both textual and cultural, in his dramas. In addition to identifying Marlowe's medieval sources, this thesis also delineates how this material was used: to offer a subtle and subversive critique of the core principles of Elizabethan ideology. After first establishing Marlowe's medieval sources, his "medieval library," this study then explores the ultra-specific application of this material across Marlowe's oeuvre. Close textual analysis of Marlowe's seven plays is the main methodology utilised in this study, facilitating the discovery of Marlowe's politic evocation of medieval literature. This thesis seeks to advance our understanding of Marlowe's subversive theatre by identifying his unique and subversive medievalism.

Introduction: Marlowe's Medievalism

This image depicts the Old Court of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This is where Christopher Marlowe spent, with the exception of some unexplained absences, seven years of his life. The ground-floor window on the left is the room in which Marlowe stayed during his time at Corpus, as commemorated by the bronze plaque which now hangs outside. Directly above, the tower of St. Bene't's church looms over the court. Dating from the year 800, this church is the oldest structure in Cambridge. Though this apparent juxtaposition of early modern and early medieval culture is nothing unusual, early modern England denied and rejected the pre-Reformation era despite this formidable presence. The architecture of his alma mater thus reflects Marlowe's literary constructions: Elizabethan life subtly supported and framed by earlier forms.

Beyond Cambridge, Elizabethan England was a landscape dotted with ruins of the medieval past. Yet these ruins were often not products of decay and erosion over time, but of deliberate and systematic acts of destruction. Former monastic buildings were not decayed but decimated, as most of the re-appropriated medieval buildings had been seized by force. Medieval literature was as deeply embedded and obviously visible as pre-1500 architecture in Elizabethan life. Marlowe lived in a period of intense cultural change, but at a time in which the disparaged Catholic past was still within living memory. A recent past from which educated elites now sought to distance themselves continued to permeate most aspects of daily life in England. Marlowe, Shakespeare, et al. have been seen, according to Cooper, as "marking the final obsolescence of the medieval" (2013 1) yet their dramas are indebted to and imbedded with the medieval past.

Marlowe, perhaps more than any other early modern dramatist, tends to be read through our conceptions rather than in his own context. When we speak about Marlowe, we are all too often discussing only our own conception of Marlowe. When we speak about "audience interpretation", that audience is ourselves. There is much to be uncovered in Marlowe's corpus when we remove ourselves from the dynamic and examine the texts on their own terms. This thesis explores Marlowe's texts within their original Elizabethan context. Such a focus makes apparent Marlowe's subversive use of medieval literature.

My thesis argues that medieval literature and culture deeply permeates Marlowe's work, and is essential to our understanding of the cultural milieu that shaped the English literary canon.

Humanists claimed a complete break with the recent past, and a "rediscovery" of classical culture. In a period when medieval literature was

dismissed as redundant, can we accept "renaissance" authors' claims of originality? As Gransden asserts, "perhaps the most distinctive feature of the humanists was that they regarded themselves as humanists, and were so regarded by others" (425). Humanists defined themselves through an emphatic rejection of the medieval, emphasising a supposed break from preceding decades, insisting that the medieval past really was "past". Marlowe's engagement with the medieval is to go in the opposite direction, in demonstrating just how deeply embedded in Tudor literature the rejected pre-Reformation era was. Whilst Tudor culture in general sought to reject medieval literature and culture, Marlowe assimilates it into his most innovative and forward-thinking work. Each age interprets, reinterprets and ultimately utilises the Middle Ages for its own ends. Stock memorably states that "the Renaissance invented the Middle Ages in order to define itself, the Enlightenment perpetuated them in order to admire itself; and the Romantics revived them in order to escape from themselves" (Stock 543; Simpson 2002 7). Marlowe notes the continuation between the pre and post-Reformation worlds, and sees similarity where Humanists insist on positing difference.

Marlowe's sources are long recognised as being varied and multiple. As Smith explains: "explorations into the sources which lie behind […] Marlowe's plays have led to discoveries which, by their number and variety, have at times amazed researchers and revealed Marlowe to be an author who customarily integrated from a surprisingly broad and diverse group of materials" (1977 143). This thesis contends that the literary genetics of medieval literature are re-appropriated by Marlowe for subversive ends. This thesis is a study of Marlowe's plays, of the subversion of cultural norms in the communal experience of drama. As Wright observes: "among all the forms of entertainment that amused the public of

Elizabethan England, none flourished with greater vigour than the drama, and none appealed more to all classes" (603). I cannot place Marlowe in the audience of a specific play, nor can I place a single text in his hands, though as we shall see in the following chapter, many were in extremely close proximity. Thus, this argument is centred on generic formats of drama and literary narrative, and their respective remediation in Marlowe's oeuvre.

Marlowe's Medievalism

Medieval (archaic spelling mediaeval) refers to the "middle" period, between the ancient world and the period known as the Renaissance. Williams notes the "persistent unfavourable use" of the term 'medieval' (1976 207), and it goes without saying that it is still a pejorative term today. The term did not exist in Marlowe's era, and it is crucial to avoid anachronism in the construction of this argument. Thus, this study makes broad use of this term.

This thesis is about Christopher Marlowe's strategic use of medieval literature; Marlowe's medievalism. "Marlowe's medievalism" does not simply refer to Marlowe's use of medieval source texts, although it will be demonstrated that he uses such material in abundance, including popular medieval romance, and drama, and a proliferation of medieval tropes and themes serve as constant touching points throughout his work. Nor does "Marlowe's Medievalism" refer to the writing of history plays, although Marlowe obviously does make explicit use of medieval history in *Edward II*. Rather, the term connotes a reading of Marlowe's deliberate and strategic intertextual use of medieval literature. "Medievalism" in the context of this study has multiple variants: a recent past, albeit across the vast schism of the Reformation. Marlowe's medievalism is a multi-pronged tool. It utilises the

medieval in concrete forms of text and genre, and in the abstract, a medieval imaginary of a pre-Reformation world. The chapters that follow analyse the cultural repetition of literary tropes from the medieval through the early modern period, assessing how this continuation is co-opted by Marlowe for subversive ends.

In this study, I identify the significance of medieval tropes and themes throughout Marlowe's corpus. Moreover, I propose his is a uniquely Elizabethan medievalism, as it functions within a specific frame of reference. Theatre-goers and readers held exacting expectations of the texts they would encounter in the immediate post-Reformation period. Literary renderings of society and ideology supported these structures, but in Marlowe's case serve to undermine them.

Taylor states that medieval reading was often intensive rather than extensive, in that people read the same books repeatedly (Taylor 1999 25; Calkin 4). Medieval literature seeped into the English consciousness more than that of any other period, until perhaps Shakespeare's own work. Cooper has delineated the pervasiveness of literary motifs in terms borrowed from evolutionary biology, describing repeated literary motifs as "memes". This is a term coined by Dawkins and applied to literature as "an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures" (Cooper 2004 3). The middle ages were frequently contrasted inauspiciously with the Elizabethan period. This term has been in regular use since the nineteenth-century, but the tripartite division of Western history was developed in Marlowe's own lifetime, the sixteenth-century, and became commonplace from the seventeenth-century onwards. It is of course essential to stipulate that the term itself did not exist in Marlowe's epoch, but the concept of an interim period of a lesser cultural and historical value did exist. For Marlowe, there was no "medieval

period". For Marlowe's audience, medieval literature was simply popular literature. It was widely available, in various formats, and though disparaged by Humanist scholars and Reformists, was devoured by almost everyone else.

The medieval period is one to which Marlowe constantly returns, and invites his audience to recall. This cultural memory was a powerful resource for any dramatist. The most marked difference between the two periods was religion. For an Elizabethan, the dividing line between medieval and Renaissance was the Reformation. Reformists sought to define themselves against an inferior past culture, as different and radical, but ultimately righteous. As Anglicanism moved from a peripheral position to one of dominance, this dismissal of the medieval was soon accepted as fact. In Marlowe's active years, there was no such stability, and his work grapples with an increasingly polemicist culture. Marlowe's medievalism is cultural memory. He evokes familiar material and initially appears conventional in presenting it. This thesis studies medieval literature in the early modern era, and contributes to recent scholarship advocating a more porous divide, if any, between the medieval and Renaissance.

Marlowe shares many memories with his audience; social, cultural, and above all religious. This collective consciousness was ripe for exploitation. Marlowe selectively *mis*-remembers the middle ages, anticipating that his audience will recognise any alterations, and be sufficiently struck by the incongruities to pay attention. As Kirwan has recently observed, "creative misremembering" is an artistic technique through which new ideas can be articulated (2015). In Marlowe's case, it is the ideal conduit for ideas that are not only new, but potentially dangerous.

Medieval Literature and Subversion

Marlowe specifically uses medieval literature to subvert social and cultural norms in Elizabethan England. "Subvert" is a term which itself derives from late middle English. Literally meaning to "overturn." *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb "to subvert" as to "undermine the power and authority of an established system or institution" (Def.1). The sub-definitions demonstrate that subversion on a large external scale is "to try to destroy the authority of a political, religious, etc. system by attacking it secretly or indirectly" and also "to challenge somebody's ideas or expectations and make them consider the opposite." As Hayes points out, to subvert is not to revolutionise. Subversion finds its place "in *potential*, not actual revolution" (Hayes 3, emphasis own). Marlowe's small corpus fulfils both of these definitions. To subvert is not necessarily to attack, or to attempt to revolutionise, and this is a significant aspect of subversive activity. Subversion, Happé explains, has a social function, in that it can serve to uphold or undermine a community (2001 11). Marlowe's subversive texts are dependent upon inter-related cultural signifiers, contained within seemingly orthodox narratives. Marlowe's plays manage to subvert orthodoxy by appearing to uphold it. Marlowe achieves both sides of this dichotomy through the subversion of familiar medieval material. Tropes, characters, stock figures, language and imagery within Marlowe's plays recall many medieval permutations, but entirely de-familiarise the referenced material.

As Lunney has observed "subversion is not simply a matter of 'ideas', neither is it chiefly a question of place or context. It has more to do with 'how' minds are changed that with 'what' or 'where' (2002 7). Subversion does not necessarily seek change; it opens up opportunity for alternative considerations but does not ultimately offer new answers. Marlowe's texts undermine established discourses of power; they

do not offer alternatives or suggest replacement ideologies. Marlowe's plays use medieval literary references to subvert established ideas, to expose these as received, not inherent. The plays use familiar tropes and themes subversively, to offer the possibility of alternative cognitive responses.

To consider Marlowe's plays subversive is not an innovation. His reputation as a daring and provocative dramatist began within his own lifetime. Bartels has mused that:

> If ever there were reason for the guardians of church and state to be wary of the politics being practised, promoted, or critiqued within Elizabethan theatre, reason for Puritan activists such as Stubbes to declaim against "all kind of sin and mischief" appearing on the Renaissance stage, or reason for Queen Elizabeth herself to authorise secretly the assassination of a popular playwright (as Riggs has suggested she may have done to Marlowe), the plays of Christopher Marlowe provided that prompt. (2004 2)

Marlowe navigates these potentially explosive ideas with the aid of medieval intertexts. Lunney exposes a need to examine "what happens when Marlowe retains the old ways, but uses them differently" 2002 26). In addition to illuminating the abundant use of medieval topoi in Marlowe's dramatic oeuvre, this thesis further demonstrates that medieval literature was utilised by Marlowe to provoke his audience. Although humanist writers denied the ubiquity of medieval tropes, genres and motifs in the period, it is their very pervasiveness that makes this material ideal for subversion. In the immediate post-reformation period, theatre audiences and readers expected the narratives that they would encounter to uphold theological and social norms. Marlowe establishes generic expectations, only to defy them. This creates a disorientating effect that encourages his audience to think critically and

question the status quo. In the historical context in which Marlowe was writing, subversion was the only route available to those with unconventional ideas.

Censorship: The Case for Subversion

In the introductory passages of his eponymous *Chronicles*, Holinshed informs his reader "'Tis dangerous […] to range in so large a fielde as I have here undertaken, while so many sundry men in divers things may be able to control me".[1] Holinshed is aware that he does not have unfettered authorial control over his chronicle. Marlowe, like his source Holinshed, is writing under censorship, and all his plays requires the approval of the Master of Revels. Yet, as Lynch explains, the conditions of censorship "could inspire remarkable resourcefulness on the part of playwrights" (119).

In the Elizabethan era of censorship, a direct challenge to authority would have grave consequences for an author. The sixteenth century was an extremely tense period, likened by Bossy to Europe in the late 1930s. He considers it to have been in a "state of undeclared civil war" between Protestants and Catholics, with the exception of the Netherlands, "where it [war] had been declared" (quoted in Kendall 13). It was determined that "'matters of Divinity and of state' were not fit subjects for the public stage" (Dutton 76). Thus, Marlowe consistently destabilises Elizabethan literary and social norms through the strategic use of medieval intertexts. This thesis illustrates that in displacing and reshaping familiar medieval literature Marlowe probes established contemporary dogma from a safe distance. To consider Marlowe's dramas as subversive is nothing new. This thesis locates the culturally specific nature of Marlowe's subversive imagination, as I argue that a

[1] *Chronicles* 1577: I sig 4r. *Chronicles* 1587: III sig A3r.

hitherto unacknowledged aspect of this subversiveness is his strategic use of medieval literature.

Literature Review: The State of the Art

There are two critical milieux into which this thesis fits: medieval and Renaissance literary criticism and Marlowe studies. This thesis examines the afterlife of medieval literary forms beyond their evident influence, in considering the deliberate and strategic use of medieval material in Marlowe's oeuvre. My thesis not only illustrates this resonance in Marlowe, it also demonstrates why and how medieval literature comes to be remediated and remade in his writing. Shakespeare's medieval sources have gained critical attention, but Marlowe's remain overlooked.

Medieval and Renaissance Literary History

As this is a single-author study, it is expedient to consider the wider discourse of medieval literary afterlives in the early modern period. Medieval and Renaissance literary criticism has undergone a shift in recent years, with scholars such as Cooper arguing for a previously unappreciated overlap between the two periods. Other scholars have begun to acknowledge the resonance of the Middle Ages in the early modern period, but how and why medieval texts are evoked has not been explored in any great depth. Scholarship has been moving toward a more nuanced understanding of the two periods for the last couple of decades. Yet it was only at the beginning of this decade that such an approach rapidly gained ground. Simpson and Cummings' anthology *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History* (2010) threw open the discipline to a new impetus of connection and continuation, in contrast to the preceding insistence on a divide between the two periods in literary

history. The essays therein invite the reader to "be alive to the paradoxes and reversals of time as well as to its inexorable teleology" and the collection takes as its "default position" that "historiography moves both backward and forward" (9). Cooper's pioneering work on the afterlife of medieval literature in the early modern period is also the bedrock on which this thesis is set. Reading Marlowe in light of the medieval is a natural progression from this critical standpoint. This thesis distills this broad overview of the literary environment into a case study of Marlowe.

This study is posited on the tip of such a broad discourse, and carries this more nuanced understanding of both epochs into a single author study, applying it to the minutiae of literary culture of the period. This thesis not only contributes to this discourse, but situates Marlowe within it, expanding the scope and content of the discourse, to include a hitherto unconsidered author.

Marlowe Studies

The more salacious aspects of Marlowe's reputation - potential atheism, homosexuality and a supposed hedonistic lifestyle - that led nineteenth and early twentieth century readers to overlook his work now form the core of his appeal to twenty-first century audiences. There has been an increased critical interest in Marlowe since the early 1990s, culminating in the establishment of an academic journal dedicated to his work, *Marlowe Studies: An Annual*, in 2011. The four subsequent volumes of the journal have explored Marlowe's entire corpus from diverse and innovative viewpoints, but to date have not considered medieval literature. In 2014, the 450th anniversary of Marlowe's birth saw a flourishing of publications and productions, including the first London performance of *The Massacre at Paris* in over four hundred years. Most significantly, this year saw the

publication of an edited collection, *Christopher Marlowe at 450*, which takes stock of Marlowe scholarship at this pivotal moment. This definitive text reveals that, despite repeated calls for a more nuanced awareness of Marlowe's sources, the integral role played by medieval literary and dramatic modes has not been considered. Further, Marlowe scholarship still suffers from an over-emphasis on his most accomplished play, *Doctor Faustus*, and has been dominated by biographical readings of the canon that envision a literary figure first, and the work second.[2] My thesis seeks to redress this imbalance.

Marlowe's potential use of medieval material has been gestured at in some short studies, and it is worth pausing to consider these here. Bevington has traced a moral structure in drama, as the book's title states, *From Mankind to Marlowe* (1968), but still considers Marlowe's use of such a form as less than strategic. Ryan's article "'Edward II' and the Medieval Passion Play" (1998) suggests medieval saints' plays were a potential source for *Edward II*, but does not develop this argument beyond the imprisonment scene. Whilst my study likewise relies on close readings, I identify not only the use, but the strategic use, of medieval sources. In a more recent book chapter, "Marlowe's Medievalism" (2013), Chism considers Marlowe's protagonists to recall medieval mystery plays. In "The Dynamics and Staging of Community in medieval "Entry into Jerusalem" Plays: Dramatic Resources Influencing Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*" (2014), Willits observes parallels between Calymath's entry into Malta and Christ's entry into Jerusalem in the mystery plays. Willits makes a convincing case for Marlowe's considered use of this "medieval topos" (1). The oldest and most extensive study of the influence of medieval literature on Marlowe's work, beyond its established use in *Doctor*

[2] Brandt has recently calculated that general studies or biography comprise 32% of all of the scholarship produced in the previous decade. See "Christopher Marlowe Studies: Bibliography 2000-2009". *Marlowe Studies: An Annual*. 2011.

Faustus, is Seaton's chapter, "Marlowe's Light Reading" (1959). Seaton makes a convincing case for the resonances of popular medieval romance in Marlowe's corpus, but does not infer that these applications are deliberate or strategic. Seaton instead suggests that the recollection of romance is unconscious, perhaps derived from memories of tales Marlowe read as a child. The most extensive study of Marlowe's use of earlier dramatic material is Lunney's *Marlowe and the Popular Tradition: Innovation in English Drama Before 1595* (2002). Yet no study provides an exhaustive analysis of the medieval sources of Marlovian drama

Though sparse in number and scope, these studies have laid the groundwork for establishing Marlowe's awareness of medieval literature. There is a paucity of criticism on Marlowe's medieval sources and, at most, Marlowe as a medievalist has only been examined briefly in short studies. Yet, collectively, these pieces suggest an untapped potential in Marlowe's source material. In studying Marlowe's medieval sources, this thesis supplements those publications in which the subversive nature of Marlowe's texts is discussed at length, but his technique of re-appropriating and re-working medieval material to achieve this is not observed.

I will now offer a brief overview of the critical status quo for each play. *Doctor Faustus* is by far the most studied of Marlowe's plays. It comprises 31.6% of all scholarly output from 1978-89, and 21.1% from 2000-9 (Brandt 2011 194).[3] Calvinism is the focus of much of the discussion, and religion in general, while a good deal of consideration has been given to the difficulty posed by the two distinct editions. The theological implications of Faustus' dilemma are explored with increasing incision, by Poole (2006), Duxfield (2007), Preedy (2012) and Streete (2000 & 2001). Yet many studies remain tentative in asserting the subversive

[3] For more detail on these statistics, and percentage values for each play, see Brandt, 2011.

implications of these findings. The influence of the medieval morality play on the text has been treated extensively; works by Bevington (2007), Lunney (2002), Cox (2000) and Parker (2007) are among the most recent publications dealing with the issue. To date, there has been little consideration of the morality framework as a subversive rhetorical strategy. Scholarship on the medieval resonances in the play is abundant, and my study of the play in Chapter Two seeks to develop this substantial body of work.

Edward II has drawn sustained critical attention, but within the relatively narrow remit of sexuality. Selected texts on this aspect include Stymeist (2004), Stewart (2006), Perry (2000) and Orgel (2000). Some studies have diverged from this well-worn path, such as Kim (2001), who diffuses the issue of the homoerotic into wider discourses within the play. Sillitoe (2003) similarly looks at homoeroticism as an issue that complicates the play, rather than as its defining issue, arguing that *Edward II* is focused on the nature of the English court. Only a handful of studies have broken off to focus on English politics. Knowles (2001) explores the play from the perspective of a sixteenth-century reader, who would have been more likely to see the play as interrogative of contemporary issues. In the same vein, Keenan (2006) argues that early modern audiences expected tragedy to offer important and relevant lessons for contemporary monarchs, and Lee (2008) considers that the play engages with Elizabethan concepts of aristocracy. Only Brown (2002) explores Marlowe's treatment of his source, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, arguing that the play expands "marginal elements" from the chronicle such as women, and "interrogates [the *Chronicles*'] stoic public values and ethos" (166). Apart from this article, there has been to date no engagement with the chronicle *genre* as the play's defining source. Chapter Five explores exactly this unchartered

area, demonstrating that the play engages with and depends on this important medieval literary genre, and employs it to offer a subversive critique of hierarchical class structure and its ultimate expression in monarchy.

Tamburlaine the Great Part I and *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* have fascinated scholars, and the treatment of both texts has thus far focused on the portrayal of the Islamic East, Islam in general, class, and gender. The play's setting in the East has gained much attention, as has Tamburlaine's racial and religious identity. Grogan (2012) argues the play offers a more nuanced concept of Islam than many scholars have acknowledged, focusing on "the domestic subtexts of this exploration of intra-Islamic conflict and schism" (46). Vitkus (2006) has examined religious identity, and concludes similarly that the play is more complex than it appears, offering a critique applicable to Elizabethan London. However, the two plays' sustained use of, and strategic engagement with, medieval romance has yet to be acknowledged. Chapter Three endeavours to fill this gap in illustrating both the influence and subversive use of medieval romance in both texts.

The Jew of Malta was not afforded sufficient attention in the twentieth century, as the post-Holocaust world still struggles effectively to engage with a distasteful stage Jew caricature. The play is most often studied in relation to its more esteemed heir, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. As in the *Tamburlaine* plays, religion is a prominent topic of study. Recent criticism has moved towards reading the play on its own merit. Logan's recent edited collection *The Jew of Malta: A Critical Reader* (2013) is a welcome exploration of the play. In his contribution to the collection, Brandt devotes a section to "Jewish Stereotypes and Anti-Semitism" (11) but this examines only the debated presence of Jews in 1590s London, and contemporary attitudes towards such individuals. Allusions to medieval cycle plays

have been noted by Willits (2014), but there has to date been no consideration of the long medieval lineage of these stereotypical figures, nor any consideration of the "Jewish" stereotype as a conceptual model that serves a specific purpose in Christian communities, and is not dependent on the presence of actual Jews. Nothing has been published on Marlowe's subversive development of the uniquely medieval stage Jew, the subject of Chapter Four. For future scholarship, Lynch asserts that "a key question remains – to what extent is the play radical, defiant, and subversive?" (122). Chapter Four seeks to answer this essential critical question.

This thesis goes beyond the canonical works to include Marlowe's entire dramatic corpus. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris* have received significantly less critical attention than the other plays, but as we shall see in Chapters Five and Two respectively, they also boast medieval literary sources, and use them subversively. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* has attained relatively little critical attention, but interest is steadily increasing. Most criticism focuses on the play's primary source, Virgil's *Aeneid*. In recent years, the play's more subversive aspects have gained notice. Hopkins argues that the play undermines the patrilineal trajectory of empire through the figure of Actaeon (2014) and Crowley (2008) asserts that the play is satirical in its depiction of the ideology of the *translatio imperii*. Potter states that twentieth-century scholars have "over-invested" in Virgil and Ovid (27; Lunney 2015 42) and Lunney argues that there is a need to cultivate "a wider appreciation of cultural influences beyond the obvious literary ones in Virgil and Ovid" (42), arguing instead for a consideration of the wider dissemination and appropriation of the tale in the sixteenth century (42). My study of this play in Chapter Five makes headway in both directions, examining both the use of a

medieval source and the subversive juxtaposition of this intertext against the standard Elizabethan reading of the Virgilian source text.

The Massacre at Paris is the most critically neglected of Marlowe's plays, with a stunted critical heritage. When it is afforded some attention, it is interpreted as debased anti-Catholic propaganda, a tawdry production designed for shock value. Few critics have discerned any aesthetic value in the truncated text. Yet, the corrupt text still reveals subversion, mediated through medieval drama. Recently, McCall-Probes has identified theological allusion in the play, arguing that four rhetorical strategies are used to depict religious violence (2008), and Greenfield has noted an absence of conventional deathbed speeches (2004). Chapter Two delineates the ways in which these subversive allusions undermine religious theatre, and once again do so through a medieval source: the cycle play.

Methodology

The initial aim of this study is to identify and examine the use of medieval forms within Marlowe's dramatic writing. In order fully to probe Marlowe's medievalist technique, a focused methodology combining close reading of the texts, essential contextualisation and carefully applied theoretical paradigms, is required. Due to the subtle and underhand nature of Marlowe's subversive allusion, medieval literary influences can only be discovered through close reading. Textual analysis and close reading will be the primary methodology of this study, in conjunction with appropriate theoretical frameworks. This thesis is not posited in support of any single theory; rather, taken collectively and applied selectively, several paradigms offer inroads into each play. The theories informing this thesis have been judiciously

selected in order to aid in the uncovering of medieval intertexts, without obscuring the textual analysis with excessive theorisation.

In broad terms, the methodology of this thesis is New Historicist in that it situates Marlowe's plays exclusively in their own context, and appreciation of its argument is contingent on such contextualisation. This study hinges on historical contextualisation, as it is only through this lens that subversive allusion can be identified. New Historicism is especially concerned with subversion, particularly the constraint of subversion by dominant structures. My reading of Marlowe is similarly informed by Derrida, and the theory of Deconstruction. The contention that the centre of meaning is constantly in flux is relevant here, as Marlowe's unique medievalism engages his own cultural milieu in different ways to ours. This thesis does not directly apply any single critical framework to Marlowe's oeuvre; rather these concepts are employed to aid in the discovery of Marlowe's unique engagement of the medieval.

As Marlowe's use of medieval literature is most aptly described as intertextual, the theory of intertextuality informs much of my reading. Whilst the entirety of the Marlowe corpus bears this analysis, this thesis focuses exclusively on drama. Although it would have been possible, and desirable, to cover all of Marlowe's oeuvre, it is not within the temporal or organisational remit of this thesis to do so. Marlowe's poetry and translations occupy different generic and theoretical spheres, and require separate study to that of his dramas. Marlowe's subversive appropriation of medieval literature in his plays is a distinct phenomenon, and is the sole focus of this thesis.

Chapter Overview

Structured in five chapters, this thesis delineates four distinct but interconnected subversive uses of medieval literature. It does not offer a chronological arrangement, rather a thematic series of self-contained studies which, as a whole, comprehensively examine and articulate Marlowe's medievalism. After the opening bibliographical and contextual chapter, the remaining four chapters comprise detailed analysis of Marlowe's seven plays, and of their medieval intertexts, assessing the ways in which this material is used subversively. Three of these concern two plays each (taking the *Tamburlaine* plays as separate entities); one focuses singularly on *The Jew of Malta*.

"Marlowe's Medieval Library"

This work hinges on context: the first chapter will serve to establish this by illustrating the range and variety of medieval material available to Marlowe, his "medieval library". This library includes, but is not limited to, physical libraries and collections of books. This initial chapter will also illuminate the pervasive presence of medieval drama and popular fiction during Marlowe's lifetime, indicating how and where Marlowe may have accessed this material. Crucially, this chapter will demonstrate that this vast array of medieval material was a cultural commonplace that the dramatist shared with most of his audience, making it an ideal vehicle for subversion. Having established the plurality of medieval literature still widely embedded in Marlowe's cultural milieu, the remainder of the thesis will focus exclusively on analysis of Marlowe's seven plays and their medieval intertexts.

"Staging Schism: Marlowe's Medieval Theatre"

Marlowe is perhaps the English dramatist most associated with unconventional religious belief, and his most lauded play, *Doctor Faustus* (c.1592-3), reveals the most obvious medieval influence. The logical starting point for a study of Marlowe's medieval sources is surely this text, and is precisely where the thesis proper will commence. This chapter will begin the analytical portion of the thesis by examining both religion and medieval religious theatre, combining this with a study of Marlowe's least-admired text, *The Massacre at Paris* (c.1592). Although at opposite ends of the critical spectrum, both plays offer a critique of Protestantism as scathing as it is subtle, and both utilise still-familiar formats of medieval drama to convey this message below the eyes of the censor.

Doctor Faustus has long been recognised as using the form of the medieval morality play, but the implications of this have not been fully examined. Marlowe takes a generalised model of medieval drama, but inserts into it an individualised, ultra-specific character, the folk anti-hero Doctor John Faustus. In altering strategic portions of this unique narrative, and presenting it within a dramatic scaffold of general morality, the play demonstrates the redundancy of the latter genre in the post-Reformation theatre. Moreover, the play combines this with an exploration of the required Protestant activity of Bible-reading, and offers the subversive implication that it is Faustus' mastery, not his failure, in studying scripture that leads to his demise.

Medieval theatre is a mode through which Marlowe stages subversion throughout his oeuvre. *The Massacre at Paris* is Marlowe's least-esteemed play, but a skillful series of allusions to medieval Passion plays offer the same subversive undercurrent as his most famous play. The truncated text retains glimpses of

dramatic and visual allusions to core images of Christ's passion, but these are used to subvert this narrative trajectory, presenting senseless and brutal sectarian violence without any possible redemptive conclusion.

"Tamburlaine the Great and Medieval Romance"

Developing our understanding of Marlowe's awareness of medieval literature beyond the theatre, Chapter Three explores two of Marlowe's highest-grossing plays, *Tamburlaine the Great Part I* (c.1588) and its sequel, *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* (c.1588). This chapter will demonstrate that both plays rely on an equally popular Elizabethan genre, medieval romance. In their depiction of the Islamic East, both plays evoke medieval romance, particularly the subgenre of Saracen romance. Furthermore, they do so in a manner intended to provoke the audience. The first play presents the four core tropes of the Saracen romance as defined by Metlitzki, but crucially stages them in a religiously-neutral territory, without the presumed superiority of Christianity and the drive for conversion. The second *Tamburlaine* play extends the subtle under-cutting of Christian hegemony by switching the audience's viewpoint from the Christian forces to the Saracen army, and edging closer to engaging directly with scripture. The second play poses an opaque intellectual challenge to Christian self-assurance.

"Marlowe's (medieval) Stage Jew"

The penultimate chapter moves outside the generic boundaries of the previous two, and follows the first chapter in its wider consideration of medieval literature. This chapter focuses on *The Jew of Malta* (c.1592) and its subversive reframing, not of a medieval genre, but of a medieval trope: that of the stage Jew. Through a sustained

close reading of the character of Barabas, this fourth chapter determines that Barabas is the product of centuries of stereotypical "Jewish" figures in medieval literature and art, and reveals how it is through the subtle undermining of these medieval signifiers that Marlowe rewrites a model used for inculcating Christian unity through a common enemy.

Marlowe's (medieval) Monarchies: Myth and History

The final chapter returns to the issue of genre, specifically the history chronicle. It explores Marlowe's medieval history play, *Edward II*, and proves this text owes more to medieval history than its mere narrative, as it also subversively utilises the genre of the history chronicle. Marlowe manipulates the generic signposts of the chronicle in order to undermine the fundamental values of this mode of representing events: divine providence and primogeniture.

This chapter also examines Marlowe's subversive engagement with Classical myth, which was conceived as authentic history in Elizabethan England. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (c.1587?) engages with English conceptions of the Dido narrative, but elects to present a uniquely medieval version of events. Whilst dramatising a Virgilian narrative, Marlowe does not stage Virgil's specific version of the Dido myth. Instead he depicts a medieval version of the tale, in which Dido is the protagonist and Aeneas a rather emasculated figure. In opting for this dismissed medieval account over the prized Virgilian narrative lauded by humanists, Marlowe's play offers a counter-narrative to the Galfridian tradition of representing British history.

Collectively, these chapters reveal the scope and depth of Marlowe's

medievalism through an examination of his persistent use of medieval literature throughout his dramatic corpus.

Conclusion: Signposting Subversion

As Greenblatt states in his seminal essay 'Invisible Bullets': "the term subversive for us designates those elements in Renaissance culture that contemporary audiences tried to contain […] that now conform to our own sense of truth and reality" (39). Subversion is identifiable only from a distance. Greenblatt notes that, if we were to take them seriously, central ideas of Renaissance culture, such as religious and political absolutism, would seem extremely subversive (39). Greenblatt posits the viewer at a distance from the subversive action when he memorably states that "there is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us" (39). He acknowledges the audience is adept at identifying subversiveness *in other cultures*. This is precisely how Marlowe uses medieval culture. His audience are familiar with, but crucially also distant enough, to recognise where the pieces do not fit. Couched in conformity to familiar dramatic and literary models, Marlowe's dramatic output effectively conveyed invitations to rigorous intellectual challenge.

This thesis explores the powerful and pervasive influence of medieval literature in the dramatic oeuvre of Christopher Marlowe. Moreover, it demonstrates the integral role of medieval literary culture in Marlowe's sceptical vision of the world.

Marlowe's Medieval Library[4]

Introduction

In the only extant acknowledgement of Marlowe's use of medieval romance, Seaton observes that a scholar is "well served for the reading of Marlowe" (17). Since this statement in 1959, the reader has been served all the better. Stapleton has accurately traced Marlowe's Ovidian borrowings and allusions, Brown-Kuriyama has explored the influence of Renaissance culture on Marlowe's productions, Cheney has examined Marlowe's political leanings, Preedy has definitively identified Marlowe's unique use of religion, while Cornelius meticulously traced Marlowe's reading of the Bible. Dabbs has illustrated the origins of Marlowe scholarship itself, and biographical readings of Marlowe, including his literary influences, have all but become a genre of their own. No critic, with the exception of Seaton's short study, has considered Marlowe as a medievalist. While Marlowe's debt to medieval liturgical drama has been briefly acknowledged by Chism and Ryan, in a short chapter and article respectively, there is no in-depth study of Marlowe's use of medieval dramatic tropes, nor is there any consideration of Marlowe's wider engagement with medieval literature. This thesis serves to fill this lacuna in Marlowe studies, by illustrating not only how but also why medieval literature was an important source for Marlowe, and is essential for our understanding of the work of this canonical author.

[4] I am extremely grateful to the Bibliographical Society for a grant in support of research for this chapter.

In this initial chapter I will outline the broader medieval sources identified for Marlowe, the early modern dramatist's "medieval library". This is a term that requires some clarification. The term "medieval" within the remit of this thesis will refer to editions of texts dating from 1400 to re-workings contemporary to Marlowe. This date is an approximate beginning of the move into a more literary culture, as most popular narrative had made it into manuscript at this point. Many of these texts will have much older origins, with exact dates difficult to define, but at this point the manuscript history of most narratives was firmly established. Caxton established the first English printing press in 1476, just a century before Marlowe's career commenced (see Marcus 15). This is also the earliest date for the beginning of the early modern period, as the following century and a half saw the co-existence of print and manuscript culture, before the proliferation of printed texts in the Elizabethan period. It is the area of most overlap between medieval and early modern.[5] The Parker Library at Marlowe's alma mater, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge holds texts dating from the Anglo-Saxon era, but earlier material will not be studied in depth here.[6]

The term "library" is also a rather fluid descriptor. It does not refer, here, to a physical building holding a catalogued collection, or a personal inventory of books, though such entities do form part of the overall selection. It does not refer either to a collection of texts owned by Marlowe, whose sudden death without a will ensured no such records exist. This medieval "library" is also a much broader repository than just a selection of books. An umbrella term, "library" also contains cultural and dramatic material. My argument draws on that of Cooper, that medieval literature

[5] Simpson and Cummings deny a "break" in culture said to have occurred around 1500 (3) and many scholars of medieval texts in the early modern period, such as Summit, Driver and Ray consider this permeable timeline.
[6] Space and time restraints will require this thesis to examine only medieval texts and editions.

and culture deeply permeated Elizabethan life, education and culture in many guises, and that society was still largely medieval, if increasingly conflicted (2011 1). This culture has a tangible bearing on the work of Marlowe. Cooper argues that we cannot truly understand the work of Marlowe's exact contemporary, Shakespeare, or the culture which produced it, if we do not appreciate "how thoroughly medieval" its foundations are (2). This chapter will serve to apply this argument to the Marlowe canon, and to expand our understanding of the wider significance of medieval literature in later periods. Cooper further argues that medieval romance motifs serve as "memes." In essence, they remain the same as they are replicated over time, but their meaning (and purpose) change to suit different authors and audiences (2004 3). Chartier observes that "even the greatest works, especially the greatest works, have no stable, universal, fixed meaning" (ix). For Chartier, meaning is dependent on the "competence" and/or "expectations" of the receiver (x). The following chapters will demonstrate that for Marlowe, medieval "memes" are subversive tools, disorientating, inverted signposts which previously would have been used to ground the reader. Before studying Marlowe's clever undermining of Elizabethan cultural consensus, we must first consider the society in which this discourse takes place, before looking in more detail at the medieval literary resonances which allow for subversive inferences.

Marlowe's Medieval World

The world in which Marlowe grew up was still a medieval one.[7] Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564. Canterbury was a Reformation city, socially and physically altered by Henry VIII. Marlowe's birth came at a time of renewed stability, after a cultural, although not physical, rebuilding. The city had lost wealth, in the form of looted monastery gold, and more crucially, its pre-eminence as a site of pilgrimage. With the now desecrated shrine of Thomas Becket rendered worthless, Canterbury regained some standing as a trading post. As we have seen with Cambridge, the city remained a medieval construction, the skyline mostly unchanged since its establishment, though the function of many buildings had altered. Canterbury remained dominated for centuries by its medieval cathedral, re-appropriated as an Anglican church by the reformers. During her royal visit, Elizabeth I would stay in the monastery of St. Augustine, which had been claimed by her father Henry VIII and turned into a palace. The Reformation altered the population, as the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in France, which would later form the subject of Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, brought an influx of French refugees from nearby Dover. Yet like the repurposed buildings, the refugee community was accepted in Canterbury: it took over only abandoned properties, supported its own poor and even provided employment (Urry 2). Despite political upheaval and outbreaks of plague, the community was unaffected in its daily routine. The city maintained its agricultural and commercial activity, and daily life in Marlowe's neighbourhood, the small working class parish of St. George, continued as normal throughout the post-Reformation years.

[7] Cooper makes this observation on the society into which Shakespeare was born and began his career. See *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, 1.

The son of a shoe-maker, Marlowe showed academic ability at a young age and was awarded a scholarship to attend a local grammar school, the King's School.[8] From here he received a Parker scholarship to study Divinity at Corpus Christi College at the University of Cambridge. This subject choice, and the receipt of a scholarship from the Parker fund, suggests that Marlowe intended to take Holy Orders and become a member of the Protestant clergy. Marlowe continued his studies to Masters level, but did not follow the expected path. Instead he elected to move to London upon receipt of his MA degree in 1587. Marlowe turned his hand to dramatic writing, though this likely began at Cambridge with *Dido Queen of Carthage*, a collaboration with Nashe.[9] Though none of his plays were published under his name within his lifetime (Brown-Kuriyama xviii), Marlowe's work proved commercially successful. Later, the closure of the theatres in 1592 would force a change in direction in Marlowe's career, a focus on poetry, before his tragic death cut short his literary ambitions. This chapter will lay the bedrock of the over-arching thesis, illustrating that each of these cities boasted a visible medieval heritage, both literary and dramatic, and a cultural memory ripe for exploitation.

Marlowe's medieval library then comprises four core areas, which overlap through familiar tropes: The Parker Library, John Gresshop's personal library, popular medieval romance and drama. The first is the only literal library; the collection of medieval manuscripts in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi. Archbishop Parker's contribution to Marlowe's formative years was, I will suggest, more than financial. Parker was a relentless collector of medieval manuscripts, saving many quires during the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. Parker bequeathed his sizeable collection to Corpus Christi, establishing the

[8] The exact source of this scholarship is unknown, but the fund was administered by Parker.
[9] All plays staged in the colleges were in Latin, so it is unlikely this play was actually performed within the University.

aforementioned Parker Library just five years before Marlowe's matriculation there. This collection has not been afforded due consideration as a source for Marlowe, though he spent his college years living just yards from the library threshold.[10] The second is a personal and pedagogical collection; that of Marlowe's school headmaster Gresshop. This collection has been reconstructed by Urry and has previously been considered by biographers for its proximity to Marlowe, but not for its medieval components.[11]

The two remaining "libraries" move away from the codex of the book, but retain much of the content. Medieval romance maintained its popularity in cheap print and oral culture, and I will demonstrate the use of these tales in Marlowe's subversive narratives. I will build on but ultimately argue against the only study of this aspect of Marlowe's work, that of Seaton mentioned at the start of this chapter. While its meticulous scholarship conclusively demonstrates Marlowe's use of medieval sources, Seaton's chapter relies on the same class-based assumptions which have ultimately blocked a modern audience's understanding of the "reading of Marlowe" (17). Seaton also considers a second pervasive medieval genre, that of the history chronicle, that will be examined in Chapter Five.

The final "library" considered is the vast repository of dramatic material encountered by Marlowe, both inside and outside the academy. Both public and academic areas of Marlowe's youth afforded a strong dramatic culture. These familiar dramatic images could be, and were effectively, reworked for political agendas, one example being the progresses of Queen Elizabeth. I will argue that this Reformation context presented medieval culture in the promotion of contemporary

[10] Spiller is tempted to speculate that Marlowe may have read the copy of Holinshed's *Chronicles* at the Parker library, but does not consider the rest of the catalogue.
[11] Many Marlowe scholars have used Urry as their source on Gresshop and his collection, including Brown-Kuriyama, Rutter and Spiller. More recently, Brown-Kuriyama has stated that Gresshop's library has never been fully studied in detail (2015 337).

ideals, and that this forms the basis of medieval drama's significant resonance in Marlowe's plays. These elements may appear disparate, but are closely inter-related, and combine to create a shared consciousness of medieval culture in Elizabethan society as a whole. It is this shared understanding and cultural memory that provides space for subversion in Marlowe's canon.

The Parker Library

This shared mental furnishing reflects the transitional nature of the late sixteenth century. The world in which Marlowe grew up was still a medieval one, and so were its libraries. While Marlowe thrived in an environment of humanist education, his alma mater was a repository of medieval rather than classical texts. The Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge was named for the bequest of Archbishop Parker in 1575. Though a Reformist, Parker was committed to the preservation of medieval texts acquired during the dissolution of the monasteries. He valued medieval scripture and argued against the destruction of monastic libraries, comparing such destruction to the catastrophic loss of libraries in classical antiquity (Summit 101). Yet Parker destroyed any medieval library material he deemed unsuitable for a Protestant audience; perhaps a thousand books or manuscripts were obliterated for every one saved (Spiller 106). It was in Marlowe's college library, mere yards from his student lodgings, that the selected fruits of Parker's labour would be preserved. The relationship of this collection to Marlowe's studies and future oeuvre has never been acknowledged. While it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that Marlowe read particular medieval manuscripts, as no library records are extant, there is strong circumstantial evidence to argue that it is probable that he did. Marlowe matriculated at Cambridge only five years after Parker's

mammoth bequest, and was undoubtedly aware of it. Although undergraduates did not automatically have access to special holdings, they could gain entry to the Parker Library with the support of any college Fellow. The proliferation of sermons and centuries' worth of theological texts would exponentially increase the likelihood of a divinity student seeking to access the catalogue.

Parker's preservation of Catholic monastic texts was a Reformation exercise: Parker only selected texts that he deemed useful in the promotion of a Protestant agenda. The Archbishop wished to locate material that would serve as evidence of a historical precedent for an English-speaking Church distinct from Rome. Parker defended the usurpation of the Catholic Church by arguing that the Roman organisation was in fact the unjust usurper. The result is a library rich in religious material: tracts, bibles and sermons, and medieval manuscripts chosen to complement such a collection. Here medieval texts such as *Guy of Warwick,* Chaucer's *Troilus*, the medieval story collection *The Gesta Romanorum*, and the instructive Anglo-Saxon *Ancrene Wisse* were placed alongside the Wycliff Bible and Latin theological material. I argue that this Reformation display is indicative of a wider literary culture, which had a profound effect on Marlowe's reading and on his subsequent use of the texts encountered within the Parker Library and beyond.

The bequest was the culmination of decades of specific and strategic engagement with medieval manuscripts, which was to be continued by Parker's followers after his death. Parker's funding also established the Society of Antiquaries, in 1586.[12] The interest in the English past stimulated by Parker's collections and financial backing developed significantly during Marlowe's active years. This continued despite the widespread debasement of Catholic culture. The

[12] The Society is said to have met weekly, with each member contributing to a set discourse of two questions (McKisack 156).

Reformation and the spread of humanist ideology from the continent demanded an abandonment of medieval Catholic culture, a rejection which ultimately did not take place. However, the presentation of medieval literature changed. It is a curious phenomenon, a specific and tactical interest in the English past. It is a product of a desire to re-write the past, rather than a general interest in objective history. This interest may be more accurately defined as "Tudor Medievalism," although of course Elizabethans did not use the term "medieval"; the pre-Reformation years were termed "barbaric" if defined at all (Cooper 2010 2). Brackmann's study of Elizabethan Anglo-Saxonists reveals a coterie engaged not only in uncovering a forgotten past, but also in shaping that past into support of the present (225). Reformists did exactly the same with medieval literature, adopting anti-clerical texts as proto-Protestant, and reading their own Reformist ideas into established narratives. Brackmann navigates the Elizabethan appropriation of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, illustrating how the Elizabethan antiquaries used their carefully-selected texts to validate contemporary society, and in doing so created a new understanding of the past.

Parker's associate John Bale, often accused of fanaticism in his arguments for a break with Rome, was also and perhaps paradoxically committed to preserving medieval manuscripts. Like Parker, Bale considered the destruction of libraries and their historic contents abhorrent and inhuman. He argued that for generations past "their labour was to holde thynges in rememberance, which otherwise had most wretchedly peryshed" (83). There was a simple reason he sought to preserve the literature of a culture he wished to destroy: he planned to write his own "history of England" (McKisack 22). The collection housed a courtyard away from Marlowe's rooms provided a sense of this quest of appropriation. Bale required authoritative

sources for his project, as he sought to destroy Catholicism not through physical decimation but through a re-appropriation of information. Bale's attack on medieval Catholic culture was intellectual as well as ideological. He acquired copies of "historical" texts by revered authors such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bede and William of Malmesbury, which would later be included in the Parker bequest to Corpus Christi. The Galfridian tradition of English history and "British" identity, a central issue in *Dido, Queen of Carthage,* is dealt with in multiple manuscripts; 190, 292, and 281. CCCC 281 also contains an excerpt of an original medieval account of the death of Edward II, which as we shall see in Chapter Five, may have influenced Marlowe's rendering of this episode in his only history play, *Edward II*.[13] Accounts of Edward's reign also appear in CCCC 259 and 174, and original documentation from his reign in 292.

The Parker collection is the culmination of his efforts to preserve and utilise the English literary past. The selection and arrangement of the manuscripts within the Corpus Christi library presented this agenda to a reader. Two manuscripts reflect the juxtaposition explicitly; *Lives of Saints and Romance* (CCCC 318), a selection of religious narrative bound with medieval romance, and *Geoffrey of Monmouth, Historia regum Britanniae. pseudo-Turpinus, Historia Caroli magni et Rolandi. Charters, etc,* (CCCC 292) which comprises Charlemagne romance and English national history. Both manuscripts are compilations, and it is the act of selective binding that is significant. *Lives of Saints and Romance* includes a selection of hagiographic narratives interspersed with Charlemagne romance tales. A life of the Venerable Bede precedes tales of the adventures of Bishop Turpin, aligning the popular literary hero with the

[13] At the time of writing, Marlowe has been listed as a co-author of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays (Oxford *Complete Works* 2016). This discussion will undoubtedly play out of the coming years.

revered, and more importantly English, theologian and historian. The Turpin narrative is followed by tales of virgins and martyrs, before the manuscript concludes with more popular romance, *Apollonius of Tyre*. This repeated pattern of historical narrative aligned with religious material creates deep links in the mind of the reader, indelibly joining saints with folk heroes. CCCC 80 contains a Grail Quest Romance, an example of a wider genre that has a crucial, yet hitherto unexamined influence on both *Tamburlaine* plays. Chapter Three will explore Marlowe's deployment of this very genre of medieval romance. The Saracen is a romance stock character that, as we shall see, plays a key role in the depiction of the East in these two texts, and the Saracens appear in CCCC 142, in a *Life of Seynt Katherine*. MS 292 once again presents Turpin, this time aligned with foundational historical figures in Geoffrey of Monmouth's revered history of Britain, and with the English regal authority of the tracts of the medieval kings Edward I-III.

The crusading Christian is both saint and historical forefather in these arrangements. The inclusion of the bellicose Catholic leader in Protestant propaganda is easily rendered in selective compilation. CCCC 318 is carefully numbered, and a full list of contents of the saints' lives is provided at the rear in "Parkarian hand" (James 1 131). Numbering and tabling are features of print culture. Parker's editorial practice assimilates the medieval Catholic manuscripts into the print culture of the Reformation. Someone, apparently Parker himself, considered these tales worthy of a contemporary reframing, and a manicule drawn by Parker on page 156 bears witness to his close reading of the material.

It is agreed by the Parker bibliographers that the manuscript tales were not bound together by Parker et al, but still compiled after the completion of individual

sections, in the thirteenth century at the very latest. James notes the varying hands that contribute to the manuscript (II 131). While the scribes may be different, they are not disparate and the script follows the Christ Church style throughout. *Apollonius* is of the same hand as the miracles of Saint Jacob (James II 131); there are changes in hands during the Turpin narrative (between 421-54) and at one point (page 269) in the Anselini Cantuariensis (James 129). We can deduce from this that the individual texts were produced together, in a unified fashion, though the overall manuscript was bound at a later date. The practice of combining popular folk tales with hagiography and biblical narrative is not an innovative reformist practice; it has been utilised since the earliest years of Christianity. Irish monks inserted Saint Patrick into biblical episodes (Ní Mhaonaigh) and pagan festivals were rebranded as Christian feast days. It is likely this manuscript originated from similar practices, but gained entirely new significance in the era of Henry VIII, when it became the perfect artefact for re-appropriation by the reformists who usurped monastic libraries. A reader in the library during Marlowe's time at Cambridge would have encountered these texts through this very specific Reformation context, and I will argue it is this authoritative framework which Marlowe aims to subvert in his presentation of medieval narrative. In such texts, Christian unity is often established through attacks on Judaism. A stock figure of medieval literature that is crucial to *The Jew of Malta* is unsurprisingly, the medieval Jew. This caricature appears in CCCC 259 and CCCC 145. Marlowe's incisive inversion of the figure will be examined in Chapter Four.

There is one particular strand of medieval romance that is particularly ripe for this type of re-appropriation. Charlemagne romance is didactic by nature, and often tinged with sectarian fanaticism. Charlemagne gained popularity in folk

literature due to his famed defeat of Saracen invaders, saving France, the Holy Roman Empire and consequently the entirety of Christendom from Islamic seizure. It is often overlooked that this was a very real fear in Elizabethan England, as a Muslim invasion was a distinct possibility. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was a significant threat to Christian Europe (Vitkus 2000, 3). The Catholic threat within and the Saracen threat without further threatened Protestant confidence (Demetriou 108). Popular literature and drama of the period represents these concerns. In this climate of distrust it is unsurprising that Bishop Turpin is a particularly significant figure within the genre, famed for his militant Christianity and seemingly divinely-endowed prowess on the battlefield. Charlemagne romance is an obvious choice for both monastic scribes and Protestant reformers. The legend of the Twelve Peers was available in popular culture, to the extent that the term "douspere" became a common pseudonym for a valiant knight (Weston 30). The popular romance of *Fierabras* is often referenced in popular Middle English texts such as *Barbour's Bruce*. The King didactically relates the "romanys off worthy Ferambrace" (437) and "rycht douchty Olywer" (439) (Hausknecht viii). Charlemagne narratives would be printed as both historical accounts and romance throughout Marlowe's active years, such as *The Tail of Rauf Coilyear* in 1572, and well into the seventeenth century, with a joint biography of Charles and Alexander the Great published in 1665. We shall see Marlowe's subversive deployment of these romances in Chapter Three. This explicit Reformation framing would have been jarring to a reader more familiar with the tales as commonplace entertainment. Middle English romance comprises only a small segment of the catalogue, with many earlier didactic works and more recent Reformation tracts present.

John Gresshop's Library

The Parker Library was not the first Reformation library to which Marlowe was exposed. John Gresshop, Marlowe's headmaster at the King's School, had amassed an impressive private library of over three hundred and fifty books.[14] This collection was larger than that of any other private individual, excluding bishops and noblemen (Urry 47). This collection contained "polemical Reformation literature" such as works of Luther, works "against Luther", and both vulgate Latin and Geneva Bibles (47). This Reformation library was a pedagogical rather than propagandistic assortment. Gresshop possessed copies of classical texts such as Plautus, Terence, Virgil and an illustrated copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It has gone without notice that these were all medieval, not humanist, editions. Histories, which will be discussed momentarily, are widely represented, from Fabyan's *Chronicles,* Fenton's *Discourse of the Warres in France*, and Solinus' *Polyhistoria*.[15] Medieval literature was represented by Chaucer and Boethius. It cannot be stated with absolute certainty that Marlowe accessed this library, but it was stored beside his classroom, and contained Gresshop's teaching texts, including Ascham's *Scholemaster*, a humanist education manual, and a copy of *Aesop's Fables*. After compiling a detailed catalogue of Gresshop's Library, Urry considers the "tantalising possibility" that Marlowe may have had some access to its content (48). Had this been the case, Marlowe would have browsed through an extensive academic library well before his matriculation at Cambridge. At the very least, Gresshop imparted his interests through the classroom, and his collection acted as a stimulus to the intellectually curious pupils (48).

[14] For a more detailed account of the contents of Gresshop's collection see Urry, *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury*.

The King's School offered Marlowe his first glimpse of academic drama, staging of Greek and Latin plays, which Butcher considers linked to the popular drama of the "courtyard and street" (25) taking place right outside the grammar school. The King's School predictably followed the humanist principles of inculcating classical Latin through engagement with canonical texts. Classical Latin was often taught with an emphasis on its superiority to the Latin of the Middle Ages, which was fatally tinged with Catholicism. Yet often the editions used, like Gresshop's, owed more to the Middle Ages than to pagan antiquity. The humanist education received by Marlowe was the culmination of the concepts outlined in the texts of Gresshop's library. A preacher named Nicholls recounts a strict Calvinist education in the King's School on the 1560s, and this went unchanged in the 1570s (Butcher 25). In his introduction to Urry's book, Butcher describes Marlowe's education as "partisan" (25), with the young scholar amongst the ranks of bright young men in training for the Protestant ministry.

External to the academy, many of the same narratives and figures also appeared, albeit in an entirely different guise. In *The Immaterial Book*, Wall-Randell studies the presence of non-material books within early modern texts. This thesis will also study the immaterial narrative, the tropes imbedded in the mind of the reader, often at a subconscious level, and will argue that Marlowe's work directly challenges and subverts Elizabethan ideologies through these familiar patterns.

Medieval Romance - the Popular library

There was a library of texts available to Marlowe with no physical presence: the proliferation of medieval romance tales. Romance was everywhere, and is so endemic it is almost indefinable (Barron 1). Wilson has quipped that attempting to

define early modern romance is to embark on a journey as difficult as any undertaken by the genre's protagonists (213). It presents a unique set of challenges and paradoxes. Firstly, romance texts were printed in large numbers, but due to the ephemeral nature of these publications, few copies survive. Secondly, the pervasive nature of romance narrative makes it more difficult to trace, and virtually impossible to study in isolation from other forms of literature. Finally, and most crucially, the popular nature of the form made it ripe for satire, and satirised it was. Ubiquity naturally allows for unrelated adaptations, for a text to be used in a way unintended by the original author, and it is my argument that this is what Marlowe ultimately did with popular forms. Wall-Randell describes medieval and early modern romance as a "Janus-faced" entity. It gazes nostalgically after the medieval past but also pre-empts modern literature with daring experimentation and the emergence of drama (105).

In contrast to the carefully selected manuscripts in the Parker Library, and the medieval-mediated classical texts owned by Gresshop, this popular literary consciousness forms a third, far less scholarly library of medieval sources for Marlowe. The popular literature of the Elizabethan period was essentially medieval romance. Romances appeared in various guises, as exemplars such as the Charlemagne tales included in Parker's library and also as "[popular] texts for reading" (Thompson 23). Popular tales have often been dismissed as insatiably violent, filled with sexual innuendo, and crude. Prose romances were scorned for "violence, lewdness and pornography" (Stanivukovic 183) in the Elizabethan period. Yet Meale argues convincingly that medieval romance tales were intended for, and reached, a learned readership (211).

What is particularly interesting about early modern adaptations of medieval romance, and a point that is often ignored, is that the genre circulated through all echelons of society. Chartier notes that the same texts "circulated in all social milieus" (Wilson 213; Chartier 270). Romance readership was a very broad one, not merely an elite, nor those who wished to emulate an elite (Meale 212). Romances were often bound in household books with other materials such as recipes, medicinal advice, and also exemplary narrative (220). It is this ubiquitous presence and malleable form that makes the romance genre particularly apt for subversion. Romances contributed significantly to English identity formation, as we shall see in Chapter Three, and consequently formed a core component of what the average medieval and Elizabethan regarded as authentic history (Turnville-Petre 121). The romance genre was also appropriated for the moralist cause. Any aspect of a popular text was ripe to have a moral lesson drawn from it, and a moral exemplum tagged onto the narrative (146). Marlowe's plays subversively challenge such appropriation.

Romance gained a more elite status as it reached print. By the 1560s printers' outlets had replaced scriveners' stalls, but the texts produced and sold in large quantities remained the same (Cooper 2011 265). Chivalric romance was still the most popular genre, with *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton* and *Valentine and Orson* still holding readers in their thrall. I have mentioned Seaton as the main critic to suggest romance narrative as a potential source for Marlowe, but only as an unconscious one, a resonance of childhood stories encountered in chapbooks. Chapbooks were a non-academic literary repository of entertainment and delight for Marlowe and his fellow schoolboys (19). Chapbooks were sold by "chapmen" who were regular fixtures on the streets of London, and in the countryside, including East Anglia (Watt 267). Increased literacy and moderate wage increases sparked demand

for this new commodity and chapbooks were soon mass produced. The chapbook format presents a unique challenge to researchers: the ubiquity of this product means very few copies remain. Chapbooks were relatively cheap, and although not always considered disposable, their repeated use meant copies from this period do not survive. Their exact use and influence is also hard to define, as the readership was primarily ordinary lay people, farmers, labourers, and children. They did not leave written accounts of their lives, much less of their literary preferences. Interestingly, bibliographic research has shown romance circulation reached its peak at the time denouncations of romance were most vitriolic, perhaps proving the old adage that there is no such thing as bad publicity. While romance was denounced by humanist academics, it was widely purchased by both middle class and poorer consumers (Wright 376). The prevalence of chapbooks is apparent in various accounts, their popularity exponentially increased in the seventeenth-century, with some surviving examples that provide a flavour of the tales on offer. Crucially, most texts printed for a wide readership were those that already had a long history in print (Chartier 9).[15] Narratives featuring a single hero, such as Robin Hood, retained their popularity, as did jestbooks and of course, chivalric romance (Simons 1998 12-15). Those who were illiterate could still avail themselves of the chapbook, as they were often read aloud, replacing oral recitation as communal entertainment. This practice was common well into the eighteenth century, and the preference for romance continued. One contemporary observer notes:

> The poorer sort of farmers and even the poor country people in general, who before that spent their evenings in relating stories of witches, ghosts,

[15] Chartier uses the French chapbook series, *The Bibliotheque Bleu*, as an illustration of this practice. The series included only the most established popular narratives.

> hobgoblins etc., now shorten the winter nights by hearing their sons and daughters read tales, romances etc.
>
> (quoted in Simons 7).

Simons observes that these later chapbooks did not distinguish between medieval and early modern as contemporary scholars would (35). The age of the tales was not the only omission, as textual differentiation is also blurred. The lack of literacy meant chapbook producers had to give their narratives obvious structure, so even the barely literate could grasp the type of tale they were reading or hearing. Chapbooks relied on genre more so than plot, and while "generic definition" is often blurred, generic signposts are essential (Simons 36). I contend that this reinforced structure, obvious framing and familiar patterns imbued tropes, and consequently expectations, in the imagination of the reader. This type of popular print depended almost entirely on prior knowledge (Chartier 9). Chapbooks were not the only outlet for romance, as more costly volumes contained largely the same texts. In contrast to chapbooks, bound storybooks were considered durable. Early modern habits of transcribing wills and family records as marginalia infer that hardbound books were made to be retained, repossessed, and as a result, re-read (Coldiron 63) in Marlowe's lifetime. Cheap print was particularly fertile ground for seditious texts, not merely because of the shared understanding of chapbook tales as a genre, but due to the increasingly wide readership, and unregulated means of distribution by chapmen. Cheap print offered an outlet for otherwise inappropriate texts to reach a wider audience, and provided escape from the dogma of the pulpit.

Spufford's study of the lay community of Ely, Cambridgeshire reveals parishioners who were not "the docile material" reformers would have hoped for. The availability of religious pamphlets amongst chapbook-seller's fare

"demonstrably influenced the religious beliefs of individuals" (xvii).[16] The use of popular tropes to present unorthodox ideas preceded Marlowe's usurpation of Reformation polemic. We will see Marlowe invert this means of unifying a nascent Protestant community in Chapter Four, where the common enemy of the Jew illuminates only Christian schism.

As well as its ubiquity, the multiple formats of romance make it an even more pervasive genre. Romance was a curious amalgamation of oral, literary and visual culture, and this tripartite structure creates a very broad spectrum for a single narrative to move across. Most of these were medieval in origin. Seaton has examined a range of still-popular tales which are traceable sources for Marlowe. Seaton argues that *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick* (which we have seen makes an appearance in the Parker catalogue), *Richard Coeur De Lyon* and *Huon of Bordeaux* have an evident bearing on Marlowe's oeuvre. Seaton considers Marlowe's evocation of these romance texts to be for the most part unconscious, while his use of revered medieval texts, particularly Lydgate's *Troy Book* is conscious and intentional. While Seaton's scholarship and close reading is exemplary, this argument is flawed. Seaton's definition of Renaissance dramatists is typical of mid-twentieth century scholarship. This is reflected in a refusal to entertain the idea that a canonical author may have engaged with popular fable as an adult. There is no evidence to suggest that Marlowe's use of earlier tropes is anything but conscious, and even, I will argue, calculated.

Seaton's observations are nonetheless startling and demand our attention. One is the image of a golden bird statue at the entrance to the city of Damascus. This

[16] Tales of individuals converting to Quakerism as a result of reading pamphlets were not uncommon (Spufford xviii), and stirred fear amongst authorities Church of England.

sight in *Tamburlaine* is not accounted for in histories but it appears to have been present during Bevis of Hampton's visit centuries earlier (18):

> At the Bryge stode a toure,
>
> Peynted with gold and asure.
>
> Riche it was to be-hold.
>
> There on stode an egull of gold…[17]
>
> (*STC* 72.02)

> Now may we see Damascus' lofty towers
>
> The golden stature of their feathered bird
>
> That spreads her wings upon the city walls
>
> Shall not defend it.
>
> (*1 Tamb*. IV.ii.102-7)[18]

Tamburlaine observes a strikingly similar sculpture, but steadfastly refuses to stand in awe of it, dismissing it instead as a mere "feathered bird", a novelty which will have no effect on his onslaught. While there is certainly evidence that Marlowe first encountered these texts in his youth, I will argue further that the handling of this material is not only conscious but carried out with intent. The passages highlighted above by Seaton can be seen as a subversive re-evocation of a stock image.

Medieval romance often presents an anxiety surrounding social status, but almost always resolves this in a way that upholds social structures and moral norms. The trope of the man of low birth attaining great stature is a ubiquitous one in medieval literature of all genres, but the character is always revealed to be of noble birth at the end, negating any possible accusation of a threat to order. In Chapter

[17] Seaton notes that this description is not common to all editions of Bevis, but it does appear in those most contemporary to Marlowe, East's of 1582 and Pynson's of 1503 (cited)(18).

[18] All quotes in this thesis are from Burnett's edition, *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*.

Three, I illustrate Marlowe's subversion of such structures through romance in the two *Tamburlaine* plays, and in Chapter Five, the subversion of the very principle of class hierarchy in *Edward II*. Romances were inextricably linked to authentic history in the medieval and early modern periods, but the genres were envisioned as polar opposites. The interchangeability of "history" and "story" extended beyond simple definitions of fact and fiction. Many could not read the chronicles but as we have seen, could enjoy the stories orally, read aloud in the same setting as romance adventures. As we shall see in Chapter Five, Marlowe's use of medieval history chronicles did not preclude any less-educated spectators from comprehending the narrative, far from it. Literacy rates in the early modern period are difficult to determine, yet the general consensus is that reading ability did increase significantly, though writing skills were not as common (Wright 103). The large increase in elementary education allowed for a surge in literacy in the sixteenth-century.[19] The teaching of reading began a year before that of writing, but crucially also a year before a child was deemed old enough to work (Spufford 45), allowing even the most economically-deprived to attain some measure of reading ability. As Spufford succinctly puts it, "the market for cheap print was there" (45). Spufford further notes that the potential readership of chapbook stories exponentially increased, but the content of cheap prints remained constant from the late thirteenth century to the mid-nineteenth (260). The chapbook reader devoured stories of an idealised past, so inherently medieval as to seem as though the Reformation never happened (219). Rather than Puritan denouncements of the unreformed Church, it is pre-Reformation anti-clerical satire that retains its popularity throughout the Tudor period, as chapbook tales relied on old tropes such as the lecherous Friar or the imbecile priest,

[19] See Spufford, 19-44.

rather than contemporary anti-Catholic discourse (220). Middle English chivalric romance and histories proved as popular with an Elizabethan audience as with a pre-Reformation readership, as demand for explicitly "retold stories" such as *The Mirror For Magistrates*, which, as we have seen in Gresshop's collection, remained high (Cooper 2011 264).[20] Though Marlowe's primary source for *Doctor Faustus* is undoubtedly the *English Faust Book*, the contemporary folk tale of Dr. John Faustus is precisely the sort of narrative that would appear in these pamphlets.

Morse wittily observes that Geoffrey of Monmouth "made most [of his history] up, and made the most of what he made up" (2010 124). Yet the Galfridian theory of English history remained commonplace, and the medium of historical narrative, the chronicle, remained unaltered since the medieval period. Both Elizabethan Protestants and their Catholic ancestors considered the reading of history an instructional and morally beneficial exercise, second only to Bible study in its ability to fashion the reader into a moral citizen (Wright 297). Histories never faced the same censure as romance or drama, even if they presented the same narrative. Marlowe's use of history owes a considerable debt to this particular model of reading the past in its steadfast refusal to replicate the model exactly as intended. Marlowe incorporated history chronicles and Troy legend narratives, texts which Seaton deems worthy to be considered "conscious" evocations. Lydgate's version of the Troy myth is examined not only as a source for *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, but as a crucial intertext for Marlowe's subversive rendering of this narrative. I will suggest that Marlowe had more than a passing encounter with both Gower and Lydgate. Chapter Five will consider Lydgate's *Troy Book* as an important intertext for *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, not merely a tributary. The more serious genre of chronicles is

[20] Forker suggests Marlowe may have read Churchyard's "The Two Mortimers" in the 1578 edition of *The Mirror for Magistrates*.

misleading however, as history was indissolubly mixed with romance, and often inter-changeable. Many mythical narratives were presented to contemporary readers as authentic history, such as Arthurian legend and those in the Parker collection (Cooper 2004 24). Equally, histories served as bottomless treasure chests for story-tellers, who would find unlimited source material and utilise them for their own ends, even if just for pure entertainment value. In the unstable Post-Reformation years, both history and romance became instructional. The popularity of *Don Quixote* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* illustrate the enduring resonance of medieval romance well into the seventeenth century, as a source of fun and laughter, as well as of social and moral critique. In contrast, early modern appropriations of medieval histories were regarded with much of the same reverence as in the past, but now became a challenge to, rather than an acceptance of, the status quo. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 prompted a deluge of patriotism, and this in turn sparked a flurry of printing in the history genre, and staging of history plays. Shakespeare's history plays are the most renowned but not the only example of the renewed interest in English, increasingly "British" history in the unstable Elizabethan era.

Drama - the Performed Library

The final library available to Marlowe was a dramatic one. Theatre permeated most of Marlowe's life, specifically medieval theatre. Canterbury, a small but thriving city, was a hub of street theatre throughout Marlowe's early years. Cambridge offered similar displays of street plays, and Latin productions formed a core of the university curriculum. Medieval resonances permeated these dramatic arenas, sometimes literally in the form of props. This mental store of images is strategically recalled by Marlovian drama, as the following chapters will

demonstrate. Chapter Two will demonstrate the surviving modes deployed by Marlowe, including cycle plays, particularly the Passion sequence, and morality plays.

Canterbury held cycle pageants for decades after their heyday in the rest of England, well into the 1540s and beyond. Crowds poured into the city from the surrounding counties, often numbering thousands. The scale and intense visuality of the performances ensured such a huge event went unequalled in Canterbury until the visit of Elizabeth I in 1573. The suppression of religious drama did not indicate the end of its influence, as authorities fought bitterly to have the cycles reinstated. In Coventry, the Commons were still petitioning for their reinstatement in 1591 (Chism 92; Whitfield-White 1999 139). Though the performances had abated by Marlowe's birth, they were still a topic of conversation. Elizabeth's parade would reawaken the theatrical imagination of the city, and possibly of a nine-year old Christopher Marlowe. As we shall see, Elizabeth's revival of medieval theatricality would be a strategic one, comparable to Parker's compilation of medieval manuscripts.

Prior to the Queen's visit records of civic expenditure reveal that many smaller-scale plays were staged after the demise of the cycles. The Diocese of Canterbury edition of *Records of Early English Drama* details how the city regularly made payment to "players" and "waytes" each year (Gibson 1 216). This trend existed for centuries, as the same volume details 2400 payments to professional players from 1272 to 1641 (1 50). This only includes surviving records, and commercial payments. The remaining evidence is indicative of a much wider proliferation of dramatic productions, and public interest in such. Travelling performers were most active in Canterbury in the century between 1425 and 1525, with 61% of surviving payments made within this period (I 53). In tandem with these

regular performances by travelling "minstralli" (53) acting under patronage, parishes within the diocese staged their own productions (I 56). Predictably for non-commercial events, records are extremely scarce, but funding was occasionally drawn from the central diocese. The Christ Priory treasurer's account for 1444 notes payment for an event in St. Mildred's parish, not recorded in the parish itself: "parochianis sancte Middrede in coexibicionem ludi" (I 57) "for the parish of St. Mildred hosting the games." This brief entry in the account book provides a glimpse of dramatic events in local communities. Performances were often extensions of church services, or parish-based entertainment, such as the "games" mentioned above. This is theologically-imbued parochial activity, far removed from the secularized commercial theatres of later decades. Yet crowds came from all over the diocese for parish events such as these. Coldeway examines records of food consumed at a parish event in Bungay in 1568 to obtain a sense of the sheer number of spectators; five calves, four stone of beef, several lambs, gallons of butter, hundreds of eggs and thousands of gallons of beer were consumed (226). Such a mass of food and drink could only have been consumed if many from outside the parish attended. Shakespeare was "raised on a diet of moralities and mysteries" (Greenblatt 2001 191) in Stratford, and we can envisage a similar diet for Marlowe.

The records above illustrate that the heyday of civic pageantry reached its zenith in the early sixteenth-century, and that most of these performances, while still occurring, had significantly reduced by the year of Marlowe's birth. However, mystery plays, public displays of Christ's passion and death, continued on a smaller scale, and it is these models which are primarily referenced on Marlowe's stage. The mystery plays were the most prominent dramatic event in England prior to the establishment of the commercial theatres. For nearly two hundred years, the mystery

or Corpus Christi cycle dominated the social and cultural life of every major town. The entire population of at least twelve cities attended mystery plays annually (Prosser 5). The charged Reformation atmosphere made the production of religious drama a dangerous activity, but as we shall see did not spell the end of the genre. The post-reformation stagnation of public plays gives further weight to the claim that the unspecified performances were religious drama. While small local productions endured through to the seventeenth century, the large scale pageantry had vanished throughout England, leaving the smaller plays as fleeting reminders of what had preceded them. The dramatic productions of East Anglia were based rather on spectacle than the cycle plays (229). O'Connell also argues that Shakespeare illustrates knowledge of mystery plays (178), which we shall examine in detail in the following chapter. One can gage similar interaction from Marlowe's dramas, and a shared presumption that the audience would be sufficiently aware of religious drama to pick up on these dramatic signifiers. The cycle-plays depended on piety and civic pride in equal measure, but local drama served to entertain and delight visually, and this served as a "cultural osmosis" (O'Connell 179) of shared imagination. While cycle plays do not seem to have occurred with much frequency in London, the huge influx of migrants from the countryside in the 1590s brought this cultural common ground to the capital. It is this aspect that Marlowe interprets in his own dramas, as a backdrop to a subversive scripting. Just as the jokes and ironies of history plays depended on audience understanding of English history, so did the allusions to medieval street theatre require knowledge of this form of drama.

Marlowe's backward glances to medieval street theatre were by no means an original evocation at the time, nor was Marlowe the first dramatist to adopt medieval pageant imagery for contemporary ends. The famous progresses of Elizabeth I were

witnessed by thousands, and were the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of her public image. The success of these displays in securing Elizabeth's precarious hold on the throne, and assuring her populace of the suitability of a female monarch are well documented. What is rarely acknowledged is the extent to which the royal pageants depended on familiar imagery. Elizabeth's processions recalled earlier modes of civic pageantry (McGee 109). The progresses evoked earlier images with new intent: instead of civic pride represented by local guilds, the Virgin Queen sought to promote national pride, and moreover national unity, in the public image of the monarch. The host towns and cities aided this recollection of medieval staging for more practical reasons: they simply recycled old pageant wagons and props. Bristol, Coventry and York drew on "traditions of religious drama" when hosting the Queen (109), and York had demonstrated such resourcefulness generations earlier when hosting King Henry VII. They adapted wagons used in the Corpus Christi cycle, adding red and white rose trees to the plasterers' pageant of the creation, to which "all other floures" on the stage were to "evidently yeve suffrantie" (Johnson 139; McGee 109). Our Lady descended once again from the weavers' pageant of the Assumption, this time to inventively welcome the new king. The Reformation ensured no such resourcefulness could be demonstrated before Elizabeth, but the stagings remained the same, minus the Catholic icons. Indeed, pageants originally used in mystery plays by Coventry's drapers, smiths and tanners were presented as part of Elizabeth's entertainments in 1566 (McGee 110). McGee observes that Elizabeth's court preferred to control drama rather than to ban it (121), and this proved a most effective strategy. Elizabeth I and her government chose to appropriate rather than decimate. Instead of destroying all visual reference to the cult of the Virgin Mary, Elizabeth ingeniously inserted herself as the Virgin Queen in the

same social frame. The Queen was both chief spectator, and spectacle (Keenan 2007 102) in these productions, and utilised this to further her political aims. Marlowe's dramas also engage with this model, but serve to undermine rather than uphold hierarchical structures. We shall see in Chapter Two that in *Doctor Faustus*, the morality play is explicitly re-staged, but it is used to interrogate rather than to promote Christian morality, and allusions to cycle drama in *The Massacre at Paris* destabilise Protestant hegemony.

Drama proved an effective means of communication for the monarch, but equally served as a suitable platform for subjects to make their petitions to the Queen. Keenan examines how plays staged at the Universities of Oxford, and Marlowe's alma mater Cambridge, used performances to advise the Queen on religious conformity, royal succession and predictably, the issue of the Queen's marriage (87). *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is often read as such a play, but I argue that Marlowe's production of the Dido tale is far more subversive than this. *Edward II* offers a clever challenge to apparently unquestionable monarchical right through evocation of such dramatic presentations, as we shall see in Chapter Five.

It has been suggested that Elizabeth's progresses allowed for the development of professional theatre, as city authorities commissioned non-local dramatists to "write and produce" the entertainments (121). It is apparent that Elizabeth's presence supported dramatic production in the university also, which we shall see provided strong stimulus for dramatic productions, reverberations of which would still be felt in Marlowe's years at Corpus Christi. This visit was in turn building on a strong theatrical tradition in Cambridge, taking place outside the confines of the university. The wider area of East Anglia demonstrates prosperity at all levels of society in the period, developing a stable rural community. Unsurprisingly it had been a hotbed of

literary activity since the early Middle Ages, producing significant literary figures from Julian of Norwich (1343-1413), Margery Kempe (1373-1439) and the aforementioned Lydgate (c.1370-1449) to John Bale (1495-1563). Only London could boast more prominent literary figures and significant texts from the twelfth century to the sixteenth (Coldeway 216). Cambridgeshire was a hub of East Anglian dramatic culture, and a disproportionate amount of dramatic material was produced in this area, making the counties of East Anglia the central production site of non-cycle drama in England. Surviving East Anglian dramatic texts include the Digby plays (from MS Digby 133) and the Macro Plays.[21] These manuscripts contain some of the most significant morality plays: *The Castle of Perserverance* and *Mankind* number amongst the Macro plays and *The Killing of Saint Paul*, *Mary Magdalen* and *Wisdom* feature in the Digby Manuscript. In the first major study of medieval dramatic locales, *The Mediavel Stage* [sp] (1903), nearly forty percent are found in East Anglia. More recent scholarship has discovered more "theatrically-inclined towns and villages", but the East-Anglian dominance remains (Coldeway 211). Furthermore, the majority of extant manuscripts of plays can be linked to East Anglia by provenance, place-name reference or language (212). The University of Cambridge contributed immensely to this output, as did the town guilds of Cambridge. There are marked differences between popular and academic drama. Civic-sponsored productions were vernacular, and increasingly less religious, much like those of Canterbury. Chapter Two will illustrate the subversive use of religious cycle and morality drama in Marlowe's corpus.

From the early sixteenth century the university increasingly prioritised the arts, and "performative aspects" of the learning process (Grantley 2000 6). Students

[21] Named for the texts first recorded owner, Reverend Cox Macro.

were required to undertake assignments and exams orally, and to craft new versions of classical narrative. Unsurprisingly, drama became a core component of a university education. University drama was a distinct genre. It comprised mostly classical texts with some new scripts, and almost always in the language of the elite, Latin.[22] The University drama was not entirely innovative; rather it was a fusion of classical and native traditions (Keenan 2007 91), of academic and entertainment. University drama was also pedagogical, and aimed to illustrate learning at all times. Exposure to academic drama offered an *instructional* fusion of tradition and classical learning, a fusion we will see Marlowe develop as a means of undermining rather than upholding institutional authority. University courses required more advanced readings of the classical narratives studied in the grammar schools (Hanson 189). The story of Dido and Aeneas from Virgils's *Aeneid* was an established plot in academic stagings. King's College staged a play by Halliwell, entitled *Dido*, the text of which is no longer extant, but it illustrates the long-standing tradition of dramatising this episode of *The Aeneid*. Marlowe's interpretation of the story, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, as mentioned earlier, was also likely composed in Cambridge, and has been seen as Marlowe's reworking of a classical and current curriculum text. In Chapter Five, I will demonstrate that Marlowe's reworking of medieval material serves to subvert contemporary appropriations of the classical narrative. So crucial was drama to the university curriculum that Heywood cites this in defence of public theatre: "Do not the universities, the fountains and well-springs of all good Arts, Learning and Documents, admit the like in their Colledges?" (1612, C3v: Grantley 75). Heywood recalls: "in the time of my residence in Cambridge, I have seen Tragedyes, Comedyes, Historyes, Pastorals and Shewes, publickly acted, in which

[22] The earliest recorded performance of a classical text was a comedy by Terence at King's Hall in 1510-11 (2. 711).

Graduates of good place and reputation, have bene specially parted" (1612, C3v: Grantley 75). It is likely Marlowe also witnessed a similar programme during his seven-year residency.

Academic drama was not unfamiliar to the attendees of the public theatre. Records illustrate that more prominent townspeople often gained admittance to the college halls to watch plays (II 709). If they could not comprehend the Latin script, they could still enjoy the visuals. This heterogeneous group pre-empts the socially-diverse London theatre audience that Marlowe would later write for professionally. It was the presentation of these dramas that evoked the medieval staging of the past, and medieval inheritance of the productions external to the college walls. While the spoken word was Latin, and the text dispositional and classical, the appearance was something rather more familiar. Masques were still performed in academic plays (II 713), demonstrating the resonance of earlier modes of representation. It is likely students and academics also observed street theatre and entertainments such as bear-baitings, before the university made valiant efforts to suppress all secular entertainment (II 709). As in Canterbury, bookkeeping provides the extant records of staged productions. The audit books of the various colleges reveal expenses relating to these, and the town treasurer's records account for public performances, such as the payment of "the Queenes players" in 1585 (I 313). Dramatic stagings took place both inside and outside the college courtyards, and served as models of social performance for the university and the town.

While extensive records are available for neighbouring colleges, no text or even a title of a play staged at Corpus Christi college survives. Yet significant dramatic activity is evident throughout the 1580s, particularly in the academic year 1581-2 (Nelson II 751). Extensive records remain for payments to musicians at

Corpus Christi and we can speculate dramatic production accounts for some of this expenditure. The college audit of 1584-5 records a payment "to the musitians for their fee" (I 312), and it is also noted that the college participated in the university tradition of hiring the Cambridge waits to perform on the institution's feast day, Corpus Christi (II 730). The last known staging of a play at Corpus was in the academic year 1622-3 (II 994). The tradition was flourishing during Marlowe's time in the college.

Other colleges make more explicit references to plays in their archives, and this can serve as an indication of what may have been produced at Corpus. The Trinity College junior bursar includes in the 1586-7 accounts the expense of "making the stage at the plays" (I 318) and St. John's College records in "necessary expenses" an "overplus of charges att the playes for invitinge the doctoures" (I 318). In 1564, academic drama won Royal approval with Elizabeth attending no less than three nights of performances at King's College (II 712). So exhausted was the monarch from this flurry of dramatic production that a fourth play, written for the following evening, went unperformed (II 712). The universities would provide the political and religious leaders of the near future, and served as crucial stalwart of support for the Queen, as illustrated by the Royal visits. The acceptance of academic drama by the Queen in the year of Marlowe's birth was a significant factor in the development of English drama as a whole. These presentations of mostly classical texts, or secular scripts in Latin, were exempt from the increasing disapproval levelled at parochial events and the travelling companies, whose visits were severely curtailed from 1570.[23] Academic drama attained higher status, and thus also

[23] From 1579-80, troupes were regularly sent away without payment (Nelson 2.704).

immunity from the increasing censorship of street theatre.[24] It is clear that drama and public staging was bound up with control, both that of the state and institution. Like that of Canterbury, this theatrical tradition affected generations, and it is this collective memory on which Marlowe's subversive dramatic writing hinges.

Exploring Marlowe's Medieval Library

The long literary and dramatic culture of the Middle Ages did not halt in the early modern period, and certainly did not cease. Humanist dismissals of medieval romances did nothing to quell public demand for them, nor did the learned culture of the universities remove its students from popular culture. This broad cultural consensus is essential in order for the subversive tones of the texts to be fully appreciated; the audience needs to be familiar with the medieval material in order to notice subversion. It is clear that most Elizabethan readers and theatregoers had such familiarity. Perhaps the modern audience has lost this sensibility, our judgments clouded with nineteenth-century concepts of what the English Renaissance was, and a willingness to take humanist claims for originality at face value. Subversive elements of Renaissance drama have been considered since the 1980s, yet the role of medieval literature and culture in subversive texts has not been adequately acknowledged.[25] This initial chapter serves as an overview of the social and cultural framework in which Marlowe's plays and poems were produced, and from which they draw their consciousness. It demonstrates that this shared consensus across social strata allows for subversion to take place. The acknowledgement of communal ideology becomes a means of challenging this very notion. Marlowe's subversive evocations are a reaction to the polemical post-Reformation culture of Elizabethan

[24] After 1597, no visiting troupes were recorded in Cambridge (2.704).
[25] See Greenblatt, 1980.

England, an attempt to question supposed universal truths of religious and social authority. Yet Marlowe often falls short of posing an explicit challenge to the institutions he questions. “Subversion” derives from the Latin term “subvertere”, to “turn under” and this is exactly how Marlowe’s texts enact subversion, by overturning and inverting established ideology. As noted in the Introduction, subversion functions by offering the potential for revolution, not in actual attempts to revolutionise (Hayes 3) and this is precisely how Marlowe employs the medieval library.

Marlowe's Medieval Drama: Staging Schism and Dramatising Doubt

Introduction

Philosopher of religion Kenny states "the common characteristic of faith […] is its irrevocability. A faith that is held tentatively is no true faith" (394). In medieval drama and Protestant theology alike, doubters are not counted amongst the faithful, no matter how understandable or how articulately expressed their doubts might be. The inevitability of such doubts is subversively articulated in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Massacre at Paris*. The plays are at opposite poles of critical history, respectively Marlowe's most famous and most lauded play and his most critically dismissed. However, whilst vastly different in terms of quality and textual condition, both texts engage with the seemingly insurmountable challenges of early modern Protestantism and both rely on familiar medieval theatre to offer a subversive commentary on faith. *Doctor Faustus* has been interpreted as both orthodox Calvinist and daringly unorthodox in its overarching narrative, and its extensive use of the medieval morality play has been long established. *The Massacre at Paris* has never been seriously credited as containing any subversive interrogation of Protestantism, with its prudent engagement of medieval cycle plays also unmapped.

Streete observes "the theatre is the veritable crucible where dominant and emergent forms of subjectivity are tested" (29). The London stage was the locale where many conflicting ideologies were meted out before the public. The Reformation "radically redefined" the means and location of authority, and indelibly affected modes of representation (Weimann 3). Weimann explains:

> The act of representation was turned into a site on which authority could be negotiated, disputed, or reconstituted. Modern authority, rather than

> preceding its inscription, rather than being given as a prescribed premise of utterances, became a product of writing, speaking, and reading, a result rather than primarily a constituent of representation. (3)

The Reformation irrevocably decentralised authority. Yet Protestantism was a complex and uncompromising belief system, which demanded stringent adherence. Reformed Protestants of all denominations "had to grapple with the uncompromising message found in Calvin": that one is either elect or damned (Streete 2009 10). Marlowe deploys the medieval morality to interrogate contemporary Calvinist ideology; exposing the morality format as redundant since Christian theology has splintered.

As the most significant figure in Elizabethan literature, after Shakespeare, it is easy to overlook that Marlowe's educational background is not in literature. As outlined in Chapter One, Marlowe was a theologian, thus religious theatre is not material he could handle lightly. Marlowe's worldview is grounded in and informed by Protestant theology, but his reputation for unorthodox belief is well-established. Marlowe's reputation as an atheist is oft-discussed, even in the century after his death and before the revival of interest in his dramas.

Marlowe and Atheism

In 1641 Simon Aldrich shared a curious tale, of a Mr. Fineux from Dover. He recounted that this man "was an Atheist and that hee would go out at midnight into a wood, and fall down upon his knees and pray heartily that the Devil would come, that he might see him (for hee did not believe that there was a Devil)". Aldrich continues "hee was a verie good scholler, but he would never have aboue one booke at a time, and when hee was perfect in it, hee would sell it and buy another: he

learned all Marlo by heart and divers other books: Marlo made him an Athiest" (Hopkins 2008 112; Eccles 41). Aldrich's curious tale affords the works of Marlowe the same supernatural allure as the book of magic taken up by Faustus. Whilst Marlowe's personal beliefs are ultimately as unknowable to us as to Aldrich, it is clear from this anecdote that Marlowe's writings are blamed for Fineux's unorthodox behaviour. Aldrich insists that Marlowe was a blaspheming atheist: "Marlo who wrot Hero and Leander was an Atheist: and had writ a booke against the Scripture; how it was al one man's making, and would have printed it but could not be suffered" (Hopkins 2008 112; Eccles 40). Marlowe clearly had a reputation for the blasphemous in his own lifetime. Amongst other things, Marlowe is alleged to have stated:

> That Christ was a bastard and his mother dishonest.
>
> That St. John the Evangelist was bedfellow to Christ and leaned alwaies in his bosome, that he used him as the sinners of Sodoma.
>
> That the first beginning of Religioun was only to keep men in awe.[26]

These are only three of many "damnable opinions" attributed to Marlowe by Richard Baines. The infamous yet disputable Baines Note has come to define Marlowe's reputation as an atheist, rebel and non-conformist. Marlowe's work is often read in the shadow of this document, and the arrest that followed it, the case of Fineux of Dover a prime example. Marlowe's plays feature characters who repeatedly defy orthodox beliefs and challenge the assumption of providentialism inherited from medieval morality and liturgical drama. Yet it is an over-simplification to consider

[26] Baines's note on Marlowe, CA. 26 May 1593, BL Harleian MSS 6848-FF. 185-86. For transcription see Brown-Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life*. 219-222.

him the "Elizabethan Richard Dawkins" (Preedy xv). One must consider the much broader definition of the term "atheist" in Elizabethan England. Not merely unbelief, atheism included everything from blasphemy to simply a difference of opinion on a point of doctrine. Protestants regularly denounced Catholics and even other Protestants as "atheists". Perkins described perfectly orthodox debates about the effectiveness of prayer as "flat Atheism" (Ryrie 119). Yet sectarian division defined society throughout Elizabeth's reign, and was for many a matter of life and death. Marlowe's relationship with religious belief has been debated ad nauseam, and while his alleged atheism is questionable, his unconventional approach to matters of faith is not. Vitkus observes that Marlowe's dramatic canon "draws much of its energy […] derives its titillating, blasphemous edge" from the "contradictions and paradoxes of religious discourse in a time of religious schism" (2003 45). Anderson also notes Marlowe's "specifically religious register" in dramatising religious difference (79).

Taken in two halves, this chapter will examine Marlowe's unique and incisive treatment of religious belief, through his subversive use of medieval religious drama. The first section will explore Marlowe's most famous play, and most famous engagement with medieval literature, *Doctor Faustus*. I will argue that *Doctor Faustus* appropriates the morality play to discretely suggest Calvinist theology has rendered it obsolete. In contrast, the second section focuses on Marlowe's least esteemed work, the truncated text of *The Massacre at Paris*, and its echoes of medieval mystery plays. This play strategically evokes the visual spectacle and audial cues of the mysteries to undercut depictions of sectarian violence as divinely-mandated.

Obsolete Lessons: *Doctor Faustus* and the Medieval Morality Play

Any study of Christopher Marlowe and medieval literature must surely begin with *Doctor Faustus* (c.1593). The medieval influence on Marlowe's most famous play has long been noted and explored in depth.[27] The play presents a selection of instantly recognisable morality tropes: a Prologue, devils, comic subplot, and various stock figures such as an Old Man, Good and Bad Angels. It is clear that the play utilises medieval drama, but what these studies do not consider is *why* the medieval morality genre is evoked, and to what end. This chapter builds on the extensive extant scholarship to demonstrate that Marlowe employs the medieval morality genre to subvert contemporary Protestant theology. The play provokes its audience because it utilises the morality format to challenge, rather than to uphold, contemporary theology.

A Note on the Text(s)

Before commencing this study, one must consider the two quite different variations of the play.[28] This chapter will primarily examine the B-text with some reference to the variant scenes in the A-text as this the conventional approach to the dual-textual nature of the play.[29] Scholarly interest in the A-text itself is increasing, with the most recent Globe production (2011) using this version. Yet this version has generally been read as a "bad quarto", unrelated to any form of original script.[30] One might argue that this text was more considerate of censorship, whilst the B-text is a closer

[27] Several editions of the plays provide thorough introductions to the morality play theme, including Leech and Bruster and Rasmussen.
[28] For a succinct summary of the proponents and opponents of each text, see Duxfield, 2005. For further discussion on the task of editing Marlowe in general, see Duxfield 2013.
[29] For a detailed account of editions that primarily use the B-text, with variant scenes of the A-text appended, see Bowers' edition, 159. Some editions conflate the two texts, but this is not a viable practice.
[30] For a detailed account, see Bowers, 125.

representation of what occurred on the stage in the original production. Bowers is emphatic in asserting that the B-text should be used as a copy text, but considers selecting a text to use for an edition of the play a more complex task (142).[31] As Duxfield has noted, many scholars who lean towards the A-text as their preferred version, including Bowers, still choose the B-text as a copy (2005 4).

This chapter will illustrate that Marlowe's use of the medieval morality play is designed to underline the Doctor's battle with complex theology. Faustus' dilemma underscores the contradictions of early modern Protestantism itself. The familiar morality framework serves to highlight this irresolvable dilemma.

I will begin by outlining the Protestant literary culture Marlowe's audience were embedded in, and the values advocated by Elizabethan Protestantism, before demonstrating how these concepts render the morality framework ineffective.

This chapter will provide an overview of the medieval morality form, before a brief discussion of contemporary Protestant literary culture. It will then illuminate the significant changes Marlowe has made to the narrative source, *The Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* (1592) known as the *English Faust Book* (*EFB*). It shall then discuss Marlowe's subversive application of the morality framework, in light of Protestant culture, through subversive biblical allusion. It will then explore the challenging implications of how Protestant theology, indeed scripture itself, has been presented within the morality format, before concluding with a consideration of the implications of this subversive morality play and ultimately arguing that the form cannot be applicable to the early modern individual: it has been made redundant by Calvinist thought.

[31] All quotes in this chapter refer to the B-text, unless otherwise specified.

The earliest surviving morality plays date from the fifteenth century, but the genre did not reach its zenith until immediately before the emergence of the public theatre, well into the Renaissance (Cooper 2010 105). Marlowe not only displays this surviving tradition within his plays, he develops it through subversion. Crucially, in order for a playwright to attempt this, the earlier trope had to be familiar to his audience at least in form, if not as specific narratives. It is likely Marlowe's audience was more acquainted with the morality tradition than any classical work. Religious drama was the foundation of the "lived theatrical experience" of most playgoers throughout the Elizabethan period (147). The surviving moralities include *Everyman* (1495), *Mankind* (1465-70), *Wisdom* (1450-1500), *The Castle of Perseverance* (1405-25) and *The Worlde and the Chlyde* (c.1450s-1500).[32] Morality plays are effective in their simplicity. Potter defines moralities as Christian, anonymous, and popular (1975 6). The morality play is simple, derivative and unambiguous, with all conflict resolved by the end of the final scene. As we shall see in the next section, whereas the cycles represent the total history of humankind, the morality play charts the life of an individual human being (6). The plays have few defining features: a single, generic protagonist representing all of humanity; personifications of the seven deadly sins, and occasionally the corresponding seven virtues also; devils or Satan himself. The Vices and Virtues will battle for the soul of man, with exhortations and temptations galore. The human figure temporarily falls into sin, but repents, is forgiven, and ultimately attains salvation.[33] The plays present biblical truth in an accessible formula: repent and be saved. In *Everyman*, the titular figure is aided by Good Deeds, Knowledge, Confession, Strength and Discretion, among others. In *Mankind*, the protagonist is

[32] Also known by its Latin title, *Mundus et Infans*.
[33] For an evocative introduction to the genre, see Bruster and Rasmussen, 1-8.

tempted by a devil, Titivillus, and his associates New Guise (fashion), Nought (nothing, worthlessness), Nowadays (the present day, temporary mortal life) and Mischief, but is ultimately redeemed with the aid of Mercy. It is easy to see why the morality proved so enduring: it is a simple format, a clear commentary on humanity through a representative individual, widely accessible but by no means crude.

Whilst the genre has been linked to the late Roman poem the *Psychomachia*, Potter identifies the chief source of the English vernacular moralities as sermons of the medieval church (6). The mystery plays taught scripture and the morality demonstrated how Christian teaching could be applied to the life of the ordinary citizen. The generic morality play has been more accurately described by Bruster and Rasmussen as a "soul play" because the genre is simply a depiction of the battle for a man's salvation (24). The morality comprises a single, recognisable and relatable protagonist, who is conflicted as various forces compete for his soul. This figure is basically good, but is flawed and tempted to sin. Crucially, this character will see the error of his ways with the aid of the benign figures. The morality protagonist is a human who gives in to sin in the short-term, but ultimately attains salvation through repentance. This will be a crucial point when we examine *Doctor Faustus*. The resonance of the medieval morality is apparent in plays such as *A knack to Know a Knave* (1592), *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1589-90) and *The Conflict of Conscience* (c.1500s).[34] Marlowe's deployment of the morality format diverges from Elizabethan cultural consensus in that *Faustus* interrogates rather than endorses Protestant values.[35]

[34] The latter play has been linked to *Faustus* by Bevington (2009 705), who argues it "offers a model for […] *Doctor Faustus* in its post-Reformation story of a lapsed convert confronting the terrors of damnation" (708).
[35] For a discussion of the morality form in Greene, Peele and Kyd, see Happé 1999.

Perhaps less obvious to the function of the morality play is its theological and social context. *Doctor Faustus* is the only one of Marlowe's plays in which Christianity has an explicitly existential status (Preedy 2012 21). Yet Marlowe's Christian God is silent, and Faustus remains heedless to the words of God's messengers, the Good Angel and the Old Man (21). The audience recognises these tropes as stable and transparent, but Faustus finds them confusing and arbitrary (Lunney 2002 149). It is in this play that Marlowe's overreaching protagonist rebels against a "recognisably Protestant deity" (26). The only physical sign of heaven in the play is the throne.[36] Yet this is "more apparently an emblem of state control" (Bevington & Rasmussen 24) rather than a sign of God's majesty. Whilst various devils appear throughout, the play fails to demonstrate any divine presence.

Knapp has observed that "there was no single religion suffusing Renaissance England […] but rather many religions from which to choose: not simple Catholicism or Protestantism […] but also kinds of Catholicism and kinds of Protestantism" (Knapp 10; Streete 2009 7). Post-Reformation England does not have this unilateral religious culture. The morality play had survived in some form in the Elizabethan era, it was co-opted in support of Calvinism. *Faustus* exposes the morality as a format entirely unsuitable and ineffective for an Elizabethan play, as Marlowe explores the hermeneutic impossibility of uniform theology post-Reformation. The morality play is a product of late medieval Christianity, and anticipates that its audience shares a uniform, cohesive ideology. Marlowe's play is not a battle between God and Satan for the soul of a man, nor a tight rope walk between salvation and damnation, but an inter-denominational debate. Christianity is at war with itself and Faustus is only the most notable of many casualties.

[36] This motif is apparent in Isaiah "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isaiah: 6.1).

Snyder's pioneering reading of *Doctor Faustus* considers it an inversion of a saint's life. Snyder presents Marlowe's play as a reversal of the "didactic biography" (566), with Faustus following each generic step of the saint's life, from conversion and the performance of miracles to entry into the afterlife, but turning to Satan instead of God. I expand on this argument to contend that the medieval morality format is being utilised to subvert Protestant ideology, particularly regarding the principle of personal Bible reading, in addition to predestination. *Doctor Faustus* presents an orthodox and familiar medieval format, but barely contained within it are highly provocative and unorthodox ideas. In order for these concepts to be presented, a delicate balance must be struck. They must be subtle enough not to attract the attention of censor Tilney, but relatively apparent, so their subversive inferences can be grasped by the audience.[37] All of Marlowe's dramas were staged and printed "with no apparent hindrance from Tilney or the Bishop's censors" (Dutton 88). The familiar morality play format allows the audience to identify what is "wrong" with the play, what is missing from the expected narrative, and these disjunctions invite critical thinking from those willing to follow the ideas through.

The Word Made Print: Protestant Literary Culture

Protestantism was a European phenomenon with local manifestations (Marshall & Ryrie 9-10). The terminus of the English Reformation is usually set at either the Elizabethan Church settlement of 1559, or the final promulgation of the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1571 (Marshall & Ryrie 232). As Marshall notes, these dates can equally be construed as "starter's flags" rather than "finishing posts" (232). It is in the

[37] Edmund Tilney held the office of The Master of the Revels from 1579-1610, and would have been responsible for censorship at the time of staging. For a detailed account of Tilney's tenure, particularly regarding Marlowe's work, see Dutton.

following decades that the decisive battles for the hearts and minds of the lay population would take place. The Reformation undoubtedly shaped the English nation, and the population's national identity. Haigh has argued that the English Reformation was in fact "an Elizabethan event" (236; Marshall & Ryrie 4) and this idea has some merit. Elizabethans solidified their own writings and culture at the expense of the centuries immediately preceding England's turn, and later return, to Protestantism.

The Reformation forever decimated Christian unity, and inflicted a devastating blow from which it has never fully recovered. Yet the Reformation divide was never as sharp or finite as either side would argue. The Reformation promised Europeans a pure and unmediated relationship with God, but offered unprecedented and repeated intellectual challenges. Both Catholics and Protestants were still using the same theological vocabulary and using "the same terms of approbation and derogation" (Marshall & Ryrie 5). *Doctor Faustus* highlights just how narrow this divide is.

Pettegree memorably stated "Protestantism was the religion of the word, the word was made print" (128). What I term Protestant literature in this period comprises three core strands: the Bible; the prescriptive sermons read aloud in churches every Sunday; and the martyrology, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, commonly known as the *Book of Martyrs*. These texts were as formative as the Bible itself during Elizabeth's reign, but readers did not explore only Protestant texts. Protestants of various denominations "promiscuously read" one another's books, and surprisingly also Catholic books (Ryrie 472). The Parker Library contains both Catholic and Protestant texts, though established to legitimise the latter. Revisionist historians see early modern belief as a wide spectrum "from Catholic recusancy at

one end to Puritan separatism at the other" (Streete 7) and this is reflected in the proliferation of these polemical texts.

Unsurprisingly, drama also adapted in response to the proliferation of new texts. As Roston has demonstrated, biblical drama developed during the Reformation to depict more realistic human figures, without the physical presence of God (50). In the sixteenth century, drama became concerned with "the contemporary relevance of the scriptures" (72).[38] Groves explains that "Shakespeare's [and by default Marlowe's] audience not only knew the Bible, but could be relied on to bring their knowledge to what they saw on stage" (11). Biblical allusion, quotation and misquotation abound in Shakespeare's work, clearly anticipating an audience capable of recognising them. One can discern that Marlowe's decision to dramatise Elizabethan theology was not an unusual or unexpected move, but the subversive implications of the play certainly constitute a radical departure.

Sola Scriptura?

Tyacke determines that in this period "Calvinism was the defacto religion of the Church of England" (7). However, that is not to say that Calvinist doctrine was accepted without objection, quite the opposite. Calvinist strictures on predestination, grace, free will and justification by faith were "nothing if not controversial" (Streete 161) provided one of the most prominent Elizabethan cultural preoccupations. *Sola Scriptura*: by scripture alone, is the defining concept of the European Reformation. It is through scripture, and by implication faith in scripture, that one can attain salvation. Protestant England shed the accoutrements of Catholicism: saints, indulgences, veneration of images, and all non-biblical practises. English theologian

[38] For a detailed account of biblical tales appearing in early modern drama, see Roston.

Chillingworth (1602-44) famously stated that "the Bible, the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants" (quoted. in McGrath, 199). The Bible is a large text offering an infinite number of readings. However, Protestantism itself can be seen to invite unorthodox readings of and responses to scripture. Protestantism in general advocated solitary prayer, in addition to solitary study of the Bible. This would be entirely unsupervised by authorities (Ryrie 156). Ryrie asked recently, "who could guarantee the orthodoxy of solitary religion?" (157). The answer is of course, no-one.

The Church did however make valiant efforts to do just that. Authorities attempted to guide personal reading through explanatory sermons at the weekly church service. A new church required new sermons, and in Elizabeth's Church, sermon collections were drafted and approved by the state. *The Book of Homilies* served as the definitive Protestant preaching manual, with ready-to-preach sermons on topics as varied as appropriate dress and the fear of death. The spread of print saw the further propagation of these collections, creating a sub-genre, the model sermon collection which could be purchased and read at home. These tales retained the central tenets of the sermons read aloud in churches every week. These texts utilised storybook entertainment to teach Protestant morality (Ryrie 14). Pettegree evocatively surmises that the "new Protestant people lived on a diet of sermons; at every Sunday observance, and often through the week" (38) and this model became the "bedrock around which the churches harnessed other communication media" (39). The Protestant church sought to extend their influence into popular entertainment, utilising the literary pursuits of the congregation. Through popular literature, Protestants found a route through which they could attempt to resolve the complex theological ideas they encountered in scripture and doctrinal texts.

In a state seeking to control the literary and social pursuits of the populace, it is no coincidence that the longest and most detailed sermons in the *Book of Homilies* are on obedience and repentance. The homily *Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion* (1571) comprises no fewer than six parts, each longer than many other whole sermons in the collection. Many of the issues raised as Faustus approaches death are covered in the prescribed sermons, indicating the topical nature of the play. A sermon on "Falling from God" cites study and the pursuit of knowledge as a potential trouble source, if one's motivation is not solid: "whosoever studieth for the glory and honour of this world, he turned from God" (82).[39] This may predict Faustus' downfall, but the same sermon offers a worrying signifier, that a lack of contact from God may be an indication of damnation, comparing this relationship to a vineyard:

> As long as a man doth proine [prune] his vines, doth dig at the roots, and doth lay fresh earth to them, he hath a mind to them, he perceiveth some token of fruitfulness that may be recovered in them: but, when he will bestow no more such cost and labour about them, then it is a sign that he thinketh they will never be good. And the father, as long as he loveth his child, he looketh angerly, he correcteth him, when he doeth amiss: but when that serveth not, and upon that he ceaseth from correction of him and suffereth him to do what he list himself, it is a sign that he intendeth to disinherit him, and to cast him away for ever. (87)

Marlowe's subversive morality play engages with these ideas in a problematised battle for a Protestant man's soul.

[39] All quotes are from Griffiths' edition.

Erasmus famously argued that "every Christian could and should be a theologian" (Ryrie 1; Erasmus 100), and it appears that during Elizabeth's reign, he may have gotten his wish. An Italian visitor to London was said to have sardonically reported that "here the very Women and Shopkeepers were able to judge of Predestination, and to determine what Laws were fit to be made concerning Church-government" (Cummings 2002 285). The teachings of Calvin, and Puritan theology in general, were well known to Elizabethans, and many were adept at articulating these theological standpoints. Cummings quips "every Elizabethan Londoner, it seems, was a theologian" (286). It is for this theologically-astute population that Marlowe wrote. The issues Faustus confronts on his descent into damnation were topical issues, debated in marketplaces and taverns as often as in academic institutions. Marlowe's audience were the most theologically-informed generation of English theatre attendees, but also the most confused. The audience in the Rose theatre faced "an agonising dilemma," a choice between Catholicism and Protestantism (Hopkins 2008 164). As Cooper notes "the devil in various forms is the most fearsome adversary, but wrong doctrine comes a close second" (2004 91). Elizabeth's state denounced Catholics, but dissident Protestants such as Puritans were equally threatening. This secondary enemy is the crux of Marlowe's subversive morality play. For Elizabethan Protestants, the enemy was within Christianity. Their choice was one of eternal life for the 'correct' sect, damnation for the heretic. Thus Faustus' indecision "touched a culturally crucial chord" and both versions of the play "are emblematic of the difficulties of choice presented to an entire culture" (Hopkins 2008 164). Protestant culture is one of yearning for a personal relationship with God through scripture, it is the pursuit of a single "true" doctrine. *Doctor*

Faustus demonstrates the impossibility of this endeavour by presenting it within a genre rendered obsolete by Calvinism.

Marlowe's morality protagonist dwells in a specifically Protestant world, where all of the simultaneously rigid yet ambiguous commandments of Protestantism are probed within the now ineffective morality framework. The morality play teaches basic doctrine, defining sin and virtue according to Christianity, ultimately promising mercy and redemption through faith in Christ. But the homily *Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion* warns against over-confidence in God's mercy: "they do overboldy presume God's mercy and live dissolutely, so doth God still more and more withdraw his mercy from them" (89). The sermon advocates complete obedience to God as the best course of action:

> "And, as God would have man to be his obedient subject, so did he make all earthly creatures subject unto man; who kept their due obedience unto man so long as man remained in his obedience to God." (550)

Simpson summarises the conflict: "Reading might be for everyone, but predestination certainly isn't" (2007 3).

The *English Faust Book*: Inspiration and Deviation

Marlowe's primary source text is *The Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* (1592) known as the *English Faust Book* (*EFB*).[40] *Doctor Faustus* stages the juxtaposition of medieval generality and Renaissance specificity. We shall see the generalised morality of medieval drama collapses when applied to an

[40] All quotes from British library BL.C.27.b.43. Tydemann and Thomas consider the *EFB* Marlowe's only source for the play, and suggest he dramatises the narrative "chapter by chapter" (171). This text was not directly available in the Parker collection, but was a tale in circulation in popular literature.

individual case in a Calvinist context.[41] Marlowe's plot follows this contemporary text closely, but the play's deviations, presented in the context of the morality play, are crucial to understanding its subversive subtext. Most apparent initially is the title, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe omits "deserved" from Faustus' death, and describes his life as "tragical". Marlowe's Doctor of Divinity is established as a tragic hero, though he remains the instigator of "damnable" acts and his own doom. As Hopkins recently observed, the emphasis on the academic title in the shortened title of the play is in itself provocative (2015). The title emphasises Faustus' status as a respected scholar, as the entirety of the play will, but this distinction was also one of theological prominence, a Doctor of the Church. Though the plot follows the source almost exactly, Marlowe's narrative continues to diverge ideologically.

The opening lines of the *EFB* build up a picture of John Faustus, a prodigal son who has inherited wealth and much unearned privilege from his wealthy uncle: "his father, a poor husbandman, and not well able to bring him up, but having an uncle at Wittenberg, a rich man, and without issue, took this John Faustus from his father and made him his heir" (*EFB* 3-4).[42] The seemingly petulant young Faustus is sent to university by his long-suffering uncle, yet neglects his studies: "But Faustus being of a naughty [evil] mind and otherwise addicted applied not his studies, but took himself to other exercises […]" (*EFB* 7-9). His uncle tries to rectify Faustus' reprobate nature: "this good man laboured to have Faustus apply his study of divinity, that he might come to the knowledge of God and His laws" (*EFB* 12-13). The *EFB* is a clear-cut moral narrative of the downward spiral and due punishment of a reprobate soul.

[41] For a study of the development of subjectivity and selfhood in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, see Hanson, introduction.
[42] Quotes are from British library C.27.b.43, transcribed by Tydeman and Thomas.

Doctor Faustus alters the *EFB* narrative entirely. The spoilt child of the *EFB* is replaced with a learned scholar. The Prologue and opening scene of *Doctor Faustus* introduce not an idle benefactor but an able and admirable scholar of divinity. Gone is the satanically-inclined changeling, instead we are introduced to a seemingly orthodox theologian. The first indication that the audience are watching a morality play is at the very outset: the prologue. The prologue itself is obviously a medieval morality trope, and the first of several iterations of the format. *Everyman* opens with a messenger declaring: "I pray you all gyve your audyence, /And here this mater with reverence" (1-2). This technique of laying out a prescribed interpretation of the action to follow continued through to Tudor drama. *The Enterlude of Godly Queene Hester* (1560/1) opens with the exhortation:

> Come nere virtuous matrons and women kind,
> Here may ye learne of Hester's duty;
> In all comeliness of virtue you shal finde
> How to behave your selves in humilitie.
>
> (Pro.1-4)

In Marlowe's Prologue, the Chorus recounts Faustus' authentic and hard-won academic achievements. "So soon he profits in divinity, / The fruitful plot of scholarism graced / That shortly he was graced with doctor's name" (Pro. 15-17). Academic prowess also served as an indication of God's favour. Streete asserts "one of the central pillars of Protestant orthodoxy is the so-called *duplex cognition Dei* (twofold knowledge of God), which asserts that any move towards self-knowledge is inextricably bound to knowledge of the divine" (51). For Calvin, knowledge is divinely ordained, and is only increased through understanding God, and oneself as a subject of God. Calvin states "nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true

and sound wisdom, consists of parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves" (1961 35). Thus, Faustus' extensive knowledge of theology is evidence of his moral standing.

Furthermore, Faustus' knowledge is the basis of his earthly achievements. His uncle's wealth is omitted entirely; Faustus has left his poor household in Rhode and achieved academic success apparently on his own merit, and rather than foregoing his studies in favour of conjuring, he has "profited' in them. Therein lies the crucial difference: Marlowe's Faustus is an entirely orthodox figure. According to English Protestant values, Marlowe's Faustus is admirable. Initially at least, the audience are encouraged to admire Faustus, who "combines the qualities of the medieval folk hero with those of a champion of European Protestantism" (Preedy 2012 168). Faustus "never deliberately defies God in the way that the doctor of the *EFB* does" (Waldron 109). The use of the morality prologue only serves to underline the disjunction between Faustus' apparent orthodoxy and his eventual damnation. These strategic alterations of the Faust story make the figure likeable, if not relatable like the generic morality protagonist. Marlowe takes this well-known folk narrative from a contemporary publication, and frames it within a medieval morality play, to demonstrate the futility of the latter genre.

The prologue of *Doctor Faustus* appears a direct continuation of this trope, but the content is a complete inversion of the expected prescribed interpretation. It cleverly unhinges its own structure by stopping short of fully condemning Faustus. He is criticised for being full of "self-conceit" (A. Pro. 20) but his achievements which underpin his arrogance are praised:

> So soon he profits in divinity,
> The fruitful plot of scholarism graced,

That shortly he was graced with doctor's name,

Excelling all whose sweet delight disputes

In heavenly matters of theology.

(A.Pro. 15-19)

His sins are referenced but he is not castigated for them, and praise of God and promotion of the correct way of living are conspicuous by their absence. Instead, his only listed mistake was overestimating his own abilities:

Till swoll'n with cunning of a self-conceit,

His waxen wings did not mount above his reach,

And melting heavens conspired his overthrow.

(A. Pro. 20-2)

This is an intriguing suggestion that "heavens" - not diabolical entities - plotted Faustus' downfall. This is an inversion of an image popular in early modern Protestantism: St. Paul's description of the ascension "upon the wings of faith, unto the glory of the Empyrean Heaven" (Ryrie 89). Faustus' "waxen wings" will lead his decent to hell, not an ascension to heaven. This begins an inverted use of doctrine that is continued throughout the play, subversively implying that Protestant theology may be doomed to fail, not Faustus himself.

Universal Morality

The morality play is a universal form that claims to represent all of humanity. Titular characters such as "Everyman" and "Mankind" reflect this pan-human characterisation. They do not emphasise their location or date; they represent all of humanity in all ages. Marlowe's morality is entirely fixed; he grounds the play around one individual, in a specific place and at a specific time. The play is set

precisely in Reformation Germany, and the audience may note that another renowned theologian emerged from the University of Wittenberg: Luther. Faustus' crisis of belief occurs as Luther calls for the Reformation of the Christian faith. The setting is further confirmed by the inclusion of the Emperor Charles V. The Emperor who requests the spectre of Alexander the Great and Helen of Troy is, according to the list of *dramatis personae*, the famed Catholic leader remembered for his failure to halt the spread of Lutheranism as much as his spectacular dominance of the continent (Maltby 25). Though it is not explicit in the play, these subtle details are selected from the *EFB* to emphasise Faustus' life as a specifically Reformation event. Marlowe uses the morality play form but his innovation is to take, from the *EFB*, the Reformation as a geographical and temporal nexus point and to consciously highlight this to demonstrate that this cultural impasse has caused the obsolescence of the morality format. Faustus is repeatedly presented as a unique and exceptional figure from the very first lines of the play. He is as far removed as possible from the 'everyman' of the morality. He is an individual presented within the framework of the universal, and his individuality demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the morality genre, in a Calvinist world. Morality is easily established in the abstract, but is a difficult if not impossible task for the individual. Faustus' individuality, his ultra-specific historical context, and his distinguished scholarly career are presented within a morality format to subversively interrogate the play's post-Reformation context. The audience, though they can admire the intellectually gifted Doctor of Divinity, cannot relate to him. The audience is forced to ponder his conundrum, and consider that if a man of his learning cannot find answers in scripture, how could the common man? There is a subtle argument articulated in the use of the morality

framework: that the Bible does not offer clear answers to man's problems, and certainly does not offer a direct route to eternal life.

Marlowe is not simply influenced by or borrowing from a popular tradition, he is utilising it for a specific purpose: to subvert the Protestant theology outlined previously. The play opens with Faustus in his study, perusing books. He seems dissatisfied with the various texts he has studied and apparently mastered. Faustus elects to "Live and die in Aristotle's works" (I.i.5) and this in turn subverts scripture by replacing Jesus with the Classical philosopher. Romans 14.8 reads: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's". It is also worth noting here that Aristotle denied the immortality of the soul, and therefore to live and die according to his works is to foreclose the possibility of an afterlife.[43]

Faustus moves on from the first philosopher to pick up and discount Galen, the founder of medicine, and Justinian, founder of law. Faustus appears to have personally excelled in these fields, claiming that his own medical advice had enabled "whole cities to escape the plague" (I.i.19). He moves on to dismiss the study of Law as "too servile and illiberal for me" (I.i.34). Then Faustus begins reading the Bible. It has long been observed that Faustus' reading of the Bible in the opening scene is a misreading. However, this argument depends entirely on the version of the Bible the Doctor of Divinity is actually quoting from. He explicitly names Jerome's Bible (I.i.36), the fourth-century Latin translation "associated with Roman Catholic teaching" (Preedy 2012 42). That Faustus reads from a Catholic-tinged text would appear to explain his fallacies. An Elizabethan audience could easily dismiss this text as inaccurate if not entirely corrupted. But a more detailed reading suggests that this

[43] An idea put forth in *De Anima*.

is not what Faustus is actually quoting. Faustus is quoting directly from scriptures familiar to his audience: the Geneva Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Thus, these may not have immediately stood out as mis-readings to the original audience. Sinfield considers Faustus' summary, "What will be, shall be" before he bids "Divinity, adieu!" (I.i.75) to be "doctrinally satisfactory" (117). Within the structure of the morality play, Marlowe minutely gestures towards statements that are truly damnable: a direct critique of scripture. Faustus' consideration of the Bible as one book amongst many on his shelves diminishes its power as the revered word of God. Faustus has apparently studied the founder of Philosophy, Aristotle, the founder of medicine, Galen, a foundational thinker in Law, Justinian, but doubts the author of the Bible. Perhaps Catholic ceremonies and rites we shall see mocked in the play were more effective at building and bolstering faith than reading alone.[44] Later it appears that scriptures are essential textbooks for conjuring. When notorious black magician Valdes briefs Faustus on conjuring, he states that the "requisite" books include "The Hebrew Psalter, and New Testament" (I.i.157).

Protestant culture certainly considered study to be requisite, and abhorred idleness in this endeavour. Yet the simplified morality play was designed for illiterate audiences, with little to no understanding of the Bible. Ryrie notes "when a little tedium began to tug on you, it was not something to be dismissed lightly" because it may imply that the "mouth of hell was yawning" (21). The audience are aware that Faustus' ennui may be a trouble source, but equally it is made clear that his boredom is a result of excelling in his studies, not neglecting them. Faustus is repeatedly and explicitly established as not only a good Christian, but specifically a

[44] The Baines note accused Marlowe of stating that Catholicism was the closest thing to a "good Religion" as "the service of god is performed with more ceremonies, as Elevation of the mass, organs, singing men […]". For a full transcription of the document, see Brown-Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* 220.

good Protestant. His academic achievements are emblematic of idealised Protestant scholarship. Yet he is damned.

Subversive Subplots

The comic subplot was also a morality play staple. In the morality play, these subplots served to draw the audience into the action, to increase their vicarious enjoyment of sinful hedonism, and to help them sympathise with the tempted protagonist. The physical appearance of a devil on stage was a core component of morality plays, and it is likely owing to this allure that Mephistopheles appears on the frontispiece of the published play. The audience can laugh at the spectacle of mischievous devils safe in the knowledge that redemption will be offered both to them and the embodiment of humanity on the stage. So alluring was the spectacle of sin that in *Everyman*, Nowadays and New Guise demand money from the audience in exchange for presenting the devil Titivillus on stage.

> Nowadays: Give us red royals if ye want to see his abominable presence.
>
> New Guise: Not so! Ye that may not pay the tone, pay the tother.
>
> (465-6)

Marlowe's comic subplot, the activities of Wagner, Robin and the clown (I.iv) recall such generic scenes, but whilst they add to the entertainment value of the play, they serve to further alienate rather than engage the audience.

Marlowe's comic subplot, derived from the morality genre, might be best described as an ironic subplot. It further underscores Faustus' tragic fall into sin. Wagner believes Robin's poverty might lead him to such a fate: "Alas, poor slave, see how poverty jests in his nakedness, I know the villain's out of service and so hungry, that he would give his soul to the devil, for a shoulder of mutton, though it

were blood raw" (I.iv.6-8). Robin responds with a comic rejoinder: "Not so neither; I had need to have it well roasted, and good sauce to it, if I pay so deere, I can tell you" (I.iv.9-10). The irony of course being that the ignorant and impoverished servant will do nothing of the sort, and is so at ease about the status of his soul that he can joke about it. He does elect to follow Wagner, but it is apparent that he does so only in the hopes of employment, with conjuring only as an added perk. Later, after they are transformed by Mephistopheles into an ape and a dog respectively, Robin and Rafe choose to be content with their fate as, as animals, they will get more food. Robin declares: "How, into an ape? That's brave. I'll have fine sport with the boys; I'll get nuts and apples enough" (A.III.ii.42-3). He believes that men will offer him more food as an ape than as a labourer, and insists Rafe will be able to steal food with impunity as a dog: "I 'faith, thy head will never be out of the pottage pot" (A.III.ii.45). Their desire is bitterly simple: to eat. Their transgressions are not in pursuit of transgressive knowledge; they are simply poor men looking to feed themselves. It is for this reason that Mephistopheles seems to appear to them only under sufferance. He arrives grumbling:

> Monarch of hell, under whose black survey
> Great potentates do kneel with awful fear,
> Upon whose altars thousand souls do lie,
> How vexed am I with these villains' charms!
> From Constantinople am I hither come
> Only for pleasure of these damned slaves.
>
> (A.III.ii.30-5)

Mephistopheles considers responding to the poor men's summons a tiresome chore. The explanation for his begrudging response is in a preceding scene, where the

demon explains to Faustus how he was summoned. He did not arrive in response to Faustus' "conjuring speeches" (I.iii.44), much to the Doctor's disappointment, but his renunciation of Christ. Mephistopheles elaborates:

> For when we hear one rack the name of God,
> Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,
> We fly in hope to get his glorious soul…
>
> (I.iii.47-50)

The servants have evidently not offered their souls, resulting in Mephistopheles' complete lack of interest. The pair then joke about a satanic bargain that sounds very similar to the one that the Doctor has agreed to in the preceding scenes. The figure of the fool "straddles the boundary between the world of the play and that of its spectators" (Carlson 11) and thus serve to provide a somewhat more relatable presence on stage. The unlearned characters pilfer one of Faustus' conjuring books, with hilarious results. It seems that these unlearned men can still use the magic texts with relative ease. The powers that the learned Doctor sold his soul for are seemingly freely available to the unlettered servants, as they have made no bargain with Mephistopheles, Satan has no hold over them, there is no blood contract. There is no indication that they have made any pact with Lucifer in order to conjure, nor is there any suggestion that they will be damned for doing so. This seems a glaring contradiction between the episodes of conjuring, and a further implication that Faustus' theological knowledge has not served him well. Perhaps the magnitude of the servants' actions is incomprehensible to them, and therefore they are not held to full account for their actions. But neither do they experience the despair said to be indicative of the reprobate. The servants are not damned, because they do not recognise themselves as such. They are not equipped with the theological knowledge

which would enable them to contemplate their own damnation, and they appear all the better for it.

The servants actively deride academia. The First Scholar ponders the whereabouts of Faustus, evoking the Doctor's name in the context of his scholarly prowess: "I wonder what's become of Faustus that was wont to make our schools ring with '*sic probo*'".[45] When Wagner enters carrying wine, he makes a mockery of the scholarly debating skills so lauded in Faustus. The First Scholar insists: "Go to, sirrah! Leave your jesting, and tell us where he is" (I.ii.7). Wagner jests: "That follows not necessary by force of argument that you, being licentiate, should stand upon't. Therefore, acknowledge your error, and be attentive" (I.ii.8-10).

For Wagner, the esteemed scholars are buffoons to be derided, the entire system of scholarly debate is a joke. Wagner's irreverence can be considered a product of ignorance, but as Faustus' predicament becomes increasingly grave, the audience may wonder who actually fares better. If one is to follow the concept of predestination through to its logical end, then the Anglican promotion of education is futile, as the pursuit of knowledge is worthless if one is doomed or saved from conception.

Marlowe uses the subplot to the same end as the other morality play tropes: to complicate his audience's understanding of Protestant culture. In the medieval morality, the subplot underlines the temptation of the everyman, to allow the audience to directly relate to his illicit desires, through relatively innocuous pranks, before contemplating the horrors of hell and seeking repentance. In *Doctor Faustus*, the comic scene only makes Faustus appear even more foolish. It is a step away from, rather than toward, redemptive interpretations of the narrative. That semi-

[45] 'I prove it thus'.

literate simpletons can conjure and avoid damnation, but the Wittenberg-educated theologian cannot, underscores the latter's catastrophic failure. The unlearned characters appear to have avoided all of Faustus' anxieties. In matters of theology in Elizabethan England, ignorance is bliss.

Post-Reformation Virtue

The Old Man is another obvious morality play trope; he is a general embodiment of virtue and wisdom, without individuality or character development. His name is general, but it is not reflecting a particular virtue, just his age. There is an implication in this that his certainty in simple faith is a generational trait. Only those who recall simpler times can maintain strong faith. He is wise but not intellectual, and is able to ostensibly articulate Christian thought without recourse to any text. Yet this adds to the troubling picture of Faustus' mental state: this man is unwavering in his Christian faith, but he is uneducated. The Old Man further underscores the subversive interpretation of Faustus' fall: it is a direct result of his study of scripture. The Old Man is secure in his Christian faith because his beliefs have not been compromised by years of independent study. The Old Man's pleas, though undoubtedly genuine, reflect the simplistic message of the morality plays. Streete concludes that "for Faustus to definitively know his fate would require a cultural context where such questions were uncontroversially settled" (158) and it is obvious this was not the case in London in the early 1590s. In a Calvinist context, Faustus cannot merely "call for mercy, and avoid despair" (V.i.58), because from a Calvinist perspective, Christ "did not die for all" (Streete 85). His sacrifice was only for the elect. Mephistopheles' speech is specifically tailored to this post-Reformation context.

Subversive Satire

Marlowe appears to be challenging contemporary Protestant beliefs with demonic figures who tempt the audience as much as Faustus with their spectacles. Following the morality tradition, the vicarious enjoyment of sin is offered to the audience. But Marlowe's play goes further than any morality by inviting the audience to initially admire Faustus, and to sympathise with him throughout his most transgressive acts. Faustus is understandably dissatisfied with the limits of available knowledge, and the spectator's curiosity is aroused in parallel with the scholar's (Shepherd 107). Since his descent into sin is shown in such a sympathetic light, the audience is naturally compelled to question whether his fate was entirely just.

The morality structure is first undercut by anti-Catholic satire. This was obviously orthodox sentiment, but presenting it in a format that is itself Catholic creates a startling juxtaposition.[46] A conventional attack on Catholicism is the ideal vehicle to introduce Faustus' doubts. The anti-Catholic satire begins with Faustus' request that Mephistopheles return in the form of a Franciscan Friar because "that holy shape becomes a devil best" (I.iii.26) and continues to the farce in Rome.[47] As Preedy points out, whilst Mephistopheles may appear as a Catholic Friar, the linguistic and rhetorical strategies he uses to deceive Faustus come straight from Protestant educational practise (2012 39). The struggle for Faustus' soul unfolds as a scholastic debate (Taunton 81; Hopkins 2008 6), not a general moral struggle.

One of the most humorous anti-Catholic satires in the play is a scene in which Faustus and Mephistopheles travel to Rome, and whilst invisible wreak havoc at a Papal dinner party. Faustus helps himself to the Pope's wine and meat, before punching him in the head. The Pope and friars leave the dinner table and return to

[46] For an account of allusions to Catholicism on the early modern stage, see Groves, 1-9.
[47] For a detailed exploration of this theme, with a discussion of contemporary performances, see Preedy 2012, 34-40.

sing a dirge, to cleanse the room of the suspected poltergeist activity. The friars collectively chant:

> Cursed be he that stole his holiness' meat from the table.
>
> *Maledicat Dominus!*
>
> Cursed be he that struck his holiness a blow on the face.
>
> *Maledicat Dominus!*
>
> Cursed be he that struck Friar Sandelo a blow on the pate.
>
> *Maledicat Dominus!*
>
> Cursed be he that disturbeth our holy dirge.
>
> *Maledicat Dominus!*
>
> Cursed be he that took away his holiness' wine.
>
> *Maledicat Dominus!*
>
> (III.ii.96-105)[48]

A Protestant audience would enjoy these humorous asides, but could also recognise the refrain "cursed be he" from Deuteronomy 27, which they would interpret as neither Catholic nor open to satire. Verses 21-26 proclaim:

> Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.
>
> Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say Amen.
>
> Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.
>
> Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And the people shall say, Amen.

[48] All quotes are from the Authorised King James Version, Oxford World Classics edition.

> Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And the people shall say, Amen.
>
> Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This list details what all Christian sects would agree is deviant behaviour, and the correct interpretation of such verses is unambiguous. To use this model in a slapstick anti-Catholic sketch undoubtedly brings these verses into the satire, and is truly seditious in luring Protestants to indirectly laugh at a biblical verse. The dramas of the Middle Ages, whether mysteries, saints' lives or moralities, only ever affirm God's majesty, *Doctor Faustus* only ever undermines it.

In a post-Reformation morality, one is not merely faced with a choice between good and evil, but also between orthodox (Protestant) and heretical (Catholic) and deviant (Protestant sects) "good". Faustus not only has to repent, but he has to negotiate complex theological arguments after repentance. The morality play offered a strict binary of good and evil, a direct, if challenging, choice for the protagonist and audience. For Faustus, he cannot simply "repent" as the Good Angel repeatedly implores of him. Though the angels are "conventional, unambiguous figures throughout" (Lunney 2002 139) the dilemma Faustus faces were topical and new. Were he to abjure Satan, he would have to negotiate a theological minefield after repentance. This undoubtedly contributes to his inability to make a decision. The audience is left in no doubt that Faustus is expert in theology. If he cannot pinpoint the correct Protestant action, what hope for the ordinary Elizabethan? It is the ambiguity of Christianity that leads him to the certainty of damnation in the first instance. Faustus' studies have led him to this point, and continue to complicate his understanding of repentance. The morality genre staged so plainly before the

audience recalls simplistic ideals prior to schism. The audience may be invited to observe that Catholicism was the official state religion mere decades earlier. If an institution like the old church can be destroyed, could it ever have been legitimate? One needed more than Christian faith, one needed the *right* Christian faith, and it is the impossibility of discerning true Christianity that drives Faustus to insanity. Mephistopheles does not simply deceive Faustus, he quotes orthodox Christian scripture in tempting him.

The repeated anti-Catholic satire draws attention to the inferiority of Catholicism, but Protestant theology within the play does not appear as a suitable alternative. The morality play framework highlights this conundrum. As in a traditional morality, Faustus' sale of his soul appears a catastrophic decision. He has sold his soul so that Mephistopheles would "be his servant, and / be by him commanded" (II.i.97), but finds his earliest requests denied:

> Faustus: Now tell me, who made the world?
>
> Mephistopheles: I will not.
>
> Faustus: Sweet Mephistopheles, tell me.
>
> Mephistopheles: Move me not, Faustus.
>
> Faustus: Villain, have not I bound thee to tell me anything?
>
> Mephistopheles: Ay, that is not against our kingdom.
>
> This is: thou art damned, think thou of hell.
>
> (II.iii.67-75)

This refusal can, like most discourses between Faustus and Mephistopheles, be simultaneously read as true to the morality form and as dangerously subversive. The most apparent is the straight-forward morality view, as an evil Vice luring a gullible human into sin. A more disturbing allusion can also be envisioned in these scenes. Is

it possible that "God that made the world" (II.iii.76) is not a loving father as Protestantism defines him, or is at least apathetic to the suffering of humanity? The implication is the vague mysteries of creation are as hollow as the false promises of Mephistopheles.

The morality is typified by a debate between the protagonist and the tempting figure. These debates were "intrinsically didactic" and attempted to imbue an authorised viewpoint (Lunney 2002 19). Marlowe's subversive morality offers only ambiguity. The morality play offered a single binary: heaven and hell. Both were fixed locations whose respective representatives, in the personified form of sins and virtues, sought to lure the everyman in. The most intriguing debate underlying Faustus' anguish is Mephistopheles' conflicting accounts of hell: before Faustus seals his fate in his own blood, Mephistopheles gives a vague description of hell as a state of mind:

> Faustus: Where are you damned?
>
> Mephistopheles: In hell.
>
> Faustus: How comes it then that thou art out of hell?
>
> Mephistopheles: Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
>
> (I.iii.72-5).

Faustus considers his current circumstances outside of the kingdom of God to be bearable enough to forgo his place in Heaven. As soon as his ill-fated bargain is completed, Faustus is told a very different story of damnation:

> Faustus: First I will question thee about hell:
>
> Tell me, where is this place that men call hell?
>
> Mephistopheles: Under the heavens.
>
> Faustus: Ay, so are all things else; but whereabouts?

Mephistopheles: Within the bowels of these elements,

Where we are tortured, and remain forever.

(II.i.119-24).

Just as it appears hell is a physical locality after all, Mephistopheles reiterates his earlier account:

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed

In one self place; for where we are is hell,

And where hell is must we ever be.

And, to be short, when all the world dissolves,

And every creature shall be purified,

All places shall be hell that is not heaven.

(II.i.125-30)

The play can be interpreted as simultaneously orthodox and daringly *un*orthodox. The play can be superficially defined as a complete morality play which follows the model exactly, but equally as the exact opposite: that the play is a subverted Christian text, even an atheist or at least extremely unorthodox argument. Marlowe's striking sympathy with his protagonist locates the text right in the centre of the medieval morality tradition (Cooper 2010 118), but Faustus' Protestant status recontextualises it. The definition of hell is ultimately left for the audience to decipher, a radical departure from the medieval moral form. Faustus lives in a Calvinist world, where arguments are open to interpretation. Does Faustus damn himself all over again with his potentially blasphemous assertion "I think hell's a fable" (II.i.131)? Is Mephistopheles being evasive in his answers because he is a devil, and therefore cannot be reliable? These questions are ultimately left unanswered. However, within the text they are valid theological points. Hell could

be interpreted as *both* a state of mind *and* a physical place. Moreover, this was a perfectly orthodox view, as reflected in St. Thomas' *Aquinas Summa Theologica* (Kocher 117). Hell as a mental state of the living was a specifically Calvinist conception. In his *Commentary on 1 John*, Calvin elaborates:

> It is very important to be quite sure that when we have sinned there is a reconciliation with God ready and prepared for us. Otherwise we shall always carry hell about within us. Few consider how miserable and unhappy is a wavering conscience. But in fact, hell reigns where there is no peace with God. (240)

Thus Mephistopheles confirms an account of hell already available in the theological works that Faustus has presumably studied. Calvin gives this account of hell in a commentary on 1 John 1:9: "If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (quoted in Streete 155). Streete has noted a startling parallel: this is the verse Faustus fails to quote in his opening soliloquy, where we have seen he quotes only 1 John 1:8. Streete concludes: "By abjuring 1 John 1:9, Faustus not only offers a partial reading of the biblical text's message, he also commits himself to the individual hell that Mephistopheles sets before him" (155).

Hell as a mental state was a Calvinist concept, articulated in poems such as *Betraying of Christ* (1598) by Rowlands, which describes Judas' guilt and despair upon realising the magnitude of his sin. The contemplation of Calvinist doctrine may lead one to concede, as Faustus seems to, that he is damned. Hell is his mental state following this realisation. Hell can be "a terrible experience of interiority caused by the fundamental absence of Christ from the sinner" (Streete 155). Streete argues the scene can also be read "as an example of a writer utilising his biblical sources in a

way that replicates the cultural conditions of an Elizabethan subject's internalisation (indeed occlusion) of Calvinist doctrine" (157). Faustus' reading may not offer the full picture of Calvinist doctrine, but it is reflective of what his audience themselves read. While medieval moralities like *Everyman* assured the audience of God's mercy – embodied in the Catholic faith –Marlowe's inverted morality play speaks to an anxious post-Reformation audience, and reflects concerns of salvation depending on far less tangible concepts of faith or even predestination (Bevington & Rasmussen 10).

In the aforementioned feast scene, the friars suspect the cause of the ruction is "some ghost, newly crept out of purgatory" (III.ii.73). The mention of purgatory in this episode draws attention to the uniquely Catholic conceptual space. One of the most important changes in Christian theology from Catholic to Protestant was what de Goff termed "the death of purgatory" (Marshall 2015 3). Duffy asserts that purgatory was *the* defining doctrine of late medieval Catholicism (8), while Marshall insists that "the status of the dead was among the most divisive issues of the early Reformation" (2002 47) and argues that purgatory and intercession were pressing issues for the "first generation of English reformers" (53). The medieval afterlife consisted of Heaven, Hell, purgatory, *limbus partum* (limbo of the Patriarchs) and *limbus infantium* (limbo of unbaptised infants). For Marlowe and his audience, there was only heaven and hell. This unremittingly binary construction (2002 193), to borrow Marshall's term, confronted the population with agonising questions about the destination of their souls. Greenblatt elaborates that the Protestant disavowal of purgatory destroyed this concept "for most people in England", but it "did not destroy the longings and fears that Catholic doctrine had focused or exploited" (2001 256-7). The remnants of Catholic culture continued to complicate Protestantism. The

congregation was constantly reminded that their forebears followed a different faith, and naturally many wondered if their relatives who had not lived long enough to convert to Protestantism were now damned. The Elizabethan audience had unresolved concerns regarding this abolished conceptual space. To make reference to purgatory after Faustus obsessively questions Mephistopheles only about Hell highlights the massive theological upheaval the audience has to negotiate. Framed within a morality play, Marlowe inverts anti-Catholic satire into a sceptical probe of unmediated Bible study: the activity Protestant theologians claimed would offer clarity and definitive answers, but only raises more questions.

Biblical Blasphemy

Cornelius claims to have traced over three-hundred and fifty biblical allusions in the play (2). Whilst the vast majority of these are questionable, there are a significant number of references to scripture in the play.[49] Some are direct, some allusions or paraphrases, but many veer dangerously close to blasphemy.

In his monograph, *Dramatic Uses of the Bible in Marlowe and Shakespeare*, Sims argues that Marlowe's distorted sense of the world relies heavily on biblical allusion, stating "Marlowe's most effective means of providing the rear-view mirror glance at conventional ideas and beliefs is by the use and abuse of Scripture" (15). Whether we are reading *Doctor Faustus* as a medieval morality or a Renaissance tragedy, the text which permeates the entire play is the Bible. It is these allusions which are highlighted and subverted by the morality play framework.

In his definitive *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Calvin sets out for his Protestant audience their complete dependence on God's mercy. Stating obligatory

[49] Many of what Cornelius claims are intentional biblical references are Elizabethan commonplaces.

scriptural precedent, Calvin argues that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once and for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth:

> *but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgement he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation*
>
> (xxi-7, emphasis added)

One of the most contested issues in the play is whether or not Faustus is damned or elect, if indeed, predestination is true. Even if one is to accept that Faustus is acting within a world of predestination, Faustus demonstrates the apparent injustice in Calvinism, and by default in scripture.

Interpreting scripture for oneself would and did inevitably lead to a multitude of different interpretations. In the 1520s, Bucer asserted that if a given doctrine could be "adequately justified on the basis of the Bible […] it should be accepted as lying within the spectrum of Protestant thought" (quoted in McGrath, 208). Such stipulations did little to quell the onslaught of multiple and opposing theological arguments. Reading of the Bible, prerequisite though it was, was a fraught activity. Nietzsche's acerbic comment that one would need to "put on gloves before reading the New Testament" (66) is applicable to the precarious situation Elizabethans found themselves in.

This challenge is apparent when the Good Angel entreats Faustus to "lay that damned book aside" (B.I.i.69) and to "read the scriptures" (B.I.i.72). There is serious ambiguity here as to which book contains the scriptures. In a modern production of the play, a director can smooth this out by having the Good Angel point to a given

codex, but the play does not specify which of Faustus' many books is the offending text, the book which he has lifted remains unnamed, and unidentified to the audience. Only the stage directions indicate that this is a "book of magic" (I.i.47). An audience seeing only the books held up as props would be totally unable to distinguish this text. One could however easily note that Faustus' interest in satanic magic stemmed from reading in the first place. Not only has he already read the scriptures, he has made reading scripture a profession, and the obscure magic book is the next step in his search for knowledge.

It is the lack of fulfilment after reading scripture that provokes Faustus to take up magic. Yet his new career is largely one of servitude to wealthy patrons. Again, it is Marlowe's adaptation of the *EFB* that underscores the subversive evocation of medieval texts. In the *EFB*, Faustus conjures up a feast of various fruits for the Duke and Duchess of Anholt. He appears to do so entirely by himself. Marlowe's Faustus depends on Mephistopheles to procure the one requested fruit, grapes, which are not in season. The implication is that Mephistopheles travels to a location where the grapes were available, and likely stole them. The emphasis on Mephistopheles' theft of a single fruit is a startling evocation. The unlawful acquisition of fruit was a common theme in medieval theological works, and remained extremely common in the works of Reformers. In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine recalls his youthful depravity with a tale of his theft of pears from a tree. The theft of fruit was a repeated motif in Protestant conversion narratives (Ryrie 430) as preachers made liberal use of this Augustinian trope. Hopkins suggests that the Duchess of Vanholt's request for grapes may gesture towards the medieval Cherry Tree Carol, in which the Virgin Mary requested cherries whilst pregnant (2008 160). This is an intriguing prospect as it suggests Marlowe's understanding of

biblical narrative was also informed by popular literature and song, external to his intense study of scripture at Cambridge, and that medieval, Catholic sources of scripture were still extant.

The most daring subversion in the play is the placing of words recognisable as scripture into the mouths of Mephistopheles and other apparently damned figures. Malachi 3:12 states "And all nations shall call you blessed…" and Valdes promises his eager student "Faustus, these books, thy wit, and our experience / Shall make all nations to canonise us" (I.i.120-4). Valdes continues to lure Faustus using biblical allusion: "First I'll instruct thee in the rudiments, and then wilt thou be perfecter than I" (I.i.162-3), recalls John 14:12 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that beliveth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father". Mephistopheles continues this thread, asking "Now Faustus, what wouldst thou have me do?" (Iiii.35), paraphrasing Acts 9:6 "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Faustus himself places Mephistopheles as his god "When Mephistopheles shall stand by me, / What power can hurt me? Faustus thou art safe" (II.i.24-5). This reflects Romans 8:31 "What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Scripture is used in the morality play to educate and reform the everyman sinner and the audience, but in *Doctor Faustus* subversive allusions to scripture only undermine and criticise the foundational principles of Protestantism. Furthermore, the morality offers strict binaries. The devils may be alluring, but their appearance or speech never overlaps with that of the virtuous figures. Both sides of the moral battlefield remain distinct. In Marlowe's morality, Mephistopheles not only appears in religious garb as noted earlier, he directly quotes scripture.

The most spectacular failure of the morality framework is in the closing scene, and Faustus' damnation. Here, the failure of the play to deliver the promised resolution emphasises the ambiguity of theological decisions.

Second Scholar: Yet Faustus, call on God.

Faustus: On God, whom Faustus hath abjured?

(V.ii.52-3)

It would seem initially that Faustus is ill-judged in his assertion. Romans 10. 12-13 promises salvation to all who call on God, regardless of their past beliefs:

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God is in this instance, merciful and welcoming to repentant sinners. Yet, the Bible includes some ambiguous stipulations to this statement, such as when exactly this call must take place. For example, Proverbs 1.28 states "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." This is a clear instance of ambiguity in scripture, that even a theologian like Faustus cannot resolve. His confusion on this issue is a legitimate response, not an arrogant misreading. Faustus is reflecting legitimate concerns of biblical interpretation when he deems himself damned.[50] Faustus is repeatedly implored to call on Christ, but Christ can be of no help to the reprobate. As Streete explains "the burden that this places on grace and on individual faith is almost intolerable" and this is the crux of the play, framed in a conventional morality scaffold (149).

[50] The only sin which is explicitly stated as unforgivable in the Bible is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. For instance, Mark 3.29-30 declares: "But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit". It is unclear whether or not Faustus' supposed blasphemy constitutes this particular sin.

The 1616 edition restages the climax of the 1604 text, and adds a poignant scene in which the three scholars pay Faustus a visit, only to find his "limbs / All torn asunder by the hand of Death" (V.iii.6-7). This scene adds to the ominous, tense atmosphere of the finale, and the closing lines subvert the expected ending of medieval moralities, omitting the reassuring presence of a deity:

> Well, gentlemen, though Faustus' end be such
> As every Christian heart laments to think on:
> Yet for he was a scholar, once admired
> For wondrous knowledge in our German schools.
>
> (V.iii.13-16).

Here the Second Scholar asks the audience to remember the positive contribution Faustus made to academia, instead of reeling off the standard didactic speech condemning his sins. This repeated invitation to sympathise with the flawed Faustus is Marlowe's main destabilisation of the morality scaffold. Not only that but the Scholar encourages us to recall Faustus' achievements as a mortal man, rather than dwell on his unpleasant death or the torment of his soul. This is not a memento mori or an effort to assert the rightness of contemptus mundi – instead, it directs our attention to the worldly and tangible rather than spiritual realms.

This creates a pinching allusion that the moral frame in which Faustus is contained is not entirely just. Ultimately, whether Faustus is good or bad takes a supporting role to the question of whether or not the universe he dwells in is just (Bevington & Rasmussen 15). Using the medieval morality play to emphasise Faustus' reading of scripture, the play implies it is not.

The Epilogue completes the morality frame, but the lines it delivers further articulate the problems in the narrative. Where the morality uses this verse to

summarise and reiterate the core moral lesson, the final verse is conspicuous in its failure to offer a conciliatory message. The haunting closing line "Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight" (Ep. 1) is yet another subversive rendering of biblical phrasing. Only one biblical allusion has been noted by critics, that of Isaiah 14.19: "But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch".[51] This line also appears in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Yet the motif of the branch flourishing or being cut is a repetitive strand running through the Old Testament, especially in Proverbs, and it is one with troubling implications that invert the standard morality. God's favour is described as a prosperous branch: "the righteous shall flourish as a branch" (12.28). This image is repeated in Isaiah 4.2.[52] God promises Isaiah "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (61.21). In Isaiah 9.4, God's favour allows these personified branches to bloom, but he can also strip them away: "Therefore the lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day" and in Isaiah 11.34 "And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron". It is abundantly clear that it is God who cuts down the transgressors. Proverbs 2.22 states "But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it", whilst Isaiah 56.5 concurs "I will give them an everlasting name, that shall be cut off".[53] Morality plays introduce the basic principles of Christianity to theologically-ignorant spectators. Marlowe's morality speaks to an audience who read the Bible, or had it read to them, and actively engaged with theological debate. It uses the morality format to build on, and to subvert, received ideas. Streete

[51] Noted by Cornelius, 282.
[52] "In that day shall the branch of the lord be glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely, for them that are escaped of Israel".
[53] The verb "to cut" abounds in the Old Testament, specifically God undertaking the action. The phrase appears four times in Ezekiel, twice in Amos, three times in Nahum, six times in both Zephaniah and Zechariah, and once in both Obadiah and Malachi.

considers the play's focus "the double bind of the early modern subject caught between the possibilities of election or reprobation" and struggling to cope with "an increasingly absent Christ" (141). The real tragedy is the absence of Christ, not Faustus' refusal to accept his saving grace. Streete observes that in the closing scene, "the Devil seems less of a representation than Christ does" (161).

Imitatio Christi: Faustus and Damnation

A central tenet of Protestant thought was *imitatio Christi* - seeking to imitate Christ. Nietzsche explores an uncomfortable truth in Protestantism's insistence on imitating Christ, that this is an impossible task: "in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the cross" (151). According to Nietzsche, for a mortal man, in the material world, to effectively model himself on Christ is impossible, therefore *imitatio Christi* is a "theological lie" (151; Streete 4). Streete notes that Faustus *does* imitate Christ, and continues to do so right until the moment of his death (160). Faustus is introduced throughout as an individualised figure; he has a specific identity but he appears contained within a format that we have seen was completely based on a generalised human experience.

Faustus' orthodoxy is strengthened by hinting at another equally familiar source: the biography of Jesus. Snyder has noted that Faustus' boasts about his previous intellectual jousting are evocative. He declares "And I, that have with subtle syllogisms / Gravelled the pastors of the German church" (I.i.113-4). Luke 2:46-47 provides an account of Jesus' youth: "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his answers." Marlowe here compares the Satanist damned to hell to Jesus Christ. The

god / devil binary of the morality play has been completely obliterated, with Calvinist theology in its place. Moreover, this is not an isolated allusion. Faustus offers his blood sacrifice to Satan in parallel to Christ's. Faustus' blood constitutes his contract with Mephistopheles, just as Christ's blood constitutes his bargain with God to secure the salvation of man. Faustus' blood is directly compared to Christ's: "let it be propitious for my wish" (II.i.58). A very astute Protestant will notice the word "propitious", as this was a term for the blood of Christ. As Waldron explains "Protestants asserted that only Christ's Galilean blood was 'propitious', or capable of appeasing god's wrath" (93). Faustus can thus be read as an inverted Christ, sacrificing himself to the Devil in pursuit of knowledge.

The play is literally 'bookended' by scenes in which Faustus' intellectual ability and contribution to academia are paramount. The defining article of the text is the book. The key scenes take place in Faustus' study, he repeatedly interacts with books as objects, and his conjuring is enacted through books. At his final damnation, Faustus almost recants, screaming "Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer! / I'll burn my books! Oh, Mephistopheles!" (V.iv.195-6). Faustus considers his sin to have come from his books, but not specifically his magic books. He is full of regret, but what he regrets is telling; he laments his studies, not his conjuring: "O, would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!" (B.V.ii.50-1). Marlowe's morality protagonist regrets biblical study, his greatest transgression.

Conclusion: Marlovian Morality

Marlowe is less concerned with the power of God than the power of man, and more interested in the words of man than the word of God. Preedy considers Marlowe's play "the tragedy of an atheist whose scepticism fails him" (184). She notes that the play is also "the tragedy of a man, torn between two conflicting allegiances [Mephistopheles and repentance]", who is unable to make the required choice, "remaining unable to commit to either option" (184). The medieval morality was representative of one group, the single Christian church, and was used to demonstrate Christian morality to a largely illiterate populace. The morality play offers fixed binaries of good and evil, God and the Devil. This clear choice between sin and salvation has been obscured by Protestant Bible study. In exploiting fully the pre-Reformation genre of morality drama, Marlowe's play exacerbates this tension, highlighting the irrevocable schism through which his audience has lived. Duxfield has argued that Faustus is "doomed to failure by the persistently ambivalent world in which he exists" and that the text places "alongside and within one another concepts and structures which are fundamentally incompatible" (2007 7.1). He argues further that "Faustus' Hermetic project meets with failure because in the world in which he operates it is impossible for it to succeed" (7.1). This section shares Duxfield's outlook, and demonstrates that it is the evocation of the medieval format so explicitly adopted that presents this idea to the audience. The exponential increase in educational opportunities afforded by the Reformation and the proliferation of vernacular Bibles gave a new voice to the congregation, allowing them to form their own readings of scripture, and in an unprecedented consequence, to effectively answer back to the clergy. The often brutal enforcement of conformity could not stop multiple readings of the Bible within European Christianity. The confessional

penitent of the Middle Ages was replaced by a more informed, but also more uncertain Protestant, and Faustus serves as their Everyman.

The ostensibly Protestant audience in the Rose theatre would have had a broader cultural understanding of Christianity than the Protestant literature outlined in the preceding section. For centuries, the most pervasive mode of religious instruction was drama. While the morality plays advocated basic Christian values, the proscribed cycle plays taught biblical narrative and the tenets of Christian theology, and it is in those productions that the life and death of Christ reached thousands of spectators. In *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus' infliction of wounds upon himself precedes the declaration of the loaded term *consumatum est* – it is done. The phrase would have been familiar to Marlowe's audience from another theatrical source: mystery plays. Both the Chester and N-Town cycles use the Latin phrase, while the York and Towneley cycles state it in English. Theatre representing Christ's Passion was an equally available resource for any dramatist to avail of. In what follows, this section delineates Marlowe's handling of this proscribed yet highly topical theatrical format in *The Massacre at Paris*.

The Massacre at Paris: A Sectarian Cycle Play

The Massacre at Paris (hereinafter *Massacre*) is unquestionably the most critically neglected Marlowe play.[54] The garbled text is considered so unbefitting of a canonical English dramatist that some doubt that it was even written by Marlowe. Most early criticism dismissed the play without ever closely examining it.[55] So low

[54] The consensus is that the extant text is a memorial reconstruction, that has no relation to an original Marlowe manuscript. For a detailed textual introduction to the printed text, see Bowers' edition, 355.
[55] For more information on this critical dismissal, and a reasoned argument against it, see Marcus, 145-6.

was his esteem for *Massacre* that Collier wrote in 1820 "though the name of Marlow [*sic*] be upon the title-page, I feel satisfied that it is merely the imposition of the bookseller availing himself of the popularity of so esteemed a poet" (Maclure 83). More recently, Menzer described the play as like something that was "written on the back of a cocktail napkin" (363). While the unrelenting violence of the drama did not appeal to these later critics, the play certainly impressed its original audience. Henslowe documented its popularity as the highest grossing play of the season for Lord Strange's Men, an "early modern blockbuster" (Munson-Deats 2004 199). Recent criticism, this thesis included, tends to bridge the gap between these opposing views. While the fragmented state of the text is undeniable, most recent scholarship has accepted *Massacre* as part of the Marlowe canon. Weil, Briggs and Munson Deats, for instance, have all asserted the value of the truncated text.[56]

On closer inspection, *Massacre* offers much to scholarship on Marlowe's subversive depiction of religious schism.[57] Yet, even those who tentatively assert this do so only within the confines of the subcategory of Protestant drama. For example, Healy allies the text with a "Spenserian cultural perspective" (69), which promotes a pronounced role of religion, especially Protestantism, in understanding society as a whole. Tydeman and Thomas consider only contemporary tracts detailing the horrors of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre as sources, but these provide only the basic narrative. The play adopts the "historical topos" of France (Kirk 98), but as we shall see, Marlowe uses this to depict a repetitive circle of unrelenting sectarian violence.[58]

[56] See Weil 82-103, Munson Deats 2004, 199-01 and Briggs 1983, 257-78.
[57] Kirk has acknowledged that the play instigated a trend of plays based on contemporary French history, a most underrated innovation (81).
[58] Kirk argues that French history had a crucial relevance in Tudor England, as both Protestant nations felt affinity with each other.

This half of the chapter illuminates the strategic allusions to medieval cycle drama in the play, and argues that these allusions subvert the genre they appear to support: Protestant propaganda. When one observes this, a more nebulous account emerges. The play articulates the suffering of the Protestant victims of the massacre through the visual imagery of the Passion, inherited from the medieval cycle plays. In this, it instigates a conventional propagandistic account of events. However, in presenting events in such culturally loaded terms, *Massacre* simultaneously sets up the expectation of a redemptive conclusion, which it then subversively refuses to deliver. In the introduction to this thesis, I noted Happé's assertion that subversion can be used to uphold or undermine a given society. In *Massacre*, medieval literature is employed to do both simultaneously. The imagery of the cycles is evoked to unsettle Elizabethan ideals of martyrdom. As we shall see in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Marlowe's only alignment with a Spenserian cultural perspective lies in his efforts to undermine it.

This section shall demonstrate that Marlowe's use of medieval drama initially appears to support a conventional pro-Protestant, anti-Catholic propagandistic account, but subtly inverts this premise in the latter half of the play. We have noted in Chapter One that most of Marlowe's audience had likely attended, or at the very least heard of, the mystery plays, and we will soon see that the Passion episodes were the core of this genre. Willits has noted Marlowe's participation in "a dynamic appropriation and re-articulation of topos from medieval cycle drama" in *The Jew of Malta* (3), and this is also apparent in *Massacre*. The play stages sectarian violence through repeated allusions to the assassination of Christ, as the Huguenot victims are described in the language of Christ's ultimate sacrifice. We shall also see that this imagery sets up an expected resolution, which not only does

not come to fruition in Marlowe's play, but is completely subverted. The target of this subversion is the very genre it appears to conform to: Protestant propaganda which glorifies violence by claiming a metaphysical purpose. The title of the play offers the first instance of the hitherto rarely appreciated complexity of the text. As recently noted by Hopkins, the emphasis on the location "at Paris" draws attention to how bound up religion and politics are to national identity, and the inclusion in the long title "with the Death of the Duke of Guise" centralises the action around the persona of Guise (2015). The text must be viewed with the Duke at the forefront, as Marlowe has made Guise the primary instigator of the massacre, which is not in keeping with historical accounts, where Guise shared liability with Queen Catherine, the Duke of Anjou and King Charles. By cleverly focusing the action around a Catholic villain, the drama can be extremely daring while simultaneously slotting neatly into the safe niche of Protestant propaganda.

This section will begin by exploring the cycle plays, outlining the core scenes from the Passion plays, before examining the specific generic signposts: evil tyrants, religious identity politics, theologically necessary violence, and the blood and wounds of Christ. I then consider how these motifs are evoked in *Massacre*, initially conforming to Protestant polemic, but subsequently subverting it. The play uses the visual imagery of Christ's Passion to articulate the suffering of the Protestant victims, aligning the play with the martyrology genre, and the suffering of Christ himself. Yet as this section will demonstrate, these Passion images set up the expectation of a contingent resolution, a redemptive ending that gives the violent acts a demonstrable licit purpose and moral value. *Massacre* provides the exact opposite.

Cycle Plays

The most significant mode of drama prior to the establishment of the commercial theatre was the cycle play. Extant cycles include the York cycle (1376-1569), N-town (1450-1500), Chester (1422-1521), Coventry (1392/3-1579) and Wakefield (late 1400s-1576).[59] In the preceding chapter, we have noted that pre-Shakespearean theatre is usually considered just that, theatre prior to Shakespeare; plays regarded only for what the great early modern dramatist may or may not have gleaned from them. This reductive view has been challenged in recent years, as scholars such as Happé and Walker have demonstrated that the power of these texts is in performance.[60] Though the plays were suppressed by the 1570s, their enduring afterlife in English drama is evident.[61] As discussed in Chapter One, Shakespeare's use of the genre has been examined, and established beyond doubt. As Cooper states, the likelihood that Shakespeare did see the cycle plays "goes beyond the fact that he could have".[62] The same is true for Marlowe.

Regardless of either playwright's attendance at the cycles, "a broad continuing awareness" of the mysteries "long outlasted their performance" (Cooper 2010 71). Shakespeare undoubtedly attended performances, and the influence of the plays in his canon is indisputable.[63] When Hamlet famously warns his hired actors against performances that "out-Herod-Herod" (III.ii.12) he is referring to the loud,

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[59] The dates refer to the last known performance before suppression. For brief introductions to each cycle, and information on dating and extant manuscripts, see Walker 4-8.
[60] For exhaustive general introductions to the mystery play genre, see ibid, Happé, *English Mystery Plays*, and David Bevington, Richard Beadle and J. Fletcher, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*.
[61] The dramatic spectacle of the mystery play was replaced in the Elizabethan era with the royal pageant, an event Marlowe likely would have witnessed in Canterbury as a young boy.
[62] See Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* 64-71 for a succinct and convincing case for Shakespeare's attendance at mystery plays.
[63] For more detail on Shakespeare's allusions to the mystery plays, see Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare*, Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, *Medieval Shakespeare* and Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*.

bombastic performances of the tyrannical king of the cycle plays, and when Chaucer describes his Miller as shouting "in Pilate's voice" (I.i.2) it is to the same end. Kyd alludes to suppressed Catholic drama in *The Spanish Tragedy*, referring to plays as "mysteries" (Waldron 131). The cycles were not only a cultural event, but an instructional one, as many rural dwellers first encountered Christian teaching at the pageant wagon. In 1644, preacher John Shaw recalled an encounter with an old man in Cumbria. When questioned by Shaw on his knowledge of Christ, the man replied: "I think I heard of that man you speake of, once in a play at Kendall, called Corpus-Christi play, where there was a man on a tree, and blood ran downe" (quoted in Cooper 2010 57).

As recalled by this unnamed spectator, the penultimate episode of each cycle was the Passion play. The Passion narrative was the only sequence to be included in all of the cycles and it was regularly staged on its own (Cooper 2010 55). It is reasonable to argue that Passion plays had the most cultural currency of the entire cycle. Though this section predominantly uses examples from the York cycle, as these are the best examples surviving, it is likely Marlowe encountered the Passion play in a more local form. Twenty miles from Marlowe's hometown of Canterbury, in New Romney, a very popular Passion play was performed annually from the 1450s to 1568 (Gibson 137; Willits 12). This version of Christ's suffering attracted crowds over six-thousand strong and a team of six players toured the production all over Kent (Gibson 16-17; Willits 12). The Passion plays are the most important episodes in the cycle, as the crucifixion bridges the Old and New Testaments, and looks forward to the future of man's ultimate salvation.

Cycle plays were an important source of religious instruction. The mysteries present biblical narratives to a largely illiterate population, and they teach central

tenets of Christian faith to an apparently theologically homogenous group of spectators, such as the old man described by Shaw, Elizabethan dramatists could never assume such a consensus. That is not to say mysteries have no subversive potential of their own. Simpson has offered a revisionist view of the cycle plays, illuminating their more interrogative aspects. The format was suitable to, and frequently utilised for, subtle critique of civic institutions. Though the plays served to sanctify the trade guilds, this association also worked in the opposite direction: to secularise biblical narrative. In other words, biblical episodes could be used to comment on contemporary social issues, such as labour practises and local authority, be it royal or episcopal (Simpson 2002 513). As Simpson has pointed out, "these are plays in which a given community stood in judgement not only over its competitors, but also over itself" (2002 504), and he concludes that cycle plays are not merely "simple examples of the Church's instruction of the laity" (509). Corrupt biblical figures such as Herod or Pharaoh were reimagined as contemporary feudal lords or amoral bishops through deliberate anachronism. The Devils of the Towneley cycle offer "a satirical attack upon the activities of contemporary lawyers" (Happé 2001 12). Simpson notes that the plays emphasise Christ's suffering, but that they do so "within a larger reflection upon the social structures that produce that pain" (2002 525). According to Martin, pain itself can be used as a referential language (2015 110). Christ's Passion was a cultural model of physical suffering that remained post-Reformation, that we shall see reworked in *Massacre*.

The secular world was sanctified as the spiritual realm was commercialised. Cycle plays are a dramatic blend of the sacred and profane, and each aspect interacts with the other. This is exactly the pattern that *Massacre* will follow, but exploring only sectarianism. In *Massacre*, the visceral descriptions of the Passion of Christ are

evoked in depictions of Catholic atrocities, a conventional move identifying the Protestant victims with Christ, but remarkably, the biblical trajectory is subverted.

Passion Plays

Mystery plays are undoubtedly an "important agent" in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English drama (Willits 3), but the nature of the influence of the cycles is often hard to pinpoint. The language in these plays is deliberately sparse as it primarily invites the audience to observe the vision of Christ's intense suffering. Cycle plays present brutal violence and suffering, but crucially, as Waldron explains, they "tended to counter the tragic potential of sacrificial acts with clearer assurances about their divine mandate and ultimate purpose" (127).

The Passion pageants were designed "to stimulate the imagination to bring to mind the suffering of the Saviour" (Davidson 164) and utilised "the affective power of Christ's wounds in sacred dramatic traditions" (Waldron 120). As Carlson explains, "the body is […] a site of control; the violated body a familiar sign of injustice" (5). Carlson elaborates further, that in medieval drama "suffering creates order" as "the onstage suffering of Christians is itself orderly, the result of formulaic ordeals and tortures, all of which mimic Christ's passion" (6). There is violence resulting in a physical wound, but it is always demonstrated to serve a cosmic purpose. Bennett argues that the visceral image of Christ's body in pain serves as a memorial tool, inviting the medieval Christian to meditate on the wounds and blood of their saviour (10). The centrality of this image was reflected in visual art: the "Five Wounds of Christ" were a common motif (Davidson 164). The nail wounds in each of Christ's hands and feet, and the spear-wound in his right side became religious signifiers in their own right, demonstrable proof of Christ's suffering for

the good of mankind. We shall see Marlowe uses medieval drama to underscore the absence of such assurances in the wake of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre.

In cycle drama, Christ's punctured, bleeding body was not merely a spectacle, but a call to action, as a "visceral connection is made between the wounded body on display and those who watch" (Richards 2008 116). Christ's suffering urges an active response from the viewer, inscribing piety on the wounded body. The plays emphasised suffering even in their props. With "roods" placed at the entrance to the Church (Davidson 145), Christ's sacrifice for mankind was expressed in visual language. Yet, the core symbolic image of the mystery play genre was the blood of Christ.

Reading mysteries can be a challenging, disconcerting experience, because they are designed to be witnessed. Cycle plays combine sacred and secular in a visual medium that is to be observed and experienced rather than read. It is these audial and visual cues that Marlowe will recall in *Massacre*. The written words are mere cues for the spectacular visual scenes on the pageant wagons. Waldron observes an "increasing emphasis in the late medieval period on Christ's human suffering" (119), as exemplified by the Passion plays, and early modern preachers continued to use images of Christ's wounds for pedagogical preaching. In *Massacre*, Marlowe recalls this in rather more provocative circumstances.

The violence of the Passion is preceded by verbal confrontation. To an audience with the cycle plays imbedded in their consciousness, this extremist persecution would have recalled Herod. The slaughter of the innocents was another major cycle narrative, appearing in nearly all of the cycles. In the York play *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, Herod is typically boastful and bombastic in asserting his authority.

Poor beausires about,

Pain of limb and land,

Stint your stevens stout [shouting]

And still as stone ye stand,

And my carping record.

Ye ought to dare and doubt,

And lere to lof and lout

To me, your lovely lord.

(1-8)

In the York *Herod and the Magi* this alliterative bombast is apparent:

The clouds clapped in clearness that these climates enclose-

Jupiter and Jove, Mars and Mercury amid-

Raiking over my royalty on row me rejoices,

Blundering their blasts to blow when I bid.

(1-4)

In the York *Christ Before Herod*, the titular figure threatens excessive, alliterative force: "Your tongues from treating of trifles be trased, / Or this brand that is bright shall burst in your brain" (3-4).

This is followed by repeated accusations of heresy. Christ is denounced as a traitor to the state, a treasonous liar. Some examples will serve to illustrate the cumulative tendency of the cycles. In the York play *The Death of Christ*, the high Priests condemn Christ. Caiaphas states that Christ's claims "touched treason untrue" (54) and Annas demands capital punishment: "To deem him to death it is due, / For treason it touches […]" (59-60). In the York *Christ Before Pilate (1): The Dream of Pilate's Wife* Caiaphas insists Christ's teaching is leading the Jewish

people astray "[…] lo how they follow you fool / Our folk so thus he frays in fere" (444-5). Pilate defends Jesus against the implication of treason:

> Yea, for he does well his death for to deem?
>
> Go lake you sir, lightly; where learned ye such law?
>
> This touches no treason, I tell you.
>
> (452-4)

In the subsequent play, *Christ Before Pilate (2): The Judgement* Caiaphas enforces his point and insists on the death penalty: "Sir, no time to tarry this traitor to taske / Against Sir Caesar himself he seggres, and says" (97-8) and is supported by Annas "Yea, harrow off this traitor" (161). In the N-town *Christ's Appearances to the Disciples* there is a dramatic switch in the closing lines, as those who condemned Christ, and those who continue to doubt his divinity, are labelled heretics by Thomas: "For my grett doute oure feyth we may preve / Agens all the eretykys [heretics] that speke of Chryst shame. / Truste wel Jhesu Cryst; the Jewys kyllyed [killed] the same" (387-89). Religious identity politics precede the violence of the crucifixion. In turn, the crucifixion precedes the resurrection and pursuant salvation of man, literally and figuratively, as each scene followed the other on the pageant wagons making their annual procession through the streets. These individual episodes were familiar within this specific biblical narrative trajectory.

After Christ's arrest, another central scene included in all of the cycles depicts villainous Jewish soldiers torturing the dignified Christ. They debate amongst themselves how they will torment the silent victim. The Townley play, *The Scourging* serves as an example:

> II Tortor: Now fall I the first to flap on his hyde.
>
> III Tortor: My hart wold all to burst, wold I lene the this tyde.

II Tortor: War! Lett me rub on the rust that bloode downe glyde.

As swythe.

III Tortor: Have att!

I Tortor: Take thou that!

II Tortor: I shall lene thee a flap

My strengthe for to kythe.

(134-42)

They then brutally torture the silent Christ (238-41). The cumulative effect of these repeated descriptions of Christ's sacrifice is a hyper-awareness that the violence and suffering on stage serve a higher purpose than any in the physical world. Suffering, Martin explains, "is no longer senseless affliction but an opportunity, not a negation of being the guarantee of future, eternal being" (2015 105). Martin elaborates further: "Pain, God's curse on fallen humanity, is through Christ redeemed, not simply alleviated but placed within the framework of God's providential unfolding of human history" (105). The audience is imparted with a sense that ghastly acts of physical violence serve as stepping stones to a transcendent resolution. These acts were symbolised in Catholic culture:

The rich possibilities opened up for the human subject by Christ's sufferings are manifest in late medieval culture. The Eucharist, which became the focus of widespread and intense devotion in the late medieval period, celebrated Christ's broken body as the means by which the believer could participate in the collective body of the church and could experience mystical union with God (Martin 2015 105).

This trajectory facilitated the move from dramatic spectacle to cultural phenomenon. Ruminating on Christ's suffering was a cultural commonplace in the

Middle Ages, and one that would largely continue unchanged post-Reformation. The plays remained in the public consciousness as images rather than literature. Christ's suffering is conveyed through an image that "is offered primarily to spectators rather than auditors: blood running down" (Cooper 2010 71). It is the blood, not just the wound, that proves Christ's identity. Blood is the symbol of both Christ's suffering and resurrection. It is through Christ's blood that man can achieve salvation. The central image of the Passion play is blood. Cooper has noted the primacy of blood as a visual aid (71), and because it is impossible to prove Marlowe's familiarity with any specific play, or indeed any given cycle, it is important that one considers the wider range of cycle plays which centralise this theme.

In the Chester play *The Ascension* the audience is encouraged to identify Christ by his bloody clothing:

> II Angelus: Why is thy clothing now so redd?
> Thy body blody and also heade?
> Thy clothes also all that bene lead
> Lyke to pressors of wyne.
> (128-31)

The Passion plays use the image of Christ's blood to inculcate Christian teaching by asserting the primacy of faith over reason. Returning to the York play *The Resurrection*, Christ's abundant bloodshed remains etched in the minds of the disciples. Cleophas describes the suffering of Jesus, unaware that it is Christ he is speaking to. "He bled out all his herte blood / How cudde he thane ryse with might?" (127-8). Luke describes Christ's suffering, lest the audience forget the significance of the previous pageants: "The jewys were redy hym for to quelle, / With skorgys bête out all his blood" (125-6). So bloody was this suffering that Luke cannot credit

his survival: “That he doth leve I trost not this, / For he hath bled his blood so red” (141-2). But once he has seen the wounds Luke accepts the miracle that has occurred: “He is a-resyn with flesch and blood” (266). Naturally, Thomas remains doubtful: “[…] a dede cleve his hert and made hym sprede hos blood” (326). But it is the display of the wounds, and the physical touching of them, that convinces Thomas. Jesus implores him “Be-holde wele, Thomas, my woundys so wyde, / Which I have sufferyd for all mankynde” (337-8). Upon touching the actual blood of Christ, Thomas is resolute: “For myn hand have I wasch in thi preycous blode” (348). It is the sight of the blood that resolves Thomas’ doubts. He is apologetic: “I trustyd no talys that were me tolde / Tyll that myn hand dede in his hert blood wade” (369-70). He repeats this sentiment countless times: “I trustyd nevyr he levyd that deed was on a tre / Tyll that his herte blood dede renne in my sleve” (379-80). Thomas’ scepticism serves as a conduit for any potential doubts the audience may have about the accuracy of the biblical account, and reminds the audience it would behove them not to follow such sceptical lines of thought. In this, the cycle plays encourage faith rather than the desire for empirical evidence. Some figures seek the reassurance of physical evidence, but as we shall note in Chapter Four, only evil Jews insist on it. The disciples are encouraged to remain steadfast and loyal to Christ, even if his teaching seems illogical to them. In the York plays, Christ’s blameless sacrifice is illustrated for the audience in all its brutal suffering. In *The Crucifixion* Jesus explains:

> Almighty God, my Father free,
> Let these matters be made in mind:
> Thou bade that I should buxom be,
> For Adam’s plight for to be pined.

Here to death I oblige me,

For that sin for to save mankind,

And sovereignly beseech I thee

That they for me may favour find.

And from the fiend them fend,

So that their souls be safe

In wealth without end-

I keep nought else to crave.

(49-60)

The plays insist that this kind of spiritually-valuable violence can only be enacted upon the innocent, only the suffering of the righteous and just can be offered to God as a sacrifice, and there is none more perfect than Christ. Christ's blood is the ultimate sacrifice for mankind. In the York cycle *The Death of Christ,* Pilate emphasises the Jew's guilt in spilling the innocent Christ's blood:

His blood to spill

Took ye you till,

Thus was your will,

Full spitously to speed he were split.

(36-9)

After Christ's reappearance, each cycle concludes with the destruction of the world on the Day of Judgement. In the York *The Last Judgement* God states that Christ's blood has saved mankind: "Man, thou speeds thyself to spill- / Thou art bought out of all thy bliss" (15-16). He continues:

I sent my Son with full blithe mood

To earth, to salve them of their sore.

For ruth of them he rest on rood

And bought them with his body bare;

For them he shed his heart-blood-

What kindness might I do them more?

(27-32)

Jesus again recounts his suffering on his final return to earth:

On cross they hanged me, on a hill,

Bloody and blo, as I was beat,

With crown of thorn thrusten full ill.

This spear unto my side was set-

Mine heart-blood spared they not for to spill;

Man, for thy love would I not let.

(225-260)

Jesus explains that his suffering, and particularly blood-letting, is the ultimate sacrifice:

Through death on crosse and bloud so clear,

I have made them all myne

These bloudy dropps that you may see,

All they freshe shall resarved be

Till I come in majesty

To deme the last day.

(134-9)

At the end of the cycle, Christ's blood is currency. This is a repeated motif: "These dropps now, with good intent, / To my father I will present" (144-5). His blood will save all who believe in him: "The dropps I shedd on rood tree / All fresh shall

resarved be / Ever till the last day" (157-9). Jesus states: "Thus for thy good / I shed my blood" (127-8) and Joseph further insists: "Mankind by his blood for to buy" (351). The physical horror of the bloody and bruised Jesus is repeatedly pointed out to the audience. Nicodemus describes how "He was a full worthy wight, / Now blemished, and bolned with blood" (369-70). The play concludes with Joseph reiterating this essential idea:

Joseph: This Lord so good,
That shed his blood,
He mend your mood,
And busk on his bliss for to bide.

(413-16)

Similarly, in The Saddlers *The Harrowing of Hell*, Jesus explains his momentous sacrifice.

The fiend them won with train
Through fruit of earthly food;
I have them got again
Through buying with my blood.

(9-12)

This is the ultimate resolution of the cycle: Christ's suffering buys man's eternal survival. Bloodshed is explicit and brutal, but it serves a divine purpose that renders Christ's suffering necessary. Christ's blood also appears in non-cycle drama. In the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, it serves as proof for the incredulous Jews. Christ's blood appears to the Jews before he does, as the stolen host bleeds (401-4), before the caldron in which it is placed miraculously overflows with blood. The stage directions state: "Here shall the cawdron byle, apperyng to be as bloode," before

Malchus declares: “Owt and harrow! What devyll ys herein? /All thys oyle waxyth redde as blood / And owt of the cawdron yt begynnyth to run” (593-5). It is the sight of Christ’s blood that proves his suffering, and by default his divinity, to the disbelieving Jews.

Blood is an image commonly associated with the Passion, that can serve as a synecdoche for the event, as we shall see in *Massacre*. Davidson explains:

> The veneration of the Sacrament, while focused on the host, was also necessarily in close proximity to the cult of the Holy Blood, for it was argued that the consecrated host, displayed during the Corpus Christi procession, not only remained irreversibly the true body of Christ but also included his blood. (57)[64]

Given the suppression of any reference to the Host post-Reformation, blood was the only image that remained acceptable to stage. It was an allusion that was “safe” to make, and one the audience could be relied upon to understand. The cycle plays were religious dramas depicting accusations of heresy, bloody murders and graphic displays of violence. To a population who were essentially raised on mystery plays, or who at the very least had heard all about them, these images and plot points remained familiar.

The final image of the Passion sequence is Christ’s wounds, particularly after the resurrection. In the final scene, Christ’s wounds serve as his identification. In the Townley cycle *The Resurrection* this is repeatedly emphasised by Jesus: “My woundys ar weytt and all bloody; / The, synfull man, full dere boght I” (233-4). He continues: “from harte and syde the blood out ran, / Sich was my payne” (240-1). He describes the agonising torture inflicted upon him:

[64] For further information, see Rubin.

With cordes enewe and ropys toghe

The Jews fell my lymmes out-drogh,

For that I was not mete enogh

Unto the bore;

With hard stowndys thise depe woundys

Tholyd I therefore.

(250-5)

Jesus then invites the spectators to view his wounds: "Behold my shankes [ankles] and my knees / Myn armes and my these [thighs]" (262-3). He invites the disciples and the audience to recall the previous scenes "Behold my body, how Jews it blang [beat]… (275) / As stremes of well the bloode out sprang" (277). He connects the suffering of the preceding scenes with the wounds in the present: "Knottes where thay hyt, well may thou wytt, / Maide woundys wyde" (278-9). The image of Christ on the cross survived well into the post-Reformation period, but crucially it was now constructed with words rather than with visual art.

The various cycles close with a dramatisation of the Harrowing of Hell, where Christ returns to save humanity at the end of the world. All of the suffering in the cycle plays is justified by Christ's resurrection and the resultant salvation of all of mankind. The Reformation was a transition from pulpit to altar: from the re-enactment of Christ's Passion on the altar to the reading aloud of his suffering from the Protestant pulpit, the imagery remained the same though the medium had irrevocably shifted. The suffering human body is indelibly bound up with images of Christ's Passion in the decades after the Reformation. *Massacre* recalls this violence without any offer of redemption.

The ideological shift from Catholic to Protestant during the sixteenth century did not wipe the theological slate clean; the medieval image of Christ's Passion remained at the fore of reformed thought - Merback charts the representation of bodily suffering in art from the medieval era through to the Renaissance, deducing that "the theological aesthetics of medieval art centred on Christ's suffering by inviting the viewer as believer to participate in the *communitas* of Christ's body" (quoted in Martin, 2015 103). Christ's suffering body was a contemplative tool for a Christian audience, be it in visual, audial or written material.

The Passion maintained a crucial intellectual space in the early modern era, as a trans-historical event that served as a cultural signifier. Thus, though Christ's suffering was no longer staged, it continued to be described in detail in sermons read from the pulpit. Both Catholic and Protestants advocated piety through observation, through the presentation of Christ's suffering in an instructive context. The Passion image was designed to inspire active responses to Christ's passion, and the application of Christian values in daily life. The image, whether visual, verbal or audial, was meant to imbue appreciation of Christ's momentous sacrifice and love. Looking at Christ's body was "uni-directional act" (Ashmore 2016) that served as a contemplative site for pious Protestants. This is evident in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes.[65] The Passion continued to be re-enacted verbally in sermons, though the more evocative repressed dramas were consigned to memory. Nevertheless, such preaching ensured the memories of the Passion plays would have been preserved.

[65] For more examples see Andrewes, *Selected Sermons and Lectures* ed. McCullough.

The Passion Post-Reformation

It is worthwhile to note that blood held different associations in the early modern period than in later centuries. Blood occupied numerous conceptual spaces and its meaning in a drama depended on a selection of factors. Where blood is abundant, and is explicitly referenced by the characters on stage, almost as though it were a prop, it is obviously more noteworthy than a character merely pricking their finger. It was not the gory prop of horror films, as it was a relatively common sight in Elizabethan London. From bear-baiting, to the heads impaled on spikes on the city walls, and the common medicinal practise of blood-letting, the spilling of blood was an everyday sight, not immediately associated with horrific violence.[66] Performances often entailed "sanctioned killing by the state, both on stage and off" (Carlson 50), as public executions drew as many crowds as the playhouse. It was conceived as the site of passion, and according to humoral theory it was also the site of the four humours which underpinned all of human health. Carlson theorises the body in pain as an important social image, insisting "pain might be reiterated by one body over and over, across multiple allied bodies, real or mimed, through the arts or via news media" (155). Yet there is, Martin points out, "one subject in whom pain and being are reconciled: Christ" (105). For Marlowe's audience, Christ's physical torment was a repeated image, an event repeatedly re-staged as a contemplative site.

Crucially, Waldron recently argued "scenes of graphic violence in Elizabethan drama carry over the visceral power of Christ's torment in the cycle plays" (4). This particular image of blood was entirely removed from the mortal sphere. Blood is the source of human life, but blood is also the source of eternal life,

[66] For more information on bloodletting see Greenstone, 12-14. The academic blog earlymodernmedicine.com has numerous entries on the practice. For a general introduction to the conception of blood in the period, see Curtis' unpublished PhD. dissertation *An Anatomy of the Tragedy of Blood*.

as we have seen articulated in the mystery plays. For Catholics and Protestants alike, this was an irreproachable truth. It is apparent that Marlowe is familiar with Christ's blood as a synecdoche for man's salvation, as the most significant dramatic reference to it as such comes from Marlowe. In the penultimate scene of *Doctor Faustus,* it is Christ's blood that offers a glimpse of salvation to the damned scholar. In the A-text, an aghast Faustus cries out:

> See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
> One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!
>
> (V.ii.78-80)

The more austere B-text does not include the first line, the vision of Christ's blood pouring out of heaven, but it still refers to this liquid salvation: "One drop of blood will save me. O, my Christ!" (V.ii.145). Blood is a prominent signifier in two scenes in *Doctor Faustus,* but the image that permeates the entirety of *Massacre* is altogether more disconcerting, as the play articulates sectarian bloodshed within the language of Christ's ultimate blood sacrifice and neglects to offer a redemptive conclusion.

Martyrs and Martyrologists

In addition to the advocated reading of scripture and obligatory sermons discussed in the last section, there was another text which defined the Protestant literary experience. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* replaced the popular medieval hagiography with Protestant martyrs defending their faith in the face of excruciating torture and death. In addition to replacing the Catholic saints with suitable Protestant role models, the book served as a selection of moral and religious exempla and an extortion to Protestant faith. A lay reader is encouraged to contemplate the sacrifices

made by the Protestant martyrs, and strive to honour them in their own practise of the faith. But with an increased understanding of doctrine came increased anxiety. Awareness of Protestant doctrine meant acknowledging the possibility of potential damnation.In Marlowe's lifetime, the spectacle of the human body in pain had a new depiction: the martyr. The martyrology was a distinct Protestant genre and a revered format designed to instruct the nascent Protestant community. The primary goal of martyrologies was "to interpret particular lives and deaths as confirmation for abstract belief systems" (Brietz-Monta 4). The steadfast Protestant martyrs replaced Catholic saints, and one could argue, dramatic representations of the Passion. Foxe defines a martyr as one who has died for a worthwhile cause. The cause, not the individual, or the manner of death, makes a martyr. Martyrologists claim their martyrs died for "truth" (Brietz-Monta 10).[67] Betteridge concurs, asserting that "what guarantees the status of the martyrs' testimony is their bodily suffering" (147). Following this, the title page of the 1583 edition of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* adds an extra word to the by-line. This edition specifies that it contains the tales of the "*true* martyrs," not just of martyrs.[68] This text defined the Protestant articulation of suffering for a theological purpose: physical pain was re-articulated not just as suffering for faith, but suffering for the right faith. As we shall see, Marlowe will utilise images of physical suffering to completely break down any such distinction. This was a necessary emendation: as persecution of Catholics intensified, Catholic martyrologies began to proliferate. Here, Foxe reaffirms that his subjects are the "true" martyrs, lest his reader be confused by Catholics who falsely claim this title. Propagandistic tales of martyrdom permeate much of early modern drama. As Brietz-Monta explains: "competing martyrologies pressured early modern authors to

[67] For a detailed account of conceptions of truth and factual accounts in Foxe, see Collinson, 1997.
[68] For an illustration of the complete title page see King's edition, 1.

represent the search for religious truth as essentially agonistic and as taking place in a world in which a true martyr could look disturbingly similar to a false heretic or a damnable traitor" (7). Like the cycle plays, martyrologies depict violence that has a divine mandate and they guide the reader to interpret traumatic events by using a theological framework.

In the years following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, dramatic literary violence was evident in these martyrologies. Yet, in early modern culture suffering had, in Brietz-Monta's words, "a clarifying force" (82). Like the history chronicle explored in Chapter Five, the martyrology was not merely an account of an event, but an interpretative guide, as the martyrologist carefully moulded the account to a particular interpretation for the reader. Suffering in martyrologies had two interrelated purposes: to prove the faith of the martyr and to bolster the faith of the reader. Death in the name of God was a worthy cause. Public displays of violence were common sights in Elizabethan London, but disordered, senseless violence was not.

Martyrdom, like the Passion, is a "moment of extreme visibility" (Betteridge 147). As Brietz-Monta explains "the epistemologies of martyrdom are adapted and redeployed by writers of various religious persuasions as they reflect upon achingly similar problems: how truth may be confirmed by subjective testimonies in an age when so many suffer for different causes" (4). Any individual seeking to rework the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre would have to navigate "the Reformation era's complicated plurality of testimonial voices" (2).[69] We shall see Marlowe navigate this martyrological maze by subversively gesturing towards the now-proscribed

[69] The Parker Library catalogue exemplifies this juxtaposition. Epistles of the debased Catholic saint of Marlowe's hometown, Thomas Becket, (CCCC 295) are filed directly before tracts of the denounced Protestant preacher Wycliffe (CCCC 296). Various tracts and doctrines appeared to argue each other out of relevance. Contradictory polemic is filed coherently, though it cannot be resolved.

Passion plays. Catholic and Protestant factions both glorified violence when it was carried out in the name of "true" religion. We will see that *Massacre* stages brutal sectarian violence, initially in a conventional manner glorifying the slaughtered Protestants, but without the expected assurances of theological certainty. Pleshé's declaration of "the virtues of our true religion" (xiii.42) and his insistence that he acts on behalf of the "true profession of His holy word!" (XIII.51), reverberate through the text. The play utilises imagery and linguistic cues to the violence of Christ's Passion in describing Protestant suffering, but doubles back on itself by suspending an interpretation or resolution.

Medieval depictions of Christ's physical suffering largely served to maintain the status quo (Richards 2008 111), situating the audience within an apocalyptical trajectory, but imbuing a sense of stability with assurances of Christ's sacrifice. Equally, early modern martyrologies, exemplified in Foxe, "reconcile […] the representation of suffering with affirmations of spiritual joy" (Knott 721). *Massacre* deals with very recent history, and places the Protestant Christian audience in an entirely unstable position. Where the cycle plays promoted a sense of hope and redemption through a prescribed providential interpretation, Marlowe depicts post-Reformation, rather than pre-Apocalyptical narrative, and denies his Protestant audience the linear progression they expect. Medieval religious staging is subtly used to underscore both orthodox and subversive ideas.

Marlowe's sectarian cycle play depicts recognisable accusations of heresy and graphic violence in the language of Christ's Passion, but completely suspends the established conclusion. The play begins conventionally; its rearticulation of Passion play visual language seemingly fits into orthodox Protestant historiography. However, it is soon apparent that the medieval allusions upholding Protestant

supremacy are equally employed to undermine it, and are equally effective in doing so. No sooner is a sense of certainty established, than doubt is slowly slipped in, both through the evocation of the medieval Passion play.

The Massacre at Paris: A Subverted Cycle Play

O'Connell argues that mystery play allusions can be distinguished from general biblical references by "visual and auditory detail" which originates in "dramatic performance" rather than reading the Bible (178). *Massacre*'s sectarian violence is conveyed in repeated, almost excessive bloody imagery, as characters ruminate on blood and wounds. The cycle play evocation begins with a continued comparison between the planned slaughter of the Huguenots and a popular biblical episode in the cycles, the Slaughter of the Innocents:

> Guise: If ever Hymen loured at marriage-rites,
> And had his altars decked with dusty lights:
> If ever sun stained heaven with bloody clouds,
> And made it look with terror on the world,
> If ever day were turned to ugly night,
> And night made semblance of the hue of hell;
> This day, this hour, this fatal night,
> Shall fully show the fury of them all.
>
> (II. 1-8)

In his opening verse, Guise is introduced as a magnanimous tyrant, pontificating in threatening hyperbole as he masterminds the mass slaughter of innocent Protestants. The use of alliteration dotted throughout these lines is striking,

we have noted that mystery plays were almost entirely alliterative. Designing mass slaughter in such terms can comfortably recall the Herod of the mystery plays. The following lines are explicit:

> And will revenge the blood of innocents
> That Guise hath slain by treason of his heart,
> And brought by murder to their timeless ends.
>
> (i.43-5)

This would surely have led a Biblically-literate audience to recall the Slaughter of the Innocents and Herod's self-conscious dramatic bombast in the cycles. Guise presents his Protestant victims as sinful persecutors who deserve death, yet he acts as the ultimate tyrannical murderer of innocents, Herod. He speaks in hyperbole befitting Herod: "This day, this hour, this fatal night, / Shall fully slew the fury of them all" (ii.64-5). The Cardinal implores Catherine to mediate with the King in Pilate's words: "Tell him that 'tis for his country's good, / And common profit of religion" (xiv.58-9), effectively comparing the Huguenots to Christ. Thus, the play begins conventionally, setting up an expected generic trajectory.

As in the Passion plays, accusations of heresy foreshadow graphic violence in *Massacre.* Guise declares "He that wants these and is suspect of heresy, / Shall die, be he King or emperor" (iv.32-3). He insists that he will not tolerate any form of heresy: "Than pity or relieve these upstart heretics" (iv.20). Accusations of heresy foretell ghastly violence in the cycles and the same pattern is staged here. Certainly, the Admiral recognises these dangerous accusations: "Ah, my good lord, these are the Guisians / That seek to massacre our guiltless lives" (iv.57-8). The innocence of the Protestant victims is foregrounded, in contrast with the inherent evil of the Catholics. Thus far, the play appears conventional in comparing the Catholic

megalomaniac to Herod. Guise also accuses innocent clerics of heresy: "Loreine, Loreine, follow Loreine! Sirrah, / Are you a preacher of these heresies?" (vii.1-2). Loreine insists "I am a preacher of the word of God" (vii.3) but he is not spared. Loreine's terse response may recall Christ's when he was interrogated for the same offence. In the York *Christ before Annas and Caiaphas* Jesus stands by his preaching: "Sir, thou says it thyself, and smoothly I say / That I shall go to my Father that I come fro […]" (293-4). Guise asserts that even suspicion warrants death: "And spare not one that you suspect of heresy" (ix.85), reflecting Caiaphas' insistence in the York *Christ before Pilate (II): The Judgement*: "In what faitor [traitor] falsehood is found, / Should be slain" (103-4). Considering the pervasiveness of the cycle play Herod, and the references to these bombastic portrayals in Shakespeare and Chaucer, it is likely that this analogy would prompt the audience to recall the medieval mysteries. To present the Catholic enemy as Herod is a conventional move, but one that the play does not follow through to the expected end.

The mystery plays were the single most prevalent collective imagining of biblical motifs. Infinitely more spectators knew biblical narratives through civic drama than through reading the bible in the vernacular. *Massacre* initially uses medieval theatre in an orthodox way, but it simultaneously serves subversive ends. Allusions to medieval theatre highlight the physical suffering of the Huguenots, but also underscore what is absent: a discernible interpretation of events and a theologically-satisfactory resolution. The one-sided accusations against Christ in the cycle plays are recalled on *both* sides of the argument, creating an in-extractible web of bigotry. In the confused world of *Massacre*, Guise is in turn accused of heresy by Epernoun: "I challenge thee for treason in the cause" (xix.26) and Guise compares the Huguenots to the Jews: "There are a hundred Huguenots and more / Which in the

woods do hold their synagogue" (xi.21-2). The conventional set up of Guise as Herod is almost immediately inverted by subsequent biblical imagery. The Catholic usurper posits himself as a Christ-like rebel against heretical Jews, blurring the previous analogy. In Marlowe's post-Reformation mystery play, one simply cannot tell who is the Old Testament mass-murderer and who is the innocent Christ, or even a Christian. There is only one certainty, that the outcome will not be redemption. To use martyrolgical imagery for action that is ultimately senseless, undermines the pretext of the martyrology genre. To use the Passion to describe a redundant act of violence says something entirely more subversive.

The Catholic assassins are depicted as an anti-intellectual and regressive movement, particularly nihilistic in the killing of Protestant-convert Ramus. It is a historical fact that this famed logician and mathematician was killed during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, but the exact circumstances are uncertain. The play presents him as the victim of a particularly nasty political assassination; again Guise is the instigator, but this scene does not maintain this straightforward depiction. He is discovered alone in his study, an innocent scholar frightened by the noise of the massacre outside: "What fearful cries comes from the river Seine / That frights poor Ramus sitting at his book?" (ix.1-2). Guise denounces Ramus as a wandering false preacher, a very familiar accusation: "And he, forsooth, must go and preach in Germany / Excepting against doctor's axioms" (ix.31-2) and condemns him to death for his ideas: "To contradict which, I say: Ramus shall die" (ix.35). Such a pronouncement surely reflected both the dogmatic persecution of Christ by the High Priests and the resolute statements of Protestant martyrs. Ramus argues his case and pleads for his life, but to no avail. Guise is unmoved: "Why suffer you that peasant to declaim? / Stab him, I say, and send him to his friends in hell" (ix.53-4). The

assured tyrant is expediting the murder of anyone whom he denounces as a heretic and a con-artist, recalling the high priests of the cycle plays and their frenzied desire for Jesus' execution. Yet, because Guise has announced in his soliloquy that he is apparently a non-believer, his speech rings increasingly hollow; the comparison between Guise and the killers of Christ is no longer effective. The Passion image, recalling the medieval cycle drama, is used to set up religious violence, such as the accusations of heresy against the Protestant Professor, but shortly thereafter entirely secular motivations are revealed. Immediately before Ramus is stabbed, Anjou sneers "Nere was there a Collier's son so full of pride" (VII.416). In placing the secular insults last, the play makes these statements the most memorable. The Catholics utter petty insults about the Professor's social background, expanding their hatred beyond bigotry and inferring that their motivations are not holistically "Catholic".

The audience can read the scene as a savage Catholic attack on a Protestant-convert intellectual, but this is complicated by the actions of his associate Taleus, who refuses sectarian division. When asked by Gonzago "what art thou?" (ix.13) he simply replies "I am as Ramus is- a Christian" (ix.14). But Retes intervenes and reveals Taleus' surprising religious profession: "O, let him go, he is a Catholic" (ix.15). For a Catholic to issue such a noble statement, in defence of a Protestant, de-stabilises any sense of superiority over the Catholics committing atrocities, and implies that Catholicism in itself cannot be held accountable for the St. Bartholomew's Day attacks. The play cannot be entirely read as anti-Catholic propaganda because not all of the Catholic figures behave abhorrently. Unlike the High Priests who collectively condemn Jesus, the presence of some virtuous Catholics unsettles any partisan interpretation.

The final scene in the Passion plays is the recognition of Christ by the Disciples, upon their inspection of his wounds. We have seen in the first section how the wounds serve as proof of Christ's identity and by default, his resurrection. In *Massacre,* the audience is invited to recall those scenes as previous wounds identify the target of assassination. Early in the play the Admiral is shot in the arm:

> Condé: What are you hurt, my Lord High Admiral?
>
> Admiral: Ay, my good lord, shot through the arm.
>
> (iii.31-2)

It is this wound by which Guise later identifies him.

> Guise: Cousin, 'tis he, I know him by his look.
>
> See where my soldier shot him through the arm;
>
> He missed him near, but we have struck him now.
>
> (v.35-7)

After the successful assassination, a striking scene in *Massacre* reflects the torture of Christ by unnamed soldiers as Guise's henchmen joke about disposing of the Admiral's slaughtered body:

> First Soldier: Now, sirrah, what shall we do with the Admiral?
>
> Second Soldier; Why, let us burn him for a heretic.
>
> First Soldier: O no, his body will infect the fire, and the fire the air, and so we shall be poisoned with him.
>
> Second Soldier: What shall we do then?
>
> First Soldier: Let's throw him into the river.
>
> Second Soldier: O, 'twill corrupt the water, and the water the fish, and by the fish ourselves when we eat them.
>
> First Solider: Then throw him in the ditch.

Second Soldier: No, no, to decide all doubts, be ruled by me: Let's hang him here upon this tree.

First Soldier: Agreed.

(xi.1-13)

The ludicrous and crude debate reflects the arguing soldiers' torture of the silent Christ. Stapleton has suggested that this scene "evokes the *Crucifixio Christi*" motif of the York cycle (216) and Marcus similarly argues that "the Admiral could […] be hanging like Christ on the cross" (156). Marcus considers the image of the cross-as-tree ubiquitous enough for this allusion to be viable, and we have seen the common description of the cross as "tree" or "rood" in the cycles. The Admiral's death scene appropriates Passion imagery to seemingly eulogise another Protestant martyr. Nonetheless, this image also undoes itself. Here, a wound identifies the living target to be killed and the soldiers then jest over their desecration of his dead body. This is a direct reversal of the cycle play pattern which made these scenes ubiquitous, in which they pre-empted Christ's return to earth. In *Massacre*, the order of events is inverted. The wounds identify a living person who is condemned to death, his dead body desecrated by bickering soldiers. This sequence results in the Passion imagery leading, literally, to a dead end, where there is no resolution for the atrocity. The play emphasises the finality of the Admiral's death. In the cycles, Christ's tomb is the site of his resurrection, but when Catherine discovers the Admiral's corpse, it remains lifeless, serving only as the fulcrum of black humour. Guise sardonically asks "Now, madam, how like you our lusty Admiral?" (xi.13), to which Catherine responds in kind: "Believe me, Guise, he becomes the place so well" (14). The incident is another standard depiction of Catholic sadism. Yet we shall momentarily see this order reversed. We have noted that medieval culture condoned pain if it was

divinely-ordained, and ultimately served a larger purpose, whether that was the Passion of Christ or public executions in the criminal justice system. *Massacre* depicts frenzied, repeated slaughter and the sadistic pleasure derived from it by others, without any justification afforded to either group. Marlowe draws on the cycle plays as the most familiar stock pile of images of theologically-mandated violence. Medieval drama shapes and facilitates an orthodox surface narrative, whilst simultaneously working to destabilise such an account and to offer alternative cognitive routes to a more unsettling meta-narrative: not only does sectarian violence not attain any justifiable end within the play, it never does.

The Passion play trajectory is interrupted by Guise's soliloquy in which he denies *any* religious affiliation. The stated campaign is a religious quest, but this is not his true motivation: "Religion: *O Diabole!*" he declares, before also sneering at providential social order: "To shuffle or cut, take this as surest thing: / That, right or wrong, thou deal thyself a King" (i.86-7). He uses religion only as a means to a political end. Similarly, Protestant identity is itself politicised, as a Cardinal feels the need to specify: "to kill the Puritans- / But 'tis the house of Bourbon that he means" (xiv.55-6). It is easy to overlook a crucial issue here: these atheistic and political statements place the speakers outside of Catholicism. They do not act as a result of doctrine, even false doctrine. Though he acts on the behalf of the idolatrous Roman church, political expediency is Guise's stated motivation, and the battle is drawn on political as much as religious lines. Thus, if the cause for violence makes a martyr, the play questions whether victims of the politically-motivated violence are truly martyrs. If the cause makes a martyr, and the causes of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre are exposed as nebulous, this undoes the Christ-like status afforded to the Huguenots in the early scenes. The bloodshed of the Protestants is given biblical

precedent through the Passion images of the Passion, but this is in turn retracted by the allusions to blood in the latter half of the play. In contrast to the redemptive and forward-looking Passion plays, McCall-Probes describes *Massacre* as "an indelible dramatic portrait of the horror of sectarian violence" as she notes the "ubiquitous imagery of blood saturating the play" (151). Blood is promised in the opening lines by Queen Catherine, observing the marriage vows she promises to "dissolve with blood and cruelty" (i.25). Guise's thoughts are fixated on blood: "If ever sun stained heaven with bloody clouds" (ii.3); "which cannot be extinguished but by blood" (ii.36). Blood also weighs on Henry's mind, as he recounts past bloodshed: "And in remembrance of those bloody broils" (xxi.94). The blood-letting more familiar to any Elizabethan theatre-goer was not the recent events in France, but Christ's ultimate sacrifice in the New Testament. As noted, the mystery plays were the primary cultural carriers of these scenes, leading the audience to recall medieval drama in tandem with dramatic representation of the passion.

Yet later in the play, bloodshed has no divine currency, it does not absolve sins or lead to salvation, it is a tawdry bargaining tool. Though this model is set up in the description of the massacre, these secular functions of blood complicate this reading and undermine the preceding effort to invest Protestant death with a metaphysical purpose. Here, blood is a bargaining tool, which resolves disputes and pays debts. Henry describes "bloody practises" (xxiv.66) and demands blood: "He loves me not that sheds most tears, / But he that makes most lavish of his blood" (xxiv.100-1).

An allusion to Christ's Passion is not automatically an allusion to a mystery play on the subject. Yet, an allusion particularly to the visual spectacle of the Passion recalls those very scenes, still lingering in the collective memory of Marlowe's

audience. The buying of blood, the bargaining with blood cannot fail to allude to Christ's Passion. In the mysteries, Christ's bloods buys mankind's salvation from sin. In the disturbed world of the *Massacre*, blood is compensation for infidelity, deceit and hatred. The ostensible martyrdom of the slain Huguenots is completely devalued by the tawdry exchanges of blood in these later scenes. Infidelity also commands a blood-price. When Guise uncovers his wife's infidelity, he demands blood in retribution: "But, villain, he to whom these lines should go / Shall buy her love even with his dearest blood" (xv.39-40). He rages: "even for your words that have incensed me so- / Shall buy that strumpet's favour with his blood, / Whether he have dishonoured me or no!" (xvii. 25-7). This scene is a pivotal moment in the play. After this episode in which blood sacrifice is completely secularised and debased, the focus shifts to the Protestant faction and their revenge for the massacre. Here, through allusions to the cycle plays, the audience has been prepared for a resolution of astronomical proportions. What is actually staged is almost a repeat of the St. Bartholomew's Day atrocity. Protestant Navarre insists that the response must be to "resolve to fight / In honour of our God and countries good" (xvi.10-12). Navarre does not elect to accept the violence enacted upon his people, which, as the audience is hyper-aware, is the Christ-like reaction. Navarre never attempts to be Christ-like, he does not follow the trajectory established by the images evoked in the description of the slaughter of Protestants. He is instead a willing, if not enthusiastic, combatant. Again, his speech mirrors those of Guise:

> The power of vengeance now incamps itself,
> Upon the haughty mountains of my breast:
> Plays with her gory colours of revenge,
> Whom I respect as leaves of boasting green

That change their colour when the winter comes,

When I shall vaunt as victor in revenge.

(xvi.20-5)

He is closer to Guise's Herod than a Christ-like saviour. The second half of the play fails to deliver on the premise established by the preceding scenes, and further undermines the Passion play allusions by unpicking and exposing the political and social causes of the massacre.

The second half of the play moves from religious-motivated murders occasionally tinged with secular issues, to entirely worldly violence. After Navarre declares his intent to restore order, the play depicts an entirely secular murder, a shooting carried out on behalf of Guise. Mugeroun is shot by a soldier employed by Guise, in revenge for his affair with Guise's wife (xv.1-11). Guise then relishes his rival's death: "Lie there the King's delight, and Guise's scorn. / Revenge it Henry as thou list or dare, / I did it only in despite of thee" (13-15). The massacre which recalled Christ's Passion is followed by cold-blooded murder with no possible Christological context. When Guise is shortly thereafter confronted by the King, he reveals not only his own secular motivations but those of the entire schism. He asserts:

Why? I am a Prince of the Valois line,

Therefore an enemy to the bourbonites,

I am a juror in the holy league,

And therefore hated of the Protestants.

(xix.31-4)

In another subversive turn, only the murder of Guise is dignified. Only the evil Catholic maintains his dignity and defiant faith in the moment of death. Guise

boldly overestimates his own prowess, but stays resolute and strangely admirable right to the end. Despite being forewarned that there are assassins waiting for him, he is unrelenting: "Yet Caesar shall go forth" (xxi.68). His deathbed confession is a bold declaration of his apparently authentic faith: "*Vive la messe!* Perish Huguenots! / Thus Caesar did go forth, and thus he died" (xxi.90-1). His proud end is typical of the unrepentant Marlovian over-reacher, to borrow Levin's term, but his steadfast faith even in the face of death posits Guise as a martyr, not a tyrant. As in *Doctor Faustus*, the anti-Catholic satire in the play is not exclusively anti-Catholic, as it is extended into the depiction of supposedly virtuous Protestants, and here, the dignified martyr's death is emulated by the evillest Catholic.

An Elizabethan audience expected the cycle play imagery to lead to a cycle play pattern. As Kirk explains, "English playwrights turned Catholics into villains and depicted Protestant leaders such as Henry IV as heroes" (4). Marlowe does not follow this set trajectory and the preceding use of Passion play imagery foregrounds this omission. Moreover, though Guise had always been a scheming dissembler, the soon-to-be Protestant convert King Henry is shown to engage in exactly the same behaviour. Guise whispers an aside: "the choice is hard, I must dissemble" (xvii. 48) in his usual pattern of behaviour. Now, after the massacre, Henry follows suit, assuring his nemesis "the King and thou are friends" (xvii.53) before declaring to Epernoun: "but as I shall live, so sure the Guise shall die" (xvii.82). Instead of the righteous rule of a Protestant monarch, the audience are presented with Guise in mirror image. Yet once again, Marlowe undoes these allusions to the mystery plays, as evil behaviour is not exclusive to the Catholic faction. In this, Marlowe swerves audience sympathies away from the Protestant King, whom an Elizabethan audience would automatically look towards. Henry III may have become a Protestant, but the

viewer is left in no doubt that he is not any more admirable than Guise. Catherine insists she can control Henry as "his mind […] runs on his minions" (iv.45). He is more interested in his favourites than in his duty as King, here recalling the famously inept Edward II. Thus, a potential associate of Elizabeth is compared to the most debased monarch in English history.

The play depicts religious hatred as a political tool, using familiar dramatic tropes to de-familiarise Protestant propaganda. Henry III's conversion was an event the audience would have expected, and considering the orthodox manner in which cycle play imagery is used in describing the massacre, this could be the earthly solution to the metaphysical violence. For a Protestant audience whose anticipation has been built up for a redemptive ending, Henry III's conversion is distinctly hasty and cynical. In Marlowe's play, Henry's conversion is explicitly only a political move. The King swiftly changes allegiance when he is double-crossed by the Catholics; his decision is not a result of any spiritual conversion. Within seconds of being stabbed by a Friar, he orders Epernoun: "Go call the English agent hither straight, / I'll send my sister England news of this, / And give her warning of her treacherous foes" (xxii.51). Unlike Guise who is committed to his murderous rampage, the new King seems to change his personal ideology on the slightest whim. The conversion is a transparent power-grab, motivated by revenge and a keen sense of realpolitik. Henry dies proclaiming his loyalty to the English nation: "Salute the Queen of England in my name / And tell her, Henry dies her faithful friend" (xxiv.104-5). Yet the audience is prevented from accepting this pledge having witnessed the futility of his previous oaths and the rash nature of his conversion.

Moreover, as the Duke of Anjou, he relished in the violence of the massacre, and some of the most sadistic acts are committed by the soon-to-be Protestant

monarch, not the Herod-like Guise. Henry's acts of "blood and cruelty" (i.24) far exceed those of the Queen who promised them in the opening scene. The sadistic pleasure he takes in forcing Guise's son to observe his slain father's body is one of the most disturbing moments in the text, and surpasses many of the Catholic Duke's own crimes:

> King Henry: Boy, look where your father lies.
>
> Guise's son: My father slain! Who hath done this deed?
>
> King Henry: Sirrah, t'was I that slew him; and will slay
>
> Thee too, and thou prove such a traitor.
>
> (xxi.121-4)

Henry III fails to be an admirable Protestant ally for the Elizabethan audience. Greenfield has uncovered Marlowe's use of increasing anatomical knowledge in the early modern era, and notes that in *Massacre*, the expected profession of faith is replaced by "verbal self-dissection" (236) as fatally injured characters fixate on their physical bodies. Henry III cannot be read as a martyr for Protestantism as he frets only for his physical wounds: "The wound, I warrant ye, is deep […] / Search, surgeon, and resolve me what thou see'st" (V.54-5). Here, the wounds of a potential Protestant martyr are the complete inverse of those of the medieval Passion play: they are the purely physical marks of imminent and final death.

Following Henry, his Protestant followers are in no way morally superior to the Catholics who perpetrated the massacre. They behave in an indistinguishable manner to their Catholic persecutors. They sardonically joke that they will not shed innocent blood:

> Cardinal: What, will you file your hands with churchmen's blood?

Second Murderer: Shed your blood? O lord, no, for we intend to strangle you.

(xxii.3-4)

There is no longer a definable protagonist or antagonist, both factions match each other in fervent hatred. The final scene is anti-climactic, the resolution implied by the Passion imagery completely suspended. By contrast, it is a continuation of the cycle of violence that has gone well beyond the Catholic instigators of the massacre. The future King Henry IV, Navarre, seems somewhat more promising, as he insists: "[…] we are grac'd with wreathes of victory: / Thus God we see doth ever guide the right, / To make his glory great upon the earth" (xvi.1-4). He is the only character to insist he acts with the aid of God:

How many noble men have lost their lives,
In prosecution of these cruel arms,
Is ruth and almost death to call to minde:
But God we know will always put them down
That lift themselves against the perfect truth,
Which I'll maintain so long as life doth last:
And with the Queen of England join my force,
To beat the papal Monarch from our lands,
And keep those relics from our countries coasts.
Come my lords, now that this storm is overpast,
Let us away with triumph to our tents.

(xvi.9-19)

Considering his previous speeches, Navarre's promise of stability rings hollow. He may claim to act in God's name, but he refuses martyrdom. Navarre is a shadowy

figure who makes no reference to his kingdom's new "faithful friend" (xxii. 105) Queen Elizabeth, instead completely ignoring the allegiance. He promises revenge, and a continuation of sectarian warfare:

> Come lords, take up the body of the King,
> That we may see it honourably interred:
> And then I vow for to revenge his death,
> As Rome and all those popish Prelates there,
> Shall curse the time that ere Navarre was King,
> And ruled in France by Henry's fatal death.
>
> (xxii. 107-11)

The play concludes not with a speech but with the sound of weapons. The stage directions state that the four men march off the stage with the body of the King on their shoulders, "drawing [their] weapons on the ground" (xxii). The second half of the play omits any redemptive cycle imagery, nullifying the previous framing of the massacre in these terms. The earlier evocation of the Passion and its dramatic expression in the cycles compounds the failure of the play to shape the historical account and to derive cosmic meaning from the massacre. The violence comes "full circle" leading the audience to experience "a sickening sense of déjà vu" (Munson Deats 2004 201). This chapter adds to the relatively sparse critical lineage of *The Massacre at Paris* in demonstrating that this sense of déjà vu stretches back further than the violence depicted on stage or the recent history it dramatises, but to the very earliest and most potent sectarian violence dramatised in England: the Passion of Christ in medieval cycle drama.

The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre was "an extreme historical event" (Martin 2015 130). It was a definitive moment in history and became a cultural

impasse in the early modern era. It was co-opted as propaganda on both sides, written about, staged and immortalised as one of most brutal events in decades of schism. This section has argued that Marlowe approaches this recent and monumental historical event from more than a single partisan perspective. Medieval theatre frames a potential partisan interpretation of the recent event, but also serves to undo any straightforward propagandistic reading. Using familiar visual language of the Passion inherited from cycle drama, Marlowe's play refuses any clear-cut schismatic appropriation of events by seeming to adhere to one.

Nietzsche laments the futility of martyrdom, asking "is the worth of a cause altered by the fact someone had laid down his life for it?" (79). *Massacre* demonstrates that the answer is evidently yes, but with a subtle suggestion that the fact of martyrdom still fails to make a cause worthwhile, even if that violence is the theologically-mandated Passion of Christ. Martin states that *Edward II* "registers the failure of Christ's Passion as a model for making sense of the pain of secular history. The Christological paradigm haunts the play as a felt absence, an ultimate lack of meaning" (109). This statement is, however, far more applicable to *Massacre*.

As we have seen with the morality play in *Doctor Faustus* in the first half of this chapter, Marlowe demonstrates the redundancy of this familiar religious theatre post-Reformation. The mystery plays end with an assertion of Christian truth and the possibility of salvation offered by Christ, but such assurances are impossible post-Reformation. The medieval allusion opens up a possible lament for seemingly senseless sectarian violence, and McCall-Probes considers the play an "indictment not only of the atrocities that occurred on St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572 but of all religious terror" (152). In the wake of the most recent massacres at Paris, the Charlie

Hebdo massacre and the Paris attacks of 2015, Marlowe's fragmented, critically-neglected play has never been more relevant.

Conclusion: The Theatre of the Damned

This chapter has explored Marlowe's politic evocation of religious theatre to critique Protestant culture and theology. *Doctor Faustus* has long been recognised as a medieval morality, but it is a post-Reformation morality, its generalised framework exposing the impossibility of such moralisation in a time of devastating Christian schism. *The Massacre at Paris* dramatises the most brutal expression of this schism: the open slaughter of hundreds of innocent Protestants, framed within the dramatic language of the cycle plays, but does so in a deliberately suspenseful manner that fails to deliver the expected conclusion, closing off any sense of an uncomplicated Protestant righteousness. The play suppresses coherent moral order as a counterpoint to contemporary providential histories (Shepherd 123). Instead of the guiding hand of Providence, the spectator is brutally shoved into the centre of an historical tug-of-war, and is left to mentally process the failure of the play to follow through on the medieval dramatic images established in the massacre scene. In the introduction to this study of the two plays, Kenny noted the all-or-nothing requirement of faith, even more accurate for early modern congregations than those of the present day. "True" faith left no room for doubt. Marlowe's plays utilise medieval drama to subversively suggest that doubt is the only logical response to Protestantism, both in its theology and in politics.

Tamburlaine the Great and Medieval Romance

Introduction: "That Atheist" Tamburlaine[70]

Speaking at a meeting of the Clifton Shakespeare Society in 1888, Tucker described the *Tamburlaine the Great* plays as "a spectacle of military bustle and of Oriental gorgeousness," which was "in perfect harmony with the taste of the age" (Maclure 169). It is more accurate to describe the plays as jarring against the tastes of the intended audience, as the shock and awe Tamburlaine provokes arises from the character's placement within a generically-mixed drama.[71] The two plays challenge the audience by subverting established literary norms. This chapter argues that Marlowe's provocative and ground-breaking *Tamburlaine* plays are a subversive reworking of medieval romance, with particular emphasis on the ubiquitous subgenre of the Saracen romance. Marlowe avails of medieval romance to present the Islamic East without Christian dominance, and presents the figure of Tamburlaine as a deliberately ambiguous fusion of tropes to break down fixed binaries of chivalric romance, subversively destabilising ideas of Christian superiority.

Frakes notes that when we consider academic study of the Muslim "other", we think of a field of study "more or less invented by […] Said" (xi). The theory of Orientalism cannot be directly applied to early modern culture, as any genuine assertion of political superiority over the magnanimous Ottoman empire was impossible. Yet the early modern attitude to the Islamic east similarly insists on

[70] Tamburlaine is famously referred to as "that Atheist Tamburlaine" in Greene's Preface to *Perimedes the Blacksmith*. London: John Wolfe for Edward White, 1588.
[71] For a detailed discussion of mid-twentieth century critical responses to the two plays, see Rutter, "*Tamburlaine*: Parts One and Two".

depicting the Muslim world as "other" and monstrous.[72] Both medieval romance and early modern drama negotiate the fraught relationship of Islam and Christianity through literary depictions of the Muslim "other," and we shall see the *Tamburlaine* plays interrogate this representation.

For the purposes of clarity, this study is split into two sections. The first will focus on the broad category of medieval chivalric romance, defining the genre before demonstrating the subversive use of key romance tropes in both plays. The second half will look at the more specific influence of Saracen romances, again defining this subgenre before demonstrating each play's subversion of it. As the prevalence of medieval romance in early modern England has been demonstrated in Chapter One, this chapter shall commence with an examination of how it was read in the Elizabethan period, before demonstrating each play's subversive use of romance tropes. I will then explore the subgenre of the Saracen romance, building on Metlitzki's definitive work *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (1977). The only book-length study on the topic, this comprehensive overview has delineated the Saracen romance genre and compartmentalised its core components. I shall argue that the plays repeatedly present Saracen romance tropes without the essential Christian framework, thereby undermining core generic concepts such as indisputable Christian superiority and conversion. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of Tamburlaine's unorthodox religious practise in light of this new understanding of the use of medieval romance in the plays.

[72] See Barbour, 13-39.

Mediated Fantasy: Medieval Romance in Elizabethan England

In the sixteenth-century, reading fiction generally meant reading medieval romance (Moore 319). In Chapter One we have explored the omnipresence of romance in post-Reformation culture.[73] The proliferation of romance in this era was due to print, with romance tales attaining "a breath of currency" impossible from their manuscript origins alone (Cooper 1999 153). Indeed, most romances survive only in copies at least a century younger than their original composition (153).[74] Tudor copies of these texts added a distinct feature: moralisation.

Typical of this moralising tendency is Underdowne's translation of Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*. Underdowne insists his translation is unlike the popular romances *Morte D'Arthur* (c.1470) and *Amadis of Gaule* (c.1500), as they depict seditious behaviour such as "violent murder, murder for no cause" and "fornication and all unlawful lust, friendly love" (3r; Moore 317). Instead, his book shall "punisheth the faults of the evil doers, and rewardeth the well livers" (3r; Moore 317). The text stipulates the function it will serve for the reader. Tale collections such as *The Gesta Romanorum* and translations like Underdowne's peppered their texts with moral instruction and prescribed interpretations. Though romances offered escapism and excitement in far-away lands and long-ago eras, they maintained the social and political values of Tudor England. Thus Marlowe's audience enjoyed romances, and as such, they expected a definitive moral message from the narratives they read, heard and watched. As Shakespeare would later do, Marlowe was writing "from deep within a vernacular tradition", one that "came with its popular appeal already established" (Cooper 2010 176). It follows then that the use of romance

[73] An account of a central romance narrative, the grail quest, is in the Parker Library. CCCC 80 contains *The History of the Holy Grail*.
[74] For an exhaustive list of all romances printed and available in the sixteenth-century, see Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, appendix.

narrative as a source is a logical, even predictable move. According to Seaton, the romances are "the culture-bed in which the seeds of Marlowe's young imagination germinated" (35). Crucially, unlike classical literature, humanist manifestos or venerated chronicles, medieval romance is a genre Marlowe shares with every single member of his audience. Medieval romance, and particularly Saracen romance, was a common source for early modern dramatists. Greene's *Alfonso King of Aragon, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *Orlando Furioso* (all c.1590) reflect this.[75] Decisively, Marlowe uses romance to engage in a discussion of the East which stands in marked contrast to that of his cultural milieu.

Tamburlaine and Medieval Romance

Cooper has shown that medieval romance held currency throughout the early modern period, and Martin has suggested that the *Tamburlaine* plays reflect Marlowe's manipulation of the conventions of romance (1978 248). This chapter demonstrates that the plays allude to the conventions of the chivalric romance, but utilise this generic DNA in a deliberate failure to satisfy the romance conventions presented, and delineates precisely how they do so: to engage the intellectual conscience of their contemporary audience.

Medieval romance focuses on the actions of a heroic protagonist, or a handful of valiant individuals. These depictions were plentiful. Arthurian legends, tales of *Guy of Warwick* and *Valentine and Orson* were all dramatised in the sixteenth-century, simply because they guaranteed a full house of spectators who had "been brought up on the same stories" (Cooper 2010 176). In *Part I*, aspects of the knight / chivalric hero are challenged. It is entirely disconcerting that the tyrannical

[75] Indeed, the latter play is the likely source of Olympia's suicide method, an incident discussed on page 193.

Tamburlaine is initially introduced as a medieval romance hero. The *Tamburlaine* plays reflect the familiar romance tales depicting a poor male, often a shepherd, seeking adventure through some form of quest. His noble deeds and heroic behaviour lead to grand achievements, and he wins his lady's love. Tamburlaine's reflection of the medieval knight is most apparent in his wooing of Zenocrate. The hero without means or a family name gaining the love of a wealthy noblewoman was one of the most common tropes in romance (Cooper 2004 225). Tamburlaine is certain that prestigious family lineage is not essential for him to earn the title of "lord," by which he is grudgingly addressed by Zenocrate: "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove, /And yet a shepherd by my parentage" (*1 Tamb*. I.ii.34-5). Tamburlaine's bold statements recall heroic knights such as Guy of Warwick, who elected to prove themselves worthy of a noble woman's love. Tamburlaine declares his intent to prove himself through heroic deeds, before comically discarding his shepherd's robes to reveal a suit of armour he has apparently been wearing underneath all along. He boldly declares "Lie here, ye weeds that I disdain to wear!" (*1 Tamb*. I.ii.41), before the stage directions state "Tamburlaine tears off his shepherd's garb to reveal a suit of armour". He defiantly states "this complete armour and this curtle-axe /Are adjuncts more beseeming Tamburlaine" (*1 Tamb*. I.ii.42-3). In a literal self-fashioning, Tamburlaine usurps the role of knight simply by adopting the required dress.

The medieval romance generally involves a narrative of a knight, or a lower status male who behaves as a knight, undertaking a quest that directly or indirectly results in his marriage with a princess or noble woman. After his successful quest, he is revealed to be of aristocratic heritage after all. Examples include *Eglamour of Artois* (c.1400), *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (c.1489), *The Earl of Toulouse* (c.1500)

and *Eger and Grime* (c.1400s). In the *Tamburlaine* plays, the use of this narrative convention daringly subverts the chivalric code in two simple but potent details. Firstly, Tamburlaine is not a Christian, nor an English hero. He is and remains a Saracen, an idea we will explore in detail in the second half of this chapter. Secondly, he really is just a shepherd. A conventional romance trope indeed, but as Cooper points out, these figures are inevitably and without exception revealed to be of noble birth after all (2004 70). Though the actions of the shepherd may seem extraordinary, they are justified by this noble heritage. Tamburlaine's eloquence would have set up this expectation in the audience, as dramatic norms saw characters of low birth who were well spoken "inevitably turn out to be disguised aristocracy or abandoned aristocrats" who have been raised in a rural setting (4). There was undoubtedly genuine surprise when it became apparent Tamburlaine really was of "base parentage" (4). Tamburlaine's moment of revelation never comes; he truly is just a shepherd by parentage, rendering his ambition subversive rather than admirable. By removing the essential plot point of noble birth, and giving Tamburlaine's ambition an aggressive and blood-thirsty undercurrent, Marlowe reinvents this well-worn narrative into a provocative intellectual challenge.

Tamburlaine's pastoral background is itself particularly subversive to a Tudor audience. We tend to conceive the literary shepherd in classical terms, as derived from Virgil. However, Elizabethan pastoral literature was different to its classical forebears as it was also influenced by medieval texts. The medieval shepherd was a more biblical interpretation, a religious leader in charge of his flock (Cooper 2010 133). Thus, to place this self-appointed "scourge of God" in this role was another daring defiance of literary norms.

Bataile observes that the medieval institution most recognisable to us in the twenty-first century is chivalry. Crucially, Bataile makes the distinction between something being familiar and "known" (205). The knight is not understood in terms of what the role actually entailed; the role of the knight is belligerent, and often involves brutal sectarian violence. Tamburlaine blends the seemingly incompatible dual aspects of the knight figure. Bataile notes that the moral code of chivalry seems to originate in literature (212) and was then adopted as a social convention in an apparent case of life imitating art, not vice-versa. In the work of Malory, Spenser, Berners and Sidney, a knight is always "the agent of virtuous action" (Moore 323). Tamburlaine embodies the knight figure in its entirety, not merely the sanitised chivalrous gentleman, but the vicious and blood-thirsty warrior. Marlowe's play distorts the medieval concept of the knight, and subverts the English culture it ostensibly represents by thwarting the expectations of the audience.

In the second play, the image of the knight is subversively interrogated. Spenser drew on medieval romance, but presented its values entirely uncontested, using chivalric romance to uphold Elizabeth and the political establishment. Spenser's Redcross Knight has been described as the epitome of the "Renaissance ideal of Christian humanism" (Riggs 213) and there are strong inter-textual links between the hero of *The Faerie Queene* and Marlowe's second Tamburlaine play.[76] Marlowe turns the romance motif on its head, subverting the chivalric image Spenser uses to describe the allegorical crest of Prince Arthur's helmet. Spenser's verse is the pinnacle of orthodox early modern idealism:

> Upon the top of all his loftie crest,
>
> A bunch of haires discolourd diversly,

[76] While the completed *Faerie Queene* was not published until 1590, Books I and II circulated in manuscript many years previous to this, and Marlowe undoubtedly came into contact with them. The opaque reference has been noted by Greenblatt (1980) and Cheney (1997) among others.

With sprincled pearle, and gold full richly drest,
Did shake, and seem'd to daunce for jollity,
Like to an Almound tree ymounted hye
On top of greene Selinis all alone,
With blossomes brave bedecked daintily;
Whose tender locks do tremble every one
At every little breath, that under heaven is blowne

(Book I Canto VII 32)

In Spenser's epic, the almond tree evokes the Old Testament tale of Aaron's rod blooming and bearing ripe almonds to illustrate that God has chosen him as High Priest. The reference to "greene Selinis" recalls the town where the victor's palm was awarded to military heroes in *The Aeneid*. The result is an image of union between the Christian and classical worlds, of secular literature and scripture, of the Renaissance and Middle Ages (Riggs 213). It is Spenser's combination of "biblical sainthood" and contemporary idealism of "heroic achievement" in an effective fusion, forming the "idealised Christian Knight" (214). Fusing Christian and chivalric values was a core aspect of medieval narratives; for example, Guy of Warwick absolves himself of his violent past by retiring to a monastery and dying a hermit (10855-11045). Yet as the awkward juxtaposition of crusade and monastic life demonstrates, this proved a seemingly insurmountable hurdle, for both protagonist and author.

In a striking contrast, Tamburlaine's speech from his chariot, drawn by captive Kings "with bits in their mouths" (*2 Tamb*.IV.iii.), is a shocking re-staging of the medieval chivalric model:

Through the streets with troops of conquered Kings,

I'll ride in golden armour like the sun,
And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,
Spangled with diamonds, dancing in the air,
To note me Emperor of the threefold world;
Like to an almond tree ymounted high
Upon the lofty and celestial mount
Of evergreen Selinus, quaintly decked
With blooms more white than Herycina's brows,
Whose tender blossoms tremble every one
At every little breath that thorough heaven is blown

(*2 Tamb*. IV.iii.114-24)

The "triple plume" which replaces Spenser's "bunch of haires" will act as Marlowe's feather quill, as it will "note" Tamburlaine's planned conquest of the "threefold world" of Europe, Africa and Asia (214). Marlowe's use of "blooms more white than Heryina's brows" for Spenser's biblical "blossoms brave" provides an erotic undercurrent. Herycina was an epithet for Venus used by Ovid in his *Amores*, *Metamorphoses* and *The Art of Love*. The name derives from a shrine to Venus on Mount Eryx in Sicily (214). Thus, Marlowe's use of Ovid and his erotic allusions are subversive in comparison to Spenser's appropriation of the heroic images of the more conservative Virgil. Marlowe's text offers less definition than Spenser's, as Marlowe's "Ovidian blossoms" wander from their appointed place; they blow "through" rather than "under" heaven (215). In doing so, their motion robs the image of heaven of its standing, literally. It is not presented as an immutable sphere of absolute perfection, rather as a liminal, nondescript location that bodies merely pass "through." Heaven is exalted in the First Book of Spenser's "didactic romance"

(215), which illustrates the obtainment of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. In striking contrast, the second part of *Tamburlaine the Great* depicts only the shameless secular ostentatiousness of a hedonistic voyage into eternal death (215). Typically, it is left for the perplexed audience to assimilate in their own mind whether this constructed self-destruction is being condemned or encouraged. Marlowe selectively recalls aspects of medieval romance to highlight and emphasise the intellectual challenge.

What is "sung" by Spenser in praise of Arthur, Tamburlaine screams in praise of himself (Greenblatt 1980 222). In his role as usurper of royal authority, he acts as his own poet, patron and subject. Greenblatt suggests that Arthur and Tamburlaine are not polar opposites at all - rather they are merely "two faces of the same thing," the two sides of the successful monarch (224). Tamburlaine's thundering aggression is the image a ruler must use against his enemies, while Arthur's paternal wisdom is how a king should present himself to his followers (224). As Greenblatt states, to a colonised people such as the Irish, Spenser's "Prince of Magnanimity" looks like "the Scourge of God," while to an English courtier Marlowe's contemptuous conqueror appears more akin to "the Faerie Queene" (224). The play cracks the image of the knight into two seemingly immiscible sides.

We have noted above that the development of the knight occurs through a self-imposed quest. Tamburlaine sets out on a quest through foreign lands, but with the stated goal of complete political dominance of every land represented on his map. He has no moral agenda in crusading, he aspires only to personal glory. The play removes any justifiable motivation, such as the spread of Christianity, and presents instead a seemingly merciless tyrant who refuses to act even as God's scourge. Elements of medieval romance are scattered throughout Tamburlaine's

campaign across the East. Seaton has identified a contemporary 1582 edition of *Bevis of Hampton* (1300) as a source for Marlowe's description of the entrance to Damascus. On his arrival at the city, ready for battle with its Saracen king, Bevis takes in the imposing view of the entrance:

> At the Bryge stode a toure
> Peynted with gold and asure
> Riche it was to be-hold
> There on stode an egull of gold[77]
>
> (1146-9)

Tamburlaine undertakes a conquering mission in Damascus, and seems to arrive at the very same entrance:

> Now may we see Damascus lofty towers,
> The golden stature of their feathered bird
> That spreads her wings upon the city walls,
> Shall not defend it.
>
> (*1 Tamb*. IV.ii. 102-6)

Tamburlaine's use of various coloured flags was detailed in historical accounts of Timur the lame, but Seaton (20) and Bruce (257-8) have pinpointed Tamburlaine's infamous appearance, clad entirely in black, as originating in chivalric romance. In the *Morte D'Arthur*, Malory depicts the three day tournament between knights in various colours of black, green, red and blue (VII 6-11), and the young knight Ipomedon is described as having "a black stede" and a "black sheld aboute his halsse," whilst

> Black was all his armur alse…

[77] These lines are not found in every version of the tale, but in the two most contemporary to Marlowe, Pynson's 1503 edition and East's 1582 edition (Seaton 18).

Cole-blake sadull and conysance

The child bare on his launce

A pensell all of black.

(C. 204)

We shall see Tamburlaine adopt the same aesthetic. The satirical play *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (c.1613) demonstrates the ubiquity of the motif of a 'knight on a quest' in English culture. As exposed in *Part I*, knights are by default militaristic, and their role is violent. Medieval texts mediate this through chivalry and by ensuring that violence is only ever meted out to demonised non-Christians, and it is thus presented as divinely sanctioned. Tamburlaine is excessively violent, with his chivalric side relegated to brief interactions with Zenocrate, and crucially, he is not a Christian. Tamburlaine is a perversion of the medieval knight; the model is turned inside out and exposed on the stage as a horrifying reflection of inter-faith conflict as it is, not as it is designated in chivalric romance.

In *Part I* Marlowe has Tamburlaine subvert as many social and literary structures as he can; in *Part II* all that is left to subvert is himself. Here the narrative seems to double back on itself, as the play revokes the ending of the first instalment. Greenblatt argues that Tamburlaine fails to complete his earlier quest of placing himself in "radical opposition" to orthodox rulers, because he marks his successes by behaving exactly like his defeated enemies (1980 212). For Greenblatt, the end of *Part I* represents anything but "radical freedom," with the victorious Tamburlaine reverting to the cultural norms he once snubbed as he assures his new father-in-law that Zenocrate has remained chaste: "And for all blot of foul inchastity, / I record heaven, her heavenly self is clear" (*1 Tamb*. V.i.487-88). In *Part II*, Tamburlaine's transcendence of social order appears to have been merely a rise through the ranks of

class. Tamburlaine emerges as an-all conquering Emperor, and also as a gentleman. His new status is evident in his sons' privileged upbringing and the exclusive pastimes it has afforded them (Burnett 2014 129): "Their fingers made to quaver on a lute [...] / Their legs to dance and caper in the air" (*2 Tamb*. I.iii. 29. 31). The lifestyle Tamburlaine's military conquests have provided for his sons has made them completely inept for war: "I take no pleasure to be murderous, / Nor care for blood when wine will quench my thirst" (*2 Tamb*. IV.i.29-30). Tamburlaine's military successes have ensured his own sons would never become "scourges" of God. Romance heroes who are authentic royalty easily slot back into their rightful place in the aristocracy. As Tamburlaine cannot do this he can only strive to establish a dynasty; this in turn proves futile because of his lazy sons. There is a note of bathos in these final scenes, a suggestion that as successful as the Scythian shepherd initially was, the narrative ends on a note of failure, his mighty quest is incomplete.

In concluding with a wedding, *Part I* evokes a conventional medieval romance ending. *King Horn* (c.1225) demonstrates just how integral this marriage is to the knight's legitimacy, as the titular hero refuses to consummate his marriage to Rimenhild until he has fully regained his throne. The second play completely decimates the marriage ending of *Part I*, and of its romance sources. Zenocrate's death provokes Tamburlaine to sink into further depravity, burning an entire town to the ground as it was the site of Zenocrate's death: "So burn the turrets of this cursed town […] / Because my dear Zenocrate is dead!" (III.ii.1-14). He razes the town not as an act of war, or because its inhabitants refused to surrender, but out of pure rage. In these displays *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* breaks further out of the romance genre evoked in *Part I*, and explores Tamburlaine's religious identity as a Saracen.

"A Jew is not a Jew until he converts to Islam": Islam in the Medieval Imagination[78]

The Jewish enemies of Christ in the mystery play cycles have a curious habit of evoking the name of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. *The Wakefield Pageant of Herod the Great* (c.1450s-1576) begins with a messenger declaring: "Most mighty Mahoun meng you with mirth!" (1).[79] The messenger later describes Herod as King "by grace of Mahoun" (11). In the York play *Christ Before Caiphas* (1350s- 1569), the titular High Priest refers to the "mights of Mahound" (265) and a soldier declares "For Mahound" (332). We observe a villain worshipping "Mahoun" even when he has explicitly professed another faith, usually Judaism. The scheming Jew Jonathas, of *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* is apparently also a Muslim:

> Now, almighty Machomet, marke in thi mageste,
> Whose laws tenderly I have to fulfyll,
> After my dethe bring me to thy hyhe see,
> My sowle for to sauve yh yt be thy wyll
> For myn gloryus God the to honer.
>
> (149-56)

References to "glorious god" and the Holy See illustrate the inability of both playwright and audience to imagine prayer in anything other than Christian terms, even from a contemptible heathen. By the late Middle Ages, the devotee of "mahound", the Saracen, was a distinct and central figure of romance tales. Before commencing this argument, I will pause to define the terminology used in this section. This study refers exclusively to the "Saracen". Like the stage Jew we will encounter in the following chapter, the Saracen is a stock figure throughout medieval

[78] Attributed to Peter the Venerable (1094-1156). For a detailed exploration, see Cutler and Cutler.
[79] Dates refer to the estimated date of first performance and last performance before the suppression of religious drama.

and Renaissance literature. The term "Muslim", an objective term for a follower of Islam, is not used in literature written from an English Protestant perspective. Indeed, the term did not exist at this time, and so shall not be used in reference to these figures. "Saracen," by contrast, is perennially a loaded term, and one that I have consciously selected. In this period both "Jew" and "Saracen" evoke far more than the religious affiliation of their subject. "Muslim" is impartial, but "Saracen" has specific connotations.[80] Saracen is an umbrella-term for the "other"; the non-normative, non-national, and most crucially, non-Christian.[81] Calkin uses the term "Saracen" to refer to medieval representations of belligerent Muslims, and the term "Muslim" to denote the "lived reality" of medieval Muslims (2). It is this model I will follow in examining the subversion of the former in the *Tamburlaine* plays.

We find this Saracen enemy throughout Middle English texts. *Piers Plowman* (1370-90), *Confessio Amantis* (1380s-90), *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* (c.1460) and *The Canterbury Tales* (1400) reference the Islamic East. Saracens are also the main enemy in the omnipresent tales of *Bevis of Hampton* (c.1300s), *Guy of Warwick* (c.1300), *The King of Tars* (c.1330) and Mallory's *Le Morte D'Arthure* (c.1470). The genre that focuses on the Islamic East is Charlemagne romance. *Otuel* (c.1330), the *Chanson de Roland* (c.1100), *Roland and Veragu* (c.1330), *The Siege of Melayne* (c.1350-1400) and most importantly, *The*

[80] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines a Saracen as "a non-Christian, heathen, or pagan, an unbeliever, infidel" (Def. 2.a.). In medieval English literature Saracen denotes a non-Christian who is an enemy and usually a military threat. "Saracen", as opposed to "Muslim", is also a fluid term. It can be applied as an ethnic definition, to Turks and Arabs, and even the visigoths. In the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, it encompasses a range of aliens from Greeks and Romans to the Danes, Norse and even Irish (Gorney 1).

[81] Gorney identifies the term "Saracen" as a "rhetorical category" (1), much like that of the Jew examined in the next chapter. In this genre "Saracens" were the literary tool of those seeking to imbue a sense of cohesion in the Christian audience. It is a blanket term for the "other", the non-Christian infidel.

Sultan of Babylon (c.1450), created and propagated the imaginative category of the Saracen.[82]

Holy War: The Medieval Saracen Romance

As Greenblatt states, "one cannot achieve an identity without rejecting an identity" (1980 159). In medieval romance, English identity is established through the virulent rejection of the Islamic world. The central character of medieval romance, after the heroic protagonist, was the Saracen antagonist. The figure appears in all three strands of the romance genre. Firstly, the matter of Britain depicts King Arthur and his knights defending England against Saracens, and converting a noble warrior, Palomides; secondly, the matter of Rome is concerned with the narratives of the classical world and depicts Alexander the Great's battles with Saracens in the Mediterranean; and finally the matter of France is concerned with the tales of Charlemagne, the twelve peers and their valiant defence of Europe from Saracen invasion.[83] Saracens are most prominent in the latter strand. Saracens are a "crucial public theme" in Anglo-French literature (Metlitzki 119), as the Charlemagne romances were heavily co-opted by English romance authors for their own versions. Each Charlemagne tale depicts religious belief, conversion, and warfare in a dramatic showcase of inter-faith interaction. Metlitzki states that in the Saracen romances, "the moral ideal of chivalry is subservient to the requirements of religion, politics, and ideology" (160); this is, therefore, an appropriate genre to utilise in an

[82] *The Sultan of Babylon* is a mid-fifteenth century epic poem. It is regarded as by far the most popular of the Charlemagne tales, originating from a French text and combining two poems, *Le Destruction de Rome* and *Fierabras*.

[83] Charlemagne promoted Christian faith and learning, but his most significant and famed achievement was his successful defence of Europe against Saracen invasion. The romance legend that emerged in England in the centuries following Charlemagne's death in 814, is a direct response to this threat, a portrayal of a valiant leader of an entirely fictionalised band of twelve peers. The addition of the twelve peers, while hardly subtle, is effective in evoking Charlemagne as the divinely- appointed defender of Christendom. He was imagined, and re-imagined, as a Christian folk hero across a broad spectrum of genres.

exploration of the knight as a concept. Everett's description of the genre as "unromantic" (13; Metlitzki 160) is accurate. Metlitzki proposes that the "intense preoccupation" with the East as a "theme, image and metaphor" in popular medieval romance is rooted in the unconscious (240). These narratives operated in a formulaic way, and were designed to bolster Christian faith and reassure the Christian readership of its superiority. This culturally layered literature sought to burrow into the unconscious of the reader, to build on their Christian worldview.

The Charlemagne tales were essentially sectarian propaganda, imaginatively eviscerating non-Christian enemies. The Saracen romance gained an increasing relevance in the Elizabethan era, as the Ottoman Empire rapidly expanded across the Near East. The fear of Ottoman power increased the prevalence of the imagined Saracen; a "warlike and bombastic Muslim male, valiant and often noble in the romance tradition" (Dimmock 2008 67). Saracens are serious opponents who are afforded respect, though interactions are antagonistic.

The most important surviving text representing Charlemagne romance is the Auchlinleck manuscript.[84] This demonstrates that romance literature dealing with historical figures survived not only in popular culture, but was often preserved in medieval libraries under the guise of authentic history (Wormald 99), and we have seen in Chapter One that Charlemagne narratives are represented in the Parker Library. These texts provided light entertainment through seeming historical fact, and historical teaching through popular stories. They had a wide circulation in popular culture, and terms from the genre seeped into the everyday consciousness, which is reflected in literature across many centuries. Chaucer alludes to the

[84] It contains, among others, *The King of Tars*, *Floris and Blanchflour*, *Roland and Vernagu*, *Bevis of Hampton*, the two versions of *Guy of Warwick*, *Otuel a Knight*, *King Alisaunder* and the *Lives of Seynt Margrete and Seynt Katherine*, who were famously tortured by Saracens. A Life of Saint Katherine is in the Parker Library, in CCCC 142.

treacherous Ganelon of the Charlemagne tradition twice in *The Canterbury Tales*, and considers this sobriquet ubiquitous enough to require no explanation, as the narrator of the Nun's Priest's tale aligns Ganelon with Judas Iscariot: "O newe Scariot, newe Geniloun!" (3227). In the Shipman's Tale, the merchant's wife announces: "And but I do, God take on me vengeance /As foul as evere hadde Geneloun of France" (193-4). The qualifier "of France" appears to be all that Chaucer deems necessary for his already familiar audience. The eponymous hero Roland is mentioned in Dante's *Inferno*:

> After the grevious defeat in which Charlemagne,
> Lost the sacred cause in which he had ventured,
> There was no more terrible sound from the horn of Roland.
>
> (*Inferno* XXXI 16-18)

Weston notes that a prevalent term for a valiant knight or warrior in Middle English literature was "douspere", denoting one of Charlemagne's twelve peers (30). The Charlemagne romance is a genre that bridges the physical scholarly and intangible popular libraries. This popularity continued through the Tudor era. Saracens remained the perennial enemy of Christian knights, as reiterated in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* with the mention of "treacherous Saracens" (III.156).

In these medieval texts and oral tales, the Saracen was usually encountered on the battlefield. Heffernan observes the common notion among scholars that the romance genre emerged "from the meeting of the Saracen and crusader" on this literary battlefield (1). In both the medieval and early modern periods, Islam was a military force, and also proved a formidable ideological and political challenge to Christianity. Calkin observes that the primary function of the representation of the non-Christian in western literature was to "clarify for Christians certain tenets of

their faith" (146). The fearsome Saracens could only be overcome with divine intervention and resolute Christian beliefs. For example, *The Siege of Melayne* is concerned with "reaffirming Christian belief through […] stories of past victories for the faith" (Hardman 72). Key to the central function of the literary Saracen was his position as a potential convert. Metlitzki has identified four character tropes of Saracen romance: the fearsome "Saracen giant" (192), "the defeated Sultan" (187), the "converted Saracen warrior" (177), and the "enamoured Muslim Princess" (161). I contend that in Saracen romance each character type represents a stage in the assimilation of Muslim territory into Christendom, and both *Tamburlaine* plays evoke these tropes only to problematise this romance ideal.

These battlefield interactions with Saracens are formulaic. Saracen forces inspired fear and awe in the reader, they have considerable military prowess, often "a thousende sarazins and mo" (1440) can spring from nowhere, as in the *Otuel* narrative, and the army is far better equipped than the Christian force. Saracen technology, particularly cannons and heavy artillery unknown to Western Europe, is described with admiration in most texts.[85] In *The Sultan of Babylon*, the titular sultan Laban launches a justified attack on Rome using an impressive cannon, capable of firing missiles from a significant distance:[86]

> To the toure a bastille stode,
> An engine was i-trowe
> That was to the cite ful goode-
> (395-7)

[85] Saracen naval forces are also oft admired. For a detailed discussion of this trope, and its historical basis, see Metlitzki 121-5.

[86] The name Laban is biblical. "Laban the Syrian" is prominent name in Genesis (Gen.26.20). This is likely the source of the name, and for its association with this area of the Middle East.

Yet the flawed belief in "Mahomet" serves as an Achilles heel. The narratives always end in Saracen defeat; as in the literary interaction with the Jew discussed in the following chapter, the vanquished Saracen is left to choose conversion or death.

Conversion was the preferable option; the slaughter of Saracen foes was a last resort, a view espoused by Gower, who argues in his *Confessio Amantis* against violent crusade by stating that the killing of a Saracen is still murder, and a sinful transgression of Christian values:

> A Sarazin if I sle schal
> I sle the soule forth withal,
> And that was nevere Cristes lore
>
> (4.1679-81)

Metlitzki observes that the Saracen in medieval romance can only be turned into an acceptable figure with the "fanfare of conversion" (178). This is reflected in the popular literary accounts of war with the Saracens. Though he attributes the world's problems to "makomet and mede" (III.327), Langland considers Saracens as apt for conversion as the Jews: "For sutthe that the Sarasyns […] and thes Iewes [...] Thei sholde turnw who so trauayle wolde and of the Trinite techen hem" (*Piers Plowman* XVII 252-4). Early modern intellectuals followed their medieval predecessors in aspiring to convert their theological opponents. Many Christian authors accepted that there was much common ground between the three Abrahmaic religions (Dimmock & Hadfield 1). For Christians this commonality was the basis of peaceful conversion. This idea continued through to the Tudor era, where dialogue with the Ottoman Empire increased along trade routes. Indeed, it was not an anomaly for hard-line Protestant reformists to praise aspects of Islamic culture. Many writers, including Heywood, Mandeville and Erasmus, accorded the Muslim "a certain

respect" (Vitkus 2003 10). Contemporary accounts of Middle Eastern Muslims, as opposed to literary Saracens, afforded the subjects a degree of admiration.[87] Though their ideology was deemed false, the devout nature of Muslims was partly admired, particularly their abstention from alcohol and their rejection of any form of idolatry.[88]

Cooperation between Turks and Christians was well established by the late Middle Ages, and Chaucer alludes to infer-faith military collaboration in his Knight's Tale. The crusading knight fights valiantly against the Ottoman Empire, but also enters into convenient relationships with its rulers:

> This ilke worthy Knight hadde been also,
> Sometime with the Lord of Palatye
> Again another hethen in Turkye…
>
> (64-6)

This ambiguous loyalty of Chaucer's Knight is not presented as an anomaly to the reader. It requires no explanation and his reputation is solid: "Ful worthy was he in his lords were / And thereto hadde he riden, no man fere / As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse" (47-9).[89] The interaction between Saracens and Christians is belligerent, but there is the possibility of resolution through conversion. Marlowe characterises his "others" in familiar terms, but completely inverts the outcome of the other's actions. In popular medieval romance, exemplary Christians interact with Saracens only out of necessity, and Saracens convert or are killed in battle, with most tensions

[87] The Saracen image purported to represent the formidable Ottoman Empire. In Chapter Four, we will see literary Jews dealt with in isolation or in small numbers, whereas by contrast Islam is conceived as an empire, and the Saracen is defined by this militaristic, empirical threat.
[88] Elizabeth herself used the latter point to foster relations with Ottoman ruler Murad III, assuring him that she was "the most mightie defender of the Christian faith against all kinde of idolatries" in early correspondence reproduced by Hakluyt (165; Dimmock & Hadfield 10).
[89] Though later critics have suggested that Chaucer problematises certain aspects of the knight's military conquests, this alliance is not a major plot point.

resolved. Christian warriors always opt to fight uncooperative Saracens because they are assured of divine favour and, therefore, victory. The beginning of *Otuel and Roland* emphasises this cosmological battle: "At Cordys how thay fought same, / All for the love of cristendom" (1695-6).

The militaristic depiction of religion in medieval romance found a contemporary reference point in Reformation England. Protestantism rejected the miraculous incidents recorded in many Saracen tales, but the bellicose expression of Christian faith in the Charlemagne tales retained currency. If prayer can ever be said to have trends, a significant post-Reformation one was armour. The call to don the armour of God in the letter to the Ephesians was a popular source, while Erasmus' *Handbook of a Christian Soldier* (1501) further illustrates the point. Prayers often urged the believer to "put on armour" daily (Ryrie 244). Preachers made it clear that this was a mental and spiritual fight (244), but such imagery in a Sunday sermon would naturally draw a congregation's attention to descriptions of armour so prevalent in the popular romances they read at home. In the words of Ryrie, Protestant preaching was often "little more than a call to arms" (244). It was in this context that the Saracen continued to loom large in the English imagination.

The portrayal of the Saracen remained static from the matter of France tales to Spenser (Metlitzki 120). As discussed above, Metlitzki has demonstrated that medieval Saracen romances are typified by four generic signposts: the defeated Sultan, the converted Saracen warrior, the enamoured Muslim Princess and the fearsome Saracen giant. Both *Tamburlaine* plays demonstrate familiarity with all of these generic markers, but use them to undermine, not to support, Christian hegemony. Yet, Marlowe's revolutionary *Tamburlaine* plays cleverly re-imagine and subvert sectarian images of romance through careful plot points and problematised

religious references. Indeed, Marlowe's subversive depiction of the stock figures of medieval romance creates the opposite meta-narrative to the medieval material, as Marlowe's non-Christians destabilise Christian notions of superiority and challenge orthodox Christian belief.

The Defeated Sultan

Medieval Saracen romances inevitably introduce a Sultan whose presence is entirely negative, whose wealth and splendour cannot redeem him from his devotion to "Mahomet". Strikingly, despite the virulent iconoclasm of the Islamic world, the literary Saracen is oft accused of idolatry. Whilst we shall see the converted Saracen espouse recognisably Christian values, the defeated Sultan is earmarked by his obsessive idol worship. A Saracen monarch praying to "Mahomet" invariably foreshadows his defeat.

The central image of the defeated Sultan is of a raging idolater cursing his gods before death. Indeed, throughout the medieval and early modern periods variants of the name "Mahomet" were used as a generic term for an idolatrous object (Metlitzki 208). There are many examples of this in Parker Library texts, including the *Speculum Historiale* (CCCC 8) and Higden's *Polychronicon* (CCCC 259). The idolatrous Saracen smashing his idols in defeat is a standard medieval motif. The *Chanson de Roland* depicts Saracen forces attacking their image of the God Apolin after failing in battle before throwing their idol of Mahomet into a ditch, where it is trampled on by dogs, and significantly, pigs (2581-91). The *Digby Mary Magdalen* describes "Mahowndy's bones [relics]" as being in broken pieces (142). Dante describes the physical body of Muhammad as "mangled" in hell due to his instigation of schism (*Inferno* XXVIII 31). In *The Sultan of Babylon*, Laban also

rages against his gods - “O ye goddess, ye faile at nede, / That I have honoured so longe” (II. 2431-2), before he too destroys his idols:

> In Ire he smote Mahounde,
> That was of goolde fulle rede,
> That he fille down to the grounde,
> As he hade bene dede.
>
> (II.2507-10)

This outburst occurs upon his army’s defeat: “Whan tidyngges came to him / That his men were slayn […]” (2419-20). He then renounces his previous faith:

> O ye goddes, ye faile at nede,
> That I have honoured so longe.
> I shalle you bren, so mote I spede,
> In a fayre fyre ful stronge.
> Shall I never more on you bileve
> But renaye you planly alle
>
> (2431-2436)

Even before his inevitable defeat, Laban’s anger is all-consuming, exemplified in his insistence that the women captured during the siege of Rome must all be slaughtered (II. 232-5). The Sultan is presented as irrationally aggressive throughout the text, creating, in Metlitzki’s words, an “anticipated climax” (191) in the destruction of the idols. The statues have proved futile when required to heed his prayers, leading the infuriated Sultan to smash them as a final act of severance from his idolatrous faith. The defeated Sultan motif will reappear, albeit entirely discredited, in Marlowe’s play.

The Converted Saracen

Saracen romance is typified by a battlefield conversion. The brave and noble Saracen knight is doomed to fail and his prayers to "Mahomet" spell his doom. It is explicit that the Christian knights defeat these formidable warriors, as they do the giants, through divine providence. It also becomes increasingly apparent that flattering depictions of Saracen warriors precede an inevitable conversion. Such virtuous figures soon see that their belief system is false and convert to Christianity, the outcome for which the reader is prepared. In *The Sultan of Babylon*, the Sultan's son, Ferumbras is one of many Saracen warriors to convert on the literary battlefield: "Hoo, Olywere, I yelde me to thee / And here I become thy man" (1353-4). He seems more impressed by the Christian army than the faith, and declares: "My goddis ben false by water and londe; / I reneye hem alle here in this place" (1357-8). Ferumbras proudly declares his intent: "Baptised now wole I be" (1359). He is swearing allegiance not only to Christ but also to Charlemagne, and the victorious army which would have otherwise executed him. He pledges "To Jesus Crist I wole me take" (1360) and that "Charles the king shal sene / And alle my goddess forsake" (1362). This is a pragmatic move that saves his life, which is more pertinent to Ferumbras' immediate concerns than eternal salvation. Ferumbras remains a famous figure beyond Marlowe's lifetime, as he is named in *Don Quixote*.[90] In *Otinel* Garcy, the king of Saracen Spain, converts after a defeat, again appearing more concerned with holding on to his life than his religion: "Thene bede he Olyuer pur charite, / That he ne schulde hym noght sle […] And he wolde christen be" (II. 1668-9, 71). This encounter is the more poignant since his conqueror is himself a converted Saracen, Otuel. Ferumbras and Otuel are the most significant heroes in English

[90] In chapter II of Volume II, Don Quixote claims to have the recipe for "the balm of Fierabras" [Ferumbras], a magic medicinal balm mentioned in one of the early *chansons*.

versions of the French epic (Metlitzki 182), as the converted Saracen seems to hold the most interest for English readers. The climactic battle of this tale is not between Christian and Saracen but converted Saracen and unconverted Saracen: an ideological battle is here articulated for a Christian reader. The Saracen is invariably conceived as a conundrum to be solved by Christian Europe, and Elizabethan audiences associated Saracens with these battlefield conversions as much as the many depictions of Christians "turning Turk" on the Elizabethan stage.[91]

This is evident in the case of one very admirable Saracen in the *Morte D'Arthure*. In this epic tale the reader is introduced to an upstanding Saracen Knight "Sir Palomides the Saracen" (180), who is described as "a noble knight and a mighty man" (180) and this clearly earmarks him as a potential Christian convert. He is ferocious in battle, single-handedly defeating all the knights of the Round Table in a single combat:

> There came Sir Palomides with a black shield, and he overthrew many knights, that all people had marvel; for he put to worse Sir Gawain, Gaheris, Agrawain, Bagd Emagus, Kay, Dodinas le Savage, Sagramore le Desirous, Gumret le Petit. And Griffet Fils de Dieu- all these the first day Sir Palomides struck down to the earth. (181)

Again, we note the motif of the black shield, associated with Saracens in romances well before Tamburlaine appeared on the stage. Palomides follows the Christian code of knightly honour when he refuses to attack an unarmed opponent: he insists that he will not slay Sir Tristram "for thou art here naked and I am armed: and if I slay thee, dishonour shall be mine" (305). He goes on to rebuke Tristram for even challenging him in such circumstances, reminding him of the code of behaviour:

[91] For an in-depth study of contemporary Elizabethan representations of Christian/Muslim conversion, see Vitkus, *Turning Turk*.

"well thou wotest" [know it]" (305). Palomides' Islamic faith is much lamented by the Christian figures. Sir Galleron bemoans "that is great pity that so good a knight and so noble a man of arms should be unchristened" (307) and Belle Isode worries "Sir Palomides is but a dead man because that he is not christened, and I would be loath that he die a Saracen" (201). Inevitably, Palomides does convert and he does so after a physical defeat. He concedes defeat to Sir Tristram after an epic joust, and elects to become a Christian, revealing that it is, in fact, only his inherent honourable nature that has prevented him from doing so previously. He informs his new comrades that "a vow that I have made many years ago" (306) delayed his conversion, though "in my heart and in my soul I have had many a day a good belief in Jesu Christ and his mild mother Mary" (306). His baptism is conventional: "my lord, forgive me all that I have offended onto you. And this same day, have me to the next church, and after that see yourself that I be truly baptised" (308).

Palomides is an ally of the Knights of the Round Table, but conversion typically occurs on the battlefield. Hand-to-hand combat between the Saracen and Christian knight is regularly interspersed with theological debate. Between sword thrusts and injurious contact, the warriors debate contentious issues, usually the Trinity. In Turpin's *History of Charles* (c.1300s) Roland debates central theological issues with the giant Vernagu, and later informs his opponent, Ferragus, of "one God in three persons": "Deus permanens in tribus personis" (Herrtage xx). Ferragus responds with a typical Islamic refutation, an accusation of polytheism.[92] He states that this must refer to three gods, not one: "ego tres Dii sunt […] et non vnus Deus" (xx). Ferragus refuses to accept the "logical" standpoint relayed to him, electing to fight for his faith. His cries to "Mahumet, Deus meus" (xxiii) go unheeded, and the

[92] This demonstrates an understanding of Islam as monotheistic. In contrast to the intolerant romance tales, the Middle Ages also saw a large volume of scholarly texts attempting to engage with Islam. For more information on medieval texts grappling with Islamic theology, see Metlitzki and Vitkus.

Saracen army is entirely defeated as a result of his failure to accept the "truth" at the beginning of the combat. Others accept their defeat on the battlefield as proof of the Christian god, and convert as well as surrender. The Saracen of *Rauf Coilyear* happily converts because he witnesses the success of the Christian forces: "Bot gif thy God be sa gude as I heir the say, / I wil forsaik Mahoun, and tak me to his micht" (940-1).

Authors of medieval romance construct their Saracen warrior as heroic, rational and morally upstanding, making their conversion highly desirable. The threat they initially pose is nullified, and the Christian faith and state are bolstered by the formidable addition. This forms an important point of contrast with *Tamburlaine the Great Part II*, where the Saracen romance figures highlight that this pattern is completely undermined.

The Enamoured Muslim Princess

Arguably, the defining interaction between Saracen and Christian was not a battle, or a theological debate, but intermarriage. As Metlitzki states, "the dream of Oriental romance throughout the middle ages is the union of Christian and Saracen" (140). Marriage between a Christian and a converted Saracen is an abundant image in medieval romance.[93] *The King of Tars*, Gower and Chaucer's renderings of the *Tale of Constance* (1350-1400 respectively) and *Bevis of Hampton* depict intermarriage as the ultimate resolution of sectarian tension. In English vernacular romances, these marriages take place in tandem with conversion. Whether before or after the ceremony, Saracens must assimilate into Christendom. Medieval crusade romances can be summarised as depicting a fierce battle with a formidable Saracen force, the

[93] Interestingly, this model is reflected from the opposite perspective in the *Arabian Nights*, with an enamored Christian princess. See Metlitzki 165.

overthrow and humiliation of the Sultan, followed by the real victory: conversion of the youth and intermarriage with Arabian royalty, legitimising the violent conquest. As Barabas memorably states in *The Jew of Malta*:

> […] crowns come either by succession,
> Or urged by force; and nothing violent,
> Oft have I heard tell, can be permanent.
>
> (I.i.130-32)

Marriage makes the Christian knight legitimate heir, not a usurper. In *Bevis of Hampton*, after Bevis' marriage to Josian, Princess of Armenia, his twin sons become the heirs to the Armenian crown. In *The King of Tars*, the intermarriage of a Christian and a Saracen is approved by the Pope, in an effort to bring about peace between the warring faith groups (Metlitzki 137).

Whilst intermarriage is a core theme in Saracen romance, proposals of marriage are rejected if there is a more appropriate English suitor. Guy of Warwick rejects the beautiful Clarice, the daughter of a Saracen emperor, in favour of his beloved Felice in England. Where there is no potential match in the home kingdom, intermarriage with converted Saracens is inevitable. Floripas, the princess of *The Sultan of Babylon*, forsakes Islam for the love of one of the twelve peers, Guy: "For his love wille I cristenede be / And lefe Manhoundes laye" (1895-6). This is yet another motif which is satirised in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Rafe insists he would never consider a non-Christian woman as a romantic prospect:

> I am a knight of religious order,
> And will not wear a favour of a lady's
> That trusts in Antichrist and false traditions.
>
> (IV.92-4)

The Citizen offers a familiar solution: "Well said, Rafe; convert her if thou canst" (IV. 95). Crucially, these romance figures always appear in relation to Christian characters. Both *Tamburlaine* plays will subvert this established blueprint. *Tamburlaine the Great Part I* presents Saracens on their own, without Christian influence, and *Part II* depicts Saracen-Christian conflict from the opposing viewpoint, that of the Saracen other.

The Saracen Giant

The most fanciful element of medieval Saracen romances is also the most straightforward: combat between a Christian knight and a Saracen giant. It may seem counterproductive to discuss a romance trope *not* explicitly reflected in the *Tamburlaine* plays, but as I will discuss below, if there is no giant, Tamburlaine himself embodies many of the figure's most recognisable characteristics. The encounter is the most opaque example of the Christian message imparted by the tales. The giant is a physically imposing, supernatural figure. The Christian knight is a lone mortal man, usually with either basic weaponry, or none at all. The metaphor is not obscure: David and Goliath repeated "ad nauseam" (Weston 25). It is obvious that a mere man could only overcome such a formidable figure with the aid of a miracle, and thus the inevitable victory proves to the reader that divine intervention has taken place, and that they are on the "right" side, and this will be reiterated throughout the narrative with repeated Christian victories.

The giant is ubiquitous across literary depictions of the Islamic East. In an episode of *King Alisaunder* (c.1280s-1300s) Alexander the Great builds a huge iron wall to protect the civilised world from two eastern giants, Gog and Magog.[94] The

[94] Interestingly, this episode also appears in the Q'uran as Sarat al-Kahf (83-98).

oldest surviving example of combat between a Christian warrior and a Saracen giant is *Roland and Vernagnu* (c.1300), where the titular giant Vernagnu is described as follows: "Stout he was and fers" (II.465) and that "He hadde twenty men strengthe, / and fourti fet of lengthe" (II.473-4). He enters the narrative with a single purpose, to fight Christian forces:

> Of babliloun the soudan
> Thider him sende gan,
> With king charls to fight
> (II.467-9)

The douseperes in *The Sultan of Babylon* are confronted by an Ethiopian giant, Astrogot: "This Astrogot of Ethiop, / He was a Kinge of grete strength" (352-3). It is emphasised that this creature dwells only in non-Christian territory: "Ther was none suche in Europe / So stronge and so longe in length" (354-5).[95] To qualify the point more, he is explicitly affiliated with the devil: "I trowe he were a develes sone, / Of Besabubbis lyne" (356-7). His stated purpose is "to do Cristen men grete pyne" (359). Bevis, Guy of Warwick and all other Christian knights will face similar foes. Guy's gigantic opponent, Colebrant, is of less certain origin than Astrogot. He is described as a "sedne", a term which can refer to a Saracen or a Saxon. This is clearly an intentional term as it appears over ten times in the French narrative (Djordjevic 34). His geographic and ethnic origins underpin his religious affiliation. Once again, the prevalence of this narrative is evident in satire. In *Rauf Colyear* (c.1450-1500), a giant churl is brought home as a guest to Rauf's house (43-104). The giant motif continues in the Tudor era, as Rafe of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* faces a "giant" named Barbaroso (III.238). A giant, though abnormal in size

[95] Ethiopia is a repeated location for Saracen romance, with significant racial implications. This aspect of Saracen romance is beyond the scope of this chapter. For an in-depth introduction, see Calkin.

and strength, has human features. It is not entirely monstrous, apart from its size. In the *Tamburlaine* plays, there is no combat; instead, we see elements of the knight and giant fused, as Tamburlaine embodies the stature and terrifying reputation of the giant, the "contradictory impressions of divinity and bestiality […] never reconciled" (Bevington 1968 217).

Subverting Saracen Romance: *Tamburlaine The Great Part I*

Some critics have tentatively acknowledged the *Tamburlaine* plays' debt to medieval romance, but have not explored this resonance. Vitkus has noted a link between the humiliated Bajazeth's cries and the "boasting Saracens of the romance tradition" (2003 56) and we can see this bears out. Barbour argues that *Part I* "answers *de casibus* expectations with Bajazeth" in order to "shatter them" with Tamburlaine (41). Bajazeth more accurately conforms to expectations derived from medieval romance depictions of Eastern Sultans, recalling the romance tradition almost exactly. He begins with boastful hubris, and has no fear of Tamburlaine's advance, declaring: "You know our army is invincible; /As many circumcised Turks we have" (III.i.7-8) and he is emphatic in stating his own power, announcing that he is:

> […] the Turkish Emperor,
> Dread lord of Afric, Europe and Asia,
> Great King and conqueror of Graecia,
> The Ocean Terrene, and the coal sea,
> The high and highest monarch of the world,
> Wills and commands…
>
> (III.i.22-6)

Bajazeth's religious declarations are reminiscent of the romance tradition; he worships "Mahomet" as god, then denounces him when it appears this god has failed him. He begins with various statements praising his god: "All this is true as holy Mahomet" (*1 Tamb*. III. i. 54), "Ye holy priests of heavenly Mahomet […]" (*1 Tamb*. IV. ii.2), and so forth. After his defeat and capture by Tamburlaine, he denounces "sleepy Mahomet" (*1 Tamb*. III. iii. 269) as Zabina curses him: "O cursed Mahomet that makes us thus / The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous! (*1 Tamb*. III. iii. 270-1). The audience of the romances and the Elizabethans still devouring them would have anticipated his brutal overthrow, but crucially, at the hands of a righteous Western European Christian, not a Scythian shepherd. Thus, the plays erode the concepts of social and religious superiority on which the Saracen romance is based, and that Marlowe's audience were encouraged to accept.

In scenes reminiscent of the matter of France tales, Tamburlaine wins allegiance from enemy warriors. He "converts" Mycetes' best warrior, Theridamas, to his side, though they ostensibly share a religious profession. Yet Tamburlaine does not gain this support through besting him in physical combat, in the face of the failure of "Mahoun" to protect him. Theridamas willingly switches allegiance after an impressive speech by Tamburlaine. He states "Not Hermes, prolocutor to the gods, / Could use persuasions more pathetical" (I.ii.209-10). Tamburlaine has lured Theridamas with eloquence. The loyal fighter is concerned about this potentially treasonous agreement: "But shall I prove a traitor to my king?" (I.ii.225). Tamburlaine rebuffs this by asserting his own superiority: "No, but the trusty friend of Tamburlaine" (I.ii.226). In Saracen romances, such as the Charlemagne tales discussed above, the Christian hero converts the Saracen warrior, and this is a

startling reversal. The submissive compliance Theridamas then offers Tamburlaine is of a bride yielding to a groom, not of a military leader negotiating with an aggressor:

> Won by thy words and conquered with thy looks,
> I yield myself, my men and horse to thee:
> To be partaker of thy good or ill
> As long as life maintains Theridamas.
>
> (*1 Tamb*. I.ii.227-230)

This pledge of allegiance is closer to a marital vow than martial entente. Tamburlaine responds in the same vein:

> Theridamas my friend, take here my hand,
> Which is as much as if I swore by heaven
> And called the gods to witness of my vow:
> Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine
> Until our bodies turn to elements
> And both our souls aspire celestial thrones.
>
> (*1 Tamb*. I.ii.231-6)

Tamburlaine's "wooing" of Theridamas is provocative to an audience better acquainted with the battle debates of Saracen forces, as Marlowe eroticises the political treaty. It is a reversal of Saracen romance, where such language is used to court a Saracen princess, but martial language signals the conversion of a Saracen warrior. The play conflates and then inverts these two tropes in a subversive rendering of standard conversion narratives. Tamburlaine's wooing of Theridamas is contrasted with his more politically-charged wooing of Zenocrate. Tamburlaine's marriage to Zenocrate can be read in the romance tradition of the "enamoured Muslim Princess" (161), as defined by Metlitzki. Zenocrate's martial

relationship with Tamburlaine is negotiated in terms far more applicable to the political alliance he has formed with Theridamas. It is Zenocrate to whom he strives to prove his martial ability and legitimate authority (*1 Tamb*. I.ii. 42-3). Zenocrate is initially unconvinced by Tamburlaine's boasts, and is unmoved by the speech to which Theridamas has yielded. She closes the scene resigned to her fate as a captive:

Tamburlaine: For you then madam, I am out of doubt.

Zenocrate: I must be pleased perforce, wretched Zenocrate!

(*1 Tamb*. I.ii.257-8)

It is only at the end of the play that she finally consents to marry Tamburlaine, and the wedding scene closes the first play. Zenocrate's apparent lack of zeal is also a commonplace feature of the medieval genre; as Metlitzki notes, a "mechanical compliance" was all that was required of the converted princess (169). We have seen in the previous section that Zenocrate is ultimately won over and becomes enamoured: "That I may live and die with Tamburlaine!" (III.ii.24). Like Theridamas, she has "converted" to become a follower of Tamburlaine, but she has not changed her religious or social identity. This is emphasised in her insistence that her father, the Sultan of Egypt, be spared. Tamburlaine decides not only to spare his future father-in-law, but to reward him with more territory as a ruler in his empire:

Come, happy father of Zenocrate-

A title higher than Sultan's name.

Though my right hand have thus enthralled thee,

Thy princely daughter here shall set thee free.

(V.i.434-7)

He insists:

And therefore grieve not at your overthrow

Since I shall render all into your hands

And add more strength to your dominions

Than ever yet confirmed th' Egyptian crown.

(V.i.447-50)

Zenocrate is a conventional echo of the enamoured Muslim Princess, whilst her father's treatment compounds the standard overthrow of Bajazeth. The characterisations begin in seemingly conventional fashion, before a subversive alteration occurs, that undermines the Christian supremacy on which these generic character models are based. The more conventional depiction of Bajazeth serves as a foil for the innovation in Tamburlaine's character later.

As stated, there is no explicit giant in the *Tamburlaine* plays, but the type is evoked in the depiction of Tamburlaine himself.[96] Since the earliest critical engagement with the *Tamburlaine* plays, critics have struggled to interpret the titular figure. He is obviously frightening in appearance: Agydas implores Zenocrate, "How can you fancy one that looks so fierce, / Only disposed to martial stratagems?" (*1 Tamb*.III.ii. 40-1). Tamburlaine is "as monstrous as Gorgon" (*1 Tamb*. IV.i.18), described in terms of Classical images of monstrosity, and the feminine.[97] Monstrosity, particularly in this era, was bound up with moral instruction. The Latin root of the term, *demonstrare*, literally means "to demonstrate" and presents the monster as an example. A monster is, in the words of Foucault and Baldick, "something to be shown" (Foucault 1964 68-70; Baldick 10). In Christian thought, the world is overseen by a "reasonable God" and thus the monster is a creation that must have a specific purpose. This notion dates to Augustine, who argues in *De Civitate Dei* that monsters "reveal the will of God" (10). Baldick asserts that this is

[96] See Barbour.

[97] Monstrosity is often described in terms of the feminine and the Gorgons were female monsters. I am grateful to Dr. Nicola Moffat for making this observation.

to present "the results of vice, folly and unreason as a warning to erring humanity" (10). Thus, for Marlowe's audience, and readers of prior centuries, monstrosity was moral. This notion informs the concept of the Divine Right of Kings. If a king was a "good" king, he served as proof that God had chosen the correct leader. If the king was a tyrant, he was inflicted on the people as a punishment for the sins of the populace. Tamburlaine presents himself in this tradition when he refers to himself as the "scourge of God" (V.iii.248), again evoking the fear of the Saracen giant. Scourging the Islamic East was entirely in line with orthodox Christian philosophy; however, this proclamation is devalued by Tamburlaine's subsequent actions, and the fusion of apparently mutually exclusive traits in his physical appearance.

Menaphon states he is "of stature tall" (*1 Tamb*. II.i.6) and apparently God-like. He continues to describe Tamburlaine in hyperbolic terms:

> So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,
> Such breath of shoulders as might mainly bear
> Old Atlas' burden; twixt his manly pitch
> A pearl more worth than all the world is placed
> Wherein by curious sovereignty of art
> Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight,
> Whose fiery circles bear encompassed.
> A heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres.
>
> (*1 Tamb*. II.i.8-16)

In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Frye defines the romance hero as one "whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being" (3). This is how Tamburlaine is presented, ostensibly human but "viewed through a 'gigantic' lens" (Burnett 2002 39) throughout the plays. He is terrifying fusion of both the

magnanimous (and ostensibly Christian) chivalric hero and the horrifying Eastern monster. Tamburlaine was first played by Edward Alleyn, who at over six feet was extremely tall by Elizabethan standards (Hopkins 2008 52). Tamburlaine is further inflated by his rhetorical power; the Scythian shepherd appears almost superhuman. The plays subvert their audience's chivalric expectations by providing a dual-faceted portrait: Tamburlaine is both the monster and the warrior. His imposing stature is neither inherently menacing nor benevolent. Tamburlaine's appearance depends on whom he is dealing with: "His lofty brows in fold do figure death, /And in their smoothness amity and life" (*1 Tamb*. II.i.21-2). His identity is less stable than giants of Saracen romance, whose geographic location and ethnic identity is continuously emphasised as "Other". The monstrous yet alluring Tamburlaine, magnanimous in victory, articulates the English-Protestant fantasy of dominance and humiliation of the Ottoman Turks. Tamburlaine offers the English "theatrical empowerment" (47), to borrow Barbour's term. The plays articulate English fantasies of dominance over the East, an empire they could scarcely dream of equalling, let alone conquering. Tamburlaine brutally defeats the Turks, reducing their armies to negligible numbers, but he is less a conquering crusader, than a dissident Saracen. Not only is he a Saracen, but a Scythian, a race conceived by the Elizabethans as wild savages. For example, Spenser associates the Irish and Scottish with Scythians (Hadfield 2015). They are held in similar repute in the play, with Zabina insulting Tamburlaine and his followers in racial terms, as "Scythians rude and barbarous!" (III.iii.271). In the plays, the romance "hero" is a shepherd of the most debased ethnicity.[98]

Marlowe depicts the wooing of a princess and the winning of the loyalty of a formidable warrior, inviting his audience to recall these romance tropes. However,

[98] Scythians were also believed to have been amongst the first groups to settle in the British Isles, linking Tamburlaine to a proxy-European heritage also. See Floyd-Wilson.

the *Tamburlaine* plays utilise these episodes without the most crucial aspect: religious affiliation. In romance, the enamoured princess and the converted warrior are exactly that, converted. The conversion narratives can be seen as a form of wish fulfilment for their European, Christian audience, but in *Tamburlaine* Marlowe unsettles this fantasy in his refusal to offer any indication of Christian superiority within the narrative. The audience's allegiance to the dominant force is based on their acceptance of Christianity. In *Tamburlaine the Great Part 1*, a typical Saracen romance episode occurs within the Islamic world, without any Christian involvement. Tamburlaine is a renegade Saracen gaining a royal spouse and a loyal warrior, all within the Islamic East. We have noted in the previous section that conversion is always the end goal of medieval literary encounters with Saracens; thus Marlowe's depiction of a homogenous Saracen world interrogates this ideal, in order to expose the supremacy of the Christian West presented in romance as a fallacy.

Subverting Saracen Romance II: *Tamburlaine The Great Part II*

In its subversive use of Saracen romance tropes, the second play is arguably even more daring than the first. *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* opens with a group of Saracens, led by Orcanes. They are associates of the deceased Bajazeth:

> Orcanes: Egregious viceroys of these eastern parts,
> Placed by issue of great Bajazeth.
> And sacred lord, the mighty Callapine,
> Who lives in Egypt prisoner to that slave
> Which kept his father in an iron cage […]
>
> (I.i.1-5)

We are introduced to and encouraged to identify with this group. We see the Saracen perspective of an interfaith conflict, as the assembled men discuss their Hungarian Christian enemies. Orcanes mulls over whether or not he will launch an attack:

Orcanes: Our warlike host in complete armour rest,
Where Sigismond the king of Hungary
Should meet our person to conclude a truce.
What, shall we parley with the Christian,
Or cross the stream and meet him in the field?

(I.i.8-12)

Gazellus' response plays on the audience's conception of Eastern forces. He advocates a truce, but not because they have been bested by divinely-endorsed Christian forces. In a description that would not be out of place in the goriest romance, Gazellus admits a surfeit of slaughtering Christians: "King of Natolia, let us treat of peace. / We all are glutted with the Christian's blood" (I.i.13-14).

The Hungarian King Sigismond is referred to as "the Christian" (*2 Tamb*.I.i.11) in a direct reversal of romance narrative, which depicts Christian forces in conflict with unnamed, external Saracen aggressors. The play is presented from the viewpoint of the Saracen force. Introducing the play from this angle, the focus has been diverted to the supposed enemy. The scene is further complicated when it emerges that these Saracens do not consider Christians their primary enemy at all: Orcanes must face Tamburlaine.

Gazellus: And have a greater foe to fight against:
Proud Tamburlaine, that now in Asia
Near Guyron's head doth set his conquering feet
And means to fire Turkey as he goes.

’Gainst him, my lord, must you address your power.

(I.i.15-19)

This is a depiction of inter-Saracen schism, with religious motives rendered irrelevant. The Saracens in the *Tamburlaine* plays are not one homogenous group; Marlowe presents a stereotype, but nuances it. This scene also differentiates politics from religion, a separation scarcely imaginable to early modern audiences. Though their religious affiliation loses significance, Saracen romance themes remain apparent. The audience is encouraged to remember the awe-inspiring descriptions of Saracen technology in the romances, as Orcanes urges the Christian messenger to remember his own impressive arsenal, and the military feats he has achieved with this weaponry:

Orcanes: Stay, Sigismond. Forgett’st thou I am he
That with the cannon shook Vienna walls
And made it dance upon the continent.

[…]

Forgett’st thou that I sent a shower of darts
Mingled with powdered shot and feathered steel
So thick upon the blink-eyed burgers’ heads.

(I.i.86-8, 90-2)

The repeated imploring of the Christians not to “forget” demonstrates that this is a reputation already established, and it is a reputation that owes much to medieval romance. The treaty that follows is a dual proclamation of faith. The contrasting oaths of Sigismond and Orcanes directly recall the theological debates during Saracen / Christian combat in medieval romance:

Sigismond: By him that made the world and saved my soul,

The son of god and issue of a maid
Sweet Jesus Christ, I solemnly protest
And vow to keep this peace inviolable.

Orcanes: By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,
Whose holy Alcoran remains with us […]

(*2 Tamb*. I.i.133-8)

Sigismond implies that Christ made the world, which is theologically inaccurate, whilst Orcanes offers the most appropriate description of Islamic belief in the play, describing Muhammad as a "sacred […] friend of god." The Christian does not understand his own faith, but the Saracen has knowledge of his supposedly false one. Both use their religious identity to seal a treaty, with neither force willing to fight for its God.

The form is entirely subverted in the most crucial scene: the battle between Christian and Saracen forces. It is the Christian forces who betray the peace treaty, earnestly held by Orcanes' forces:

Messenger: Arm, dread sovereign, and my noble lords!
The treacherous army of the Christians,
Taking advantage of your slender power,
Comes marching on us and determines straight
To bid us battle for our dearest lives.

Orcanes: Traitors, villains, damned Christians!
Have I not here the articles of peace
And solemn covenants we have both confirmed,
He by his Christ and I by Mahomet?

(II.ii.24-32)

Orcanes is plainly horrified that the Christians have broken an oath taken in the name of Christ. His shock is shared by Gazellus, who remarks that the Christians appear to "care so little for their prophet, Christ!" (II.ii.35). Not only has a Christian leader blasphemed with ease, his actions have managed to horrify supposedly barbaric followers of "Mahomet". We have noted that in romance tales, exemplary behaviour was so indelibly associated with Christians that any example of good conduct from a Saracen warrior pre-empted a conversion. For an audience raised on such tales, this reversal was a daring intellectual challenge:

Orcanes: Can there be such deceit in Christian,
Or treason in the fleshly heart of man,
Whose shape is figure of the highest god?
Then if there be a Christ, as Christians say,
(But in their deeds deny him for Christ),
If he be son to ever living Jove
And hath the power of his outstretched arm,
If he be jealous of his name and honour
As is our holy prophet Mahomet,
Take here these papers as our sacrifice
And witness of Thy servant's perjury!
He tears to pieces the articles of peace.

(II.ii.36-46)

The play presents the familiar motif of an angry Saracen leader behaving violently, but this is entirely justified. It was undoubtedly shocking for an English audience to see a Saracen enraged at appalling blasphemy committed by European Christians. It

is easy to overlook the final lines of the verse above, where Orcanes addresses Jesus. Here is a pseudo-conversion, directly referencing the Saracen romance conversions that were so fundamental to the overall narrative. Instead of a contrite Saracen calling on Christ to witness his sincere conversion however, likely after smashing his idols or suffering defeat on the battlefield, Orcanes tears up a peace treaty that has been invalidated by the Christians, and calls on Christ to note his followers' behaviour. In a savagely ironic subversion of sectarian battle, it appears that Christ does heed the call of the scorned Saracens. Sigismond's forces are bested on the battlefield, and the King recognises the cosmic implications:

Sigismond: Discomfited is all the Christian host,
And God hath thundered vengeance from on high
For my accurst and hateful perjury.

(II.iii.1-3)

The play then stages the death of a justly defeated Christian leader. Sigismond's death makes a mockery of Christian penitence, as his final lines appear to be a cynical attempt to escape Hell:

Let the dishonour of the pains I feel
In this my mortal well-deserved wound
End all my penance in my sudden death,
And let this death, wherein to sin I die,
Conceive a second life in endless mercy!

(II.iii.5-9)

When Orcanes proves victorious in battle, he explicitly refuses to accept a cosmological victory. In a direct subversion of the romance pattern, Orcanes is

unsure as to whom he owes his success: “Now lie the Christians bathing in their bloods, / And Christ or Mahomet hath been my friend” (*2 Tamb*. II.iii.10-11).

Though the marriage of Tamburlaine and Zenocrate at the end of *Part I* is conventional to medieval romance, a sub-plot in *Part II* undermines the intermarriage motif. Theridamas proposes marriage to Olympia, the widow of an assassinated enemy captain. He spares her life though she has pleaded to die with her husband and son:

> Olympia (*kneeling*): Take pity of a lady’s ruthful tears,
> That humbly craves upon her knees to stay
> And cast her body in the burning flame
> That feeds upon her son’s and husband’s flesh.
> (*2 Tamb*. III.iv.68-71)

Techelles physically lifts her up and refuses her request on account of her physical allure: “Madam, sooner shall fire consume us both / Than scorch a face so beautiful as this” (*2 Tamb*. III.iv.72-3). Her beauty earmarks her as a potential convert, a familiar motif exemplified by Bevis of Hampton’s Saracen bride Josian, who is described in distinctly western ideals of attractiveness: “faire she was and bright of mod / As snow upon the red blood” (520-1). Theridamas responds to Olympia’s physical beauty conventionally: “Madam, I am so far in love with you / that you must go with us. No remedy.” (*2 Tamb*. III.iv.78-9). Olympia remains obdurate, insisting “I cannot love to be an emperess” (*2 Tamb*. IV. ii.49). Theridamas appears to be prepared to rape Olympia if she will not yield willingly: “I must and will be pleased, and you shall yield. / Come to the tent again” (*2 Tamb*. IV.ii.53-4). Olympia promises Theridamas a magic ointment which can prevent wounds. She invites him to stab her anointed throat in order to prove her claim. Once he has done this,

Theridamas realises he has been deceived: "What, have I slain her? Villain, stab thyself!" (*2 Tamb*. IV.ii.82). So *un*-enamoured is the widow that she has chosen suicide over intermarriage with the enemy. The inclusion of this episode undercuts Tamburlaine's successful marriage, and discredits the medieval model of intermarriage as a solution to political tension. Marlowe subverts Elizabethan culture by displacing the signposts of medieval Saracen romance. Saracen romance quests are solely concerned with the battle between Christianity and Islam (Metlitzki 160), and these allusions are redundant without sectarian battle.

"That Atheist" Tamburlaine?

Tamburlaine refers to a "God" but his own religious affiliation is strategically ambiguous. He is ostensibly *not* a Christian (nor are any of his subjects), and his burning of the Qur'an removes him from his initial affiliation with Islam in the most definitive way possible. Nor does he espouse the pagan beliefs typically associated with Islam, and professed by other characters, including Bajazeth: "Ah mighty Jove and holy Mahomet" (*1 Tamb*. V. i.364). Perhaps Greene's denouncement of "that atheist Tamburlan" which opened this chapter and is reiterated above is not inaccurate, at least in the early modern definition of atheism as unorthodox religious practice.

Tamburlaine is ostensibly Muslim at the start of *Part One*, but the text's conception of Islamic belief is itself ambiguous, and this is in part a direct continuation of a medieval tradition. Many medieval romances depict an "anti-Trinity of Muhammad, Tervagant and Apollo" (Conklin-Akbari 241). Whilst this is evident in Bajazeth, Zabina has a distinct conception of her deity. The empress seems to conceive "Mahomet" as distinct from God:

Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,

No fiend, no Fortune, nor no hope of end

To our infamous, monstrous slaveries?

(*1 Tamb*. V. i.242)

The notion of Muhammad, in whatever form, as distinct from a deity is shared by Orcanes, who recounts a common medieval myth about the mortal Muhammad's life:

By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,

Whose holy Alcaron remains with us,

Whose glorious body, when he left the world

Closed in a coffin, mounted up the air

And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof,

I swear to keep this truce inviolable.

(*2 Tamb*. I. i.137-42)

This episode reflects one of the many accounts of Muhammad propagated throughout medieval and early modern England, the tale of Muhammad's coffin floating within his tomb in Mecca. This account, which has no basis in Islamic history, was widely denounced as an elaborate hoax in Britain (Dimmock 2008 77).[99] Throughout the play Muhammad is defined as a god, as a pagan-god conflation "Ah mighty Jove and holy Mahomet" (*1 Tamb*. V. i.364), as a false idol, as a prophet, and a "friend of God" (*2 Tamb*. I. i.137). The play is deliberately ambiguous and contradictory in its treatment of Muhammad, as it draws on

[99] Both plays reflect the basic understanding of Muhammad in England, a perception which went unchanged from the crusade era to the early modern period. Muhammad was conceived as a renegade Christian, as a con-artist and a heretic. For detailed studies of Muhammad in medieval literature and culture, see Metlitzki 197-210, Vitkus *Turning Turk* and Taylor's chapter in Frakes, *Contextualising the Muslim Other*.

contradictory conceptions of the Islamic prophet propagated in the late Middle Ages.[100]

The most complex understanding of Muhammad is Tamburlaine's own. Tamburlaine abandons Islam, a conventional move, but this conversion is the most transgressive action of the text. As he elects to burn Islamic holy texts, he utters a telling sentence:

> Now, Casane, where's the Turkish Alcoran [Qur'an]
> And all the heaps of superstitious books
> Found in the temples of the Mahomet
> Whom I have thought a god? They shall be burnt.
>
> (*2 Tamb*. II.v.172-75)

The phrase "thought a god" implies that Tamburlaine has previously worshipped "Mahomet" but is now renouncing his faith. This is subversive in two ways: he is not converting to a superior belief system, Christianity, and he converts whilst magnanimous in victory. This is a direct inversion of the medieval Saracen trope, where the Saracen denounces Muhammad at the moment of his defeat.

Vitkus observes that Tamburlaine's subsequent Qur'an burning goes beyond the destruction of idols common in medieval Saracen romances, and is an attack on the theology of Islam (2003 10). The first *Tamburlaine* play presents the medieval defeated Sultan, but the second reverses the familiar image of Saracen inferiority by representing an *undefeated* Saracen desecrating Islam's holiest object - not a false idol, but scripture. It is not a conventional attack on taboo paganism, but an attack on an artefact common to all Abrahamic religions: written scripture. Tamburlaine does

[100] For informed speculation on Marlowe's knowledge of Islam, see Archer.

not renege his "false" Islamic belief in favour of the "correct" Christian ideology: he abandons all religion in favour of self-aggrandisement and pursuit of worldly gains.

In a drastic and deliberate departure from the martial encounters with superior Christians depicted throughout medieval romance, every character in *Part One* is Muslim. The plays provoke the audience to ask how they characterise Islam when it is not "other" to anything else, and invites Marlowe's English Protestant audience to suspend their own beliefs when viewing Tamburlaine in a "tragic glass" (*1 Tamb*.I.i.7).

Tamburlaine's burning of the Qur'an is not only an inversion of the medieval defeated Saracen motif, it is also an innovative subversion of medieval and early modern accounts of conversion. Tamburlaine's conversion to an apparent atheism undercuts English Protestant superiority. The tale has utilised the format of a medieval narrative associated with conversion, but he has not chosen conversion over seemingly divinely-appointed military defeat, and it is not the orthodox conversion anticipated by an audience familiar with Charlemagne romances and contemporary depictions of the Islamic world. Tamburlaine lays waste to the near East, humiliates the Turkish emperor, usurps the Sultan and converts opposing warriors to his cause; however he does so not with the justifiable aim of spreading Christianity, but his own cult of personality. Tamburlaine is the Saracen other and Christian crusader combined in one terrifying presence, and his only conversion is the complete abandonment of religion.

Conclusion: Early Modern Saracen Romance

Duxfield has observed that "perhaps the most idiosyncratic feature of Marlovian drama, after the 'mighty line' is its persistent ambiguity" (2005 1). This statement is never more applicable than to the figure of Tamburlaine. This chapter has demonstrated that recognisable aspects of medieval romance contribute significantly to this subversive drama. Through skilful manipulation of the Saracen romance, Marlowe offers a protagonist who steadfastly refuses to allow any semblance of Christian superiority, and undoes centuries of propagandistic Christian romance. Evolutionary biologist Dawkins defined the "meme" in human genetics (206-7) and this idea has been applied to romance by Cooper (2004 3) and Blackmore. The *Tamburlaine* plays evoke, then reposition the genetic literary code of medieval romance. Rather than the rigid sectarianism of medieval Saracen romance, the *Tamburlaine* plays probe and prompt us to "reassess our assumptions about the dramatic world" (Martin 1978 248). Tamburlaine is an interlocution into Saracen romance. He is a dual-embodiment of the chivalric and monstrous, and his adventures in a homogenous Islamic East deconstruct his audience's conceptions of inter-faith interaction. One can easily dismiss how restrictive the Elizabethan world really was, even dress was regulated by the sumptuary laws. Tamburlaine's flouting of every established convention, from dress to nationality and religious identity was extremely provocative. The plays do not suggest a figure like Tamburlaine could exist outside of the theatre, yet Marlowe uses familiar medieval narrative to offer his audience the opportunity to think differently.

Marlowe's (medieval) Stage Jew

Introduction

"If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him."

Sartre's quip that "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" led Spector to state that in fifteenth century England, Jews did not exist, and English dramatists *did* invent them.[101] The dramatists created the stage Jew by "consciously selecting specific models of the Jew, and altering them to serve the didactic purposes of the plays" (6). No figure had consistently captivated the English literary imagination like that of the Jew. Though there were no Jews physically present in England post the expulsion in 1290, there was a deeply prevalent construct of the Jew.[102] Shapiro describes early modern England as "surprisingly preoccupied with Jewish questions" (1). Shapiro goes on to observe that these "Jewish questions" were used in order to "answer English ones" (1). It is a cliché to observe that the basis of identity is the definition of the "self" in opposition to the "other". For centuries in the Christian West, the quintessential "other" was the Jew, and thus the Jew is repeatedly used in attempts to resolve English issues. This is most evident in literature. Rosenberg notes the "fixed and recurrent caricature of the Jew" across centuries of English literature (8). The process of stereotyping Jews began in essence with the New Testament, but a very specific stereotype emerged from the twelfth-century onwards. Hirsch believes that any study of Jews in early modern England must consider "the indigenous anti-Semitic textual and visual narratives inherited from England's medieval past" (141). Hirsch observes the rich "cultural and material legacy" held by Jews in England, long after their physical expulsion in the late

[101] Satre's quote from *Anti-Semite and Jew*.
[102] The actual number of Jews in England was negligible. For an overview of debates on this issue, see Shapiro.

thirteenth-century and well before their readmission under Cromwell in 1650 (141). In the interim period, the Jew became a powerful figure in the English imagination.

Whilst many critics have struggles to reconcile the apparent virulent anti-semitism within the play, none have asserted that the play deliberately undercuts itself in this regard.[103] In the introduction to her edition of *The Jew of Malta*, Gill argues that the play has "no known sources or antecedents […] for its plot" and argues that the Jew himself, Barabas, has "no counterpart in life or literature" (ix). This is not entirely the case. Whilst the complex characterisation of Barabas is unique in Elizabethan drama, he is an archetypal stage Jew, a direct product of medieval literary tradition. It is the defiance of this inherited tradition that renders Barabas a subversive figure. Marlowe takes the medieval Jew figure in its entirety, and places him in a post-Reformation context, on an island where inter-faith social and economic interactions are the norm. In doing so, Marlowe interrogates this literary mold, and cleverly subverts his audiences' sense of Christian superiority. Gill has argued that the character of Barabas is "far richer than any of the stereotypes that he [Marlowe] could have inherited from popular tradition" (xii). However, Barabas is unique because he *defies* these conventions; on the surface, he appears to entirely fulfil the medieval Jew convention but undermines the entire concept. This chapter will demonstrate how the deliberately distorted evocation of the medieval Jew stock figure subverts ingrained habits of early modern thought. I will begin by illustrating the central components of this character, before examining the mystery play Jew and its integral function. I will then illustrate how Marlowe evokes and completely inverts each aspect of the medieval Jew stereotype. Finally, I will

[103] For various examples of critical engagement with the play's apparent anti-semitism, see Brandt 2013, 11-15.

demonstrate that Marlowe's stage Jew is a direct subversion of the function of the stage Jew: to imbue Christian unity.

The Medieval 'Jew'

In order to appreciate the subversion of medieval material in Marlowe's work, we must read the play within its original context. It is impossible to prove what texts Marlowe actually read: one can only conclusively state what was available in close proximity, and what was pervasive and popular in his time. Thus, I do not argue that Marlowe is reacting to one particular Jew figure, in the way many have argued that Shakespeare's Shylock is modelled on Marlowe's Barabas. Instead, this section will prove that the caricature of the "Jew" originating in the Middle Ages was generic enough to have been well-known to any Elizabethan. The following section will demonstrate that this figure was instantly recognisable to Marlowe's audience, not from one text but from a range of media. Marlowe need not have read one specific text because this figurative Jew was an imagined enemy personified in everything from plays to stained glass windows.[104] All that was required to evoke this multivalent image was a single noun: "Jew". Medieval literary depictions of Jews are to the modern reader anti-Semitic and distasteful, and thus regularly dismissed. The modern reader's efforts to distance themselves from problematic texts can often preclude accurate assessment. It is necessary for a contemporary reader to anticipate that the function of this material is not to attack Jews, indeed there were none present to read these narratives, but to use the image of the Jew as an instructional tool for the Christian reader. Through reading about the evil nature of Judaism, Christians were reminded of the superiority and authentic "truth" of their own beliefs. When

[104] For a selection of illustrations see Higgs-Strickland and Hirsch.

informed of the miraculous conversion of an evil Jew, a Christian reader or listener has their own faith bolstered. It is through this common enemy that homogeny is encouraged, if not actually achieved. The Jew, imagined on stage or page served as a safe outlet for articulating and extracting doubt from the Christian population. In resolving the denials of the Jews, potential uncertainties in the minds of the audience could be resolved covertly. We shall see that *The Jew of Malta* strategically challenges each aspect of the medieval received concept of the Jew, and in doing so evokes only doubt about the viability of demonising Jews.

This section will take a sample of medieval portrayals of Jews from various texts selected based on prevalence and availability, to re-establish the frame of reference utilised and subverted in *The Jew of Malta*. These key texts include Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (c.1390) and Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1320), as both provide evocative examples of medieval attitudes to Jews. I shall acknowledge Chaucer's infamous Prioress' Tale (c.1400) as a literary example of popular anti-Semitism. I consider *Piers Plowman* (c.1380s-90s) and examine in detail a range of conversion tales. I will take two very different "Jew" tales from Higden's *Polychronicon* (c.1380s), the Jew of Toledo and the Jew of Tewkesbury, as a core example. The three later texts all appear in manuscript form in the Parker Library.[105] As stated, my aim here is not to place any particular text in Marlowe's hands, nor place him in the audience of a certain performance; instead, the texts outlined here will illuminate the prevalent cultural stereotype known to Marlowe and his audience, and demonstrate Marlowe's subversion of this imaginative figure in *The Jew of Malta*. The final section will consider the medieval stage Jew in the mystery play, arguing that the figure of the Jew developed from this genre, where the Jew served

[105] *Piers Plowman* is available in Middle English as CCCC 293. Higden's *Polychronicon* appears in Latin in CCCC 259, 117, 21, 164. Trevisa's famed English translation of the *Polychronicon* appears in CCCC 354.

as a vehicle for the extraction of doubt in Christian audiences. I will demonstrate that Marlowe's subversion extends beyond stereotypes to invert the core meta-narrative of Christian and Jewish interaction, and offers a veiled but potent challenge to Christian hegemony and Christian identity. Marlowe presents Barabas as an instantly recognisable medieval Jew, but subtly disrupts each aspect of this character to imbue a subversive interrogation of Christian culture.

Firstly, we must familiarise ourselves with the medieval Jew, the figure still prevalent in Elizabethan England. The admonishment of Jews in Western culture stems from the accusation that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. This charge became "the prime excuse for and explanation of the wave of medieval persecution" (Richards 1991 89), and this is reflected in literature. Gower states in *Confessio Amantis* that the Jews were the crucifiers of Christ whom "thei hinge and slowhe upon the crois" (V.1722) and were as a result cast out of God's grace "Whereof parfit of here Lawe / Fro thanne forth hem was withdrawe" (V.1723-4) and condemned to a pitiful, nomadic existence:

> So that thei stoned of no merit,
> Bot in truage as folk soubgit
> Withoute propreté of place
> Thei liven out of Goddes grace,
> Dispers in alle londes oute.
>
> (v.1723-9)

The sins of the Jews are emphasised in Dante's poetic journey through hell:

> […] and the rest of the council
> Which sowed so many evils for the Jews.
>
> (*Inferno* xxiii. 122-3)

In *The South English Legendary* (c.1200s-1350), the Jewish population's responsibility for the crucifixion is reiterated, as though the appalling acts committed in the tales were not horrific enough: "Ich biluue on hure [the Virgin Mary] sone that the Giues honge on the tre" (229). In certain popular legends, the Jews are not only associated with the implements of Christ's suffering- they create them. In one legend, the Jews commission a smith to "Make thre nayles stif and gude / At naile the prophet on the rode" (Glassman 27). In the late thirteenth century, tales began to circulate on the continent which purported that Jews sought to injure the consecrated Host, so determined were they to inflict even more suffering on Christ (Freeman 189).[106] The most significant extant text is the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, already recognised as a potential source for Marlowe, though critics neglect to consider other medieval texts.[107]

The Host-desecration accusation fuelled grotesque legend of the blood libel. This persistent anti-Semitic accusation purported that the spilling of Christ's blood left the Jewish people insatiable for Christian blood, which they used in their rituals. Despite many popes denouncing this rumour as false, the imagination of the masses was gripped (Perry 2009 3). The morbid fascination with these claims is stimulated in literary accounts of supposed factual events. The most famous of these literary constructs is arguably Chaucer's Prioress. The Prioress' Tale has been a source of debate for many scholars, and serves as a clear example of the worst of medieval anti-Semitism. As Chaucer's aim is to include a variety of genres and popular plots (Mann xx), the representation of these anti-Semitic stories in *The Canterbury Tales* serves as evidence of their popularity in the late fourteenth century. The tale is

[106] These tales of Jews seeking out and destroying hosts spread across the continent to England, but few examples remain post-Reformation.
[107] The *Croxton* play is included in Thomas and Tydeman's source book, but is only one of two pre-sixteenth century texts noted by the editors.

introduced with a lyrical and poetic prologue, representing the highest form of poetic expression, before it quickly descends into a hate-filled diatribe. The tale narrates the abduction and brutal slaughter of a Christian schoolboy, in a clear allusion to the Hugh of Lincoln tradition.[108] Chaucer's "litel clergeoun" (503) infuriated a Jewish ghetto by singing the *Alma redemptoris* as he passed: "Ful murily than wolde he singe and crye / 'O *alma redemptoris*' evermo" (553-4). The Jews were enraged by the singing, and "conspired" (565) to silence the boy. The boy is grabbed by a Jew who brutally slits the child's throat and dumps his lifeless body in a sewer: "This cursed Jew him hente, and heeld him faste, / And kitte his throte, and in a pit him caste" (570-1). Miraculously, the saintly child continued singing whilst dead and mutilated: "Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright, / He *Alma redemptoris* gan to singe / So loude that al the place gan to ringe" (611-3). The body of the child is discovered, and all the Jews are put to death. Though the tale of the "yonge Hugh of Lincoln" (684) emerged over a century prior to Chaucer's Prioress' account, she states the events occurred "but a litel while ago" (686). This belligerent depiction reflects Marlowe's audience's inherited literary interaction with Judaism: blood-thirsty narratives reflecting and provoking extreme hatred.

In narratives like The Prioress' Tale, the Jew is easily identifiable due to his monstrous appearance. Art Historian Higgs-Strickland muses that non-Christians were depicted as not only following the "wrong" religion, but they were also "literally ugly as sin" (29). In what she describes as a "pictorial code of rejection," Higgs-Strickland points out the consistent demonisation of Jews in art and literature. The trademark monstrous feature of the Jew was an oversized nose. This originated

[108] The Hugh of Lincoln tradition refers to the myth of a Christian child whose death resulted in an accusation of ritual murder against the Jewish community in Lincoln. Lincoln cathedral became a shrine to the martyred "Little Saint Hugh", and was frequented by many devotees. Throughout the late Middle Ages a number of these groups sprang up around England.

in the early Middle Ages, as this stereotype had emerged prior to the expulsion (Bale 2006 16). This trope appears to have begun with Judas, who was often described as a bearded red head "fitted out with large nose, red hair and a red beard" (Rosenberg 22). In medieval drama, Judas traditionally wore a red wig (Roston 26). In the York play *The Conspiracy*, Judas' meretricious nature is evident in his facial features. A Porter states "Yea, some treason, I trow, / For I feel by a figure in your false face / It is but folly to fast affection in you" (160-2). In tandem with an oversized nose, medieval texts describe Jews as having a distinctive noxious odour, known as the *foetor judaicus*. The "Jewish smell" was often contrasted with the "odor of sanctity" attributed to saints and holy figures, and it was said that the smell could only be removed by baptism (Richards 1991 102).

The stated reason for these physical deformities was the Jew's association with Satan.[109] The many physical abnormalities attributed to Jews, such as male menstruation, chronic haemorrhoids requiring treatment with Christian blood, and the distinctive *foetor judaicus*, were products of their demonic physicality (Glassman 33). In addition to being demonic themselves, Jews consort with demons. One of the most popular fourteenth-century accounts of the Jewish-Satanic alliance was the sermon tale of Theophilus, an aspiring Bishop, who consults a Jew who was a "known agent of the Devil" (32).[110] This figure acts as a demonic travel agent, organising excursions to hell, and mediating with Satan on behalf of paying clients. In the N-Town cycle play *The Council of the Jews* the council meeting is presided over by a demon. We will soon observe each of the motifs outlined above reworked in Marlowe's play.

[109] See Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews*.
[110] For a detailed account of the narrative, see Hall.

These medieval caricatures develop from the demonic blood thirsty Christ-killer to generally murderous Jewish doctors. There was an established tradition of depicting Jews as "physicians, apothecaries and herbalists" with skills in both "healing and poisoning" (Vitkus 2000 37). An ongoing discourse on the continent repeatedly accused Jews of poisoning water supplies in tandem with spreading the plague. This served as both a literary and literal image, as depictions of Jews in the act of well-poisoning appeared all over central Europe. This embedded belief came to the fore the year after Marlowe's death. In 1594, Roderigo Lopez, personal physician to Queen Elizabeth, was accused of plotting to poison the monarch at the behest of Philip II of Spain. Yet the alleged traitor was not accused of being a secret Catholic, as one may expect considering his patron. He was in fact accused of being a Jew. The prevalence of the medieval "bogeyman" is apparent in this incident, as Lopez' supposed religious identity serves as evidence for the alleged treachery.

Jews were repeatedly associated with the practise of avaricious and destructive usury. Preachers warned their flocks that while honest occupations were created by God, usurers were the invention of the Devil (Glassman 33). The behaviour of Judas is attributed to this inherent greed. In the York play *The Conspiracy*, Judas is overjoyed with his receipt of thirty pieces of silver in exchange for Christ: "And thereto jocounde [happy] and joly I am" (281). In a more complex rendering of the Christ-killer image, the Jew was a necessary implement in Christ's passion, one of the "arma Christi" depicted in Christian art and literature. Hirsch considers the place of the "spitting Jew"(141) in this arsenal but early medieval narrative fused this relationship even further, depicting Jews incessantly spitting at Christians in literature as well as the art examined by Hirsch.

Finally, the Jew could be reconciled with Christian society as a convert, though he often proved to be a recalcitrant one. It is often overlooked that the ultimate aim of these literary interactions with Jews is not physical annihilation, but assimilation of the Jew within the narrative. This reformist ambition dates to the theology of St. Augustine, who purported that the conversion of the Jews was essential for mankind's overall salvation, and thus argued that at every opportunity Jews should be encouraged to convert (Richards 1991 90). This conversion proves to the Christian reader the authenticity of their doctrine. Langland explicitly states in *Piers Plowman* that a Jew or Saracen has "the heritage of hevene as any man Cristene" (X.354) and should be repeatedly encouraged to convert and save their soul. The narrative includes what can only be described as a conversion fantasy, as Langland describes the ultimate assimilation of non-Christians: "And the myddel of a moone shal make the Jewes torne, / And Sarsynes for that sighte shul synge *Gloria in excelsis*" (III.326-7). This rather amusing scene of global choir performance was entirely earnest, and presented as achievable to Christian readers, provided that they were steadfast in their faith. According to Langland, this worldwide conversion is entirely a one-way street: Christians could never authentically convert to the other "false" religions: "For though a Cristen man coveited his Cristendom to reneye, / Rightfully to reneye no reson it wolde" (XI.125-6). Langland makes a curious assertion that "Reason" would prevent any Christian from "legitimately" reneging on his indisputably correct beliefs. Christianity is so indelibly correct it can never be disputed, unlike Judaism. Conversion often came after an intellectual debate with a righteous Christian, a genre known as the *Disputatio*, where the Jew is converted or at least silenced by the superior Christian interlocutor. These themes proliferated

well into and beyond the early modern era, and informed the understanding of the "Jew" in Marlowe's lifetime. This ideology will be overturned in *The Jew of Malta*.

The image is clearly illustrated in Higden's *Polychronicon*. This text appears in the Parker library (CCCC 259), and in no less than one-hundred and seventeen other manuscripts, and countless print editions. The narrative can also be found in a range of monastic manuscripts and it also proved to be a popular source for many sermons (Bale 2006 48).[111] The collection was revered from its completion circa 1342 to the Elizabethan era as an authoritative moral history, an extended exemplum for generations of English subjects. This text remained undisputed as a historical source in Marlowe's lifetime. Book VII of the text includes a well-known conversion narrative and a less-savoury account of the fate befalling Jews who fail to heed Christ's call. *The Jew of Tewkesbury* aptly demonstrates the latter literary model. The tale concerns a Jew, who falls into a "latrine" on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.[112] In respect of the Sabbath, the Jew refuses to extract himself and he is duly punished for this preposterous refusal. The following day, Sunday, Richard de Clare refuses to allow the rescue of the Jew, as it is now the Christian Sabbath. Thus the Jew dies in a pit of human excrement. The metaphor is not subtle: Jewish theology is false and practise of this doctrine can end only in death, the most gruesome and unpleasant death. Yet Jews are of course permitted to act to save their own lives on the Sabbath, as are Christians, so it is ultimately this individual Jew's obdurate nature which causes his demise.[113] The exclusion of Jews from God's mercy is reiterated throughout English narratives; though these generic plots

[111] For a detailed list of extant manuscripts, see Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*.
[112] Toilet or sewer, also translated as "privy" by the *OED*.
[113] Luke 14:5: In response to a complaint regarding his curing of a man on the Sabbath, Jesus answers the Pharisees by stating "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?"

explicitly condemn only Jews, Christians are implicitly warned that God is merciful but also decisive in who will be spared.

The *Polychronicon* is one of many medieval texts to present Jewish enemies at times of discord. The year covered in Book VII is 1258. This year was a troubled one, marred by the Barons War and ensuing civil unrest. The Jew tales serve to quell the inter-Christian tension that forms the bulk of this chapter in Book VII, by directing the reader's attention to the common enemy. The chapter closes with an offer of redemption for these wilfully ignorant Jews, albeit on entirely Christian terms. *The Jew of Toledo* concerns a Jew who discovers a book in which lines of "hebraice, Graece, Latine conscriptum" (Higden 8 244-5; Bale 35).[114] The Jew is overcome by what he reads and converts to Christianity as a result. He is converted entirely by the written word.

The appeal of this narrative to sixteenth century reformers is obvious, as Protestantism was a religion of literacy and literary engagement. The conversion of the Jew was a literary event that invited the Christian reader to witness the majesty of God's grace to those who repent. These tales of conversion are incredibly basic: often no more than forty lines long, they contain only the sparsest details. The Jews, and very often the Christians, are unnamed: they are reduced entirely to their religious identity. These tales appear in collections designed as aids to sermon preaching, so it is conceivable that these accounts were only to serve as frames for a minister or preacher to develop. The speaker could add details relevant to his own audience, and embellish the tales as he saw fit. In the pre-Reformation period, the

[114] "Lines of Hebrew, Greek and Latin were written".

conversion of a Jew was depicted as a miraculous occasion; often the Jew converts after witnessing a miracle, or an appearance of the Virgin Mary.[115]

Some examples will serve to reconstruct this literary image. A popular tale collection, *Mirk's Festial* (c.1380s), contains a couple of pertinent examples of the miraculous conversions of Jews.[116] This collection was primarily used in sermon preaching throughout the liturgical year, illustrating the clear function of the Jew in the inculcation of Christian belief. One tale presents a Jew who converts after seeing a lily blooming from a wine pot. In another tale in this collection, a French Jew is captured by thieves, only to be saved by the Virgin Mary. The Virgin shows the Jew a vision of heaven and hell, and this convinces the Jew to convert. In Middle English narratives, Jews are at enmity with the revered Virgin Mary, as much as they are with Christ. Although the mother of Jesus saves Jews, she is also depicted as formidable against those who refuse her divine mercy. A tale in BL Addit. MS 39996 describes how a Jew attempted to desecrate an image of the Virgin, before he is suddenly struck dead, presumably as a result of divine intervention. The attack on images of the Virgin demonstrates the petty and completely arbitrary nature of Jewish malice against Christianity. The same manuscript contains another tale of Jews struggling to remove an image of the Virgin from a wall, but they are unable to do so. In another tale known as *Toledo* or *The Jews of Toledo* (not to be confused with the previous *Jew of Toledo* tale) the Virgin Mary's disembodied voice addresses a congregation in the cathedral at Toledo, complaining that the Jews are still free to insult her son. Later in the tale Jews are caught attacking a waxen image

[115] Bibliographic accounts of all the tales discussed here are available in volume nine of the *Manual of Writings in Middle English*. Hartung, ed. 1993.
[116] *Mirk's Festial* was compiled by Shropshire prior John Mirk and attained nationwide popularity.

of Jesus.[117] In an early version of *The South English Legendary*, a cross bleeds after being stabbed by a Jew (521-34). The tale is followed by a more elaborate narrative in which a bleeding cross stabbed by Jews emits blood which cures diseases, once again pre-empting the conversion of the Jews involved: "To the bischop huy wenden a-non: and lieten heom cristini alle" (565).[118]

Jew tales also appear in the version of *Legendary* in the Parker Library. In CCCC 145, the section titled *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross* depicts a Jew who is saved from the Devil by making the sign of the cross. The Jew subsequently converts.[119] Later, a Jew prays to Saint Nicholas to safeguard his unattended property. Though Christians steal the Jew's goods, the Saint appears to them and forces them to return the stolen items. Naturally, the Jew converts "and the Gyw let cristni anon and turned al to Godes lore" (452). Interestingly, this account shows a Jew becoming a Christian as a result of being robbed by a Christian, an unusual departure from the standard narratives depicting evil Jews versus righteous Christians. In this instance, the wrongdoing of the Christians does not invalidate the Jew's good faith in the saint, and the saint intervenes in the dispute.

It is worth pausing here to note that there is no detail provided about any of these Jews, they are never named, nor described; their religious affiliation is the sum of their entire identity. The term 'Jew' is all the information that is provided, and this is apparently sufficient for the audience to understand the character that is being presented to them.

[117] The tale appears in the *South English Legendary*, the 1438 *Golden Legend* and is listed, though not present in the Vernon manuscript.
[118] Quotes from Early English Text Society edition, ed. Horstmann.
[119] All quotes from this text are from the Early English Text Society edition, eds. D'Evelyn and Mill.

By far the most persistent tale across Europe was that of the Jewish Boy.[120] It is also represented visually across a range of media (Higgs-Strickland 124). The narrative concerns a young Jewish boy who attends an Easter mass with his Christian friends, and receives the sacrament. When his father discovers this, he throws the boy into an oven and tries to immolate him. The boy is protected from harm by the Virgin Mary. The Jewish father is himself thrown into the oven, where he burns physically and by implication, metaphysically in hell. The tale assures the audience of the maternal love and mercy of the Virgin, but equally warns of her ultimate authority. Naturally, conversion tales involving the Virgin Mary or Catholic saints were all but entirely erased post-Reformation, and only a handful survive in extant manuscripts. These cultural narratives offer a simple choice for Jews therein: convert or die. This model is replicated on stage. The Jews in the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament* are confronted by Christ and immediately confess the full horror of their recent desecration of the host. The leader Jonathas declares:

> And I aske Crystendom wyth great devocion
> Wyth repentant hart in all degrees
> I aske for us all a generall absolucion
>
> (848-50)

Significantly, the Jews appeal to Christendom, not to Christ. It is the forgiveness and acceptance of the living followers of Christ that they seek, in a self-gratifying fantasy of Christian dominance. The Jews immediately present their contrition in physical form, as the stage directions state: "Here the Jewys must knele al down." The former anti-Christian aggressor continues to reveal the depths of their depravity:

> For that we knele all upon owr knees;

[120] This tale appears in no less than 68 manuscripts across the continent. In Middle English, it appears in the Vernon manuscript, BL Addit. MS 39996, and in multiple tale collections including both editions of the *Golden Legend*, *An Alphabet of Tales*, and in the *South English Legendary*.

For we have grevyd owr Lord on ground
And put Hym to a new paynfull Passyon,
Wyth daggars stryckyd Hym wyth grevos wounde,
New naylyd Hym to a post, and with pynsonys
Pluckyd Hym down.

(851-856)

After the Reformation the Host desecration myth lost relevance; Protestant rejection of transubstantiation rendered the Host insignificant, and miracle narratives were tainted with suspicion. Yet the concept of the malignant Jew attacking Christians remained.

Dramatising Disbelief: The Mystery Plays

The preceding tropes were replicated in oral tales, manuscripts and tale collections and formed the ideological construct of the 'Jew' in Christian Europe. The most pervasive imagining of the Jew in specifically English culture was the mystery play. As discussed in Chapter Two, the mystery plays presented a cycle of biblical narratives in chronological order with each pageant depicting a different event, from the Fall of the Angels to Judgement Day. The plays were individually staged and funded by a craft guild. Thus the name "mystery" reflects both the content of the play, the "mysteries" of Christian faith, and the context, as the plays were performed by those who practised "mysteries" or crafts. The convergence of secular and sacred was further underlined by the pairing of a play with a particularly relevant guild. For example, in the York cycle the shipwrights staged *Noah's Ark*, the Nailer's *The Crucifixion*, and the Cutler's *The Conspiracy*. These connections serve a deeper purpose than mere punning or advertising the performers' wares, though this was a

factor. The appropriate assignment of play and performers reflects the sacred nature of the crafts and their place within divine history (Beadle & King xvi). Linking the characters with contemporary medieval professions also served to obscure the fact that all of the individuals depicted were Jews (Roston 70), in contrast to the depiction of the evil tormentors of Christ, whose Jewish identity is always emphasised. The plays drew in the spectator and involved the audience at every level. In *The Entry into Jerusalem* it is through the streets of York that Christ walks; it is the local audience who form the crowds cheering him. This deeply personal connection is forged in the presentation of the Jews in the dramas. This is the dramatic depiction of Jews Marlowe would have been familiar with, in tandem with the folkloric motifs outlined above. Marlowe could not have read these play scripts as they were not in circulation outside of the guilds, but he likely attended performances as we have seen in Chapter One. These performances offered the most wide-spread and enduring image of Jews in their treatment of Christ, one that specifically targeted non-literate audiences. The mystery play Jew was presented to an audience socialised to accept these belligerent depictions of Jews, but the genre does not make much reference to wider conceptions of Jews. It is my argument here that the Jew in the mystery play is not a generic enemy but a particular localised threat: they are the deniers of Christ, they refute the doctrine that the cycle presents to the audience, and it is how they articulate these doubts that is so significant. This is evident in the variant depictions of Old Testament characters: the Patriarchs are precursors to Christianity and are deemed reasonable, the New Testament Jews are philistines and irrational zealots, clinging pathologically to the old laws and foreclosing any possibility of change. The primary Jew figures are Judas, the betrayer of Christ, Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests who condemn him, but

those who arrest and torture Christ are explicitly all Jews. It is these Jews that primarily inform the medieval Jew caricature. These sadists display a clear Jewish identity with repeated references to "oure law" and "oure sabot day". The terms "oure laws" or "oure lore" appear five times in a single York play, *Christ Before Pilate (1): The Dream of Pilate's Wife*. In the subsequent play, *Christ Before Pilate (2): The Judgement* the phrase is used four times. In the N-Town *The Council of the Jews* it is used seven times. It is re-emphasised at the opening of the York play *The Crucifixion* "lords and leaders of our law" (4), leaving the audience in no doubt that it is in the name of Judaism that Christ is condemned. This repeated emphasis on the Jewish law reinforces both the Jewish identity of Christ's enemies and their defining characteristics: fanatical, stringent adherence to old laws and disbelief in Christ. Crucially, they are not misbelievers or heathens, they reject Christ based on their "entrenched disbelief" as a result of "blind adherence to the reasonable and the natural" (Spector 7). The defining feature of the mystery play Jew is not inherent evil, but simple disbelief in accounts unsubstantiated by empirical evidence.

The omnipresence of the disbelieving mystery play Jew is reflected in many early modern ballads. *A new ballad of king John and the Abbot of Canterbury* considers the listener's beliefs about Jews as established: "For thirty pence our Saviour was sold / Amongst false Jews *as you have been told*" [emphasis added].[121] A ballad dating circa 1563 bemoans "the Jewes of kind / Beleved it not, but were styl blynd".[122] Their disbelief raises questions that many medieval spectators may have, and serves to externalise doubts which are present within Christianity. Mystery play Jews angrily refuse to accept second-hand accounts of miracles performed by Jesus.

[121] Circa 1672-1696, from Pepys Library. Accessible in digitized form at *The Broadside Ballad Archive.*

[122] *The complaint of a sinner, vexed with payne, Desyring the joye, that ever shall remayne. After W.E. moralized.* By William Birch. Preserved in the Huntington Library and accessible in digitized form at *The Broadside Ballad Archive*.

In the Towneley play *The Scourging*, the torturers of Christ demand that he demonstrate the miraculous powers he is said to have, and attack him when he does not attempt to prove himself:

III Tortor: Where –on servys thi prophecy thou tells us in this case,
And all thi warkys of great mastery thou shewed in dyvers place?
I Tortor: Thyn apostles full radley ar run from the a-rase;
Thou art here in oure baly withoutten any grace
Of skap.
II Tortor: Do, rug [shake] him

(143-8)[123]

In the subsequent play *The Resurrection*, Annas is still trying to find an explanation for Jesus' reappearance, suggesting simple grave-robbing by Jesus' followers: "He hase no might to ryse and go / Bot his dyscypyls steyll his cors us fro" (173-4). The Jews deny Christ through practical concerns, they reject the entire concept of faith, accepting empirical evidence only. The plays externalise and resolve this basic disbelief, demonstrating to the viewer the indisputable nature of Christian doctrine, and the consequences of attempting to dispute biblical accounts. The mystery play Jew serves to air out and exorcise the latent anxieties of the English audience, and so acts as a vehicle to unify and bolster Christian faith. The Jew is the vehicle through which disbelief can be extracted from the Christian audience.

[123]All quotes from the Towneley plays are from Happé's edition, *English Mystery Plays*.

The Jew of Malta

The preceding outline is intended to reconstruct the image of the Jew in medieval popular culture. We can see that the stereotype was unchanged since the Middle Ages and current in Elizabethan England. Rosenberg observes that when Shakespeare chose to stage the Jew in *The Merchant of Venice* "he was in possession of all the facts: the type was fully constituted as he found it, and it had been for centuries" (33). This is equally true for Marlowe. For early modern dramatists, the stereotype was there, a writer only needed to avail themselves of it (36). Marlowe not only avails of but strategically utilises these long-running medieval anti-Semitic stereotypes. Marlowe's characterisation follows the same pattern as the original medieval tales and plays, and retains the same function, that is, to engage the intellectual and religious consciousness of the receiver, but it subversively fails to cleanse them of doubt and affirm Christian unity. Marlowe's Jew represents all the central tenets of the medieval Jew, and is at first glance not apparently innovative. He is the externalised "other" to the Christian audience, and they are initially invited to unite in laughter and derision at his excessive evil. Barabas further conforms to the medieval Jew caricature as the play progresses, but the audiences' understanding is complicated. Barabas follows each medieval and contemporary characteristic to the letter, yet spectacularly fails to fulfil the original premise of this figure: as a unifying common enemy for Christians. Marlowe stages the Jew figure to achieve the exact opposite affect: to provoke doubts instead of eradicating them. Like Tamburlaine, Marlowe's Barabas subverts the idea of the religious "other" as a whole, turning the focus onto Christians and Christian doctrine.

The Jew of Malta opens with a prologue, delivered by "Machevill." The presence of a prologue usually indicates a moral tale will follow (Lunney 2002 71).

Curiously, Marlowe's prologue diverges from generic expectations as it implores the audience to avoid taking a prescribed view, and is delivered by a figure recognisable to Elizabethans as completely *amoral*. Machevill invites the audience not to observe a specified moral lesson but to judge Barabas according to their own standards, not to accept him based on faith, but on empirical evidence offered in the play. Thus it reverses the entire premise of the mystery play. The Prologue discourages an automatic condemnation of Barabas because he is a scheming Machiavellian:

> I crave but this, grace him as he deserves,
> And let him not be entertained the worse
> Because he favours me.
>
> (Pro. 33-5)

The play is already subverting generic expectation by using the Prologue to elicit sympathy for a figure instantly recognisable to the audience as evil. Scholarship has long associated Barabas with morality figures, as he acts out the implication of his character-defining name. He is a Jewish criminal, just like the biblical Barabbas who was released in place of Christ.[124] Barabas appears an entirely medieval figure, but, the medieval character type, outlined above, has been altered to create a distorted and challenging departure from the earlier portrayals. Firstly, we see that Marlowe's Jew is explicitly a member of the wandering outcast group described by Gower, but he accepts his situation and does not conceive it as punishment:

> They say we are a scattered nation;
> I cannot tell, but we have scrambled up
> More wealth by far than those who brag of faith.

[124] "Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when they gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt 27. 15-17). The prisoner named Barabbas is also mentioned in Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 18.

(I.i.118-20)

Barabas appears to be defending himself against the audience's implicit assumptions about his status, the very beliefs exemplified by Gower. He appears both aware and accepting of his ascribed position as a Jew under Christian rule. He does not demonstrate any of the Machiavellian ambition promised by the prologue:

> Give us a peaceful rule; make Christians kings,
> That thirst so much for principality.
> I no charge, nor many children,
> But one sole daughter, whom I hold as dear
> And all I have is hers.

(1.i.132-7)

At the outset, Barabas is a relatively benign figure, though evidently greedy and morally questionable, he is not involved in nefarious activity at the outset. The audience shall soon see his avaricious desires completely eclipsed by those of the Christians on the island.

Another distinctive feature of the Jew in medieval visual art was a distinctive hat. While this is less significant than the "Jewish nose" discussed earlier, it is part of the same pictorial tradition, which Barabas continues. Ithamore jokes "That hat he wears, Judas left under the elder when he hanged himself" (IV.iv. 66); this links Barabas right back to the original villainous Jew who betrayed Christ. The more common attribute of the large nose is repeatedly emphasised in the play, with a curious twist. Critics agree that Barabas likely sported an oversized comedy nose and red wig, in typical stage Jew fashion (Munson-Deats 2013 27; Vitkus 2006 61), and a near-contemporary source, Rowley's *A Search for Money* (1609) refers to the large size of the "Jew of Malta's nose" (Simkin 149). Despite the long history of the

"Jewish" nose, in Marlowe's play this serves as a comedy prop rather than a stage convention ripe for exploration. This is apparent when Barabas commits to educate Ithamore in the role of villain. Ithamore's response invites the audience to laugh as he conflates Barabas' evil nature with his ugly appearance: "O, brave, master, I worship your nose for this!" (II.ii.177). The distinctive "Jewish smell" described earlier is evoked in the play, as Ithamore sneers that Barabas has not "put on a clean shirt since he was circumcised" (IV.iv.74). However, the theme of the Jewish nose and smell are conflated and subverted completely, as it appears Barabas's giant protuberance has enabled *him* to smell the Christians:

> Ithamore: Look, look, master, here come two religious caterpillars.
>
> Barabas: I smelt 'em ere they came.
>
> Ithamore: God-a-mercy, nose!
>
> (IV.i.22-4)

This is a striking inversion of the medieval Jew, further implying that from a Jewish perspective, Christians smell as pungent as the *foetor judaicus*. In addition to the recognisable smell, Barabas is presented as a scheming Machiavellian. Like the medieval Jew, Machiavelli was repeatedly associated with the devil. Ithamore recognises Barabas in precisely these terms. He credits not Barabas for the forged letter plot, but Satan: "Why, the devil invented a challenge, my master writ it" (III.iii.18). Whilst engaged in poisoning, which we have noted is another typically 'Jewish' act, Ithamore sniggers at his master:

> Barabas: What, hast thou brought the ladle with thee too?
>
> Ithamore: Yes, sir; the proverb says, he that eats with the devil had need of a long spoon. I have brought you a ladle.
>
> (III.iv.59)

It is immediately apparent that Barabas will fulfil the premise of villainy outlined by Machevill and implied by his Jewish identity. He proudly boasts to Ithamore of a lifetime spent fulfilling every medieval anti-Semitic motif:

> As for myself, I walk abroad o' nights,
> And kill sick people groaning under walls:
> Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
> And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
> I am content to lose some of my crowns;
> That I may, walking in my gallery,
> See 'em go pinioned along by my door.
> Being young, I studied physic, and began
> To practise first upon the Italian;
> There I enriched the priests with burials,
> And always kept the sexton's arms in ure
> With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells:
> And after that I was an engineer,
> And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,
> Under the pretence of helping Charles the Fifth,
> Slew friend and enemy with my strategems.
> Then after that I was a usurer,
> And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
> And tricks belonging unto brokery,
> I filled the jails with bankrupts in a year,
> And with young orphans planted hospitals,
> And every moon made some or other mad,

And now and then one hang himself for grief,

Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll

How I with interest tormented him.

But mark how I am blest for plaguing them,

I have as much coin as will buy the town!

(II.ii.179-205)

The familiar image of the wandering Jew opens Barabas' self-congratulatory diatribe, and it seems Barabas fulfils another medieval stereotype as he is an adept well-poisoner. Two critics have tentatively suggested a medieval resonance in this speech. Richards describes this passage as the "culmination" of the stock figure (1991 102) and Rosenberg suggests this is "presumably an echo" of the early medieval well-poisoning accusation (47).

Barabas continues to list every accusation levelled against the Jews for centuries, eager to claim credit for himself. Barabas also murders in more intimate circumstances as a doctor who slaughters his own patients, and we have noted how prevalent the image of the homicidal Jewish doctor was in Elizabethan England, evidenced by the Lopez case.

Not content with this practise of ritual murder, Barabas re-trained for a second career as an engineer, who chooses only to engineer the deaths of as many Christians as possible. It is apt that he took advantage of a weakness in Christian foes during the Reformation in the era of Charles V (1519-56). This episode further underlines that Barabas is a disruptive, rather than unifying enemy. The fatal conflict between Don Mathias and Lodowick, easily engineered by Barabas, demonstrates this further. Barabas it seems also appears in times of internal Christian strife, but he only exploits and exacerbates schism. The Christians of Malta fail to unite against

Barabas due to their own interests. Whilst conforming to the medieval Jew stereotype, Barabas instigates only Christian disunity.

Needless to say the Jew has acted as an avaricious money lender, and delighted in the suffering of his Christian debtors. Barabas' embodiment of materialism provides further entertainment, as he conflates his wealth with paternal love. Upon Abigail's retrieval of the hidden gold, he declares "O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!" (II.i.54) before he comically "hugs his bags". His emotional reunion with his coins rather than his only child invites laughter rather than fear, and serves to reassure the audience that he is a comical villain, at least in this instance. This humorous aside draws the audience in and invites them to laugh with disdain at the familiar figure, though later their actions will be questioned.

Even from a comic figure, Barabas' lengthy confession seems improbable. While there can be no doubt about his murderous intentions, one wonders how Barabas could have had *the time* to carry out such atrocities in many locations. The play can be seen to infer that Barabas' boasts are just that: boasts. He is trying to carve out a niche for himself within the narrow social confines that the Christian world allows him, to hold his own "infinite riches in a little room" (I.i.37). Barabas evokes medieval stereotypes, but at this point in the play he has yet to enact them. It is my contention that this speech in II.ii is intended to be read as boastful, not as a serious admission. The evidence for reading Barabas' speech as hollow is abundant. Firstly, we must consider Barabas' onstage audience, in this case Ithamore. He is speaking, not to a wide audience, but to another social outcast who has presented himself as evil. Moreover, Ithamore is a slave who has no authority to question Barabas' claims. The conversation can easily be represented as two men bragging about their exploits. It is crucial to note that Barabas' speech ends in an invitation to

Ithamore to boast "But tell me now, how hast thou spent thy time?" (II.iii.202). Most critics quote this speech as a stand-alone verse, but it is not, it is rather only half of a conversation.

The presentation of Barabas' crimes, as a long list, also appears ridiculous. He lists one horrific act after another with questionable detachment, further increasing the possibility that this speech is shallow bragging. Whilst Barabas presents himself as a malicious Jew, the possibility that he is fabricating, or at least grossly exaggerating, his own evil deeds invites the audience to question the plausibility of the tales they have heard about Jews. Marlowe's Jew is not seen to carry out any of these particular atrocities on stage, in a departure from the extant tradition. Everything from Host desecration to brutal murder is staged before the eyes of the medieval audience; the homogenous crowd of Catholic spectators in the late Middle Ages were never left in doubt as to the savage and blood-thirsty nature of Judaism.

While the death toll resulting from Barabas' proposed activities must be high, child-murder is curiously absent from his curriculum vitae. As we have noted, horrific Jewish attacks on Christian children were a central theme of literary depictions of Jews. Richards conclusively states that the "longest-lasting, most notorious, and most damaging charge" against the Jews was ritual murder (1991 102). This was the most pervasive stereotype of Jews in England. The Hugh of Lincoln case remained the "standing example in the folk mind" of evil Jews (Dundes 43), yet this is omitted from Barabas' already ludicrous account. In a soliloquy which recounts all of the accusations against the Jews, the exclusion of the central one seems deliberate. The murder of children could not be rendered humorous or farcical, thus it has been excluded from Barabas' exaggerated *curriculum vitae* of evil. This omission gives further weight to my claim that the speech is intended as

farce. This accusation is simply too horrendous to ever be made comic, thus Marlowe omits it from this speech, and from the character of Barabas generally. However, guilty of such heinous crimes or not, Barabas is suspected of them. Friar Jacomo implores Friar Bernardine to reveal the terrible crime Barabas has committed, immediately suspecting this exact type of ritual murder: "What, has he crucified a child?" (III.vi.49). It is a cleric who accuses Barabas of child-murder, a possible reference to the monastic tradition of building shrines and beatifying children allegedly murdered by Jews. Here, the Christian figure makes an assumption about a Jew that is, despite Barabas' extensive misdeeds, ultimately unfounded, perhaps implying a critique of this practise.

Attentive audience members will also note that this speech is a radical departure from Barabas' opening soliloquy, in which he dismissed any kind of scheming. There is a marked contrast between Barabas' statements in the opening scene and his boasting to Ithamore. His increasingly ludicrous statements can be read as a reaction to the extortion of the Christian governor. Barabas here inverts the medieval Jew trope. Where the unnamed Jews of the mystery plays and tale collections moved towards conversion thanks to the actions of superior Christians, Barabas becomes increasingly evil as a result of abominable treatment at the hands of Christians.

In further contrast to the stock figure medieval Jew, Barabas is an individual. The medieval Jew is an instantly recognisable figure, who serves to represent a "scattered nation" of enemies to which Barabas seems to belong. Yet Barabas is explicitly *not* representative of any interest group; he is an individualistic Machiavellian, and does not act on behalf of other Jews. Barabas is introduced alone, while the other Maltese Jews appear only in groups, as noted by Barabas "why flock

you thus to me in multitudes" (I.i.143). They even speak in a chorus: All three Jews: "O my lord, we will give half!" (I.ii.78). Barabas interacts with this group but always remains external to it, repeatedly distinguishing himself from those he calls his "brethren" (I.ii.92). The mostly unnamed Jews briefly present a very different account of "Jewishness" to Barabas, with one bemoaning "most of us are poor!" (I.ii.57). These Jews appear as passive victims of exploitation rather than inherently evil and bloodthirsty. Thus the text makes a very clear distinction between the stage Jew prototype of Barabas and the Jewish community on Malta. Barabas may present most medieval stereotypes of the Jew, but he does not represent Jews. In a startling departure from standard depictions of Jews in both mystery plays and tale collections, Marlowe's innovation is underscored by Barabas' separation from the Maltese Jewish community.

The soliloquy delivered by Barabas in II.ii is further complicated by a more recent reformist practise. It could in fact be recognised by the theologically astute as entirely orthodox. The Reformation turned previously concrete standpoints into malleable arguments, creating heated debates on minute aspects of Protestantism. One argument concerned how best to confess one's sins to God in order to gain entry to Heaven. Protestant theology advocated an unusual practise of self-accusation. As God is omniscient, it would be counterproductive for any penitent to try to defend themselves or excuse one's sins, as God already knows their motivations and the circumstances in which the sin took place (Ryrie 53). It is in fact better to admit the full horror of one's deeds, even to exaggerate them, and plead for God's mercy; as Faustus' scholar friend notes "mercy is infinite" (V.ii.45). This practise was termed "aggravation" (Ryrie 53).[125] Rather than self-defence, termed "extenuation",

[125] For a series of examples of the preaching of this idea, see Ryrie 2013.

exaggerating, aggravating one's sins was advised. In confessing sins, one should "make them as great and foule in their natures and circumstances as thou canst" (Ryrie 53; Scudder 88). Aggravation was a concept founded in role-play. Just as a defendant within the judicial system expects the judge to listen to all sides and make a rational decision, the sinner expects that if one fulfils the role of penitent that God will in turn fulfil his duty as a merciful father (Ryrie 53). Foucault argues that through confession, the accused takes part in the "ritual of producing penal truth" (1975 38).[126] Through driving the action with a confession, the penitent becomes an instigator of their own judgement, and paradoxically gains some modicum of control over their fate. Barabas explicitly plays to the role of the Jew, but the Christian society he is restrained in contains no powerful written scripture that will inspire him to change, and perhaps it contains no merciful deity either. His best option is to play to type with exaggerated or fabricated confessions. Barabas' boasts serve to undermine the earlier subjugation of the Jew. Instead of a contrite confession, Barabas boasts of his exploits with glee. Yet paradoxically, in attempting to prove his evil "otherness," Marlowe's stage Jew behaves in line with orthodox Protestantism.

Marlowe's Jew problematises Protestant conceptions of Judaism. Barabas' interactions with Christian authority represent him as undoubtedly obdurate, but highly methodical in his thought process. Barabas rejects Christianity logically, but instead of refusing to accept second hand accounts of miracles, he refuses the dominance Christians have on Malta. He explains his rejection of Christianity succinctly:

Rather had I, a Jew, be hated thus

[126] Foucault is of course referring to the modern penal system, but this idea is relevant to early Protestant theology when the latter adopts this judicial form.

Than pitied in a Christian poverty;

For I can see no fruits in all their faith

But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride,

Which methinks fits not their profession.

(I.i.111-115)

Barabas' reasoned rejection of Christianity is not only logical, but completely understandable to the audience who soon witness his persecution at the hands of avaricious Christians. Unlike the tale of Saint Nicholas defending a wronged Jew, Marlowe's Malta offers no deity to right Christian wrongs, or to negate Barabas' behaviour. Barabas is blocked by abhorrent Christians from undergoing any genuine conversion. Barabas' only encounter with Christianity is in the form of self-interested individuals, his only exposure to scripture is when it is used to extort money from him. Barabas' disbelief is potent because there are no viable counterpoints to his logical rejection of Christian society.

Like his mystery play forebears, Barabas functions only in relation to Christian characters. The first encounter between Barabas and his Christian nemesis Ferneze recalls the medieval *disputatio* genre popularised in medieval conversion texts. Ferneze, the Christian governor of Malta, is issued with a demand from the Ottoman emperor for "the ten years' tribute that remains unpaid" (I.ii.7). The outcast Jew is confronted by the Christian governor and a theological debate ensues. Yet this discourse is motivated entirely by fiscal concerns, as Ferneze argues a biblical precedent for Jewish taxation. A knight informs Barabas that the Jews must "with us contribute" (I.i.60), to which Barabas responds with the query "How, equally?" (61) prompting Ferneze to deploy scripture:

No, Jew, like infidels.

For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,

Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,

These taxes and afflictions are befallen,

And therefore thus are determind;

Read there the articles of our decrees.

(62-7)

An officer then reads a decree ordering the Jewish community of Malta to contribute half of their net worth, or face a choice between forced conversion or having all their wealth seized. Barabas indignantly exclaims "Will you then steal my goods?/ Is theft the ground of your religion?" (I.ii.97-8). Ferneze apparently reinforces his divine precedent:

No, Jew, we take particularly thine

To save the ruin of a multitude:

And better one want for a common good,

Than many perish for a private man.

(I.ii.99-102)

This notion of prioritising the "common good" again evokes scripture: John xi. 50 states: "Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." This theological debate evokes the *disputatio* model, but Ferneze has entirely manipulated the text. In scripture, the "private man" who suffers for the "common good", dying for the sins of humanity, is Jesus. Barabas is not compared to the crucifers of Christ but to Christ himself. In Ferneze's warped evocation, Barabas is not the evil crucifier of Christ, but a Christ-like martyr, persecuted by "pharisaical expediency" (Sanders 48). After the initial dispute, a knight reiterates that "'Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin" (I.ii.112).

Barabas admonishes these statements: “Preach me not out of my possessions” (I.ii.114). While he recognises the injustice of the situation, Barabas is an oppressed outsider in Malta and knows there will be no recourse. Ferneze concludes his theological extortion with blatant hypocrisy: “Excess of wealth is a cause of covetousness: / And covetousness, O, ’tis a monstrous sin!” (I.ii.126-7). Barabas opts not to convert, and this action can be seen as not an entirely illogical clinging to false doctrine, but a logical refusal to accept oppression. It is decided that in light of his obdurate refusal to comply, Barabas will lose all he has. Like the medieval disputes which do not result in a seamless conversion, the interrogation concludes with the silence and oppression of the Jew. Marlowe’s disputation clearly illustrates that the Christian’s “superior” position was a complete falsity, yet this did not prevent his victory. The Christian ruler is victorious not because of the authenticity of his doctrine, his quoting of scripture is merely perfunctory, but because he holds the power. This episode turns the medieval mode on its head, completely inverting the established narrative pattern.

Ferneze has expertly manipulated biblical narrative for his own secular ends and the Jew is subjugated under Christian politics. Yet Barabas remains resolute and it is this unrelenting defiance of Christian rule that will constitute the action for the remainder of the play. This steadfast refusal to convert, or to accept Christian dominance, is also a medieval theme. The scathing satire of Jewish resolve found in the *Jew of Tewkesbury* narrative recorded in Higden’s chronicle is evidence of this. It is this image of the Jew clinging desperately to his flawed faith even as he dies in a pit of human excrement that dominated the “ostensibly stagnant” perception of Judaism for centuries (Bale 52). Barabas follows the medieval Jews in his recalcitrance, but unlike the truly hapless Jew of Tewkesbury, his position is one that

can invite as much sympathy as derision. As the Christian treatment of Barabas becomes increasingly unchristian, the audience is naturally left wondering why he does not simply leave Malta. Upon his hilarious reunion with his bags of gold, Barabas elects not to flee the island on which he suffered so much abuse but to re-establish himself as the outcast within Maltese society. He announces "I have bought a house / As great and fair as is the Governor's; /And there in spite of Malta will I dwell" (II.iii.13-15). He has also reiterated his earlier boasts of wealth, this time emphasising his financial achievements "in spite of swine-eating Christians" (II.iii.7). Later as he is dragged away by Maltese officers, Barabas boldly exclaims "I'll live in spite of you" (V.i.40). After this second defeat, Barabas narrowly escapes with his life, as his body is thrown over the city wall. His determination to "spite" Christians at any cost, including his own safety and well-being, is puzzling to a twenty-first century reader. However, an audience more acquainted with the medieval tradition would immediately identify the implicit notion of illogical Jewish resistance. Yet in Marlowe's play, Barabas is shown as refusing to accept cynical plots to drive him from his home, rather than resisting the true Christian doctrine. The spiteful nature of the Jew would also be recognised from the popular miracle tales, but in sharp contrast to the earlier depictions, the target of Barabas' spite is not a revered deity, or an innocent child, but an equally malevolent powerful male leader who has wronged him. The introduction of the wrongful action of the Christian undermines the characterisation of the recalcitrant Jew. Though he is scheming and obsessive, Barabas cannot be seen as inherently unjustified in his actions. As in the medieval model, conversion was the only escape route offered to Barabas:

> Ferneze: Why, Barabas, wilt thou be christened?
>
> Barabas: No, governor, I will be no convertite.

(I.ii.84-5)

Yet this option offered by Ferneze comes with a qualifier: "Then pay half" (I.ii.84). The apparent greed of the Christian oppressor nullifies any claim to theological authority. It is not just Ferneze who uses Judaism as a pretext for financial gain. Barabas' horde of gold is lusted after by many other Christians on the island, including the supposedly pious and impoverished Friar Jacomo:

> O happy hour,
> Wherein I shall convert an infidel,
> And bring his gold into our treasury!
>
> (IV.i.166-8)

Conversion and the simultaneous acquisition of wealth are indelibly linked even in the mind of a lowly friar. In a startling reversal of the medieval models outlined, Jacomo is only one of many avaricious Christians targeting the Jew. Barabas' angry declaration that "some Jews are wicked, as all Christians are" (I.ii.113) is not the evil scheming of a villain but a fair observation based on his experience. This grumbling line aside, Barabas is resigned to his fate in a textbook scene of cynical manipulation. He is obdurate in his refusal to convert, but this can also be seen as an admirable resistance because Ferneze's extortion is so unjust.

Barabas' insistence on maintaining his Jewish identity in underscored by another non-Christian who seemingly converts with ease, Ithamore. Ithamore is an apparently Muslim slave, purchased and later unofficially adopted by Barabas. Like Barabas, his name is poignant and evocative, but evocative of religious ambiguity. Preedy has noted "Ithamore" suggests a nomadic and equivocal religious heritage. "Ithamar" is the biblical name of both a noble Christian bishop and the son of the (Jewish) patriarch Aaron in Exodus VI (78). Preedy convincingly argues that the

added ending "more" is a pun on "moor", a classification of race *and* Islamic identity. The name Ithamore spreads its bearer across all three Abrahamic religions with no set loyalty to any, and he indeed moves between them with ease.

The only character whose inter-religious movement is fixed is Abigail. Like Barabas, Abigail is also a biblical name: Abigail the Carmelite is the mother of Daniel, mentioned in the first book of Chronicles. Abigail is also the name of David's sister, and of his wife. This name is explicitly Jewish owing to its Old Testament origins, but with links to Christianity through David, who is an ancestor of Christ. Abigail is a revered Jewish woman of the Old Testament: "Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb" (1 Samuel 25.3). The biblical Abigail is also beholden to a male relative of dubious character. Following the death of her drunken and gluttonous husband (1 Samuel 25.36), Abigail weds David: "And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife" (1 Samuel 25.42). Abigail's wisdom and good counsel aid David, and he acknowledges his gratitude to her:

> And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:
>
> And blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.
>
> (1 Samuel 25.32-33)

In *The Jew of Malta*, Abigail is the virtuous and unwitting cause of vengeance and blood-letting. The name Abigail also reminds the Protestant audience of admirable

Jews in the Bible, and thus problematises the demonising of a faith that is the basis of the Christian faith. The names of the characters link them to biblical Jews, who are not all villains. We have seen in Chapter Three that positive depictions of non-Christian characters earmarked them for conversion. This conversion does occur in the case of Abigail, but the name itself alludes to a noble, contentious Jewish woman who *remained a Jew*. The Bible offers positive depictions of Jews who are valued and admired within the Christian tradition, without conversion. Referencing this is a subversive challenge to the convert-or-die motif stamped across English literature throughout the medieval and early modern periods. In the naming of Barabas and Abigail, Marlowe contrasts the medieval stereotype derived from the New Testament with the admirable Jews of the Old Testament, and in doing so expands his audience's understanding of 'Jews'.

Critics have neglected to note that the biblical names are applied to most of the main characters of the play. Don Mathias is another evocative biblical name. Matthias, who would later be canonised by the early Christian church, is an obscure figure in the New Testament. The brief mention of him is hugely significant though, as he is elected to replace Judas as one of the twelve apostles. The Book of Acts accounts the event:

> And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
>
> And they prayed, and said, Thou, lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,
>
> That he may take part this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

> And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.
>
> (Acts 2. 23-26)

Marlowe's Don Mathias also has to bear the consequences of a Jew's seditious betrayal, but he pays with his life.

The biblical names appropriated by Marlowe are not just ambiguous, but also potentially deceptive. Ithamore is seemingly a dissembling multiple convert. Ithamore's statement of his origins is revealing:

> Barabas: Where was thou born?
>
> Ithamore: In Thrace, brought up in Arabia.
>
> (II.iii.131-2)

Hutchings uncovers the implication of this reply: that Ithamore was a Christian boy captured by Saracen invaders, forced to convert and serve in the Ottoman military. This practice was titled "devshirme" and was well known throughout Europe (429). The practice became so widespread that the Turkish elite deemed Muslim-born Turks ineligible for military or civil service (429). Marlowe's audience may have been aware of this particular Ottoman threat, and it appears from his response that Barabas certainly is:

> Ithamore: In Thrace, brought up in Arabia.
>
> Barabas: So much the better; thou art for my turn;
>
> An hundred crowns, I'll have him; there's the coin.
>
> (II.iii. 132-3)

Barabas recognises Ithamore's record of disingenuous conversion, and deems Ithamore as suitably qualified for his "turn" of false profession. Though Ithamore does not formally convert on stage, his profession shifts with his loyalty, and as

often. Barabas' adoption of Ithamore can be considered a "presumptive conversion" to Judaism and his later alliance with Bellamira and Pilia-Borza as a "quasi-conversion" to Christianity (Preedy 81). Ithamore's many conversions are as strategic as they are frequent, "turning" from Christian boy to Muslim soldier, from Muslim slave to Jewish son and later to Catholic lover. His statement to Barabas that his profession is "what you please" (II.iii.168) is taken to refer to his occupation, but can also be interpreted as his religious affiliation, which is evidently highly adaptable. Barabas also takes pleasure in the irony of a former Christian, converted to Islam out of policy, once again acting in a plot against Christian authority (430). His desire for wealth and social status is his only genuine expression, revealed through his lust for the courtesan Bellamira: "I would give a hundred of the Jew's crowns that I had such a concubine" (III.i.27-8). Though he too is distinct from the Christian power structures on the island, and though he remains a slave, Ithamore's constantly shifting positions allow him to escape the persecution meted out to the island's Jews. He attempts to transcend servitude by theft and blackmail, and until his apparent poisoning at the hand of Barabas he had managed to extract himself from oppressive masters. He presents a more effective model of malleable religious identity, and the implication that biblical identities cannot be fixed into an evil Jew / virtuous Christian binary.

In a startling parallel with the central mystery play event, the audience witnesses Barabas' apparent resurrection from the dead. An officer presents his apparently lifeless body to Ferneze, who, in terms recalling the mystery plays assures them that Barabas' mysterious death is divinely sanctioned: "the heavens are just / Their deaths were like their lives; then think not of 'em" (V.i.53-4). Ferneze refuses Barabas the dignity of a burial, instead ordering his body to be

unceremoniously flung from the city walls. As soon as the corpse has been abandoned on stage the audience witness Barabas' apparent resurrection, before he declares "Well fare, sleepy drink!" (V.i.61) and reveals he has faked death with a sleeping potion. It appears Barabas has strategically poisoned himself to stage a non-miraculous return from the grave, a subtle but direct reversal of cycle drama. Mystery plays present Christ's resurrection from the dead and prove to aggressive stage Jews and doubtful spectators alike that Christian doctrine is indisputable. Barabas builds and heightens scepticism in his audience, his "resurrection" presents a possibility that a return from death *can* be an illusion.

Conclusion: Didactic Judaism

Ultimately, Marlowe's Jew actually does follow Christ in losing his life for the common good: his actions save Malta from a Turkish invasion (Riggs 265). Barabas' death in a firing caldron recalls the hell mouth of the morality play, and the grisly deaths of medieval Jews in the sewer and oven. Yet the action around it presents Barabas as a scapegoat rather than as a belligerent antagonist. The play enables, but crucially does not compel, the audience to disengage from accustomed ways of viewing and responding in the playhouse (Lunney 2002 123). Marlowe's stage Jew recalls the medieval tale motifs and mystery play interactions, but in doing so completely reverses the function of these narratives. Marlowe's Jew acts only to undermine Christian homogeny and superiority. Whilst maintaining the appearance of the medieval Jew caricature, Barabas fails to be the savage antagonist expected by his audience and required by anti-semitic propagations of Christianity. Barabas offers an acceptable adherence to logic in the face of a farcical Christian "truth" and acts as a subverted Christ on the irreconcilably heterogeneous island of Malta and on

the London stage. In this, the play cautions against blanket demonisations of religious others, a most pertinent interlocution.

Marlowe's Medieval Monarchies: Myth and History

Introduction

After *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe's second apparent use of medieval sources is his only history play, *Edward II*. Simpson argues that medieval historiography is inherently different to the early modern conception. Renaissance historians write their histories by emphasising a "break" from the past, whilst their medieval forebears conceive of history through continuity (2002 170). Marlowe's dramas react to contemporary historical engagement, not only those accounts seeking to break with the recent medieval past, but to politicised re-appropriations of historical texts. This chapter examines two plays which engage historical narrative: *Edward II* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. This may seem an odd pairing. Hopkins has examined the two plays together in a study of mobility and nationhood (2010) arguing that, whilst they "may not at first sight appear to intersect with ideas of Britishness," both plays are "radically configured by an interest in the relationship between nationhood and geographical location" (324). In addition to location, nationhood is most often established through a shared history. In Marlowe's England, history is represented within a culturally-specific genre: the history chronicle. *Edward II* recounts the reign of a medieval English monarch, derived from both medieval and contemporary Tudor history chronicles, but interrogates assumptions inherent in this category. In this, medieval sources are more significant than their provision of an interesting plot: this chapter argues that Marlowe dismantles the scaffolding of the history chronicle in order to subversively question received representations of historical events. This section delineates not a single 'authoritative' chronicle source for Marlowe, but a genre: that of the moralised, providential and distinctly medieval chronicle.

After the chronicle, the series of myths originating in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1160s) comprised an equally topical quasi-historical genre.[127] This chapter will examine firstly *Edward II* and secondly *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and demonstrate that in both plays Marlowe utilises medieval accounts to subversively de-stabilise contemporary ideology.

Queering *Edward II*

In his seminal 1998 edited collection, Whitfield-White aims to "capture the range and intensity of interest in Marlowe during the 1990s" (i). The collection's title *Marlowe, History and Sexuality*, is illuminating. As the title suggests, "sexuality" is prominently placed because, in Whitfield-White's own words, "Marlowe was as interested in the body natural as he was in the body politic" and also because Marlowe presents "sex and gender-related issues" in defiance of tradition (i). Bromley represents generations of scholarship when he states "to many readers of Renaissance texts, Christopher Marlowe's name serves as a by-word for dissident sexuality in the period" (29). This by-word is still in use today. In his book *Queer Edward II*, Jarman states that he chose Marlowe's play "solely for its subject," that subject being a "gay love affair" (26). This is not the play's subject, nor is it indicative of what Marlowe or his audience deemed the "subject" of the play. Rather, Jarman utilises an Elizabethan tragedy to trumpet the "queer" political identity of interest in the early 1990s. This is not the first time the play has been defined by contemporary attitudes to homosexuality. It was very rarely produced before 1967, when private homosexual acts were legalised in Britain. Since then, concerns of homosexuality have dominated readings and productions of the play. The play has

[127] For a succinct introduction to the tradition in literature, see Cooper 2004, 23-4.

come to read as a tale of persecuted homosexuality, however it is anachronistic to deem any early modern as "homosexual" or "heterosexual" in the same binary terms we use in the twenty-first century.[128] This chapter does not consider why or even if Edward is punished for his homosexuality; it instead examines social, not sexual, transgression through a subversive engagement with historiography. Thus, this chapter re-focuses criticism of the play onto the first of Whitfield-White's subjects: history. I have played on Jarman's title in this section as I argue that Marlowe's Edward is more *queered* than queer: it is the transgressive behaviour of outwardly-orthodox members of his court that lead to his deposition, not his actions alone. Thus, the play criticises a system, not an individual monarch. Kamp has argued that Elizabethan history plays "on the whole […] foreground unity and cultural orthodoxy […] through a coherent literary representation of […] the monarch" (2). Whilst this view has been challenged (Hill 197), it is representative of how the history play is often perceived. The play engages the cultural preoccupation with monarchy, the definitive topic of history chronicles. As Hill explains: "The presence or absence of the monarch appears to be a potent, if metonymic signifier of history *per se*" (196).

Edward II stages the reign of a medieval monarch, and it is through this historicity that it offers a subversive double-narrative. The play appears to uphold the divine right of kings in staging an episode derived from didactic histories, sympathising with Edward, and apparently denouncing his regicide. Yet in nearly every scene the play undermines the very foundation of monarchy: divinely-appointed class hierarchy. Contemporary criticism fails to consider that *Edward II* is

[128] For a thorough exploration and explanation of early modern sexualities, see Bray. For an account of the development of contemporary attitudes to sexuality, see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Vols. 1-3.

above all a history play, and it is this genre, this tradition of presenting the narrative of the shamed medieval monarch that Marlowe principally engages.

Considerations of the play as a history have been brief. Hopkins acknowledges the role of the history play in nation-building (2010) but asserts that Maley is the only critic to discuss *Edward II* in the context of a history play concerned with "Britishness" (Maley 98-99; Hopkins 2010 326). The critical status quo is that Marlowe's primary source for *Edward II* is Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), with extensive use of Stow's *Annals* (1580).[129] This thesis does not refute this standpoint, rather it nuances it with a consideration of the multiplicity of sources available to Marlowe.[130] If one examines Marlowe's sources, both medieval and contemporary, the importance of the medieval history chronicle as a genre, not merely as a narrative source, becomes apparent. The generic markers of medieval chronicles include the situation of the events within biblical history; Christian dating schemes; and the rationalisation of all events within the context of divine providence. There is also a marked interest in individuals, and individual morality and good judgement.

It is crucial to observe that any history play has a "double historical background": the period which it depicts and the period in which it is staged (Barker 111).[131] *Edward II* is not entirely a counter-factual history, it generally follows the narrative of the chronicles quite closely, with the exceptions of some crucial deviations in historical characters, as we will observe. Yet it is subverted English

[129] Shumake has demonstrated that Marlowe likely used the later editions of both chronicles. Slaughter's unpublished PhD. thesis is the most extensive investigation of Marlowe's sources for the play.
[130] Tydeman and Thomas have considered Fabyan's *Chronicle* (1559) and Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* (c.1422) as potential sources for Marlowe, and his wide reading is self-evident. See 341-50.
[131] This chapter will distinguish between variant sources by denoting Marlowe's characters as "Marlowe's," the chronicle figures by author or title, and factual information regarding a historical figure as "the historical Edward", etc.

history, in that it presents the account without the necessary qualifiers of divine providence and social order. Where a chronicle would offer structure, Marlowe presents a series of events that is at most haphazard. It is history not as it was, not as an alternative, but an examination of what is actually possible within the remit of English politics, when one explores the system objectively. Ribner states that Marlowe "sees no pattern in history" (1957 131) and Sanders continues this argument, asserting that because of this lack of historiographic awareness it is "exceedingly difficult to get hold of the pattern in the play" (1968 122). As Logan has recently pointed out, neither critic considers that "no pattern" might be Marlowe's intention (2015 131). By contrast, Logan is concerned with exploring ambiguity as a dramatic technique (2015 136).

This ambiguity hinges on the subversive use of the Edward II narrative as a means of interrogating propagandistic uses of English history. Gransden adroitly states: "History was useful. It could be used to persuade. As propaganda it was of service to the kings and to their opponents alike" (xiii). Marlowe's play dismantles this ubiquitous chronicle format in order to make more subversive ideas apparent. Marlowe stages a historical account from the chronicles, but his subversive alterations and arrangement of this material extracts the narrative from the genre, staging the actions of a failed ruler and ambitious nobles in an entirely indifferent, divinely-redundant universe.

In the following discussion, I examine the medieval and sixteenth-century historiography of Edward, noting its preservation in the Parker Library and Elizabethan chronicles, before demonstrating how the play uses a familiar medieval narrative to undermine the very ideological principles it appears to uphold: divine social order.

Medieval Chronicles

History chronicles are simply records arranged chronologically by year. Under each year, notable events could be recorded for posterity, but more importantly, rationalised within a Christian providentialist worldview.[132] Providentialist histories purport that all worldly action is governed and pre-determined by an omnipotent deity, and we shall see Marlowe's history play undermine this exact notion. The medieval world view conceived the universe as being full of signs, portents and prophecies, and it was the duty of the chronicler to interpret them for his readers (Given-Wilson 21). Gervase of Canterbury asserted that the role of the chronicler was to "reckon by true computation the years of the lord and the events listed under them" (quoted in Given-Wilson 21). These events included the lives of kings, important battles and miracles, which served as proof of divine providence - on which all chronicles were based. The providential chronicle took shape from the twelfth century, and would remain the definitive mode of historical writing from the earliest written accounts to the late sixteenth century. The chronicle is an essentially medieval genre that survived into the sixteenth century, but one that was utilised in support of monarchy. It is a medieval genre that survived, but it survived as a model of orthodoxy.

By 1500, the chronicle had become "a kind of civic commonplace book" (Woolf 1998 325) in which multiple events and points of information could be recorded. Reflecting the concerns of the sixteenth-century English population, chronicles always rationalised events within a context of divine providence. As Taylor asserts "all medieval history was universal history because it was a record of the acts of God in history" (1987 40). Given-Wilson simplifies it: "Chronicles

[132] For a general introduction to the format of medieval chronicles, see Woolf, 1988. 323-5.

'proved' things" (73). Chronicles served to inculcate Christian teaching in the same way as cycle plays; by demonstrating the guiding hand of God in all human affairs.

Chronicles offered an explanation for events, particularly negative ones (194). The texts were clearly instructional, as history served as an educational tool, as a barometer of exempla by which they could measure the "successes and failures of later kings" (165-6). Thus, the most important purpose of the chronicle was to "put history to work in the service of monarchical power" (Given-Wilson 153-4). As medieval chronicles dealt most often with contemporary events, Taylor observes that the medieval chronicler was most concerned with "the world in which he lived" (40). Whereas chronicles such as Matthew Paris' *Chronica Maiora* (c.1300) spanned all of Europe, by the fourteenth century there was a marked "narrowing of interest" and exclusively English chronicles emerged (Taylor 1987 41). By the Elizabethan era, the focus would be entirely on English political orthodoxy.

Higden's *Polychronicon* (1348-81) was, in the words of Woolf, one of the "most familiar accounts of both universal and English history, rivalling the popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the *Brut*" (2000 13).[133] It survives in over 120 manuscripts (Gransden 44).[134] It was also one of the first historical texts published by Caxton (1480-2), and was also published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1495 and Peter Treveris in 1527. It was circulated nationwide and became the most popular historical work since Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Taylor 1987 56). When the *Brut* (c.1333) was translated into English it would attain the same level of popularity in the fifteenth century (56). Titled *The Chronicles of England*, the translation was printed by Caxton in 1480 and was the earliest printed English history. At the time of printing, the *Brut* was "the most widely diffused history of the

[133] Higden also wrote sermon collections and preaching aids, the *Ars Componedi Sermones* and *Speculum Curatorum*. (c.1340s), indicative of his interest in edifying narratives.
[134] The definitive modern edition is J.R. Lumby, 1865.

day" (110). Taylor asserts that the *Brut* was "the most popular retelling of the Arthurian legend in late medieval England" and was for its readers "the main statement of British history" (110).[135] As we shall see, both of these texts were preserved in the Parker Library.

Chronicles which include Edward's reign are quite numerous: the aforementioned *Brut* and the *Polychronicon*, the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (c.1310, which charts Edward's life up to 1325), Geoffrey Le Baker's chronicle (covering the years 1303-1356), the St. Alban's chronicle (1307-24), Trevet's *Annals* (to 1339), the *Lanercost* chronicle (1201-1346) and Robert of Reading's *Flores Historiarum* (to 1326) all give some account of Edward II.[136]

The *Vita Edwardi Secundi* is an anonymous Latin prose chronicle, and it is the "most politically finely-tuned English chronicle of the fourteenth century" (Given-Wilson 167). The *Vita* was likely written by a secular clerk, possibly working in royal administration (Taylor 1987 12). It is by far the largest and most detailed narrative of Edward's reign (Fryde 7) but it stops at 1325, a year short of his death.[137] The author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* is unforgiving, blaming the Peers for their jealousy of Gaveston, Gaveston for his own arrogance and Edward for favouring Gaveston (40).[138] Medieval chronicles of Edward's reign "gave their fullest attention to Gaveston, and to the political crises of 1321 and 1326" (Taylor 1987 4). Taylor also notes that the other preoccupation of the contemporary chronicles was war with France and Scotland (4-5). Furthermore, "in these conflicts the chronicler's sympathies invariably lay with the baronial opposition" (4). Again, I

[135] For a detailed history of the *Brut* see Taylor 1987 110-132. F.W.D. Brie has edited it for the Early English Text Society, 1906.
[136] For detailed accounts of these texts, plus some informed speculation on the authors of the anonymous ones, see Gransden 4-117.
[137] All quotes are from Denholm-Young's edition.
[138] For an English translation of several passages see Given-Wilson, 171-3.

will demonstrate that Marlowe's play subversively re-focuses the narrative on Edward's personal life. Gransden's statement that Edward II had "bad press" (58) is an intentional and evocative understatement. As I discuss below, the only chronicle to offer any real sympathy to Edward is that of Geoffrey Le Baker.

Case Study: *The Chronicle of Geoffrey Le Baker*

Le Baker is by far the most important of the later fourteenth-century chroniclers (Gransden 4) and has the most evident bearing on Holinshed, Stow and later Marlowe. In marked contrast to his contemporaries, Le Baker eulogises Edward. This may owe something to the later date of composition, as Edward's reputation was salvaged in the two decades immediately after his death, as sympathetic accounts increased and "legend was eroding historical accuracy" (Gransden 40). Le Baker eulogises Edward as a martyr sacrificed by ambitious nobles. Decisively, Marlowe follows this version of depicting the monarch's death, but as Lunney states "the considerable emotional reinforcement generated by the scene's horrifying details is not explicitly applied to exemplary lesson" (2002 87), as Marlowe stages history without historicising events within a providentialist world view.

Le Baker is one of the more obscure chroniclers; scant details are known of his own life. He wrote his short chronicle between 1347-60, under the patronage of Thomas De La More, who was erroneously recorded as the author. Le Baker's chronicle, like most in the genre, opened by situating the events in relation to the definitive event in the history of man: "In the one thousand three hundred and third year after the birth of the only-begotten omnipotent King Jesus Christ" (1).[139] Le Baker also states the name of the contemporary pope, Boniface VIII, and the current

[139] All quotes are taken from Preest's English translation.

King, Edward of Winchester, and the year of his reign, the thirty-first. The events being chronicled are situated foremost in biblical and ecclesiastical history. Secular battles are given a sacred edge in medieval history chronicles, as they are contextualised by Christianity. For example, the account of Edward's offensive in Gloucester is introduced "On the following nativity of our Saviour [...]" (8). Though Le Baker was one of the first of a movement of secular chroniclers, he follows the monastic tradition of relating everything back to Christ. Le Baker's text does not appear to have circulated widely in his own time (26) but, as we shall see, his chronicle was used extensively by Elizabethan chroniclers.

Le Baker presents Edward as a Christian martyr. In the narrative, Edward is unjustly forced to abdicate but he does so for the good of his people: "the pious heart of the king was won over, and not without sobs, tears and sighs, he climbed down and took the bishop's advice" (26). His decision is given biblical precedence: "Knowing that a good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11) he was more ready to end his life as a follower of Christ than to look with the eyes of a living body upon the disinheritance of his sons or civil war in his kingdom" (26). Le Baker's Edward becomes a pseudo-Christ: "the kingdom of angels in heaven received one hated by this world, just as it had hated his master Jesus Christ before him (John 15:24). First it received the teacher, rejected by the kingdom of the Jews, and then the disciple, stripped of the kingdom of the English" (32). Le Baker's Edward rules under Christ, lives by following Christ's teaching and dies as a Christ-like martyr for his people. In his play, Marlowe completely removes any providential framework, and depicts Edward's deposition and death as a clash of formidable personalities, but retains this particular medieval chronicle account of Edward's death. Stow's text was also indisputably a primary source for Marlowe, but Le

Baker's medieval history chronicle right within his grasp has hitherto been ignored.[140] The account of Edward's death is present in the Parker Library in CCCC 281. The manuscript compilation is titled *Geoffrey of Monmoth, Historia regum Britanniae, Annals (Incarnation-1339) et Thomas de la More (attrib.) Vita et mors Edwardi II regis (excerpt) Gesta Francorum*. The *Life and Death of Edward II*, here attributed to de la More, is Le Baker's near-contemporary fourteenth-century account of Edward's reign. The excerpt contains only the death of Edward, but the rest of Le Baker's account was widely available in Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Stow's *Annals*, giving it a notable afterlife in Elizabethan chronicle writing. Stow cites Le Baker's chronicle directly "as it would seem by report of Thomas de la More" (Tydeman & Thomas 24-5). Marlowe encountered More's name in Holinshed's text, and Stow's text, and it is possible he perused the source text whilst at Cambridge. Whether or not he did read the original, the medieval foundation of the Elizabethan chronicles peer out at the reader. We shall see that Marlowe's history play, derived from Elizabethan chronicles and possibly from Le Baker's medieval text, undoes the principles of this genre by emphasising individual ambition and the ability of figures to shape events without any recourse to divine aid.

Marlowe utilises his chronicle sources in distinct way: by maintaining a narrative but altering small details in individual characters. The similarities between Marlowe's socially-aspirant Gaveston and Le Baker's account of this figure are apparent, but so are some crucial differences. The historical Gaveston is the son of a minor Gascon Lord, not a royal, but far from the "base minion" (I.i.32) Marlowe's Gaveston is dismissed as. His luxurious apparel is noted, but not criticised. It is also

[140] The only scholars to note the existence of this manuscript in proximity to Marlowe are Tydeman and Thomas, 341. They express doubt that Marlowe used this source, because the description of Edward washing in rainwater is not present in the Parker Library excerpt, but it is in Holinshed. This is obviously quite a weak proposition, as it appears to foreclose any possibility that Marlowe used more than one source, as is my argument here.

explicitly stated that the nobles conspired against him due to envy, and though there was due provocation, this was not a legitimate complaint: "But Piers Gaveston outshone them all in the splendour of his dress and apparel, thus inspiring general resentment and a wicked hatred of his person, in that he challenged prerogatives which pre-eminently belonged to the nobility alone" (4). Gaveston's social aspirations lead to his downfall but it is his executioners who are condemned. It is clear that his relationship to the King is only as a "friend" (3), though the nobles accused Gaveston of having "bewitched" the King's mind (10), a phrase repeated by Stow and later Marlowe. Le Baker reserves his vitriol for the "cowardly knight" Hugh Despenser (8) and ultimately blames Gournay and Maltravers for Edward's demise. Le Baker is particularly vitriolic in his depiction of Mortimer and Isabella, whom he presents as adulterous, homicidal usurpers, whilst Isabella, "that angry woman" (24), regularly ousts innocent lords from their positions. We will see that *Edward II* avails of these distinct details.

Edward II is an elliptical history that refuses to affix its characters and events into a Christian worldview. Marlowe subtly alters details of the familiar historical narrative to undermine the rigid didacticism of chronicle sources and to question providential modes of representing human history.

The Parker Library and the (Re)representation of the past

The Parker Library is a unique example of how medieval texts were explored and exploited for the contribution they could make to major contemporary discourses and debates (Graham 323). The collection does not just preserve historical documents, it re-contextualises them for post-Reformation society.

Marlowe was in a position to access what contemporary historians refer to as primary and secondary material in his university library. Furthermore, Marlowe's contemporary sources are often direct reproductions of medieval material. In addition to the Le Baker excerpt, the Parker collection holds over fifty chronicles, including the definitive sources for Edward's reign consulted by Holinshed.[141] *Brut* and *Polychronicon*, noted by Taylor as the two great chronicles of the fourteenth century, are both present in the Parker Library. CCCC 259 comprises Higden's *Polychronicon* (to 1338) and CCCC 174 is a Middle English prose *Brut* chronicle, ending at the death of Edward III.[142] There is another Middle English prose *Brut* chronicle in CCCC 182, and an illustration of Edward's coronation appears in CCCC 20.[143] The Parker Library also contains tracts from his reign in CCCC 292.

The monastic manuscripts preserved in the Parker Library exemplify the providential history tradition, and this is the framework through which historical narrative was presented throughout the Tudor period. Yet Parker is sourcing chronicles that can be used to justify an English church. Where the manuscripts did not provide quite the account he was looking for, he found an effective solution: to write what he wished into the manuscript (Woolf 2000 55; McKisack 36). What Woolf terms Parker's "dubious editorial methods" (55) irrevocably altered the medieval material. If one were to read the manuscripts after Parker had set to work on them, this artificial editorial gloss is apparent.

In addition to preserving and "editing" manuscripts, Parker also patronised the publication of history chronicles. He had Matthew Paris' *Chronica Maiora* printed in 1571, and an abridgement and continuation of the *Flores Historiarum* in

[141] For detailed descriptions of over 58 manuscripts containing chronicles, see Parker on the Web.
[142] The Corpus Christi MS of the *Polychronicon* follows John of Malvern's continuation of the text and may have originated in Westminster (Taylor 1987 83).
[143] *Apocalypse.Visio Sancti Pauli*. Folio 68r. For an illustration see Parker on the Web.

1567 and 1570. The crux of the argument here is that Marlowe is not necessarily reading histories mediated through Stow and Holinshed, rather Elizabethan chronicles interspersed with medieval accounts and the genre in general. The history available to Elizabeth's subjects was, in essence, medieval history.

Elizabethan History Chronicles

Harvey complains in his annotations of Livy's *Romanae Historiae Principis* (c.1590) of the "many asses who dare to compile histories, chronicles, annals, commentaries" (quoted in Woolf 2000 25). His bemoaning of an apparently tedious and overwrought genre was not unique. Nashe lambasted aspiring chroniclers in 1592 as "lay chronigraphers, that write of nothing but of mayors and sherifs, and the dere yere, and the great frost" (194).

For all the mocking diatribes against the chronicle, it remained the single form of historical writing well into the seventeenth century, and the term "chronicle" was synonymous with "history" in the Elizabethan period (Woolf 2000 24). Woolf classified medieval to Renaissance historiography into two distinct yet overlapping modes: dynastic and nationalist historiography (1400-c.1550) and a late Renaissance and Reformation phase (c.1540-1660). The former era is characterised by dynastic and nationalist themes "inherited from the royal / baronial and monarchical / papal struggles" of the late Middle Ages (474), whilst the latter period is dominated by "religious tensions" (474), and Marshall concurs that "the ideological underpinnings of early modern society were all in some sense religious" (2013 411). Medieval chroniclers were mostly ecclesiastics (Taylor 1987 8) whilst sixteenth-century chroniclers were scholars or secular history enthusiasts. Though one may expect otherwise, this movement is not evident in the texts produced. It is a medieval

continuum rather than a distinct genre. Early modern chronicle history was essentially still medieval, as the "themes and tendencies" of the late medieval chronicles carried over into the early sixteenth century (Woolf 2012 474). But these generic norms were being carried over fault lines. Historians of these centuries faced a particular challenge: how to write about recent conflicts in a partisan environment, without "inflaming further violence" (Woolf 2012 483). As English society became less stable, interest in providentialist histories increased and the chronicle was a comforting source of orthodoxy. The chronicle is a medieval format which survived well into the early modern period. Marlowe's use of this genre is a radical departure from the cultural consensus on the appropriate mediation of historical events.

Thus, though humanist historiography was beginning to emerge, Christian allegory actually acquired more relevance due to increasing religious schism (Gransden 476).[144] Gransden states: "Historians exploited the idea of history as the manifestation of God's will on earth more than they had done since the Dark Ages" (476). Not only did Tudor historians have to write providentialist accounts of history, they had to negotiate events that could potentially destroy this mode of representation. As Gransden notes, the Reformation "threatened to disrupt the course of English history" (472). The contemporary histories that Marlowe read were at least as didactic as the earlier medieval accounts, if not even more so as post-Reformation chroniclers struggled to reconcile the Reformation into the providentialist worldview. Wright similarly observes that "the Elizabethan citizen shared the belief of his learned and courtly contemporaries that the reading of history was an exercise second only to a study of Holy Writ in its power to induce good

[144] Gransden argues that there are only two humanist histories that stand outside this model: More's *History of King Richard III* and Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (425). Humanist historians studied man rather than God (Gransden 426), yet their theoretical framework was not in any way reflective of the status quo.

morality and shape the individual into a worthy member of society" (297). Holinshed concurs that chronicles were second "unto the holy scripture" in providing lessons to man (766). Stow also espouses this view, claiming history provides "persuasions to honesty, godliness, and virtue of all sort" (168-9; Gransden 476).

As we have seen in Chapter Three, medieval romance proved to be the most popular literary genre in the Elizabethan period, and history would never eclipse these narratives in sales or ubiquity. But unlike medieval romance, medieval history chronicles were accepted, indeed lauded, reading material (Wright 297-8).[145] For the duration of the sixteenth century, publishers printed and reprinted chronicles, republishing old editions and bringing out new versions to satisfy the demand for English history (Wright 302), as history chronicles proved as profitable for publishers as Bibles (314).[146] For those whose incomes did not extend to the purchase of weighty tomes, history chronicles were often available in the form of broadside ballads, a notable example being *The Chronycle of all the Kynes: that have Reyned in Englande: Sythe the Conquest of Wyllyam Conqueroure* (c.1590).[147] Holinshed's *Chronicles* were a faithful rendering of medieval chronicles, copied almost exactly. These texts were characteristic of sixteenth century "moralistic journalism," to borrow Walsham's term (442). Walsham argues that *Holinshed's Chronicles*

> highlight the intensely religious climate in which people continued to write and read about the past in post-Reformation England – a climate in which Protestant theology placed fresh emphasis on the omnipotence of God and

[145] Publication records indicate that this was indeed the case. For detailed statistics on the publication of chronicles in the sixteenth century and later, see Woolf 1988 339-46.
[146] Surprisingly, the language barrier of the Latin texts proved porous. One of the most popular chronicles was Camden's *Britannia* (1586), and despite being available only in Latin, was popular enough to be reprinted seven times by 1607 (Wright 315).
[147] In the Britwell ballads. For a detailed exploration, see Wright 327.

> fostered heightened sensitivity to the regular and restless intercession of the Almighty in mundane affairs (429).

From the mid-sixteenth century, these medieval history chronicles were increasingly deployed for political causes, though their promise of divine justice in human affairs seemed increasingly less evident. According to Wright, a particular aspect of providential chronicles that was popular with Elizabethan readers was "the relation of biographical details from the lives of historical figures, both good and bad, with proper moralisations" (333). Medieval chronicles seek to moralise Edward's biography and situate his reign within God's divine plan for humanity. Early modern chroniclers will follow the exact same objective, but with an increased urgency. Early accounts served to lend legitimacy to post-Reformation chronicles, with medieval accounts serving to prop up later political and religious power structures. Elizabethans expected their chroniclers to signpost the appropriate historical precedents to follow. Medieval chroniclers fixated on the morality of their subjects, and similarly post-Reformation chroniclers approached their medieval sources with a renewed vigour, to find suitable figures from whom moral lessons could be derived. In his *The true order and Methode of writing and reading Hystories* (1574), Blundeville explains how chroniclers select their subjects: "All those persons whose lyves have beene such as are to bee followed for their excellencie in virtue, or else to be fledde for their excellencie in vice, are meete to chronicled" (Sig. C2.). Chroniclers select the best *and* worst examples from history.

Needless to say, in the early modern imagination Edward II was in the latter category.[148]

The reign of Edward II was a seminal one. It was the first time a prince ascended to the throne whilst the previous ruling monarch was still living, rendering the deposed Edward a problematic figure. Thus, it is the ideal chronicle account through which to probe royal succession. It was an effective vessel through which doubts about monarchy could be introduced. Marlowe uses a medieval narrative, possibly directly from medieval chronicles, to present history in a manner in which the only didactic aim is to foster doubt. Tudor chronicles, like the medieval versions, included recently deceased monarchs and events that were still within living memory. Thus it was a highly politically-charged genre, as stated by Holinshed himself and quoted in the Introduction to this thesis. To subvert any aspect of this material, even of a narrative that was already controversial such as the reign of Edward II, was a daring endeavour that required much skilful manoeuvring. For Marlowe and his audience, history was a pedagogical and propagandistic tool, but a genre whose fundamental points about divine providence, class hierarchy and the divine mandate of the monarch, were unimpeachable. Marlowe reworks contemporary propagandist history by undoing the providentialist framework inherited from the medieval chronicles. By staging a chronicle account the play initially appears to uphold its principles, but actually interrogates the concepts presented by the chronicles as inherent in nature.

[148] The moralisation of Edward II would continue beyond Marlowe's lifetime, as the titles of two seventeenth century publications attest: *The History of the most unfortunate prince King Edward II* by Lady Elizabeth Cary (1680) and Francis Hubert's *The deplorable life and death of Edward II, King of England. Together with the downfall of the two unfortunate fauorits, Gavestone and Spenser. Storied in an excellent poem* (1628).

"To discourage unnatural subjects from wicked treasons":

Marlowe's Sources

Marlowe's reading of the Edward II narrative was incontrovertibly extensive.[149] Tydeman and Thomas explain that "Marlowe's principle task in writing *Edward II* was to impose unity and coherence on a vast and formless mass of chronicle material covering the twenty years of Edward II's reign and the first three years of Edward III's, a process which involved some very severe pruning" (344). But this is not all Marlowe does in staging the Edward II narrative; as I will show, it is how and what he elides that allows him to subversively interrogate British kingship whilst simultaneously appearing to uphold it.

It has long been established that Marlowe's primary sources for the Edward II narrative were Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) and Stow's *Annals of England* (1592), with considerable medieval influence as argued in the previous section. Holinshed's *Chronicles* was "regarded as the most authoritative history of its time" (Wright 315) and Stow's text was not far behind in terms of popularity.[150] Holinshed follows his medieval sources to the latter and directly cites them. He maintains the Christian framework of his medieval sources, using the Christian calendar to situate events: "about the first Sunday in Lent, he set forward towards his enemies" (316). Stow also copies the generic aspects of the medieval chronicle, emphasising the Christian dating scheme: "Edward the second, son to the first Edward, born at Caernarfon, began his reign the seventh day of July, in the year of Christ 1307" (1-2). We will note this is an obvious omission in Marlowe's play.

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[149] Forker argues that Marlowe read Grafton's *Chronicle at large and mere History of the affayres of Englande* (1569) and Churchyard's poem "The Two Mortimers" in the 1578 edition of *The Mirror for Magistrates*, in addition to Holinshed, Stow and Fabyan (41-65).

[150] For a brief synopsis of Stow's life see Wright 308. For an extended biography, see *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Stow. For more information on Holinshed's life and works, see Wright 314 and *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Holinshed.

Stow was also a proponent of didactic history, his most famous work being *The Chronicles of England from Brute unto this present yeare 1580* (1580), republished as *The Annales of England*.[151] He espouses the benefits of historical examples in his preface to his first historical text, *A Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (1565):

> Amongeste other Bookes, which are in this our learned age published in gret numbers, there are fewe, […] to be preferred before the Chronicles and Histories: what examples of men deseruinge immortality, […] what incouragement of nobilitie to noble feates, what discouragement of unnatural subjects from wicked treasons, […] to conclude, what perswasions to honesty, godliness and virtue of all sort, what disswasions from the contrarie is not plentifully in them to be found?

Stow's stated goal is to shift his reader's inclination away from "wicked treasons" and instead inculcate a sense of duty as a citizen. Historical knowledge was intended to be utilised: after reading the material "it was supposed to be put to practical moral or political use, talked about, shared with friends and family, and interactively revised and reshaped by the reader" (Woolf 2000 80). Notes recorded in the marginalia of history books and in personal diaries attest to how reading history was a serious activity.[152] Drama in general was also "underpinned and governed by exemplarity" (Martin 2001 159) and history plays in particular were designed to elicit an active response. Whether Elizabethan theatre-goers sought to be edified by history or not, they expected any historical narrative they encountered to attempt to do so. The medieval and early modern reader was guided through the chronicles with

[151] Marlowe's use of Stow is evident in his divergence from Holinshed. Marlowe has evidently used Stow's account of Mortimer's arrest (171-180), as Holinshed does not account for this event.
[152] See Woolf, 2000, 79-131.

the firm lead of the chronicler's interpretation of divine providence, as seemingly incongruous and disparate events were organised under the auspices of a divine plan.

Marlowe's "bleak concept of history" has been observed by Forker (44), and this is achieved through the undoing the didactic aim of its chronicle sources, by setting up the action in a way which questions received history, presents catastrophic events without the comforting providentialist framework, and evokes doubts about the naturalness of class hierarchy and its ultimate expression in monarchy. Marlowe effectively does have a didactic aim in his presentation of chronicle history. However, his play inculcates the very opposite meta-narrative to that of his sources. Where the chronicles affirm the righteousness of the institution of monarchy, *Edward II* undermines it. The chronicles repeatedly rationalise events in a comforting providential framework, but Marlowe's play only emphasises its absence and the hermeneutic impossibility of completely rationalising human history. Marlowe's strategic alteration of medieval history destabilises the didactic approach of medieval and Elizabethan history chronicles, as he uses the historical narrative's original sources as ammunition to subvert providentialist readings.

Edward II

In his foreword to Warner's 2015 biography of Edward II, Mortimer asserts that "primogeniture was a cruel method of selecting a king. The very idea that a man should be given absolute power simply on account of his paternity- with no reference to his father's or mother's qualities, or even his own ability- seems a recipe for disaster" (9). This is the subversive argument articulated in Marlowe's *Edward II*. *Edward II* is famous for its engagement with sexuality, but it is predominantly about class. The play represents every class in English society, from the monarch and his

family to nobles of every rank, the clergy, and, though often overlooked, the military, artisans and working class men. Marlowe avails himself of the historical account to invite intellectual critique of the ideology of social order.

Edward II's biography was, until Marlowe's play, always moralised or utilised in some pedagogic way. Extant criticism tends to identify the trouble source of the narrative as either Edward II the individual, as in most of the chronicles, or his court, as apparent in Le Baker. I contend that the real problem which Marlowe subtly exposes is the system in which all of these figures are contained: divinely-appointed hierarchical class structure. The audience are thus forced to acknowledge that this is an aspect of English culture which is still extant; it is not, like the individuals depicted, in the past. Marlowe uses an already-scandalised monarch to imply divinely-ordained natural social order is artificial and manmade.

The play is subversive in two ways: Firstly, by removing and challenging the providential framework, and diverting the audience's natural inclination to contemplate the action in this way. Secondly, it undermines conceptions of class by presenting a series of characters who intentionally transgress their assigned social position, are morally ambiguous and whose actions are apparently not divinely sanctioned. Marlowe's "ideological citation" (2015) to borrow Paleit's term, of medieval history chronicles in such a provocative manner throws providential readings of history into disarray, and subverts ingrained habits of thought. *Edward II* "represents a mature fusion of moral structure with the secular subject matter toward which Marlowe was constantly striving" (Bevington 1968 234).

Though the universal sovereignty of God is never questioned in either medieval or early modern chronicles, the latter period saw the emergence of a more nuanced consideration of the divine right of kings. Ponet's controversial treatise *A*

Short Treatise of Politic Power (1556) proposes a greater degree of accountability from the monarch. Ponet's treatise justifies disobedience, an extremely radical proposition. This text is dubious about the idea that any tyranny could have a divine mandate, as Ponet argues that God would never instigate evil (Hodgdon 187). Crucially, Ponet accepts rebellion *only* where a ruler has been wilfully negligent and failed in his duty (193). In Marlowe's lifetime then, the divine right of kings has been opened up to debate from a social perspective, but the fundamental principles of divine providence and resultant primogeniture are never called into question. Shakespeare's *Richard III* offers a scathing critique of the Wars of the Roses, but retains the providential framework (V.viii.23-41). The pervasive idea gaining traction in Shakespeare and Marlowe's era is that individual kings can be fallible, but God is not.

Edward II has been described as Marlowe's "most secular play" (Bevington 1968 244). It begins by dismantling the anticipated providential framework. In marked contrast to most historical accounts of Edward's reign, God is notably absent from Marlowe's narrative. Forker has observed that there is a distinct absence in the play "of any action […] that requires the use of the upper stage" and thus "the apparently missing 'above' […] implies […] a profound scepticism about inherited religious categories" (79). This argument bears out in the rest of the play, as Hopkins observes that there is a notable omission of "any demonstrations of heaven" (2000 104). Though not immediately apparent to a contemporary audience, for an Elizabethan raised on didactic chronicles this was a startling omission.

The few references to a Christian deity in the play are brief and ambiguous, such as Warwick's rebuff to Gaveston when the latter is denied access to Edward:

Gaveston: Treacherous earl, shall I not see the king?

Warwick: The King of heaven perhaps, no other king-

Away!

(III.i.15-16)

God and providential order are only mentioned in passing during an outburst of verbal abuse. Thus, the audience cannot assimilate the action on stage into a standardised chronicle narrative.

Marlowe's play alludes to more contemporary events with the stripping of the Bishop of Coventry's wealth and title. The usurpation of the senior cleric by the worldly Gaveston has more relevance to a post-Reformation audience than a medieval chronicle. Upon deposing the Bishop, Edward offers his property and title to his lover:

No, spare his life, but seize upon his goods;

Be thou lord bishop, and receive his rents,

And make him serve thee as thy chaplain.

I give him thee, here use him as thou wilt.

(I.i.192-5)

The play excludes almost all of Edward's political life, but includes his disputes with the church, and this is significant. Again, Edward ignores any reference to God as he is rebelling against his presumed representative on earth:

Coventry: For this offense be thou accurst of God.

Edward: [*calling to attendants*]

Who's there? Convey this priest to the tower.

(I.i.198-200)

He blatantly and definitively ignores the omnipotence of God in favour of sneering at the former Bishop's demoted lowly status, and this emphasises the radically

secular context of the action. Edward then reiterates his order to Gaveston to commandeer the Bishop's property: "But in the meantime Gaveston, away, / And take possession of his house and goods" (I.i.201-2). Edward disregards God and deposes a church leader. Lancaster is aghast: "What will they tyrannize upon the church?" (I.ii.3). The audience are all too-aware that the English monarchy can tyrannize the church, and can use the same historical chronicles to justify this action. Mortimer later describes his own Machiavellian behaviour as "not unlike a bashful Puritan" (V.iv.59), a stunning anachronism that is hardly an oversight. The self-confessed Machiavellian is also a fanatical, deceiving Protestant, active in the fourteenth century. Once the audience has grappled with the fact that there is no discernible divine presence, the action on stage is further complicated, as within this godless environment the Elizabethan viewer is forced to consider the huge gulf between their ancestor's religion and their own.

The play makes no reference to the more successful aspects of Edward's reign, such as battles he was victorious in, instead the play takes a completely downward trajectory to his death in abject misery. This is a conventional moralising technique, but the details illuminated in the play immediately deconstruct any apparent framework. After this providential framework has been suspended, subversive ideas are interjected through subtle nuances to the historical characters Marlowe stages. We will now examine these in detail.

King Edward

Marlowe's depiction of Edward is relatively faithful to his chronicle sources: the King is weak and incapable of rule, but Marlowe's Edward demonstrates self-doubt from the very beginning. Even at the most secure phase of his kingship, he cannot

bring himself to discipline his nobles. He repeatedly refers to the lords' insubordination, highlighting their transgression for the audience, but he fails to act on it: "Beseems it thee to contradict thy king?" (I.i.91); "What danger 'tis to stand against your king" (I.i.96); "I am a king, and must be overruled?" (I.i.134); "Was ever a king so overruled as I?" (I.i.38). Edward is incapable of asserting any authority: "Anger and wrathful fury stops my speech" (I.i.42). He even fails to rebuke Leicester's order that he must go to Killingworth: "'Must'! 'Tis somewhat hard when kings 'must' go" (IV.vii.82). His one attempt to declare intent is woefully ineffective: "If I be King, not one of them shall live" (I.i.iv). These lines emphasise the severity of the situation for the audience. Edward is passive, the most unbefitting trait in a monarch. They cannot avoid the fact that an English king is about to be deposed by English people, without a providential framework.

Soon, Edward is directly challenged by his lords, but it is one particular comment from Baldock that is the most subversive of the entire play. When questioned on his lineage by Edward, he asserts "my gentry / I fetched from Oxford, not from heraldry" (II.ii.242-3). The juxtaposition of the Oxford-educated gentleman and the royal heir Edward is cast in a clear perspective, an opportunity for a more nuanced consideration of class. Perhaps even more disconcerting is Edward's seeming acceptance of the plan to "make a new-elected King" (V.i.78). An "elected king" is a stunning oxymoron and an extremely radical choice of words for a play set in a period when, as we have just seen, the divine right of kings was presented as inherently natural. For Edward to use this term within the play infers that he, even as a king himself, doubts his ostensibly irreproachable divine appointment. Marlowe's Edward does not abdicate at the will of his people, because his people have not called for his abdication, as we have seen was the case in the chronicles. He is

deposed by Mortimer alone: "But if proud Mortimer do wear this crown, / Heavens turn it to a blaze of quenchless fire" (V.i.43-4). Edward remains incapable of authority, passively lamenting that "Two kings in England cannot reign at once" (V.i.58). He makes no mention of his son and heir, who will undoubtedly receive the throne. He rightly observes that Mortimer and Isabella hold the power:

> My nobles rule, I bear the name of king;
> I wear the crown but am controlled by them,
> By Mortimer and my unconstant queen
>
> (V.i.28-30)

Forker considers the play to degrade "human - let alone royal- dignity well beyond the warrant of history" (Forker 59). Edward's passivity would, in the chronicle context, mark him out as an ineffective ruler, and justify some form of objection to his rule, but the degradation that he experiences serves to martyr him, forcing the audience into a see-saw motion where they cannot locate a fixed providential reading, as Marlowe does not give pre-eminence to a single chronicle account of the King. Edward is detained in the sewer of Berkeley castle, with every sense "annoyed with stench" (V.iii.18) and his body covered in "foul excrements" (V.iii.26). Elizabethan theatre-goers would recognise the concept of the mobile court: the court was the area and persons within the immediate vicinity of the king's body. Kent has voiced the confusion likely to have been felt by the audience when he asks "where is the court but here? Here is the King" (V.iii.59). The critique of English monarchy as an entity, without focus on the individual monarch, is evident here: the court is a cesspool. Yet an even more shocking pronouncement is made: the court is actually embodied by Mortimer: "The court is where Lord Mortimer remains" (V.iii.61). It is apparent that although there is no mention of Mortimer being crowned - he is still

referred to as “Lord”- he has completely usurped Edward’s throne. The “monarch” is simply the most powerful person in the court, not a divinely-ordained representative of God. Kent provides one of the only rueful comments on this situation: “O, miserable is that commonweel where Lords / Keep Courts and Kings are locked in prison!” (V.iii.63-4). The play secularises providential history through unsettling the essentially medieval chronicle genre. Forker argues: “what happens in Edward’s death scene, and in the final scene of the play, is a radical change in the way that audiences are enabled to respond to a cautionary tale” (73).

Edward’s tyrannical rule was replaced by a regime that was “entirely illegal, but […] adept at manipulating skilfully the traditional instruments of government” (Fryde 200). All of the chronicles describe the brutal public execution of the Despensers, which preceded Edward’s abdication and served as a scapegoat for his manifold failures. Marlowe omits this crucial historical episode entirely, and so the rebellion is more seditious because it is directed entirely at the person of the monarch from the very start. The “providential” world of the chronicles is depicted as allowing flawed individuals to seize power, or even be born the rightful monarch. The absence of the providential framework offers no comfort for the audience, no indication that there is any meaning to the course of events, and not only raises the possibility that social and political structures can change, but subversively suggests that individuals, irregardless of birth, can change them. *Edward II* develops certain strategic points in the narrative, and nuances certain historical figures, in order to inculcate this subversive meta-narrative.

"That Villain" Gaveston

Marlowe's innovative dramatisation hinges on how he utilises his medieval sources. What he selects, amplifies or alters from these sources serves to imbue subversive counterpoints to the chronicle narrative. Marlowe uses the famed upstart Gaveston from the chronicles to undermine one-dimensional morality readings of historical figures. Both Holinshed and Stow directly follow medieval sources in describing Edward's infatuation with Gaveston. Holinshed describes Edward as being "enchanted" with his favourite (94) and Stow directly quotes Le Baker in stating that Gaveston had apparently "bewitched the king" (321). Marlowe in turn follows Le Baker and Stow when the nobles describe Gaveston as having "bewitched" the King's mind, as Mortimer Senior ponders Edward's obsession with Gaveston: "Is it not strange that he is thus bewitched?" (I.ii.55). Marlowe stresses Edward's devotion to Gaveston "without the chronicler's moralism" (Forker 41). This description comes directly from the medieval chronicle, but we shall see Marlowe refuses to follow the historiography in demonising Gaveston's social ambitions, as we shall also see *Edward II* allows for genuine emotion, admirable values and transgressive ambition in one figure. Unlike in the chronicles, desirable and debauched traits are not mutually exclusive.

Marlowe's first innovation in the Edward narrative is the relationship between Edward and Gaveston. The differences between Marlowe's socially-aspirant Gaveston and his sources for this figure are apparent. Gaveston played a less significant role in the medieval chronicles, and his banishment precedes Edward's deposition by many years. In all of the potential chronicle sources, Gaveston's death precedes Edward's deposition by at least five years. Yet Marlowe posits the King's inappropriate relationship with the favourite as the reason for his downfall. Marlowe

has altered the plot to make the relationship of king and favourite the fulcrum of the action. Gaveston's successful manipulation of the King leads to destructive action within the realm, as Edward deposes and demotes others to fund Gaveston's lavish lifestyle.

Gaveston's class transgressions are foregrounded and enhanced. In Le Baker and the other chronicles, he is the son of a minor Gascon Lord, not exactly a base position. Marlowe has left his exact status unclear, but it is apparent that he is of a far lower rank than the Lords. Edward and Gaveston are threatening and subversive not because of their homosexual relationship, but because of their audacity in carrying out their relationship in public. The court revolts against Edward because he demanded something unthinkable: acceptance of Gaveston as a royal consort (Stymeist 237).[153] If Edward had kept his relationship purely sexual, then the nobles could have defined, and quickly dismissed, Gaveston as an ingle or a male whore. Yet Edward has moved Gaveston outside the boundaries of this set social definition, and thus conflict occurs (Stymeist 237). Isabella, a figure whom I will examine in more detail later in this chapter, summarises this point perfectly: "Never doted Jove on Ganymede / So much as he on cursed Gaveston" (I.iv.180-1). Isabella's complaint is that her husband dotes "so much" on Gaveston, not just the fact that he is romantically involved with him. She acknowledges that the king of the Gods engaged in homosexual behaviour, without condemning it. Her argument is that Jove's "alternative" sexual escapades never interfered with his "heterosexual" obligations as a leader (Stymeist 242). Goldberg argues that Edward's transgression is primarily one of social order (121), and it is his sexual relationship which will be the stated grounds for his usurpation. The real motivation is evident once the reader

[153] For more information see Goldberg 117, 120 and Bray.

examines the insults hurled at Gaveston by the peers: they almost always refer to his class, not his sexuality, and he is denigrated as a social climber, never as a sodomite. While homophobic slurs are conspicuous by their absence, snobbery is rife in all of his dealings with the lords. He is described as "base" and as a "minion" on countless occasions within the text: "Thy base minion" (I.i.32); "And let him frolic with his minion" (I.ii.67); "The King is lovesick for his minion" (I.iv.87); "Now his minions gone" (I.iv.198); "Let the peasant go" (I.iv.218).[154] Marlowe "forges an unmistakeable link between the politics of class and of sexuality" (Forker 52), emphasing Gaveston's social, not sexual, transgression, and in doing so shows how social order can be breached via the personal relationships of the head of state. In demonstrating that it is the interpersonal relationships of the King that cause his downfall, the play problematises the idea that a single individual should hold complete power.

In contrast to this plethora of comments on Gaveston's social standing, sexual desire is only evoked as destructive by Lancaster, who feminises him with a comparison to Helen of Troy:

> That, like the Greekish strumpet, trained to arms
> And bloody wars so many valiant Knights,
> Look for no other fortune, wretch, than death
>
> (II.v.15-17)

Stymeist also argues that sodomy is not the key transgression in the text, simply by pointing out that homosexual affairs would not have been scandalous to a Renaissance audience in the same way as they would have been in later centuries.[155] Stymeist notes that the death sentence for sodomy was rarely invoked in Elizabethan

[154] "Minion" in this period is a term which could, but not necessarily had to, have sexual connotations (Heyam 2016). Marlowe clearly plays out the multiple meanings of this term here.
[155] For a comprehensive account, see Bray.

England, nor was it a major taboo. Sodomy only became a criminal offence when it was combined with other charges, such as heresy or atheism (234).[156] Orgel agrees, stating: "English Renaissance culture does not appear to have had a morbid fear of male homoerotic behaviour" (Stymeist 233; Orgel 58). Marlowe takes a socially-transgressive figure from the chronicles, enhancing and foregrounding his deviant social aspirations, in order to subversively infer that such aspirations can be achieved. Marlowe represents social deviance not as inherent in one individual, but as endemic in a system that is entirely flawed.

Edward II depicts figures who make incursions into the social order, and repeatedly attempt to transgress their assigned role. In sharp contrast to the chronicles' sole focus on the monarch and nobility, *Edward II* includes working class figures in the court system. The Three Poor Men who seek employment from Gaveston in the opening scene make the play completely pan-social. Gaveston questions each jobseeker in order to determine if they can be of service:

> Gaveston: But how now, what are these?
>
> Poor Men: Such as desire your worship's service.
>
> Gaveston: [*to the first*]: What cans't thou do?
>
> First Poor Man: I can ride.
>
> Gaveston: But I have no horses.
>
> (I.i.24-8)

Gaveston's response that he does not own horses may betray his own class transgression, in that he appears not to have the means or status to hire the men. He continues to the next poor man:

[156] This is obviously a point pertinent to Marlowe's own life, as he was accused of being a sodomite alongside suggestions of atheism in the Baines note. It seems likely that suggesting John the Baptist was a sodomite, as Marlowe was alleged to have done, would have been a more grave offence than actually being one himself.

Gaveston: What art thou?

Second Poor Man: A traveller.

Gaveston: Let me see, thou wouldst do well to wait at my trencher and tell me lies at dinner time, and,

as I like your discoursing, I'll have you.

(I.i.28-31)

His completely ludicrous plan to hire a man to tell "lies at dinner time" establishes Gaveston's frivolous expenditure, but also underscores his exploitation of unnamed working class men. The visit concludes with Gaveston tactlessly dismissing a soldier.

Third Poor Man: A soldier, that hath served against the Scot.

Gaveston: Why, there are hospitals for such as you.

I have no war, and therefore, sir begone.

Third Poor Man: Farewell, and perish by a soldier's hand,

That wouldst reward them with an hospital!

(I.i.33-7)

Gaveston will certainly need soldiers, and this dispute highlights both Gaveston's naivety and the easily overlooked fact that poor commoners will be maimed or killed at the behest of nobles. The cruelty of Gaveston's whims becomes clear when he decides to offer the men false hope of employment. He declares in an aside "But yet it is no pain to speak men fair; / I'll flatter these and make them live in hope" (I.i.41-2). He then addresses the men: "If I speed well, I'll entertain you all" (I.i.45). So desperate are these men for employment that they intend to wait indefinitely until summoned: "We will wait here about the court" (I.i.48). This chorus elicits a snide response from Gaveston: "Do." (I.i.49). Though they are not privy to the action of

the play, working class men are present "about the court". This scene illustrates and repeatedly emphasises the use of the working class as pawns by the aristocracy: they do not have a suitable position in a hierarchical, but fair, social order, they are exploited. Later, Mortimer mocks Lancaster by sneering "thy soldiers marched like players" (II.ii.182). This serves to reference the artificiality of the drama itself but also conceives the soldiers as hired hands without any personal investment in the battles they are paid to fight. In contrast to these struggling labourers, Gaveston appears a self-obsessed pleasure seeker:

> I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,
> Musicians that, with touching of string
> May draw the pliant King which way I please.
> Music and poetry is his delight;
> Therefore I'll have Italian masques by night,
> Sweet speeches, comedies and pleasing shows;
> And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
> Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad
>
> (I.i.50-7)

In this description, the play follows the fourteenth-century chronicles more closely than any contemporary account (Heyam 2016) further indicating potential reading of the original Le Baker text. In medieval historiography, such worldly behaviour was deemed transgressive as it denoted a man as emasculated. John of Salisbury (1115-80) warns in his *Metalogicon* that men are feminised by excessive pleasure "feasting, drinking, banquets, song and dance, sport, over-refinements of luxury, debauchery, and varied types of defilement, weakens even robust souls and, by a sort of irony on nature's parts, renders men softer and more corrupt than women" (McGarry 13;

Burgwinkle 67). He states that pursuits such as hunting and gambling "tone down the manly voice into dulcet effeminate strains" causing men "to forget their manhood" (McGarry 13). Marlowe's play deviates from such presentations of feminised men, as Gaveston's hedonistic pursuit of pleasure is orchestrated for a stated purpose: to please the "pliant king" and advance himself socially. Gaveston boasts of his eminent social promotion as he reads a letter from his lover:

> "My father is deceased, come, Gaveston,
> And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend."
> Ah, words that make me surfeit with delight!
> What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston
> Than live and be the favourite of a King?
>
> (I.i.1-5).

He goes on to rejoice that he will no longer have to endure life in the social rank he was born into, as he will be inferior only to the King: "Farewell base stooping to the lordly peers; / My knee shall bow to none but to the King" (I.i.18-19). Sexuality is a tool in Gaveston's arsenal, not his ultimate motivation. It is only much further on in his soliloquy that Gaveston makes any reference to his sexual desires, and then only in passing: "To hide those parts which men delight to see" (I.i.64).

We have seen Gaveston's primary mission is explicitly a social, not sexual, conquest, and that is what is condemned by the peers. There is a strategic foreshortening of time that serves to render Gaveston the cause of the Lords' anger. An example will serve to demonstrate this point: Marlowe makes Gaveston the cause of two devastating battles, Bannockburn (II.ii) and Boroughbridge (III.iii), for which the historical Gaveston was not alive. The effect of the personal on the political is completely foregrounded, even to the point of exaggeration. Marlowe's Edward

combines "administrative weakness with homosexual infatuation" (Forker 50), and this dichotomy is never assimilated into a providentialist reading. Gaveston's death immediately precedes Edward's imprisonment, with Edward's dalliance with Spenser a less significant episode, though historically the opposite was the case. In all of the historical chronicles, there is never any overlap between Edward's involvement with Gaveston and Spenser. Marlowe stages the two relationships in mirror image of each other, the infatuated king and the indulged lover, demonstrating that the situation is equally attributable to flaws in Edward's character, as to Gaveston's manipulation of the "pliant" King. This serves to undo the previous scenes which appear to follow the chronicles in condemning the upstart Gaveston and sympathising with the lords' discontent.

In opposition to the chronicle accounts, Marlowe refuses to file his characters under any one moral category. Those who condemn Gaveston harbour the same desires themselves. Just as the audience has gotten a sense of Edward and Gaveston's relationship, the play topples it. Marlowe turns the abhorred upstart Gaveston into a more sympathetic figure before his death, a subversive departure from the chronicle structure. Marlowe neutralises the distasteful aspects of Gaveston's character, firstly by omitting the more nasty incidents in the chronicles, such as his widely reported theft of Edward's treasure (Holinshed 319-20). In the play, he attains everything from Edward at the King's own behest. Secondly, and more significantly, the play reveals Gaveston's genuine affection for Edward, whilst the lovesick monarch appears inconstant and capricious. Gaveston's devotion to Edward outlasts his presence in court. Pursued by the rebels, it is his love for Edward, not his social ambitions, he reiterates:

Yet, lusty lords, I have escaped your hands,

Your threats, your larums, and your hot pursuits;
And though divorced from King Edward's eyes,
Yet liveth Piers of Gaveston unsurprised,
Breathing, in hope […]
To see his royal sovereign again.

(II.v.1-7)

When captured, his only comfort is his lover's name: "Renowned Edward, how thy name / Revives poor Gaveston!" (II.v.41). His dying words are for Edward alone: "Sweet sovereign, yet I come / To see thee ere I die" (II.v.93). As Edward is not present to hear him, and the lords are committed to murdering Gaveston because of his relationship with Edward, there is no apparent motive for Gaveston to speak disingenuously. It seems this speech can only be an authentic expression. Edward's reaction to the news of Gaveston's murder is quite different from his lover's dying lament. Edward kneels, and swears a hyperbolic oath to enact horrific revenge on the perpetrators, the "villains that have slain my Gaveston" (III.ii.142), but then immediately replaces Gaveston with Spenser. He rises from the floor and promptly declares:

And in this place of honour and of trust,
Spenser, sweet Spenser, I adopt thee here,
And merely of our love we do create thee
Earl of Gloucester and Lord Chamberlain,
Despite of times, despite of enemies.

(III.ii.43-7)

Not only does this speech demonstrate an astounding lack of political acumen, but Edward appears to have betrayed the now-seemingly devoted Gaveston. His

indulgence of Gaveston seems even more catastrophic as it appears the relationship was only a passing fad. In a preceding scene, created entirely by Marlowe, Gaveston had actually introduced Spenser to Edward. This compounds Edward's distasteful behaviour:

> Edward: Knowest thou him, Gaveston?
>
> Gaveston: Ay, my lord,
>
> His name is Spenser; he is well allied.
>
> For my sake, let him wait upon your grace;
>
> Scarce shall you find a man of more desert.
>
> (II.iv.247-50)

In all of the chronicles, the favourites lived around a decade apart and never met. By centralising the upstart, to the elision of the aristocratic Spensers, the play maintains class as its core issue, and underscores the absence of providential rationalisation of events. By staging Gaveston's genuine devotion to Edward, Gaveston's flaws are mitigated. At this point, it cannot be avoided that Gaveston is the only noble who is loyal to his king. In depicting Gaveston as both transgressively socially aspirant and genuinely loyal and devoted, the play neutralises the moral judgement anticipated by the audience and instead invites them to question the class structure in which he existed, and that they still exist within. Instead of merely interrogating Edward's relationship with his favourite, or simply demonising Gaveston, the play rejects such a reading and invites the audience to question the concept of the favourite. *Edward II* secularises providential history through unsettling the essentially medieval chronicle. It follows the chronicles in denouncing the favourites, questioning why one man, irregardless of status or morality, should be able to wield absolute power over the

monarch. Marlowe's play extends this question, to lure his audience into pondering why a monarch, a fallible man, should have absolute control over everyone else.

Proud Mortimer

In a definitive reading of the Marlowe canon, Levin defined every Marlowe protagonist as an "Over-reacher", a figure who transgresses his assigned place in the world, and ultimately suffers for it (1). This term is by far the most applicable to Mortimer. Mortimer is an ambitious noble who tests and ultimately transgresses beyond the limits of his own power. In their exploration of Marlowe's sources, Tydeman and Thomas definitively state "the crucial change is the prominence given to Mortimer"; this figure is "almost entirely [Marlowe's] own creation" (345).

Mortimer, not Edward, is Marlowe's protagonist. The original title of the play is *The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable End of Edward II, King of England, with the Tragical Fall of Proud Mortimer*. As Hopkins has recently observed, to describe the fall of a king, the only subject worthy of tragedy according to Aristotle, as merely "lamentable" is most disconcerting. Hopkins further observes that it is *Mortimer's* death which is flagged as the tragedy in the play (2015). Marlowe demotes Edward and chooses instead to chronicle Mortimer. In Holinshed and his medieval sources, Mortimer is a relatively minor figure, who only joins the rebellion after Isabella returns from France. Marlowe makes him the instigator. In detailing Edward's interpersonal relationships within the court, not the figure of the monarch alone, the play diffuses Edward's power from the very first line. By the final scene, the formidable presence of Mortimer nullifies Edward's authority entirely, demonstrating that power is cyclical, and political situations are in flux, not divinely or socially anchored.

Forker argues that the play exploits "the allegorical potential of visual signs for other, non-allegorical purposes, the dramatic emblems […] broke the link […] between the visual sign and traditional perspectives and values" (66). This is most apparent when Mortimer boldly asserts himself against Edward in describing his shield emblem. Edward enquires about it: "But tell me, Mortimer, what's thy device" (I.ii.11). Mortimer responds with feigned humility: "A homely one, my lord, not worth the telling" (II.ii.13). Edward insists the cantankerous peer describe it, and Mortimer's response is assertive:

> A lofty cedar tree, flair flourishing,
> On whose top branches, kingly eagles perch,
> And by the bark a canker creeps me up
> And gets unto the highest bough of all.
> The motto: *Aeque tandem*.[157]
>
> (II.ii.16)

This image of a worm attempting to attain an equal status with the cedar tree it feeds from encompasses the conflict of the play. Bevington and Rasmussen gloss the term "canker" as referring to Gaveston's attempts to advance himself through a parasitic relationship with the royal cedar, Edward (478). Yet this is Mortimer's shield, and hardly more applicable to Gaveston than to Mortimer himself. Mortimer denounces Gaveston's aspiration as parasitic but he is the sole character who directly challenges the King, and who ultimately commits regicide. His heraldic device proves prophetic, but it is not applicable to Gaveston. In depicting transgressive behaviour as widespread throughout Edward's court, the play defiantly disrupts moralisation or providentialist rationalisation.

[157] "Equally at length".

The image gives Edward far more adulation than Mortimer himself ever would. The cedar is a biblical tree, a major motif in the Old Testament.[158] Edward insists: "I am that cedar. Shake me not too much" (II.ii.37). The image of the cedar associates Edward with Old Testament royalty, a lineage far superior to that of the Plantagenets, that of Christ. This detail reminds the audience of the supposed-divine mandate Edward wields, again underscoring the absence of the providential framework.

Edward fails to live up to the image he claims for himself, as his need to assert his authority in itself weakens his premise. Historical works sought to "inculcate good morality, with an insistence upon order, peace, sobriety, and loyalty to the commonwealth as cardinal principles of their doctrine" (Wright 333). *Edward II* makes such a reading completely impossible with these contradictory and ambiguous messages. Here, Mortimer offers his own interpretation of the symbolic inscriptions, again refusing an external definition of his identity and fate.

Departing significantly from his chronicle sources, Marlowe nuances Mortimer's character throughout the drama. In Chapter Three we have seen Tamburlaine's development from aspirant shepherd to fearless warlord, and Mortimer develops along a similar trajectory. Mortimer's banishment of Gaveston is a trial run for eventual deposition and regicide. He overrules the monarch, enforces his own will and achieves his aims. It is only the persuasion of Isabella, whose influence is examined in the next section, which leads him to allow Gaveston's

[158] It appears no less than seventeen times in the first book of Kings. The temple built by Solomon is constructed almost entirely from cedar wood. "So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and broads of cedar" (1 Kings 6.9). The use of cedar is repeatedly emphasised: "And then he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar" (1 Kings 6.9). Cedars appear six times in Chronicles, three times in Isaiah, twice in Song of Solomon, four times in Jeremiah, three in Ezekiel, twice in Samuel, four times in Psalms, and once in Zephaniah, Zechariah and 2 Kings.

return. In doing so, he has proven he can dominate the feeble Edward. When the banishment of Gaveston goes unpunished, it paves the way for further rebellion against the King. This development underscores the absence of providence, as humans shape events on their own terms.

Forker has observed that Edward is directly referred to as a tyrant only once (II.II.57), but he applies this term to Mortimer twice (IV.vii.92; V.ii.36) (61). Indeed, Marlowe has Mortimer devise the ambiguous note that orders Edward's death, but seems to simultaneously plead for his life, an obvious departure from the chronicles in which it is written by the Bishop of Hereford (Holinshed 341). Mortimer emphasises his cunning plot:

> Yet he that is the cause of Edward's death
> Is sure to pay for it when his son is of age,
> And therefore I will do it cunningly.
>
> (V.iv.3-5)

He goes on to boast of his murderous wordplay:

> This letter, written by a friend of ours,
> Contains his death, yet bids them save his life.
> '*Edwardum occidere nolite timere, bonum est'*,
> 'Fear not to kill the King, 'tis good he die.'
> But read it thus, and that's another sense:
> '*Edwardum occidere nolite, timere bonum est',*
> 'Kill not the King, 'tis good to fear the worst.'
> Unpointed as it is, thus shall it go…
>
> (V.iv.6-13)

The infamous note that orders Edward's execution is a historically-familiar exposure of the mutability of language, even the most authoritative literary language, Latin. The "sophistical form of words" (341) described by Holinshed undermines the entire foundation of British historical writing, it is evident why this is the episode of British history that Marlowe chooses to dramatise.[159] Where an Elizabethan would expect guidance in the form of moralisation, Marlowe emphasises only ambiguity. When the battle is underway, both factions stake a claim on national righteousness:

> Warwick: Saint George for England and the barons' right!
>
> Edward: Saint George for England and King Edward's right!
>
> (III.iii.35-6)

Though Edward's authority has to be viewed as the most legitimate, he is left to feebly parrot Warwick, and is incapable of authoritative speech. In contrast, Mortimer speaks with bombast. Mortimer refuses chronicle moralisation completely, insisting that he alone is in control of fate: "[…] Mortimer / Who now makes Fortune's wheel turn as he please" (V.ii.53-4). Mortimer reflects the moralisation of chronicle histories when he acknowledges his sins before death, but his "confession" contains no note of regret. Like Barabas' boastful deathbed speech, his review of his misdeeds is filled with pride:

> Base Fortune, now I see that in thy weal
> There is a point to which, when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong down. That point I touched
> And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?

[159] The Edward II tale is not the only chronicle narrative to make use of such a literary device; similar notes appear in other medieval history chronicles. Matthew Paris records that a similar message "*reginam interficere nolite timere bonum est*" was used to order the murder of a Hungarian Queen in 1213 (Paris 51, Philips 564).

(V.vi. 58-62).

Marlowe's Mortimer is a historical figure who refuses to behave according to his assigned position, both in *Edward II* and in the historical tradition of the chronicles. He lives in rebellion against society and then refuses to die the expected "moral" death. Mortimer's final lines seem to sneer at the tradition which preceded him, and lasted in English drama for centuries. He completely discounts any notion of "dying well" after repenting one's sins and living a moral life. Mortimer has not lived in accordance with moral values, but instead of fear and regret upon his death, he expresses a sense of satisfaction; he is proud that he has achieved all he could in life, reached the point "to which, when men aspire / They tumble headlong down" (V.iv.59-60). Thus, he is not perturbed in the slightest by death. The only note of chronicle instruction in Mortimer's demise is the subtle suggestion that living a full life, rather than dying a moral death, is the best possible outcome of the human condition. The best historical legacy is one of defiance.

Mortimer's astonishingly audacious deathbed speech simultaneously scorns both his captors and an entire dramatic tradition of God-fearing chronicles:

> Weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and as a traveller
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown
>
> (V.vi.63-5)

Once again, his speech elides any providential pattern. Mortimer refuses to accept any moralisation or providentialist rationalisation of his actions. In allowing Mortimer to reject didactic interpretations of his own life, the play liberates the audience from the same cognitive patterns.

Fair / False Isobel

Critics regularly position Mortimer in direct antagonism with Edward, and overlook that he does not act alone in this opposition. His dominance over the Peers and eventually over the realm is assisted, if not co-orchestrated, by Queen Isabella. Marlowe alters the historical narrative to imply that Isabella's affair with Mortimer preceded the rebellion. The *Lanercost* chronicler states that "there was a liaison suspected between him and the lady queen mother, as according to public report" in 1330 (266-7). No chronicle suggests an affair prior to this year.

The chronicles, with the exception of Le Baker, depict Isabella as a naïve woman overpowered by traitors and meretricious peers, if they pay her any heed at all. Le Baker, by contrast, offers a scathing account of Isabella. Le Baker describes her as an "iron lady" with a "heart harder than an adamantine anvil" (28). Yet no chronicle holds her in any way responsible for the insurrection: for example, the *Vita* includes no such plots or conspiracies (135).

Marlowe's play stages internal transgression within the court. Crucially, in all of the chronicles Isabella has no act or part in the deposition of Edward, and the most recent biography of Edward states that Marlowe's text is the first to suggest that Isabella's relationship with Mortimer preceded 1325 (Warner 175). Holinshed, again completely following medieval sources, does not suggest any affair prior to Mortimer's arraignment (c.1330). This amplification of a detail in the chronicle narrative has a significant bearing on the play. Marlowe creates a socially-transgressive character who is within the court, not an external aspirant, thus demonstrating that the thirst for power is not limited to those without it.

In *Edward II*, this relationship is established from the earliest scene, as Edward accuses Isabella of infidelity. The play offers the disturbing implication that

Edward's downfall may have been instigated by the scheming couple from the start, and may not have been a direct result of his poor rule. In *Edward II*, history is made by individuals, not God. This re-writing of the minutiae of English history serves to completely subvert any possible providentialist reading.

The Queen has often been dismissed as a hysterical, one-dimensional figure, a hapless victim of her husband's whims, and later a pawn in Mortimer's struggle for power. Yet this view is coloured by a contemporary audience's pre-conceived ideas of female characters on the early modern stage. As Gibbs notes, "in Marlowe's plays women are allowed to make inroads into male space and actively engage in statesmanship" (164). Like Marlowe's male protagonists, Isabella thirsts for power, but understands the limitations ascribed to her position.[160] When Edward dismisses his Queen's affection "Fawn not on me, French strumpet, get thee gone" (I.iv.145), she rebukes him in conventionally courteous manner "On whom but on my husband should I fawn?" (I.iv.146), provoking an ambiguous allegation from Gaveston: "on Mortimer, with whom, ungentle queen- / I say no more; judge you the rest, my lord" (I.iv.147-8). Again, there is the possibility that Isabella began her adulterous affair before she was rejected by Edward. This seemingly innocuous detail gives Isabella a greater role in the following events, suggesting she did not recourse to Mortimer after Edward's usurpation, rather the affair preceded his downfall, and this suggestion opens up the possibility that Isabella even engineered it. Isabella's self-interested machinations could be presented within a realm of divine providence, with

[160] One might perceive Isabella's apparent authority as disconcerting to an Elizabethan audience, the manner in which she wields limited power was not. The assertive female was a familiar trope on the medieval stage. In fact, Cooper identifies medieval romance as the first secular genre to feature women as leading agents (2010 179). While these early figures tended to be pre-occupied with marriage and domesticity rather than politics, the medieval romantic heroine was at least as important as the male in driving the action of the play (179).

the Queen as agent of God's will, but this is explicitly not the case in Marlowe's play as her plotting is implied to *precede* Edward's transgressions.

Outwardly, Isabella presents herself as a pitiful abandoned spouse. It is her woeful lamentation of Edward's behaviour, not the behaviour itself, which arouses the attention of the lords:

> Lancaster: Look where the sister of the king of France
>
> Sits wringing of her hands and beats her breast.
>
> Warwick: The king, I fear, hath ill intreated her.
>
> Pembroke: Hard is the heart that injures such a saint.
>
> Mortimer: I know 'tis long of Gaveston she weeps.
>
> (I.iv.187-91)

Each line here is significant. Firstly, Isabella is initially introduced as French, an origin which was derided in Gaveston. Yet, this is one of a few explicit mentions of her nationality, which is never presented as negative. Lancaster later refers to her as "sole sister to Valois" (II.ii.171). Isabella's social position insulates her from xenophobic comments, exposing the insults hurled at Gaveston as purely classist. Secondly, Pembroke's seemingly hyperbolic response illustrates the lords' attitude to Isabella: she is beyond reproach. The lords' treatment of Isabella is profoundly ironic. She embodies every detail that they despise in Gaveston. She is foreign, specifically also French, and actually stages a treasonous invasion of her husband's kingdom, but she is never regarded as anything other than the rightful Queen consort.

Finally, Mortimer's insistence that he knows what is bothering Isabella implies that he has conversed with her in secret. The power Isabella wields in these interactions is made clear in this scene. She attempts to convince a resolute Mortimer

that Gaveston should be permitted to return:

Sweet Mortimer, sit down by me a while,

And I will tell thee reasons of such weight

As thou wilt soon subscribe to his repeal.

Mortimer: [*sitting beside her*]: It is impossible; but speak your mind.

Isabella: Then thus, but none shall hear it but ourselves.

[*They talk apart*]

(I.iv.225-9)

Neither the audience nor the characters on stage hear what exactly they discuss; the audience is privy only to Pembroke's assertion that the Queen will not be able to persuade Mortimer: "Fear not, the queen's words cannot alter him" (I.iv.233). Yet, this is exactly what does happen, and Mortimer relents. It is made explicitly clear that it was Isabella's argument that changed his mind:

Lancaster: Ay, but how chance this was not done before?

Mortimer: Because my lords, it was not thought upon.

(I.iv.272-3)

Her decision to allow Gaveston to return from banishment has been seen as evidence of her weak temperament:

Then let him stay; for, rather than my lord

Shall be oppressed by civil mutinies,

I will endure a melancholy life,

And let him frolic with his minion.

(I.ii.64-7)

In fact this speech is the exact opposite. Rather than a weak, defeated spouse, Isabella's decision reveals an extremely pragmatic woman with an innate

understanding of power. Considering her efforts to provoke discontent, there is an implication here that during this secret conversation Isabella instigates a plan to have Gaveston killed. Marlowe amplifies the details of a conniving Isabella in Le Baker, to create a scheming Machiavellian who is complicit in Edward's downfall. In doing so, *Edward II* demonstrates that strategic power grabs are not only made by upstarts: even those in the highest echelons of the monarchy can transgress social order.

Once Gaveston has returned, Isabella resumes her role of martyr. She enters by running past the lords, her physical movement prompting Mortimer to ask: "Madam, whither walks your majesty so fast?" (I.ii.46). Her previous behaviour suggests that the Queen may have intended to provoke this question with her dramatic public perambulation. She responds with a melodramatic lament about her husband's affection for Gaveston. Isabella's bemoaning of Edward's neglect of her in favour of Gaveston is not mentioned in Holinshed, is briefly suggested in Stow, but is the single cause of his usurpation in Marlowe's play:

> Unto the forest, gentle Mortimer,
> To live in grief and baleful discontent,
> For now my lord the king regards me not
> But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
>
> (I.ii.47-50)

She goes on to describe Edward's transgressive actions in detail:

> He claps his cheeks and hangs about his neck,
> Smiles in his face and whispers in his ears,
> And when I come, he frowns, as who should say
> "Go whither thou wilt, seeing as I have Gaveston".
>
> (I.ii.51-4)

Edward II depicts the self-interested machinations within Edward's court, rather than a justifiable deposition. Isabella's traditionally feminine displays of despair at the state of Edward's kingdom are undercut by devious asides, in which she actively *encourages* the rebellious lords. She pleads that Edward has abandoned her for his minion, but not only does she evoke pity, she provokes the lords' disgust at Edward. "Look, Lancaster, how passionate he is, / And still his mind runs on his minion" (II.ii.3-4). Later, Isabella addresses the lords and again draws their attention to Edward's transgression: "Hark, how he harps upon his minion" (I.iv.311). She emphasises the destructive nature of Edward's relationship with Gaveston, knowing the reaction it will provoke. She appears to deliberately stimulate the lords' discontent, whilst concealing it from Edward. After witnessing the anger of the Peers, she meretriciously assures Edward: "Sweet husband, be content. They all love you" (II.ii.36). It is clear that they do not, and that Isabella knows the malice directed at her husband. To reassure Edward after the conversations she has been privy to, and has partaken in, is most duplicitous.

When the lords finally take arms against Gaveston, Isabella leads them directly to their target:

> He's gone by water unto Scarborough;
> Pursue him quickly, and he cannot 'scape.
> The king hath left him, and his train is small.
>
> (II.v.37-9)

She goes on to reveal Edward's strategy to the rebels, explaining that he separated from Gaveston in order to cause Mortimer's forces to split (II.v.41-5). Isabella understands the treasonous implications of her speech and insists that Mortimer keep

their conversation a secret, in order to attain the most chivalric of ends, maintaining her honour:

> You know the king is so suspicious
> As, if he hear I have but talked with you,
> Mine honour will be called in question;
> And therefore, gentle Mortimer, begone.
>
> (II.v.53-6)

Isabella claims it is only Edward's suspicious nature that creates the need for secrecy, discreetly obscuring the fact that, in supporting a force in military conflict with her husband and king, her speech is an act of treason. Isabella justifies her behaviour by insisting that it is her only civic duty to protect her country and heir that motivates her. Later in the text, when the revolt is underway, she reiterates this point: "I rue my lord's ill fortune; but alas, / Care of my country called me to this war" (IV.vi.64-5). Her treasonous actions are masked by a presumed service to her country, a clear demonstration of realpolitik within a medieval chronicle narrative.

Isabella is an even more insidious transgressor than Mortimer. In Holinshed, Isabella is sent to France by Edward on a diplomatic mission. In *Edward II*, she leaves of her own accord in a clear act of treason. Once the rebellion commences, and Edward's power neutralised, her character changes from lamenting spouse to belligerent military leader. After the uprising gets underway, the most bellicose and militaristic speeches come from Isabella. She advises her companions: "Successful battles give the God of Kings / To them that fight in right and fear his wrath" (IV.vi.19-20). Over the course of three scenes she has seemingly gone from a crying woman who cannot articulate her emotional suffering to a rebel leader rallying the troops. Marlowe's Isabella demonstrates that seditious behaviour permeates every

level of Edward's court, an entirely transient system of power that is devoid of any morality or design. Marlowe breaks down the fixed class structure of the chronicles by staging sedition from the highest, as well as the lowest, levels of Edward's court. Marlowe's Isabella develops from a neglected spouse to an adulterer, and ultimately becomes a ferocious usurper. In choosing to develop a potentially subversive figure from Le Baker, Marlowe creates a subversive depiction of a court system that belies a standard chronicle account.

The plotting Mortimer describes his partner-in-crime as "Fair Isabel" (V.ii.1), while the husband who spurned her only to find himself facing a revolt identifies her as "false Isabel" (V.i.17). In fact, the fair / false Isabella is even more insidious than Mortimer. Though Edward III seeks to punish her for her role in his father's death, he cannot bring himself to do so yet, and sends her to the Tower: "Mother, you are suspected for his death, / And therefore we commit you to the Tower" (V.vi.77-8). This appears a more finite punishment than she ever receives in the chronicles, where she is merely mentioned as being under house arrest. Marlowe renders Isabella a political prisoner at the same level as Mortimer.[161] Edward III insists her status as his mother will not influence the outcome of her impending trial: "If you be guilty, though I be your son, / Think not to find me slack or pitiful" (V.vi.79-80). Yet the following lines undermine this statement, as it appears that the Queen mother still yields some influence over her son.

Isabella: Nay, to my death, for too long have I lived
Whenas my son thinks to abridge my days.
Edward III: Away with her. Her words enforce these tears,
And I shall pity her if she speak again.

[161] Interestingly, Marlowe completely omits Edward and Isabella's other children, making Isabella's sole focus her son the heir. The historical Isabella and Edward had at least four children in total.

(V.vi.82-5).

Even after she is suspected as Mortimer's accomplice, her position as Queen Mother gives her leverage with the new monarch. Edward III expresses doubt that she could have arranged his father's murder, again articulated in reference to her social position: "I do not think her so unnatural" (V.vi.75). She is "unnatural" but manages to maintain her position. While her devastation at Edward's abandonment may or may not be genuine, she is not long forgetting her upset and strategically planning her future. Her actions are swift, pragmatic and effective. This presentation of the Queen disorientates the audience, and completely dissipates any providentialist associations.

The play posits a sceptical distance between the audience and the chronicle episodes. Isabella and Mortimer are not moral crusaders justly punishing a reckless leader; they are merely the heterosexual equivalent of Edward and Gaveston. It is not because their affair is more orthodox that they are able to continue unaffected; it is simply due to their understanding of statecraft. They are informed enough to carry out their affair, and campaign against Edward, in secret until they are guaranteed the support of the Peers. They understand the nature of power in a way Edward and Gaveston could never comprehend. *Edward II* discreetly exposes the lack of moral order through the immoral behaviour of the supposedly orthodox figures. The play reveals the class hierarchy that the chronicles purport to describe as actually being super-imposed on the accounts by the genre itself.

The most subversive aspect of Isabella's swift personality change is her insistence on claiming divine approval. If the audience was in any doubt as to how to interpret the narrative within a sphere of divine providence, Isabella directly challenges this concept. She claims divine approval for herself:

Successful battles gives the God of kings

To them that fight in right and fear his wrath.

Since then successfully we have prevailed,

Thanks be heaven's great architect and you.

Or farther we proceed, my noble lords,

We here create our well-beloved son,

Of love and care unto his royal person,

Lord Warden of the realm; and sith the Fates

Have made his father so infortunate,

Deal you, my lords, in this, my loving lords,

As to your wisdoms fittest seems in all.

(IV.vi.19-29)

The play blocks providentialist interpretation in the portrayal of three figures. The first of these is Edward, a negligent ruler who is disinterested in kingship and fails to maintain his power. This leads to his manipulation by Gaveston, an apparently effeminate and overly-ambitious Peer, who attempts to undermine established order initially through his sexuality, and later by publicly flouting it, but ultimately proves to be Edward's only loyal subject. He is condemned by Mortimer, who holds equal ambition and ultimately is the only figure to physically sodomise the King, if by proxy. Finally the audience must try to interpret the Machiavellian Isabella. Yet while the two former figures ultimately fall, Isabella reaps countless rewards until her ambiguous end. The moral theme is totally overturned by the latter character, who commits similar transgressions, yet, like Tamburlaine, achieves every ambition. She has totally subverted the existing order simply by having the greatest understanding of that order. The homosexual King Edward may have neglected his

"heterosexual" duties, but his heterosexual queen is an expert in early modern statecraft, and demonstrates all of the same condemnable traits and desires as Gaveston: foreign origins, sexual and social transgression, treasonous betrayal. Yet Isabella remains legitimate in the eyes of the lords. The play offers exempla not of how a ruler should act, but of how one *could* act: subverting his/her own social position by seeming to conform to it. *Edward II* not only refuses to assimilate events into any semblance of divine order, it opaquely suggests that transgressive acts are the only means to secure power in the court system.

Conclusion

Edward II appears to end conservatively: the righteous and formidable Edward III takes his throne in a court full of loyal nobles and purged of all transgressors. Yet none of the doubts raised in the preceding scenes have been resolved; the play "ends with a denial that the death by poker is an exemplum of poetic justice" (Lunney 2002 88). *Edward II* was a very popular play, there was no indication that it was considered seditious at its first performance. It is testament to the skilful subversion of familiar historical narrative that such provocative ideas remained in the script. It is the audience's familiarity with medieval narrative, particularly the chronicle genre, that allows Marlowe's audience to observe when the ideological signposts have been inverted or removed entirely. As Forker notes: "*Edward II* exploits this traditional exemplary rhetoric only to fracture it in the play's final scenes […] breaking […] the connection between the particular instance and its moralising commentary" (11).

Tydeman and Thomas assert that Marlowe's history play is "in many ways unhistorical" and instead consider it "an illustration of Sidney's argument in *The Apology for Poetry* that "a poet may be better able than a historian to tell the

essential truth about the past" (345). Marlowe's historical exempla, though subtle and underhand, are hard-hitting. Fryde has argued Marlowe's play "captured the essential atmosphere of the regime perhaps better than any historian has since been able to do" (7), and has contributed to the historiography of the medieval monarch he chose to depict. *Edward II* is a history play that has become part of the historiography of Edward's life and reign, as seminal to the genre of the history play as Higden's *Polychronicon* or *Holinshed's Chronicles* were to historical writing in their respective eras. Marlowe's play is one of few texts that superseded the chronicle as a mode of representing historical events. Though this chapter has demonstrated that the chronicle remained current throughout the Elizabethan era, it slowly began to decline by the end of the sixteenth century. Derided by satirists and losing the interest of publishers concerned about low profit margins, the chronicle would soon be replaced by a multiplicity of historical genres, including drama.[162] Plays, much like contemporary film and television adaptations, made history available to the masses. Infinitely more people would attend the play than read chronicles, and as such the theatre offered an alternative intellectual space in which to contemplate Elizabethan London.

Marlowe is no more the Elizabethan Karl Marx than the "Elizabethan Richard Dawkins" (Preedy xv), but his approach is radical. Marlowe's elliptical chronicle history disturbs the chronicle genre. The history play is an invitation and opportunity to reflect on England's past, and how it is conceived in the present and in the future. The play engages with a central question: is it ever right to depose a king? (Tydeman and Thomas 348). Though it superficially at least answers 'no', the play repeatedly emphasises that it is possible to do so. In this, it subverts over six

[162] For a detailed account of the decline of the chronicle, see Woolf, 1988.

hundred years of received concepts of providentialist history chronicles. In recounting the biography of Edward derived from medieval chronicles, the play seems to offer the audience a standard chronicle history, but turns the very concept on its head, and instead undermines every structure a history play purports to uphold. Liberated from the confines of providentialist chronicles and propagandistic, politicised history, Marlowe invites his audience to join Edward in pondering:

> But what are kings, when regiment is gone,
> But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?
>
> (V.i.26-7)

The reign of Edward II is a most suitable narrative for a history play seeking to interrogate the genre itself because, as we have noted, it was the first occasion where an English court deposed their King. The Galfridian account of English history, instigated in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britainae* (c1130s), stretches much further back than the Kings of England; it comprises classical narrative. In this, there is another episode that is ready-made for a subversive reading: Aeneas' affair with Dido in Book IV of the *Aeneid*. *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, stages this episode from Virgilian epic, understood as authentic history in Marlowe's lifetime, and represented in a multiplicity of often contradictory sources. The next section explores Marlowe's dramatisation of this story in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and the play's subversive employment of a distinctly medieval version of the tale.

Subversive Appropriation: *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and Medieval Sources

Dido, Queen of Carthage (hereafter *Dido*) is second only to *The Massacre at Paris* in being Marlowe's most neglected play.[163] The play is "something of an orphan child" according to the most recent chapter on it (Lunney 2015 13), but interest has increased exponentially in the last two decades, largely thanks to feminist criticism. *Dido* stages an episode from Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* for an audience in Elizabethan England. In her contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, Munson Deats notes the significant variations between the Dido narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Marlowe's play (198). Examining the differences and similarities between Marlowe and his primary source is a common critical practice, and in this regard Munson Deats follows an expected route. Critics often use the subject matter of the play to argue that the play was written for performance in Cambridge, as one of many university dramas of the Tudor period.[164] Classical Latin texts and their language were the tools of pedagogy. As Desmond states "it is clear Virgil's *Aeneid* was a canonical text read in institutional settings throughout the medieval West, often, though perhaps not exclusively, as a Latin primer" (4). It is also clear that the play is not a simple example of Marlowe versus Virgil. The use of Lydgate has been established by Seaton (1959) and Smith (1977), and affirmed by Thomas and Tydeman (1994), and Lunney (2015). But the extent to which medieval versions of the tale have been used, and more importantly, how they are used, has not been considered. Rather, in focusing on the play's medieval sources this chapter illuminates a crucial intertext within the drama, and its subversive use as a counterpoint to orthodox readings of Virgil. At the start of this chapter, we have

[163] Nashe is recorded as an author on the 1594 title page, but there has been much speculation as to the extent of his involvement. See Hopkins 2008 39.
[164] Gager's *Dido* was performed at Oxford in 1583 and a lost play by Halliwell was performed before Queen Elizabeth at Cambridge in 1564.

noted the two opposing modes of conceiving history in the Tudor period, continuation (medieval) or change (Renaissance). Simpson asserts that Geoffrey of Monmouth is very much in the former category. Geoffrey of Monmouth is, according to Simpson, a "medievalist" in that he provides a "middle age"; a narrative that "fills in […] the vast gap between the fall of the past empire and the rise of a new nation" (2002 71). We have noted the relatively unencumbered continuation of the chronicle genre, but the Elizabethan era saw the propagation of another "historical" genre, that of the Galfridian tradition. However, this history could not slide into this gap unencumbered, as, contrary to humanist claims, the Middle Ages actively engaged with Classical history, and crucially, produced their own versions of the Troy narrative. In this study, we shall see that Virgilian narrative was read in a particular way in Elizabeth's kingdom. Orthodox readings of Virgil's text "produce a totalising discourse for a Eurocentric, colonializing view of history" (Desmond 6), but Marlowe will develop the medieval tradition to offer a very different reading of imperial narrative for the English public.

The critical consensus on Marlowe's Aeneas is that he is *un*heroic. Cutts' argument will serve as representative: Aeneas "does not think nor act like a Trojan prince with a divine mission to found an empire, but like a shattered being who cannot restore his self-respect" (77).[165] Decisively however, the conventional Renaissance view of Aeneas was as an exemplary leader and "virtuous man" (Sills 127). This study demonstrates that Marlowe's rather lacklustre Aeneas is a medieval characterisation, that Marlowe has chosen to stage in order to subvert the standard Elizabethan Galfridian narrative. An audience attending a production of a classical narrative would expect a conventional Virgilian depiction of Aeneas as an infallible

[165] Other critics who espouse readings of an unheroic Aeneas include Munson Deats (2004), Gill (1977), Gibbons (1968), and Seaton (1959).

hero. Instead of a simple dramatisation of a portion of the *Aeneid*, with all of the cultural trimmings, Marlowe presents an alternative medieval version of the story, in which Dido takes pre-eminence and Aeneas is depicted as weak and cowardly. In an era of imperialist portrayals of Aeneas, Marlowe chooses to centralise Dido. In selecting this established variant version of the story, Marlowe interjects into the Galfridian tradition with a subversive suggestion: that Aeneas is not infallible, and nor are English aspirations to empire divinely sanctioned. Marlowe's play posits two sources that are ostensibly binary opposites and its plot is modelled on a medieval version that directly undermines Elizabethan conceptions of the classical myth.

This chapter will examine the appropriation of the Dido figure in Tudor England, detailing Marlowe's subversive choice to stage a contrary, uniquely "medieval" Dido. It will then explain where Marlowe recourses to this specific medieval version, and how he strategically follows this tradition to offer a subversive injection into imperialist narrative. Before embarking on a reading of *Dido*, it is worth pausing here to consider the narrative Marlowe's audience expected to see.

Great Britain: The Galfridian Tradition

Hill observes that "it has long been a critical truism that the end of the sixteenth century witnessed a noticeable cultural concern with historical matters" (195). We have seen in the previous section this bears out in Marlowe's history play, *Edward II*. Yet during the reign of Elizabeth, England did not rely solely on its own history to bolster itself, it also laid claim to classical epic. Most Elizabethans accepted as fact the Galfridian tradition, the legend that Britain had been founded by Brutus (Oliver xxxvii). The Dido and Aeneas story was thus in turn accepted as a factual historical event in early modern England. The narrative can be summarised as

follows: after the fall of Troy, the eponymous hero Aeneas escapes the decimated city with his father Anchises and little son Ascanius. Aeneas' mother, the goddess Venus, saves her son from certain death in Troy and commands him to sail to Italy, and to establish a new Troy there. Aeneas eventually completes this mission, and through the overthrow of a local Prince, Turnus, and marriage to a Princess, Lavinia, he establishes the Roman Empire. This is where the Virgilian epic ends. But according to British tradition, Aeneas' great-grandson Brutus fled the city after the manslaughter of his father in a hunting accident. The exiled Brutus travelled west, until he came upon an uninhabited island he claimed for himself, calling it "Brutain" or, later, Britain. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britainae* traced the lineage of the English monarchy to King Arthur, a descendant of Brutus. This origin myth continued through to Marlowe's lifetime and beyond. Though it would not become the official name for the country until the Act of Union in 1707, it had been a name for the island for many centuries. Its specifically Galfridian connotations gained "a new force from […] nationalist agendas" in the sixteenth century (Cooper 2004 24), as the myth served as uniting strategy as the Tudors sought to consolidate their power over England and Wales.[166] Virgil's *Aeneid* served as a model for Britain's self-fashioning as a "second Troy" founded by Brutus (Williams 2006 32).[167] In the Elizabethan era, London was known as "Troynovant" a "new Troy" with the English as the heirs of Western empire.[168] Thus, the story of Aeneas was effectively the story of Britain, as Marlowe's audience saw their ancestors in Virgilian narrative. As Martin explains, "when a Tudor audience saw such legendary characters as Gorboduc, Locrine, Arthur, or Leir, that audience would grasp certain

[166] For more see Knight, 38-67.
[167] For contemporary accounts of this origin myth, see Manley, 29.
[168] Fabyan's *New Cronycles of Englande and Fraunce* (1516) recounts English history from Brutus to the contemporary era, but explicitly from a London viewpoint, placing the city at the very centre of the imperial trajectory. This myth was fundamental to its self-creation as a city as well as a nation.

connotations involving notions of national history, dynastic legitimacy, and providential teleology" (2001 157). Galfridian material is a unique fusion. It is a medieval epoch that appropriates classical narrative, that is in turn appropriated by Tudor writers for nationalist purposes.

Marlowe's adaptation of Virgil explores alternative medieval versions of the tale as a response to this specific cultural context.

Martin has noted that poetic and dramatic accounts of the Galfridian myth "occur predominantly in the latter years of the sixteenth century" (158). Excluding a single example, Kelton's *Chronicle* (1547), there were no such literary uses of the theme prior to Elizabeth's reign (158). There were however, some prose accounts in history chronicles, such as Fabyan (1513 & 1533), Harding's of 1543 and Caxton and Higden's texts. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Galfridian tradition took on a new lease of literary life during Elizabeth's reign and that any play staging Virgilian episodes was extremely topical. Shakespeare's use of Galfridian "history" is well documented.[169] We see that he alludes to Dido in no less than seven plays.[170] *Historia regum Britanniae* is a source for *King Lear* (1606), *Troilus and Cressida* (c.1601-2) and *Cymbeline* (c.1623). Spenser also uses the myth extensively in *The Faerie Queene*.[171] Naturally, Marlowe's audience was well acquainted with the Dido and Aeneas tale, and it would not be excessive to suggest that Dido was as familiar then as Cinderella is now. Unsurprisingly, the Galfridian tradition is well represented in the Parker Library. CCCC 281, which we have examined previously for its content from Le Baker's *Life and Death of Edward II*, is primarily concerned with this mode of representing English history. *Galfr. Monumethensis, Annales, etc*

[169] See Hadfield, 2004, 151-68.
[170] For a full list see Savage 14-18.
[171] For Spenser's rendering of the Galfridian account of the lineage of British monarchs, see Canto III. ix.38-51.

contains handwritten notes from Parker's time, and Geoffrey of Monmouth appears also in CCCC 292.[172] Camden's *Britannia* (1586) presents the Galfridian version of Britain's foundation, as does Drayton's *Polyolbion* (1612). The government utilised the Trojan war epic to motivate soldiers during the 1588 Armada (Shepherd 53). Aske's *Elizabetha Triumphans* (1588) is another obvious example of the political appropriation of Virgil's epic. The consideration of the Troy tale as English history extended well beyond Marlowe's lifetime, as evident in texts such as *The Wandering Prince of Troy* (1600), Fisher's *Fuimus Troes* [We Were Trojans] (1633) and Dekker's *Troia-Nova Triumphans* (1612) which all centre on Aeneas and the founding of Britain. Simpson states "translation of Virgilian epic in the early seventeenth century […] revived ideals of imperial conquest" (1998 68). But with a revival of the classics, came a renewed interest in medieval romance versions of classical narrative, and there was a revival of medieval romance historiography under the Tudors (Gransden 475). "The Tudors adopted the medieval legends of Brutus and King Arthur for propaganda purposes", as Gransden explains, "thus fostering interest in Britain's legendary past" (475).

English chroniclers availed themselves of the matter of Britain narrative because there was simply nothing else; without this classical heritage, the English were effectively cultural nobodies. Elizabethans were adept at noting significant aspects of British history in the tales they read and witnessed on stage. In the *Aeneid*, they expected to see their valiant ancestor.

[172] Gerald of Wales, another proto-historian famed for blending myth and factual accounts, appears in three manuscripts in the library; CCCC 390, CCCC 400 and CCCC 425.

Dido and Aeneas in Britain

In the *Aeneid*, there is a significant detour on Aeneas' journey. Before Aeneas fulfils his ultimate destiny, he accidentally lands his fleet in Carthage, in Libya. Here he becomes embroiled in a romantic affair with the widowed Queen Dido. Dido makes valiant attempts to persuade Aeneas to remain in Carthage with her, but though his loyalty is conflicted, Aeneas undertakes the dutiful decision to leave the city. Bereft, the Queen then commits suicide. In the *Aeneid*, the narrative never loses sight of the ultimate destination, even when the voyage takes this detour: "'Italy' shouted Achates who first hailed the sighting, / 'Italy' sang out the crew in a joyful and clamorous greeting" (III.523-4).[173] The reader has already been informed: "that's where Aeneas' house will establish a worldwide dominion, / Kept by the sons of its sons and by those who'll be born of their offspring" (III.97-8). In contrast to this focused trajectory, Dido is "burning with passion, love's madness has seeped to her marrow" (IV.80). When their affair commences, it is presented as a silly distraction: "Cupid's slaves in a shameless love, their kingdoms forgotten" (IV.194). When the time comes for Aeneas' inevitable departure, he insists "Going to Italy's not my choice" (IV.361). Dido remains passionate to the point of mania, threatening him with ludicrous hyperbole: "my dank ghost will haunt you" (IV.385). Yet Aeneas is admirably resolute and undaunted by her protests: "meanwhile, Aeneas was holding a steady course with his navy" (V.1).

In order to support English claims to empire, the Dido episode must be rendered in a manner that maintains Aeneas' unblemished reputation. Within this narrative, Aeneas, as the forefather of Britain, is presented as a faultless hero, and his journey westward as a foregone conclusion. Lees-Jeffries explains: "in the late

[173] All quotes are from Ahl, ed.

sixteenth-century, Aeneas was praised not only as a model of heroic virtue and filial piety but also of his imperial destiny, the founding of Rome" (384). This is the image of Aeneas in Marlowe's lifetime.

Dido was crushed under the cultural weight of this reading of Virgil; she existed only within the *Aeneid* as a foil for the heroic forefather of Britain. In contrast, across Europe, there are approximately forty Renaissance dramas about Dido.[174] With the exception of two academic dramas, Marlowe was the only English dramatist to centralise Dido in England before the late seventeenth century.[175] Dido is not represented in English drama because Aeneas is overrepresented, and we shall presently see that at this point, any adapter of Virgil faced this choice.

The Troy narrative came from the original Greek of Homer, via France, and was rendered in Latin several times from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. Moreover, not only did the classical text not preclude uneducated spectators from appreciating the narrative, it actually increased interest. Classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, historians Pliny and Tacitus, dramatist Plautus and of course Ovid and Virgil were well known to Elizabethans, even if they had not read their individual works in depth. The everyday Elizabethan "who may never have been within sound of university lectures, knew that Aristotle was an omniscient Greek, who pronounced upon all things- the soul, the body, nature, and what not" (Wright 564). The names and central ideas in classical works were known because these authors were evoked extensively in popular romance narratives. These tales formed the baseline of Elizabethan popular tradition. The Dido myth was an extremely popular tale in the Elizabethan era, and popular in the broad sense of the word. Lunney states "it was one of the great legendary stories, an ingredient of elite and

[174] See Desmond 20 and Allen 55-60. For a detailed bibliography of sources accounting for Italian, Spanish and French versions of Dido, see Desmond, 238.
[175] Only one of the academic plays, Gadger's *Dido*, actually survives.

popular culture with a variety of associations and appropriations from court entertainment and didactic literature to bawdy ballads and artefacts" (2015 19).[176] So commonplace was the story that it served as a commentary on current affairs. Williams notes that the Dido narrative is used to comment on the core Reformation issue of free will versus predestination in Giraldi's *Didone* (1541), whilst in Jodelle's *Didon se sacrifiant* (1558) it serves as a pro-French Monarchy text (38). The Dido narrative appears as romance in the *Roman de la Rose* and as historical foundation in *Eneas*, a text "part of a cultural program designed to legitimise the Plantagenet dynasty" (Desmond 105).

Yet the most common rendering was simply a Galfridian reading. Depending on how she is presented, Dido as a figure can undermine claims to Virgilian authority and imperialist ambitions. Within this Virgilian / medieval narrative binary, either Dido or Aeneas can be depicted as behaving honourably, not both. The Dido episode can only be interpreted in two ways: Aeneas as a hero, whose departure from Carthage is necessary in order to fulfil his destiny, or Aeneas as a traitor, who, irregardless of his excuse for his actions, behaves abhorrently. Concurrently, Dido is either a hysterical disrupter of Aeneas' duty, or a faultless committed lover.

Although beyond the remit of this thesis, Marlowe was not just a poet and playwright, he was also a translator. As a Classicist, he undoubtedly understood Virgil's works in depth, and read the *Aeneid* in its original language, Latin. It is trickier to pinpoint exactly what text Marlowe is using, but his first encounter with Virgil was likely in the original Latin, at grammar school. His audience could

[176] For example, Christian historian Silvestris moulded the *Aeneid* into a "paradigm for the travails of the Christian soul" (Williams 2006 35).See Ward Jones and Jones, eds.

equally be relied upon to share some knowledge of the *Aeneid* through English translations, if they did not share his grammar school education.

These translations inevitably upheld Aeneas as the eponymous hero. In Phaer's contemporary translation of the *Aeneid* (1558), Aeneas' divine heritage is foregrounded throughout: "thou thy son Aeneas stout to heaven shalt bring at last" insists Venus, who later describes her son's ultimate destiny. The narrator asserts the inevitable prosperity of his descendants (40-56), culminating in Venus emphatically stating: "Endless shall their empire grow" (56). This is clearly a translation designed to allude to Britain. After the establishment of Rome, the westward expansion of empire is unlimited. In this translation, Aeneas is steadfast in fulfilling his destiny: "Of Italy I seek the land, and Jove's offspring I am" (106). Dido's pleading cannot sway him, even her most hyperbolic rhetoric: "Nor Dido, like to die with cruel death, can stay thy flight?" (210). Aeneas explains his position clearly and rationally, reminding Dido "Nor I for wedlock ever came" (246) and setting out the pressing importance of his onward journey to Italy. The text establishes and then emphasises that Aeneas' flight from Carthage could not be halted, and that his decision to leave the Queen he dearly loves is a noble one, a necessary step in the establishment of Western civilisation. This is one of many examples of the version of the Dido and Aeneas story presented in Tudor England: the eponymous hero diligently following his duty, despite the protests of the hysterical queen. This is the official Virgilian account of events.[177] Early modern English depictions of Dido choose the elision of Dido in favour of Aeneas. Desmond notes that "the textual ordering of history around models of *translatio imperii* privileges the 'fame of Pius Eneas' and presents the poets in relationship to a monumentalising view of the past that has no room for

[177] This version of the tale would enter the Middle Ages with Dante describing Dido in the second circle of hell, as an overly passionate lover (Canto V 85), but by the late 1400s, it had all but been replaced by an alternative.

Dido" (137). Aeneas and Dido are set in binary opposition. Aeneas' betrayal of an honourable Dido cannot be reconciled with his image as the heroic founding father of Rome (and by extension Britain), therefore this episode can only be accounted for by having Dido appear in an unflattering light, with Aeneas' action entirely justified. Notably however, as Desmond observes, while "the Latin *Aeneid* was a highly canonical text embedded in elite social structures, the vernacular Dido allowed for disruptive reading practises" (21).[178] Thus, the Dido story is not immediately the most obvious choice for a dramatist staging Virgil. It is however, a natural fit for any dramatist writing *against* the standard Virgilian text.

The first English translation of the *Aeneid* was Douglas' *Enedos* (1513). In this text, Douglas' stated goal is to produce the work of Virgil in the "language of Scottis natioun" (Pro. 103) and to appropriate Virgilian authority for nationalist purposes.[179] Though it is undetermined if Marlowe came into contact with this specific text, it serves here as a prime example of how Virgil was read in Tudor England. Douglas attempts to claim "Virgilian eloquence for the Scottish language and Scottish identity" (Desmond 165). We have seen in the previous section on *Edward II*, the permeable line between history and romance in Elizabethan culture. The Galfridian tradition blends the two completely. As Watkins has observed, any late sixteenth-century writer of the Dido myth was responding "not only to Virgil's text but to the long history of its cultural reception" (30). It is impossible to engage with the "authentic" Virgilian Dido in isolation, try as Douglas might.

[178] Desmond has shown that "the historical Dido is, as a rule, evoked against the Virgilian tradition" (18) as "the second hand memory of Dido's other stories, as well as the literary history of Dido's itinerary in medieval vernacular cultures, mark a disruption of the standard pedagogical focus of great books, or Western civilisation courses" (21).

[179] Though this is a Scottish text, it is the first English translation and exemplifies nationalist appropriations of Virgil in the sixteenth century. See Desmond, 163-5.

Douglas centralises Aeneas as the hero of the poem, following the orthodox reading of Virgil's epic. Yet in choosing to do so, Douglas has to overcome a major hurdle: Chaucer. In order to present Aeneas as the spotless hero of imperial epic, Douglas must discredit a popular medieval tradition in which Aeneas is anything but heroic, where he is a traitor. Douglas begins this dismissal by lamenting that "My mastir Chauser gretly Virgill offendit" (Pro.I.40). Though he reveres him as a "master", Douglas insists that Chaucer has diverged from the ultimate authority of Virgil in his critique of Aeneas, where he "callys hym [Aeneas] traytour als" (Pro.I.16). By incorrectly presenting Aeneas as "fals" (Pro.I.15) Chaucer has apparently "gretly the prynce of poetis grevit" (Pro.I.418). Douglas has an interesting excuse prepared for Chaucer's alleged deviation: "For he was evir, God wait [knows], all womanis frend" (I Pro.449). Douglas claims that in his account of Dido, Chaucer has lost sight of Virgil's' supposedly indisputable authority, because of an inherent and misguided desire to present a woman in a positive light.

Though Humanists claimed to have "rediscovered" Classical literature, the Troy narrative was one of the most popular in medieval romance. *The Seege of Troy* or *The Batayle of Troye* is extant in four manuscripts.[180] Tudor propagandist missions used the Galfridian tradition in support of the state, but also in doing so increased interest in medieval history. Trevisa's translation (c.1380) of Higden's *Polychronicon* (1360) contains the Dido story. This chronicle "challenges the historicity" of the *Aeneid* through the figure of Dido (Desmond 173). Marlowe had access to it, and we have seen in the previous section, he likely made use of it in his history play. Dido is disruptive to Aeneas' westward voyage, within and without the narrative. Her very presence is difficult to navigate for any author aiming to construe

[180] These include London Lincoln's Inn 150, London B.L. Egerton 2862, London College of Arms Arundel XXII and London B.L. Harley 525. Barnicle has produced an edition for the Early English Text Society, o.s. 172.

Aeneas as an infallible hero. Buckley has noted the subversive potential of the medieval version, arguing that: "Marlowe's play responds to an Ovidian tradition which depicts Aeneas as not only perfidious to Dido, but also to Troy" and that Marlowe "re-weights authority in favour of the medieval tradition and against the central figure of the Renaissance canon, Virgil" (129). In medieval literary culture the Dido story "circulates as a unit more or less detached from the larger narrative of the *Aeneid*" but remains "identified with it" (Desmond 49). The Middle Ages produced a plethora of alternative versions of the Dido story.[181]

The Medieval Dido

The version of events that Douglas accuses Chaucer of erroneously recording was a standard medieval account, and one that we shall see Marlowe selects for his play. Desmond identifies "a discernible tradition" in medieval vernacular adaptations of the *Aeneid*: a focus on the character of Dido (2). Savage similarly describes an "unusual symbiosis between the [Virgilian] poem and quite a different Didonian narrative tradition" (13). Desmond has documented "Dido's centrality to medieval vernacular reworkings of Virgil" (xi) in French, and this alternative Dido was well-represented in English. Classical narratives were a key source for romance writers all over Europe, particularly France.[182]

In *Heroides VII* Ovid instigates the tradition of reading Dido alone, and displacing Aeneas as the locus of the action.[183] In her epistle, Dido literally writes back to Aeneas, challenging his behaviour: "Are you resolved none the less to go,

[181] Desmond identifies an alternative "historical Dido", a pre-Virgilian version of Dido's story in which "she never meets Aeneas, but commits suicide in order to preserve her chastity and oath of fidelity to her deceased husband Sychaus" (17-18). Unsurprisingly, this tale was used to promote the ideal of "chaste widowhood" in the Middle Ages.
[182] See Murray, *From Plato to Lancelot: A Preface To Chretein De Troyes*.
[183] The *Heroides* was obviously part of the *Ovide moralise* tradition –so the medieval versions of the narrative were didactic.

and to abandon wretched Dido, and shall the same winds bear away from me at once your sails and your promises?" (VII 7) and she describes Aeneas as "false" (VII 20) and "perfidious" (VII 120). Crucially, she establishes this as an inherent trait in the hero, not an insult being hurled by a spurned lover: "You are false in everything- and I am not the first your tongue has deceived, nor am the first to feel the blow from you" (VII 85). The more common tradition which depicted Dido as a wronged woman, and Aeneas as treacherous began with Ovid, but flourished in medieval accounts of the Troy narrative.[184]

Crucially, medieval vernacular romances did not distinguish between the Dido of the *Aeneid* and the Dido of the *Heroides*. They did not acknowledge, in Watkins' words, the "ideological and aesthetic incompatibility" of the two texts (38). Furthermore, Watkins explains that in the medieval era "no-one interpreting or retelling the story of Aeneas' adventures seemed to be concerned with fidelity to one moral or aesthetic perspective privileged as authentically Virgilian" (41). Virgil's authorial intent was not a valuable currency in medieval versions. To recourse to a time when such aspirations to this authority were unknown, Marlowe subverts Elizabethan claims to empire. Moreover, the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries saw a vernacular English representation of the Troy narrative that was both anti-Virgilian and anti-Galfridian (Simpson 1998 404). This distinctly medieval version provides no scope for imperialism, less a divinely-sanctioned empire, and though "intensely historical," (404) its history has no forward momentum.

Most medieval versions of the Dido tale derived from Guido's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287).[185] There are three significant pre-sixteenth century

[184] The original "defender of Dido" is Ovid. It has long been established, and has been noted in Chapter Three, that Marlowe takes an Ovidian career trajectory. Following the tradition of defending Dido is a logical route for an Ovidian poet to take.
[185] For an English translation, see Meek.

literary accounts of the Trojan War: the anonymous Laud *Troy Book* (c.1343-1425), *The Destruction of Troy* (c.1386) and Lydgate's *Troy Book* (1412-20).[186] Lydgate's text is by far the most widely disseminated of the three, surviving in twenty manuscripts and two print editions (1513 and 1555).[187] Caxton also produced a translation of *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1468-1471). Caxton's *History of Troy* (1473-4) would be the first printed version in English (Simpson 1998 78). Caxton's translation appeared in no less than three editions, from the original in 1475 to as late as 1553 (*STC* 24571.3- 24572). A revised edition *The ancient historie of the destruction of Troy* was produced in 1596 and remained in print as late as 1738 (*STC* 15379-82). The medieval texts were available throughout the Elizabethan period. This medieval Dido story survived in the shadows of early modern imperialist narratives. For example, Dolce's *Didone* (1547) describes Aeneas as a serpent "who came back to life, so that, in return for the good he received, he may now kill us with his poison" (III.5). Simpson explains that:

> In the fifteenth century, the main literary tradition of Troy […] had no sympathy for ancestral or imperialistic pretensions. Instead, this tradition represented the failures of militarist societies, and those failures are produced from the very territorial and matrimonial dynamics by which societies are driven. (2002 98)

He continues: "fourteenth and fifteenth century [versions of classical narratives] marked out their opposition to militarist, imperialist pretensions in a variety of ways" (60). Exploring the Dido episode from the perspective of the abandoned Queen was one established way of doing so. Caxton's *Eneydos* (1490) is a medieval text that outlines the *Aeneid* with the exclusion of Dido, exemplifying the orthodox reading of

[186] For more information on these and less-significant versions of the Troy narrative in Middle English, see Simpson, 2002, 77.
[187] See Simpson, 1998, 404-5.

Virgil. Simpson notes that in Caxton's text, the "Virgilian pretensions are almost completely derailed by different and incompatible versions of the Dido story" (78).

In the late Middle Ages, Lydgate and Chaucer became known as "defenders of Dido" (Lunney 2015 18) as they emphasised the innocence of the Queen and the treachery of the hero.[188] Lydgate's *Troy Book* (1420) has long been accepted as a source for Marlowe; it is one of two medieval sources listed by Tydeman and Thomas (22), but it has only recently begun to be afforded critical attention.[189] This section contends that Lydgate is not a single secondary or supplementary source, rather his Troy narrative is the most dispersed rendition of a medieval account of the story, a version that is anathema to both Virgil and Geoffrey of Monmouth. Marlowe directly quotes from Lydgate, but he may have been aware of other popular accounts such as those of Chaucer. Smith argues that the play holds a multitude of influences, including the *Troy Book* and, as we shall see, Chaucer's *House of Fame* (c.1380s) and *The Legend of Good Women* (c.1380s). These texts exemplify the medieval tradition of depicting Aeneas as a traitor, and Dido as a sorrowful abandoned woman. We have noted Ovid's defence of Dido, but these canonical English authors have instigated in vernacular literature a Dido narrative that is anathema to imperialist interpretations of Virgilian texts. What is most pertinent here however is the model Marlowe chooses for his play, the defence of Dido, which is both unilaterally medieval and in an Elizabethan context, deeply subversive.

Lydgate and Chaucer brought the medieval version of Dido into English vernacular. Chaucer and Lydgate's accounts of Dido are brief as they fit within the wider collections of tales. As such, medieval authors do not render Dido the protagonist of their texts, as is Marlowe's innovation, rather they present her as the

[188] For a list of various sources that depict Aeneas as a traitor, see Seaton, 27.
[189] Lydgate's *Troy Book* was printed in 1513 and in 1555 (*STC* 5579-80), and again in a modernised version in 1614 (*STC* 5581).

protagonist of the *Virgilian* narrative that they recount within the larger collection. Thus, their representations of Dido are short, but the reversal of the Virgilian epic that occurs within them is significant.

Chaucer has lambasted Aeneas on more than one occasion. In *The House of Fame* he insistently reasserts Aeneas' treachery. Book I recounts the Dido tale (151-508), and Chaucer leaves no doubt as to whom he holds responsible for the tragic events: "For he [Aeneas] to hir a traytour was, / Wherfore she slow hirself, allas!" (219-20).[190] He soon reiterates the point: "But let us speke of Eneas, / How he betrayed hir, allas, /And left hir ful unkyndely" (245-7). Chaucer then presents Dido as a martyr, who is ever-forgiving of the treachery against her, falling back on his source to emphasise his point:

> For she desired nothing ellis
> In certeyn, as the book us tellis.
> But to excusen Eneas
> Fullyche of al his grete trespass
>
> (425-8)

In *The Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer presents the same deceptive and cruel Aeneas: "Therwith his false teres out they sterte" (1311) before his ultimate betrayal:

> For on a nyght, slepyne he let hire lye,
> And stal awey unto his companye,
> And as a traytour forth he gan to sayle
> Toward the large contre of Ytayle.
>
> (1326-9)[191]

[190] All quotes are from the Riverside Chaucer, ed. Benson.
[191] Chaucer's accounts of Dido do not appear in the Parker Library catalogue, but his other famed heroine, Criseyde, does. CCCC 61 contains *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Though Marlowe's use of Lydgate is not in doubt, the editor of the standard critical edition of the play, Oliver, is inexplicably dismissive of the importance of Lydgate's text.[192] It is not Lydgate's language or attitudes that are appropriated by Marlowe and recognisable to his audience, but his narrative, the model of elevating Dido and denigrating Aeneas. Lydgate is unambiguous in denouncing Aeneas:

> But tho he wist that there was treason
> Falsely compassed unto his city
> By Antenor and also by Enee [Aeneas]
> Of whose malice he was no more in doubt…
>
> (6316-19)

In parallel to denouncing Aeneas, Lydgate martyrs Dido:

> And how he falsed the queen,
> I mean Dido, of womanhead flower
> That gave to him her riches and treasure,
> Jewels and gold, and all might him please,
> And everything that might do him ease,
> But for all that, how he was unkind…
>
> (1446-1451)

In medieval accounts, the better Dido appears, the more reprehensible Aeneas is. Lydgate is specific in using the word "falsed", implying intent. Aeneas is inherently deceptive, not incidentally cruel as a side effect of his dutiful actions. Lydgate prompts his reader to find the account of Aeneas' deplorable behaviour in the *Aeneid*:

> Read *Eneydos*, and there ye shall it find;

[192] He argues Marlowe had nothing to learn from Lydgate's "dull enumeration of encounters on the battlefield or his tedious passages of anti-feminism," insisting "the language of the *Troy Book* never takes fire" (xxxix). A scathing dismissal indeed.

And how he falsely stole away
By nighter time while she abed lay,
And of his conquest also in Itaille,
Where he had many strong bataille,
His adventures and his works all,
And of the fine that is to him fall,
Ye may see, by full sovereign style
From point to point compiled in Virgil...

(1452-60)

The virtuous Dido / deceptive Aeneas binary is also presented in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (2.1898-2233). These narratives repeatedly contrast the shameful behaviour of Aeneas with the exemplary character of Dido, a complete inversion of the Virgilian account popularised in the Tudor era. Another example of this medieval characterisation is Book IV of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Again, Aeneas is held up as a poor example:

Lo, to Enee thus sche wrot
With many another word of pleinte.
Bot he, which hadde hise thoghtes feinte
Towardes love and full of Slowthe,
His time lette, and that was rowthe.

(IV.116-120)

It has been noted that *Dido* directly references the *Troy Book*. The descriptions of blood and gore in the play, such as "young infants swimming in their parent's blood" (II.i.193) are sourced directly from the *Troy Book*:

All forbathed in their own blood,

Both man and child, without exception,

The Greekis sparing no condition

Of old nor young, woman, wife, nor maid…

(6307-10)

Marlowe's use of Lydgate is supported with the "forensic evidence" of near-direct quotation. In choosing to quote Lydgate in addition to the Latin of the *Aeneid*, Marlowe destabilises the latter text. Aeneas refuses to accept responsibility for his treachery, instead defaulting to religious obligation: "Jove wills it so; my mother wills it so" (iv.iii.5). His pathetic submission to "religious authority" makes him unlikeable in Marlowe's play (Williams 2006 47). Marlowe presents the steadfastness and commitment to empire that Virgil lauds as bumbling idiocy and ineptitude. Yet *Troy Book* is not the only medieval source explicitly evident in the play. Marlowe's account of Virgil's narrative not only integrates, but centralises this medieval version, and in doing so *Dido* undermines every literary and social expectation of its audience.

Dido, Queen of Carthage: Re-Writing Empire

It has been observed that Marlowe makes use of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, and that his presentation of the Dido myth is distinctly un-Virgilian. This section will demonstrate that Marlowe offers a subverted Virgilian episode, one that is repeatedly undercut by medieval interjections.

The subversive staging of Dido begins in the title. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* is striking for an Elizabethan play. Throughout literature the episode was generally known as the story of 'Dido and Aeneas'. Marlowe removes Aeneas entirely, and focuses on Dido as the protagonist and hero. This is indicative that the play will

present the medieval version, with Dido as the protagonist who "has become detached enough from the *Aeneid* that her position is not solely seen in relation to Aeneas" (Desmond 228). We have noted that depictions of Dido as a titular protagonist, external to translations of the *Aeneid*, are sparse in England. Staging Dido, especially as a titular protagonist, is not a conventional move.

Rutter states that the play's exploration of England's Trojan origins can be read as simultaneously "supporting Elizabethan claims to empire" or "subversively questioning them" (104). This study upholds this assertion, and examines the latter point. Medieval traditions undermine, even usurp, Galfridian readings. It is easy to overlook that the Trojan epic formed the basis not only of the foundational myth of Imperialist England, but its justification in the contemporary period. In undermining the foundational narrative of Rome, Marlowe is by default undermining England's national identity. Marlowe undercuts the Virgilian narrative, and by default the Galfridian account of English history, through three sustained strategies. Firstly, the gods who control Aeneas' fate lack authority: they are depicted as flighty, capricious figures whose decisions are better described as whims rather than clear divine mandates. Secondly, the elevation of Dido coincides with a demotion of Aeneas to a hapless and cowardly figure, quite literally a little boy, with his apparent childishness foregrounded throughout. Finally, and most subversively, the play repeatedly offers alternative endings to the Dido episode, completely destabilising any recognition of English national identity for the audience. This subversive reworking of a Galfridian subplot depends on the careful selection and use of the medieval version of the tale, an interpretation where Dido, not Aeneas, is the protagonist the audience is encouraged to identify with. The remainder of this chapter will examine each of these subversive strategies in detail.

Dido, Queen of Carthage

Dido opens with a distorted picture, Jupiter "dandling Ganymede upon his knee" with Mercury "lying asleep" (I.i). The scene is unique to Marlowe, and serves to introduce the catalogue of inversion that constitutes the remainder of the play (Munson Deats 2004 165). Marlowe shows us the gods "off duty", to borrow a phrase from Gill (1977 144). Smith debates the location of the scene, pondering if it is in the heavens or if the gods have momentarily "come to earth" (1977 181). Smith concludes that it is heaven, and that "this is heaven in the context of this play" (181). With heaven depicted as such a den of iniquity, the mortal world cannot fare any better. Marlowe's divine figures are weak and self-indulgent, they appear incapable of controlling human fate. The gods' mandate of human activity is nullified in the play. In the *Aeneid*, the gods physically intervene on more than one occasion, to force Aeneas to leave Carthage. In Marlowe's play, it is only Aeneas' own bumbling ineptitude that causes him to delay after meekly accepting his mother's orders. Hopkins has noticed the potential for subversion here, as she posits that the play is dependent on its audience's familiarity with and understanding of the Roman Gods, and their various positions, in order for the viewer to spot when these roles are altered (2008 83).

In contrast to the *Aeneid*, Venus' speech makes no mention of Aeneas' destiny, she merely hopes for his safe passing, without reference to any final destination (II.i.122-33). This destination, Italy, is mentioned only once (218). Aeneas' journey is not quite set up as an inevitable trajectory in Marlowe's play. Subsequent lines offer a startling departure from Book IV. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas laments the sack of Troy after seeing a mural depicting the siege on the wall of a temple Dido built in honour of Juno. Simpson explains that in this Virgilian scene,

Dido "becomes the magnet and generator of history" inviting Aeneas to recall the fall of Troy, and foreshadow her own tragic end and the eventual rise of Rome (1998 409). In *Dido*, it is a statue of Priam (II.i15-21) which prompts Aeneas' sorrow, and consideration of an alternative course:

> O yet this stone doth make Aneas weep,
> And would my prayers (as Pigmalions did)
> Could give it life, that under his conduct
> We might sail back to Troy, and be revenged
> On these hard harted Grecians, which rejoice
> That nothing now is left of Priamus:
> O Priamus is left and this is he,
> Come, come aboard, pursue the hateful Greeks.
>
> (II.i.15-22)

Marlowe has completely re-written this episode; Dido is absent, and Aeneas is a quivering wreck whose only plan is to go backwards. In another departure from Virgilian characterisation, Dido is not inherently passionate. Marlowe's Dido is struck by Cupid's arrow (III.i), in a plot orchestrated by Venus, but she is not romantically interested in Aeneas, let alone burning with passion, prior to this incident. Marlowe's Dido is a victim of the gods, not her own fatal flaws, and the gods' actions are self-interested and whimsical, rather than providential decrees.

Having established Marlowe's use of the medieval version of the Dido story, we can observe that the entire production is tailored to highlight this subversive choice. Marlowe's characters each defy their roles and several principles of English culture are challenged in the text. This is achieved through the medium of representation. Rutter notes "the masculine world of epic is transformed into a drama

dominated by a woman, in which male characters are cut down to size" (105). The Trojan hero has literally been demoted to a young boy, as the play is performed by a children's company, the Children of the Chapel. *Dido* is unusual amongst children's plays of the time because it does not resort to moral debates or commentary (Lunney 2015 43) and Marlowe is "indifferent" to the restrictions imposed by child actors (Hopkins 2008 62). Rutter points out that as female characters were played by younger boys, the figure of Dido represented by a child was not unusual, but for Aeneas, the esteemed hero of Trojan epic, to be played by a young boy was a demotion (104). Similarly, Oliver admits that "a schoolboy Dido has no difficulty in conveying the distress of Dido, but a schoolboy Aeneas […] is bound to seem somewhat artificial in comparison" (xxxiii). Smith notes that there is much scope for satire in the play, which depends entirely on "the media of child actors" (1977 188). The elevation of Dido and the demotion of Aeneas is exacerbated by child actors, as Marlowe's Aeneas is repeatedly depicted as an enfeebled child. Typically, the medium through which the subversive employment of a medieval version of the narrative is articulated is also the medium in which it is disguised. Gurr considers child actors an appropriate choice for a deliberately subversive play, because children could not effectively emulate "the language and garb of their social superiors" (2009 46).

In the opening scene, an exasperated Venus attempts to save her son, without much support from the disinterested Jupiter. She laments "what shall I do to save thee my sweet boy?" (I.i.74). Her description of her son as a "sweet boy" is at odds with his reputation as a fearsome warrior. Yet this image is carried throughout the text. When Aeneas does appear on stage, none of the other characters recognise him. Illioneus iterates their confusion, and seems to jest at the height and unbroken voice

of the child actor when he insists "I hear Aeneas' voice, but see him not, / For none of these can be our General" (II.i.44-5). Dido faces the same difficulty: "What stranger art thou that doest eye me thus?" (II.i.73) she enquires of Aeneas. So inept is her Trojan guest that he does not seem to know himself, and comically recourses to asking his companions who he is: "sometime I was a Trojan, mighty Queen: / But Troy is not, what shall I say I am?" (II.i.74-5). Dido then expresses surprise that "warlike Aeneas" is wearing such "base robes" (II.i.79), and commands her servant to fetch more suitable garments from her late husband's wardrobe (II.i.80).

By taking the medieval portrait of Aeneas as a cowardly traitor, Marlowe introduces doubt about the inevitability of Elizabeth's kingdom, and about its founding father's ancestry – he has no lineage of heroism, rather the audience are left with the worrying thought that Brutus's forefather was callous, or at least passive, and that his presence was detrimental to other nations. Moreover, Dido has heard of Aeneas' bravery during the siege of Troy, but cannot reconcile this reputation with the deferential boy before her: "What, faints Aeneas to remember Troy? / In whose defence he fought so valiantly" (II.i.119-20). Aeneas cannot even meet her eye, as she commands him "look up and speak" (II.i.120). Aeneas' later insistence that he had "fought manfully" (II.i.271) until "manhood would not serve" (II.i.272) is farcical from both a child actor and such a meek character. So unwarlike is Aeneas that his only appearance bearing arms is when he is humiliatingly asked to hold Dido's weapon: "Fair Trojan, hold my golden bow awhile, / Until I gird my quiver to my side" (III.iii.7-8). Later, Aeneas is comically incapable of recognising that Dido is in love with him (III.iv.1-40). Marlowe's play extends the medieval depiction of a cowardly Aeneas to an incapable Aeneas, a buffoon who cannot possibly

comprehend the weight of the task he has been assigned. Thus, the play invites the Elizabethan audience to laugh at their founding father.

Marlowe takes an episode from the Virgilian epic out of the remit of Virgilian authority. Juno, in a jealous rage, contemplates murdering Aeneas: "For here in spite of heaven I'll murder him" (III.ii.10). In the *Aeneid*, Juno is nullified by the authority of Jupiter, which is entirely lacking in Marlowe's drama, making this threatened homicide a more realistic possibility. Dido herself ponders the possibility of alternative outcomes, wondering what would have occurred if Troy had never been sacked: "O had that ticing strumpet [Helen] ne'er been born!" (II.i.300). The inevitability of Aeneas' onward journey, indeed Aeneas' journey itself, is repeatedly undercut. Aeneas himself considers taking Dido with him: "We may as one sail to Italy" (IV.iii.30). This action would naturally preclude his subsequent marriage to Lavinia, required to establish Rome. Dido offers Aeneas her kingdom, inviting him to remain in Carthage and rule with her: "Stay here Aeneas and command as King" (IV.iv.39). Aeneas then ponders what would be a momentous *volte face*.

> Then here in me shall flourish Priam's race,
> And thou and I, Achates, for revenge
> For Troy, for Priam, for his fifty sons,
> Our kinsmen's loves and thousand guiltless souls
> Will lead an host against the hateful Greeks
> And fire proud Lacedaemon o'er their heads.
>
> (IV.iv.87-92)

Rutter has observed a tantalising possibility offered by *Dido*: an alternative history, in which instead of continuing on to Italy to found Rome, and begetting a dynasty that would establish London, Aeneas remains in Carthage and establishes a new

dynasty with Dido, and seeks revenge in Troy (106). The play introduces doubt about the validity of *translatio imperii*. Perhaps empire cannot be, or was not inevitably destined to be, "translated". The medieval allusions in the play pose the question "what if?" In doing so, the play shakes the Elizabethan government from its literary foundations. Marlowe employs the frustratingly indecisive Aeneas of medieval narrative to offer the possibility of him keeping his false promises, and potentially nullifying the concept of *translatio imperii* before it is ever initiated. Marlowe's subverted Virgilian episode insists on looking *back* to Troy via the medieval Aeneas, not forward to Elizabethan England. By demoting the gods to petty backbiters, negating divine intervention, elevating Dido and lambasting Aeneas, the play removes all of the expected narrative touchpoints.

Conclusion

Hendricks considers the play a post-Armada "political allegory" which "defends Englishness" (166; Lunney 2015 28). This reading is hard to accept. The play chips away at English national identity by undermining its foundation myth, diluting, even polluting, the imperial Virgilian narrative England sought with the popular narratives it sought to *reject*: medieval versions of the Dido tale. As England sought to move forward as "Britain," Marlowe subversively forces his audience to look back, on an alternative version of their foundational myth, a version that renders England's imperialist ambitions as mere pretensions. As Desmond explains, "Virgil's *Aeneid* has historically been read in circumstances that support social and cultural hierarchies" (1). In disrupting Virgil's narrative, Marlowe tells us "the other side of the story" (Williams 2006 49) but this side is actually long established. It is more accurate to state that he *chooses* to tell the medieval version of the tale. Marlowe

then uses this medieval arrangement to lampoon Aeneas and the pagan gods who control his fate. In doing so, the play subverts the Virgilian authority from which the audience derive their national identity. Williams convincingly states that the play can be seen as a rebuttal of colonial history (54) and in this endeavour the use of the medieval version of the Dido episode demonstrates that the *Aeneid* is not infallible.

The version of the Dido myth that Marlowe presents is within the remit of Virgilian narrative, it is a potential reading that is already present in the *Aeneid*. But it is an aspect of the narrative that had been engaged with and extensively developed by medieval writers, and is one that works against conceptions of Virgil's epic in Elizabethan England. Desmond asserts "the traces of reading Dido in medieval vernacular culture might direct us in our efforts to read differently and to read difference" (7). By acknowledging Marlowe's subversive use of this medieval tradition, we can do just that.

Marlowe's Medieval Monarchs

Marlowe's delineation of historical and mythological monarchs uses medieval sources to offer an interrogative account of history. Simpson expands on his definition of medieval / Renaissance historical methods, describing a medieval narrative that "generates its power by *carrying on* a single tradition, in contrast to a Renaissance model that "claims its authority by virtue of *being like* a different tradition" (1998 404). Both models are evident in Marlowe's sources, the essentially medieval history chronicle, and the multiplicity of voices refashioning the Troy narrative. Woolf adds an important consideration to Simpson's summary: that Tudor historiography allows no room for "divergent points of view" as historical narrative was always "firmly tied to the wagon of ideological and political conflict" (1987 35).

Marlowe's subversive representations of history use medieval sources to offer exactly that. This chapter has demonstrated Marlowe stages not only Virgil's narrative, but the intertextual montage of Virgil, Geoffrey of Monmouth and the contesting medieval "defenders" of Dido. In a 2010 essay on *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *Edward II*, Hopkins asserts that in both plays "the idea of nationhood is evoked only to be savagely undercut" (348). This is attained through the subversive use of medieval history, both as a source and as an intertext. In staging a Virgilian queen, Marlowe seems to laud Elizabeth, yet the inclusion of a conflicting medieval account undermines the ideal of *translatio imperii* from its very foundation, and undercuts English self-image as the "New Troy". *Edward II* offers an anti-providentialist reading disruptive to Elizabethan methods of accounting for historical events. Knapp has noted the search for stability which ultimately underpins the history play, asserting that "the rise of the history play in Elizabethan England has long seemed the strongest proof that the Elizabethans were nationalists" (80). Tudor writers similarly returned to Geoffrey of Monmouth as they sought to "understand their present through the prism of their past" (Shrank 452). This recourse to historical narrative can equally be seen as indicative of Elizabethan insecurity and trepidation regarding their own status in their kingdom and the wider world. This sense of uncertainty is exacerbated by Marlowe's dramatic subversion of history through medieval literature. The two plays use medieval literature to disrupt English historical narrative, and in doing so interrogate ideals of English kingship, and British imperial ambitions.

Conclusion: Marlowe Our Contemporary

What emerges from this thesis's delineation of Marlowe's plays within their own context is the image of a playwright adept at utilising medieval literature to signpost subversion. In each play, Marlowe can be seen to deploy and hone a distinct strategic handling of medieval topoi.

In Chapter One, I demonstrated the formidable presence of medieval fiction, drama and cultural commonplaces in the Elizabethan period. The evident ubiquity of medieval literary tropes means that some medieval allusions are almost inevitable, but this thesis has proven these repeated references and allusions serve a clear purpose. As noted in the introduction, Marlowe's multivalent sculpting of his various sources has long been observed and admired. Marlowe's provocative and intellectually rigorous dramas can be more clearly observed, and more thoroughly understood, through an exploration of his medievalism. This chapter has established Marlowe's medieval sources as conceptual and cultural as well as physical texts. Tracing the numerous medieval sources available and accessible to Marlowe, Chapter One enables this study to follow these threads through Marlowe's dramatic oeuvre.

The remaining four chapters have demonstrated Marlowe's use of medieval literature from multiple sources. Medieval history is explicitly dramatised in *Edward II*, but Chapter Five has revealed that the medieval genre of the history chronicle is as integral to the play as the historical events gleaned from these texts. This chapter also demonstrates that the Galfridian tradition of representing classical narrative as authentic English history is a necessary context for *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. When one considers the play with this increased contextual awareness, the medieval

intertext becomes apparent, and I have shown that it is a distinct medieval "historiography" of the Dido myth that Marlowe has dramatised.

Marlowe's repeated posturing of medieval intertexts is always on the edge of contemporaneous discourse. Marlowe's medievalism is not anachronism, as the "medieval" genres, formats, tropes and ideas are actually almost all contemporaneous to Marlowe's plays, or at least close enough within living memory to be topical. Recent history provides the narrative of *The Massacre at Paris*, but Chapter Two has shown that it is Reformation history layered upon a medieval dramatic format, that of the Passion play from the cycle drama, and it goes without saying that medieval theatre informs *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe's famed engagement with the morality play. Marlowe fuses the morality with Renaissance tragedy in *Doctor Faustus*. Yet, as this study has demonstrated, Marlowe's plays utilise a wide range of medieval materials.

In Marlowe's small dramatic corpus, the subversive use of medieval literature is standard. Medieval literature is not only co-opted for, but is absolutely essential to, Marlowe's subversive imagination. Medieval romance provides a key source for the two *Tamburlaine* plays: as we have seen in Chapter Three, the major characters are informed by the stock figures of Saracen romance. The play stages these familiar medieval figures within an entirely unfamiliar context: a homogenous Islamic world, with only a limited and ineffective Christian presence. Marlowe's plays challenge "traditional perspectives and values, not so much by substituting 'new' ideas for old, but breaking old rhetorical connections" (Lunney 2002 185).

This subversive re-contextualisation inverts and invalidates the communal meta-narrative of romance: the superiority of Christianity over Islam. Finally, with reference to *The Jew of Malta*, I have evinced that Marlowe's distinct medievalism

extends beyond generic boundaries, as the titular Jew, Barabas, marks the furthest limit of centuries of medieval anti-Semitic caricatures. As Chapter Four demonstrates, any holistic interpretation of this figure is contingent upon an awareness of its rather unsavoury cultural-heritage. When this awareness is established, we can easily identify Marlowe's subversive alterations to the omnipresent stereotype.

This study has demonstrated Marlowe's regular co-opting of medieval source material, but it does not simply argue that he was an end-stage medievalist. Rather it reveals a careful and considered use of medieval reference points. Having established his consistent use of medieval intertexts, I have defined Marlowe's specific and strategic use of medieval tropes, themes and formats, demonstrating that recollections of familiar medieval literature serve as signposts for subversion. Outward conformity was literally a matter of survival in Elizabeth's kingdom. Distortion of the familiar medieval forms serves as a gateway to unconventional ideas when non-conformity is impossible. A voracious and astute reader, Marlowe qualified to select effective literary sources he anticipates his audience to recognise. In re-modelling the familiar, Marlowe alters the expected. Where the anticipated action or outcome does not occur, a niche is opened up for critical thinking, even within the constraints of Elizabethan theatre.

Marlowe hides subversion in plain sight. In Chapter Five, we have noted that the genres of orthodox representation of monarchy, the history chronicle and the Galfridian myth, can serve as its undoing. In *Edward II*, the incomplete presentation of the chronicle genre, and the careful rendering of historical characters, enables a form designed to inculcate certainty to offer only ambiguity. Marlowe's medieval history play thus undermines the foundational principles of the medieval history

chronicle: divine providence and divinely-mandated monarchy. In *Dido, Queen of Carthage* the medieval account Marlowe stages allows him effectively to "write back" to Galfridian representations and the cultural hegemony they represent, and again to allow the audience to question ideologies that have been presented as absolute and finite.

In evoking culturally omnipresent images of Christ's Passion, derived from the mystery cycles, in presenting sectarian history, *The Massacre at Paris* de-stabilises Protestant ideology by subverting its ideological core: Christ's suffering for the salvation of mankind. *Doctor Faustus* applies the general medieval morality play format to a culturally-specific Reformation folk narrative, and a careful manipulation of both sources undermines Protestant theology. This generic co-mingling allows for subversive comment on Elizabethan Protestantism. In *Tamburlaine the Great Part I*, medieval Saracen romance figures are presented in an entirely new context: that of a homogenous Islamic world. This causes the sense of Christian superiority inherent in these models to collapse. *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* extends this subversive re-making of Saracen romance to its ultimate conclusion: an interrogation of scripture. The medieval stage Jew presented as Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* foregrounds Marlowe's innovative rendering of this template. Barabas' evil nature underscores even more deplorable Christians on the island of Malta. Each aspect of this character highlights flaws in Christian thinking, not absolute truths about the evil of Judaism. The model of the demonised Jew that was used to inculcate Christian unity is deployed to emphasise Christian failure. To borrow a phrase from Waldron, Marlowe's subversive deployment of medieval literature invites the audience to undertake "an act of completion that sits outside of the text" (2015 211).

This thesis has delineated Marlowe's unique use of medieval literature, but more remains to be done. As stated at the outset of this study, Marlowe's poems and translations are beyond the theoretical and temporal remit of this thesis. That is not to say that there is not sufficient scope to extend this reading to Marlowe's non-dramatic corpus, quite the opposite. Marlowe's subversive medievalism is evident in his poetry. *Hero and Leander* makes the same subversive use of a familiar narrative, and an equally familiar medieval genre, that of moralised classical narrative. Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* must negotiate a preponderance of medieval renderings of Ovid's work, and this aspect of Marlowe's endeavour as a translator has yet to be considered. This thesis has shown there is considerable scope for reading Marlowe on his terms, rather than with a focus on the more forward-reaching aspects of his work.

What is evident from this exploration of Marlowe's medievalism is an author preoccupied with, and a skilled practitioner of, subversion in drama. Collectively, the seven plays studied in this thesis offer an incisive, sceptical view of religion, politics and society, as applicable in twenty-first century Europe as in early modern England. In this, Marlowe is our contemporary (Bevington 2015 261). Delineation of Marlowe's distinct strategic medievalism and his unconventional and daring reactions to his own cultural milieu offers new routes through which to nuance our understanding of the early modern negotiation of the medieval, demonstrating that Marlowe was not only an accomplished classicist, an informed and innovative humanist, but also, when it proved expedient, a pragmatic medievalist.

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