

THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
CHRISTOPHER  
MARLOWE

EDITED BY  
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*In memory of Clifford Leech*

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# I

PATRICK CHENEY

## Introduction: Marlowe in the twenty-first century

... that pure elemental wit Chr. Marlowe, whose ghost or genius is to be seen walk the Churchyard in (at the least) three or four sheets.<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Marlowe (1564–93) enters the twenty-first century arguably the most enigmatic genius of the English literary Renaissance. While the enigma of Marlowe's genius remains difficult to circumscribe, it conjures up that special relation his literary works have long been held to have with his life. In 1588, fellow writer Robert Greene inaugurates printed commentary by accusing Marlowe of 'daring god out of heaven with that Atheist Tamburlan' (MacLure, p. 29), an imitation of Marlowe's description of his own protagonist, whose 'looks do menace heaven and dare the gods' (1 *Tamb.* 1.2.157), and indicating that the Marlovian 'ghost or genius' rather slyly haunts his own historical making. Perhaps the enigma continues to fascinate today because the brilliant creator of such masterpieces in lyric and tragedy as 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' and *Doctor Faustus* was ignominiously arrested no fewer than four times – three for street-fighting and a fourth for counterfeiting – and was under house arrest for (potentially) dissident behaviour when he received a fatal knife-wound to the right temple in what proved his darkest hour. If his life was dissident, his works were iconoclastic, and both are difficult to capture. Reflecting variously on the enigma of Marlovian genius, the present *Companion* includes sixteen subsequent chapters by distinguished women and men from the United Kingdom and the United States spread over as many topics as such a volume can contain.

The volume design follows a tripartite format. After the present Introduction, the first part divides into five chapters offering orientation to essential features of Marlowe and his works. The first three of these chapters concentrate on topics that underlie the others, and address the genuine difficulty we have in gauging and interpreting Marlowe: his life and career; his texts and authorship; and his style. The next two chapters explore Marlowe in his cultural contexts, probing the interrelation between religion and politics and examining the English literary scene in the late 1580s and early 1590s.

The second part of the *Companion*, which forms the bulk and centre, consists of six chapters on Marlowe's works, divided according to the two broad literary forms he produced. One chapter examines his poems by emphasizing what they have in common: a vigorous response to classicism. The following five chapters range over his extant plays, with one chapter each on those plays taught more frequently (*Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two; The Jew of Malta; Edward II; and Doctor Faustus*) and a single chapter combining those plays that are taught less often (*Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*).

Finally, the third part of the companion consists of five chapters. The first bridges the second and third parts by focusing on Marlowe's foundational dramatic genre, tragedy, filtered through important themes of representation, patronage, and power. The next two chapters also deal with themes of Marlovian representation that commentators have found especially important and original: geography and identity; and gender and sexuality. The final two chapters concern Marlowe's afterlife, from his day to ours: Marlowe in theatre and film; and his reception and influence. The present *Companion* also features an initial chronology of Marlowe's life and works, emphasizing dates and events important to the various chapters; a reading list at the close of each chapter, recommending selected works of commentary; and, at the end of the volume, a brief note on reference works available on Marlowe (biographies, editions, bibliographies, concordances, periodicals, other research tools, collections of essays, 'Marlowe on the Internet'). Underlying many of the chapters is an attempt to unravel the enigma of Marlowe's life and works; precisely because of this enigma, we can expect varying, even contradictory assessments and interpretations. In this introductory chapter, we will consider issues not covered in detail elsewhere in order to approach the haunting genius we inherit today.<sup>2</sup>

Marlowe's own contemporaries discover a deep furrow marking the genius of the young author's brow. For instance, the sublime author whom the poet Michael Drayton imagined 'bath[ing] . . . in the Thespian springs' and who 'Had in him those brave translunary things, / That the first Poets had', was evidently the same 'barking dog' whom the Puritan polemicist Thomas Beard damningly found 'the Lord' *hooking* by 'the nostrils': 'a playmaker, and a Poet of scurrilitie' whose 'manner of . . . death' was 'terrible (for hee even cursed and blasphemed to his last gaspe, and together with his breath an oath flew out of his mouth)' (MacLure, pp. 47, 41–2). If Drayton could rhapsodically discover in Marlowe the 'fine madness' of high Platonic fury 'which rightly should possess a Poets braine', another Puritan, William Vaughan, referred more gruesomely to the fatal point of entry at the poet's unsacred

temple: Marlowe died with ‘his braines comming out at the daggers point’ (MacLure, p. 47).

How could ‘the best of Poets in that age’, as the dramatist Thomas Heywood called Marlowe in 1633, be ‘intemperate & of a cruel hart’, as his former room-mate and the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Thomas Kyd, claimed back in 1593 (MacLure, pp. 49, 33)? How are we to reconcile fellow poet George Peele’s fond testimony about ‘Marley, the Muses darling for thy verse’ with Kyd’s accusation against a dangerous atheist with ‘monstruous opinions’ who would ‘attempt . . . soden pryvie injuries to men’ (MacLure, pp. 39, 35–6)? Evidently, the same sexually charged youth who deftly versified the loss of female virginity more powerfully than perhaps any English male poet before or since – ‘Jewels being lost are found again, this never; / ’Tis lost but once, and once lost, lost for ever’ (*HL* 1.85–6) – relied on ‘table talk’ to ‘report St John to be our saviour Christes Alexis . . . that is[,] that Christ did love him with an extraordinary love’ (Kyd, in MacLure, p. 35). At one point, a deep religious sensibility bequeaths one of our most haunting testimonies to the loss of Christian faith: ‘Think’st thou’, Mephistopheles says to Faustus, ‘that I, who saw the face of God / And tasted the eternal joys of heaven / Am not tormented with ten thousand hells / In being deprived of everlasting bliss?’ (*DF* ‘A’ text 1.3.77–80). Yet, at another point, that same sensibility opprobriously ‘jest[s] at the devine scriptures[,] gybe[s] . . . at praires’, as Kyd claimed, or, as fellow-spy Richard Baines put it in his infamous deposition, callously joke that ‘the sacrament’ ‘instituted’ by Christ ‘would have bin much better being administred in a Tobacco pipe’ (MacLure, pp. 35, 37). While Kyd and Baines both portray a Marlowe who considers Moses and Jesus to be dishonest mountebanks, they also show a young man with a deep religious imagination, complexly cut, as Paul Whitfield White shows in his chapter here, along sectarian lines. As Baines reports, Marlowe claimed that ‘if there be any god or any good Religion, then it is in the papistes because the service of god is performed with more Cerimonies . . . That all protestantes are Hypocriticall asses’ (MacLure, p. 37).

In the political sphere, we can further discover troubling contradiction. If Marlowe could nobly use his art in the grand republican manner to ‘defend . . . freedom ’gainst a monarchy’ (1 *Tamb.* 2.1.56), he could, Kyd writes, ‘perswade with men of quallitie to goe unto the k[ing] of Scotts’ (MacLure, p. 36) – a treasonous offence before the 1603 accession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne. Indeed, the archive leaves us with little but murky political ink, ranging from Kyd’s accusation of ‘mutinous sedition towrd the state’ (MacLure, p. 35) to the Privy Council’s exonerating letter to the authorities at Cambridge University, who tried to stop the young scholar from receiving his MA degree because he was rumoured to have gone to



the Catholic seminary in Rheims, France: 'in all his actions he had behaved him selfe orderlie and discretelie whereby he had done her Majestie good service, and deserved to be rewarded for his faithful dealinge'.<sup>3</sup> What are we to believe? Shall Marlowe be rewarded for his faithful dealing? Or should the barking dog be hooked by the nose for his cruel and intemperate heart?

While the biographical record makes it difficult to gain purchase on this baffling figure (as David Riggs ably shows in the volume's second chapter), we can seek surer footing by gauging Marlowe's standing in English literary history. Yet even here (as the subsequent chapter by Laurie Maguire makes clear) we enter difficult terrain, in part because the texts of Marlowe's works make assessments about his authorship precarious; in part because our understanding of those texts continues to evolve imperfectly. The Marlowe canon (perhaps like its inventor's personality) has never been stable. In his 1753 *Lives of the Poets*, for instance, Theophilus Cibber believed Marlowe the author of *Lust's Dominion* (MacLure, p. 56), a play no longer ascribed to him, while Thomas Warton in his 1781 *History of English Poetry* believed Marlowe had 'translated Coluthus' 'Rape of Helen' into English rhyme, in the year 1587, even though Warton confessed he had 'never seen it' (MacLure, p. 58); nor have we. In 1850, a short entry appeared in *Notes and Queries* signed by one 'm', who mentions a manuscript transcribing an eclogue and sixteen sonnets written by 'Ch.M.'. This manuscript remained lost, but by 1942 the biographer John Bakeless could speculate hopefully that 'Marlowe's lost sonnets may have been genuine.' Bakeless believed the probability increased because of the technical mastery that he and C. F. Tucker Brooke thought Marlowe displayed in the ottava rima stanza in some verses printed in *England's Helicon* (1600), titled 'Description of Seas, Waters, Rivers &c'.<sup>4</sup> In 1988, however, Sukanta Chaudhuri was able to print the 'lost' manuscript of eclogue and sonnets, but concluded that Marlowe had no hand in it – as, alas, seems likely.<sup>5</sup> Today, unlike at the beginning of the past century, neither those poems nor the priceless hydrologic verses in *England's Helicon* make their way into a Marlowe edition.

The works that do make their way constitute a startlingly brief yet brilliant canon created within a short span of six or perhaps eight years (1585–93) – brief indeed, for an author with such canonical status today. Marlowe is now generally believed to be the author of seven extant plays: *Dido*; *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*; *The Jew*; *Edward II*; *The Massacre*; and *Faustus*. Recent scholarship encourages us to view that last play as two, since we have two different texts, each with its own historical authority, yet both published well after Marlowe's death: the so-called 'A' text of 1604 and the 'B' text of 1616. As these dates alone indicate, the question of the chronology of Marlowe's plays is a thorny one, and it has long spawned contentious debate.

As Riggs and Maguire reveal, however, most textual scholars now believe that Marlowe wrote *Dido* first, the two *Tamburlaine* plays next, followed by *The Jew*; and that he wrote *Edward II* and *The Massacre* late in his career, although not necessarily in this order. During the last century, scholars were divided over whether Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus* ‘early’ (1588–9) or ‘late’ (1592–3), with some believing that he might have written two versions at different times, and today most seem willing to entertain an early date. In his chapter on this play, Thomas Healy emphasizes how the two texts, rather than being of interest only to textual scholars, can profitably direct interpretation itself. The larger chronology of Marlowe’s plays has been important because it has been thought to hold the key to the locked secret absorbing scholars since the Victorian era: the obsession with ‘Marlowe’s development’ as an autonomous author.

The fascination holds, but it has not impeded Marlowe’s latest editor from choosing a quite different method for organizing the plays: a chronology not of composition but of publication, in keeping with recent textual scholarship privileging the ‘materiality of the text’. Thus, Mark Thornton Burnett in his 1999 Everyman edition of *The Complete Plays* begins with the two *Tamburlaine* plays, which were the only works of Marlowe’s published during his lifetime (1590). Burnett follows with two works published the year after Marlowe’s death, *Edward II* and *Dido* (1594), continues with *The Massacre*, published after 1594 but of uncertain date during the Elizabethan era, and next he prints the two Jacobean versions of *Faustus* (1604 and 1616). Burnett concludes with *The Jew*, not published by Heywood until the Caroline period (1633). Thus, even though the canon of plays has not changed during the last century, the printing of it today has changed dramatically. If earlier editions arrange the plays according to the author’s dates of composition (and performance), Burnett’s edition prints them according to the reception the author received in print. Commentary derived from the one method may differ from commentary derived from the other, but one can imagine that Marlowe would have been cheered by the mystery of this difference. He is so mysterious that some prefer to replace ‘Marlowe’ with a ‘Marlowe effect’.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the plays, Marlowe wrote five extant poems, none of which was published during his lifetime. As with the plays, here we do not know the order in which Marlowe composed, but the situation is even less certain about when most of these works were published. *Ovid’s Elegies*, a line-for-line translation of Ovid’s *Amores*, is usually placed as Marlowe’s first poetic composition (while he was a student at Cambridge University, around 1584–5); its date of publication is also uncertain, but it is generally believed to have been printed between the latter half of the 1590s and the early years of the

seventeenth century. *Ovid's Elegies* appears in three different editions, the first two printing only ten poems and the third the complete sequence of three books or 48 poems. 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love', Marlowe's famous pastoral lyric, is also of uncertain compositional date, but it is generally assigned to the mid to late 1580s, since it was widely imitated during the period, including by Marlowe himself in *Dido*, the *Tamburlaine* plays, *The Jew*, and *Edward II*; it appears in various printed forms, from four to seven stanzas, with a four-stanza version printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599) and a six-stanza version in *England's Helicon*. Lucan's *First Book*, a translation of Book 1 of Lucan's epic poem, *The Pharsalia*, is the only poem whose publication we can date with certainty, even though it was not published until 1600. Scholars are divided over whether to place its composition early or late in Marlowe's career, but its superior merit in versification suggests a late date, as does its presence in the Stationers' Register on 28 September 1593, back to back with *Hero and Leander*, which scholars tend to place in the last year of Marlowe's life. This famous epyllion or Ovidian narrative poem appeared in two different versions published in 1598, the first an 818-line poem that ends with an editor's insertion, '*desunt nonnulla*' (something missing). The second version divides the poem into two 'sestiaids', which were continued by George Chapman, who contributed four more sestiaids and turned Marlowe's work into the only epyllion in the period printed as a minor epic in the grand tradition of Homer and Virgil, each sestiad prefaced with a verse argument. Marlowe's fifth poem, a short Latin epitaph on Sir Roger Manwood, a Canterbury jurist, is preserved only in manuscript, but it must have been written between December 1592, the time of Manwood's death, and May 1593, when Marlowe died. Additionally, Marlowe is now credited as the author of a Latin prose *Dedicatory Epistle* addressed to Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (sister to Sir Philip Sidney), which prefaces Thomas Watson's 1592 poem, *Amintae gaudia*, and which sheds intriguing light on Marlowe's career as a poet and thus is now conventionally printed alongside his poems.

In short, the Marlowe canon is not merely in motion; it is paradoxically truncated. The image recalls Henry Petowe, in his *Dedicatory Epistle to The Second Part of 'Hero and Leander', Containing their Future Fortunes* (1598): 'This history, of *Hero and Leander*, penned by that admired poet Marlowe, but not finished (being prevented by sudden death) and the same . . . resting like a head separated from the body'.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Ben Jonson or Samuel Daniel, Marlowe did not live to bring out an edition of his own poems and plays; nor did he benefit, as Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare did, from a folio edition published by colleagues soon after his death, preserving his canon for posterity.

The truncated state of Marlowe's works confounds attempts at holistic commentary, rendering our efforts tenuous and controversial. Students of Marlowe might view this predicament as less a warning than a challenge. The question is: how can we view clearly what is inherently opaque? Perhaps the occasion affords a genuine opportunity, and we may wonder whether the spy who was suspected of going 'beyond the seas to Reames' knew it (qtd in Kuriyama, p. 202). In viewing his life and works, we might experience the excitement an archaeologist presumably feels when first discovering the bright shard of a broken vase – or perhaps more appropriate here, scabbard.

While the present *Companion* affords a frame for viewing such a shard, we need to register the singular feature of Marlowe's standing in English literary history: his absolute inaugural power. Nearly four hundred years ago, Drayton first located in Marlowe's brain the brave translunary things 'that the first Poets had' – what Drayton himself considered the mysterious rapture of air and fire that makes Marlowe's verses clear. The word 'first' is applied to Marlowe so often during the next centuries that we might wonder whether Spenser or Shakespeare could outstrip him in the race of literary originality (like the word *genius*, the word *first* occasionally slips into a second meaning: *best*). The achievement is all the more remarkable because the Muses' darling is dead at twenty-nine. No wonder the energy circulating around his corpus continues to be electrifying. As William Hazlitt expressed it in the nineteenth century, somewhat ambivalently, 'There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by any thing but its own energies' (MacLure, p. 78).

Like Hazlitt during the Romantic era, both Petowe and Heywood in the early modern era place Marlowe at the forefront of English literary history. Petowe says of 'th' admired Marlowe' that his 'honey-flowing vein / No English writer can as yet attain' (58–60), while Heywood calls him 'the best of Poets in that age' – a phrase quoted throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the first years of the nineteenth century (1808), Charles Lamb singled out 'the death-scene' of *Edward II* as moving 'pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted' (MacLure, p. 69). In an unsigned review from 1818, a commentator considered *The Jew of Malta* 'the first regular and consistent English drama; . . . Marlowe was the first poet before Shakespeare who possessed any thing like real dramatic genius' (MacLure, pp. 70–1; reviewer's emphasis). By 1820, Hazlitt is a bit more guarded, but not much: 'Marlowe is a name that stands high, and almost first in this list of dramatic worthies' (MacLure, p. 78). In 1830, James Broughton went further by specifying that Dr Faustus's 'last impassioned soliloquy of agony and despair' is 'surpassed by nothing in

the whole circle of the English Drama', even though it is *Edward II*, 'by far the best of Marlowe's plays', that 'place[s] Marlowe in the first class of dramatic writers' (MacLure, p. 87). Perhaps echoing Drayton, Leigh Hunt marvelled in 1844, 'If ever there was a born poet, Marlowe was one... He... prepared the way for the versification, the dignity, and the pathos of his successors... and his imagination, like Spenser's, haunted those purely poetic regions of ancient fabling and modern rapture... Marlowe and Spenser are the first of our poets who perceived the beauty of words' (MacLure, pp. 89-91).

In 1879, when modern scholarship on Marlowe is first being consolidated,<sup>8</sup> Edward Dowden finds that Marlowe, 'of all the Elizabethan dramatists, stands next to Shakspeare in poetical stature' (MacLure, p. 100). In 1875, A. W. Ward, writing *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, can summarize Marlowe's originality in a judgement that basically holds true today: 'His services to our dramatic literature are two-fold. As the author who first introduced blank verse to the popular stage he rendered to our drama a service which it would be difficult to overestimate... His second service to the progress of our dramatic literature' is that he 'first inspired with true poetic passion the form of literature to which his chief efforts were consecrated...; and it is this gift of passion which, together with his services to the outward form of the English drama, makes Marlowe worthy to be called not a predecessor, but the earliest in the immortal company, of our great dramatists' (MacLure, pp. 120-1).<sup>9</sup>

For these reasons, John Addington Symonds in 1884 can style Marlowe 'the father and founder of English dramatic poetry' (MacLure, p. 133); and A. H. Bullen in 1885, 'the father of the English drama' (MacLure, p. 136). In 1887, James Russell Lowell can poignantly say, 'Yes, Drayton was right', for Marlowe 'was indeed... that most indefinable thing, an original man... He was the herald that dropped dead' (MacLure, pp. 159-62). In 1887 as well, George Saintsbury could state that the 'riot of passion and of delight in the beauty of colour and form which characterises his version of "Hero and Leander" has never been approached by any writer' (MacLure, p. 163). That same year, Havelock Ellis agreed: 'It is the brightest flower of the English Renaissance' (MacLure, p. 167). No one, however, rhapsodized more than Algernon Charles Swinburne, who termed Marlowe 'alone... the true Apollo of our dawn, the bright and morning star of the full midsummer day of English poetry at its highest... The first great English poet was the father of English tragedy and the creator of English blank verse... the first English poet whose powers can be called sublime... He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature' (MacLure, pp. 175-84).

Pioneer, discoverer, morning star, herald, original man, first dramatic genius, first poet: this is an astonishing set of representational claims for the enigma of Marlovian genius. While the twentieth century sharpened its view of Marlowe's role in English literary history, it did not substantively change these earlier assessments about his original contribution to English drama. Opening a groundbreaking 1964 *Twentieth Century Views Marlowe*, for instance, Clifford Leech writes, 'There is wide enough agreement that Marlowe is one of the major figures in English dramatic writing. That he was the most important of Shakespeare's predecessors . . . is not disputed, nor is the poetic excellence of . . . Marlowe's "mighty line".'<sup>10</sup>

Leech's essay conveniently serves as an intermediary between earlier and later commentary, reminding us that the leaders of Renaissance studies throughout the twentieth century felt drawn to the genius of the Marlowe enigma: from A. C. Bradley, T. S. Eliot, G. Wilson Knight, Muriel C. Bradbrook, Cleanth Brooks, C. S. Lewis, William Empson, Harry Levin, and C. L. Barber, to Harold Bloom, Stephen Orgel, David Bevington, A. Bartlett Giamatti, Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Dollimore, Catherine Belsey, Jonathan Goldberg, and Marjorie Garber.<sup>11</sup> Yet Leech does alter the earlier view of Marlowe as a madcap dreamer absorbed in the exultant power of his imagination, demarcating 'three ways in which Marlowe criticism has taken new directions' up to the early 1960s (p. 3), even as he acknowledges that 'the nature of Marlowe's drama remains a thing that most readers are still groping after' (p. 9). First, Marlowe now enjoys the 'intellectual stature' of 'learning', through which he 'conscious[ly]' moulds and extends 'tradition' (p. 4), represented in the work of Paul Kocher.<sup>12</sup> Second, Marlowe's writing thus acquires new 'complexity', including 'the comic element', wherein Marlowe recognizes 'the puniness of human ambition', which leads to 'a wider range of interpretations . . . extending from Christian to agnostic views' (pp. 5–6), represented in work by Roy Battenhouse and Una Ellis-Fermor.<sup>13</sup> And third, Marlowe's plays, after long absence from the theatre, begin to demonstrate their stage-worthiness, the dramatist exhibiting an 'eye' for specifically theatrical effect (p. 9), represented by Leech himself.<sup>14</sup> For Leech, Marlowe had 'large-mindedness', a 'double view of the aspiring mind', a 'notion of the irresponsibility with which the universe functions', and 'a profound sense of the Christian scheme: no one has written better in English of the beatific vision and the wrath of God' (pp. 9–10).

After Leech declared that 'the beginnings of Marlowe criticism are with us' (p. 11), a virtual industry emerged, as Marlowe in the later 1960s, the 70s, 80s, and 90s became subject to large-scale investigation on diverse fronts. We may conveniently identify five broad, interwoven categories: (1) *subjectivity* (matters of the mind: inwardness, interiority, psychology); (2) *sexuality*

(matters of the body: desire, gender, homoeroticism/heterosexuality); (3) *politics* (matters of the state: culture, ideology, sociology, family); (4) *religion* (matters of the Church: theology, belief, the Reformation); and (5) *poetics* (matters of art, or literariness: authorship, language/rhetoric, genre, influence/intertextuality, theatricality/film/performance).<sup>15</sup>

Among works produced in the second half of the twentieth century, Levin's groundbreaking 1954 study of Marlowe as 'the overreacher' continues to resound today, while Greenblatt's 'new historicist' Marlowe remains the most influential formulation in the last quarter century: 'a fathomless and eerily playful self-estrangement' that Greenblatt calls the 'will to play' – 'play on the brink of an abyss, *absolute* play'.<sup>16</sup> As Mark Burnett writes in his 1999 'Marlowe and the Critic', 'With one or two exceptions, the construction of Marlowe as a political subversive has gained a wide currency over the last twenty years' (ed., p. 617) – though we could extend Marlovian subversion to the categories of subjectivity, sexuality, religion, and poetics.<sup>17</sup>

The investment that Greenblatt shares with Leech in a theatrical Marlowe has a characteristic twentieth-century liability: a neglect of Marlowe's poems. While commentators from the late-seventeenth century to the nineteenth praise Marlowe exuberantly for his achievements in drama, they have surprisingly little to say about his poems as a body of work in its own right, and even less praise.<sup>18</sup> Commentators in this period do recognize *Hero and Leander*, as we have seen, but it takes until 1781 for Warton to recognize fully Marlowe's 'PURE POETRY': *Ovid's Elegies*, *Lucan's First Book*, and even 'The Passionate Shepherd' (MacLure, pp. 59–60; see MacLure's comment, p. 24). Between Warton and Swinburne, commentators refer to various of the poems only intermittently, as if, under the pressure of the Shakespeare factor, no one is quite sure what to do with a playwright who, like Shakespeare, wrote some of the most gifted poems in the language.<sup>19</sup> The General Catalogue to the British Library sets the official classification that prevails today: 'Marlowe (Christopher) the Dramatist'.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, counter forces were assembling.<sup>20</sup> Levin himself led the rearguard action, in a series of brilliant observations spliced into his dramatic view of the overreacher. He was followed more emphatically by J. B. Steane in his 1964 *Marlowe: A Critical Study*, which devotes chapters to *Lucan*, *Ovid*, and *Hero* (curiously ignoring 'The Passionate Shepherd').<sup>21</sup> Even Leech's posthumously published *Poet for the Stage* (1986) includes two chapters on the poems (pp. 26–42, 175–98). While most studies throughout the century focused exclusively on 'Marlovian drama', some included chapters on *Hero and Leander*, while simultaneously this Ovidian poem was attracting an impressive string of fine analyses, from C. S. Lewis to David Lee Miller and beyond.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of Marlovian classification appears enshrined in the 1987 article on Marlowe in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, printed in the volume on *Elizabethan Dramatists*, rather than in *The Sixteenth-Century Non-Dramatic Poets*. Written by the late Roma Gill, the opening paragraph confirms what we have learned about Marlowe's standing in English literary history but tacitly resists the narrowness of the volume's generic frame, as if Marlowe's 'ghost or genius' were too infinite to be encircled by such artificial boundaries:

The achievement of Christopher Marlowe, poet and dramatist, was enormous – surpassed by that of his exact contemporary, Shakespeare. A few months the elder, Marlowe was usually the leader, although Shakespeare was able to bring his art to a higher perfection. Most dramatic poets of the sixteenth century followed where Marlowe had led, especially in their use of language and the blank-verse line . . . English drama was never to be the same again.<sup>23</sup>

Nor, we may add, was English poetry ever to be the same. For Gill, Marlowe is a 'poet and dramatist'; we may take her cue, recalling that we have had access to this version of Marlovian authorship for a long time. In 1891, for instance, producer-actor Henry Irving unveiled the Marlowe Commemoration at Canterbury, Marlowe's city of birth, with a memorable formulation: 'of all those illustrious dead, the greatest is CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE. He was the first, the only, herald of SHAKESPEARE. He was the father of the great family of English dramatic poets, and a lyrical poet of the first order among Elizabethans' (MacLure, p. 185).

Following Irving and Gill, we may usher in our own century by identifying another first for Marlowe: he is the first major English author to combine poems and plays substantively within a single literary career. A few previous English authors – John Skelton, for instance, or George Gascoigne, or even Marlowe's fellow street-fighter Watson – had combined at least one play in their otherwise non-dramatic careers – but Marlowe moves beyond this haphazard-looking professional profile by taking both forms to heart.<sup>24</sup> Today, Marlowe may be best remembered as the father of English drama, but his achievements in poetry are no less astonishing, once we pause to consider them, as Georgia Brown does in her chapter here. It is not simply that two of his poems are recognized as the first of their kind – *Ovid's Elegies*, the first translation of the *Amores* into any European vernacular; *Lucan's First Book*, the first in English – but also that no fewer than three of the five have been singled out as 'masterpieces'. *Hero and Leander* has long been known to be the most superior Ovidian narrative poem in the language, greater even than Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, asserted C. S. Lewis: 'I do not know that any other poet has rivalled its peculiar excellence.'<sup>25</sup> In the history of



praise, however, few poems can rival ‘The Passionate Shepherd’ – ‘one of the most faultless lyrics . . . in the whole range of descriptive and fanciful poetry’, rhapsodized Swinburne (MacLure, p. 183); ‘the most popular of all Elizabethan lyrics’, rationalized Millar MacLure (ed., *Poems*, p. xxxvii). As for *Lucan’s First Book*, Lewis judged it ‘of very great merit’, so much so that he was tempted to deny Marlowe’s authorship of it (*English Literature*, p. 486), while the classicist Charles Martindale calls it ‘arguably one of the underrated masterpieces of Elizabethan literature’.<sup>26</sup> Given that scholars are only now looking into the 1590s as the original groundplot of seventeenth-century English republicanism, we may expect this original translation to come closer to centre stage.

All told, when we match such utterances as Martindale’s with those made about the plays, we discover an unprecedented literary achievement: the first sustained combination in English of poems and plays at an artistically superior level. We may thus come to view Marlowe as the founding father of a distinctly sixteenth-century form of authorship: the English poet–playwright.<sup>27</sup> *Ovid’s Elegies* suggests that Marlowe looked back to Ovid as the progenitor of his own twin production, since the *Amores* tells a clear authorial narrative, interleaved with an erotic one: Ovid struggles to write both epic and tragedy, the high Aristotelian genres from the *Poetics*; he becomes impeded in this professional ambition by his erotic obsession with love elegy (1.1, 2.1, 2.18, 3.1); but finally he succeeds in announcing his turn from elegy to tragedy (3.15; in *Ovid’s Elegies*, 3.14), setting up the expectation that he will eventually turn to epic. Ovid fulfils the expectations of both generic turns. As he reports in the *Tristia* towards the end of his life, he has ‘given to the kings of tragedy their royal scepter and speech suited to the buskin’s dignity’ (2.551–3) – referring to his *Medea*, a tragedy extant in two lines and praised in antiquity as the true measure of Ovid’s genius (Cheney, *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession*, pp. 31–48, 89–98). And as Ovid writes to open the *Metamorphoses* (1.1–4), he is metamorphosing from ‘elegist into epicist’.<sup>28</sup>

While Marlowe may have self-consciously imitated Ovid, we need to situate his imitation within a broader sixteenth-century European movement, represented diversely in the careers of Marguerite de Navarre in France, Lope de Vega in Spain, and Torquato Tasso in Italy, all of whom combined poems with plays in their careers. Even if today we do not recognize Marlowe’s status as an English poet–playwright, his own contemporaries most emphatically did – from Beard’s grim classification of ‘a playmaker, and a Poet of scurrilitie’ to Heywood’s citation of both *Hero and Leander* and the *Tamburlaine* plays in his commemoration of ‘the best of Poets in that age’.

Presumably because of Marlowe’s pioneering combination, his two most important English heirs, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, went on to

combine poems and plays in even more influential ways. Together, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson gave birth to a new standard of English authorship, evident in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the careers of Milton and John Dryden; in the nineteenth century through the Romantics, especially Lord Byron; and in the twentieth century through William Butler Yeats and John Millington Synge, T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, and even in our own time, such authors as Derek Walcott and Sam Shepard.

Marlowe's pioneering role as England's first great poet-playwright speaks to another paradox: despite his painfully brief career and sadly truncated canon, this author appears to have possessed an ambition we may call Dantean. In the *Inferno*, the great medieval poet of Italian Christian epic pauses to place himself in the company of a select band of pagan authors. As the guide Virgil tells the pilgrim Dante:

That other shade is Homer, the consummate poet;  
The other one is Horace, satirist;  
The third is Ovid, and the last is Lucan.<sup>29</sup>

In *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, Charles Martindale enables us to see a signature peculiarity of Marlowe's career when he recalls this moment: 'Authors elect their own precursors, by allusion, quotation, imitation, translation, homage, at once creating a canon and making a claim for their own inclusion in it.'<sup>30</sup> For reasons to which we will never be privy, by the time Marlowe was in his late twenties he had translated two of Dante's five classical authors, Ovid and Lucan; he had put a third, Virgil, on the stage; and he had dramatized a fourth, Homer, in one of the most famous appropriations on record; in a play now celebrated as a world masterpiece, Faustus conjures up Helen of Troy, 'the face that launched a thousand ships' ('A' text 5.1.89). As Faustus earlier exclaims to Mephistopheles, 'Have not I made blind Homer sing to me / Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?' ('A' text 2.3.26-7). (Perhaps not surprisingly, the poet who felt compelled to complete *Hero and Leander*, George Chapman, became the great early modern translator of Homer, as Keats fondly remembered.) From Dante's company of poets, only the 'satirist' Horace appears to escape the Marlovian imagination, although we might wonder whether Marlowe's well-known satirical pose towards the world does not have at least some Horatian origin.<sup>31</sup> Yet even without Horace, the company Marlowe keeps is notable for its canonicity. Quickly, we discern something askew. On the surface, Marlowe appears to engage in the self-conscious canon-formation that Martindale attributes to Virgil and Dante, and that we could extend to Spenser and Milton. Yet who with confidence would make such an attribution to Marlowe? Whatever canon the Muses' darling might create, the barking dog breaks asunder.

Marlowe boldly raises the spectres of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan, only to draw a magical circle around them; more to the point, he turns the author of the *Iliad* into a love poet of demonic energy – his great epic into an erotic epyllion – and he sets Ovid and Lucan against Virgil. Marlowe is arguably England's first canonical dissident writer.

Martindale recalls the broad European political quest for empire, *translatio imperii*, and its accompanying literary vehicle, *translatio studii*, 'with Virgil at its core' ('Introduction', p. 3), allowing us to see further the vast cultural enterprise that Marlowe dares to break up. Furthermore, in his chapter on geography and identity in the present companion, Garrett Sullivan permits us to see that in four of seven plays Marlowe migrates his plot along the east–west route of empire and learning: *Dido*, with its obvious trajectory from Troy to Carthage to Rome; the two *Tamburlaine* plays, wherein the 'monarch of the East' (1 *Tamb.* 1.1.43) 'write[s him] . . . self great lord of Africa: / . . . from the East unto the furthest West' (3.3.245–6); and *The Jew of Malta*, set on 'an island', Levin reminds us, where, 'if anywhere, East met West' (p. 65). We could add three of Marlowe's five poems: *Ovid's Elegies*, set in Rome in opposition to Virgil's epic imperialism; *Lucan's First Book*, rehearsing Rome's civil war also in opposition to Virgilian empire; and even *Hero and Leander*, as Chapman reminds us in his translation of Marlowe's source text, the poem by the same name written by the fifth-century grammarian Musaeus, whom Marlowe and the Renaissance thought one of the legendary founders of poetry, along with Orpheus: 'Abydus and Sestus were two ancient Towns; one in Europe, another in Asia; East and West, opposites.'<sup>32</sup> Marlowe habitually rehearses his plots along the expansive imperial track precisely to blockade it, from early in his career to the very end, both on stage and on page.

Despite this consistent representation, the truncated quality of Marlowe's works and our imperfect knowledge of his life prevent us from attributing to him the kind of political organization that Richard Helgerson and others attribute to other early modern individuals who wrote the English nation, such as Spenser and Shakespeare, who managed to survive their twenties.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, as Marlowe's counter-imperial track hints, enough representational evidence exists to discern the outlines of a concerted project.

In *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, I argued that Marlowe's Ovidian poems and plays inscribe a 'counter-nationhood', a non-patriotic form of nationalism that subverts Elizabethan royal power with what Ovid calls *libertas* (*Amores* 3.15.9) – and Marlowe translates as 'liberty' (*OE* 3.14.9) – in order to present 'the poet' as 'the true nation':<sup>34</sup> 'Verse is immortal, and shall ne'er decay. / To verse let kings give place, and kingly shows' (*OE* 1.15.32–3). Marlowe's Lucanian poetry, however, needs to be re-routed as a second

classical road into the Elizabethan political sphere – specifically, as a republican form of nationalism in opposition to monarchical power. Marlowe’s twin translations of Rome’s two greatest counter-imperial epicists,<sup>35</sup> at the beginning and the end of his career, construct for his work a bifold representational framework that includes, rather complexly, both Ovidian counter-nationalism and Lucanian republicanism. Any full study of Marlowe’s representational politics needs to distinguish between the two and then to discern their concurrent, interwoven texture.

Marlowe deserves to be placed at the forefront of any conversation about the rise of English republicanism, simply because he is the first Englishman to translate Lucan’s counter-imperial epic, also known as Lucan’s *Civil War* (*De Bello Civili*).<sup>36</sup> According to David Norbrook, Lucan is ‘the central poet of the republican imagination’ (p. 24). As the original Lucanian voice in England, Marlowe qualifies as the first Elizabethan poet of the republican imagination. We do not know what Marlowe’s plans were for his partial translation, but Norbrook helps us understand what Marlovians neglect: ‘The first book of the *Pharsalia* was in fact much cited by two of the leading seventeenth-century theorists of republicanism, James Harrington and Algernon Sidney’ (pp. 36–7). Whatever Marlowe’s intentions might have been, we can guardedly classify his translation of Lucan’s first book as a republican document – perhaps the first great literary representation of republicanism in the English ‘Renaissance’.

Because *Lucan’s First Book* shows up in the Stationers’ Register with *Hero and Leander*, we may see how these two proto-epic documents at the end of Marlowe’s career cohere with documents traditionally placed at the beginning, in elegy and tragedy (*Ovid’s Elegies* and *Dido*), thereby completing a Marlovian *cursus* that imitates the generic pattern of Ovid’s career. Marlowe’s counter-Virgilian Ovidian art joins his counter-Virgilian, Lucanian art as solid evidence for looking further into the representational politics informing Marlowe’s career.<sup>37</sup>

Marlowe’s experiments in tragedy (discussed in the chapter here by Richard Wilson) can also be identified as in some sense republican documents. Stephen Greenblatt and his heirs – notably Emily C. Bartels – emphasize Marlowe’s theatrical originality in putting at centre stage a series of aliens, outsiders, and exiles – an African queen, a Scythian shepherd, a German scholar, a Maltese Jew, even an English homoerotic king who lacks political organization – without recognizing such figuration as forming a strong republican ethos.<sup>38</sup> Marlowe describes Tamburlaine as one who ‘with shepherds and a little spoil / Durst, in disdain of wrong and tyranny, / Defend his freedom ’gainst a monarchy’ (1 *Tamb.* 2.1.54–6). Thus, Marlowe’s much-debated interest in Machiavelli needs to be reconsidered, since it is well

known that in *The Jew of Malta* he is the first to put the arch-republican author of *The Prince* and *The Discourses* on to the English stage.<sup>39</sup> To this *dramatis personae*, we can add, from Marlowe's poems, an Ovidian lover, a passionate shepherd, a pair of star-crossed lovers, and of course those egregious Gemini of anti-republicanism at the core of Lucan's Roman civil war, Caesar and Pompey.

Accordingly, the famed Marlovian narrative, in both poems and plays, tells how a freedom-seeking individual is oppressed, always to annihilation, by authorities in power, whether represented by a corrupt government or by the angry gods – often by both: 'My God, my God, look not so fierce on me! / Adders, and serpents, let me breathe a while!' (*DF* 'A' text 5.2.119–20). The precise goal of Faustus's turn to magic helps us recognize what the authorities would be so swift to annihilate: a longing to 'make man to live eternally' ('A' text 1.1.24; see Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, p. 82). Intriguingly, this line has an earlier instantiation in the *Inferno*, where the pilgrim Dante recalls how Ser Brunetto, damned for sodomy, 'taught [him] . . . how man makes himself eternal' (15.85). Ser Brunetto is Dante's most powerful icon of earthly fame; not simply does he tell Dante that his 'company has clerics / and men of letters and of great fame' (106–7), but the great teacher makes a request that marks his signature character: 'Let my *Tesero*, in which I still live, / be precious to you; and I ask no more' (119–20). For Dante, Ser Brunetto is the author of a book that makes himself famous and teaches others how to be famous 'upon the earth' (108). He is the supreme exemplar in the entire *Commedia* of an author who writes a book violating Dante's own authorship in service of Christian glory. For his part, Marlowe overgoes Dante, for Faustus uses the book of magic not simply to become famous on earth but to create eternal life within time – an art that forms the ultimate blasphemy against the Christian God and yet hauntingly anticipates the goal of modern medicine and science. As in so much else, Marlowe's daring search for freedom attracted the strong hand of government.

Patrick Collinson has made famous the notion that Elizabeth's government was really a 'monarchical republic', and much recent scholarship, in English studies as in history, has been intrigued to map out such a complex public sphere.<sup>40</sup> Presumably, such a government allows for the birth of Marlovian freedom and puts it under surveillance. Yet here we might distinguish between republicanism as a form of government – conveniently defined by Norbrook as "a state which was not headed by a king and in which the hereditary principle did not prevail in whole or in part in determining the headship" (p. 17; quoting Zera S. Fink) – and the representation of republicanism in literary documents. Was Marlowe a republican? To quote Marlowe

himself in *Hero and Leander*, ‘O who can tell’ (2.23)? What we can tell very plainly is what we might call the literary form of Marlowe’s representational republicanism. His poems and plays constitute a significant register and clear herald of republican representation, both in the late Elizabethan era and finally in the early seventeenth century, as the English nation moves ever closer to the nightmare of a Lucanian Civil War.

*Lucan’s First Book* ends with an inset hymn to the god Apollo by a Bacchic Roman matron, who futilely uses her prophetic power to head off Roman civil war. Philip Hardie finds the counter-Virgilian Lucan himself lurking in the original Latin representation (pp. 107–8), suggesting that Lucan uses characters to voice his republican programme. Surely, Marlowe saw this and delighted in cross-dressing his own English voice in his translation.<sup>41</sup> As is well known today, and as Kate Chedgzoy shows in her chapter here, Marlowe achieves another first worth emphasizing: he is the first English author to foreground his own homoerotic experience, in both poems and plays. This Marlovian originality appears most notably in the relationship between Edward and Gaveston in *Edward II*, but also in the inset tale of Leander with Neptune and the opening episode of *Dido* with Jupiter and Ganymede (see the chapter here by Sara Munson Deats).

For all Marlowe’s inventiveness, however, no one could have predicted, until the last few years or so, Marlowe’s most uncanny originality: not simply his staging of Jews, taken up famously by Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, but also his invention of a sub-genre of plays about Islam, taken up by such competing heirs as Robert Greene in *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (1587) and Peele in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1589).<sup>42</sup> In his chapter on *Edward II* here, Thomas Cartelli notes how Marlowe has recently emerged as ‘early modern England’s most modern playwright’; nowhere is this more striking than in Marlowe’s centralized staging of two cultural topics now absorbing the world, the fate of Jews and the role of Islam. Furthermore, as the chapters by Julia Lupton and Mark Burnett emphasize, Marlowe’s world of Barabas and Tamburlaine, recording a cultural environment in which Christians, Jews, and Muslims occupy the same political space, is a striking prediction of the world we inhabit today.

By way of conclusion, we might recall that Marlowe himself seems to have been fascinated by the idea of firstness. The word *first* appears over 130 times in his truncated corpus, and he manages to record a capacious series of first happenings: from the ‘first mover of that sphere’ (1 *Tamb.* 4.2.8) to ‘he that first invented war’ (1 *Tamb.* 2.4.1); from ‘the first day of [Adam’s] . . . creation’ (DF ‘A’ text 2.2.109) to the ‘first verse’ of his own poetic creation (OE 1.1.21); and from the ‘first letter’ of Lechery’s ‘name’ (DF ‘A’ text 2.2.169–70) to Leander’s ‘first sight’ of Hero (HL 1.176). As this

last example reminds us, the idea of firstness imprints one of Marlowe's most famous lines, quoted by Shakespeare in *As You Like It* (3.5.83): 'Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight.' In a manner not perhaps uncharacteristic of him, Marlowe indeed appears to have been (secretly) involved in the invention of his own standing as England's first major poet-playwright.

What is finally so striking about Marlowe is his signature yoking of literature with violence – not simply in his works but in his life. Contemporaries such as Spenser had used terms of violence to represent the art of writing, but surely England's New Poet did not make such a marriage the heart of his work.<sup>43</sup> In contrast to Spenser, Marlowe (one suspects) did: this young man made out of his author's life and works one of the most haunting fusions of the literary and the violent on record, and he was the first in England to do so in a nationally visible theatre. Yet even so, perhaps we can discern in the strange Marlovian fusion something more than a tormented psyche and its sadly truncated product: perhaps it is the historical birth passage of authorial freedom itself. Back in 1600, Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of Marlowe's *Lucan*, initially captured the historical constraint of Marlovian freedom when imagining a ghost or genius walking the churchyard in three or four sheets.

The notion of Marlovian firstness might help us further appreciate today the enigma of Marlowe's original genius. Clarke Hulse, observing that Marlowe wrote a poem paraphrasing 'divine Musaeus' (*HL* 1.52), calls Marlowe 'the Primeval Poet' and *Hero and Leander* the inaugural poem of an Elizabethan 'genre of primeval poetry'.<sup>44</sup> Marlowe might have been drawn especially to the primeval poets as a republican community because, as some Renaissance scholars thought, poets preceded monarchs in the evolution of civilization.<sup>45</sup> By recalling the remarkable line of commemoration identifying Marlowe's original achievement in English poetry and drama, from his day to ours, we may wonder whether it was the Muses' darling bathing in the Thespian springs, or perhaps the barking dog hooked by the nose, who cultivated for posterity the absolute fame of originality. Christopher Marlowe enters the twenty-first century the enigmatic genius of canonical dissidence.

## NOTES

For helpful readings of this introduction, I am grateful to James P. Bednarz, Mark Thornton Burnett, Robert R. Edwards, Park Honan, David Riggs, and Garrett A. Sullivan.

1. Thomas Thorpe, *Dedicatory Epistle to Lucan's First Book* (1600), in Millar MacLure (ed.), *The Poems: Christopher Marlowe, the Revels Plays* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 221. In this chapter all quotations from Marlowe's poems are taken from this edition. Quotations from the plays are from Mark Thornton

- Burnett (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, Everyman Library (London: Dent; Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 1999). The i-j and u-v have been modernized in all quotations (Marlowe and otherwise), as have other obsolete typographical conventions, such as the italicizing of places and names.
2. The chapters by Lois Potter (pp. 262–81) and Lisa Hopkins (pp. 282–96) touch on interrelated matters. For recent recuperations of ‘genius’, a word that originally meant *attendant spirit* but that quite naturally came to mean *creative brilliance*, see Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997); and Harold Bloom, *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (New York: Warner, 2002). Marlowe’s ‘genius’ has long been debated, but supporters from the sixteenth century onwards include (in MacLure, *Critical Heritage*) George Peele, Michael Drayton, Thomas Heywood, Ben Jonson, Thomas Warton, William Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Edward Dowden, A. C. Bradley, John Addington Symonds, James Russell Lowell, George Saintsbury, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. T. S. Eliot ushers in modern criticism by judging that Marlowe wrote ‘indubitably great poetry’ (‘Christopher Marlowe’, in *Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Faber, 1963), pp. 65–6).
  3. Rpt in Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 202–3.
  4. John Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe*, 2 vols. (1942; Hamden, CT: Archon, 1964), 2: 161 (see 2: 290).
  5. Sukanta Chaudhuri, ‘Marlowe, Madrigals, and a New Elizabethan Poet’, *RES* 39 (1988), 199–216.
  6. Leah S. Marcus, ‘Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: the Case of *Dr Faustus*’, *RenD* 20 (1989), 1–29; Thomas Healy, *Christopher Marlowe* (Plymouth: Northcote House in Association with the British Council, 1994), pp. 1–9.
  7. Rpt in Stephen Orgel (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 91.
  8. See Thomas Dabbs, *Reforming Marlowe: The Nineteenth-Century Canonization of a Renaissance Dramatist* (London: Associated University Presses, 1991).
  9. Marlowe was not the first to bring blank verse to the stage (it emerged in such pre-Marlovian plays as *Gorboduc*), but he was famed in his own time for having made blank verse the standard line for the stage, as Jonson recognized by singling out ‘Marlowes mighty line’ in his memorial poem on Shakespeare (rpt in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans, et al. (eds.) (Boston: Houghton, 1997), p. 97). On this topic, see McDonald in the present volume, pp. 55–69.
  10. Clifford Leech (ed.), ‘Introduction’, *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, *Twentieth Century Views* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 1.
  11. These and other critics can be found in Leech and other important collections: Brian Morris (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Hill, 1968); Judith O’Neill (ed.), *Critics on Marlowe* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970); Alvin B. Kernan (ed.), *Two Renaissance Mythmakers: Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Harold Bloom (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Chelsea, 1986); Emily C. Bartels (ed.), *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: G. K. Hall; and London: Prentice, 1996); and Richard Wilson (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Longman, 1999).



12. Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (1946; New York: Russell, 1962).
13. Roy W. Battenhouse, *Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine': A Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941); and Una Ellis-Fermor, *Christopher Marlowe* (1927; Hamden, CT: Archon, 1967).
14. Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, Anne Lancashire (ed.) (New York: AMS Press, 1986), esp. 'The Acting of Marlowe and Shakespeare' (pp. 199–218).
15. See Patrick Cheney, 'Recent Studies in Marlowe (1987–1998)', *ELR* 31 (2001), 288–328. See earlier instalments in Jonathan Post, 'Recent Studies in Marlowe: 1968–1976', *ELR* 6 (1977), 382–99; and Ronald Levaio, 'Recent Studies in Marlowe (1977–1987)', *ELR* 18 (1988), 329–41.
16. Stephen Greenblatt, 'Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play', in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: More to Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 193–221 (quotations from p. 220; his emphasis); and Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954).
17. Cf. Irving Ribner, 'Marlowe and the Critics', *TDR* 8 (1964), 211–24.
18. For a recent overview, see Mark Thornton Burnett (ed.), 'Introduction', *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems*, Everyman Poetry (London: Dent; Rutland, VT: Tuttle, 2000), pp. xiv–xx. Cf. MacLure (ed.), *Poems*, pp. xix–xliv; and Harry Morris, 'Marlowe's Poetry', *TDR* 8 (1963), 134–54.
19. Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 259–64, esp. p. 343n6.
20. For a fuller inventory, see Patrick Cheney, 'Materials', in Cheney and Anne Lake Prescott (eds.), *Approaches to Teaching Shorter Elizabethan Poetry* (New York: MLA, 2000), pp. 46–50.
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23. Roma Gill, 'Christopher Marlowe', in vol. 62 of Fredson Bowers (ed.), *The Dictionary of Literary Biography: Elizabethan Dramatists* (Detroit: Gale Research Group, 1987), pp. 212–31 (quotation from p. 213).
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41. On this Elizabethan strategy elsewhere in Renaissance literature, see Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 227–78.
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## 2

DAVID RIGGS

### Marlowe's life

Christopher Marlowe's contemporaries recalled a conflicted figure. 'Pity it is that wit so ill should dwell', wrote a student playwright at Cambridge, 'Wit lent from heaven, but vices sent from hell.' Other living witnesses lined up on either side of this divide. The poet George Peele called the dead playwright 'the Muses' darling'. William Shakespeare hailed the author of the magical verse, 'Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?' Ben Jonson praised the inventor of 'Marlowe's mighty line'. Michael Drayton, another poet, proclaimed that Marlowe 'Had in him those brave translunary things, / That the first Poets have'. Marlowe's enemies were just as adamant about his vices. During the months leading up to Marlowe's death, the pamphleteer Robert Greene publicly predicted that if the 'famous gracer of tragedians' did not repent his blasphemies God would soon strike him down. Just a few days before Marlowe was murdered, the spy Richard Baines informed Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council that the playwright was a proselytizing atheist, a counterfeiter, and a consumer of 'boys and tobacco'. Protestant ministers viewed Marlowe's violent end in his twenty-ninth year as an act of divine vengeance. Marlowe had 'denied God and his son Christ', declared Thomas Beard, 'But see what a hook the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dog.'<sup>1</sup>

Four hundred years later, we can agree about Marlowe's artistic genius, but the story of his wayward life remains elusive. He left no first-person utterances behind for us to interpret (the sole exception is a cryptic Latin dedication to the Countess of Pembroke). The facts of his adult life are few, scattered, and of doubtful accuracy. Only one of his works was published during his lifetime, and his name appears nowhere on the text. Despite his many encounters with the law, Marlowe seldom went to trial and was never convicted of anything.<sup>2</sup> The evidence about his transgressive temperament sits at one remove from his own voice. It consists of reported speech, observations by unfriendly witnesses, and passages drawn from his plays. Sceptics rightly insist that the atheist and troublemaker exists only in these documents. He is an irretrievably textual being.

Where does a biographer go from there? Seven of Marlowe's contemporaries allude in writing to his blasphemies; the number increases to eleven if we include writers who refer to him by pseudonyms.<sup>3</sup> This dossier is unprecedented in its intricacy and scope, its points of contact with literature and politics, and its murderous outcome. The fear of God was the bedrock of moral order in Marlowe's England. His contemporaries assumed that people who did not believe in the hand of divine correction would sin with reckless abandon. Within the history of modern unbelief, Marlowe bestrides the moment when atheism comes out of the closet and acquires a public face. In *The Theatre of God's Judgments*, Beard correctly identified him as the first Englishman to challenge comparison with the great blasphemers of antiquity: 'not inferior to any of the former in Atheism and impiety, and equal to all in manner of punishment'. During the last six years of his life, Marlowe was cited for defecting to the Roman Catholic seminary at Rheims, suspicion of murder, counterfeiting, disturbing the peace, felonious assault, and public atheism. The constables in his neighbourhood sought protection from the local magistrate because they were afraid of him. One informant accused him of planning to join 'the enemy', Catholic Spain, just four years after the coming of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Another linked him with a London gang-leader who was involved in a plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I.

In the jargon of today's intelligence agencies, there was a lot of 'chatter' around Christopher Marlowe, an array of signals that implicated him in covert operations and high-level conspiracies. Prosaic explanations for Marlowe's misadventures are readily available: the rumour about his going to Rheims could have been a simple mistake; maybe he took up counterfeiting because he needed money, and got away with it because the authorities did not bother to prosecute him; perhaps he was murdered in a drunken quarrel over a bar bill. But the chatter is still there.

The first question to ask about this evidence is not 'Did he or didn't he?' but rather 'Why Marlowe?' Why was he selected by history to fill this role? The answers to this question cannot lie in his conscious choices, about which there is little to know; they lie in the parts he was chosen to play.

His father, the migrant worker John Marlowe, moved to the cathedral city of Canterbury in the mid-1550s. He was twenty years old and came from Ospringe, beside the north Kent port of Faversham. Single men between the ages of twelve and twenty, the time when apprentices were indentured, took to the roads in search of work. Canterbury was not only a church capital, but also a regional centre located amid fertile farmlands. Families bearing the name of Marlowe, or Marley, had settled there during the fifteenth and earlier sixteenth centuries. John Marlowe could expect to find 'cousins' in a position to help him. Furthermore, the influenza epidemic of the late 1550s decreased

the local population by a quarter. This demographic catastrophe encouraged looser policies of apprenticeship and admission to the trade guilds; it was far easier for outsiders to enter the workforce when local replacements were lacking.<sup>4</sup> By the autumn of 1560, John Marlowe had apprenticed himself to an ageing and impoverished shoemaker.

The following spring, Marlowe married Katherine Arthur, another outsider, who came to Canterbury from the coastal city of Dover. Like her husband, she was probably the child of peasants. A year later the newlyweds had a daughter named Mary. Their first son Christopher was baptized on 26 February 1564, just two months before Shakespeare was christened at Stratford-upon-Avon. All told, Katherine Marlowe bore nine children and saw five or six of them survive into adulthood. John Marlowe's master died intestate in 1564, during a severe outbreak of bubonic plague. His passing doubtless explains why Marlowe could join the Shoemakers' Guild a few weeks later, just four years after entering into his apprenticeship, instead of the statutory seven. The Marlowes remained a poor family: they were not on the subsidy rolls and received welfare assistance from local charities during Marlowe's boyhood. Yet the father did possess one unusual asset for a man in his position: he could sign his name and perform clerical tasks.

Christopher Marlowe's formal education began around the age of seven, when he memorized his *ABC and Catechism*. This ubiquitous little book was meant to induct impressionable children into the Church of England; but Canterbury remained a city of divided loyalties. The English state religion changed three times between 1547 and 1558, and Canterbury felt the full shock of these seismic alterations. Each time a new king came to the throne, everyone in the ecclesiastical establishment had to adapt or be deprived. These vacillations left parish life badly demoralized. When the Crown lawyer and antiquarian William Lambarde visited Canterbury during the 1560s, the city was a shadow of its former self: 'And therefore no marvel', he reckoned, 'if wealth withdrawn, and opinion of holiness removed, the places tumble headlong to ruin and decay.'<sup>5</sup>

Tradesmen's sons usually left school at the age of eight. Marlowe, however, proceeded to grammar school and began to study Latin. In the winter of 1579, just six weeks shy of his fifteenth birthday, he won a scholarship at the prestigious King's School in Canterbury. The School instituted these awards for 'fifty poor boys, both destitute of the help of friends and endowed with minds apt for learning'. When Marlowe became a scholar, perhaps half of the fifty really were poor, that is, the sons of small tradesmen or yeoman farmers. The head master reserved places for them because, as Archbishop Cranmer remarked when the school was founded, 'the poor man's son by painstaking for the most part will be learned, when the gentleman's son will not take the

pain to get it'. Poor boys won many of the university scholarships for the same reason.

The 'chiefest labor' of grammar school, wrote a prominent schoolmaster, 'is to make those purest Authors our own, as Tully [Cicero] for prose, so Ovid and Virgil for verse, so to speak and write in Latin for the phrase, as they did'. The most gruelling ordeal was the extemporaneous oral composition of Ovidian and Virgilian hexameters. William Harrison, a Tudor social historian, reports that university scholarships were awarded to 'poor scholars' after they had mastered 'the rules of versifying, the trial whereof is made by certain apposers yearly appointed to examine them'. Archbishop Parker's son John, who oversaw the Parker scholarship that sent Marlowe to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, wrote this career path into the terms of his father's bequest. Parker wanted this award to go to 'such as can make a verse'.<sup>6</sup> By the time Marlowe left grammar school, he had internalized the basic principles of Latin prosody (figures of speech, metrical resolution rules, relative stress) that underlaid his great contributions to the art of English poetry: the heroic couplet and the blank verse line.

Marlowe arrived at Corpus Christi during the second week of December, 1580. The student body included a mix of fee-paying gentlemen and base-born scholars. The division between these two groups laid the groundwork for many scenes of social conflict that arise in Marlowe's works. Parker endowed Marlowe's three-year scholarship for boys 'who were likely to proceed in Arts and afterwards make Divinity their study'. Students who intended to enter Holy Orders could hold them for an additional three years after the BA, and proceed to the MA. The Cambridge arts course, however, emphasized classical studies at the expense of Divinity. The 1570 statutes virtually eliminated scholastic philosophy, the cornerstone of Roman Catholic learning, from the list of set texts for university lecturers. The most important book in Master Robert Norgate's lesson plan for students at Corpus Christi is John Seton's *Dialectic*, the indispensable textbook on logic.<sup>7</sup> The dialecticians rejected formal validity, the guiding principle of scholastic logic, in favour of persuasiveness, the looser standard of proof that applies to rhetoric. The truest arguments, which could be borrowed from rhetoric and poetry, were the ones that 'compelled belief' on an *ad hoc* basis.

Marlowe learned this lesson well. His poetry and plays – from his signature lyric 'Come live with me and be my love' (1584?) to *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587–8), to his erotic narrative *Hero and Leander* (1592–3) – emphasize the power of persuasive speech to move the will.

Although there is no hard evidence to go on, most scholars put Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* at the beginning of his career. His line-by-line rendering of Ovid's unrhymed distiches into rhymed English couplets



reproduces the snap and wit of Ovid's original; but *All Ovid's Elegies* (1584–5?) also contains the botched translations and metrical irregularities that are the telltale signs of apprentice work. The title page of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1584–5?) states that the play was prepared by Marlowe and his Cambridge contemporary Thomas Nashe, and performed by the Children of the Chapel Royal. Since the Chapel Children flourished in 1583–4, and then went into eclipse, we can infer that *Dido* was written c. 1584. The play dramatizes Books 1, 2, and 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*; but Marlowe, following Ovid, emphasizes the plight of the abandoned queen, while reducing the status of Virgil's manly hero. Edmund Spenser had already positioned himself as the 'English Virgil'; Marlowe adopted the opposing role of the English Ovid. His masterly line-by-line translation of Lucan's *Civil War*, Book 1, is even harder to date, but Marlowe's commitment to Lucan, the other great anti-Virgilian poet of imperial Rome, complemented his Ovidian stance.

Marlowe received his BA in July 1584. Degree-holders had more mobility than undergraduates did and Marlowe took advantage of this. He was away from his college for about half of the academic year 1584–5, and the pattern of extended absences persisted until the end of his MA course. Marlowe's only recorded appearance outside of Cambridge during this period occurred in Canterbury. In August 1585, he signed the will of Widow Benchkin, a neighbour there; this is Marlowe's only extant autograph signature. With the benefit of hindsight, speculation about Marlowe's employment during his absences has focused on the secret service. The Jesuit mission to re-convert England, the mounting threat posed by Mary, Queen of Scots, and the outbreak of war with Spain in 1585 stimulated an acute demand for messengers, snoops, and undercover agents. Queen Elizabeth professionalized her surveillance apparatus in 1581–2, when she authorized Sir Francis Walsingham to organize the first state-sponsored secret service in English history. By 1585, Walsingham's annual outlay for secret service work had leapt to about £7,000 a year; the figure for 1586 was upwards of £12,000, an enormous sum of money by Elizabethan standards.<sup>8</sup>

The intriguing puzzle of Marlowe's absences from Cambridge makes it easy to forget that he spent at least a year and a half in residence preparing for his MA. Candidates for the MA were required to 'be constant attendants of lectures in philosophy, astronomy, optics [the science of sight], and the Greek language'. Cosmography, an interdisciplinary branch of optics that encompassed both geography and history, proved especially fruitful for Marlowe's intellectual development. Abraham Ortelius's pioneering atlas, *The Theatre of the World*, Andre Thevet's *Universal Cosmography*, and Francois Belleforest's *Universal Cosmography of the Whole World* supplied him with material for *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, and *The Jew of Malta*

(1589–91).<sup>9</sup> With the eclipse of scholastic learning, poetry became an important source for the study of philosophy. The author of *The Ethical, Scientific, and Historical Interpretation of Ovid's Fables*, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1584, explained that 'Poetry is nothing, if not philosophy joined together with metre and story.'<sup>10</sup> Ovid's naturalistic and libertine philosophy had a profound influence on Marlowe's atheistic worldview. The scientific metaphors of the four elements and the voyage into the heavens guided Marlowe's reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, and taught him to conceive of the universe as a self-perpetuating physical construction. These paradigms came to life in *Tamburlaine*, the play he completed in the year that he took his MA.

The mystery of Marlowe's absences grew more urgent in 1587. There was a 'rumour' that Marlowe 'was determined to have gone beyond the seas to Rheims there to remain'. The English seminary at Rheims was a prime destination for Catholic students-in-exile; it housed many of Queen Elizabeth's deadliest enemies. On 29 June, the queen's Privy Council informed university officials that Marlowe 'had done her Majesty good service . . . in matters touching the benefit of his country'. The Councillors denied that he had ever intended to 'remain' at Rheims, and finessed the intriguing question of whether or not he had actually gone there. In any case, their letter leaves the impression that Marlowe has carried out secret missions on the Council's behalf.

The major figures in Marlowe's postgraduate life, apart from the playwright Thomas Kyd, worked for the Elizabethan secret service. The spy Richard Baines, the poet Thomas Watson, and the Kentish squire Thomas Walsingham all belonged to the band of intelligence operatives that kept watch on the seminarians at Rheims and their English allies.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Marlowe's name nowhere appears in the Diary where the seminary kept its records. It is more likely, then, that he intended to visit Rheims, where he could have contacted one of Walsingham's agents such as the master spy Gilbert Gifford. Biographers assume that Marlowe was in Sir Francis Walsingham's employ; but the Council's letter to Cambridge was signed by Lord Treasurer Burleigh, the queen's closest adviser, and members of his faction, the 'peace party' who were negotiating with the Spanish army headquartered in Brussels. When Marlowe subsequently appears in government documents, he is dealing with Burleigh or his agents.

The Council frequently employed poets as messengers and go-betweens. Marlowe's case stands out because of the rumour about his switching sides. In its effort to scotch the rumour, the Privy Council identified the real Marlowe with the loyal subject ('he had no such intent'), implying that the seditious Marlowe was merely playing a part. Such distinctions often broke down in

practice. The vast majority of secret agents toiled in a marginal and mercenary occupation. Their own employers held them in suspicion, believing that ‘There be no trust to a knave that will deceive them that trust him’ (Nicholl, p. 130). Field operatives rarely found posts in the civil service or the professions, and there is no reason to believe that Marlowe’s prospects were any different.

The timing of the Council’s letter to Cambridge dovetailed with Marlowe’s decision to write for the newly erected London theatres; he was the first university graduate to forge a lasting professional bond with the adult players. Why was this collaboration so successful? Like his new employers, the secret agent was an actor, licensed by authority to perform the role of the outlaw, and shrewdly suspected of being the part he played. By commissioning Marlowe as a double agent, the authorities inserted him into opposing roles – loyal servant and subversive Other. As a government agent, he served the state by imitating the enemy whose presence justified the exercise of state power; the Crown authorized him to voice what it regarded as sedition and heresy (Goldberg).

Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great* was in the repertory of the Lord Admiral’s Men by the autumn of 1587. A work of high literary accomplishment, and an unprecedented crowd-pleaser to boot, *Tamburlaine* marked an important advance in the quality of English professional theatre. Marlowe’s major innovation was the sonorous, actor-friendly blank verse line that he bequeathed to Shakespeare and Milton. The author voices his scorn for ‘rhyming mother wits’, and promises to regale his audience with ‘high astounding terms’, in the opening lines of his Prologue. Marlowe writes this triumphalist version of literary history into the structure of his work. His base-born hero is an extemporaneous oral poet whose verses, the ‘working words’ that energize his followers, are his passport to wealth and dominion. This fable transforms the cycle of poverty, poetry, and social mobility that had cast Marlowe on the margins of Elizabethan society into an unexampled success story.

The Prologue to *Tamburlaine, Part Two* explains Marlowe’s motive for writing the sequel. ‘The general welcomes Tamburlaine received’, he begins, ‘When he arrived last upon our stage / Hath made our poet pen his second part / Where death cuts off the progress of his pomp’ (1–4). *Part Two* offers a Lucretian meditation on the meaning of death. Characters who imagine themselves in a conscious afterlife, rewarded and punished by the gods, are ridiculed and tormented; characters who take the Epicurean view that the soul perishes with the body, dissolving into the elements, achieve tranquillity. Marlowe enforces this anti-Christian idea with satire and blasphemy. By the time Marlowe wrote *Part Two* (1587?), he had seen

the First Book of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* in manuscript. He signalled his awareness of Spenser's masterpiece by inserting a travesty of one of his rival's most widely admired stanzas into his play: King Arthur, Spenser's Christian warrior, momentarily turns into Tamburlaine, the blaspheming tyrant.

Small wonder that Robert Greene complained the following March about 'daring God out of heaven with that atheist Tamburlaine'. Although Greene cloaks his remarks about Marlowe in cryptic allusions and figures, the thrust of his critique is clear enough. Two gentlemen have derided him 'for that I could not make my verses jet upon the stage' like that atheist Tamburlaine. But Greene refuses to 'wantonly set out such impious instances of intolerable poetry'. Instead he will adhere to his Horatian motto, and mix instruction with delight. Tamburlaine's verses delight but do not instruct. Greene would rather endure the gentlemen's insult than follow the lead of 'such mad and scoffing poets, that have propheticall spirits as bred of *Merlins* race'. Merlin was the legendary magician; but this was also the Elizabethan pronunciation of 'Marlin', the name Marlowe went by at Cambridge, while the mad and scoffing poets are his followers. Greene doubts that Marlowe has 'set the end of scholarism in an English blank verse', the term Greene invents to describe Marlowe's innovation. 'Scholarism' refers to the ill-fated attempt to write English poetry in classical metres. Although Greene will not concede that Merlin has rung the death knell of scholarism, that is precisely what Marlowe had done. Even Greene has to admit that *Tamburlaine* has set a trend. If Merlin made a bad example, he was also a prophet who inspired a race of imitators.

The earliest imitations of Marlowe include Greene's *Alphonsus King of Aragon*, George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, Thomas Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War*, and the anonymous *Selimus*, all written within a few years of *Tamburlaine*. These works reduced Marlowe's conception to a marketable formula: poetry and spectacle transform regicide into effective theatre, a source of illicit pleasure. The protagonists speak in thumping blank verse thickly larded with hyperboles. The action reeks of egregious violence. The common practice of quoting or citing *Tamburlaine*, or of reproducing its most lurid scenes, gave Marlowe's work a bad eminence, as if 'Merlin' were responsible for the exorbitance of his imitators. Marlowe found his co-equal in his future chamber fellow Thomas Kyd. Kyd devised his own version of the blank verse line for *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587). Like Marlowe, Kyd employs the scourge-of-God motif to obtain moral leverage on subaltern violence. Where Tamburlaine claims to be a flail sent from heaven, Kyd's protagonist Hieronimo is a high-minded magistrate driven mad, like Hamlet, by the contradictory roles of 'scourge and minister'. Kyd, too, attracted imitators,

who penned blank verse revenge plays that revel in gratuitous cruelty and murder.

In a public letter 'To the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities' prefixed to Greene's novel *Menaphon* (1589), Thomas Nashe attacked the new fad of blank verse tragedy. Nashe complained about the capacity of blank verse to reproduce itself in the arena of popular culture; anyone could mimic its heavily accented rhythms. Other writers confirm Nashe's observation. Satirical vignettes by Shakespeare, Joseph Hall, and George Wither depict an urban sub-culture where plebeian poets gave extempore renditions of Tamburlaine in taverns. The art of making 'pure iambic verse', formerly the preserve of scholars, had become available to anyone who could afford standing room in the playhouse or the price of a drink. Nashe singles out Kyd, who never went to university, for censure. Greene, however, does allude to Marlowe, in the text of *Menaphon*. Making fun of what he calls a 'Canterbury tale', Greene remarks that it was told by a 'prophetical full mouth that as he were a Cobbler's eldest son, would by the last tell where another's shoe wrings'. Greene refers to the eldest son of the Canterbury cobbler John Marlowe. The would-be prophet's shoe wrings 'by the last' on which his father fashioned footwear. Like Kyd, Marlowe has left the trade into which he was born, transgressing the confines of his birth and status.

On 18 September 1589, between the hours of two and three in the afternoon, the flesh-and-blood Christopher Marlowe flashes into view. He was on Hog Lane, near the Theatre in Shoreditch, fighting with William Bradley, a 26-year-old innkeeper from nearby Bishopsgate. The poet and playwright Thomas Watson lurked nearby. Watson drew his sword, allegedly to 'separate' the two men and 'to keep the Queen's peace'. Bradley then turned on Watson, who killed his assailant with a thrust into the chest. Marlowe and Watson were arrested 'on suspicion of murder' and taken to Newgate Prison. Marlowe posted his bail on 1 October.

Marlowe's fellow prisoners at Newgate included John Poole, a Cheshire gentleman who had been arrested for counterfeiting in 1587. Richard Baines remembered Marlowe saying 'that he was acquainted with one poole, a prisoner in newgate who hath great Skill in mixture of metals'. Since Baines and Marlowe were later involved in a counterfeiting scheme, the informant was doubtless telling the truth in this case. Poole belonged to the Catholic underground and was related to the Earl of Derby's eldest son Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange. After the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, Lord Strange became an important figurehead for papists who sought to replace Queen Elizabeth with a Catholic monarch. Poole took a lively interest in Strange's claim to the English crown. He also spoke warmly of another relative, the renegade English commander Sir William Stanley, who led a regiment of

'Spanish Elizabethans' headquartered in the Low Countries (Eccles, pp. 3–101; Nicholl, pp. 286–98).

Around the time of his imprisonment in Newgate, Marlowe began to write for Lord Strange's acting company, and in this way crossed the outer threshold of Ferdinando Stanley's retinue. Kyd, who seems to have been Strange's personal servant, later testified that 'my first acquaintance with this Marlowe, rose upon his bearing name to serve my Lord although his Lordship never knew his service but in writing for his players'. By 1591, Kyd and Marlowe were 'writing in one chamber'. Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* contains verbal echoes of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and bears family resemblances to Kyd's intricate revenge plot. *The Jew* was already in the repertory of Strange's Men when they gave the first recorded performance on 26 February 1592.

Barabas, the Jew of Malta, personified the new breed of stateless intelligence operatives who made their living by playing both ends against the middle, shuttling back and forth between Protestants and Catholics while remaining loyal to no one but themselves: 'Thus loving neither will I live with both / Making a profit of my policy; / And he from whom my most advantage comes / Shall be my friend' (5.2.111–14). Marlowe's relationship to Lord Strange, who was both a potential patron and a primary object of surveillance, put the playwright in a similar position; he could work for Strange and the secret service at the same time. Marlowe's friend Watson had this kind of relationship with his patron, the prominent Catholic Sir William Cornwallis.

Most scholars now believe that the 1604 quarto of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1588–92) derives from an authorial manuscript by Marlowe, perhaps with the assistance of a collaborator who wrote the comic scenes. The second quarto (1616), on the other hand, contains many additions and revisions by Samuel Rowley and William Birde. The date of Marlowe's original manuscript remains an open question. The case for a later date is simple. Everyone agrees that Marlowe's primary source was P. F.'s translation of the German *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587) into the English *History . . . of Dr John Faustus*; and the earliest extant edition of P. F.'s *History* appeared in 1592. The case for an earlier date largely rests on evidence that a lost and unregistered edition of *The Damnable Life* was published c. 1588; and on the appearance of brief passages that closely resemble lines from *Doctor Faustus* in two plays printed before 1592. But we cannot assume that the authors of the two plays lifted these passages from an early text of *Doctor Faustus*. In the case of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* and Marlowe's *Edward II*, the one instance where the identity of the borrower can be decided on textual grounds, Marlowe was quoting Shakespeare.<sup>12</sup>

With no clear-cut answer from textual studies, the question of when Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus* (1588–92) becomes a matter of choice. From a biographical standpoint, the early date has much to recommend it. Marlowe altered his source to include a great deal of material drawn from university life, some of which pertains to Cambridge. The story of a recent graduate who must decide what to do with his life bore on Marlowe's personal circumstances in 1587–8. Putting *Doctor Faustus* in the late 1580s, next to *The Jew of Malta*, brings out the parallels between his two close imitations of the morality play. Barabas descends from the morality-play character called the Vice, and takes part in the traditional battle of the vices and virtues – though the Christians in *The Jew* turn out to be disconcertingly vicious. Dr Faustus recalls the allegorical figure of Mankind choosing between his Good Angel and his Evil Angel – though Marlowe insinuates that Faustus has already been chosen for sin and damnation. This chronology lends an attractive symmetry to Marlowe's career. He evolves from heroic drama written in the classical style (*Dido and Tamburlaine*) to the native form of the morality play (*Faustus* and *The Jew*), to the new vernacular genre of the history play (*Edward II* and *The Massacre at Paris*).

The winter of 1592 found Marlowe at Flushing, in the Low Countries, where he began to make counterfeit money with the spy Richard Baines and the goldsmith Gifford Gilbert. After the first coin was put in circulation, Baines, 'fearing the success', went to Sir Robert Sidney, the head of the English garrison there, and informed on his partners. In his letter of 26 January to Lord Treasurer Burleigh, Sidney further reported that Baines and Marlowe accused 'one another of intent to go to the enemy, or to Rome'. The 'enemy' resided at the Spanish headquarters in Brussels and at Sir William Stanley's encampment in Nijmegen. Marlowe told Sidney that he was 'very well known both to the Earl of Northumberland and my Lord Strange'. Northumberland and, especially, Strange were the leading heirs apparent in Catholic conspiracies to remove Elizabeth from the throne. Although both men denied any involvement with such plots, Sir William Stanley urged English Catholics to 'cast their eye upon Lord Strange'. Stanley's agents financed their ventures through theft and counterfeiting. Marlowe's own counterfeiting scheme coincided with the formation of the 'Stanley plot': the plotters intended to assassinate Queen Elizabeth while Stanley's regiment invaded from the North, where they would receive assistance from Lord Strange.<sup>13</sup>

There are, then, multiple explanations for Marlowe's criminal behaviour in Flushing. He just wanted, as he told Sidney, 'to see the goldsmith's cunning'. He wanted the money – the stereotypical figure of the poor scholar recurs

throughout his later work. He wanted to penetrate the Stanley plot and gather intelligence for the Privy Council. He wanted to 'go to the enemy' in earnest. If these explanations are contradictory, they also represent options that remained open for an entrepreneurial double agent.

Sidney placed Marlowe and the goldsmith under arrest and sent all three men back to Lord Burleigh 'to take their trial as you shall think best'. There is no indication that Marlowe underwent any punishment. Why did Burleigh release him? Counterfeiting was high treason and carried the death penalty. Moreover, Baines's allegation that his chamber fellow intended to go to the enemy cast doubt on Marlowe's loyalty to the state. On the other hand, Marlowe's contacts with John Poole and Lord Strange, together with his initiative in Flushing, meant that he still could help lead Burleigh to the Stanley conspirators. The Lord Treasurer held Marlowe and Baines in reserve, 'banking his tools' like one of John Le Carré's spymasters, until the time came to use them. Marlowe was back on the streets by 9 May, when he was taken to court for his threats against two constables. The judge required Marlowe to 'keep the peace' towards the constables, and to appear at the General Sessions of the Peace for Middlesex County on 29 September.

That spring Marlowe encountered a new and potent rival. William Shakespeare's early trilogy about the reign of King Henry VI was strongly influenced by Marlowe's conqueror-hero, and contains many verbal echoes of *Tamburlaine*. Marlowe's *Edward II* (1592) in turn borrows passages from 2 and 3 *Henry VI* and adopts the basic plot formula of Shakespeare's trilogy, in which overmighty nobles and a strong-willed queen destroy a weak king. Marlowe's extraordinary variation on Shakespeare's plot-formula was to place the homosexual relationship between King Edward and his base-born favourites at the centre of the action. Although unvarnished history does not record any meetings between the two playwrights, 2 *Henry VI*, 3 *Henry VI*, and *Edward II* were all written for the up-and-coming Earl of Pembroke's Men.

Marlowe's groundbreaking representations of homoerotic attachments, together with Baines's remark about the playwright's preference for boys, raise the question of Marlowe's own sexual orientation. Unmarried persons in early modern England ordinarily had a same-sex bedfellow until they married, which usually occurred in their late twenties if they were men. Unless Marlowe was celibate, the readiest outlet for his sexual desire was other males. But the question 'Was Marlowe a homosexual?' is anachronistic. Elizabethans regarded homosexuality as an aspect of seditious behaviour, rather than a type of person. The crime of sodomy became visible in relation to other offences; otherwise, it went unrecognized. Thus the claim that



Marlowe said ‘all they that love not boys and tobacco are fools’ only arises in connection with Baines’s allegation that Marlowe was an atheist and a counterfeiter.<sup>14</sup>

Marlowe began to acquire a bad reputation in addition to his criminal record. Late in the summer of 1592, Robert Greene levelled an extraordinary public accusation of atheism against the ‘famous gracer of tragedians’, a thinly disguised simulacrum of Marlowe. On 15 September, Marlowe was brawling on the streets again, this time in Canterbury, where he attacked the tailor William Corkine with a stick and dagger. Corkine vs. Marlowe was settled out of court during the first week of October. Marlowe’s sycophantic Latin epitaph ‘On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood’ mourns the death of a powerful Kentish nobleman that December. The Manwood epitaph, his only known poem in praise of a contemporary figure, suggests that he was actively seeking patronage and protection at the end of 1592, and hoped to find it in Kent. By the following spring, he was residing at the Kentish manor house of Thomas Walsingham.

In the midst of his troubles, Marlowe grasped another opportunity to obtain a literary patron. When Thomas Watson died at the end of September, the task of seeing his Latin pastoral *Aminta gaudia* through the press fell to Marlowe. In keeping with Watson’s wishes, Marlowe dedicated the work to Lady Mary Herbert, wife of the Earl of Pembroke and a generous patron of poets; Marlowe could well have known her through his affiliation with the Earl’s acting company. He introduces himself to Lady Pembroke as an Ovidian poet in mid-career. He has translated the *Amores*; now the Countess is ‘infusing the spirit of an exalted frenzy, whereby my poor self seems capable of exceeding what my own ripe talent is accustomed to bring forth’. What did Marlowe mean by this avowal? In the recently issued *Third Part* of Abraham Fraunce’s *Ivychurch*, a book commissioned by Lady Pembroke and known to Marlowe, Fraunce notes that ‘Leander *and* Hero’s love is in every man’s mouth’ and cites standard versions of the story by Ovid and by the Spanish poet Juan Boscan. Marlowe took on the task of rendering Museaus’ original, Greek version of the poem into English. Where the traditional story ends with Leander’s drowning and Hero’s suicide, Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* (1592–3) breaks off after the consummation of their love affair. It used to be thought that the poem was left unfinished because of the author’s untimely death in May, 1593. Recent scholarship, however, sees it as a celebration of physical love that is complete and coherent as it stands.<sup>15</sup>

On 26 January 1593, Strange’s Men performed Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* (1592). It was evidently a new work or at least one that the company had not performed before. The second half of the play, with its homosexual

king and libertine minions, offers a reprise of *Edward II* (1592). The earliest edition of *The Massacre*, and the source-text for all subsequent printings, is a memorial reconstruction of the text that Marlowe had originally prepared for Strange's Men (see Maguire's chapter in this volume, pp. 41–54). Even in its truncated form, *The Massacre* reveals that Marlowe had an intricate, firsthand knowledge of the French civil wars. It includes details that were not available from printed sources, and thus bears out the hypothesis that he had performed diplomatic or secret-service work in France. In a more general way, *The Massacre* explores the role of intelligence in the history of Marlowe's own times. His plot works on the principle of discrepant awareness. First we see the forward-looking conspirators, then their unwitting victims. The only way to survive in this world is to know your enemies' plans in advance; without reliable intelligence; the play's victims are doomed.

On the night of 5 May, an anonymous rhymester who styled himself 'Tamberlaine' posted a provocative placard on the wall of the Dutch churchyard in London. Tamberlaine ventriloquized Marlowe's Tamburlaine in order to stir up mob violence against the immigrant community; he also alluded to *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*. Tamberlaine caught the queen's attention. On 11 May the Council conveyed her vexation to the authorities, ordering them to examine 'such persons as may be in this case any way suspected', a broad-bottomed category that had to include Christopher Marlowe, despite the lack of any evidence that he had written the offending verses. Marlowe's former chamber-fellow Thomas Kyd was under arrest the following day. The authorities tortured Kyd, who said that he had inadvertently received a transcript of 'heretical conceits' from Marlowe. Kyd also could have told them that it was Marlowe's custom 'to jest at the divine scriptures [and] gibe at prayers'; or that 'He would report St John to be our saviour Christ's Alexis.' He subsequently wrote these and other allegations down in two letters to Thomas Puckering, Elizabeth's Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal; he had small incentive to withhold them under torture.

Puckering now commissioned a special agent, probably Thomas Drury, to procure more evidence relating to the case. Drury contacted the gang-leader Richard Cholmeley, who indicated that he had fallen under Marlowe's influence. Drury quoted Cholmeley as saying that that 'one Marlowe is able to show more sound reasons for Atheism than any divine in England is able to give to prove divinity'. An endorsement on the back of Drury's report refers to John and James Tipping and Henry Young, three Catholic insurrectionists who were involved in Sir William Stanley's plot to assassinate the queen. Now they had joined forces with Cholmeley and, by extension, Marlowe. On 18 May, or soon thereafter, the Council arrested Marlowe; he was released

on bail two days later, but ordered to report to the Council on a daily basis. In the meantime, Drury procured Richard Baines's Note concerning Marlowe's 'Damnable Judgment of Religion and scorn of God's word' and delivered it to the Council around 27 May. The note contains a ribald, corrosive attack on Judeo-Christian religion; several sentences elaborate on irreligious jests that Kyd and Cholmeley had attributed to Marlowe. Was Marlowe a bona fide atheist and insurrectionist? Or was he a government spy attempting to entrap men suspected of these crimes? Within the fluid, opportunistic world of the double agent, it is hard to imagine what sort of evidence could categorically exclude either alternative. It has also been argued that all of this evidence was fabricated in order to destroy what Baines calls 'other great men', such as Sir Walter Raleigh, who allegedly heard Marlowe's atheist lecture. With respect to Marlowe, the most incriminating evidence in these documents concerns his peripheral involvement in the Stanley plot.

Drury subsequently recalled the moment when Baines's Note, 'the notablest and vilest articles of Atheism . . . were delivered to her highness and command given by herself to prosecute it to the full'. A few days later, on 30 May, Marlowe was murdered after a 'feast' at Eleanor Bull's house in nearby Deptford. Widow Bull was a notional cousin of Blanche Parry, formerly Elizabeth's head lady-in-waiting. Robert Poley, whose job was to foil assassination plots, was present at the scene of the crime along with the petty confidence man Nicholas Skerres and his partner, the swindler Ingram Frizer. Frizer, the killer, claimed that he had acted in self-defence, after a quarrel over 'the reckoning', a bill for food and drink. The queen's coroner William Danby accepted Frizer's plea, but Danby's contorted attempt to explain how Frizer, who was armed, killed Marlowe in self-defence, while Poley and Skerres passively stood by, does not inspire much confidence.

The archival records surrounding the death of Christopher Marlowe describe a conflict between the insurrectionist playwright and the court. This dispute came to a head when Baines's Note arrived at Greenwich and ended with the murder of Marlowe shortly thereafter. The fact that the coroner's inquest trivializes the killing should provoke scepticism, not easy acquiescence. Queen Elizabeth paid Marlowe the fatal compliment of taking him seriously, as a political agent to be reckoned with.<sup>16</sup>

For his epitaph, we may turn to Marlowe's friend Thomas Nashe: 'His life he contemned in comparison of the liberty of speech.'<sup>17</sup> Marlowe's project was to represent creeds that his society defined as alien and subversive. Tamburlaine the Great founds an idolatrous cult dedicated to violent appropriation. The Jew of Malta reduces all forms of organized religion to mockery. The Epicurean King Edward II elevates his lover Gaveston above

the claims of the Church, the nobility, and his wife. The reprobate Dr Faustus proclaims hell a fable and sells his soul for twenty-four years of carnal pleasure. Arguments about the morally correct response to these villain-heroes miss the thrust of Marlowe's achievement, which was to make such figures conceivable within a public theatrical marketplace.

NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise noted, references to Marlowe and his contemporaries can be identified through the indexes in John Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe*, 2 vols. (1942; Hamden, CT: Archon, 1964); Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 1997); Mark Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe in London* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934); Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press); MacLure; Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*, 2nd edn (London: Vintage, 2000); William Urry, *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury*, ed. Andrew Butcher (London: Faber and Faber, 1988). The first quotation is from 2 *The Return from Parnassus* qtd in MacLure, p. 46.
2. For a chronology of the events in Marlowe's life, see Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe*, pp. xiii-xix; for the relevant documents, see pp. 173-240. The most thorough, if occasionally speculative, account of Marlowe's encounters with the law is in Nicholl, *The Reckoning*.
3. David Riggs, 'Marlowe's Quarrel With God', in Emily Bartels (ed.), *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), p. 56n8.
4. John S. Moore, 'Canterbury Visitations and the Demography of Mid-Tudor Kent', *SoH* 15 (1993), 36-85. Information about Marlowe's childhood and adolescence in this and the following three paragraphs is taken from Urry, *Christopher Marlowe and Canterbury*, pp. 1-61 unless otherwise noted.
5. William Lambarde, *A Perambulation of Kent* (London, 1576), p. 236.
6. Facts about Marlowe's grammar school education are taken from T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944). For the terms of Marlowe's Parker scholarship, see Bakeless, *Tragical History*, 1: 47-50, 64.
7. Richard F. Hardin, 'Marlowe and the Fruits of Scholarism', *PQ* 63 (1984), 387-400.
8. Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 203.
9. The sources of Marlowe's plays are in Thomas and Tydeman.
10. G. Sabinus (ed.), *Fabularum Ovidii interpretatio ethica physica et historica* (Cambridge, 1584), sig. Q8<sup>r</sup>: 'Poetica nihil aliud est nisi Philosophia numeris et fabulis concinna.'
11. Roy Kendall, 'Richard Baines and Christopher Marlowe's Milieu', *ELR* 24 (1994), 507-52.

12. R. Fehrenbach, 'A Pre-1592 English Faust Book and the Date of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*', *Library* 2 (2001), 327–35. Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. Charles Forker (Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 18.
13. Nicholl, *The Reckoning*, pp. 225–39; Ethel Seaton, 'Marlowe, Poley, and the Tippings', *RES* 5 (1929), 273–87.
14. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); and Goldberg, 'Sodomy and Society'.
15. Marion Campbell, "'Desunt Nonnulla": the Construction of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as an Unfinished Poem', *ELH* 51 (1984), 241–68.
16. The paragraphs on the death of Marlowe are based on Nicholl, *The Reckoning*, Kendall, *Christopher Marlowe and Richard Baines*, and Riggs, 'The Killing of Christopher Marlowe'. Anyone seriously interested in the death of Marlowe should also consult Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe*, pp. 120–41.
17. Lynette and Evelyn Feasy, "Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*: Some Marlovian Echoes', *English* 7 (1948), 125–9.

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# 3

LAURIE E. MAGUIRE

## Marlovian texts and authorship

None of Marlowe's plays or poems exist in manuscript (for one partial exception, see the discussion of *The Massacre at Paris*, below). Our earliest witnesses are printed. Printed texts reveal a great deal about the circumstances of printing; but they can also be encouraged to speak about the circumstances of composition and consumption. A chapter about Marlovian texts and authorship is thus also a chapter about critics and readers, about tastes and preferences: not just about what Marlowe wrote but about how it was received.

The first of Marlowe's texts to reach print was *Tamburlaine*, possibly his first play. On 14 August 1590 the publisher Richard Jones made an entry in the Stationers' Register (the register in which publishers entered their right to a work) for the two parts of *Tamburlaine*. In the same year he published both parts as a single volume, in a small octavo format.

The title page is an endearing example of early modern advertising. It provides a racy plot summary, boasts of recent stage success, and promotes the quarto as hot off the press:

*Tamburlaine the Great. Who, from a Scythian shepherd, by his rare and wonderful conquests, became a most puissant and mighty monarch, and (for his tyranny and terror in war) was termed "The Scourge of God". Divided into two tragical discourses, as they were sundry times showed upon stages in the city of London by the right honourable Lord Admiral his servants. Now first and newly published.*<sup>1</sup>

The tautology of this last claim ('first and newly published') is as excessive as the eye-catching graphics: there are no fewer than three typefaces (roman, italic, black letter) and at least seven point sizes. Printing was in its early days, and printers, like novice users of word-processing packages or PowerPoint, availed themselves of all the technical flourishes. Since title pages were displayed independently as posters, the typographical enthusiasm makes sense.

*Tamburlaine* was apparently on the boards by November 1587 when a letter describes an accident during a performance of an unnamed Admiral's Men's play: a loaded pistol used for a stage murder accidentally killed two audience members and wounded a third. The description of the stage action in which the misdirected gun was used corresponds approximately to the end of *Tamburlaine, Part Two*. The approximation is explained by the derivative nature of the testimony: 'though myself no witness thereof, yet I may be bold to verify it for an assured truth'.<sup>2</sup> If this 1587 account refers to *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, *Tamburlaine, Part One* must have been performed shortly before.

In 1587 Marlowe was still at Cambridge (he graduated in July); *Tamburlaine, Part One* is thus the work of an undergraduate student, not a practising playwright. The text has visible academic credentials: the scene divisions and the ends of acts are noted in Latin ('Actus II, Scaena II'; 'Finis Actus tertii'). Act 5 concludes with 'Finis Actus quinti & ultimi *huius primae parti*' (my italics). The Prologue to *Part Two* tells us that the sequel was prompted by the theatrical success of *Part One*. If this statement is correct, then the italicized material ('of this first part') must be a post-performance insertion by Marlowe. If, on the other hand, the Act 5 Latin notice is supplied by the publisher (who, as we saw, published the two parts together), it may suggest that the Latin act and scene divisions do not originate with Marlowe. The evidence is inconclusive.

Less ambiguous is the marked difference in the format of the stage directions between *Tamburlaine, Parts One* and *Two*. *Part One* is notable for its lack of 'Enter' instructions; scenes begin simply with a list of characters: 'Cosroe, Menaphon, Ortygius, Ceneus, with other Souldiers' (B4<sup>v</sup>). Although this habit continues in *Part Two*, it is matched by directions with 'Enter' (sixteen occurrences of each type). *Part One*'s lists suggest a classical author lining up his speakers; *Part Two*'s 'Enter' formulation suggests someone now familiarized to theatre, or a text marked up for professional performance.

Richard Jones's Stationers' Register entry registers the play as 'Two comical discourses of Tamburlaine'. The printed title page, however, advertises 'two Tragical discourses'. The metamorphosis of comedy into tragedy is explained by Jones in his epistle to the reader which prefaces the printed edition: 'I have (purposely) omitted and left out some fond and frivolous gestures, digressing (and in my poor opinion) far unmeet for the matter.' Jones claims to have turned aesthetic judgement into editorial action – that is, if his statement is a true witness to events. It is a perplexing claim. In the sixteenth century 'gesture' referred solely to bodily gesture. The *OED* cites the following examples from 1532 to 1592: 'with outward gesture of my body'; 'outward gesture and deed'; 'gesture of his body'. Jones may therefore be censoring stage action, presumably clowning, in which case his epistle offers

an aesthetic excuse to disguise a practical problem: he did not possess the material which he claims to have omitted. However, if his claim of comic excision is true, the original *Tamburlaine* was clearly generically different from the extant text, although episodes like Mycetes's hiding of his crown (1 *Tamb.* 2.4) and the transfer of Zabina's crown to Zenocrate (1 *Tamb.* 3.3) indicate the plays' comic potential. The misnumbered scenes and omitted scene divisions in the printed text of *Tamburlaine* may support Jones's claim to have excised material. In *Tamburlaine, Part One*, 4.5 follows 4.3. In *Tamburlaine, Part Two* the nine scenes which comprise the first two acts run in a normal numerical sequence; thereafter they are numbered 3.1, 3.5, 2.1, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.4, and 5.6. Richard Jones was something of a literary critic, judging by the contents of the prefatory epistles to other works he published, and could conceivably have expanded his literary role from commentator to editor (although we might note that his aversion to the otiose does not extend to his own prose. The tautology noticeable on the title page continues in the prefatory epistle: 'omitted and left out', 'fond and frivolous').

There are no further publications or Stationers' Register entries until 1593, the year of Marlowe's death. 1593 saw two Stationers' Register entries: *Edward II* (registered just weeks after Marlowe's murder although not published until 1594) and the narrative poem *Hero and Leander* (published in 1598). If the timing of the entries testifies to the publishers' opportunism, the delay in publication seems odd, but speculation about a lost first edition of either text seems groundless. The copy of *Edward II* in the Victoria and Albert Museum lacks the first two leaves, which have been supplied in manuscript; the manuscript title page bears the date 1593, suggesting that it was copied from a printed edition of that date. However, Richard Rowland notes that the compositors' errors in mislineation in the 1594 quarto are too discrepant if they were copying from a printed quarto, and the preliminaries, which would usually be printed first in a reprint, were printed last, as one would expect in a first edition.<sup>3</sup> The date on the manuscript remains intriguing but is not a reliable witness to a lost edition.

Marlowe was not an 'attached' dramatist (the term for someone exclusively contracted to a theatre company). *Tamburlaine* was performed by the Admiral's Men; *Edward II* was performed by Pembroke's Men; *Dido, Queen of Carthage* was performed by the Children of the Queen's Chapel. This company of boy actors with unbroken voices was associated with satires/burlesques and plays on mythological themes; *Dido* combines the two, being a tragicomic version of Books 1, 2, and 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The play was published in 1594 with a title page advertising it as 'Written by Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Nash. Gent'. Collaboration was the norm rather than the exception in the dramatic milieu of the 1590s



(cf. the team writing of today's screenplays, and soap operas). Nonetheless, the post-Romantic conception of the writer as a solitary genius influences contemporary attitudes, and critics have long sought to identify (and separate) Nashe's share in *Dido*. Much has been made of the different and smaller typeface in which Nashe's name is printed on the title page; literary judgements give his share as anything from a few per cent to nothing.

The twentieth century developed statistical rather than literary methods for identifying authors' hands, the most reliable of which concentrates on function words and letters – areas over which authors have no conscious control. Whereas authors deliberately select their literary vocabulary (what Jonathan Bate calls their 'poetic plumage')<sup>4</sup> for elegance, sound, association, or meaning, they do not – cannot – exercise conscious control over function words – prepositions, pronouns, articles, conjunctions – or over letter frequencies. Nonetheless, the literary fingerprint, the verbal tic ('style') will reveal itself in these areas: one author will have a predilection for 'to' over 'with', another's phrasing will mean that certain letter combinations dominate. Computers can identify these networks.

The most exciting application of these approaches to Marlowe comes in the work of Thomas Merriam. He has recently identified the first half of *Dido* as being by Marlowe, the second half by Nashe.<sup>5</sup> Marlowe and Nashe were contemporaries at Cambridge, and Robert Greene associated them in 1592: 'With thee [Marlowe, whom Greene is addressing] I join young Juvenal, that biting Satirist' – a phrase usually taken to refer to Nashe.<sup>6</sup> Their collaboration is plausible; or, depending on the date of composition, perhaps Nashe completed a play left unfinished at the time of Marlowe's death. In either case, Merriam's analysis encourages us to accept the witness of the title page.

1594 is the date tentatively assigned to the publication of Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, a play performed by the Admiral's Men, although the undated octavo may have been published as late as 1602. Performances of a tragedy of the Guise are recorded in the London repertory of Lord Strange's Men in January 1592–3, and in the Admiral's repertory in 1594. The published text, however, is unlikely to correspond to that performed on those occasions. A curious cartoon-strip history which covers the seventeen years of religious wars from the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, the play compresses the deaths of thirteen main characters into a mere twelve hundred lines – little over an hour's playing time. The printer realized the play's brevity and compensated typographically: for instance, he printed single lines of dialogue as two lines. Thus the actual dialogue is only 1147 lines – half the length of a typical play of the 1590s.

The play is stylistically uneven, not at all what one expects from the author of *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II*; long and fluid speeches (notably those of the Guise) co-exist with short staccato speeches (e.g. 190–235).<sup>7</sup> Characters are blunt and over-explicit about their motives. Characterization tends to be two-dimensional, notably in the roles of Navarre and the Queen Mother, who are extremes of good and bad respectively. Verse structure is often lost, although the underlying iambic pentameter is discernible. The verbal quality deteriorates towards the end (compare Guise's soliloquy at 1031–43 with his earlier soliloquy at 108ff.), contributing further to the unevenness.

The major anomaly, however, appears in the form of repetitions. The dialogue both repeats itself verbatim and paraphrases itself loosely; it combines repeated short phrases into textual mosaics and repeats chunks from other plays. The Queen Mother paraphrases and repeats her own speech of 625–33 at lines 782–90; the Friar repeats her line 625 at 1420; Henry III repeats her line 627 at 1090. Thus it is not simply a case of an author penning a speech for one character, then deciding to use it elsewhere. The Guise's wife shares lines with Arden's wife in the contemporary *Arden of Feversham*:

Sweet Mugeroune, tis he that hath my heart,  
And Guise vsurpes it, cause I am his wife.

(*MP* 795–6)

Sweet Mosbie is the man that hath my hart:  
And he usurpes it, hauing nought but this,  
That I am tyed to him by marriage.

(*Arden* 99–101)<sup>8</sup>

These features – repetition, unevenness, wrecked verse – are not typical of Elizabethan drama; they are, however, shared by a handful of plays of the period. How are we to account for them?

We can begin to answer that question by calling another witness: a manuscript of scene 15 of *The Massacre at Paris*, the scene in which a soldier hired by the Guise murders Mugeroun, the man with whom the Guise's wife is having an affair. The soldier's speech, with which the scene opens, conveys the same information in both manuscript and printed texts. However, the printed version has instances of loose expansion and repetition; it contains the gist, with the vocabulary, of the manuscript but in a disordered manner; it keeps the punch-line but mangles the development of a piece of humour; and there are a host of indifferent variants (slight and apparently purposeless alterations). Although the soldier's speech is slightly longer in the manuscript version than in the printed octavo, the difference in length is so negligible as to obviate the possibility of deliberate abridgement. The concentration

of trivial variants likewise reduces the likelihood of revision (although it is true that revising authors often tinker needlessly). The soldier's speech in the octavo seems to be an inaccurate attempt to reproduce the version in the manuscript.

Guise's subsequent speech is sixteen lines in the manuscript but only four lines in the octavo. The omitted material includes three lines of inessential embroidery, and nine lines of Machiavellian character development. The remaining four lines make perfectly adequate if abrupt sense, and the octavo reproduces them almost perfectly, with only one substantive variant (*as* for *yf*). The Guise's four-line octavo speech is clearly an abridgement of the manuscript's sixteen-line speech.

Thus in comparison with the manuscript, the octavo text gives evidence of two processes: abridgement and memorial reconstruction. Memory explains the lengthy repetitions, the mosaics of repeated phrases, and the purposeless variants. In the external echo from *Arden* we see a mind trying to remember one sequence of lines and inadvertently recalling another from a different play. But whose memory? The memory or memories of Admiral's Men actors, some of whom may not have performed the roles they were attempting to reproduce (hence the stylistic unevenness).

Memorial reconstruction is one of the most powerful textual theories of the twentieth century. It is not a perfect theory – it has a great many 'ifs' – and there is no external evidence to support it: no contemporary witness describes or explains memorial reconstruction. All we have are a number of suspect texts whose pervasive symptoms of faulty memory attest to disruption of a kind that cannot be explained by the normal routes, such as printing-house error. In the case of *The Massacre*, the theory is bolstered by the existence of a manuscript for comparison, but the auspices of the manuscript are unclear. Is it a theatre document? A copy for private use? If either, why is it a single self-contained scene? (The scene is a deliberate extract, not an accidental fragment: there is ample blank space for scene 16.) It is not in Marlowe's hand. It was once thought to be a forgery by the Victorian scholar John Payne Collier, but current Collier scholarship has convincingly disposed of that canard. Although enigmatic, the manuscript is helpful in suggesting the kind of text that must have lain behind the Admiral's Men's performances in 1592.

Although memorial reconstruction is often characterized as an underhand practice, there is nothing illicit about a company attempting to recreate the text of a play which it owned. Why they should wish to do so is a moot point. Edward Alleyn, the Admiral's Men's lead actor, owned the playbook of *The Massacre at Paris*. If the company was performing out of town, and if it divided in two for the purposes of touring (as we know happened),

one branch might need to manufacture a text from which to perform. This suggestion is not without its problems: a reconstructed manuscript would lack the vital licence and signature of the Lord Chamberlain, without which theatre companies were not supposed to perform. Nor is the purpose of the abridgement clear: reduction in length, personnel, or simplification of staging? There are still loose ends to tie up.

By 1598 *Tamburlaine* had been reprinted twice (in 1592–3 and 1597) and *Edward II* once (in 1598). Fifteen ninety-eight also saw the publication of the epyllion *Hero and Leander* (entered in the Stationers' Register in 1593). This poem was the greatest success in the history of Marlowe in print: it had a second edition in 1598 and was again reprinted in 1600, 1606, 1609, 1613, 1617, 1622, 1629 and 1637. All the reprints from 1600 also included Marlowe's translation of *Lucan's First Book*. The epyllion may have been a poetic fashion of the 1590s but it was never out of date as a reading experience; it is as an Ovidian poet that Marlowe was most known in print.

*Hero and Leander*, an account of the inexperienced experiences of two young lovers, is by turns comic, bathetic, satirical, and cynical. The leisurely narrative ends abruptly and darkly after consummation. The first edition of 1598 concludes with the words 'Desunt nonnulla' ('some sections are missing'). The second edition, also in 1598, supplied the alleged lacunae: George Chapman continued and completed Marlowe's poem, providing twice as much again, albeit in a more moral vein. In the same year Henry Petowe's completion of the poem also reached print. Although several contemporary critics have argued that Marlowe's 818-line poem is complete as it stands, the Chapman and Petowe versions are witness to the fact that at least two sixteenth-century readers saw the poem as incomplete.

By 1599, Marlowe's translation of ten of Ovid's elegies (the *Amores*) had been published, in an edition with Sir John Davies's *Epigrams*. The book was burned, by episcopal order, in the same year. It was probably Davies's epigrams which prompted the order, for Marlowe's Ovid is not particularly licentious. Nonetheless, the number of early editions, some of them surreptitious, bears witness to the popularity of the volume. Fifteen-ninety-nine saw the publication of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a poetic miscellany falsely attributed to Shakespeare, which included Marlowe's lyric poem 'The Passionate Shepherd to his Love'. This poem was reprinted the following year in a volume entitled *England's Helicon* which also included 'The Nymph's Reply' (by Raleigh) and an anonymous imitation. Phoebe's pastoral invitation to Endymion in lines 207–24 of Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus* (1595) also imitates Marlowe. We do not know when Marlowe's poem was written: Ithamore's variant of it in *The Jew of Malta* (which was performed in February 1592 and may have been written as early as 1588) may be a draft

or a pastiche. If the latter, it is a witness to the poem's immediate popularity. As mentioned above, Marlowe's translation of *Lucan's First Book* was published in 1600. Thus the end of the sixteenth century saw all the Marlowe poems known to us in print.

The plays by which Marlowe is most regularly represented on stage today – *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta* – had not yet been published, although theatre records attest to performances of both in 1594. The seventeenth century ushered them into print (*Doctor Faustus* in 1604, *The Jew of Malta* in 1633) in texts that raise a number of bibliographical questions. In the case of *Doctor Faustus* we have three dates with which to conjure: 1602, when the theatrical manager Philip Henslowe paid the dramatists William Birde and Samuel Rowley £4 for 'additions in Dr Faustus' (since £4 was a substantial sum, the additions must have been considerable); 1604, when *Doctor Faustus* was published in a text of 1,517 lines (known to critics as the 'A' text); 1616, when the play was published in a longer text of 2,119 lines (the 'B' text). The relationship between the two texts, between the two texts and Henslowe's payment, and between the two texts and the play as performed in 1594 (or earlier) must be resolved. The early twentieth century viewed the 'A' text as authentic, the mid-century the 'B' text, and the 1990s favoured the 'A' text once more; thus the text you read depends on the date of your edition. The most recent Revels edition prints both versions.<sup>9</sup>

The 'B' text is close to that of the 'A' text in Acts 1 and 5, but diverges in the middle, expanding the action at the Imperial Court and the material with Benvolio. (In chapter 4 of *A Textual Companion*, Eric Rasmussen provides an excellent thematic analysis of the differences.)<sup>10</sup> It is now clear to us that the 'B' text incorporates the additions by Birde and Rowley. The need for these revisions is explored by Leah Marcus, who argues that they were designed to update what she calls the 'Marlowe effect' – to keep the play at the cutting edge of theatrical daring.<sup>11</sup> Thus the 'B' text is a witness to Marlowe as performed and revised on the seventeenth-century stage; it is not a reliable witness to what Marlowe wrote.

Nor is the 'A' text – or so it seemed to textual critics for much of the twentieth century. The comic scene 10 (D3<sup>v</sup>–D4<sup>f</sup>; 3.2 in Bevington and Rasmussen's edition), in which the clowns conjure Faustus from Constantinople, has duplicate endings. In one, Mephistopheles changes the clowns and the vintner into animals and makes them vanish; in another the vintner flees and the business is extended with Mephistopheles's complaints and his conversation with the clowns. One comic scene (9) and one chorus (D2<sup>v</sup>–D3<sup>f</sup>) are misplaced. The reference to Dr Lopez, a Jewish Portuguese physician who attained notoriety in February 1594 for allegedly attempting to poison Queen Elizabeth,

is clearly a topical reference which must postdate the original composition of the play. Thus the text as printed is distanced from Marlowe.

The evidence of the misplaced Chorus and the topical Lopez insertion is bibliographically clear. But twentieth-century bibliographers identified other lines and episodes as corruptions and insertions using a non-bibliographical criterion: taste. Viewing Faustus's papal pranks with horror, bibliographers found it easier to ascribe the tricks to textual corruption than to the conscious choice of a university graduate. W. W. Greg went further: he took theology as a yardstick in assessing the origins of the 'A' and 'B' texts, viewing the 'B' text as more authentic because more theologically orthodox. Michael Keefer wryly points out the folly of assuming that 'theological orthodoxy can be used – in this of all plays – as a textual criterion'.<sup>12</sup> The 'A' text cannot be deemed corrupt just because one does not approve of it.

For as long as critics believed that the longer 'B' text did not include the 1602 additions, it was easy to view the shorter 'A' text as a corrupt derivative of 'B'. The combination of clowning and brevity led to the conclusion that *Doctor Faustus's* corruption, like that of *The Massacre at Paris*, was evidence of memorial reconstruction, even though 'A' *Doctor Faustus's* textual quality is strikingly different from that of *The Massacre at Paris*: it has none of the verbal symptoms of memorial reconstruction. However, once the status of the 'B' text was reclassified as a revision, the 'A' text had to be reinvestigated.

The 'A' text gives witness to a text which has been prepared from an authorial manuscript. It is closer than is the 'B' text to the play's source, *The Damnable Life of Doctor Faustus* (a fact which tends to overrule the theory of memorial reconstruction by actors). The duplicate scene endings may thus indicate alternative actions or authorial revision (in the latter case the printer must accidentally have ignored a deletion mark).

Bevington and Rasmussen observe an interesting phenomenon which points not just to authorial papers but to dual authorship. The compositors of the 'A' text change stints mid-page, often at the beginning of a new scene or the entrance of a new character (Bevington and Rasmussen, pp. 68–9). This is unusual. Because of the process of folding the printed paper to form a quarto text, pages were not printed in numerical sequence. Pages 1, 8, 4, and 5 were printed on four quadrants of one large sheet of paper; pages 2, 7, 3, and 6 were printed on the reverse side. In the interests of efficiency, one compositor set the type for pages 1, 8, 4, and 5 while another set pages 2, 7, 3, and 6. The compositors therefore had to calculate how to distribute ('cast off') the manuscript copy from which they were working to correspond accurately with the printed pages. In the case of 'A' *Doctor Faustus* it seems that the normal process of casting off was frustrated by new scenes beginning on a new page. The logical explanation for this is collaborative authorial papers:

different handwriting made consistency of calculation difficult for the composers. Thus current theory believes the 'A' text of *Doctor Faustus* to be based not on a memorial reconstruction but on the working manuscript of two authors. Marlowe's collaborator has not yet been identified with any confidence.

Nor has the date of original composition. Critics frequently favour a late date *c.* 1593 for no other reason than a desire to see this tragedy as the jewel in Marlowe's crown. What evidence there is, however, suggests a slightly earlier date. For example, mock-sweetheart tricks like that in *Doctor Faustus* 2.1 feature in *Orlando Furioso*, *John of Bordeaux*, and *A Knack to Know a Knave* (all plays on stage before June 1592 when *A Knack to Know a Knave* is first mentioned). In *John of Bordeaux* (*c.* 1590) the virtuous Rossalin refuses to yield to the sexual advances of Prince Ferdinand; the magician Vandermast placates the prince by summoning a devil, disguised as Rossalin, to appear to Ferdinand at night. In *Orlando Furioso* (played 21 February 1591–2) the clown appears to Orlando in disguise as his sweetheart Angelica. An analogous episode in *A Knack to Know a Knave* is rendered ambiguous by an incomplete stage direction, but it is clear that the episode involves a comic trick with a devil, a sweetheart, and a disguise. In *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus requests a wife, Mephistopheles agrees, and the stage direction in 'A' reads 'Enter with a diuell drest like a woman, / with fier workes' (C2<sup>f</sup>). Clearly mock-sweethearts and comic anticlimax enjoyed something of a vogue in plays of the early 1590s. Whether Marlowe inaugurated the fashion or capitalized on it is not clear; or rather it cannot be established on textual grounds, although critical judgement – bias? – might incline us to view Marlowe, in this as in so much else, as the innovator.

It is clear that the mixed genres of Marlovian drama regularly cause critical anxiety, from Richard Jones's alleged unease in 1590 about the co-existence of comedy with tragedy in *Tamburlaine* to twentieth-century bibliographers' disapproval of the irreverent activities of Faustus. Bibliographers' anxiety about the text of *Doctor Faustus* was paralleled in their suspicions about the text of *The Jew of Malta*. The descent from tragedy into farce, relished by audiences familiar with the comedy of cruelty, caused problems for E. K. Chambers, who concluded that the play 'has only come down to us in a form rehandled to suit an audience of inferior mentality to that aimed at by the original author'.<sup>13</sup> Chambers's conclusion, as J. C. Maxwell pointed out, is 'disconcerting for those of us who have never detected anything more than a certain unevenness of quality, and now realize that we must have just the inferior mentality the adapter was aiming at'.<sup>14</sup>

The forty-year gap between Marlowe's death and the play's publication in 1633 encouraged bibliographers to attribute their unease with the play's

generic instability to textual corruption. *The Jew of Malta* was revived in 1633 for performances at the Cockpit and the Court, for which Thomas Heywood wrote new Prologues and Epilogues. The fear is that Heywood may have written more. Tucker Brooke felt that the 1633 quarto was ‘sadly corrupted and altered from that in which it left the hands of Marlowe’.<sup>15</sup> Note the emotive vocabulary: ‘sadly’ – because anything non-Marlovian is grievous even though it might tell us about Heywood and Caroline tastes – and ‘corrupted’ – because anything which time or theatre (or both) has altered is, ipso facto, diminution. Tucker Brooke is not interested in a textual witness to the conditions of 1633; he seeks a witness for the early 1590s.

In fact the text is probably a witness to both. The question we need to ask of *The Jew of Malta* is not why it was not published earlier (it was entered in the Stationers’ Register in 1594) but why it was published when it was. A survey of dramatic publications in 1633 and adjacent years answers the question.

Philip Massinger’s city comedy *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, written in 1625, was published in 1633. The central comic character is a characteristically Marlovian overreacher, as his name indicates: Sir Giles Overreach. An extortioner who seeks title, land, and influence, he deprives his nephew of his estate, tries to marry his daughter to a lord, takes over his neighbour’s lands by breaking his fences, trampling his corn, setting fire to his barns, and breaking his cattle’s legs. His manifesto could have been uttered by Barabas:

We worldly men, when we see friends, and kinsmen,  
Past hope sunk in their fortunes, lend no hand  
To lift ’em up, but rather set our feet  
Upon their heads, to press ’em to the bottom.

(*A New Way* 3.3.50–6)<sup>16</sup>

Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, ahead of its time in the 1590s, was obviously valued in the 1630s for the superb city comedy it is. City comedies were popular in performance and print in Caroline London: Jonson’s *The New Inn* (written 1629, published 1631), Massinger’s *The City Madam* (written 1632), Brome’s *The Weeding of the Covent Garden* (written 1632), Shirley’s *A Bird in a Cage* (written and published 1633), and Jonson’s *A Tale of a Tub* (revised 1633). Heywood’s court Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* apologizes for presenting an old play ‘mongst other playes that now in fashion are’, an apology repeated in the Epilogue. Nigel Bawcutt takes Heywood at face value: ‘the actors were prepared in advance for the play to be a failure’ (p. 41). But in the theatre one apologizes only for one’s most reliable offerings. It is inconceivable that the Caroline company resurrected an anticipated failure.



They resurrected *The Jew of Malta* because its genre meshed so perfectly with the prevailing vogue for city comedy.

In his play *The School of Night* (1992) Peter Whelan stages a conversation between Marlowe and Shakespeare about comedy. For Marlowe, humans are vulnerable when they laugh; laughter is ‘the fish opening its mouth’ and comedy is ‘the bait that hides the hook’. (With such a philosophy Marlowe is inevitably disturbed by Shakespeare’s question: ‘But what if you only want to feed the fish . . . not catch them?’).<sup>17</sup> Whelan’s Marlowe aptly defines city comedy and inadvertently encapsulates *The Jew of Malta*.

The influence of Marlowe on Shakespeare and vice versa has long aroused interest. This interest incorporates the fictional (Whelan, Burgess,<sup>18</sup> *Shakespeare in Love*), the literary (Shapiro),<sup>19</sup> and the bibliographical (nineteenth-century Shakespeare disintegrators, twentieth-century stylistometricists), although the bibliographical and the biographical often overlap, as in the work of those who insist Marlowe was Shakespeare. Recent stylistometric work has resurrected the view that Marlowe’s hand appears in several Shakespeare texts – in some of the *Henry VI* plays and *Titus Andronicus* – as well as introducing two new claims: that Marlowe contributed to *Edward III* (a play recently claimed for Shakespeare) and that Shakespeare’s *Henry V* is a revision of a lost Marlowe original.<sup>20</sup> Limitations of space prevent me presenting the stylistometric evidence in detail, but these tantalizing claims can be summarized.

Using function-word tests and relative letter frequencies, Thomas Merriam claims six scenes of *Titus Andronicus* for Marlowe (1.1, 2.1, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3). The Marlowe scenes focus on revenge; the Shakespeare scenes focus on pathos and suffering. In *Henry V* the two contrasting visions of Henry – as admirable hero or as tactical politician – correlate to a linguistic division. *Henry V* contains words and phrases unique in the Shakespeare canon, which occur elsewhere only in the Marlowe canon: in *Tamburlaine*, in *Edward II*, *Dido*, and *Lucan*. Presumably Shakespeare revised a Marlovian original. In *Edward III* two scenes, anomalous in terms of twelve stylistometric variables, emulate *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, and suggest Marlowe’s hand. Parallel passages in 1 *Henry VI* and in the Marlowe canon, supported by logometric tests, indicate that Marlowe wrote Joan of Arc’s penultimate scene.

Merriam’s articles offer impressively restrained conclusions. He presents his logometric analyses graphically, with a clear spatial demarcation between results characteristic of the Shakespeare canon (or reliable portions thereof) and results characteristic of the Marlowe canon (or reliable portions thereof). All that Merriam claims – or that stylometry can claim – is that certain letter frequencies or function-word patterns have more in common with Marlowe’s

canon than with Shakespeare's. If we wish to interpret that statistical witness as bibliographical/biographical conclusion, that is up to us.

I save for the end stylometry's most startling claim: that the generically anomalous *Jew of Malta* has more in common with the work of Thomas Kyd than with that of Marlowe. Critics have long recognized the resemblances between *The Jew* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. Merriam supports this impression with evidence: 'principal component analysis, based on the letter frequencies of the whole alphabet in modern spelling editions, has shown a consistent alienation of *The Jew of Malta* from the other six Marlowe plays, combined with a consistent association with *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Soliman and Perseda*'.<sup>21</sup> Criticism is accustomed to claims which expand Marlowe's small canon; claims which reduce it are unusual. That *The Jew of Malta* should be by Kyd is perhaps more of a surprise than that it should not be by Marlowe. Nevertheless, given the resemblance between *The Jew of Malta* and the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (a play stylometry also claims for Kyd), Merriam's reattribution is tempting.

We do not know as much about the history of Marlowe's texts as we'd like, and what we know is tantalizing and incomplete. It is based upon witnesses, ranging from stationers' transactions and publishers' statements to early modern performance records, Marlowe's texts themselves, and sixteenth-century critical reactions to them. These witnesses must be cross-examined so that we can decide which to trust. The fluctuation in critical trust in the last two centuries reveals as much about the generic challenges of the Marlovian canon as it does about the problems (real or perceived) in the published texts. An account of Marlowe's texts is thus an account of how we treat evidence: not a neutral description of bibliographical fact (fact is only what we agree it is) but an account of our assumptions, desires, and prejudices – in short, of ourselves as readers.

#### NOTES

1. STC 17425. I have modernized the spelling and punctuation.
2. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 2: 135. I have modernized the spelling.
3. R. Rowland (ed.), *Edward II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. xxxv.
4. Jonathan Bate (ed.), *Titus Andronicus* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 83.
5. Thomas Merriam, 'Marlowe and Nashe in *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage*', *N&Q* 245 (2000), 425–8.
6. Robert Greene, *A Groatsworth of Wit* (London, 1592), F1<sup>r</sup>.
7. Christopher Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Malone Society Reprint, 1929 for 1928).
8. Anon, *Arden of Faversham*, ed. Hugh Macdonald with D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Malone Society Reprint, 1947 for 1940).

9. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), *Doctor Faustus, A and B Texts* (Manchester University Press, 1993).
10. Eric Rasmussen, *A Textual Companion to 'Doctor Faustus'* (Manchester University Press, 1993).
11. Leah Marcus, 'Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: the Case of *Doctor Faustus*', *RenD* n.s. 20 (1989): 1-29.
12. Michael H. Keefer (ed.), *Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1991), p. xvi.
13. E. K. Chambers, review of J. S. Bennett (ed.), *The Jew of Malta*, *MLR* 27 (1932), 78.
14. J. C. Maxwell, "How Bad is the Text of *The Jew of Malta*?" *MLR* 48 (1953), 435.
15. Cited by Nigel Bawcutt (ed.), *The Jew of Malta* (Manchester University Press, 1978), p. 38.
16. Philip Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Ernest Benn, 1964).
17. Peter Whelan, *The School of Night* (London: Warner Chappell Plays, 1992), pp. 57, 58.
18. Anthony Burgess, *A Dead Man in Deptford* (London: Hutchinson, 1993).
19. James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
20. See Thomas Merriam, 'Marlowe's Hand in *Edward III*', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 8 (1993): 59-72; 'Possible Light on a Kyd Canon', *N&Q* 240 (1995): 340-1; 'Marlowe's Hand in *Edward III* Revisited', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 11 (1996): 19-22; 'Tamburlaine Stalks in *Henry VI*', *Computers and the Humanities* 30 (1996): 267-80; 'The Tenor of Marlowe in *Henry V*', *N&Q* 243 (1998): 318-24; 'Influence Alone? More on the Authorship of *Titus Andronicus*', *N&Q* 243 (1998): 304-8; 'Marlowe and Nashe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*', *N&Q* 245 (2000): 425-8; 'Faustian Joan', *N&Q* 245 (2000).
21. Merriam, 'Possible Light on a Kyd Canon', 340.

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# 4

RUSS McDONALD

## Marlowe and style

Atheist, sodomite, smoker – the image of Christopher Marlowe persisting to the present day is attributable in part to the poet himself, who apparently cultivated an anti-establishment persona for professional ends. The Prologue to the first part of *Tamburlaine* declares that the audience should expect something different from the second-rate ‘conceits’ to which lesser writers have accustomed them, and whatever the mix of artistry and commerce that governed his work, Marlowe’s iconoclastic themes and eloquent speakers certainly had the effect of selling theatre tickets and, later, books. However, the scurrilous personal reputation that attracts many in our day has not always appealed, certainly not (for example) to most arbiters of Georgian and Victorian culture: we find no evidence that any play by Marlowe was performed between 1663 and 1818, when Edmund Kean revived *The Jew of Malta*. The twentieth century, however, rediscovered his plays and poems, re-evaluated his persona, forgave him his putative sins, and took the poet and his works to its heart. One major benefit of this resuscitation has been an increased appreciation for Marlowe’s foundational role in the development of English poetry and drama.

It is worth reminding ourselves that there was more to Marlowe than his bad-boy image connotes, and such a corrective is especially salutary when it comes to comprehending the mechanics and the significance of Marlowe’s poetry. As a student in Canterbury he was sufficiently diligent to win a Parker scholarship to Cambridge; whatever the truth about his record at Corpus Christi, he educated himself well enough to prepare translations of important Latin poems and to attempt an audacious stage version of the *Aeneid*; he composed one of the most winning of all English lyrics; he wrote plays that filled the public theatres; and he served in some capacity in Elizabeth’s government, perhaps in intelligence, perhaps not. We might say that his willingness to flout cultural and artistic standards depended upon a savvy sense of how to thrive within those conventions, and how to turn them to his advantage. Throughout literary history Marlowe’s verse, like his

persona, has been exaggerated and then admired or reviled, according to the taste of the reader and the times. Patrick Cheney, in the Introduction to this volume, collects some of the most memorable of those responses, such as William Hazlitt's 'a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination'. Hazlitt's reading is itself hyperbolic, of course, but it is representative of the terms regularly invoked to describe Marlowe's creative achievement, and such instances of overstatement need to be tempered, or at least complemented with other views. Just as Marlowe the man is more complex than he is often portrayed, so is Marlowe the poet.

Marlowe's dramatic poetry proceeds from his unique combination of the transgressive and the conventional. The 'mighty line', to begin with Ben Jonson's famous phrase, is marked by irrepressible energy, thrilling sonorities, and dazzling verbal pictures, but it is still a *line*, an ordering system, an invariable and comforting rhythmic standard that organizes words and ideas. We acknowledge Marlowe as the greatest dramatic poet before Shakespeare, but we sometimes forget that he was the first English writer to create great poetry *and* great plays, and – the burden of my analysis – great poetry *in* great plays. He composed not only 'The Passionate Shepherd', *Hero and Leander*, and brilliant translations but also transformed the English popular play, thus ushering in the greatest age of English drama.<sup>1</sup> He gave the English theatre a voice, a voice the public applauded and other playwrights recognized, appropriated, and developed. Specifically, he taught his contemporaries that English verse could be made to sound magnificent, and that the way to achieve that effect was to do without rhyme.

In the introductory survey undertaken here I can do little more than glance at some of the traits that make Marlowe's verse what it is, always with an eye (or ear) to comprehending how these properties confer affective power on the verse, how they cohere to move the listener. The common thread of this analysis is Marlowe's ability to synthesize conflicting skills and ideas. Janus-faced as poet and dramatist, he looks backwards and forwards, his intimate acquaintance with the classics accompanied by a thirst for knowledge about the modern world. His expansive imagination stretches beyond accepted boundaries of geography, philosophy, and drama, but he transcends them by popular artistic means. This intellectual curiosity, exceptional even in a famously curious era, produced a great variety of themes – power, alienation, masculinity, ambition, transcendence, limitation – and such topics help to account for the distinctive texture of Marlowe's language, especially its acoustic properties. Critics as different as Jonson and Swinburne have recognized that the sound of the verse is one of its defining characteristics: commanding without being bombastic, it partakes of the affective power of

artifice without seeming stiff or excessively rhetorical. Among several important contributions to English letters, Marlowe's most meaningful is his transformation of blank verse: his renovation and development of a hitherto undistinguished poetic form into the primary medium for the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. Marlowe's poetic significance can hardly be overestimated: George Peele, his contemporary, supplied an apt label in referring to him as 'the Muses' darling'.<sup>2</sup>

### The Renaissance poet and the world of words

Marlowe's status as a major early modern poet is not in doubt, but it must be said also that Marlowe is a major Renaissance poet. In other words, his art owes much of its vitality and distinction to his unmediated acquaintance with rediscovered classical texts. The characters, geography, and concerns of classical Rome permeate, as we would expect, the translations of Ovid's *Elegies* and *Lucan's First Book*, as well as *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. But Marlowe's immersion in classical literature also greatly influenced his original poems and his plays, imparting to them the flavour of tradition and learning characteristic of much early modern English literature. His speakers often place themselves and their actions in a classical context: Faustus praises Helen as 'Brighter . . . than flaming Jupiter / When he appeared to hapless Semele' (5.1.105-6, 'A' text); Gaveston, returning to England to join Edward II, anticipates masques presenting 'a lovely boy in Dian's shape' and 'One like Actaeon peeping through the grove' (1.1.60, 66). C. S. Lewis grumbled that 'We forget Tamburlaine and Mortimer and even (at times) Faustus and think only of Rhodope and Persepolis and celestial spheres and spirits . . .', and even though Lewis preferred lyric poetry to drama and had had the opportunity to see few of the plays on the stage, still he has a point, for Marlowe's learning at times threatens to swamp the ideas and episodes it is summoned to clarify.<sup>3</sup> And yet the classical allusions usually supply an acute comment on characters and their actions, as in the case of 'hapless Semele', who destroyed herself with a desire for knowledge that parallels Faustus's own intellectual aspirations.

The humanism that accounts for Marlowe's command of the classics also manifests itself in his fascination with the multiplicity of the early modern world. Having absorbed the major texts of classical literature and ancient history, he also sought to understand the conditions of his own culture and of the world at large. The charges of atheism may have been exaggerated, but clearly he thought deeply and unconventionally about politics, religion, commerce, sexuality, science, and other topics that were causing controversy throughout sixteenth-century Europe. The breadth and intensity of his

imagination produce the energy, the hyperbole, and the persuasiveness of his expressive style. Further, the works attest to an unfailing interest in the possibilities of the English language during one of the most exciting periods of its development.

Marlowe's devotion to words and his skill at manipulating them were acknowledged immediately, most pointedly in the frequency with which other dramatists parodied his style. Tamburlaine was the principal target: Jonson, Marston, and Shakespeare all mocked the hero's majestic speech, usually by inflating it even further.<sup>4</sup> Marlowe, of course, was aware of the originality of his talent. The novice playwright's advertisement for himself in the Prologue to his first effort for the public stage—

you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine  
Threat'ning the world with high astounding terms  
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword—<sup>5</sup>  
(*Tamb.* Prologue, 4–6)

constitutes a helpful précis of his dramatic style. It emphasizes the sound of the verse ('you shall hear'), establishes precisely the register of the play's language ('high astounding terms'), and formally identifies words and deeds. The audience will see the anti-hero 'Threat'ning . . . with . . . terms / And scourging . . . with his . . . sword'. This yoking of language and action is a recurrent *topos*: seventy lines into the play proper, the weak King Mycetes responds to his general's rousing speech by proclaiming that 'words are swords'. The emotional power of controlled language is never far from the consciousness of Marlowe's principal speakers.

Visual rather than aural audacity informs *Hero and Leander*, the erotic narrative that became one of Marlowe's most popular works. Circulated in manuscript but not published until 1598, the epyllion is Ovidian in spirit, deriving much of its brilliance from the young poet's insouciant self-awareness. Assurance and wit steer the reader through a poem that seems both traditional in subject – love among glamorous ancient mortals – and self-consciously up-to-date in the style of storytelling. Its ethos is established early by the hyperbole of the visual descriptions, a winning example being the heroine's ornate buskins: they are 'of shells all silver'd . . . / And branch'd with blushing coral'; at the knees 'sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold'; filled with water by her servant, the birds as she moved 'would chirrup through the bills' (l. 31–6). Such visual extravagance is matched by Marlowe's witty treatment of the pentameter couplets. Although nothing perhaps is as jocular as the initial description of Leander – 'I could tell ye / How smooth his breast was, and how white his belly' (66–7) – nevertheless the constant chiming of the end-rhymes adds another voice to the rhythmic

and assonantal music of the poem. Such descriptive verve and witty commentary also animate the translation of Ovid's *Amores*. At the end of 'Corinnae concubitis', having described the mistress's body in detail, the speaker skips discreetly over the sexual act with a clever use of *occupatio* and finishes with an invocation: 'Judge you the rest: being tir'd she bade me kiss; / Jove send me more such afternoons as this' (1.5.25–66).

Restraint, on the other hand, is the dominant note in his translation of *Lucan's First Book*, in which the poet eschews rhyme in favour of blank verse.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the date of the translation, the impudence and eros of *Hero and Leander* are absent; instead, Marlowe renders a polished, sophisticated, and even moving version of Lucan's portrait of Caesar's campaign against Rome. The gravity of the subject involves no diminution of poetic verve. Lacking the music of end-rhyme, the poet devises alternative kinds of poetic replication:

As soon as Caesar got unto the bank  
And bounds of Italy, 'Here, here', saith he,  
'An end of peace; here end polluted laws;  
Hence, leagues and convenants; Fortune, thee I follow,  
War and the Destinies shall try my cause'.  
This said, the restless general through the dark  
(Swifter than bullets thrown from Spanish slings,  
Or darts which Parthians backward shoot) march'd on,  
And then (when Lucifer did shine alone,  
And some dim stars) he Ariminum enter'd.

(LFB 225–34)

The language is largely determined by the Latin original, of course, and the poetic properties are not flashy, but the strategic doubling of words and the intricate interlacing of vowels and consonants produce a melody that overlays and accompanies the fundamental decasyllabic rhythm: 'Here, here . . . here'; 'end . . . end'; 'bank / And bounds', 'Swifter . . . Spanish slings', 'darts . . . Parthians . . . march'd', 'then (when', 'some dim . . . Ariminum enter'd'). The unrhymed line is a crucial factor in the potency of such duplication, magnifying as it does the reverberation of the internal rhymes and repeated consonants.

### The effect of echo

The extract from Lucan conveniently establishes one source of Marlowe's poetic distinction, his taste for various types of reiteration. Aural duplication is accompanied by skeins of visual images and the ideational echoing of themes





the relatively simple backdrop magnifies the incantatory power of the few multisyllabic words, especially the liquid and sibilant name of the devil.

The monosyllables, however, are deceptive in their simplicity, augmenting the hushed tone with a musical effect based on phrasal, lexical, and syllabic repetition. *Damned* appears in two successive lines, *hell* in three (supported by a stray rhyme on *fell*), the phrase *out of* in the same location in the last two lines. We should note also the relatively insignificant *and, are, you, our, that*, words that gain power when repeated in proximity. Within lines the repetition of initial consonants or combinations of consonants and the resonance of repeated vowels intensify the effect of wonder: 'then that thou' (line 76), 'How . . . thou . . . out' (also 76), 'against our God' (72), 'are for ever' (73), 'this is' (77). The interweaving of sounds creates the impression of significance, even though precise meaning remains implicit or obscure. But the word music also functions particularly, in that a discussion of eternal mysteries sounds suitably reverential and solemn. Often the secret to Marlowe's poetic repetitions lies in their relative restraint, a quality that emerges when his lines are set against the insistent echoing of a play like *The Spanish Tragedy*.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Kyd's, Marlowe's patterns do not loudly proclaim their status as patterns.

The simple reiteration of 'Lucifer' in the passage cited also attests to an extraordinary care for diction. It is a commonplace that Marlowe takes particular delight in geographical nouns, apparently having studied atlases and other such texts for the express purpose of giving authority to his portrait of Tamburlaine, the world conqueror.<sup>10</sup> And a significant measure of that authority inheres in the music of the proper nouns and their adjectival derivatives: Scythia, Persepolis, Natolia, Trebizond, Tenedos, Persia (three syllables), Asia (three syllables), Pharsalia, Bythia, Larissa plains, Mauritanian steeds, Cimmerian Styx, Tartarian hills. All these are taken from *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two* and represent only a fraction of the total. Levin, again, calculates that 'in *Tamburlaine*, the amplest vehicle for Marlowe's fascination with proper names, we can count 1,410 of them. More than a third of these, 545, gain peculiar stress by coming at the end of a line' (61). Beyond adding tonal weight, such impressive polysyllables also afford acceleration and momentum: the music of the lengthy word sweeps the speaker through the pentameter line and on to the next. As might be expected, such geographical ostentation is especially prominent in these two plays, and while it is less insistent in others, it still serves the poet in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Jew of Malta*, with their Mediterranean settings, and in the universal arena of *Doctor Faustus*.

Marlowe appears to have taken unflinching delight in trisyllabic nouns, especially those accented (roughly speaking) on the first and last syllable.

This configuration, imported into English from Greek and Latin prosody, is known as the *amphimacer*, and the names of many of Marlowe's most vivid characters conform to its rhythmic shape: Tamburlaine, Bajazeth, Sigismond, Calyphas, Amyras, Barabas, Callepine (in two different plays), Calymath, Ithamore, Abigail, Gaveston, Mortimer, Helena. In addition, these sonorous proper nouns gain added power from what seems like totemic repetition. Especially in the associations many of them call to mind, they expose Marlowe's delight in hyperbole, his fascination with the breadth and multiplicity of the world, and the reach of his learning. Moreover, the rhythms of these terms, like most of the other poetic devices I have enumerated, fit handily into the fundamental iambic pattern.

### Marlowe and blank verse

Marlowe's adoption of blank verse is one of the decisive moments in the history of English poetry. It is generally agreed that the Earl of Surrey devised the form of blank verse as a vehicle for translating Virgil into the vernacular: on the title page of the selections from the *Aeneid* (1557), the poetic kind is described as a 'straunge meter', meaning perhaps 'foreign', and Surrey may have adapted an Italian verse form. Blank verse was first spoken by actors shortly thereafter in *Gorboduc* (1559), Sackville and Norton's tragedy on the consequences of political division. In the first decades of Elizabeth's reign it attracted many talented poets, including Nicholas Grimald, George Turberville, George Gascoigne, George Peele, and (briefly) even Edmund Spenser. According to one influential view, early writers turned to blank verse as a means of 'simulating the exotic grace of Latin quantitative verse . . .'<sup>11</sup> But until Marlowe seized upon it the form had not yet become the default mode of dramatic speech. The formal properties of blank verse seem to have been especially hospitable to his poetic and theatrical aims. Jonson's reference to 'Marlowe's mighty line' is usually taken favourably, although some regard it as a critique of his predecessor's weakness for bombast. However we choose to read the adjective, Jonson got the noun right: Marlowe is the poet of the line.

For him and his immediate contemporaries and successors, the decasyllabic line is the determinant feature of blank verse, the frame that secures the stability of poetic expression. As George Saintsbury pointed out a century ago, the earliest practitioners seemed to think in ten-syllable blocks: in *Gorboduc* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, he complains, 'the stump of the verse is . . . painfully audible . . . [T]he want of ease, the terror of losing the mould, the ignorance of deliberate line-overlapping, and of substitution within the line, are still disastrously noticeable'.<sup>12</sup> The simplicity of the

earliest examples, even including some of Marlowe's, affords unseemly mirth for Saintsbury and a few later readers. They condescend because they are familiar with the extraordinary rhythmic diversity that Shakespeare, after the first few apprentice plays, was able to wring from the line. A more productive response is to historicize Marlowe's distinctive form of blank verse, attempting insofar as we can to hear his lines as his early auditors would have heard them. Stephen Booth's complaint that critics are too often guilty of 'accusing the past of having been the past' is relevant not only to ideas but also to poetics.<sup>13</sup>

The rhythmic power of blank verse inheres chiefly in its uniformity: poetic segments of equivalent length follow one another incessantly and with little variation, creating a rhythmic pattern agreeable to the ear and gratifying to the mind. In most of Marlowe's dramatic verse the impression of regularity is enhanced by a correspondence between the semantic or syntactic unit and the rhythmic segment: in other words, the sentence usually conforms to the demands of the pentameter, ending as the poetic line ends or at least distributing its clauses and phrases so that they lie comfortably in the decasyllabic frame. Thus we find little evidence of enjambment and, as a concomitant, few instances of caesura. Such generalizations are subject to modification, of course, depending upon the work in question, but in all the plays the alignment of meaning and metrics furnishes vigour and the drive of inevitability. For all Marlowe's reputation as an overreacher, only rarely did he overreach the poetic line.

The uniformity or 'stump of the verse', the very feature Saintsbury deplores, can be appreciated as something of an achievement. The Marlovian line, especially its almost invariable regularity, offers a kind of simple symmetry, a framing pattern calling attention to 'like measure', or equivalent units of sound. In discarding end-rhyme, i.e. leaving a 'blank' in the verse where a terminal rhyme would have been expected, the poet abandons the more obvious organizing principle in favour of a subtler marker, the rhythmic unit, and so the preponderance of end-stopped lines actually helps the auditor to expect and enjoy the structured language.<sup>14</sup>

A famous speech of Tamburlaine's demonstrates the sensation of equivalence fostered by such linear arrangement:

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains  
 And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about;  
 And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere  
 Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.  
 Draw forth thy sword, thou mighty man-at-arms,  
 Intending but to raze my charmed skin,

And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven  
To ward the blow and shield me safe from harm.

(1 *Tamb.* 1.2.174–81)

In this relatively uncomplicated case of metric serialization or poetic parataxis, similar units of sound follow and replicate one another. As I have indicated, the continuous flow of equivalent lines conveys aurally the unimpeded succession of victories that make up Tamburlaine's career. But the propulsive energy of the line is also valuable generally for its effect upon the auditor. Even later, when the more experienced poet varies the musical effects and complicates the innards of the pentametric unit, lineal repetition ensures a rhythmic pulse that is dramatically irresistible. It is not too much to say that Marlowe's most vital contribution to English dramatic poetry is rhythmic, that by removing the obvious chime at the end of the line he discovered the expressive versatility of iambic pentameter.

The foundational regularity of the unrhymed line amplifies other forms of reiteration, including consonance and assonance, morphemic repetition, and other acoustic patterns. In *The Arte of English Poesie* (published 1589, but composed a few years earlier), George Puttenham promotes the poetic benefits of such a mixture of order and ornament:

It is said by such as professe the Mathematicall sciences, that all things stand by proportion, and that without it nothing could stand to be good or beautiful . . . the Philosopher gathers a triple proportion, to wit, the Arithmetically, the Geometrically, and the Musically. And by one of these three is every other proportion guided of the things that have conveniencie by relation, as the visible by light colour and shadow: the audible by stirres, times and accents. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Many kinds of pattern might be adduced to illustrate Puttenham's argument – parallel phrases, rhyme, consonance and assonance, strings of isomorphic clauses in prose – but his analysis is especially pertinent in elucidating the operation of blank verse. The key is counterpoint. Just as painting depends on the proper distribution of shadow and light in relation to each other, so poetic structures are grounded in aural relations, with sounds making an impact chiefly in relation to other sounds.

The regulatory function of the frame is modified by the complementary principle, variety or diversity. Potential diversity is the key to the sovereignty and survival of the pentameter line in English poetry, and it is in the invention and exploitation of variety that Marlowe exceeds all his contemporaries except Shakespeare. Many of them were able to produce a workable five-beat line, but Marlowe more than any was capable of filling the spaces of the ten-syllable unit with compelling, various, and pleasing details. His talent for elaboration appears in those characteristic

poetic features already enumerated: the exotic nouns, particularly place names (Persepolis, Campania, Alexandria, Uz); the multi-syllabic proper names (Barabas, Gaveston, Usumcasane, Mephistopheles); the polysyllabic diction generally (*paramour, ceremonial, magnanimity*); the specific active verbs (*fortified, pronounce, defame, glut*). It is the combination of such elements, and especially their relation to one another, that provides the ornamentation, the complex music that enlivens each pentametric segment. Marlowe's poetic contemporaries – Spenser in his lyric poems and in *The Faerie Queene*, Sidney in *Astrophil and Stella*, Shakespeare in the earliest sonnets, *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Rape of Lucrece* – were inventively expanding the repertory of ornamental possibilities: puns, internal rhymes, rhythmic surprises, extravagant use of assonance and consonance. Obviously Marlowe was listening to and learning from them.

Colourful details thus enrich what is probably the most famous passage in all Marlowe, Faustus's apostrophe to the spirit of Helen of Troy:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

[*They kiss*]

Her lips sucks forth my soul. See where it flies.

Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.

[*They kiss*]

Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,

And all is dross that is not Helena.

(*DF* 'A' text 5.1.99–105)

The phonic and melodic particulars that ornament the speech work contrapuntally with the uniformity of the unrhymed lines. As in the earlier exchange with Mephistopheles, most of the words are monosyllabic, and thus the few polysyllables – *Ilium, immortal, Helena* – stand in relief. But the poet has also crafted an intricate system of lexical and literal relations, connections that create more matching patterns within the wider metrical structure. The abundantly repeated words, for instance, connect identical elements in different lines, and sometimes in the same line: *Helen, lips, my soul, come, is*. The ear is affected not only by the reiterated words but also by a complex reticulum of duplicated letters: 'th' in the first line, 't' and 'l' in the second, 'm' and 'l' in the third and fifth lines, 'h' and 'll' in the last two. Such co-operative tension among components within the line animates many typical speeches, such as Tamburlaine's famous remarks on aspiring minds, or Gaveston's fantasy about the life of pleasure at Edward's court.

It will now be helpful to return to the complementary impulses discussed initially, the transgressive and the conventional, and to suggest that this foundational Marlovian tension manifests itself in the productive opposition between poetic diversity and regularity. And while the keynote is uniformity, certain passages exhibit greater ornamentation within the individual line, as well as from line to line; this is the promise of poetic variety that Marlowe's successors would soon exploit. The lack of certain chronology makes it difficult to construct a developmental argument, but much of the verse in *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II* sounds more diverse, more 'advanced', more various than that of the other plays.

Fair blows the wind for France. Blow, gentle gale,  
 Till Edmund be arrived for England's good.  
 Nature, yield to my country's cause in this.  
 A brother, no, a butcher of thy friends,  
 Proud Edward, dost thou banish me thy presence?  
 (EII 4.1.1-5)

Even this quiet, reflective soliloquy, spoken by the Earl of Kent on leaving England, exhibits a more sophisticated sense of rhythm than much Marlovian verse, particularly the rolling succession of equivalent lines heard in *Tamburlaine*, for example. Here the use of caesura is uncommonly abundant. Even if we distrust the punctuation supplied by editors (of whatever century, the sixteenth or the twenty-first), still it is clear that an actor must stop and start, and stop and start again and again, disrupting the rhythmic regularity and defeating the familiar Marlovian swagger.<sup>16</sup> It is significant that most of these stops come at the beginning of the line, as in the last three cited: the early stop creates aural variety but still permits the speaker to generate some velocity in moving to the end of the line. And many of the familiar poetic traits are still audible, notably the repeated words and phonetic duplications. In other words, the forms of internal ornament or poetic disorder which normally vary the lineal equilibrium are amplified even more by the additional rhythmic variations.

It is hardly surprising to find such poetic transgression at the climax of *Doctor Faustus*:

The stars move still; time runs; the clock will strike;  
 The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.  
 O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?  
 See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!  
 One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!  
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!  
 Yet I will call on him. O, spare me, Lucifer!

Where is it now? 'Tis gone; and see where God  
 Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!  
 (DF 'A' text 5.2.67–75)

Taking for granted the familiar poetic properties, we perceive immediately that these lines resemble those from *Edward II* in their multiple internal stops. But what is unique here is the degree of hyper-metricality: of the nine lines quoted, six have more than ten syllables, syllables not easily elided, so that the normal comforts of the iambic pentameter are repeatedly threatened.<sup>17</sup> In this climactic moment Marlowe's verse reveals the brilliant future of dramatic poetry over the next four decades.

The inevitable comparison with you-know-who is, on this point at least, exact and instructive. We must keep in mind that Marlowe was one of Shakespeare's most influential teachers, that Shakespeare's plays would have been very different from what they are – and may not have been at all – were it not for the Marlovian example. At just this moment in theatre history, the first three years of the 1590s, Shakespeare introduces those rhythmic permutations that will make his blank verse the subtle, flexible instrument that it becomes in the years after Marlowe's death. Frequent syn-copation, trochaic inversions, multiple caesurae, enjambed lines – these and other such modulations serve to distinguish the subtle expressivity of Brutus or Henry V or Hamlet from the relatively uncomplicated rhythms of the early histories. In the eloquence of such speakers we hear the nature of the promise that Marlowe himself might have fulfilled had the Muses spared their darling.

#### NOTES

1. Patrick Cheney seeks to remedy this separation of poet and playwright in his Introduction to the present collection.
2. The mention appears in the Prologue to Peele's 'The Honour of the Garter', in *The Life and Minor Poems of George Peele*, ed. David H. Horne (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 246.
3. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 481.
4. See especially Shakespeare's Pistol (in 2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V*), the Induction to Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, and Jonson's disparagement in *Discoveries* of 'the Tamerlanes and Tamar-Chams of the late age' with their 'scenical strutting and furious vociferation' (*Ben Jonson*, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford University Press, 1985), lines 789–92).
5. In this chapter quotations from Marlowe's plays are taken from the edition by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford University Press, 1995). Quotations from the poems are taken from *The Poems; Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Millar MacLure (London: Methuen, 1968).



6. The question of when Marlowe translated Lucan has been reopened. See James Shapiro, "‘Metre Meete to Furnish Lucans Style’": Reconsidering Marlowe's *Lucan*", in Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance B. Kuriyama (eds.), *A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker: New Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 315–25.
7. 'Christopher Marlowe', in *Essays on Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1960), pp. 58–61.
8. *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 61.
9. For example, Lorenzo's description of his defeat at the hands of Horatio (2.1.119–33) resounds with the artificial, highly rhetorical patterns characteristic of the play. Such a counter-example should not be read as an effort to promote the 'sophisticated' Marlowe at the expense of the 'naive' Kyd, but juxtaposition of the two styles reveals Marlowe's gift for exploiting poetic repetition while at the same time increasing the verisimilitude of the dialogue. It is this combination of tradition and originality that makes Marlowe's dramatic verse sound as it does.
10. Ethel Seaton, 'Marlowe's Map', *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, 10 (1924), 13–35.
11. C. F. Tucker Brooke, 'Marlowe's Versification and Style', *SP* 19 (1922), 187–8.
12. *The History of English Prosody* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 1: 346.
13. 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time and All Others', *SQ* 41 (1990), 265.
14. In apprehending this new verse, according to George T. Wright, 'the spectator's relatively frivolous delight in rhyme was replaced by the more austere pleasures of meter'. *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 97.
15. *The Arte of English Poesie*, Intro. Baxter Hathaway, A Facsimile Reproduction (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1970), p. 78.
16. On the extremely corrupt textual state of Marlowe's plays, see Richard Proudfoot, 'Marlowe and the Editors', in J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (eds.), *Constructing Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 41–54; and Laurie Maguire's chapter in this volume, pp. 41–54.
17. Some of this metrical irregularity is perhaps attributable to faulty transmission of the text; the version of this passage printed in 1616 (the 'B' text) is smoother, less ejaculatory.

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## Marlowe and style

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# 5

PAUL WHITFIELD WHITE

## Marlowe and the politics of religion

It is a critical commonplace that religion and politics were inseparably entwined in Marlowe's England. Queen Elizabeth was 'Supreme Governess' of the Church of England, and the Church of England's leading primate, Archbishop John Whitgift, wielded considerable authority as a member of her Privy Council. Since monarchical rule was divinely sanctioned with the queen herself as God's vice-regent, disobedience to her laws was not just a crime, but a sin against God; conversely, wilful dissent from the Church's official prescriptions of order and worship was not just a sin but a crime against the state. These ideas, of course, constituted the official ideology of the Elizabethan government, but English subjects (as well as foreigners) who disagreed politically with the Crown shared the notion that Church and state, religious and civil authority, sacred and secular values, are intimately and inextricably linked, whether they advocated the queen's overthrow (as Catholics loyal to Rome did after a Papal Bull excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570) or called for the routing of bishops and their hierarchical mode of ecclesiastical polity from the national church (as Puritan radicals did throughout the reign). Not surprisingly, Marlowe represents these complex intersections of religion and politics in his works, questioning many of the verities his audience took for granted about them. In the discussion of this topic which follows, my focus will be primarily on the plays with occasional reference to the poetry and translations.

### Dissecting God's scourge

With no stage-heaven or -hell, no supernatural characters, and no explicit moralistic message expressed in jog-trot verse – all typical features of popular drama in 1580s London – *Tamburlaine, Part One* would appear to usher in the age of Elizabethan 'secular' theatre. And yet this play reverberates with religious language and iconography and provocatively interrogates the political implications of mainstream religious doctrine, particularly the notion

of divine providence. Tamburlaine was most famously known in the historical narratives of Marlowe's own time as the 'scourge of God', and indeed this is how he is described on the title page to the 1590 edition. Moreover, both Tamburlaine himself and his enemies repeatedly make this identification throughout both plays. 'There is a God full of revenging wrath', Tamburlaine exclaims, 'Whose Scourge I am, and him will I obey.'<sup>1</sup> Tamburlaine illustrates the notion, popularized by Protestant writings in Elizabethan England, that while bloodthirsty tyrants are entirely responsible for their wicked deeds, they carry them out in accordance with God's will, and are thus used as 'scourges' or agents of divine justice to punish sinful individuals, communities, even entire nations.<sup>2</sup> The prototype of the biblical scourge is the Assyrian tyrant, described in the Books of Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah, whom Marlowe may have seen staged in a revival of Nicholas Udall's Cambridge play *Ezechias*, in which the Assyrian conqueror is described as 'Huge in armament and of a huge body', a fitting physical profile of Tamburlaine himself.<sup>3</sup> Divine vengeance in the play is visited on the innocent as well as the wicked, most notably in the slaughter of the Virgins in *Tamburlaine, Part One* and the drowning of the citizens of Babylon in *Tamburlaine, Part Two*. As sensational and horrifying as these acts are, Elizabethan providential theory agreed that many good people suffer when entire nations are scourged (such as England during the Wars of the Roses, thematically treated in Shakespeare's *Richard III*). Nevertheless, the rival kings and rulers Tamburlaine defeats – Cosroe, Bajazeth, Orcanes, Calapine, and their allies – are all shown to be power-hungry infidels deserving of their fate. Treated in particularly contemptible terms is Bajazeth, the Turkish Emperor of *Tamburlaine, Part One*, who boasts about the Christian apostates who have joined his army. When this historical figure threatened Christendom itself by laying siege to Constantinople, the eastern centre of Christianity, European writers feared him as an agent of divine retribution on a decaying, divided Christendom. Tamburlaine becomes the scourge of the scourge when he defeats Bajazeth and lifts the siege of Constantinople, enlarging 'Those Christian captives, which you keep as slaves' (1 *Tamb.* 3.3.46–7). For this feat, the historical Tamburlaine was celebrated throughout Europe.

And yet Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays question whether providential explanations of events are human fictions which, in some instances, constitute self-deception, but in the hands of cunning politicians, are cynically appropriated and propagated to advance their power and subdue dissent. Marlowe's complex, if not ambivalent, treatment of Elizabethan providential theory is illustrated in the sub-plot featuring the Christian King Sigismund and the Turkish ruler Orcanes in the early scenes of *Tamburlaine, Part Two*. When the armies of the two leaders face off near the River Danube on the borders of

Christian Europe, Sigismund accepts the Turk's offer of a truce, made binding by a solemn oath to their respective deities, Sigismund vowing, 'By him that made the world and saved my soul, / . . . Sweet Jesus Christ, I solemnly protest, / And vow to keep this peace inviolable' (2 *Tamb.* 1.2.133–6). Sigismund's Christian allies, however, persuade him to break the league, arguing that oaths to infidels are not binding in the eyes of God and are not trustworthy with them anyway, and that the Turks' vulnerability is an opportunity given by divine providence to scourge their 'foul blasphemous paganism' (2 *Tamb.* 2.1.53). Yet despite heavy odds in their favour due to the depleted Turkish forces (much of their army moved south to challenge Tamburlaine), the Hungarian Christians are defeated, and Sigismund concludes that 'God hath thundered vengeance from on high, / For my accursed and hateful perjury' (2 *Tamb.* 2.3.2–3). Since Orcanes himself had called on Christ to punish the Christians for the sacrilegious oath-breaking (contrasting with Tamburlaine's later calling on Mahomet to avenge his sins, to no effect), the Turkish victory over the Europeans may be seen as an act of vengeance by the Christian God. Yet Marlowe undermines this providential explanation. When Orcanes asks Gazellus whether he agrees that the defeat is attributable to the justice and power of Christ, his fellow-Turk replies, 'Tis but the fortune of the wars my Lord, / Whose power is often proved a miracle' (2 *Tamb.* 2.3.31–2). This sounds very much like the statement fellow playwright Thomas Kyd attributed to Marlowe to illustrate his atheism: 'That things esteemed to be donn by devine power might have aswell been don by observation of men' (MacLure, p. 35).

The *Tamburlaine* plays raise other questions about the ways in which religious doctrine and military/political institutions are linked. Tamburlaine's career shows how it is possible through extraordinary will-power, personal charisma, brute strength, and military strategy, to rise from a lowly shepherd to become emperor of the Eastern world. This challenges the basis on which European royalty justified and maintained their rule – divinely ordained succession through primogeniture – and it legitimates radical mobility through the social ranks, which was discouraged, if not condemned, by orthodox religious and political notions of 'place' and social hierarchy. Even Tamburlaine's repeated claim to be a divinely ordained scourge suggests that he has simply adopted this identity to give a higher aura of authority to his rule and further his military and political aims. 'But since I exercise a greater name, / The scourge of God and terror of the world,' he asserts late in *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, 'I must apply my self to fit those terms' (2 *Tamb.* 4.1.155–7; my italics).

The idea that Tamburlaine is simply exploiting religion is reinforced by the range of contradictory stances he takes towards it. He speaks, at least

at one point, as a practising Muslim (2 *Tamb.* 1.3.109); at other times he is defiant of, or sees himself as superior to, all religious authority (e.g., 1 *Tamb.* 1.2.174ff.); and certainly in the climactic scene of *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, where he burns the Koran and shakes his sword heavenward, taunting Mohammed to strike vengeance upon him, he appeared to his contemporaries as a blaspheming atheist.<sup>4</sup> Whatever playgoers are to think of Tamburlaine's own religious stance, the Koran-burning episode (which ends *without* Mahomet answering Tamburlaine with vengeance) is the culmination of a number of moments or scenes in the plays which question, if not confirm to the audience, the non-existence of the Muslim God and reveal Islam to be a religion of empty curses and providential threats. Time and again, Bajazeth and his allies predict a sensational, violent ending to Tamburlaine at the hands of Mahomet, but these never come true. When the fervent prayers of Bajazeth and Zabina to Mahomet go unheeded, the humiliated Turkish emperor calls out in frustrated rage, 'O *Mahomet*, Oh sleepy *Mahomet*!' (1 *Tamb.* 3.3.269), while his wife Zabina first curses Mahomet then loses her faith altogether before she and Bajazeth dash their brains out: 'Then is there left no *Mahomet*, no God?' (1 *Tamb.* 5.1.239). A godless religion or not, Marlowe's audience would have observed that Islam is a more tolerant religion than Christianity in *Tamburlaine, Part Two*, where Orcanes pays tribute to both Christ and Mahomet, a gesture not unheard of among sixteenth-century Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

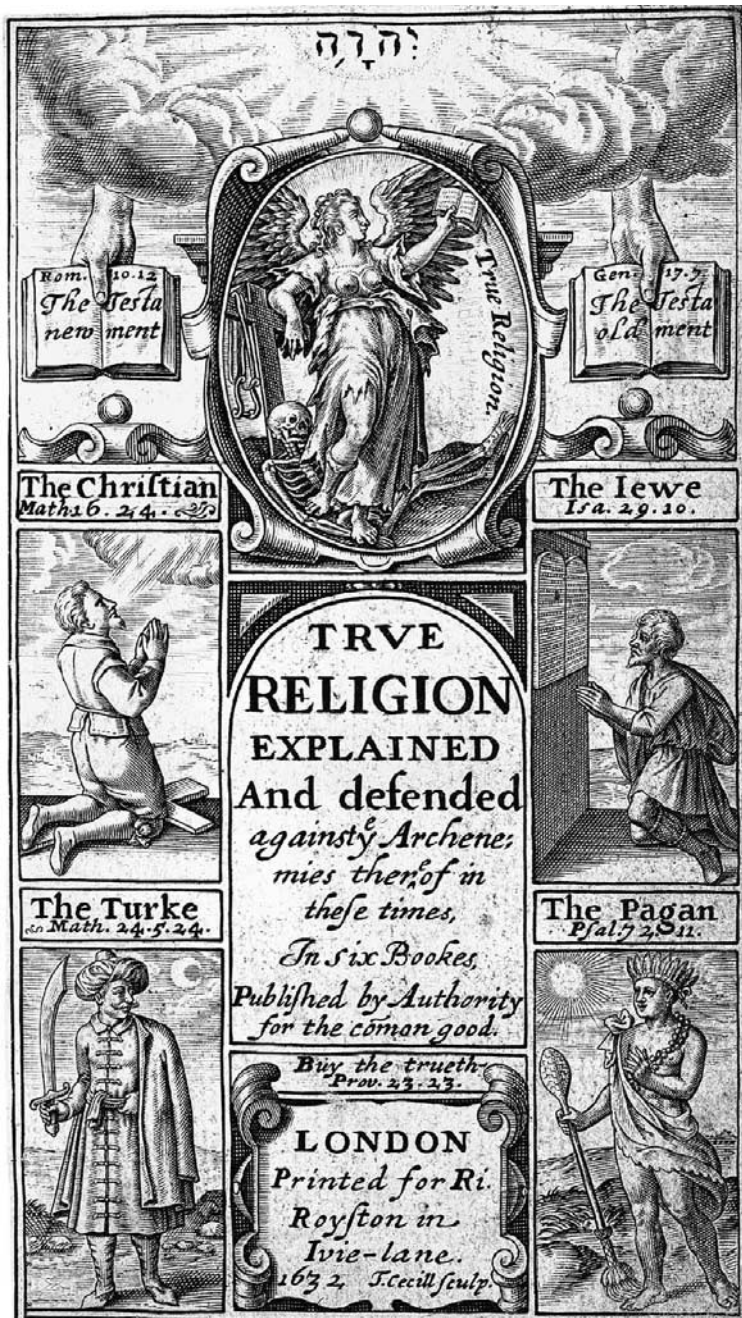
While it is probably true that continental Catholicism, and specifically Catholic Spain, was the enemy Elizabethan England feared most in the 1580s, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* gives us another important perspective on politico-religious relations of the time, suggesting that England shared with all European nations, Catholic as well as Protestant, the dread of a holy war waged by the Ottoman Empire against western Europe. When Bajazeth threatens Tamburlaine with the 'force of Turkish arms / Which lately made all Europe quake for fear' (1 *Tamb.* 3.3.134-5), he was not exaggerating but expressing a truth that was every bit as real for Europe in the late sixteenth century as in the play's early fifteenth-century setting. When facing this threat, many European Protestant and Catholic nations set aside their differences to see this as a threat against *Christendom*. This explains why nations of divided religious and political allegiances joined together to oppose the Muslim infidel, and why it was possible for English bishops to order prayers to be said on behalf of the mostly Catholic Christians in Malta to protect them against their Turkish invaders in 1565.<sup>6</sup> By the 1580s, the Elizabethan government was engaged in diplomatic relations with the Turks to increase their trade, and they were happy to exploit the enmity between the Ottoman Empire and their more immediate enemy the Spanish, who fiercely competed for control

of commerce and territory in the Mediterranean. Within this context, then, Tamburlaine must have generated both admiration and fear for contemporary audiences: admiration for his military efficiency and his conquering the Ottoman Empire, a projected fantasy of Christian European nations; and at the same time, fear of a brutal tyrant, the ‘Turkish Tamburlaine’, as he was called, indistinguishable in most respects from the Turks themselves.<sup>7</sup>

### Stranger Jews and Catholics

The other play Marlowe wrote in which the Turks figure prominently is *The Jew of Malta*. Religion, and particularly religious ‘policy’ (Plate 1), are more explicitly evident in this black farce set on the western Mediterranean island of Malta, which the Turks fiercely attacked and besieged but failed to capture in 1565. The island by this time was governed by the Catholic Knights of St John the Evangelist, an elite order commissioned by and answerable only to the Pope for the purpose of protecting pilgrims from the Turkish enemy on their travels to the holy land. After surrendering to the Turks on the island of Rhodes, the Knights were brought to Malta by Emperor Charles V of Spain. In Marlowe’s play, they find themselves caught between their political commitment to the Muslim Turks, to whom they owe a ten-year tribute, and their religious allegiance to the Catholic Spaniards, represented by Admiral Del Bosco, who shames them for dealing with the infidel. To pay the tribute, Ferneze, the governor of the island, turns to the Jews in Malta, who are not citizens but ‘strangers’ because they will not convert to Christianity, and this is the action which leads to a series of vengeful acts by Barabas, the wealthiest of the Jews on the island, whose entire estate is seized and his home converted to a nunnery.<sup>8</sup>

What did Marlowe and his audience know about Jews and what was their attitude towards them? Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 and did not resettle legally in the country until 1655. Nevertheless, it has been estimated that about 200 lived in England in the late sixteenth century, with a community of about 80 Portuguese Morannos (Jews who converted to Christianity) settling in London, the most famous member of whom was Roderigo Lopez, physician to Queen Elizabeth. Accused of plotting to assassinate the queen and Don Antonio, pretender to the Portuguese throne, Lopez was hanged in 1594. His fervent claim at his execution ‘that he loved the Queen as well as he loved Jesus Christ’ was greeted with derisive laughter by the crowd witnessing it.<sup>9</sup> The public sensation surrounding the trial and execution of Lopez illustrates the explosive mix of racial prejudice, religion, and politics that lies at the centre of *The Jew of Malta*, which, not surprisingly, was revived for this event, staged fifteen times at the Rose playhouse



1 Frontispiece of Hugh Grotius's *True Religion Explained and Defended* (London, 1632).



in the summer of 1594, quite possibly motivating Shakespeare to write *The Merchant of Venice* around the same time.<sup>10</sup>

Marlowe's portrayal of Barabas combines historical facts about famous Jewish merchants of his day with a heavy dose of stage-stereotyping and centuries-old prejudice, which included the beliefs that Jews poisoned wells and crucified children (*JM* 2.3.181; 3.6.49). The name Barabas derives from the biblical thief whom the Jews asked Pontius Pilate to release in place of Christ before his crucifixion. According to the informer Richard Baines, Marlowe himself made the blasphemous claim 'That Crist deserved better to dy then Barrabas and that the Jewes made a good Choise, though Barrabas were both a theif and a murtherer' (MacLure, p. 37). This is certainly not the 'message' of Marlowe's play, and it is conceivable that Baines was inspired to invent the statement after viewing or hearing about *The Jew*, but it certainly captures the irreverent utterances of Barabas and the play's choric figure, Machiavel, who claims to be Barabas's mentor in the play's opening address. Machiavel is a caricature of the Italian political theorist, Niccolo Machiavelli, who was notorious in England for advocating, among other things, the use of religion, when necessary, as an instrument of state power. Calling religion 'a childish toy' (Prologue 14), Machiavel counts among his disciples the Guise, a French Catholic leader, and various popes for whom religion is a convenient mask behind which one murders one's way to high office. As he himself admits, Barabas is not after political power (*JM* 1.1.128), but rather the accumulation of wealth which brings its own kind of authority and influence. If Marlowe gives Barabas a well-developed Jewish identity, Judaism itself is represented as a bogus religion, one in which the 'Blessings promised' to Abraham are interpreted *not* as the spiritual rewards of faith in Christ (as the Protestantism of Marlowe's audience taught) but rather the worldly prosperity and economic superiority of God's chosen people.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Marlowe implies, Jewish religion justifies the acquisitive drive, restless pursuit of riches, and usurious money practices exemplified by Jewish merchants such as Barabas. Of course, as a disciple of Machiavel, Barabas himself does not take his own religion seriously; publicly, he professes it to his persecutors and to his fellow Jews, who take him to be their leader, but privately he admits to the audience, 'They say we are a scattered nation; I cannot tell', and deserts his co-religionists. His religious hypocrisy in the early scenes is matched by his pose as a Christian convert to trick the Friars later on.

It is important to note that Barabas's identity as a Jew, as perceived by both the play's Christians and by its Elizabethan audience, was not based only on theological belief. Jewishness was a racial and nationalistic category as well, increasingly recognized with the development of racial and

nationalistic discourses in the sixteenth century (Shapiro, pp. 167–94). The widely accepted notion that the Jews themselves remained racially pure down through the ages may be traced back to the curse the Bible ascribed to them for their role in the crucifixion: ‘Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children’ (Matt. 27: 25). This is brought up in the play, most notably in the counsel scene where one of the Maltese Knights says, ‘If your first curse fall heavy on thy head, / And make thee poor and scorned of all the world, / ’Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin’ (*JM* 1.2.110–12). That Jews began to be considered more frequently in terms of nationhood as well as race is evident at a time when England and other European countries were defining their own sense of national identity and viewing the Jews both as a model of such nationhood (as illustrated in the Israelite people of the Old Testament) and a potential challenge. That threat was seen not only as social through intermarriage but economic as well. In the latter respect, the Jews were lumped together with other ‘aliens’ and ‘strangers’ in London, where riots and civil unrest arose over the perceived threat of foreign merchants and labourers to the livelihoods of London citizens, one series of incidents occurring in the spring of 1593, weeks after *The Jew* was staged at the Rose playhouse, and implicating Marlowe himself. As James Shapiro claims, ‘Elizabethan theatergoers in 1593 would surely have been alert to how closely Barabas’s activities in *The Jew of Malta* resembled those attributed to the dangerous aliens in their midst. Barabas is, after all, an alien merchant residing in the “Port-Town” of Malta who happily engrosses commodities into his own hands’ (p. 184).

No less alienated in post-Reformation English society, of course, were Roman Catholics who, since the Excommunication of Queen Elizabeth by the Pope in 1570, were, along with Catholic priests and missionaries, subject to severe penalties and punishments for professing their faith. Whatever Marlowe’s religious sympathies were (Baines’s Marlowe favours Catholics and dismisses Protestants as ‘Hypocriticall asses’ (MacLure, p. 37)), in *The Jew of Malta* Catholicism is, like Judaism, represented as a false religion. Throughout the period Marlowe was writing plays in the 1580s and early 1590s, England was at war with Catholic nations abroad, most notably Spain (its Armada ignominiously defeated in 1588 when it attempted to invade England), and also Catholic principalities in France. Placed in opposition both to her villainous anti-Christian father and to the contemptible Catholic figures in the play is Barabas’s daughter, Abigail. The sincerity and inward-centred nature of her faith contrast sharply with her father’s dissembling and atheism and the Friars’ avaricious, lecherous, and vow-breaking actions, which parody the Catholic formulae for spiritual regeneration: poverty, chastity, and obedience.<sup>12</sup> ‘Witness that I dye a Christian’, Abigail

declares before her death, to which Friar Bernadine replies, 'I, and a Virgin too, that grieves me most' (*JM* 3.6.41). This is one of many instances of the play's anti-Catholic satire directed at the lechery, greed, and duplicity of the Friars and the wholly corrupted institutions to which they and the nuns belong.

Marlowe's anti-Catholicism clearly extends to include Ferneze and the other monastic Knights of St John who, historically, took their directive from the Papacy and are consistently addressed as 'the Christians' by Barabas. Their sanctimonious remarks and self-righteousness in the early council-house scene with Barabas and the other Jews shows faint echoes of the Pharisees at the trial of Christ (Hunter, pp. 212–13), and while Ferneze may not have appeared as a complete religious charlatan to Elizabethan audiences, his acts of 'policy', breaking oaths with the Turks and with Barabas and invoking religious authority to exploit the Jews for their wealth and to advance Maltese interests in his relations with both the Catholic Spaniard and the Muslim Turk, suggest his kinship with Machiavel as well. Certainly his triumphant remarks at the play's conclusion ('let due praise be given / Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven' [*JM* 5.5.122–23]) are to be taken ironically.

### Religion, politics, and sectarian violence

Without doubt the most ferociously anti-Catholic rhetoric to be found in Marlowe's plays occurs in *The Massacre at Paris*, the title of which refers to the mass killing of French Huguenots (i.e., Protestants) in Paris and other cities in August and September 1572. The Guise, the play's Machiavellian villain, combines Barabas's malevolent glee with Tamburlaine's penchant for violence. His religious cynicism is revealed directly to the audience early on in his notorious 'My policy hath framed religion' speech (*MP* 1.2.62–6). This comes close to summing up the play's view of institutionalized Catholicism, an oppressive political system hiding behind the mask of true religion. The audience is repeatedly reminded (chiefly by the Duke himself) that the Guise, his brother the Cardinal of Lorraine, along with the Queen Mother, the Italian-descended Catherine de Medici, are plotting the eradication of Protestantism in the service of the Pope and King Philip of Spain, Europe's most powerful Catholic monarch. *The Massacre's* scenes of murder are shocking in their graphic realism, made all the more so by the coarse, sardonic humour of the Catholic assassins as they stab to death their enemies, whose pleas for mercy evoke sympathy and horror.

Recent criticism questions earlier opinion that *The Massacre* is simply a crude piece of Protestant propaganda, citing Marlowe's use of Catholic

sources to depict the murders of the Duke of Guise and his Cardinal brother which parallel murder of Protestants earlier in the play.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, because of the corrupt and truncated condition of the text, it is very difficult to know how much is missing from the play's twenty-four scenes and, in turn, what the complete, original play in performance involved. Certainly, even as it stands, the surviving text shows religiously motivated violence on both sides and raises questions already posed in the *Tamburlaine* plays and *The Jew of Malta* about the cynical exploitation of religious authority and religiously induced fear in the pursuit of military force and political power. Relevant, moreover, is that the Crown's military support of the Protestant Henry IV against French Catholics from 1589 onwards was unpopular.<sup>14</sup> Having said that, there is no indication here that Marlowe was balancing his criticism of opposing religious parties. From beginning to end, the play is rabidly anti-Catholic, and its depiction of sectarian violence is designed to excite and cater to the militant Protestantism which English audiences shared in the immediate aftermath of the failed Spanish Armada.

### The politics of Church and state

The tumultuous mixing of politics and religion is explored in a somewhat different way in *Edward II*. A nation's horrific descent into civil war is a theme Marlowe had addressed in his verse translation of *Lucan's First Book*, a work which betrays republican sympathies and a measure of scepticism about the role of providential intervention in human (and political) affairs.<sup>15</sup> Religion, nevertheless, was very much a part of the sixteenth-century debate over the right to resist constituted authority, particularly the authority of deeply corrupt or tyrannical monarchs. In England, the theory that under intolerable circumstances the governing class could lead a revolt against evil (read Catholic) kingship was developed by Protestant exiles during the Catholic reign of Elizabeth's elder sister Mary, and it found endorsement in one of the best-selling books of Marlowe's day, Calvin's *Institution of the Christian Religion*. This highly influential book was translated into English by Thomas Norton, the author of the Senecan tragedy *Gorboduc* (1561), itself a play which advocated a central role for Parliament and the aristocracy in monarchical government. In the heated political climate of the 1580s and early 1590s, any public sentiment justifying armed resistance to the monarch became associated with Jesuit plots to overthrow Elizabeth, but there is no question that these ideas were circulating on the Puritan left as well as on the Catholic right, and the fact that Edward II's deposition scene (unlike its counterpart in Shakespeare's *Richard II*) was not

suppressed by censorship, not to mention the repeated treatment of the subject in history plays, indicates that some degree of discussion was at least tolerated.<sup>16</sup>

What is particularly intriguing in *Edward II*, however, is the Church's role in the challenge to kingly rule. Very early in the play, the Bishop of Coventry strenuously objects to the return of the exiled Gaveston, with the result that the king and his friend strip the bishop of his vestments, cast him into a ditch, and divest him of his title and possessions. It is this incident which precipitates the play's first major movement, the barons and the Church joining forces with the queen to banish Gaveston's presence and subsequent appointments of office at the royal court. To an Elizabethan audience fully conscious of Elizabeth's own excommunication by the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury's threat to Edward that unless the king banishes Gaveston he, in his role as papal legate, will absolve the barons of allegiance to the throne must have been particularly contemptible, and it precipitates Edward's subsequent tirade against the Church in Act 1, scene 4 (Heinemann, p. 183). Here, as in the Vatican scenes in *Doctor Faustus* where, in the 'B' text version, the conflict between Pope Adrian and the Emperor's election of an alternative pope is shown, the rivalry between Church and state for political power is dramatized, with the implicit condemnation of the intervention of ecclesiastical authorities in secular rule.

The great wealth, opulent lifestyle, lavish vestments, and elaborate ceremonies of the prelates in the Vatican scenes of 'A' and 'B' text versions of *Doctor Faustus* explicitly target the Pope's court at Rome, but it is not irrelevant that these were precisely the evils associated with *English* bishops in a series of unlicensed pamphlets known as *The Martin Marprelate Tracts* published around the time *Doctor Faustus* probably was first staged (1588–90). In England, the episcopal system of ecclesiastical polity was essentially intact from the pre-Reformation Church; its leader, Archbishop Whitgift, was widely despised for his secular role on the queen's Privy Council, which he used to persecute (and eventually to crush) militant Puritans who wished to replace episcopacy with a more democratically oriented church polity known as Presbyterianism. It is now widely accepted that the commercial theatre participated in the Marprelate controversy, so much so that the government intervened temporarily to suppress plays in London in November 1589, with a warning to the company associated with Marlowe himself, the Lord Admiral's Men. Other author/playwrights participated (John Lyly and Thomas Nashe certainly, Anthony Munday and Robert Greene probably), apparently on the side of the bishops, but we have no way of knowing whether Marlowe was involved. However, the anti-prelate scenes in *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II* would have resonated with the large contingent of

Puritan sympathizers in attendance at amphitheatre performances in the late 1580s and early 1590s.<sup>17</sup>

### Religion, politics, and censorship

Apart from the Vatican scenes, *Doctor Faustus* is perhaps the least overtly political, and the most explicitly religious, of Marlowe's plays, but in the tumultuous climate of the 1580s and 1590s when activism against the doctrinal and ecclesiastical teachings of the Church of England constituted a crime against the state, the play's provocative representation of religious dissidence, however inscribed within the tragedy's morality play framework with its edifying Prologue and Epilogue, may well have been perceived as politically subversive. Sceptical of religious orthodoxy, Faustus thinks hell's a fable and contemptuously dismisses the pains of the afterlife as 'trifles and mere old wives' tales' ('A' text 2.1.129, 137).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he is inclined to side with the Evil Angel who regards contrition, prayer, and repentance as 'illusions, fruits of lunacy, / That make men foolish that do trust them most' ('A' text 2.1.18–19). Divinity, he says, is 'basest' of the learned professions, 'Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and vile' ('A' text 1.1.110–11), and promptly dismisses it to pursue magic chiefly because of the notions of original sin and predestination ('A' text 1.1.37–50), cornerstone doctrines of the Elizabethan Church, the latter so important to Archbishop Whitgift's view of Protestant theology that he petitioned the queen (unsuccessfully it turned out) to have a more explicit, detailed statement about predestination included in the Church's official articles of religion.<sup>19</sup> And perhaps most shockingly, in a parody of Christ's final words on the cross, Faustus concludes his soul-selling pact with Lucifer with the utterance, '*Consummatum Est*' ('It is finished') ('A' text 1.4.74).

The Elizabethan government was too busy hunting down Jesuit missionaries and fanatical Puritans to concern itself with intellectual atheism, but it was sufficiently sensitive to public advocacy of its opinions to summon Marlowe himself for questioning. The Privy Council issued a warrant for his arrest on 18 May 1593, shortly after fellow playwright Thomas Kyd confessed to a document containing 'vile heretical conceits denying the deity of Jesus Christ our Saviour', which he claimed actually belonged to Marlowe with whom he lodged for a short time (MacLure, pp. 32–6). Both Kyd and the informer Richard Baines attributed to Marlowe a series of incriminating opinions. Among them were that the biblical account of Adam's creation six thousand years ago is historically untenable, that Moses was 'a juggler' who filled the Israelites' hearts with superstition, and that Christ was a bastard. 'The first beginning of Religion', Baines reports Marlowe as saying, 'was

only to keep men in awe', and 'if he were to write a new Religion, he would undertake both a more Excellent and Admirable methode and that all the new testament is filthily written' (MacLure, pp. 36–7). We will never know to what extent these statements represent Marlowe's own views, but they are sufficiently close to the anti-Christian sentiment expressed in *Doctor Faustus* to raise the question of whether the play was subject to state censorship.

Over the past century, many critics have argued that *Doctor Faustus* was indeed directly censored by the government, and they have offered this as an explanation for the broad discrepancies between the so-called 'A' text (published 1604) and the considerably longer 'B' text (published 1616). The most elaborate claim for state intervention is by William Empson, who argued that the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney (the court-appointed regulator of dramatic entertainments), initially licensed *Doctor Faustus* but then, in discovering its heretical implications in performance (which included the magician being saved from damnation) and feeling pressure from the newly formed Licensing Commission of 1589 involving the Archbishop of Canterbury and the London city council, extensively cut offending passages and scenes; this resulted in the 'A' text, a truncated version used for provincial touring. Subsequently, the impresario Philip Henslowe was able to get Tilney to restore much of Marlowe's original text, and hence the 'B' text, which, Empson surmises, was performed by the Admiral's Men through the 1590s.<sup>20</sup> Empson offers no convincing evidence to support this hypothesis, and it has now been largely discredited by Bevington and Rasmussen's more plausible reconstruction of the textual history, with the 'A' text close to Marlowe's 'foul papers' (original script), and the 'B' text a consequence of additions Henslowe commissioned in 1602.<sup>21</sup> Empson was following the commonly held assumption that state regulation of theatre, particularly in policing religious expression, was heavy-handed and repressive, an assumption that persists in criticism, much of it new historicist, which sees Marlowe engaging in self-censorship as a means of avoiding the supposed draconian measures imposed on dissident playwrights, even as he obliquely conveys the subversive, atheistic ideas given explicit expression in the Baines Note. Thus Catherine Minshull sees *Doctor Faustus* avoiding censorship measures by way of a 'rebellious subtext' in which 'the exercise of absolutist authority [is portrayed] as repressive, entrenched, unjust, and implacable'.<sup>22</sup>

There is perhaps some truth to the claim that Marlowe knew his limits in terms of what he could and could not stage before a popular audience (and before the watchful eye of the Master of the Revels), but as Richard Dutton has so convincingly shown in his review of censorship issues and *Doctor Faustus*, there simply was no elaborate machinery of state regulation which imposed repressive measures on the Elizabethan stage (Dutton, pp. 62–9). To

be sure, proclamations dating back to the opening years of the queen's reign proposed severe restrictions on the expression of religious issues in plays, but it is quite clear from the numerous religious interludes and biblical plays on record for performance and publication throughout the period that these were not seriously enforced. Moreover, the frequently cited Licensing Commission of 1589, prompted by the Marprelate controversy, in which officers from the court, the City, and the Church were charged with perusing all plays for the purpose of striking out all matters relating to divinity and state, was never heard from after the controversy ended around 1590. What we can conclude, therefore, is that playwrights like Marlowe actually had considerable latitude in what they could represent in their plays, and it proved only to be in times of serious political crisis – notably the Marprelate controversy and the later Essex rebellion of 1601 – that severe measures were imposed. This helps to explain, moreover, how Lord Strange's Men in the early 1590s could include in its repertory Marlowe's anti-Catholic *The Massacre at Paris* alongside *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, a play about a Catholic heretic executed for opposing Henry VIII's act of royal supremacy.<sup>23</sup>

### Religion, politics, and sexuality

If Archbishop Whitgift did not manage to censor Marlowe's writings as a member of the Licensing Commission of 1589, he succeeded a decade later, almost six years to the day after the playwright's death on 30 May 1593, by way of a proclamation known as the Bishops' Order. Co-ordered by Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, the proclamation, issued on 1 June 1599, banned the publication of all satires and epigrams and ordered the burning of nine specifically selected books in the Stationers' Hall, one of which contained forty-eight of Sir John Davies's epigrams and ten of Marlowe's translations of Ovid's elegies from the *Amores*. Whitgift's purpose, expressed in an earlier 1596 order of High Commission, was to censor books of 'Ribaldry . . . superstition . . . and flat heresie' by which English subjects are allured 'to wantonness, corrupted in doctrine', and provoked into civil disobedience.<sup>24</sup> Marlowe's translation certainly fits these criteria. The frank eroticism of the *Amores* reflects Marlowe's refusal to follow precedent in 'Christianizing' Ovid. Indeed, several of the elegies are provocatively anti-religious, though some were omitted from the Marlowe–Davies book. 'God is a name, no substance, feared in vain, / And doth the world in fond belief detain', reads Elegy 3 from Book 3.<sup>25</sup> 'Or if there be a God', reads the next line, 'he loves fine wenches' (line 25). Elegy 8 from Book 3 states that 'When bad fates take good men, I am forbod / But secret thoughts to think there is a god' (35–6). Interestingly, Marlowe translates 'deos' (gods) as 'god'



and emboldens the meaning of the original to accentuate its provocativeness (Leech, p. 32).

All of Marlowe's classically inspired love poetry and drama, i.e. the Ovidian *Amores* and *Hero and Leander*, and the Virgilian *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, comically defy Christian standards of sexual morality at the same time as they travesty the Christian, and specifically Protestant, notions of the sovereignty and complete transcendence of the godhead. However, if the poems revel in the sexual licence which pagan religion sanctions and the multitude of gods practise – one thinks of Jupiter dotting over Ganymede as the boy sits on his lap; Neptune's equally homoerotic pursuit of Leander in the Hellespont – they also frequently remind us of the darker implications of erotic desire. As Claude Summers perceptively remarks with respect to Marlowe's treatment of homosexuality: 'What is most noteworthy about Marlowe's depiction of same-sex relations is that his posture is consistently oppositional *vis-à-vis* his society's official condemnation of homosexuality as sodomitical even as that condemnation inevitably and powerfully shapes his varied representations.'<sup>26</sup> This is very important as we turn our attention to *Edward II*, where Christian discourse defining same-sex physical relations as sodomy (the term derives from the Old Testament city of Sodom, a place of sexual vice), evoked in the horrific murder scene with its parody of physical sex between males, clashes with an Ovidian discourse of homoerotic play and desire characterizing the intimate exchanges between Edward and Gaveston. Until very recently, critics have tended to emphasize the former without sufficiently recognizing the importance of the latter in the play's representation of sexuality.

In considering *Edward II*'s complex mix of religion, politics, and sexuality, it is worth briefly comparing the play's climactic death scene with those in Marlowe's other tragedies. Certainly the tortuous deaths of the other villain-heroes, Faustus 'All torn asunder' by devils ('B' text), the multiple stabbing of the Guise, the boiling of Barabas in the cauldron of hot oil (a familiar medieval image of hell), cater to conventional notions of God's retribution for a life of sin. In this respect Marlowe is following Fulke Greville's dictate that tragedy's purpose is 'to point out God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin, to the despair or confusion of mortality'.<sup>27</sup> In *Edward II*, however, the king's murder by the insertion of a hot spit into his anus is the most shocking of all Marlowe's death scenes. We may ask, is this execution also to be perceived as divinely decreed, in this instance as the suitably prescribed punishment for sodomy? Or is it perhaps nothing more than the avenging act of Mortimer and Isabella?<sup>28</sup> As with the death of Tamburlaine after a sudden illness, Marlowe problematizes this conclusion as an example of divine justice in a play which many believe to be his most naturalistic

depiction of human experience. *Edward II* contains no moralizing prologue or epilogue, and while the play stages state–Church conflicts, its characters are conspicuously free of the religious rhetoric exhibited in the other major tragedies. Edward’s wretched final hours starkly contrast with Faustus’s in that he does not dwell on his impending spiritual fate; there is little remorse for sin, and certainly no regrets about his relationship with Gaveston – however politically and personally disastrous its consequences, and it is only moments before his murder that he prays, ‘Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul!’ (*EII* 5.5.108). Indeed, Edward’s most passionate outcry amidst the stench, filth, and cold of the castle sewer is reserved for his beloved Gaveston, in whose cause he sees his impending death as a martyr’s act of sacrifice: ‘O Gaveston, it is for thee that I am wronged; / For me, both thou and both the Spencers died / And for their sakes a thousand wrongs I’ll endure’ (*EII* 5.3.41–3). On the one hand, Marlowe inherited a narrative from his historical sources in which Edward’s passionate relationship with Gaveston leads providentially to ‘a form of punishment that reenacts the sin it punishes’.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the absence of the transcendent in this tragedy, the very strong sense that the relentless pursuit of power and wilful self-destruction are what shape the characters’ destiny, raises compelling questions about the use of a violent, sadistic killing as moralized example and a providentially ordained act.

### Marlowe’s political religion

All discussions of Marlowe’s writings, at one point or another, lead back to the author himself. No poet–playwright of the Elizabethan age is more deeply implicated in his work than Marlowe; this is a historical constant of Marlovian scholarship despite theoretical assaults on the notion of autonomous authorship and the questions of collaboration surrounding the plays. Of course, we can never get back to the ‘real’ Marlowe and see inside his mind, but it is a useful exercise to speculate about what he believed and how he felt about religion, if only as a means of drawing some general conclusions about what his plays and poems collectively communicate to contemporary audiences and to us today on this complex topic. Although they are voices one step removed from Marlowe’s own, the Marlovian persona of the Baines Note and the narrator of Ovid’s *Elegy* 3.3 articulate a materialist, if not highly political, sense of religion and God: ‘the first beginning of Religioun was only to keep men in awe’, Baines’s Marlowe asserts, and ‘God is a name, no substance, feared in vain’, Ovid’s narrator claims (MacLure, p. 37; *Elegy* 3.3.23). However, the plays are more ambiguous than this. Is Sigismund’s humiliating defeat an act of divine

retribution for violating his oath with Christ, or is it a mere consequence of war?

What Marlowe does show is that religion is a potent and potentially destructive weapon in the hands of political leaders. Tamburlaine, Ferneze, and the Guise all illustrate how senseless acts of cruelty, greed, selfishness, and injustice can be carried out in the name of God and true religion; in the cases of Tamburlaine and the Guise, the exploitation seems self-conscious, while with Ferneze it is not so clear. Marlowe, at least in the poignant case of Barabas's genuinely pious daughter Abigail, effectively raises the question of why God allows bad things to happen to good people. Abigail, perhaps the only godly, sympathetic character in the play, is victimized by both her father and her supposed spiritual mentors before she dies of poison, reminding one once again of Marlowe's Ovid: 'Live godly, thou shalt die; though honour heaven, / Yet shall thy life be forcibly bereaven' (*JM* 3.8.35–6).

Critics have perceived this questioning of Protestant notions of divine justice elsewhere in Marlowe,<sup>30</sup> as we have noted its implications for transgressive sexuality in *Edward II*. In the cases of Friars Bernadine and Jacomo, Marlowe seems to suggest that the corrupt institutions they serve and the unrealistic vows they are required to follow inevitably result in hypocrisy and a disparity between religious ideals and practices. At the same time, as G. K. Hunter insightfully remarks, if Marlowe 'was an atheist in the modern sense at all, he was a God-haunted atheist', who especially in *Doctor Faustus* but also at moments in the other plays suggests a passionate identification with the experiences of remorse, fear of damnation, repentance, and worship. This was the religious culture of Marlowe's Cambridge, and given that intensely devout Catholics engaged in similar self-scrutiny and spiritual introspection, this was also part of the world he entered when visiting Catholic colleges abroad.

## NOTES

1. *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, Mark Thornton Burnett (ed.), Everyman (London: Dent, 1999), p. 135 (5.1.181 and 183). In this chapter all subsequent references to this and other plays by Marlowe are taken from Burnett's edition and appear parenthetically in the text.
2. See John Calvin, *The Institution of the Christian Religion*, Thomas Norton (trans.) (1561; rpt London, 1582), 1: xvii; William Perkins, *The Workes* (London, 1608), 1: 160 and 164. The notion is pervasive in Thomas Beard's Elizabethan pamphlet, *The Theatre of Gods Judgement* (London, 1648).
3. The only known performance was before the queen in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, in August 1564. See Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 142–6.

4. Robert Greene, in reference to *Tamburlaine* in 1588, condemns Marlowe for 'daring God out of heauen with that Atheist Tamburlan' (MacLure, p. 29).
5. For the Muslim King of Morocco's affection for England because of its religion, see Rami Jaradat, 'Redefining the Role of the Turks in Elizabethan Literature', PhD Dissertation, Purdue University, 2002, chapter 1; and Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 141–5.
6. For English prayers for the Maltese, see Andrew P. Vella, *An Elizabethan–Ottoman Conspiracy* (Valetta, Malta: Royal University of Malta Press, 1972), p. 14; cited in 'Introduction', *The Jew of Malta*, Roma Gill (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. xii.
7. 'Turkish *Tamberlaine*' is how Joseph Hall describes Marlowe's hero in his verse satire, 'Virgidemiarum' (1597–8); see MacLure, p. 40. For *Tamburlaine* and the Turks, see Shepherd, *Marlowe*, pp. 142–69; and Jaradat, 'Redefining the Role of the Turks'.
8. For a succinct introduction to the play, see 'Introduction to *The Jew of Malta*', in *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, David Bevington, et al. (eds.) (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 287–92.
9. Cited in James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 38.
10. See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 3: 424–5.
11. See G. K. Hunter, 'The Theology of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*', *JWCI* 28 (1964), 211–40.
12. The Elizabethan Homilies of 1563 condemned 'the three chief principal points, which they called the three essentials (or three chief foundations) of religion, that is to say, obedience, chastity and willful poverty'. See Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580–1625* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 61.
13. The most influential of these commentaries is Julia Briggs, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*: a Reconsideration', *RES* 34 (1983), 257–78.
14. See R. B. Wernham, *After the Armada: Elizabethan England and the Struggle for Western Europe 1588–1595* (Oxford University Press, 1984); Curtis Bright, *Surveillance, Militarism and Drama in the Elizabethan Era* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), p. 114.
15. For discussions of Marlowe's *Lucan*, see Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 227–37; and Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, Anne Lancashire (ed.) (New York: AMS, 1980), pp. 33–5.
16. See Margot Heinemann, 'Political Drama', in A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 1990): pp. 161–205; qtd from pp. 182–4.
17. For the players' involvement in the Marprelate controversy, see Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 52–4; Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 74–6; and Charles Nicholl, *A Cup of News: The Life of Thomas Nashe* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 64–79.

18. For convenience, I quote mainly from the 'A' text of 1604. For further discussion of the 'A' and 'B' texts, see the chapters by Laurie Maguire and Thomas Healy in the present volume, pp. 41–54 and 174–92.
19. These came to be known as the Lambeth articles published in 1596. See *The Works of John Whitgift*, ed. John Ayre, 3 vols., Parker Society (Cambridge, 1851), 3: 612.
20. William Empson, *Faustus and the Censor: The English Faust-Book and Marlowe's 'Dr Faustus'* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).
21. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (eds.), 'Introduction,' *'Doctor Faustus' A- and B-texts (1604, 1616)* (Manchester University Press, 1993).
22. Catherine Minshull, 'The Dissident Sub-Text of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*', *English* 39 (1990), 193–207; qtd from p. 205.
23. See Andrew Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 263–4.
24. See Ian Frederick Moulton, "'Printed Abroad and Uncastrated": Marlowe's *Elegies* with Davies' *Epigrams*', in Paul Whitfield White (ed.), *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality: New Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), pp. 77–90; qtd from p. 77.
25. *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations*, Stephen Orgel (ed.) (New York: Penguin, 1971), p. 166 (lines 23–4).
26. Claude Summers, 'Hero and Leander: the Arbitrariness of Desire', in J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (eds.), *Constructing Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge University Press), pp. 133–47; qtd from p. 134.
27. Cited in Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 217.
28. See Charles R. Forker's discussion of the criticism in his edition of *Edward the Second* (Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 92–9.
29. I quote David Bevington in his 'Introduction to *Edward II*', in *English Renaissance Drama*. Bevington, et al. (eds.), p. 356.
30. See, for example, Bevington and Rasmussen (eds.), *Doctor Faustus*, pp. 30–1.

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# 6

JAMES P. BEDNARZ

## Marlowe and the English literary scene

Between 1587, when he left Cambridge, and his death in 1593, Marlowe's literary career developed in three social contexts: he found patronage and employment as a government spy; he associated with some of the most heterodox intellectuals of his age; and he became one of London's first professional writers. It is through these interconnected activities – reflected in Marlowe's relationships with Thomas Watson, Thomas Harriot, and William Shakespeare – that he transformed Elizabethan literature. Watson, a 'University Wit' like Marlowe, was a model of what a scholar could achieve in a career supported by patronage, publication, and playwrighting. Harriot, a brilliant scientist whose friendship resulted in accusations of their collusion in 'Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism', mirrored Marlowe's intellectual audacity. And Shakespeare, Marlowe's chief rival in the public theatre, engaged him in a theatrical dialogue on the meaning of history. The Marlovian moment lasted only six years, but its achievement was to prove that popular drama could be counted among those exclusive cultural activities which Thomas Nashe called 'the endeavors of art'.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Watson was among a small group of writers now called the University Wits, who gained literary reputations in the 1580s after having studied at Cambridge or Oxford. As London's first set of university-trained professionals, the wits – whose best writers included Watson, Marlowe, Nashe, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, and John Lyly – appeared at the moment when the cultural marketplace first made having a literary career viable. Watson, who killed William Bradley in 1589 while defending Marlowe, was a writer whose reputation seemed so assured that William Covell in *Polymanteia* (1595) called Shakespeare 'Watson's heir'.<sup>2</sup> Some seven years older than Marlowe, Watson, who had briefly studied at Oxford before finishing his education on the continent, was probably writing for the Queen's Men between 1583 and 1585, when his younger friend was still at Cambridge. Although he died in 1592, he had by that time become such an accomplished dramatist that Francis Meres would remember him

six years later as being among 'our best for tragedy'.<sup>3</sup> He had proved that it was possible for a scholar to forge a career as a playwright and patronage poet, and Marlowe followed his precedent in dividing his original compositions between poetry, circulated in manuscript or print, and drama for the commercial stage. *Hecatompathia* (1582), Watson's collection of English sonnets (in eighteen lines), became so recognizable that the courtiers Lorenzo and Balthazar in *The Spanish Tragedy* flaunt their knowledge of contemporary love poetry by recalling eight lines from sonnet 48.<sup>4</sup> Praised by the scrupulous Cambridge don Gabriel Harvey as one of England's finest Latin poets, Watson produced a Latin translation of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1581) and responded to Tasso's Italian pastoral play *Aminta* in a Latin poem entitled *Amyntas* (1585). Marlowe shared Watson's enthusiasm for translation, which he also practised with varying degrees of fidelity, in paraphrasing Virgil's *Aeneid* in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, producing English versions of Ovid's *Elegies* and the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, and improvising on Musaeus' *Hero and Leander*. Furthermore, in his Latin epitaph 'On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood' (who had been lenient in the Bradley affair) and perhaps in the Latin dedication to the Countess of Pembroke (signed C. M.) of Watson's posthumously published *Amintae gaudia*, he served their combined interests. Marlowe's remarkable facility with English blank verse was, moreover, anchored in his knowledge of classical prosody.

In the early modern period, patronage signified a wide range of attachments and responsibilities, from the process of occasionally dedicating literary work to ongoing service as a secretary or tutor. Watson and Marlowe's association with Thomas Walsingham, a second cousin of Sir Francis Walsingham (Queen Elizabeth's secretary of state and the head of her secret service), suggests that they might have served as agents engaged in anti-Catholic intrigue. When Cambridge threatened to withhold Marlowe's degree, the Privy Council insisted that his apparent apostasy was a ploy and that 'he had done her majesty good service and deserved to be rewarded for his faithful dealing'.<sup>5</sup> He was not a Catholic, heading for the English College at Rheims, but had probably been gathering information about potentially dangerous nonconformists. Between 1576 and 1577, Watson had been admitted into the English College at Douai in Flanders, before it moved to Rheims. But when Sir Francis died in 1590, Watson expressed his grief in a pastoral dialogue called *Meliboeus* in which Corydon (Watson) and Tityrus (Thomas Walsingham) lament their benefactor's passing. Years later, Edward Blount, in dedicating *Hero and Leander*, reminded Thomas of the 'many kind favors' and 'liberal affection' he had shown its author. But with so little evidence, we can only wonder at the services Marlowe had rendered in what Charles Nicholl calls 'the secret theater' of Elizabethan espionage



by the time he rode from Walsingham's estate to his death in Deptford on 30 May 1593.

That Marlowe had been employed to counterfeit his religious beliefs makes it impossible, at this late date, to determine his theological allegiances, which might have been in considerable turmoil. David Riggs cogently notes that although 'the Privy Council valued Marlowe because of his contacts in the recusant community, and because of his willingness to betray it', these were 'equally reasons not to trust him'. The modern reader faces the same interpretive problem in reading the plays. Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, who blasphemes as 'God's double agent', parallels Marlowe, whose own appearance of apostasy had been state sanctioned. Tamburlaine 'invokes the orthodox doctrine of obedience in a sophisticated right to disobey', Riggs explains, even as his status as scourge 'liberates him from the very God who enfranchises him'.<sup>6</sup> Tamburlaine rebels against the power that sanctions his transgression, and, in showing what C. L. Barber calls Marlowe's 'unstable appropriation of the divine for the human', makes blasphemy 'a heroic enterprise'.<sup>7</sup> This issue of Marlowe's poetic theology – his debate on the connection between the human and the divine – is particularly problematic when it is considered in the context of Raleigh's intellectual circle, which has been sensationalized by Muriel Bradbrook as a centre of occultism in *The School of Night*.

Raleigh's administrative, privateering, and colonial ventures were based at Durham House, his London residence, where Thomas Harriot was employed as his scientific adviser. Harriot, like Marlowe, was a bold innovator. One of the foremost mathematicians in Europe, Harriot familiarized Raleigh's navigators with the latest technology, while pursuing studies in astronomy, cosmology, astrology, alchemy, optics, ethnography, and linguistics. Through his friendship with Harriot, Marlowe stood at the epicentre of English colonialism. In 1584, Harriot wrote navigational instructions for Amadas and Barlowe's reconnaissance for the Roanoke colony, and, in the following year, he participated in the expedition, under John White, to plant it. Then, probably as part of Raleigh's plan for a new voyage, he published *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* in 1588, just before it was discovered that the remaining settlers of England's first colony in the New World had mysteriously vanished. Although urged to publish more, he later wrote to Kepler that, 'Things with us are in such a condition that I still cannot philosophize freely.'<sup>8</sup> Richard Hakluyt included the *True Report* in his *Principal Navigations* in 1589, and in 1590 Theodor de Bry published a folio edition in Latin, English, French, and German, with engravings based on White's drawings, earning its author an international reputation. Marlowe not only shared Harriot's interests in the alien and exotic: magnates such as Raleigh

and magi such as Harriot embodied the restless ambition of Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas, and the Guise.

Raleigh's enemies at court and on the continent demonized his enterprise. In 1592, a scandalous pamphlet based on the work of the Jesuit Robert Parsons mocked 'Sir Walter Raleigh's school of atheism' and Harriot as 'the conjurer that is master thereof'.<sup>9</sup> Throughout his career Harriot would be denounced as both a necromancer and rationalist who questioned Scripture. He is, for example, the target of Nashe's aspersion in *Pierce Penniless* that 'there be Mathematicians . . . harboured in high places' who believe that there were 'men before *Adam*' and 'that there are no devils' (1: 172). Domestic surveillance corroborated this view. Richard Baines quotes Marlowe as saying that 'Moses was but a Juggler, and that one Harriot, being Sir W Raleigh's man, can do more than he', and Richard Cholmeley adds that Marlowe 'read the Atheist lecture to Sir Walter Raleigh and others'.<sup>10</sup> Harriot had studied the culture of the Algonkians, and one of his most Machiavellian conclusions, as Stephen Greenblatt observes, was that their priests advanced religious myths because they made the common people 'have great respect to their Governors'.<sup>11</sup> To encourage belief in Christianity, in order to subdue the Algonkians, Harriot played on this same gullibility, becoming, in Marlowe's purported jest, a kind of Moses, in representing his own mathematical instruments, sea compasses, magnets, magnifying glasses, perspective glasses, and clocks as modern miracles. That Harriot advocated the medicinal use of tobacco and explained its function in religious offerings might also have prompted Marlowe's comment that the Eucharist could have been instituted 'with more Ceremonial Reverence' in 'a Tobacco pipe' (Steane, p. 364).

It is ironic, then, that the strongest literary trace of Marlowe's relationship with Raleigh appears in an exquisite pair of pastoral lyrics, 'The Passionate Shepherd' and 'The Nymph's Reply'. Raleigh shared poetic exchanges with Queen Elizabeth, Henry Noel, George Whetstone, Sir Thomas Heneage, and Edmund Spenser. The first attribution of 'The Nymph's Reply' to Raleigh, however, is by Izaak Walton in 1653.<sup>12</sup> Both verses (which appear in multiple manuscript versions) became popular songs that were first printed together in *England's Helicon* (1600). 'The Nymph's Reply' is written in the pastoral mode favoured by Raleigh in such poems as *The Ocean's Love to Cynthia*. But it is only one of a series of answers to Marlowe's lyric, such as John Donne's 'The Bait', and we can only wonder how familiar Raleigh was with Marlowe. Is it possible that in a moment of scandalous wit he entertained Raleigh with a recitation of 'the Atheist's lecture' containing some of the comic blasphemies retailed by Baines and Cholmeley? If so, is there any reason why this same volatile writer might not also have penned, in a

more pious mood, the theological anxieties of *Doctor Faustus* or the militant Protestantism of *The Massacre at Paris*?

We will never know how probing their intellectual curiosity became. But what makes Bradbrook's characterization of the Raleigh circle as an occult 'school of night' seem exaggerated is the appearance of the first edition of Spenser's national epic *The Faerie Queene* as Durham House's premiere literary work, and not George Chapman's mystic *Shadow of Night*. The publication of the 1590 *Faerie Queene* was an event hosted by Raleigh at the apex of Spenser's career. Its Timias-Belphoebe episode allegorizes Raleigh's service to Queen Elizabeth and features an imitation of Raleigh's Petrarchan poetry to her (3.5.45-7), in an elaborate historical allegory in which she cures him with 'divine Tobacco' (3.5.32). Raleigh's 'A Conceit upon this vision of *The Faerie Queene*' (the first of his two commendatory sonnets) judges Spenser's poem to be among the greatest in the Western canon.<sup>13</sup> In it, Spenser compares his fiction's epic geography to 'fruitfullest *Virginia*' as a site of 'hardy enterprise', of discovery and conquest; his poem, like Raleigh's New World territory, was named in Elizabeth's honour. Having inhaled Durham House's heady philosophical atmosphere, Spenser even alludes to Giordano Bruno's theory of infinite universes when he wonders, 'if in every other star unseen / Of other worlds he happily should hear' (2. Proem. 2-3). That the group's speculative enthusiasm was rumoured to have touched on issues of theology, however, continued to hurt its reputation. Like Raleigh, Marlowe brooded on the symbolic importance of Spenser's main protagonist, Prince Arthur, the patron of magnificence. But whereas Raleigh recreates Arthur's dream (1.9.13-15) in his 'Vision' of Spenser's achievement, Marlowe, who had read part of the poem in manuscript, had a more radical response. For in transforming Arthur's crest, 'Like to an Almond tree ymounted hye / On top of green *Selinis*' (1.7.32) into Tamburlaine's 'triple plume', 'Like to an almond tree y-mounted high / Upon the lofty and celestial mount / Of ever-green *Selinus*' (2 *Tamb.* 4.3.119-21), he proposed an alternative to Spenser's ethical and political commitments.

Three years before *The Faerie Queene*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, and *Tamburlaine* were published in 1590, Marlowe initiated a new literary period in which commercial drama successfully competed with poetry and fiction as being one of the most compelling media for exploring issues of contemporary ethics and politics. This shift, epitomized by Marlowe's displacement of Robert Greene as a figure of cultural pre-eminence, shows the impact of the public theatre in shaping literary reputations. What made this cultural change unusually significant was the fact that tragedy had the good fortune to become the primary mode through which the two greatest dramatists of the period, Marlowe and Shakespeare, influenced each other's interpretations

of English history. Yet it is only by tentatively forgetting the importance of print that we can recover a sense of the manner in which Marlowe and Shakespeare conceived of their plays as being primarily staged and then, perhaps, subsequently published. When Marlowe died, only *Tamburlaine* and none of Shakespeare's plays had been printed. Although drama flourished through publication, interconnections between stage and page were complex.

Consider, for instance, the embarrassment Greene experienced due to Marlowe's success, when he either saw or heard that his work had been parodied on the stage. Having completed his twelfth work of prose fiction, Greene complained in *Perimedes the Blacksmith* (1588) about an otherwise unknown theatrical production in which he had been satirized in a play written by two 'Gentlemen Poets'. It was in this drama, he insists, that 'two mad-men of Rome' were made to attack with swords part of his literary motto (*Omne tulit punctum*), which had been emblazoned on their bucklers, and scoff that Greene could not make his verses 'jet upon the stage in tragical buskins, every word filling the mouth . . . daring God out of heaven with that Atheist *Tamburlan*'.<sup>14</sup> Greene was fond of using '*omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*' (he gains every point who mixes use and delight), a famous phrase from Horace's *Art of Poetry*, on his title pages. And he must have been stunned to discover that his poetic creed had been appropriated as the centrepiece of a spectacle of derision by these now unidentifiable collaborative playwrights who favoured Marlowe's exciting and less temperate new drama. But even though his own work had begun to appear dated by comparison, Greene responds that he would rather be considered Diogenes' ass than emulate 'such mad and scoffing poets' who were 'bred of Merlin's race', punning on a variation (Marlin) of Marlowe's surname. Rejecting Marlowe's drama as a bad precedent, he vows instead to 'keep my old course to palter up something in Prose', claiming that he had only answered 'in print what they have offered on the stage'. There is no record of when Greene became a dramatist.<sup>15</sup> But it is likely that the failure of *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, his answer to *Tamburlaine*, caused him temporarily to retreat into print, after which he ultimately abandoned romance. Greene's attack on Marlowe consequently reveals a faultline dividing the University Wits on the status of drama that was caused by the sudden cultural shift towards theatre occasioned by his rival's success.

A year later, convinced that his romance *Menaphon* would be overlooked because of the growing fascination with staged tragedy, Greene invited his younger friend Thomas Nashe to demonstrate its relevance to the contemporary scene. Nashe responded by attacking Marlowe's tragedies as pretentious and dismissing Thomas Kyd, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*, as

incompetent. Marlowe, Nashe writes, is one of the 'vain glorious Tragedians' and 'idiot Art-masters, that intrude themselves to our ears as the Alchemists of eloquence, who (mounting on the stage of arrogance) think to out-brave better pens with their swelling bombast of bragging blank verse' (3: 311). He uses poetry to 'vent' his angry 'manhood' in 'the spacious volubility of a drumming decasyllabon'. Marlowe is, Nashe continues, no better than Kyd, whose writing ('Seneca read by candle light') is marred by plagiarism, deficient scholarship, and mistranslation. Sharing Greene's antitheatrical prejudice, Nashe mocks the growing number of theatregoers prepared to 'repose eternity in the mouth of a Player' and urges 'the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities' to prefer the tempered eloquence of Greene's *Arcadian Menaphon* (3: 12). But Nashe's celebration of an extemporaneous wit capable of fulfilling the highest expectations of art fits his own style better than Greene's, and at the end of his encomium he coyly directs readers to his new satirical pamphlet *The Anatomy of Absurdity* in which he attacks romance writers who aspire to be 'the Homer of Women' (1: 12). 'See how far they swerve from their purpose', he now jests, 'who with Greene colours seek to garnish such Gorgon-like shapes' (1: 16). This betrayal becomes less surprising, however, once we recognize that Greene discredits his own works as 'vanities' in his repentance tracts and adopted a new motto *sero sed serio* (late but in earnest) to signify his change.

Marlowe's overreaching rhetoric also remained vulnerable to Nashe's sarcasm, but his later recollection in *Lenten Stuff* of how 'poor deceased Kit Marlowe' had treated him 'like a friend' (3: 131) indicates that their relationship had changed. Around 1594, Nashe prepared *Dido, Queen of Carthage* for publication and composed a lost elegy on Marlowe, which prefaced some copies. This did not, however, rule out an element of irreverence, and in *Lenten Stuff* he invokes Marlowe's 'diviner Muse' as prelude to his own comic version of *Hero and Leander* (3: 195–201). In his Preface to *Menaphon*, Nashe praised contemporary writers, including Watson and Peele. But even before publication of *The Faerie Queene* made it a contemporary classic, he selects only 'Master Spenser, the miracle of wit, to bandy line by line for my life, in the honour of England, against Spain, France, Italy, and all the world' (3: 323). Nashe's preference for Spenser over Marlowe and Kyd indicates the reverence with which Spenser and Sidney were held. Sidney, who died in 1586, had heightened pastoral romance with epic grandeur, written influential literary criticism, and completed a splendid sonnet sequence, paralleling the genres used by most of the wits. Lodge's defence of poetry preceded Sidney's, Greene cultivated the genres of romance, pastoral, and lyric Sidney favoured, and Nashe wrote an ornate preface for the first edition of *Astrophil and Stella*. Spenser, who had been absent from the London scene

for almost a decade, embodied this tradition. The Tamburlaine phenomenon consequently forced writers to reconsider their political and ethical commitments. 'If Spenser sees human identity as conferred by living service to legitimate authority, to the yoked power of God and state', Greenblatt writes, 'Marlowe sees identity established at those moments in which order . . . is violated.' While 'Spenser's heroes strive for balance and control', Greenblatt continues, 'Marlowe's strive to shatter the restraints upon their desires.'<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Marlowe produces in *Tamburlaine* what Patrick Cheney describes as a 'theatrical improvisation in the Spenserian manner' that proposes a comprehensive challenge to the artistic, political, erotic, and theological premises that define his poetic programme.<sup>17</sup> *Tamburlaine, Part One* was Marlowe's most audacious play, and neither he nor his contemporaries ever exceeded its boldness.

Greene's strategy for dealing with Marlowe in the theatre was to write morally acceptable alternatives to *Tamburlaine* and *Doctor Faustus*. In *Alphonus, King of Aragon*, Alphonsus's career recapitulates Tamburlaine's, beginning with a series of combats for sovereignty with lesser kings, continuing with the investiture of his surrogates, and ending with his marriage to the daughter of his greatest rival. His fate is sanctioned by the gods, summarized by his brag, 'I clap up *Fortune* in a cage of gold, / To make her turn her wheel as I think best' (lines 1481–2) which echoes Tamburlaine's claim, 'I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about' (1 *Tamb.* 1.2.174–5). 'In all this', writes J. Churton Collins, 'we have Tamburlaine – and Tamburlaine crudely – over again.'<sup>18</sup> *Alphonus* has heightened language, exotic locations, and ample violence, but lacks Marlowe's moral complexity. Instead, Greene splits his play between Alphonsus, the trustworthy and forgiving legitimate heir of Aragon, who fights to recover his throne, and Amurack, the blaspheming, sadistic, and unscrupulous villain he conquers. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Greene repeats this procedure by offering his audience a reparative variation on *Doctor Faustus*. Indicating that damnation is not inevitable, Friar Bacon, the disillusioned conjurer, rejects Marlovian tragedy in recognizing that 'repentance can do much, . . . / To wash the wrath of high Jehovah's ire, / And make thee as a new born babe from sin' (lines 1843–9).

The University Wits unanimously responded to *Tamburlaine* by attempting to negate its disturbing vision of heroism in Greene's *Alphonus* and *Orlando Furioso*; his collaboration with Lodge, *A Looking-Glass for London and England*; Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War*; and Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*. Yet even when supplemented by the anonymous *Lochrine, Selimus*, and *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, these plays collectively fail either

to meet Marlowe's intellectual challenge or match his literary standard. Peter Berek consequently writes that at a time when Henslowe's diary reveals 'the continuous popularity of *Tamburlaine*,' these plays – which he calls *Tamburlaine*'s weak sons – 'invite their audiences to condemn characters for bursting the restraints of conventional beliefs and codes of conduct'.<sup>19</sup> Despite some shared pieties about power, however, these 'weak' writers register a wide range of reactions to *Tamburlaine*, from Greene's martial triumphalism in *Alphonsus* to Peele's ironic account of 'three bold kings' who 'Fall to the earth contending for a crown' in *The Battle of Alcazar*.<sup>20</sup> *Tamburlaine*'s theatrical sons were not weak in the same way, and if the University Wits were unable to engage Marlowe in a significant dialogue on the question of political power, Shakespeare certainly was. Although his second and third parts of *Henry VI* are indebted to *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta* for their rhetoric of ambition and subterfuge, this influence is subordinated to a very different conception of historical process, based on the perception of weakness, instead of strength, as the defining characteristic of human experience.

Greene, who was acutely aware of his audience's changing tastes in literary fashion, panicked twice at the thought of being displaced, and in doing so he chronicled two of the most important events in English literature. He first panicked in *Perimedes* in 1588 when he felt threatened by Marlowe's success in creating modern tragedy. Then, in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, purportedly written on his deathbed in 1592, he feared that Shakespeare would surpass even Marlowe by monopolizing the medium Marlowe had used to marginalize Greene's own literary efforts. In his famous open letter to Marlowe, Nashe, and Peele (heavily edited by Henry Chettle, who apparently enhanced the text he transcribed), Greene mocked Shakespeare as an 'upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his *Tiger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you'. He is, Greene concludes, 'in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country'.<sup>21</sup> Henslowe's records show that several months earlier 1 *Henry VI*, performed by Lord Strange's Men at the Rose, was far more popular than the older dramas by Greene, Marlowe, and Kyd that played with it. What Greene appears to be saying is that Shakespeare is a player turned playwright who has learned to 'shake' the stage with blank verse modelled on Marlowe's that rivals his achievement. Greene's rapacious 'Shake-scene' is imagined through a line that recalls phrasing from the yet unpublished 3 *Henry VI*, which is cited to seal the allusion to its author. There, the Duke of York, whose son Rutland has been savagely murdered by Queen Margaret's ally Clifford, rejects her cruel invitation to wipe his

tears with a handkerchief dipped in his child's blood, by saying:

O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide!  
How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child,  
To bid the father wipe his eyes withal,  
And yet be seen to wear a woman's face?<sup>22</sup>

In drawing a double analogy between himself, as the beaten York surrendering his paper crown, and Shakespeare, as the inhumane Queen Margaret, tormenting her doomed victim, Greene casts himself and Shakespeare in a fatal contention for poetic kingship. He and the University Wits were under attack by a merciless and unnatural predator: the monstrous crow with a tiger's heart, evoked by Greene's mixed metaphor for Shakespeare, who both robs and devours his rivals.

Yet in his second panic Greene mistook the deeper cause of Shakespeare's new prominence: his unusual ability to elicit empathy, based on a perception of tragic loss as the defining characteristic of human experience. It was this quality that so impressed Nashe, who noted how unusually moved audience members had been in mourning Talbot's death, when *1 Henry VI* was presented by Lord Strange's Men at the Rose in 1592. 'How would it have joyed brave *Talbot*,' he writes, to 'triumph again on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators' (1: 212). What Greene never understood was that Shakespeare's relation to Marlowe can be better construed as an open-ended intellectual collaboration than an act of plagiarism. It was during this period that Shakespeare and Marlowe made a remarkable impact on each other's conceptions of tragedy while working on hybrid plays that are now commonly categorized as histories. Marlowe, unlike Greene, does not seem to have been antagonized by Shakespeare's rise to prominence. On the contrary, he seems to have understood that in *Henry VI* Shakespeare views vulnerability rather than strength and self-assertion as the defining feature of human identity. He seems to have been particularly fascinated by Shakespeare's examination of the weak king dilemma, which caused him to base *Edward II* on *Henry VI*, after having consulted the same chronicle histories Shakespeare had previously used to flesh out the Wars of the Roses. Conforming to Shakespeare's tragic paradigm, King Edward, Tamburlaine's opposite, now sombrely asks: 'But what are kings, when regiment is gone, / But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?' (5.1.26-7). Inspired in turn by *Edward II*, Shakespeare would go on in *Richard II* to develop an even more eloquent language of loss, in a project that would climax in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. What Greene did not understand was that it was not Queen Margaret's Marlovian triumph that was the hallmark of Shakespeare's new



drama – although it is splendidly represented – but the saddened voice of Northumberland, who, moved by York’s suffering, concedes: ‘Had he been slaughter-man to all my kin, / I should not for my life but weep with him, / To see how inly sorrow gripes his soul’ (1.4.169–71). Marlowe became famous by creating Tamburlaine, the Scythian shepherd who mastered the world. In deposing Henry VI, the king who would be shepherd, Shakespeare staged a spectacle of failure that would resonate through his greatest tragedies. By August of 1592, overwhelmed by the rise of Shakespearean tragedy within chronicle history, Nashe broke with Greene’s antitheatrical bias and became an outspoken advocate of commercial theatre, whose tragedies, he writes in *Pierce Penniless*, are ‘more stately furnished than ever it was in the time of Roscius’ (1: 215). His enthusiasm was enhanced by the fact that he currently counted himself in the service of Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, whose company had first performed 1 *Henry VI* earlier that year. Indeed, Gary Taylor even presses the highly controversial proposition that Nashe collaborated on it.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporary literary criticism has come to appreciate Marlowe and Shakespeare’s involvement in each other’s work. Scholars have especially illuminated Shakespeare’s appropriation and containment of Marlowe’s poetics, showing how Tamburlaine’s evocation of ‘That perfect bliss and sole felicity, / The sweet fruition of an earthly crown’ (2.7.28–9), informs Richard of Gloucester’s rapture: ‘How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown, / Within whose circuit is Elysium / And all that poets feign of bliss and joy’ (3 *Henry VI* 1.2.29–31). Charles Forker, however, perceptively documents the ‘theatrical and stylistic interchange between the two dramatists’ that took place while both were writing between 1591 and 1592 in a relationship that approaches ‘symbiosis’.<sup>24</sup> Although their writing chronologies are a matter of debate, Shakespeare seems to have initiated their dialogue with *Henry VI*, which, Jonathan Bate explains, ‘opens where *Tamburlaine* closes: with the question of what to do after a conquering warrior is dead and there is no single strong inheritor to take over’.<sup>25</sup> In opposition to Marlowe’s myths of power, Shakespeare revitalizes the medieval *de casibus* tradition which records ‘the fall of illustrious men’, splits the Marlovian hero into moral opposites, includes a broader class model, and varies his rhetoric, as he replaces ambition and imperialism with self-division and civil war. Marlowe, in turn, was so intrigued by Shakespeare’s challenging reinterpretation that he used 2 and 3 *Henry VI* as models for *Edward II*, his own experiment in dramatizing English chronicle history. The immediate consequence of his abrupt change in direction was a loss of the mighty line, which he sacrificed to achieve greater breadth and complexity in the play’s characterization. Here, in place of a single commanding figure, Marlowe presented clashing factions, as both

Henry VI and Edward II fall through their respective weaknesses of spirituality and sensuality at the insistence of more ambitious rivals, York and Mortimer, who pay for their aspirations with their lives. The first published titles of Shakespeare and Marlowe's parallel histories preserve this balance between protagonist and antagonist. A version of Shakespeare's third part of *Henry VI* was initially printed as *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt . . .* (1595), a year after Marlowe's rejoinder had appeared as *The troublesome raigne and lamentable death of Edward the second, King of England: with the tragicall fall of proud Mortimer*. Their titles' shared billing emphasizes Shakespeare and Marlowe's mutual interest in conceiving of English history as revenge tragedy, forever doubled in the unremitting exchange of victor and victim.

By the time Marlowe wrote *Edward II*, Shakespeare had probably already completed the first tetralogy, which, with the addition of *Richard III*, submits 'the scourge of God' to the new providential order of Henry VII in a celebration of Tudor sovereignty ending the Wars of the Roses. Suddenly aware of how conservatively Shakespeare had concluded the series, Marlowe might have intended *Edward II* to resist this movement towards self-justifying moral closure by recalling Shakespeare's insights into the inherent instability of rule, which is invariably a product of self-interest. Marlowe had good reason to be impressed by *The True Tragedy*: it is a radical critique of kingship. What makes the play especially shocking is that York's claim to the throne is stronger than Henry's, who admits his own illegitimacy even as he asks his followers, motivated principally by private revenge, to defend his status. Marlowe's chronicle drama is unique in its elimination of a providential teleology and its suggestion that moral choices are made primarily on the basis of self-interest affirmed through the exercise of power. *Edward II* does not passively endorse Shakespearean history. Instead, it explores the issue of legitimacy that had been posed by *The True Tragedy* but which had been subsequently shaded over by the imperial and nationalist aspirations of 1 *Henry VI* (staged last in the trilogy as a 'prequel' in 1592) and *Richard III*, Shakespeare's most doctrinaire early histories. Yet in what is perhaps his last play, *The Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe unpredictably follows Shakespeare's practice of writing what approaches political propaganda, almost as a form of atonement for his more troubling inquiry into historical origins. After Marlowe's death, Shakespeare in his second tetralogy continued to explore the issues they had raised by re-evaluating *Edward II* in *Richard II*, a work that implicitly acknowledges Marlowe's influence, even as it overwhelms its source with nostalgia for a lost sacred order and a more compelling account of history, from the victim's perspective, as perpetual loss.

Shakespeare was so acute in revising Marlovian tragedy because he already had a strong alternative to it in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, which was first staged at approximately the same time as *Tamburlaine*. Written primarily in blank verse with a few passages in prose and rhyme, Kyd's drama shares with Marlowe's the distinction of having established the most effective poetic medium for Elizabethan tragedy. What was unique about Kyd's tragedy, however, was its emphasis on the psychology of victimization. 'Not only *The Spanish Tragedy*', writes Lukas Erne, 'but all of Kyd's plays turn around a thematic pattern constituted of loss, grief, and revenge', as 'they place at their centre a certain type of character: the victim of adverse fortune trying to cope with his or her loss', in a plot involving complex intrigue in a taut dramatic structure. It is this kind of plotting that Marlowe would first adopt in *The Jew of Malta*, in which his 'dramatic style', according to Erne, 'was so clearly affected by *The Spanish Tragedy*'.<sup>26</sup> The most characteristic elements of Kyd's drama are its intense metatheatricity, its blend of mannered elegy and raving madness, and its account of nihilistic revenge. At his best, Kyd dramatized a prevailing sense of disillusionment. Our knowledge of these connections is seriously hindered by the disappearance of his version of *Hamlet*, but it seems likely that Kyd's hero, like Shakespeare's after him, voiced outrage, took revenge, and suffered annihilation in the general blood-letting. Kyd shared a writing room with Marlowe in 1591, whom he denounced for being 'intemperate and of a cruel heart' and for 'attempting privy injuries to men' (Steane, p. 7). Kyd's critique of Marlowe confirms a major difference in their literary reputations. While Marlowe made his mark in the rhetoric of violent triumph, Kyd was best known for expressive complaints voiced by desperate characters, resolved to affirm their identities in terrifying acts of despair. Tamburlaine's boast, 'Is it not passing brave to be a king, / And ride in triumph through Persepolis?' (2.5.53-4), and Hieronimo's lament, 'O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears' (3.2.1), stereotype their difference. Hieronimo's volatile mixture of regret, melancholy, and resolve inspired some of the best writing of the next thirty years to explore with even greater intensity the psychology of social dislocation.

Marlowe and Shakespeare's final literary exchange appears to have occurred in the context of poetic patronage. Outbreaks of plague in London between 1592 and 1594 led to restraints on playing, and it was then that Shakespeare cultivated a patron, Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). In *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare turned to the Ovidian mythological narrative that Marlowe had perfected in *Hero and Leander*. It is possible that he saw Marlowe's poem in manuscript and posed Venus's failed enticement of Adonis against Leander's successful seduction of Hero

as a kind of literary diptych, creating contrasting variations on the theme of tragic desire. Here satisfaction and denial both lead to death. Shakespeare might even have conceded that *Hero and Leander* was better than his own wildly successful *Venus and Adonis*. Although based on a text by Musaeus, Marlowe's epyllion shows a greater proficiency in mastering Ovid's blend of passion and wit. In a well-known series of complaints in the Sonnets (78–80, 82–6), Shakespeare expresses his fear that a rival poet – a 'worthier pen' with 'a better spirit', known for 'the proud sail of his great verse' – will replace him. Despite a plethora of candidates, Marlowe remains the most *credible* rival to merit Shakespeare's anxiety about being outwritten during the plague years. Shakespeare might even playfully allude to *Doctor Faustus*, when he speaks of his rival's 'spirit, by spirits taught to write, / Above a mortal pitch' (Sonnet 86, lines 5–6) in language that Chapman earnestly repeats in seeking assistance from Marlowe's 'free soul' in 'th' eternal clime' of 'spirits immortal' in continuing *Hero and Leander* (3: 183–98). The modern suspicion that Shakespeare and Marlowe were identical has the consequent disadvantage of silencing the artistic and intellectual dialogue embedded in their works.

Shortly after Robert Greene died on 3 September 1592, Gabriel Harvey in *Four Letters and Certain Sonnets* described, with satisfaction, how his enemy – whose pamphlets had made him 'king of the paper stage' – had passed away, sick, indigent, and lice-infested, owing money for his funeral. Harvey's lack of empathy, however, cannot erase one particularly touching detail in his vignette. Amid the squalor, Greene's corpse, following his last wishes, had been crowned with a garland of bay leaves, commemorating his life as a poet. No matter how much he had played down his accomplishments, Greene staged his own death as a laureate. Marlowe never had that opportunity the following May. But his career symbolically began where Greene's ended: with an affirmation of his art. In his famous Prologue to *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe announced a change in direction for English Renaissance theatre, away from the 'conceits' of 'clownage', to a drama of 'high astounding terms', focused on power in history. His major achievement was permanently to enlarge the English literary canon, by transforming commercial drama into literature. But, as Greene looked on, Marlowe encountered in Shakespeare a brilliant rival who would inevitably diminish his paramount reputation once the London theatres reopened in 1594.

## NOTES

1. Preface to *Menaphon: Camilla's Alarum to Slumbering Euphues*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 3: 315. Further references in the text are to this edition.
2. William Covell, *Polymantheia* (London, 1595), sig. R3<sup>r</sup>.

3. Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury, Being the Second Part of Wit's Commonwealth* (London, 1598), p. 283.
4. *The Spanish Tragedy* (2.1.3–10), ed. J. R. Mulryne (London: A. and C. Black, 1989).
5. Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 92.
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# 7

GEORGIA E. BROWN

## Marlowe's poems and classicism

For modern readers perhaps nothing is more off-putting than the subject of classicism, with its unfortunate connotations of privilege and cultural exclusivity. In this chapter I want to show how classical culture spawns meanings, overturns ideas, amuses, shocks, and makes new in Marlowe's hands. It is far from dead, and neither does it necessarily work to confirm white, male privilege. The Renaissance had a more inclusive view of the classics than we do.<sup>1</sup> Virgil, for example, was accepted as the author of the pseudo-Virgilian text known as *Virgil's Gnat*, so the arch poet of panegyric, the high priest of epic and imperial expansion, was also the author of a mock-heroic trifle about an insect. The classical authors that Marlowe chose to translate and/or imitate in his poems, including Ovid, Lucan, Musaeus, and, in 'The Passionate Shepherd', Callimachus, were all recognized as dissident writers both by their contemporaries and by the Renaissance.<sup>2</sup> Marlowe chose to identify himself with writers who, in various ways, resisted the political, moral, gender, and aesthetic ideals epitomized by Virgil's *Aeneid*, the text that has come to embody classicism for us. Our appreciation of Marlowe's poems is not only hampered by our narrow understanding of the classical ideal, we also prefer texts that confirm our values of individualism, distinction, and authenticity of voice. We denigrate texts, like Marlowe's poems, which are translations or imitations because they supposedly lack originality, and conform to collaborative models of production which we are only just beginning to appreciate. We tend to agree with James VI, who once advised writers to avoid translation because it impairs one's sovereignty: 'ze are bound, as to a staik, to follow that buikis phrasis, quhilk ze translate'.<sup>3</sup>

We remember Marlowe as a dramatist, but what impressed his contemporaries and immediate successors most was his poetry, especially *Hero and Leander* and 'The Passionate Shepherd'. Marlowe's poems are central to his achievement, not only because he is one of the greatest poetic innovators of the Renaissance, a young man with huge, even arrogant, ambitions to do things in his verse that had never been done before, but also because

the poems deal with some of Marlowe's fundamental preoccupations. As imitations and translations, they engage formally, as well as thematically, with ambiguous identities, and explore the margins where the distinctions between self and other, the original and its representation, become confused. Not only do poems such as *Lucan's First Book* and 'The Passionate Shepherd' explore the heroic and lyric modes which constitute the twin poles of Marlowe's dramatic imagination, they are also spaces of continuing confrontations and mediations between the present and the past, and between English and alien elements. Translation and imitation are ways of negotiating spatial and temporal distances, and Marlowe's poems address the very issues that are also raised by his history plays and his dramas of colonial ambition.

The acquisition of Latin by Renaissance schoolboys was a male 'puberty rite', and Marlowe's display of classical erudition advertises his membership of a homosocial elite, but the Elizabethan grammar school system instilled its subjects with many kinds of literacy, including emotional literacy. Imitation of the classics not only taught boys the elements of rhetoric, it also ensured that the articulation of feeling would follow certain conventions.<sup>4</sup> One of the most common models for grief was the classical figure of Hecuba, and Hamlet gauges the truth of his own feeling by its conformity to and divergences from the description of Hecuba's grief as recited by the players (2.2.416–601).<sup>5</sup> In this sense, classical texts helped people to express emotions and desires, and this is equally true of non-dramatic texts like Ovid's *Heroides* or Lucan's *Pharsalia*. If Marlowe and other Elizabethans were taught to feel by the classics, as well as taught how to think and speak, then they inhabit, and are inhabited by, a bilingual culture in the most fundamental ways.

Living between two cultural codes and two linguistic codes, as Marlowe clearly does in his poems, has the most profound consequences for Marlowe's understanding of language and its relation to meaning, especially because one of those codes is Latin. In the preface to his own translation of Ovid's *Heroides*, John Dryden notes that Latin has a predilection for puns:

'Tis almost impossible to translate verbally, and well, at the same time; for the Latin (a most severe and compendious language) often expresses that in one word, which either the barbarity or the narrowness of modern tongues cannot supply in more.<sup>6</sup>

Latin is a compressed language and simultaneously evokes a variety of meanings in a highly efficient manner. It is also a language of mutated forms. It is made out of the rearrangement of elements in declensions and conjugations, where a root or syllable is yoked to prefixes and suffixes. English words are more fixed in form, and uninflected English is also much more tied to



sequence than Latin is, with the result that Latin can juxtapose sounds and set them against conceptual relationships with more freedom. Translation also raises the question of meaning and where it resides. Should a translation privilege matter over the original's style, or vice versa? As a Renaissance Protestant or Catholic, familiar with a medieval tradition of allegorizing classical texts, does one produce a Christianized translation because the meaning of the text is actually defined by its relationship to eternal truth? To what extent does the meaning of a text lie in its aural and visual codes? How, for example, would you translate a pun, and what would you do with an anagram or an acrostic?

### 'On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood'

'On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood' (probably written in 1592) is Marlowe's least read poem, which is unfortunate because it is an excellent example of the way Marlowe uses classical culture to undermine the social and political authority classicism is supposed to uphold. Critics have tried to explain Marlowe's authorship of the Latin elegy 'On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood' by arguing that Marlowe harboured a soft spot for a fellow Kentish man, who was one of the judges on the bench during the hearing in December 1589 that cleared Marlowe of any wrongdoing in the death of William Bradley. However, while Manwood was a successful judge, who rose to be Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, his final years were characterized by serious and repeated charges of misfeasance. In 1591, for example, he was exposed as trying to sell one of the offices in his gift and rebuked by the queen. The lieutenant of Dover Castle charged him with perverting the course of justice, and the suffragan Bishop of Dover accused him of selling the queen's pardon in a murder case for £240. Manwood may not have been more greedy than other Elizabethan judges, but in 1592, the year of his death, he was confined to his own house, by order of the Privy Council, as the result of a complaint against him brought by a goldsmith. Manwood was only released three weeks later on making humble submission. The Privy Council was investigating his extended possession of a gold chain, which the goldsmith had handed over as security for a loan, and Manwood had insulted them with the high-handed observation that those with hollow causes always run to the powerful, and where truth counts for nothing, might prevails – a protestation of victimization that may strike us as a bit rich coming from the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in dispute with a goldsmith.

Given Latin's penchant for punning and wordplay, and the circumstances of Manwood's later career, there is a hitherto unacknowledged wit in Marlowe's elegy, which derives from the spatial and acoustic nature of words

and from the particular nature of Latin as described by Dryden. At one point the *guiltless man*, 'insons', is called upon to weep because his protector, Manwood, is dead.<sup>7</sup> The word 'in-sons' also suggests the idea of being without sound, and the guiltless person is soundless until he weeps. When the poem cries, *Jealousy spare the man*, 'Livor, parce viro', it may well be acknowledging the bad press that surrounded Manwood just before he died. Like 'insons', the phrase 'Livor, parce viro' is a particularly Latin form of wit. The word 'viro' is actually contained within the word 'livor', albeit with a rearrangement of letters. 'Livor', *jealousy*, can indeed spare the man, as it can spell out 'viro' and still have the letter 'l' to spare. The play of word within word is a common feature of Latin tomb inscriptions, as the idea of mortal remains, encased in a tomb, encased in words, plays its own games with secrecy and revelation, emptiness, and reference. At other times, Marlowe's puns introduce a sub-text of money and riches that alludes, uncomfortably, to the facts of Manwood's greedy old age. Manwood is described as 'rigido vulturque latroni', *a vulture to the hardened criminal*, a phrase which praises Manwood, at the same time as it suggests that he is the kind of scavenger that will pervert justice for money. He is also the 'fori lumen', *the light of government*, but the Roman forum was not only the centre of Roman politics, it was also a marketplace, and the term implies the commercialization of the political and juridical which was the cause of Manwood's disgrace.

The elegy is self-conscious about its own elegiac conventions and their limitations, the shores of Acheron are, after all, 'effoetas', *worn out*, as well as *dim*, and Marlowe's elegy is ambivalent, in the literal sense of having two (ambi) valences. It implies criticism and praise, and it looks to both Latin and English. The final line exemplifies its ambivalence: 'Famaque, marmorei superet monumenta sepulchri', *and your fame outlast the monuments of your marble sepulchre*. 'Fama' is a pun which invokes the divergent meanings of fame, rumour, and even ill repute, so the thing that might live for ever is Manwood's bad name. 'Marmorei' generates its own associations with Latin terms such as 'memorare', *to keep in memory*, 'mora' *delay*, perhaps with the idea that the elegy postpones forgetfulness, and 'mors' meaning *death*. At the same time, it invokes English words such as 'memory' and 'marmoreal' in a game of interlingual transposition. Elegies are conventionally aware of their material form, and Marlowe conceives of words, such as 'marmorei' and 'livor', as movable configurations of letters and syllables, rather than as fixed word-forms. The word-games both within and between languages extend the meaning of Marlowe's elegy and reshape thought by generating associations and differences through the formal patterns of words, through what words look like and sound like. If all this seems strange and far-fetched, this is because we have lost the sense of language as an aural and visual object,

as something that is spatially conceived and materially determined. There are images, hidden agendas, and riddles embedded in the very textures of writing, which is not only conceived, in the Renaissance, as a transparent medium for communicating truths, but also as an opaque object that generates its own unpredictable meanings.

The visual and verbal games in the epitaph ‘On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood’ point to a material conception of language that is also articulated in Marlowe’s other poems. This conception of language is one of the fundamental consequences of classicism and of living between two codes. The meanings thereby generated are oblique and esoteric, but this is part of their appeal. Paradoxically, as Quintilian notes in the *Institutio Oratoria* (9.2.64), emphasis is a form of occlusion, or hiding. In other words emphasis is achieved by leaving something latent, or hidden, for the audience to discover, and just because we have to work to find something, it does not mean that it is not there, or that it is coincidental.<sup>8</sup> Our idea of the classics is that they are restrained, unified, and uphold the principle of integrity, both on a structural and moral level. But Latin is prone to ambiguity, and through verbal patterning it raises the possibility of depths of meaning which undermine the drive to a clear-cut, simple conclusion. In Stoic and Renaissance Christian philosophical traditions, the puns, word games, and patterns, with their ridiculous yoking together of ideas, would not only have been construed as demonstrations of the plenitude of creation, but also as proof of the deep structural and conceptual coherence of a cosmos that is carefully designed.

### *Ovid’s Elegies*

*Ovid’s Elegies* is the title of Marlowe’s translation of Ovid’s *Amores*, a sequence of three books of love poems addressed by a male poet-lover to his mistress. Each poem is a letter in which the poet describes his feelings in the developing relationship, but this is no ordinary romantic hero, but a man who is bitter, disloyal, violent, sarcastic, and over-sexed, as well as adoring, witty, and passionate. It is unclear when Marlowe undertook the translation of the *Amores* but most critics agree it dates from his time in Cambridge. The first edition included ten of Ovid’s elegies (the Elizabethan term for epistolary poems of love or complaint), although later editions extended to translations of all three books. The first edition, which also included Sir John Davies’s *Epigrams*, satirical poems which were always published with Marlowe’s *Elegies*, was published without a date on the title page, but is thought to date from 1594–5. Such circumspection on the part of printers is usually a sign that there is something dangerous about the publication. Marlowe’s decision to translate the *Amores* was certainly a scandalous one,

given that Ovid's text was widely held to be pornographic, and Marlowe's *Elegies* were eventually banned by the censors in 1599.

Marlowe's meditation on the materiality of language, which is encouraged by his familiarity with Latin, is also developed in *Ovid's Elegies*, which explore the different connotations of letters, whether as alphabetical symbols, or material objects, or epistles, or in the sense of 'Letters' as a sublimated, quasi-spiritual, artistic activity. For example, Book 1, Elegy 11 describes an exchange of letters between the lovers and imagines the mistress reading and writing. In 1.12 the poet curses the very tablets on which he writes, which were made from wood covered with wax. Alluding to the fact that the writing tablets are folded double, and are hence physically duplicitous, the poet curses his materials:

Your name approves you made for such like things,  
 The number two no good divining brings.  
 Angry, I pray that rotten age you wracks,  
 And sluttish white-mould overgrow the wax.  
 (OE 1.12.27–30)

The idea that writing lies because of its physical nature, because of the substance on which it is written, is reinforced by the potential of wax to melt and mutate. In writing and rewriting the *Amores*, Ovid and Marlowe both participate in a cult of good letters, and the very first elegy carefully establishes their literary credentials and their awareness of literary conventions, defining their amatory style through a comparison of heroic and elegiac prosody, where the elegiac metre is shorter than the heroic: 'Love slacked my muse, and made my numbers soft' (1.1.22). Literature is defined by its mode of consumption and the introductory elegy makes sure the reader knows that the poems should be consumed as literary artefacts. However, the cult of good letters is also, quite literally, a cult of the letter in *Ovid's Elegies*. In 1.3, the poet asks his mistress to love him so that she can become the subject of his books:

Be thou the happy subject of my books,  
 That I may write things worthy thy fair looks.  
 By verses horned Io got her name,  
 And she to whom in shape of swan Jove came  
 And she that on a feigned bull swam to land,  
 Griping [sic] his false horns with her virgin hand.  
 (OE 1.3.19–24)

Io was a mortal woman who was turned into a bull, and the reference to her myth is yet another witty play with the materiality of writing, as Renaissance

children learned to write on hornbooks, a piece of wood covered with transparent horn, which allowed marks to be erased. Io is 'horned', in the sense that she has horns, because she has been turned into a heifer, and in the sense that she is made in writing: 'By verses horned Io got her name.' The story of Io is also a myth about how writing came into being. In Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells us that, after she had been turned into a heifer, and had lost the power of speech, Io identifies herself to her father by letters which she inscribes on the ground with her hoof (*Metamorphoses* 1.647–50). Io gets her name both in the primary scene of writing, as it is described in one of the mythological accounts of the birth of letters, and in the Elizabethan petty school, the practical birthplace of letters, where children scribbled away on their hornbooks, and were inducted in the processes of writing well, in all senses of the phrase.

However, there is something else at play in Marlowe's poem, an association between writing and turning which is suggested by the Latin terms 'versus' meaning *verse*, and the verb 'versare,' which means *to turn*. Line 22 refers to another famous story of metamorphosis, or turning, in the myth of Leda, who was turned into a swan, and line 23 refers to the myth of Europa, who was raped by Jove in the form of a bull. These lines are typical of *Ovid's Elegies* in that they introduce the threat of sexual violence at the moment they attempt seduction. The pun on 'horned' also suggests the cuckold's horns, and, like *Hero and Leander*, *Ovid's Elegies* establishes a link between metamorphosis, or turning, rhetorical power, and transgressive sexuality, which is central to Renaissance interpretations of Ovid. Turning is integral to verse. It is fundamental to metaphor and simile, and both poems exemplify the process whereby the *Metamorphoses*, with its tales of transformation and translation, becomes the quintessential *poetic* text in late Elizabethan England. What Marlowe picks up from Ovid is that literary texts display extreme technical and verbal agility, and furthermore that this rhetorical skill is sexualized. It is used to seduce, whether the object of seduction is the beloved or the reader, and in the case of *Ovid's Elegies* the beloved and the reader of the letters are one and the same. Rhetoric is used to mediate the desires of writers and readers with the result that reading and writing are configured as erotic transactions. Rhetoric even has its own erotic momentum and lets slip all kinds of innuendo which escape the control of the author.

The translation of the *Amores* was a big task. It was also a breathtaking instance of innovation and self-confidence, because it was not only the first translation of Ovid's text into English, it was also the first English text to use the rhymed heroic couplet for an extended piece of writing. Marlowe has yet to receive the credit due to him as one of the Renaissance's greatest

poetic innovators. Marlowe is famous for his mighty line, and for his developments in blank verse, but he also put the heroic couplet on the map, after Nicholas Grimald's pioneering experiments with the form, in English, in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). Spatial effects are crucial to the couplet, which constructs meanings from the interplay of parts held in space by its strong form.<sup>9</sup> The patterning and arrangement of words carries a lot of the argument in the couplet, which exploits balance and contrast, and lends itself to the processes of comparison, juxtaposition, and apposition. The verse form of the couplet functions in much the same way as metaphor to suggest differences and similarities. Marlowe has not yet perfected his use of the couplet in *Ovid's Elegies*, which tends to think in lines, rather than in couplets, but Marlowe does succeed in arguing spatially. For example, by exploiting the placement of the words in the rhyme scheme, he suggests analogies between 'charms' and 'harms' (3.6.27–8); and he suggests a mutually constitutive relationship between the speaker and bad repute, by rhyming 'am I' and 'infamy' (3.6.71–2). In *Hero and Leander*, Marlowe perfects the heroic couplet, not only exploiting it to create a tone of refined, conversational fluency, but perfecting its comic and erotic potential. The rise and fall of the couplet movement lends itself to comic bathos, but its teasing rhythms also play games of invitation and delay, which collude with Marlowe's overlaying of the erotic and the poetic.

Read together, 'On the Death of Sir Roger Manwood', *Ovid's Elegies*, and 'The Passionate Shepherd' explore the different functions of elegy in Renaissance culture. An elegy was a poem of commemoration, but it was also a love lyric, and as such it had a potential to spill over into satire. *Ovid's Elegies* are a sustained meditation on the pathology of love, its pleasures, psychological perversions, and ideological functions. They are Marlowe's sonnet sequence, and the poet-lover finds himself drawn to a masochistic and sadistic relationship in which he equates virility with poetic success.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, while *Ovid's Elegies* are sexy and urbane, in contradistinction to the Spenserian idealization of chastity, they also question the values of urbanity by exposing the aggression and self-delusion of the male sexual sophisticate, and Marlowe's translation makes the speaker more aggressive and scandalous than Ovid. The sequence is full of programmatic statements about the nature of poetry, but those statements are frequently reductive: 'Toys and light elegies, my darts, I took, / Quickly soft words hard doors wide open strook' (2.1.21–2). Writing this kind of verse has the highly practical aim of getting sex, of getting the woman to open her doors, and the elegy is a sour exposé of the role played by the idealization of love in sexual and poetic ambition.

### 'The Passionate Shepherd'

'The Passionate Shepherd' (1599), like *Ovid's Elegies*, must be read in relation to the Elizabethan political context because it interrogates pastoral and love lyric, favoured modes of political address to a monarch who Spenser famously cast as 'fayre Elisa, Queene of Shepheardes all' (*The Shepheardes Calender*, *Aprill* 34). Any courtship situation figures the political backdrop of Elizabethan England because of the implicit pun on court as a verb and court as a noun, and private love is imagined through its convergences and divergences from the public world of sentimentalized political transaction. In 'The Passionate Shepherd', the speaker is a compound of dominance and suppliancy, and the petition for favour can be interpreted as a petition for patronage. Furthermore, in the context of the model of collaborative authorship which this pastoral lyric exploits, and then occasions, in its implicit demand for a reply, the petition for favour is also a petition for friendship, with all the sexual ambiguity latent in the term. It is a request for intellectual companionship that is open to erotic reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> 'The Passionate Shepherd' was, and still is, one of the most famous Elizabethan lyrics, and was endlessly copied, imitated, and answered through the seventeenth century. Marlowe's lyric presents itself as an ideal product of courtly society in which he outdoes the courtiers at their own game. The poem is an idealization of rural life, an attenuation of the harsher historical realities of country life, in which rusticity is appropriated for urbanity. Raleigh makes this point when he replies to Marlowe in a poem that introduces time and process into the prelapsarian ideal of Marlowe's pastoral. Raleigh's phrase, 'sorrow's fall' (st. 3), invokes the Augustinian idea that sex after the Fall is never satisfying, and Raleigh's time-drenched parody is critical of the utopianism of 'The Passionate Shepherd' and of Elizabeth's personal mythology of unaging, erotic attraction.

When the first version of Marlowe's pastoral was published in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), it did not have a title, and its conventional title, 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love', fixes the gender of the speaker, when there is nothing in the poem that ties it to a male speaker or a female addressee, except its general relation to the tradition of *carpe diem*. The lyric's favoured figure of paronomasia, the alteration of a single letter, as in live/love, is a game of sameness and difference, of aural, visual, and referential consonance and dissonance, which redirects our attention to ambiguity as the principle that governs the poem. As is also the case with *Hero and Leander*, equivocation makes 'The Passionate Shepherd' what it is: a masterpiece. In *Hero and Leander*, the description of Leander (1.51–90) applies the conventions of the female blazon to a man, as it invokes metamorphic myths, including those of

Circe, Narcissus, and Hippolytus, and demonstrates extreme poetic skill. It plays off what is materially visible against what is imagined, and the description of Leander comes to define the ambiguity of representation, as it comes to stand for the fact that any work of art, however accomplished, both is and is not what it claims to be. The description of Leander, like the text of 'The Passionate Shepherd', is a play of sameness and difference, of male and female, of past and present, of foreign, classical, and English. Ambiguous gender representation emerges as the supreme instance of artistic skill in the Renaissance, but this raises the issue of whether art is a civilizing force, or a force that perverts and is deceitful. The ambiguous speaker of 'The Passionate Shepherd', the girl-boys Hero and Leander, and the cross-dressed boys of the Elizabethan stage all share the same erotic charge, and exploit the hybridity whose representation is the ultimate test of artistic prowess in Elizabethan culture.

As we might expect from Marlowe, the gender politics of 'The Passionate Shepherd' are difficult to pin down because identities are difficult to pin down in the poem. If the invitation is directed by a man to a woman, then the fantasy of a compliant mistress may well figure more aggressive Elizabethan male fantasies of deflowering the great virgin queen. The beloved's silence could certainly express submission, but it could also express resistance. Masculine rapaciousness is checked by the open-endedness of Marlowe's poem, which requires a reply. Indeed Raleigh wrote a reply in which the answer was a clear no. Identity is also difficult to pin down in this poem because of its dense literary quality and its embeddedness in a classical tradition which turns Marlowe's lyric into a collaboration between Marlowe and his predecessors. Marlowe's pastoral draws on another story of a passionate shepherd who tried (unsuccessfully) to woo his love, in the myth of Polyphemus and Galatea (*Metamorphoses* 13.789–897). This myth then became the subject of a singing competition in Theocritus' *Idylls*, an extremely famous text in the Renaissance and a model for pastoral which was as important as Virgil's *Eclogues*. Marlowe's pastoral continues this pattern of transferring voices and stories. It has no single originary source, and is already inscribed within a cycle of collaboration and polyvocality before it explores the pleasures and vices of seduction. In *The Passionate Pilgrim*, the Marlowe–Raleigh interchange is followed by a poem that alludes to the myth of Philomel and Tereus, and is certainly contextualized by this notorious myth of rape, but in Marlowe's pastoral, once the lyric is separated from its traditional title, the rape is potentially male rape, as well as female rape.<sup>12</sup>

The links between the rhetorical and the erotic in this poem are also revealed in the way Marlowe's utopian pastoral vision makes its appeal to the body, as well as the mind. The sensuous appeal of art is articulated



thematically, and also in the smooth refinement of the verse, which caresses the ear, and conditions it to expect certain rhythms and sounds. Marlowe's speaker offers to make the beloved 'beds of roses, / And a thousand fragrant posies' (st. 3), playing the game of physical, figurative, and linguistic transposition that is central to this poem, where the addressee is invited to come over here, where nature is transformed into the armoury of seduction, and where one word slips into another. The terms posies and poesies are visually and acoustically very similar and are further linked through the etymology of the word 'anthology', which is literally a collection of flowers. In fact, Elizabethan books were linked to flowers in another way as they were sometimes perfumed, and lavender and other fragrant herbs were sometimes stuffed under their covers, especially embroidered covers. The phrase 'fragrant posies' is not just a pretty poetic image, but a reference to the real synaesthetic appeal of Renaissance texts, and to poetry's ability to move both body and senses.

### *Hero and Leander*

Marlowe's classicism enabled the production of radically new ideas about the nature and value of literature which became the catalyst for the formation of a literary canon, and of a literary community, in late Elizabethan England.<sup>13</sup> *Hero and Leander* constructs a self-consciously modern, specifically literary persona, which is associated with wantonness, ornament, and excess. It is a poem that avoids conclusions, it questions its own processes, and reveals the world to be a radically unpredictable place where individuals are at the mercy of unpredictable desires.<sup>14</sup> Like all Marlowe's poems, it alludes to texts that are stylistically unwholesome, digressive, and excessively ornamental. Ovid and Musaeus, the principal sources for *Hero and Leander*, do not embody the chaste, virile style advocated by the influential Roman critic, Quintilian, in his canon of good Roman writing, and Marlowe's engagement with contemporary poetics, in *Hero and Leander*, also involves an exploration of the racial ideologies that are latent in literary ideals that the Renaissance derived from Roman critics like Quintilian and Cicero.

*Hero and Leander* (1598) is the only poem by Marlowe that has received anything like the critical attention it deserves. As with all Marlowe's poems, there is no conclusive evidence as to dating, and the shape of the Marlovian cursus remains elusive, but the vast majority of readers place Marlowe's little epic, or epyllion, at the end of his career, and for Cheney, it marks the turn to epic in Marlowe's Ovidian cursus, along with the translation of Lucan. *Hero and Leander* is about the nature and status of literature, and

sets up a mutually constitutive relationship between artistic mastery and erotic success. The more accomplished their rhetoric, the more successful the characters are in getting what they want, and this includes the narrator. Marlowe's epyllion is consummately urbane, witty, and accomplished, a masterpiece of the poetic art that includes all the desirable poetic elements such as allusions to mythology, rich imagery, and a couplet form brought under complete control. At the same time, however, the kind of authorship Marlowe explores in the poem is a transvestite form of authorship which self-consciously effeminizes itself. The gender politics behind the idea of a *master-piece* are undermined in two ways: firstly, by the inability of all characters, including the narrator, to avoid chance and to control sexual desire, and secondly, by suggesting parallels between the narrator's strategies and those employed by the female characters in the game of seduction. Marlowe redefines the author as a transvestite who self-consciously adopts feminized behaviour. In its narrative digressions, for example, the poem succeeds in seducing the reader by imitating the coy behaviour which is usually ascribed to women, as it manipulates the reader's narrative desire by flirting with onward thrust and delay (1.425–30). The story of Mercury and the country maid links the rhetorical and the erotic, as the narrator's narrative accomplishment is recast as erotic arousal. The country maid puts Mercury off to bring him on, just as the narrator puts the reader off, by frustrating their desire to follow the main story of Hero and Leander, to bring them on.

Some of the most famous digressions in *Hero and Leander*, including 1.9–50, 1.55–90, and 1.135–57, are ekphrases, what we might call purple passages, highly accomplished descriptions that could stand on their own as examples of poetic excellence. These descriptions of visual objects also reflect the process whereby the visual becomes verbal, and life endures an unpredictable passage into art, but the ekphrases also contribute to the digressive structure of the poem as they get in the way of the narrative. The beauty of the descriptions arouses wonder, 'But far above the loveliest Hero shined, / And stole away th'enchanted gazer's mind' (1.103–4), but the ekphrases are also transgressive in that they cross over the boundaries of narrative, and enter the realm of dilation, of leisurely expansion and time-wasting, which is a specifically aesthetic space. The result of the text's inability to get on with it is that the text becomes a fetish, an object that is irrationally revered, and substitutes itself for erotic satisfaction. The long, but highly accomplished, descriptions stand in for action, stimulate the desire for action, even sexual action given that this is a love story, and convert themselves into the objects the literary consumer admires and desires. In *Hero and Leander*, all literary process is eroticized, including writing, which follows sexual rhythms; reading, which is recast as voyeurism; speaking, which is either

a form of seduction or is riddled with unexpected double entendres; and even publishing, as Leander seduces Hero with an argument that establishes parallels between promiscuity and the advantages of an exchange economy (1.224–94).

The poem questions the viability of boundaries and systems of containment, and in doing so it alludes to the racial discourse latent in emerging aesthetic discourse. As an original poem that combines elements of translation and imitation, with invention, it adds foreign elements to the nationalistic, vernacular brew. But hybridity is a threat posed by the famous location of the action. The hometowns of Hero and Leander, Sestos and Abydos, are opposed to each other across the Hellespont, the narrow channel of water that separates Europe from Asia, so their story is one of political and rhetorical miscegenation, as it figures the threat that Asiatic style posed to Roman *brevitas*, or brevity. Roman critics, like Cicero, were hostile to the florid, luxurious style which they dismissed as Asiatic, soft and even effeminate, and set the Asian against good Roman style which was tough, spare, and manly. Marlowe's poem reflects on colouring as a rhetorical, cosmetic, and racial issue. Hero and Leander are certainly praised for fairness and whiteness, which would seem to confirm the racial ideal. When Leander implores Hero, 'Be not unkind and fair; misshapen [sic] stuff / Are of behaviour boisterous and rough' (1.203–4), he means that, by nature, fair Hero should not be unkind, but his paradox acknowledges that she *is* unkind, and the racial discourse implicit in the idolization of fairness is both asserted and inverted. 'Spotless chastity' (1.368), whiteness (1.65), and purity (1.7–8) are celebrated, but are then challenged by the miscegenating processes of the eroticized marketplace, and the poem's celebration of sexuality. Marlowe's epyllion is a deliberately self-marginalizing text which pursues all kinds of contamination. Like *Ovid's Elegies*, with their own obsessions with gender and racial hybridity, and *The First Book of Lucan*, with its mixture of humour and tragedy, *Hero and Leander* is devalued by a critical paradigm which attempts to keep things clean. Marlowe deliberately pursues mixture and instability in his poems. His texts are hybrids which mix genders, genres, languages, cultures, and tones. In doing so, the products of Marlowe's classical imagination probe his own culture's aesthetic ideals and the way they are founded on ideals of moral, racial, and gender purity. Marlowe's highly influential epyllion articulates a new sense of literary value in a trope of self-promotion through deficiency and scandal. His text is structurally and thematically scandalous, but at least it does not lie, nor advance claims to disinterestedness and moral purity that cannot be maintained.

*Hero and Leander* opens with a striking description of Hero's appearance in which feminine beauty, constructed as erotic, spectacular, and mesmerizing, as well as threatening and deceptive, is figured through her clothes. Her garments are made of lawn and lined with purple silk decorated with 'gilt stars'. Her green sleeves are 'bordered with a grove' where naked Venus desperately tries to attract the attention of Adonis, and her blue kirtle, or skirt, is stained 'with the blood of wretched lovers slain' (1.9–16). Hero is immediately inscribed in the realm of the artefact and is made into an object of quantifiable and abstract values whose circulation becomes the vehicle for all kinds of capital investments, from the exchange of money involved in buying books, to the symbolic capital Marlowe accrues through his poetic accomplishment. But Hero does not only have visual appeal, she is also a compound of olfactory and auditory delights. Her veil is decorated with flowers and leaves that are so life-like that people, and bees, mistake her breath for the fragrance of what they think are real flowers, and her ingeniously engineered buskins make pleasing churring noises when water passes through them, in parody of the sieve imagery that was exploited by Elizabeth to figure her chastity (1.17–36). Hero's appearance is familiar from the sumptuous embroidered clothes that adorned and presented sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bodies, and the compound of delights she offers is typical of a culture alert to the appeal of simultaneous sensations where heavily decorated caps, purses, gloves, and even books were frequently perfumed.

One of the things this chapter has tried to do is to put the senses back into our understanding of Marlowe's poetry. Marlowe's description of Hero's clothes (1.9–50) focuses attention on the somatic consequences of texts and the function of ornament in late Elizabethan culture. The object with all its vibrancy and physical force is apprehended by the senses and becomes part of the process of thought through, not in spite of, its physical nature and physical effects. The imagery and colours of Hero's clothes seem to hide some deeper meaning and demand deciphering. For example, does the picture of Venus and Adonis serve as an admonition against lust, or a celebration of beauty and desire? Colours could themselves be read, and blue usually indicates amity, while green usually indicates love. In this sense, the description functions like an emblem, combining visual and verbal representations, and traces out Horace's dictum, '*ut pictura poesis*', in the fabric of Marlowe's text. In the Horatian commonplace, poetry is a speaking picture, and painting is a dumb poem, and the description of Hero's clothes focuses attention on the implications of this unfamiliar way of viewing image and text. But colours and patterns can also be chosen for purely decorative purposes and,

in a manner typical of the poem, Hero's clothes both invoke and retract their own symbolic significance, fluctuating between their role as sign and their role as product. To the extent that ekphrasis reflects Hero, but also defines her, Hero's description operates on the interface between subject and object, art and nature, and reflects on the processes of canon formation which require the material aspects of writing to be absent. *Hero and Leander* is a poem about the nature of the aesthetic which points to the etymological root of the word aesthetic in the Greek word for the *senses*. Through interweaving of the textual and the corporal, it interrogates the thematics of surface and depth, the hierarchy of text over materiality, and the process that sets rationality over aesthesis, or the processes of the mind over simple sense perception.

### *Lucan's First Book*

*Hero and Leander* is related to *Lucan's First Book* (1600) through their interest in wandering and truth. *Hero and Leander* pursues the pun Socrates identified in the Greek word for *truth*, 'aletheia', which he defined as 'ale-theia,' or *divine wandering*. *Lucan's First Book* explores *truth* as 'A-lethe-ia', or the condition of being *without forgetfulness* (lethe), which is the truth of the historian. But *Lucan's First Book* is also a digressive text which explores the compatibility of romance structures and narrative history, and the compatibility of poetic and historical modes of truth. Lucan's text immediately became the focus for debates about partisanship and the abuses of history in Roman culture. While Statius praised him, Tacitus argued that Lucan was driven by personal animosity, and so Lucan came down to the Renaissance as a string of questions and ideas about the nature of history, which were precisely the questions Marlowe was exploring in plays such as *The Massacre at Paris*. Not many people now read Lucan, but in the Renaissance Lucan's single surviving text *De Bello Civili*, also known as *The Pharsalia*, was widely read, admired, and quoted, both for its rhetorical power and for its moral and historical content. However, Lucan's biography is as important as his text in explaining his charismatic appeal for the Elizabethans. Lucan embodied the humanist ideal of eloquence married to service to the state, and he was the nephew of no less a figure than Seneca. He successfully held public office under Nero, but quarrelled with the emperor and eventually joined the Pisonian conspiracy. The conspiracy was uncovered and Lucan was forced to commit suicide, aged twenty-six, reputedly quoting lines from *The Pharsalia* as he died.

*The Pharsalia* is the great epic of classical republicanism, and the manner of Lucan's death inscribed him in the Renaissance imagination as a martyr

to tyranny.<sup>15</sup> It tells the terrible story of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, a shocking tale of depravity and rampant lust for power whose major target is Caesar:

Destroying what withstood his proud desires,  
 And glad when blood and ruin made him way:  
 So thunder which the wind tears from the clouds,  
 With crack of riven air and hideous sound  
 Filling the world, leaps out and throws forth fire,  
 Affrights poor fearful men, and blasts their eyes  
 With overthwarting flames, and raging shoots  
 Alongst the air, and, nought resisting it,  
 Falls, and returns, and shivers where it lights.  
 (LFB 150–8)

But Lucan's moral fury encompasses both the depravity of Rome and the weaknesses of the men who were later to become republican heroes. Rome's status as a role model is compromised by its decadence, which provokes a loss of masculinity leading to the collapse of virtue: '[Men] scorned old sparing diet, and ware robes / Too light for women' (165–6), and Lucan combines political radicalism with gender and class conservatism. In his translation, Marlowe plays history against myth, both the myths of classical mythology and the classical and Renaissance myths about Rome as the ideal model for all subsequent political institutions. Marlowe was the first person to translate Lucan into English, and his restless blank verse conveys the savagery and thirst for extremity of Lucan's original, but for all its bloodiness and black humour, Lucan's *Pharsalia* is an invigorating text, one written by a man with furious political commitments, in a culture where literature was a form of public intervention. For readers who find themselves in a culture of political apathy, Lucan's text comes as a shock.

France served as a formative intertext between Marlowe and Lucan. The Duke of Guise, from *The Massacre at Paris*, is modelled on Lucan's Caesar, and Marlowe read widely in the French and English propaganda produced at the time of the French wars of religion, from the late 1580s onwards.<sup>16</sup> Marlowe's translation of Lucan needs to be read in terms of his on-going sceptical engagement with epic, with the nature of heroism, with masculinity, militarism, and the potential for good and for evil in masculine *virtus*, and with his meditations on the relation of the writer to authority. There are two rival traditions of epic: the first is associated with Virgil and the epics of the imperial victors, and the second is associated with Lucan and the epics of the defeated.<sup>17</sup> The victors experience history as a coherent, end-directed story, and the losers experience history as contingency and open-endedness: 'The

world's swift course is lawless / And casual; all the stars at random range' (641–2), in the words of Marlowe's *Lucan*, so Lucanic epics are episodic and invoke romance structures. *The Pharsalia* deliberately echoes *The Aeneid* to underline its own alternative form of epic, one which dissipates the focus on a single hero. Caesar has the dynamism of the classic hero, but without the hero's sense of communal responsibility. Republican values and epic masculinity are incompatible, given republicanism's privileging of community over the exceptional individual or dynasty.<sup>18</sup>

In choosing to translate Lucan, Marlowe was making a public statement about the political and ideological investments of Elizabethan England, about the idolization of epic, and its concomitant idolization of Tudor centralizing power, and about the epic conception of laureateship. Nero has survived as one of the greatest tyrants of history, but what is less frequently remembered is that he fancied himself as a writer and patron of the arts. Marlowe uses Lucan to engage with Virgil and Spenser, and their writing of power, but he also addresses another configuration of writing and power. In late sixteenth-century England, the image of Elizabeth as an author and linguist was familiar, although her texts were rarely circulated. Not only did she exploit ways of investing sovereignty in the voice of the monarch, she also explored ways of investing sovereignty in writing. Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) constructs Elizabeth as the ideal of courtly writing, and as the ideal courtly writer.<sup>19</sup> Lucan supplied examples of the perverse relationship between authority and authorship – in Nero, and in Caesar, the author of *De Bello Gallici* – and *Lucan's First Book* engages with Elizabeth's own paradigmatic textuality. The satiric rage, sourness, vertiginous hyperbole, and hybridity of Marlowe's translation, with its indecorous mixture of jokes and blood, is an affront to the norms of courtly writing.

Lucan could have been read in Renaissance England as a republican writer, but he could also have been read as a repository of historical facts and political wisdom on matters such as the role of counsel, which did not necessarily acquire a republican inflection. At the same time, it is misleading to attenuate the political, as opposed to the specifically republican, impact of Lucan in sixteenth-century England, bearing in mind that Cuffe was supposed to have inspired Essex to rebellion by discussing Lucan with him. Marlowe's translation of Lucan offers him a way of taking up a position within the most pressing contemporary political debates, when discussion of such issues by a general public, beyond the controlled environments of court and council, would have been censored. The late 1580s and 1590s were marked by a revival of interest in Lucan prompted by the civil war in France, fears over the English succession, and the Babington Plot of 1586, which was tied to the problems posed by Mary, Queen of Scots.

Mary was a rival to Elizabeth's throne, and her presence on English soil threatened the country with the kind of factional strife described in *The Pharsalia*:

While Titan strives against the world's swift course,  
Or Cynthia, night's queen, waits upon the day,  
Shall never faith be found in fellow kings.  
Dominion cannot suffer partnership;  
This need no foreign proof nor far-fet story.

(LFB 90-4)

The invocation, quotation, and imitation of Lucan in late Elizabethan England was an act of political agency which had contemporary valence. In his *Defence of the Honorable Sentence and Execution of the Queene of Scots* (1587), M. Kyffin cites Lucan to justify Elizabeth's actions:

If the King of Spaine should come into Fraunce, although perhaps the French King mought take him for his brother, in the sence of the Poet (fratrum concordia rara) yet I doubt he would not take him there for his fellow, omnisque potestas impatiens consortis erit: there is no Kingdome that will abide a Copartner.<sup>20</sup>

Lucan came down to the Renaissance as the focus for debates about the definition of poetry and history. Quintilian canonized this interpretation of Lucan in the *Institutio Oratoria* (10.1.90), when he suggested that Lucan was more suitable as a model for orators than poets. *Lucan's First Book* thematizes the problems of reading in context, most notably in the invocation to Nero, with its joking reference to Nero's large size, 'The burdened axis with thy force will bend' (57). The invocation to Nero is deliberately problematic, and its availability to both panegyric and satirical interpretations relates the invocation to the problems of interpreting historical narrative, both in relation to the past and in relation to the present, as does the poem's witty avowal that we need no 'far-fet story' (94) to prove that power-sharing is always doomed. *Lucan's First Book* is about the rage for explanation. The terrified Romans run to the augurs and seers in a desperate bid to make sense of a welter of events. The augurs and seers are versions of the historian, and are distinguished by different levels of competence, and by their alignment with different schools of thought (633-41), and each tries to make a truthful, or at least plausible, narrative out of the events.

History tends to be associated with the particular, and poetry with the universal, in Renaissance thought, and *Lucan's First Book* is sceptical about the universalizing thrust of poetry, and its dangerous mythologizing powers. Time and again, rhetoric is used by wicked characters to justify opportunism, apathy, and aggression, by claiming that events and decisions are



propelled by some grand design. So, for example, Caesar thinks that the Fates have ‘bent’ to him (394), when the reader knows that the things that have prompted the army to side with Caesar against Rome are actually the blood-lust of the soldiers, the charisma of Caesar, and the eloquence of the chief centurion Laelius (353–96). At the same time, it is the poetic perspective, with its awareness of the lies and tales that words can tell, that becomes the vehicle for exposing the truth.

Rome does not always serve as a positive model in Marlowe’s poems, most notably in his translation of Lucan, where Rome is condemned, as well as being cast as the object of nostalgic longing. Marlowe’s classicism defines a discursive space in which he can address the problems of time and distance, the relationship of the past to the present, and of alien and English elements. The classical texts he chooses to address are not invoked as ways of fixing meaning; rather Marlowe generates diverse meanings out of the confrontation between classicism and the present. In Marlowe’s hands, classicism renovates understanding and mints new forms.

NOTES

1. Gordon Braden, *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. xiv.
2. W. R. Johnson, ‘The Problem of the Counter-Classical Sensibility and Its Critics’, *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 3 (1970), 123–51; Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe’s Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-Nationhood* (University of Toronto Press, 1997). Cheney notes that Marlowe exploits a counter-Virgilian, Ovidian *cursus* based on the triad of amatory poetry, tragedy, and epic to contest the political, poetic, and gender ideologies of the Virgilian/Spenserian model. For Virgil and Ovid as contrasting ‘literary–political authorities’ (p. 6), see Heather James, *Shakespeare’s Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
3. James VI, *The Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie* (Edinburgh, 1584), M2<sup>v</sup>.
4. Walter J. Ong, SJ, ‘Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite’, in *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 113–41. Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 19–60; and Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 23–7. See also Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 28.
5. Several texts are overlaid in this speech, including Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, Ovid’s description of Hecuba in *The Metamorphoses*, 13.399–575, and Aeneas’s description of Hecuba in Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* 2.1.244–6. Overlaying is typical of Renaissance interpretation of the classics.
6. *Essays of John Dryden*, W. P. Ker (ed.), 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), 1: 238.

7. In this chapter all quotations from Marlowe's poems are taken from *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations*, Stephen Orgel (ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).
8. See Jonathan Culler, 'The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction', in Culler (ed.), *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 1-16; and Frederick Ahl, *Metaformations: Soundplay and Wordplay in Ovid and Other Classical Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
9. If Lee T. Pearcy's numerological reading of the first edition of *Ovid's Elegies* is correct, in *The Mediated Muse: English Translations of Ovid 1560-1700* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1984), pp. 1-36, the sequence signifies through yet another kind of patterning.
10. See Orgel's comments in *Complete Poems*, ed. Orgel, p. 233. M. L. Stapleton, *Ovid's 'Amores' from Antiquity to Shakespeare* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 133-53, argues that *Ovid's Elegies* influences Shakespeare's dark lady sonnets. On the offensiveness of *Ovid's Elegies*, see Ian Frederick Moulton, 'Printed Abroad and Uncastrated: "Marlowe's Elegies with Davies' Epigrams"', in Paul Whitfield White (ed.), *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), pp. 77-90.
11. For excellent discussion of this lyric, see Douglas Bruster, 'Come to the Tent Again: "The Passionate Shepherd"', *Dramatic Rape and Lyric Time*, *Criticism* 33 (1991): 49-72; and Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, pp. 68-87.
12. For an extremely suggestive discussion of Elizabeth as Tereus, and Raleigh as Philomel, see Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession*, pp. 76-8.
13. Georgia E. Brown, 'Breaking the Canon: Marlowe's Challenge to the Literary Status Quo in *Hero and Leander*', in White (ed.), *Marlowe, History, and Sexuality*, pp. 59-75; 'Gender and Voice in *Hero and Leander*', in J. A. Downie and J. T. Parnell (eds.), *Constructing Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 148-63; and *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
14. Robert Logan, 'Perspective in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*: Engaging our Detachment', in Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance B. Kuriyama (eds.), *A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker: New Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 279-91.
15. James Shapiro, "'Metre Meete to Furnish Lucans Style": Reconsidering Marlowe's *Lucan*', in Friedenreich (ed.), *A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker*, pp. 315-25, is excellent but overlooks the importance of *Lucan's* life.
16. William Blissett, 'Lucan's Caesar and the Elizabethan Villain', *SP* 53 (1956), 553-75. On the French connection in Marlowe's drama, see Richard Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 72-III.
17. David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 7-9 and 131-209.
18. David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics 1627-1660* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23-62, esp. p. 36.
19. See Jennifer Summit, "'The Arte of a Ladies Penne": Elizabeth I and the Poetics of Queenship', *ELR* 26 (1996), 385-422.
20. Qtd from Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 120.

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