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# Targeting Nonconformity in Elizabethan England: Colonial Rhetoric as a Tool of Religious Differentiation

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TARGETING NONCONFORMITY IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND:  
COLONIAL RHETORIC AS A TOOL OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENTIATION

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By:

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2015

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## ABSTRACT

Christopher Marlowe's early modern plays were unequivocally controversial and often seen as testament to his presumed atheism. However, these assumptions focus on the depicted conflicts using religious terms, sometimes overlooking the geopolitical implications of the portrayed demographics. In this project, I argue Marlowe examines not only the religious institutions of early modern England, but also the moral compromises necessitated by England's colonial endeavors. Through close readings of *The Jew of Malta*, *Tamburlaine*, and *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus* as well as contributions from various scholarly perspectives, I conclude that Marlowe's analysis critiques the treatment of religious minorities as others, revealing the similarities between the discourse surrounding religious nonconformity and the discourse used to justify colonization.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Marlowe, Faustus, Tamburlaine, Jew of Malta, Religious

Dedicated to my parents, Tammy and Allen,  
for surviving my adolescence. I made it rather difficult.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The global age of imperialism is thought to have officially dawned in the 1870's along with the scramble to colonize Africa (Said 70). And yet, there were traces of colonial activity much sooner. As Emily Bartels notes, ideological traces of imperialism were present in Britain as soon as the mid-sixteenth century ("Fictions of Difference" 98). And though the British Empire had not yet reached its height at this time, "colonial expansion was still a major issue in the discourses of the day" (Francis 112). In other words, Britain's expansionist sentiments existed, but they had not yet been codified into actual foreign policy. Nonetheless, we know these sentiments existed because traces of them remain in other historical sources of information, such as dramas. In particular, "Christopher Marlowe's plays, produced in the 1580s and 1590s, record that interest, with their characteristic exotic presentations of foreign worlds and peoples" (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 98). These plays preserve the public consciousness of early modern England with a depth otherwise overlooked by history. Thus, their study presents a unique opportunity to scrutinize the rhetorical devices used to justify colonialism in its infancy.

Collectively, Marlowe's plays analyze oppression through the depiction of colonial rhetoric used to persecute other demographics— especially religious minorities. This also offers insight into early modern England's treatment of the domestic Catholic

problem. As Nirpjit Bassi explains, there was a growing nationwide concern about the English Catholics who refused to adopt the official state religion of Protestantism (1). This concern was transformed by England's contact with foreign peoples, which gave them a new way to conceptualize religious difference. Just as the English justified expansion through the construction of the native peoples of their desired lands as foreign and "other," so too were they able to distance themselves from the alien Catholics at home. By using otherization to rhetorically separate themselves from their Catholic peers, Protestants used their rhetorical approach to the problems of the new world to address the problems of the old world, specifically religious nonconformity.

However, such a conclusion must emerge from a thorough understanding of England's religious and imperial past. By reviewing England's historical treatment of Catholics during its period of expansion and then exposing references to that history in Marlowe's plays, this thesis argues that Marlowe's analysis critiques the treatment of religious minorities as others, revealing that the discourse surrounding religious nonconformity and the discourse used to justify colonization of foreign lands are different applications of the same rhetorical strategy.

### **Inconstancy in State Religion**

Sixteenth-century England was host to near constant shifts in national and spiritual identity, creating rampant uncertainty and turmoil. After Henry VIII converted England from Catholic to Protestant, his eventual successor, Mary I, switched the nation back to Catholicism. Only five years later, Elizabeth replaced Mary I as ruler and returned England to Protestantism. These changes all occurred in rapid succession,

resulting in England having three different rulers (and three different official religions) in the 1550's alone. Despite this temporary inconstancy, England eventually settled on Protestantism under Elizabeth. Nonetheless, some feared another impending shift and remained loyal to their old Catholic practices, leading to debates about the role of religious non-conformists in English society. As Bassi explains, these debates coincided with a growing popularity of playgoing, resulting in the frequent depiction of marginalized Catholics on the dramatic stage, now a significant economic and cultural institution (1). Subject matters such as these (cultural marginalization) transcended mere entertainment and established the theatre as an important site for social and political discourse.

This discourse was largely inspired by religious reform in England. When Elizabeth returned the nation to Protestantism, she forbade most Catholic practices, including processions, feasts, and the celebration of saints. Excessive ornamentation such as altarpieces were removed, and church services were greatly simplified (Mclean 3). Despite these reforms, however, many in England felt the queen had not gone far enough in reforming the church and accused her of excessive leniency to those who continued to practice the old ways, leading to questions about the potential for further reforms as well as the toleration of non-conformity (Mclean 3). These questions fueled rampant anti-Catholicism at home as well as an increased public disdain for foreign Catholic nations, meaning negative representations of Catholics on stage would have resonated with certain playgoers.

Despite the official transition to Protestantism, elements of Catholicism persisted for the early portion of Elizabeth's reign (Bassi 21). The Catholic priesthood who served

under Mary I and remained in England after her death, for example, continued to practice and lead Catholic services. Relying on local communities to shield them from the authorities, these priests travelled around to the areas in England still sympathetic to Catholicism, such as Cornwall and Yorkshire (McLean 47). To support these efforts, the papacy began to send Jesuit missionaries to England in hopes of reconverting England to Catholicism (McLean 47).

These missions, however, created a severe backlash. The influx of missionaries from Rome began to attract attention from the authorities, who saw their endeavors as antithetical to religious uniformity and threatening to political stability (Bassi 24). Around this time, legal persecution of Catholics was heightened. As Bassi explains, the persecution of Catholics first began with the Henrician Reformation's treason laws that made it illegal to deny the monarch as the head of the English church (24). This made allegiance to the papacy an act of political subversion and social deviance. However, these laws were only sporadically enforced until the aforementioned mass arrival of the Catholic Jesuits, at which point legal persecution was significantly increased.

Of course, this persecution was motivated by more than the domestic proselytization efforts of the Catholics. Rather, external conflicts with Ireland, France, and Spain fueled English fears about a foreign invasion (Covington 10-15). Together, these factors culminated in Elizabeth's passage of new penal laws in 1571 that illegalized Catholic conversion efforts, and then by a series of new regulations that made it treasonable to provide any assistance to Catholic immigrants and declared Catholic priests traitors to England (Bassi 25).

Severe legal action against these priests and missionaries quickly became widespread. As Bassi argues, persecution was allowed to escalate to this height because of the general mistrust and fear that was ascribed to Catholics (26). Thus, the discourse that surrounded Catholicism rallied public support for a decisive Protestant response. Negative discourse permeated literature and art but was especially conducive to satirical portrayal of Catholicism in the theatre. Portrayed as treacherous and untrustworthy, Catholics became stock characters that symbolized otherness in English society (Dolan 37).

Negative portrayals encompassed Catholics in England as well as those abroad. For example, the stage often presented English Catholics as treacherous servants or wives who served only to fuel domestic conflict (Dolan 37). Sometimes, however, narratives featured characters from Catholic nations such as France, Spain, or Italy. When these foreign characters stirred trouble in the plot, Protestant audience members were able to recognize them as external threats imported into England from the outside (Dolan 37). Dramatic reliance on anti-Catholic tropes and symbols created negative representations on stage that established Catholicism as the “anti-religion,” demonizing Catholics in England’s cultural imagination (Bassi 26).

Negative constructions of Catholicism persisted over time, eventually becoming a facet of the English identity. In tandem with the split from Rome and periodic clashes with many European nations, fixating on an external threat (the Catholics) fostered new notions of nationalism and “Englishness” (Bassi 35). That is, the Catholics became the common enemy that helped to build a sense of community among Protestants. This was aided in part by growing xenophobia among English natives as the result of a general

influx of immigrants from a myriad of foreign countries (Hoenselaars 26). As Bassi argues, this national identity interacted with existing prejudices and self-perceptions to create a discourse of nationhood that excluded certain demographics— Catholics, especially (36).

Excluding Catholics from the idea of Englishness only worsened public disdain for them. Thus, the new sense of identity and the resulting accusation of otherness constructed England as an elect nation specially chosen by God to replace and defy the Catholic Church (Bassi 36). Thus, “the ‘othering’ of Catholics was a significant part of this discourse about nationalism” (Hoenselaars 26). As Carol Weiner summarizes, “no good Englishman could have defined his national identity without some mention of distaste for Rome” (qtd. in Bassi 36). This severing of Catholicism from the English identity further divided Protestants and Catholics, both at home and abroad.

### **England’s Anti-Catholic Foreign Policy**

While concerns about the Catholic threat unfolded in the English psyche, so too did anti-Catholic rhetoric manifest in England’s foreign policy. This was probably at least partially inspired by the negative cultural assumptions about Catholicism in England, but it was also exacerbated by the dawn of the age of exploration.

Since the medieval period, England’s education system had slowly improved to provide more opportunities for people to acquire skills like literacy, arithmetic, bookkeeping, and commercial and business acumen (Guttek 117). Now better trained to succeed at their trades, the rising merchant class in England began to thrive, investing its knowledge, ambition, and money in private maritime exploration (Guttek 116). This new

investment increased exploration and was also supplemented by improved maritime technologies like the compass and the sextant, which made navigating previously unapproachable waters possible (Gutek 116).

With these new technologies, England's private enterprises (and to a lesser extent, the government) spent most of the late 1500's establishing their first settlements in the Americas in hopes of reaping the rewards of a new world. However, they weren't the only ones interested in the region. The Spanish also exercised colonialist ambitions in the Americas. As Toni Francis explains, this shared objective led to a series of sea wars between England's Protestant Alliance and Spain's Catholic Empire, both desiring control over the new world (112). These sea wars, notes Francis, reinforced England's perception of the Catholic Spain as a threat and helped to forge England's "ideology of the empire" (112).

While establishing a foothold in the Americas was certainly a state priority, England didn't much concern itself with colonization. As Francis elaborates, Elizabeth was more concerned with Spanish aggression in her corner of the world (primarily in the Netherlands and in France) than she was with asserting English dominance in a different hemisphere (112). Consequently, most royal funds were instead earmarked for the domestic war against Spain, leaving the faraway sea wars to privateers and pirates (Francis 112).

Even without state-sanctioned support, however, the English presence in the Americas became quite formidable. Most of these commercial endeavors received some degree of off-the-books support from the state but were primarily privately funded with the intention of acquiring economic spoils overseas. As Francis explains, many of these

efforts entailed at least some degree of piracy, an activity that both supplemented the capital necessary to start a colony and slowed down the Spanish in their efforts to colonize (112). Interested in hampering Spanish influence in the new world, the crown offered some support to these entrepreneurs, who became the primary means by which England spread across the Atlantic.

Elizabeth devoted most of her focus and political capital to the domestic warfront with Spain and only unofficially supported England's private colonialist enterprise. This allowed her to focus on the more immediate threat, but it also allowed her a degree of deniability over English aggression towards the Spanish in the new world. Elizabeth's "semi-private adventurers shifted between the roles of pirate and privateer, buccaneer and colonizer," but they were never in her official employ, and thus their actions, even when provocative, could not be blamed on the English leadership (Francis 113). Distancing herself from the sea wars in this way allowed Elizabeth to maintain an "ostensible innocence in terms of empire building" (Francis 113).

Though England's government played an ambiguous role in territorial acquisition, the nation continued to expand through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This era of increased geographical expansion and settlement of other cultures led to a marked fascination with "other worlds," talk of which came to dominate European colonialist discourse and English drama (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 97). These lands of the other were perceived as mysterious and savage, populated by indigenous peoples notable for their "absolute difference" from Europeans (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 98). Distinguishing those affected by colonization by their apparent lack of civility helped to rhetorically separate the colonizers from the colonized and helped to justify the morally

ambiguous nature of forced cultural assimilation. As Emily Bartels concludes, these rhetorical “strategies of power” helped to fuel English expansionism abroad while also saturating the public consciousness at home, spurring onstage reproductions of the other (such as in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*) (“Fictions of Difference” 98). In this way, early modern dramas soon reflected and analyzed the shape and direction of the now prominent public discourse on colonialism.

### **Marlowe’s Skepticism**

Reproductions of colonialist discourse on stage were relatively common in early modern England, especially in the plays of Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe, a man about whom we know very little, was an enigma even in his lifetime. Born in Canterbury, Marlowe grew up to attend college at Cambridge for his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. His frequent absences from class, however, led to rampant speculation about his personal life. He was often accused by contemporaries of atheism, homosexuality, and was even thought to be a government spy (Bassi 41). Though these claims were never proven (or disproven), he was arrested for sword fighting, counterfeiting, and assault. In May 1593, Marlowe was fatally stabbed while quarrelling over a bill of food with another tenant at his inn. Ingram Frizer, the culprit, was acquitted of murder after claiming self-defense. As Bassi explains, the circumstances of Marlowe’s death spawned conspiracy theories about his potential vocation as a spy as well the possibility that he faked his death (42). Whatever the case, Marlowe’s literary career concluded at age twenty-nine.

In the weeks leading up to his death, however, Marlowe became enveloped in legal prosecution resulting from the publication of *Tamburlaine*, which received harsh

criticism for its perceived blasphemous (and possibly atheist) undertones. As Bassi notes, these (potentially) atheist ideas in *Tamburlaine* fostered accusations that the playwright himself was atheist, a charge that was very dangerous in early modern England (43).

Despite the controversial nature of his work, however, Marlowe's plays were printed even after his death and continued to be performed until the theatres closed in 1642 (Bassi 42). They persisted in success because their controversy was precisely what appealed to Marlowe's audiences:

The audience that Marlowe imagined...was evidently one that wanted to be challenged with novel, often difficult and uncomfortable, situations. For this audience he offered moment after moment that could nonplus, elicit an array of conflicting feelings, cause self-reflection among, or awe playgoers (Walsh 71)

Of course, *Tamburlaine* wasn't the only protagonist whose actions elicited "conflicting feelings" in audience members. In fact, many of Marlowe's characters were often depicted as blaspheming against traditional Christian values. For example, Barabas, *Tamburlaine*, and Faustus all transgress God in their ambitious quests for glory or revenge in *the Jew of Malta*, *Tamburlaine*, and *Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*, respectively (Bassi 43). Unfortunately, the exact function of these characters remains difficult to discern. As Bassi argues, "it does not seem as if Marlowe has any straightforward agenda when discussing spiritual matters" (44). Rather, his work is difficult to interrogate and is sometimes assumed to be critical of all religions (Bassi 43).

This assumption seems plausible when looking at the plays collectively. After all, most of them interrogate different aspects of religion or different religions, themselves (such as Judaism in *the Jew of Malta* or Islam in *Tamburlaine*). Sometimes, the plays even appear to disagree with one another. For example, *Tamburlaine* appears to defend Muslim Turks as a people capable of morality on par with (or greater than) Christians by juxtaposing them against a ruthless Christian. Conversely, *Faustus* can be read as a critique of England's political alliance with the Ottoman Turks, portraying the Catholics as comparatively worse than Turks by depicting the pope as a corrupt and dangerous entity. By both critiquing and defending a myriad of religions, Marlowe broadens his argument to be generally critical of all belief systems. Muslim, Jewish, or Christian: no system is perfect in Marlowe's eyes.

The common thread binding these different analyses of religious oppression is the depiction of colonial rhetoric as a means of persecution. To justify unfairly taxing the Jewish Barabas, Ferneze constructs him as an other compared to the Christians of Malta. To rationalize his brutal conquest over the Muslim Turks, *Tamburlaine* accuses them of blasphemous and self-defeating beliefs. And to support his efforts to prank and antagonize the Catholic Pope, *Faustus* establishes the Pope's religious powers as inferior to his own. These are different critical applications of the same interrogation of persecution rhetoric.

Many, such as Bassi, advocate reading Marlowe simply as a critic of religion. However, I argue that by looking to the Marlowe's portrayal of colonial rhetoric in religious contexts, we can see that the discourse surrounding religious nonconformity is in many ways an application of colonial discourse. This becomes clear as Marlowe

problematizes those discourses throughout the plays. In *the Jew of Malta*, Marlowe sets up and then complicates a rhetorical dichotomy between the colonized and colonizers. In *Tamburlaine*, he portrays Tamburlaine as comparatively worse than the Ottoman Turks. In *the Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*, he compares the Ottoman Turks to the Spanish Catholics, establishing his unease about England's geopolitical alliance with the Turks. Through these rhetorical strategies, Marlowe critiques the use of colonial rhetoric in religious persecution and contributes a subversive voice to discussions about religious nonconformity and the English identity.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE JEW OF MALTA

In the expansion-oriented discourse of the early modern era, a preoccupation with the savage inhabitants of colonized lands settled over the dramatic stage. Frequently portraying the foreign residents of England's acquired lands as weak or inferior, the stage helped to justify and perpetuate this discourse (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 98). While the rhetoric of otherization was used overseas, however, so too was it used to characterize the Jewish residents of England proper. As David Katz explains, Christians of the early modern era were firmly anti-Jewish, feeling a "constant need to differentiate themselves from their older brother and to demonstrate that the new religion was superior in important and even cosmic ways" (1). This attitude was also reflected onstage, as Jews were often dramatically demonized and portrayed as an exotic and "curious display" (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 98). However, as Emily Bartels explains, Christopher Marlowe added new elements to these dramatic trends, utilizing assertions of difference in unprecedented and complicated ways, "ultimately revealing the fictionality of myths of domination and difference ("Fictions of Difference" 98). *The Jew of Malta*, especially, helps to subvert the myths of domination and difference by showcasing the frailty of (and sometimes, inverting) the European binary of Jewish otherness. By setting up the type of rhetorical dichotomy that the audience would have been familiar with due to its frequent use in expansionist discourse, and then complicating that dichotomy by subverting the

distinctions between its two sides, Marlowe effectively problematizes the colonizer's practice of presenting colonized peoples as distant others.

### **Dichotomy of Difference**

Before complicating the dichotomous relationship between *The Jew of Malta*'s colonizers and colonized, Marlowe first constructs the binary so that it is immediately recognizable to English audiences. As Bartels notes, the binary relationship depicted in *the Jew of Malta* was a predecessor of what Edward Said's studies in Orientalism would later critique as a rhetorical device ("Fictions of Difference" 98). Public discourse frequently used this relationship to justify imperial aggression in England's expansionist ambitions. That is, Europeans were historically inclined to portray their relationship with conquered peoples to the public as a dichotomy utilizing assertions of difference. These assertions would seek to create an "artificial boundary" between the civilized Europeans and the "others," a group associated with ignorance and barbarity (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 98). Thus, English audiences would have had some preconception of the rhetorical binary set up in *Jew of Malta* before even attending the play. Marlowe appealed to this preconception when initially establishing Barabas, the Jewish protagonist, as a stereotypical, greedy Jew and by categorizing the Maltese Christian majority as complex and refined.

The character of Barabas is, even from the exposition, meant to instill fear and ambivalence within viewing audiences. The briefly seen character of Machiavill introduces the antihero, making an explicit reference to the notorious Machiavelli, an Italian contemporary of the era known for controversial publications thought to

encourage immoral leadership among politicians. According to Robert Bireley, the very term “Machiavellian” accrued usage as a pejorative shortly after Machiavelli’s publication of *The Prince* in 1532 (241). In this way, Marlowe’s introductory character would have embodied a negative connotation within the public consciousness to predispose audiences to reject Barabas before he even entered the stage. Thus, the introduction to the first act serves to assign Barabas the stereotypically Jewish qualities of greed and self-interest by utilizing associations with a well-known public figure.

Ironically, the real Machiavelli, hailing from Italy, would have been more closely associated with Christianity than Judaism. Despite Machiavelli’s general skepticism of religion (he thought it was useful only insofar as it could be used to manipulate the populace), Italy was so closely ingrained with Catholic Christian culture during the Renaissance that fully separating its citizens from that culture was difficult. Thus, Marlowe chose to introduce Barabas using an existing Christian paradox: a man from a Christian nation who seemed to go against Christian ideals. I argue this may have primed audiences to interrogate the use of questionable rhetoric in the pursuit of religious ends, rather than just questioning Jewish motivations.

Of course, the audience’s expectedly negative reaction to Machiavelli’s introduction would have been quickly reinforced by the actual character of Barabas once he entered the stage. As his first scene opens, Barabas counts piles of money on the floor while bemoaning the inconvenience of having to do so: “Fie, what a trouble ‘tis to count this trash!” (1.1.7). Acquiring so much wealth that he now thinks of its value as “trash,” Barabas would certainly not have made a positive first impression. In addition, Barabas

consistently reminds the audience of his unsavory priorities through occasional revealing asides:

Who hateth me but for my happiness?  
Or who is honour'd now but for his wealth?  
Rather had I, a Jew, be hated thus,  
Than pitied in a Christian poverty;  
(1.1.111-14)

By not only prioritizing his worldly possessions, but explicitly assigning them greater value than the Christian faith, Barabas fulfills the Jewish stereotype of self-interest, alarming Christian audiences with apparent blasphemy. As Stephen Greenblatt elaborates, this stereotype of greed in tandem with Barabas' on-stage immoral behaviors allows for him to become an "embodiment" of everything Christian audiences feared and misunderstood about the Jewish population (114). In this way, Barabas initially functions more as a caricature in Marlowe's play than a dynamic character.

Of course, as Julia Lupton argues, Marlowe's use of dramatic extremes to portray Barabas was in line with the original inspiration for the character of the Jew – the early modern allegorical figure of "the Vice," an archetype left over from the medieval and early Protestant morality plays of the sixteenth century (149). Barabas fully realizes this villain template, embodying the various negative qualities expected from antagonists during his on-stage tirade to Ithamore in which he delivers a laundry list of his devious crimes:

BARABAS. As for myself, I walk abroad o' nights,  
And kill sick people groaning under walls:  
Sometimes I go about and poison wells;  
(2.3.179-81)

In this way, Marlowe relies on the playgoer's familiarity with the villainous archetype of the era to evoke feelings of disgust and dislike for Barabas before his moral complexity is revealed.

Stereotyped costuming further reinforced this portrayal of the corrupt Jew. As Bartels elaborates, plays of the era often portrayed Jews as greedy and self-interested, but they also typically costumed Jewish characters using red wigs, beards, and large noses ("Fictions of Difference" 98). It is likely that Marlowe followed the aesthetic conventions of his contemporaries, a notion supported by the plays' many allusions to the size of Barabas's nose:

BARABAS. I smelt 'em ere they came.  
ITHAMORE. God-a-mercy, nose! Come, let's be  
gone.

(4.1.23-25)

In this way, the physicality of the Jew relied on behavioral stereotypes to foster a distance between Barabas and Christian audiences. Indeed, Barabas embodied the extreme of what it meant to be a Jewish stereotype, both physically and morally.

Though the portrayal of Barabas is, in many cases, explicitly prejudiced, Bartels argues Marlowe crafted such an extreme version of Barabas to emulate the rhetorical tactics used to publically justify European expansionism ("Fictions of Difference" 98). England often sought to describe the peoples they conquered as barbaric and primitive, displacing the qualities they disliked by assigning them to an "other." Marlow accessed this same rhetorical device by portraying Barabas using extremes, depicting him as greedy, selfish, and physically reminiscent of Jewish stereotypes. This established the aforementioned "artificial boundary" between the character and the viewing audience,

setting up a dichotomy between Barabas, the barbaric, greedy Jew (in short, the “other”) and the Maltese Christians (with whom the audience was more likely to initially identify).

Barabas’ name also serves to amplify the intended distaste for his character.

Barabas, named after the criminal released by Pilate instead of Jesus, would have evoked the anti-Semitic notions sometimes associated with the New Testament’s crucifixion scene. By naming Barabas after a biblical character strongly associated with Jesus’ death at the hands of the Jews, Marlowe would have played upon these sentiments. To further entrench the Christian/Jew binary, Marlowe allows Ferneze to remind the audience that while his cohorts are dominating the island of Malta, that they are not nearly as morally corrupt as the Jews:

FERNEZE. No, Jew, like infidels;  
For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,  
Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are befall'n,  
And therefore thus we are determined.—  
Read there the articles of our decrees.  
(1.2.62-7)

Here, Ferneze describes the Jews as “hateful,” but doesn’t accuse them of any specific hateful action. Rather, he views them as inherently abominable because simply being Jewish puts one at odds with heaven. Ferneze didn’t tax his fellow Christians in Malta unfairly, but Ferneze portraying the Maltese Jews as “infidels” likely made taxing them far more justifiable to both himself and the audience. In this way, Marlowe completes his dichotomy by distancing the Christian audience and the Christian governor from the stereotypically greedy behavior of Barabas, the Jew.

Once Marlowe establishes this dichotomy, he begins to subvert it by complicating the actions and moral reasoning of both the play’s depicted dominated peoples and its

dominators. Most notably, he exposes the contradiction between Ferneze's claims and actions:

FERNEZE. Out, wretched Barabas!  
Sham'st thou not thus to justify thyself,  
As if we knew not thy profession?  
If thou rely upon thy righteousness,  
Be patient, and thy riches will increase.  
Excess of wealth is cause of covetousness;  
And covetousness, O, 'tis a monstrous sin!  
(1.1.121-7)

Ferneze argues that taxing the Jews is righteous because their wealth is the result (as well as the cause) of covetousness, a "monstrous sin." And yet, Ferneze displays this sin himself by pursuing wealth through taxation. As Bartels explains, this hypocrisy undermines Marlowe's binary: "The governor's insistence on religious difference is immediately subverted by his laws, which rewrite the distinction in economic terms" ("Fictions of Difference" 103). This is then further exacerbated through Ferneze's new edicts that require Jews who refuse to pay their taxes to be forcibly converted to Christianity.

Despite also claiming that staining their hands with blood was far from their goals as proselytizers, Ferneze watches gleefully as Barabas dies in a boiling cauldron in the final scene, taunting as he suffers:

FERNEZE. Should I in pity of thy plaints or thee,  
Accursed Barabas, base Jew, relent?  
No, thus I'll see thy treachery repaid,  
But wish thou hadst behav'd thee otherwise.  
(5.5.71-4)

This action is significant because Barabas set up the cauldron to kill Ferneze, who repurposed the trap to kill Barabas instead. I argue that by appropriating the Jewish trap meant for Christians, Ferneze adopts the exact murderous strategies he consistently

condemns in Barabas, indicating that the two characters might never have been that dissimilar. These discrepancies begin to unravel the Christian extreme of Marlowe's dichotomy, revealing that the Christian characters depicted in the play are morally complicated and not easily knowable.

The relationship between Ferneze and the foreign powers seeking to subjugate Malta further confuses the intentions behind his self-proclaimed Christian principles. Though Ferneze falls at various times under the authority of countries like Catholic Spain and Muslim Turkey, he manipulates those powers into allowing him to maintain some degree of power as governor over the island. Consequently, he cunningly "exchanges a place as the colonized for a place as the colonizer, displacing his powerlessness onto an other..." (Bartels, "Fictions of Difference" 102). In this way, Marlowe subverts the discourse of distinction separating the play's oppressive powers and those they colonized, blurring the boundaries between the civilized establishment and the feared, notorious "other." Marlowe's implication, continues Bartels, is that imperialism may be less related to such distinctions of perceived civility and development and more the product of a "self-perpetuating chain reaction" ("Fictions of Difference" 102). By setting up the type of rhetorical dichotomy that the audience would have been familiar with due to its frequent use in expansionist discourse and then complicating that dichotomy by subverting the distinctions between its two sides and complicating their moral intentions, Marlowe problematizes the rhetorical devices by which the colonizer others the colonized.

Of course, as the play progresses, the role of the colonizer becomes increasingly unclear. After all, the original inhabitants of the island of Malta are never explicitly

identified. Rather, the island is said to host many different peoples of various origins: “Our fraught is Grecians, Turks, and Afric Moors...” (2.2.9). Without definitely knowing the identity or religion of the population, the roles of colonizer and colonized are not readily assignable in Malta. Bartels argues that the unknown nationality of those on the island proposes a contradiction: “to be of Malta means, in effect, not to be, originally, of Malta” (“Fictions of Difference” 102). I argue that in addition to this effect, the ambiguity of the setting adds to the unknowable nature of Ferneze’s and Barabas’ intentions by making it impossible to discern which demographic they are loyal to (as their own demographic affiliation is unclear).

In addition to complicating Ferneze’s behavior on stage, Marlowe also complicates the character of Barabas by making his intentions and behavior inconsistent. As Bartels notes, there are many points within the play at which Barabas could have been easily perceived as worthy of sympathy and acceptance (“Fictions of Difference” 105). And yet, these moments of sincerity (such as when he laments his loss of wealth or bonds with his slave Ithamore for the first time) are usually followed by sharp contradictions in Barabas’s behavior – usually the crafting of a new scheme. The inconsistent morality Barabas displays makes classifying him as ethical or unethical impossible, as he alternates between the two. This confuses, rather than validates, the Jewish stereotype onstage (Bartels, “Fictions of Difference” 105). Marlowe thus makes it impossible to neatly define Barabas as a stereotype, further subverting the dichotomy of difference he wished to question.

Of course, this inconsistency includes moments of great moral decay. This becomes exceptionally apparent after Barabas poisons an entire convent in an attempt at revenge for converting his daughter to Christianity:

BARABAS. There is no music to a Christian's knell:  
How sweet the bells ring, now the nuns are dead,  
That sound at other times like tinkers' pans!  
I was afraid the poison had not wrought,  
Or, though it wrought, it would have done no good,  
For every year they swell, and yet they live:  
Now all are dead, not one remains alive.  
(4.1.1-7)

Here, Barabas celebrates his successful mass murder without any vestiges of guilt or remorse. In this instance, his moral depravity is unquestionable. Marlowe complicates matters, however, by adding Christian friars to the scene. When Friar Jacomo and Friar Barnardine enter and accuse Barabas of the murders, he initially equivocates by interrupting them and changing the subject:

FRIAR BARNARDINE. Thou hast committed—

BARABAS. Fornication: but that was in another country;  
And besides, the wench is dead.  
(4.1.43-5)

When the friars persist, however, Barabas alters his strategy, openly confessing a different sin (his covetousness) and asking for a chance at conversion:

BARABAS. O holy friars, the burden of my sins  
Lie heavy on my soul! then, pray you, tell me,  
Is't not too late now to turn Christian?  
I have been zealous in the Jewish faith,  
Hard-hearted to the poor, a covetous wretch,  
That would for lucre's sake have sold my soul;  
A hundred for a hundred I have ta'en;  
And now for store of wealth may I compare  
With all the Jews in Malta: but what is wealth?  
I am a Jew, and therefore am I lost.  
(4.1.53-62)

In mentioning his wealth to the friars during the course of his confession, Barabas primes the holy men for his following offer:

In Florence, Venice, Antwerp, London, Seville,  
Frankfort, Lubeck, Moscow, and where not,  
Have I debts owing; and, in most of these,  
Great sums of money lying in the banco;  
All this I'll give to some religious house,  
So I may be baptiz'd, and live therein.

FRIAR JACOMO. O good Barabas, come to our house!

FRIAR BARNARDINE. O, no, good Barabas, come to our house!  
And, Barabas, you know—

BARABAS. I know that I have highly sinn'd:  
You shall convert me, you shall have all my wealth.  
(4.1.76-86)

Despite the friar's apparent knowledge of Barabas' massively deplorable crime at the convent, they immediately accept his offer, overlooking his past actions and welcoming him into their respective houses. Essentially allowing Barabas to pay them to set their convictions aside, the friars undermine the notion that greed is exclusive to Jews. Rather, the Maltese Christians are depicted as so greedy for Barabas' fortune that they pardon him for slaughtering an entire nunnery, showing their proclivity for justice and righteousness is outweighed by their desire for wealth.

Despite Barabas's often unseemly behavior, however, Marlowe manages to actually elicit sympathy for the character at pivotal moments throughout the play, usually by depicting oppression of the Jews of Malta. As Julia Lupton explains, the Jewish population residing in Malta consisted of legal non-citizens, and the population was thus denied regular civic participation and adequate representation in the Maltese legislature

(147). Despite being treated as legal “strangers” to Malta, however, they were required to pay taxes to contribute to the Maltese society:

FIRST JEW. Alas, my lord, the most of us are poor!  
FERNEZE. Then let the rich increase your portions.  
BARABAS. Are strangers with your tribute to be tax'd?  
SECOND KNIGHT. Have strangers leave with us to get their wealth?  
Then let them with us contribute.  
BARABAS. How! equally?  
FERNEZE. No, Jew, like infidels;  
For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,  
Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are befall'n,  
And therefore thus we are determined.—  
Read there the articles of our decrees.  
(1.2.57-67)

In this way, Barabas – though explicitly demonized – is simultaneously implicitly portrayed as a victim to a larger systemic bias. The Catholic Christians of Malta are willing to tolerate Barabas’ religious convictions, but only as long as they are able to collect huge tax revenues from him.

As Lupton argues, this unequal treatment was reflective of a greater societal disdain towards the Jewish populations of Europe: “...the Jews have persisted as a religious group; surviving past their due date, an uncanny, even undead quality colours the weird vitality they embody in the Christian imagination (148). In other words, societal exclusion of Jews was common in early modern England – a predominantly Christian era – because the very practice of Judaism was seen by the church as an archaic relic leftover from older times. This irrational disdain of Jews presents in the unjust taxation and attempted forced conversion of Barabas and the other Jews of Malta.

Because Barabas experiences oppression on-stage, continues Lupton, Marlowe elicits sympathy from the audience for a character who may be morally questionable –

but whose sometimes immoral behaviors (such as poisoning his enemies or manipulating reigning institutions to grant him power) serve the explicit purpose of surviving in an otherwise hostile place (148). Portrayed as an underdog cast aside by civic society because of his religious affiliation and attacked by reigning institutions (even as they continue to shift in Malta), Barabas' self-interest comes not only from greed but from an admirable tenacity. For example, Barabas attends the senate-house (where he first argues with Ferneze) to defend himself, having predicted that the Jews would soon face another onslaught of oppression:

BARABAS. Hum,—all the Jews in Malta must be there!  
Ay, like enough: why, then, let every man  
Provide him, and be there for fashion-sake.  
If any thing shall there concern our state,  
Assure yourselves I'll look—unto myself.  
(1.1.168-72)

Though the nature of the Jew's actions remains deplorable, his persistence among hostile peers helps to loosen the moral standards he might otherwise be subject to in the eyes of the audience: "Survival, moreover, implies compromise and pragmatism, a less than strict adherence to heroic or moral codes" (Lupton 148). This is a stark difference from Barabas' dramatic contemporaries, such as Shakespeare's Shylock (who is obsessed with and ruined by his zeal for following the letter of the law). Barabas' pragmatic pursuit of self-interest as a means of self-defense was reflective of Machiavelli's similar convictions.

As Arianne De Waal argues, Barabas' resistance to a clear characterization is a deliberate attempt by Marlowe to subvert the dramatic containment of religious otherness, sometimes seen in the plays of his contemporaries (29). For example, William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* is also set in a religiously diverse urban center and

follows the economic exploits of a clever businessman. However, De Waal continues, *The Merchant of Venice* portrays self-contained religious communities that are readily identifiable and cleanly separated, only fueling the “persistent circulation of Otherness” (29). In contrast, Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* depicts both Jews and Christians justifying their actions by relying on self-interested Machiavellian ethics. Unlike in *Merchant*, this makes separating the religions into distinctive categories of morality impossible, preventing playgoers from fully assigning the Jewish Barabas otherness using the rhetoric of difference despite their convictions. As De Waal summarizes: “...the continuous unfixing of religious identity in *The Jew of Malta* prevents the containment of difference...” (29).

As Julia Lupton elaborates, Barabas’ complexity helps to transcend the play’s “simple oppositions between Self and Other in favor of...a complex layering of legal, political, and social institutions” (144). By setting up a dichotomy of difference and then complicating it with uncertainty and moral ambiguity, Marlowe prevents containment of religious identity and manages to subvert the simple binary of the Jew versus the Christians. In this way, both the colonizer (Ferneze) and the colonized (Barabas) are so unknowable and complex that the identities of the dominator and the dominated are impossible to pin down.

This relationship is further complicated through the role-reversal of the Jew-Christian binary. Though Barabas is initially the victim of a hegemonic Christian rule, he soon regains his power over the island by becoming the new Maltese governor. Despite his newfound power, however, he continues to harbor resentment towards his Christian citizens. As De Waal explains, this represents a turning point at which Barabas ascends to

power and the Jew-Christian dynamic of dominance is reversed. With Barabas in charge, the audience is left to wonder how Barabas will treat the Maltese Christians, considering his disdain for them. Even the character of Ferneze asks aloud, “Will Barabas be good to Christians?” (5.2.75). This, argues De Waal, represents a reversal in the binary of power and the rhetoric of otherness: “Barabas others the Christians just as they attempt to split him off as Other...” (30). This creates a confusion in the audience as the distinction of difference between the oppressor and the oppressed is obfuscated past the point of distinguishability.

In addition to subverting the binary of Self and Other by exposing the complexity of their respective intentions, however, Marlowe also undermines the very notion of difference, itself. As De Waal explains, this is possible because the Maltese Christians are not only notable for their difference from the Maltese Jews, but also for their sameness. The various religious inhabitants of the island all engage in behaviors that would have been morally questionable to English audiences (even the Maltese Christians, who oppress the Jewish minority as soon as they appear). However, each group respectively defends their choices by selectively following the moral code of their religious identity, pursuing their various self-interested ends by justifying immorality with religious difference. In this way, Marlowe begins to collapse the two sides of the Jew-Christian binary into a singular archetype: one motivated by self-interest disguised as religious piety of various natures.

Ferneze’s confrontation at the senate-house further explores this sameness. As De Waal continues, the senate-house hosts “an instance of cultural contestation” in which taxation is determined to be a matter of state affiliation (30).

FERNEZE. Thus; since your hard conditions are such  
That you will needs have ten years' tribute past,  
We may have time to make collection  
Amongst the inhabitants of Malta for't.  
(1.2.18-21)

However, Ferneze soon also commands his knights to call upon “those Jews of Malta” as well, addressing them as “Hebrews” (1.2.38). By taxing the Jews separately from their non-Jewish peers, Ferneze acknowledges their exclusion from an otherwise homogeneous community. In this way, the Maltese identity is denied to the Jews despite their financial contributions.

This rejection of the Jews from Maltese society present throughout the play is repeatedly justified by claiming that it is God’s will for their population to be targeted.

This occurs as soon as the very first act:

FERNEZE. No, Jew, like infidels;  
For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,  
Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are befall'n,  
And therefore thus we are determined.—  
Read there the articles of our decrees.  
(1.2.62-7)

Here, Ferneze justifies the taxation of the Jews by claiming that they are seen as “accursed” to parties in heaven, and are thus deserving of punishment. This sentiment repeats throughout the play, especially in the scenes of Barabas’ death. In the fifth act, when Barabas has the appearance of death (though he has not yet actually perished), Ferneze notes that his fate was willed upon him by divine forces:

MARTIN DEL BOSCO. This sudden death of his is very strange.

Re-enter OFFICERS, carrying BARABAS as dead.

FERNEZE. Wonder not at it, sir; the heavens are just;

Their deaths were like their lives; then think not of 'em.—  
Since they are dead, let them be buried:  
For the Jew's body, throw that o'er the walls,  
To be a prey for vultures and wild beasts.—  
So, now away and fortify the town.  
(5.1.53-60)

Ferneze claims that Barabas, as an enemy of the Christian God, was justly killed by that same divine entity. When Barabas actually dies in the final scene, Ferneze repeats this notion:

FERNEZE. Content thee, Calymath, here thou must stay,  
And live in Malta prisoner; for come all the world  
To rescue thee, so will we guard us now,  
As sooner shall they drink the ocean dry,  
Than conquer Malta, or endanger us.  
So, march away; and let due praise be given  
Neither to Fate nor Fortune, but to Heaven.  
(5.5.108-123)

Reflecting on Barabas' slow and painful death, Ferneze argues that his moral depravity was the very factor that led to his demise. He concludes the play by noting that neither fate nor fortune were driving the events depicted, but rather, "Heaven" provided the guiding hand that resulted in Malta's liberation and Barabas' demise. In this way, *the Jew of Malta* opens by portraying Barabas as an enemy of heaven, and concludes with Ferneze justifying the Jew's gruesome death with that same assumption.

However, this notion is also challenged throughout the play, as the moral complexity and unknowable nature of Barabas often makes it seem as though he is no more morally corrupt than the Christians in the play. Ferneze, for example, condemns Barabas for setting up the cauldron to kill someone else, but is more than willing to kill Barabas using that same cauldron. Though Barabas' chilling demise might initially seem anti-Jewish, Ferneze's presence (and his appropriation of the Jew's supposedly

unacceptable murder tactic) within the scene adds a juxtaposition that provides a comparison of Barabas and Ferneze, suggesting they might not be so different after all.

Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* utilized public fascination with the mysterious and savage inhabitants of "other" lands to set up the familiar distinction of civility meant to rhetorically separate colonizers from the colonized. Unlike his contemporaries, Marlowe then subverted this distinction by portraying both sides of the rhetorical dichotomy of otherness as morally complicated. Ferneze and Barabas both engage in questionable ethics, but they remain convinced that their particular brand of religion is the morally correct one. Similarly, they both use this conviction to justify targeting members of a different religion (namely, each other). This comparison problematizes the colonizer's practice of constructing colonized peoples as distant and foreign 'others,' especially as a tool of religious oppression.

## CHAPTER 3

### TAMBURLAINE

Opening to a scene set in the east then slowly progressing across the lands of Persia, Asia, Egypt, and Africa, Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* follows a series of military exploits constituting what Emily Bartels refers to as an unequivocal "drama of empire" ("Spectacles of Strangeness" 53). The nature of this drama, though differing significantly between parts one and two (the play and its sequel, both written sometime in 1587 or 1588, though the exact dates are unclear), is often thought to affirm Marlowe's ostensible atheism and habitual stereotyping of other cultures. As Jonathan Burton notes, most analyses of *Tamburlaine* are saturated with the assumption that the play, like many early modern dramas, relied extensively on preconceived notions of the Ottoman Turks as "...irrational, despotic, and fanatical..." (125).

However, Burton notes, *Tamburlaine* stands apart from the counterparts of Marlowe's contemporaries because of its multi-faceted portrayal of the Turk (125). This portrayal, though occasionally encompassing the stereotype of the violent, expansionist Turk, also breaks away from those preconceptions through the display of civility and unmistakably advanced capabilities and technologies. By portraying the Turk as possessing both brutish and civilized qualities and then assigning those same complex (and sometimes, contradictory) traits to the character of Tamburlaine, I argue that Marlowe begins to blur distinctions between Tamburlaine and the often demonized

Muslim Turks. Absent a clear delineation between the moral compass of the (initially) Christian Tamburlaine and that of the Turk, preconceived notions of the evil Turkish Muslim begin to unravel— similar to Marlowe’s complication of Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. Indeed, by using part one to establish Tamburlaine’s assertion of difference from Muslim peoples based on inherent religious worth and then contradicting that framework by portraying Tamburlaine as blasphemous, cruel, and undeniably more barbaric than the Ottomans he conquers in part two, Marlowe fosters ambivalence in observing audiences in order to subvert the role of difference in colonial rhetoric.

### **England and the Turks**

Though *Tamburlaine* was not initially performed until the late 1580’s, England had contact with the real-world Ottoman Turks far beforehand. As Burton recounts, Anglo-Ottoman formal relations were first established in March of 1579, but the two cultures had been intertwined economically (England traded tin, steel, and lead for Turkish silks and spices) for decades already (131). As diplomatic tensions began to rise between England and Spain, the English economic reliance on Turkish goods increased.

Initially, these tensions arose with Spain’s annexation of Portugal’s seafaring empire and shipping routes, “creating difficult conditions for the export of woolen cloth essential to the English economy” (Burton 131). However, the tentative Anglo-Ottoman alliance was soon fueled by more than just economic necessity. As Burton continues, the relationship between the English and the Ottomans was partially formulated to hedge against the rising Spanish threat (131).

Interestingly, this strategic alliance was not negotiated in political terms, but in religious ones. Protestant England presented itself as an “enemy of ‘idolatry’” (and any

religion that employed images of saints or deities, i.e. religious art of the Catholic Spanish) when it approached the newly appointed Turkish Sultan, Murad III (Burton 131). The primarily Islamic Ottomans, harboring similar sentiments regarding idolatry and religious images, were quick to affirm the alliance (though this might have in part been motivated by the Ottoman's recent falling out with France). For the next several years, Queen Elizabeth would seek to reinforce England's relationship with the Ottoman Empire through written correspondences with the Sultan. As Burton elaborates, Elizabeth often reminded the sultan of their religious similarities by referencing doctrine, such as describing the trinity as "singular" or mentioning their shared anti-idol beliefs (136). These mutually exchanged letters helped to keep the political and economic intertwinement of England and the Ottoman Empire alive.

Most significant about the Anglo-Ottoman alliance, however, was the sense of equality that the two seemed to share. As Burton elaborates, Elizabeth didn't merely engage the foreign nation as primitive or inferior to English culture. Rather, her letters treated the Ottoman Turk "as a respected equal whose acceptance and approval of the English are paramount" (131). Indeed, despite their ostensible doctrinal differences, they managed to find enough common ground to facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship. This occurred despite the taboo of the foreign, mysterious East.

Such a relationship, however, was only possible because the English overlooked the myriad religious differences separating them from the Ottomans. While a denial of Christ's divinity would normally be considered incredibly problematic for England's relationship with any other nation, they overlooked this denial in the Muslim Turks. Indeed, Elizabeth engaged in a very complex staging of her relationship with the

Ottomans. As Burton elaborates, Elizabeth felt this compromise, while necessary for cooperation, was problematic for the fervently Christian England (133). Consequently, Elizabeth attempted to keep her ongoing negotiations with the Ottomans secret (Burton 133). This was in part because the English people could not reasonably be expected to find Elizabeth's alliance agreeable, having had a "longstanding hostility to Islam" (Bartels, "Spectacles of Strangeness" 57).

Unfortunately for Elizabeth, the Ottomans had no intention of keeping their relationship secret. As Burton recounts, "...while the English strove to hush the affair, someone – presumably in the Ottoman court – leaked copies of the correspondence..." during the 1570's (133). This was likely strategic in nature, as the Ottomans felt that "knowledge of even a potential alliance could be enough to keep the Spanish in check while the Ottoman army concentrated its efforts on the Persian front" (Burton 133). Consequently, Elizabeth's negotiations became public knowledge. The alliance nonetheless continued on despite the attention, apparently outweighed by a fear of the Spanish.

While the English were engaging the Turks in real-world political negotiations, Marlowe explores the notion of using religion as a political tool uncommitted to any particular doctrine in *Tamburlaine*. That is, just as Elizabeth selectively upheld the convictions of the Protestant church (of which she was the head) to obtain diplomatic leverage, so too does the character of Tamburlaine. Identifying primarily in part one as Christian, but exclaiming an allegiance to Mohamet at several points throughout the sequel, Tamburlaine takes Elizabeth's tactic to the extreme. As Burton argues, Tamburlaine's "shifting religious identity" is part of a reflection on the era's intermittent

waves of anti-Islamic prejudice (126). This reflection allows for Marlowe to question the justifications Tamburlaine uses in his colonial enterprise (i.e., Muslims are enemies of God). I argue that in addition to being a nod towards the on-again off-again anti-Islamic rhetoric used by the English state, Tamburlaine's strategic dismissal of religion is meant to specifically mirror Elizabeth's negotiation tactics.

Bartels argues that the mechanism Marlowe employed in criticizing colonial justification was unique to Tamburlaine and the Ottoman Turks ("Spectacles of Strangeness" 52). That is, the Ottoman Empire was uniquely equipped to showcase the arbitrary nature of cultural superiority. As Bartels continues, colonial discourse regarding the East was problematic as the East was arguably just as developed as Europe (unlike regions in other colonized lands such as Africa). Thus, the colonial discourses that habitually portrayed colonized peoples as barbaric or subhuman couldn't be successfully applied. As Bartels explains, while "Africa could be blurred into a savage darkness, the 'civilized' East could not" ("Spectacles of Strangeness" 59). In other words, the Ottoman Turks could not be portrayed as inherently lesser than the Christian Tamburlaine because their cultural development was on par with Christian nations. This made religious distinctions far more important for justifying colonization.

Of course, this would have especially mattered to early modern playgoers who were accustomed to the primitive portrayal of non-Anglo countries. Rather than watch Tamburlaine clash against a barbarian, they saw the military leader go up against a people that seemed just as civilized as he was (if not more, at times). In fact, given his ethnic ambiguity and ruthless nature, Tamburlaine might have come across as the barbarian, further supporting the civilized nature of the Turks. As Burton summarizes, the

English who visited the Ottoman-controlled lands found the nation to be so complex that they could not have possibly have hoped to subsume it into their own (129).

To the English, the Ottomans appeared to be expertly developed and very militarily capable, as was demonstrated by their conquest of Cyprus in 1571 (Bartels, “Spectacles of Strangeness” 54). The resulting attitude was rooted in both admiration and fear. England certainly desired to maintain an alliance with such a formidable nation, but it simultaneously felt threatened by the presence of a new superpower in its corner of the world. This coexistence of admiration and fear for the Ottoman Empire permeated the English psyche at this time. Thus, argues Bartels, it is no surprise that two of Marlowe’s plays (*Tamburlaine* and *the Jew of Malta*) both use the image of the Turk in the depiction of colonization (“Spectacles of Strangeness” 54).

### **Tamburlaine’s Fluid Convictions**

Absent a clear delineation of civility between the Christian Tamburlaine and the Ottoman Empire, the Scythian conqueror was driven to find another way of distinguishing himself from his colonized peoples. James Siemon argues that without clear cultural differences between Tamburlaine and those he defeated, Tamburlaine had no choice but to adopt “notions of social distinction in non-traditional terms” (155). Though Siemon argues that these non-traditional iterations of social distinction were a reflection of Marlowe’s personal history (like Tamburlaine, Marlowe had humble beginnings but managed to elevate his reputation nonetheless), I argue Marlowe intentionally used these social distinctions as a critical mechanism to question the non-traditional terms arbitrarily assigned to different religions. In other words, because

Tamburlaine and those he ruled over had similar levels of civility and refinement (the traditional means of elevating an oppressor over others), he could not use those factors as a measurement of his own superiority and was forced to find other means of doing so.

Tamburlaine's attempts at differentiation from the Turks were further frustrated by his geographic connection to them. As Bartels recounts, the Turks were originally from Scythia, Tamburlaine's homeland ("Spectacles of Strangeness" 57). Consequently, they may have shared some ethnic characteristics that made any sort of racial discrimination difficult. Thus, Tamburlaine could not differentiate himself from the peoples he conquered using their skin either. Without a claim to superiority grounded in technological acumen or ethnicity, Tamburlaine has no choice but to elevate himself using religious difference. Marlowe showcased this rhetoric of religious differentiation in an attempt to interrogate its merits.

The issue of religion in *Tamburlaine* is paramount in understanding how the play engages with colonial discourse because Tamburlaine consistently uses theological differences as justification for his conquering of various peoples. Unlike Ferneze in Marlowe's *the Jew of Malta*, who often cites Barabas' barbarity as proof of his backwardness, Tamburlaine recognizes his enemies, the Turks, are just as culturally advanced as he is. Because he cannot assign qualities of savagery to the Turks, Tamburlaine finds a different way to distinguish them from himself: using religious difference as justification, rather than ethnic or cultural differences. In this way, Marlowe uses the only clear distinction between Tamburlaine and the Turks to allow spectators to critique religious intolerance in a vacuum, rather than alongside cultural intolerance. This

allows for a greater exclusive focus on the religious aspects of cultural oppression, rather than a broader examination of oppressive rhetoric.

Initially, this difference is rather simple for Tamburlaine to implement. In part one, Tamburlaine remains steadfastly committed to his Christian faith, allowing him to use religious terms to establish himself as “authorized from above and distinguished from all below” (Bartels, “Spectacles of Strangeness” 53). Indeed, Tamburlaine regularly justifies his expansionist activities by claiming their success is indicative of divine sanction:

And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven  
To ward the blow, and shield me safe from harm.  
See, how he rains down heaps of gold in showers,  
As if he meant to give my soldiers pay!

(1:1.2.179-82)

Here and elsewhere in the play, Tamburlaine refers to his deity of choice as “Jove,” an entity that holds several different connotations. In a literal sense, “Jove” was the name of one of the ancient Greco-Roman gods: the son of Saturn. However, Stevie Simkin explains that in the context of early modern England, it was usually used to refer to the Christian god. “The figure of Jove or Jupiter (Greek Zeus) in Renaissance culture was the one most closely related, in conceptual terms, to their Christian God: the name of Jove is clearly related to the Hebrew almighty God Jehovah” (Simkin 83). The figure of Jove was commonly used (especially in drama) as a stand-in for explicit references to the Christian God to avoid being targeted for censorship by the state. Nonetheless, it was generally accepted to refer to a Christian presence rather than a pagan one.

Using “Jove” to identify as exclusively Christian throughout most of the first part of the play, Tamburlaine seems to indicate that his military success is determined by

God's dislike for the Muslim Turks. Indeed, he often characterizes his endeavors as a mission of utmost religious significance:

I that am term'd the scourge and wrath of God,  
The only fear and terror of the world,  
Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge  
Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves,  
Burdening their bodies with your heavy chains,  
And feeding them with thin and slender fare...

(1:3.3.44-49)

Tamburlaine claims that his conquest is a rescue mission for Christian slaves and that he is not only operating with God's permission, but rather, is acting on God's behalf. By establishing himself as a conduit of God's wrath toward non-Christians, Tamburlaine divides the two developmentally matched peoples (his own Persian forces and the Turks) into two groups: one with God's support, and one without. This allows Tamburlaine to present the Turks as other despite their ostensible formidability.

This tactic of differentiating enemy troops by labeling them enemies of the Christian God was also employed by Queen Elizabeth. For example, when attempting to motivate her troops at Tilbury in preparation for the Spanish Armada in 1588, she delivered a speech that assured them they were guaranteed victory over the idol-worshipping Catholic Spanish: "...we shall shortly have a famous victory over these enemies of my God and of my kingdom" (Elizabeth I 700). In explicitly referring to the Spanish as enemies of the Christian God, Elizabeth utilizes the same tactic of differentiation that Marlowe employs in *Tamburlaine*, reinforcing the notion that Marlowe may have adopted some of Elizabeth's tactics in his work.

In fact, Tamburlaine not only cites God's will as justification for his brutish tactics, but he goes so far as to say that those tactics were exactly the sort of behavior

God himself would engage in. As Leila Watkins notes, “Tamburlaine cites Jove as his ‘precedent’ for committing such a violent and dishonest action...” (170). In this way, Tamburlaine seeks to both affiliate himself with God and to elevate himself as godlike: “What better precedent than mighty Jove?” (2.7.12-17). This line is also significant, however, because Tamburlaine is referring to a Pagan story about Jove overthrowing his father, Saturn. This seems to fuel the implication that “Jove” may have been a more complicated representation of the Christian God (or was, perhaps, not a representation of him at all).

As the play progresses, however, Tamburlaine’s relationship with the Christian God becomes less certain and more fluid in nature. While he spends most of part one swearing by Jove’s will, he changes his tone in the sequel, part two, likely to the horror of the spectating playgoers. This change initially manifests as somewhat questionable actions, such as his eventual agreeing to the Christian Frederick’s deceptive proposal to end his peace treaty with the Turks, a people he promised to refrain from attacking in future campaigns:

Frederick: Assure your grace, ‘tis superstition  
To stand so strictly on dispersive faith:  
And should we lose the opportunity  
That God hath given to venge our Christians’ death  
And scourge their foul blasphemous paganism?  
(2:2.1.49-53)

This passage is significant because it reveals the contradiction in Tamburlaine’s faith-driven imperialism. Though Tamburlaine initially resists breaking the treaty on the grounds that such betrayal would be unfavorable to the Christian God, he eventually concedes to Frederick’s assertion that faith should be “dispersive,” or prone to dissipating

under necessary circumstances (such as when politics require it) (2:2.1.50). This is embellished with irony, as a mere few lines later Frederick invokes their faith by referring to their anti-Turk mission as an attempt to “scourge their foul blasphemous paganism” (2:2.1.53). By agreeing to rhetoric that simultaneously dismisses and clings to the Christian faith, Tamburlaine begins to instill an uneasiness in the likely Christian audience members.

In other scenes, however, Tamburlaine’s dismissal of his Christian faith becomes far more overt, even approaching blasphemy. For example, Tamburlaine muses that even the Christian God (to whom he refers as “Jove”) must live in fear of his military aptitude:

'Twas I, my lord, that gat the victory;  
And therefore grieve not at your overthrow,  
Since I shall render all into your hands,  
And add more strength to your dominions  
Than ever yet confirm'd th' Egyptian crown.  
The god of war resigns his room to me,  
Meaning to make me general of the world:  
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,  
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne...  
(1:5.1.446-54)

This passage is of particular interest because in addition to committing blasphemy by accusing Jove of being afraid of usurpation at the hands of the conqueror, Tamburlaine also makes one of several scattered references to deities other than his own. In declaring an association with the “god of war” (Mars), Tamburlaine adds a pagan god to his now growing list of divine benefactors backing his cause.

However, adding a pagan god to the mix greatly complicates Tamburlaine’s use of “Jove” as a stand-in for Jehovah. When he identifies another deity from the Greco-Roman canon, he shifts his doctrinal convictions from an ostensibly Christian context to a

potentially pagan one. Thus, referring to only Jove would have suggested a Christian belief system, as was typical in Elizabethan dramas. By beginning here to refer to Jove *and* other Greco-Roman gods, however, Marlowe suggests that Tamburlaine may have slowly come to embrace pagan gods, moving away from the Christian one. Conversely, Marlowe could also have been suggesting that Tamburlaine was actually a pagan the entire time. The true nature of Tamburlaine's beliefs (as well as Marlowe's intentions) is made indiscernible by this complication.

In addition to establishing allegiance to a pagan god, however, Tamburlaine also declares a relationship with the Islamic prophet Mahomet:

With hosts a-piece against this Turkish crew;  
For I have sworn by sacred Mahomet  
To make it parcel of my empery.  
The trumpets sound; Zenocrate, they come.

(2:1.3.108-111)

This is more problematic for the consistency of Tamburlaine's rhetoric than his mentioning of pagan gods because Tamburlaine based his entire military campaign on the notion that Islam and its practitioners were inherently inferior to Christians (or at least, that was his publicly proclaimed justification). By intermittently adopting the religion, however, Tamburlaine undermines the legitimacy of this religious distinction as a justification. That is, Marlowe asks the audience how Muslims can be cursed by Jove to always lose when one Muslim, Tamburlaine, always wins (albeit, he does not maintain this Islamic conviction very consistently).

Tamburlaine's use of various deities throughout the play raises questions regarding his true commitment to Christianity, the belief system he vehemently defended

in part one. In part two, however, the illusion of his religious conviction shatters when he explicitly curses his God for giving him an inadequate son:

...In sending to my issue such a soul,  
Created of the massy dregs of earth,  
The scum and tartar of the elements,  
Wherein was neither courage, strength, or wit,  
But folly, sloth, and damned idleness,  
Thou hast procur'd a greater enemy  
Than he that darted mountains at thy head,  
Shaking the burden mighty Atlas bears,  
Whereat thou trembling hidd'st thee in the air,  
Cloth'd with a pitchy cloud for being seen.  
(2:4.1.124-33)

Making this tirade immediately after murdering his son for refusing to fight in the last battle, Tamburlaine asserts that Jove is now his enemy, as the cowardice in his son (that is, his son's refusal to fight in Tamburlaine's wars) must surely have resulted from negligence from the creator instead of from Tamburlaine's negligence as a father. In accusing the Christian God of "folly, sloth, and damned idleness" (while intriguingly also referring to Atlas, another pagan deity), Tamburlaine surrenders the last vestiges of his credibility in using religious justifications for warfare.

In adopting various deities throughout the play, Tamburlaine undermines his own rhetorical strategy of using non-traditional terms (differentiating using religion instead of civility) to classify certain peoples as inferior. Simultaneously, he disrupts the notion of Christian-oriented divine justice by engaging in incredibly cruel behaviors. These displays of cruelty begin as early as part one, such as Tamburlaine's forcing a captive king to act as his footstool in part one:

TAMBURLAINE. The chiefest god, first mover of that sphere  
Enchas'd with thousands ever-shining lamps,  
Will sooner burn the glorious frame of heaven

Than it should so conspire my overthrow.  
But, villain, thou that wishest this to me,  
Fall prostrate on the low disdainful earth,  
And be the footstool of great Tamburlaine,  
That I may rise into my royal throne.  
(1:4.2.8-15)

Here, Tamburlaine treats the Muslim Bajazeth as less than human, forcing him to fill the role of a piece of furniture. Eventually, this cruel treatment proves to me too much for Bajazeth to handle, and he commits suicide by bashing his head against the inside of his cage while crying out to Jove, apparently used here as a stand-in for Mohamet, further complicating the play's use of religious terminology.

BAJAZETH. Now, Bajazeth, abridge thy baneful days,  
And beat the brains out of thy conquer'd head,  
Since other means are all forbidden me,  
That may be ministers of my decay.  
O highest lamp of ever-living Jove,  
Accursed day, infected with my griefs,  
Hide now thy stained face in endless night,  
And shut the windows of the lightsome heavens!  
Let ugly Darkness with her rusty coach,  
Engirt with tempests, wrapt in pitchy clouds,  
Smother the earth with never-fading mists,  
And let her horses from their nostrils breathe  
Rebellious winds and dreadful thunder-claps,  
That in this terror Tamburlaine may live,  
And my pin'd soul, resolv'd in liquid air,  
May still excruciate his tormented thoughts!  
Then let the stony dart of senseless cold  
Pierce through the centre of my wither'd heart,  
And make a passage for my loathed life!

*[He brains himself against the cage.]*  
(1:5.1.286-30)

Shortly after his own death, Bajazeth's wife enters and, upon seeing her husband's corpse, kills herself in a similar manner. The gruesome spectacle of this scene would

have certainly horrified playgoers by graphically emphasizing Tamburlaine's cruel nature.

Watkins argues that Tamburlaine's consistently immoral behavior is intended to "invite spectators to critique the efficacy of institutions that seek to enforce... moral codes" (163-4). In other words, Tamburlaine's claims of Christianity clash so vehemently with his non-Christian actions that the very idea of justice enforced by God (or the church) is called into question. In addition to this effect, his seemingly contradictory behavior serves to disarm the rhetorical strategies of differentiation that notably marked his initial conquests. In inconsistently being a Christian but acting consistently barbaric, Tamburlaine's character undermines the dichotomy that places civilized Christians and savage pagans opposite one another and suggests the English self-identifying as a refined people is not always accurate.

This barbarity becomes more and more apparent as the play progresses, showcasing the apparent civility of the Turks compared to Tamburlaine. As Burton notes, when the conqueror slaughters his son, "...Tamburlaine's Turkish prisoners are the first to respond with horror. The Turks are shocked and appalled, suggesting that Tamburlaine's cruelties exceed any enacted by the Turks" (148). This role-reversal of the supposedly barbaric Ottomans and the self-assigned civility of Tamburlaine begins to upend the rhetoric of the empire, indicating that Christianity and civility may not be as inextricably tied as they are professed to be. Similarly, it becomes readily apparent that non-Christians are capable of refinement and moral judgment.

This revelation critiques the hypocrisy of leaders who shift their beliefs (or at least, their application of those beliefs) in the practice of political strategy. Tamburlaine

was the most obvious target, but in writing the second portion of the play during Elizabeth's aforementioned negotiations with the real-world Turks, Tamburlaine would have been readily comparable to the queen's tactics as well. She, like Tamburlaine, was dismissive of religious difference, but only when it was strategic (though she used it to ally with the Muslims, rather than conquer them).

References such as these (dismissal of religious difference) would have resonated with playgoers. The play's portrayal of a barbaric Christian and somewhat civilized Muslims would likely have fostered a sense of ambivalence in the primarily Christian spectators. As Burton argues, the audience "...grows less and less comfortable with Tamburlaine's brutality..." their discomfort guided by the often surprising characters who "...gives voice to its anxieties..." (144). In this way, the play is designed to have spectators leave the theatre afterward with a sense of unease and uncertainty regarding their preconceptions of religious difference. Similarly, the emphasis on Elizabeth's own religious hypocrisy was likely meant to have stirred feelings of ambivalence about her authority, especially as it pertained to foreign policy. Marlowe's arguments concerning England's leadership are subtle, but enough similarities exist with Tamburlaine's tactics to make such a critique widely accessible.

*Tamburlaine* was produced during a time of great general concern about the rising Ottoman Turks in the east. By selecting the Turks as the (supposed) antagonists of the play, Marlowe was able to rhetorically interact with this public sentiment. Using part one to establish Tamburlaine's assertion of difference from Muslim peoples based on inherent religious worth and then contradicting that framework by portraying Tamburlaine as more blasphemous, cruel, and barbaric than the Ottomans he conquers in part two,

Marlowe fosters ambivalence in observing audiences about England's use of the discourse of religious difference in colonial endeavors.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Of all Marlowe's plays, *Doctor Faustus* has one of the longest tenures of production in Elizabethan England. First performed on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1594 by the Lord Admiral's Men in the Rose Theatre, *Faustus* would be repeated several times that year as well as eight more times between 1595 and 1597 (Bevington 43). This play was noted for its "intense visuals and spectacle, as well as its dramatic themes which dealt with sin, evil and the consequences of personal ambition" (Bassi 4). However, the performances were most remembered for their great remunerative success, leading to the play's revival in the mid-eighteenth century (Bassi 4). As Bevington summarizes, "Not many other plays of the English Renaissance can touch that record" of continued production (43).

Of course, in addition to being a financial success, *Faustus* is also remembered for its religious focus, which is largely a product of its era. Elizabeth's conversion of Britain from Catholic to Protestant and her subsequent persecution of the Catholic resistance raised the question of how to deal with religious non-conformists. This question, along with the cultural marginalization of Catholics, soon became the focus of the dramatic stage (Bassi 1). A study of *Doctor Faustus* and a close reading of Bruno's scene in the B-text elucidates the discussion of this question, helping to clarify Marlowe's comparison of the Turks with the Spanish Catholics and his unease about cooperating with the Turks. Indeed, *Doctor Faustus* uses the relationship between Faustus and

Mephistopheles to reflect the diplomatic alliance between England and the Ottoman Empire. Through this allusion, Marlowe critiques England's hypocritical embrace of the east in their fight against Spain.

Scrutiny of *Doctor Faustus* is inevitably more complicated than that of Marlowe's other plays because it uniquely exists in two versions: the A-text, published in 1604 by Valentine Simmes and the B-text, published in 1616 by John Wright (Bassi 5). The differences between the texts range from subtle to significant, with minor verbal alterations as well as extensive dramaturgical and ideological changes. As Bassi articulates, modern scholars have devoted a great deal of time and effort determining which version is more authentic (5). However, considering that Samuel Rowley and William Birdie made additional changes to the play in 1602, critics have "no hint as to which is closer to what Marlowe originally wrote" (Bassi 5). Bassi offers a simple means of reconciliation, arguing that "neither version of *Doctor Faustus* is truly authentic" (6). As David Kastan notes, "plays always register multiple intentions...as actors, annotators, revisers, collaborators, scribes, composers, printer, and proofreaders, in addition to the playwright, all have a hand in shaping the play text" (qtd. in Bassi 6). That is, scholars have no guarantee that any of the print texts we possess from the period exactly record the play's performance history. Additionally, the play was known to have been edited for each individual performance, meaning that any true discernment of its original state is impossible (Bassi 7). Thus, the distinctions between the texts do not invalidate either, but must be evaluated case-by-case. Leah Marcus and Michael Warren argue the best solution is to study both texts, acknowledging them as products of two separate socio-cultural contexts (qtd. in Bassi 6). It is with this sense of all-encompassing scrutiny that

this paper aspires to investigate trends within both versions, though for the sake of consistency, the A-text released in 1604 will be used except for where noted otherwise.

### **Religious Turbulence in England**

Because of England's repeated shifting between Protestantism and Catholicism as the official state religion throughout the sixteenth century, there was great deal of uncertainty concerning which religion England would finally settle on. When Elizabeth ascended to power and ended Mary's brief counter-Reformation, she instituted the Protestant *Book of Common Prayer* as the standard text for church services (Bassi 21). In addition to using these liturgical texts, everyone was expected to attend church services on Sundays and holidays, to perform the Protestant communion three times annually, and was forbidden from practicing Catholic rituals (Bassi 21). Nevertheless, many in England's population wanted further reforms, feeling that Elizabeth had not gone far enough in purging Catholic practices. Just as balancing cooperation with the Turks against public disdain for them was challenging, so too was Elizabeth's finding a middle ground of religious reform.

Catholic practice in England nonetheless survived, though it was forced to move somewhat underground. Attempts to revive widespread Catholicism, however, were legally persecuted under new treason laws that made it illegal to deny the monarch's authority over the church (Bassi 24). These sentiments were soon reflected in more than just legislation. As the letter of the law in England increasingly fixated on targeting Catholics, so too did the dramatic stage increasingly fixate on portraying Catholics as absurd and dangerous (Bassi 24).

In addition to animosity geared towards English Catholics, however, England also became increasingly hostile towards Catholics elsewhere in the world. As discussed in previous chapters, England's relationship with foreign Catholic demographics was rapidly deteriorating. Enveloped in conflicts with Mary Queen of Scots, Catholic Ireland, France, and Spain, the English developed a great fear about a potential foreign invasion (Bassi 25). A Papal Bull further exacerbated these sentiments by excommunicating Elizabeth from the Catholic Church and officially declaring Catholics free from owing her government allegiance, leading to a handful of Catholic rebellions north of England (Bassi 25). These events served to fuel the anti-Catholic rhetoric employed by playwrights, ensuring their criticisms would have likely "resonated with certain audience members" (Bassi 2).

As discussed in previous chapters, England's preoccupation with fighting back against the rising Catholic threat far outweighed its would-be animosity towards the neighboring Muslim Turks. Consequently, the English came to a mutual understanding with the Turks in which both nations were able to set aside their doctrinal differences and rally around their dislike of other Catholic nations, primarily Spain (Burton 131). This becomes integral to Marlowe's critiques as he continually revisits the bizarre triangle of relations that existed among England, the Ottoman Empire, and the Spanish Catholics, drawing comparisons between each party and various characters in *Faustus*.

### **Representations of the West and the East**

Over the course of the play, Marlowe sets up the parallel with English foreign policy by portraying the character of Faustus as an embodiment of England's

ambivalence towards the Ottoman Empire. Initially, this unfolds in the comparison of Faustus' ambitions with those of England. Around the time of Marlowe's career, England had drastically expanded its colonial reach. Relying extensively on the initiative of privateers and pirates, Elizabeth slyly funded unofficial missions to colonize new regions such as the Caribbean, North America, Africa, and the Mediterranean (Francis 114). These missions were largely made possible by innovations in sea warfare, such as abandoning the galley in favor of heavy guns mounted on the broadside, a switch that increased both offensive and defensive capabilities (112).

Toni Francis argues that this use of "new science" in the pursuit of morally questionable endeavors (such as conquering a foreign people) is reflected in the character of Faustus, who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and luxury for the remaining twenty-four years of his life. In Act 1, Faustus declares:

Faustus: What, is great Mephistopheles so passionate,  
For being deprived of the joys of heaven?  
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,  
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.  
Go bear those tidings to great Lucifer:  
Seeing Faustus hath incurred eternal death,  
By desp'rate thoughts against Jove's deity,  
Say he surrenders up to him his soul,  
So he will spare him four-and-twenty years,  
Letting him live in all voluptuousness,  
Having thee ever to attend on me,  
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,  
To tell me whatsoever I demand,  
To slay mine enemies, and aid my friends,  
And always be obedient to my will.  
Go, and return to mighty Lucifer,  
And meet me in my study at midnight,  
And then resolve me of thy master's mind.

Mephistopheles: I will, Faustus.

(A.1.3.85-103)

Here, Faustus exchanges his eternal salvation for Mephistopheles' servitude. Initially, Faustus only utilizes Mephistopheles as a servant. Soon, however, he commands Mephistopheles to teach him knowledge of how to personally command the forces of nature:

Mephistopheles: ...Hold, take this book, peruse it thoroughly.  
The iterating of these lines brings gold;  
The framing of this circle on the ground  
Brings whirlwinds, tempests, thunder and lightning.  
Pronounce this thrice devoutly to thyself,  
And men in armour shall appear to thee,  
Ready to execute what thou desir'st.

(A.1.4.162-8)

This scene inverts the power hierarchy in their relationship so that Mephistopheles is in charge of instruction, implying that collaboration with powerful, foreign forces like Mephistopheles (or the Ottoman Empire) necessarily requires ceding a degree of power to them. Faustus notes the knowledge he obtains in this transaction will allow him to wield control over humankind as well as the natural world:

O, what a world of profit and delight,  
Of power, of honor, of omnipotence  
Is promised to the studious artisan!  
All things that move between the quiet poles  
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings  
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,  
Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;  
But his dominion that exceeds in this,  
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.  
A sound magician is a mighty god.

(A.1.1.55-64)

Much like England used its new knowledge of sea warfare technology to exert dominance over its desired colony locations overseas, Faustus is here depicted as using his new knowledge of nature to exert dominance over the rest of mankind. As Francis articulates, "Faustus wants imperialistic power; he wants to control the world and all of

its inhabitants” (118). In this way, Faustus’ ambition reaches megalomaniac proportions (not unlike Tamburlaine).

Specifically, Faustus dreams of dominating African lands and Catholic Spain:

Had I as many souls as there be stars,  
I’d give them all for Mephistopheles.  
By him I’ll be great emperor of the world  
And make a bridge through the moving air  
To pass the ocean with a band of men;  
I’ll join the hills that bind the Afric shore  
And make that land continent to Spain,  
And both contributory to my crown.

(A.1.3.104-11)

Here, Faustus expresses desire to control foreign lands of great interest to the English empire. By means of this comparison, Faustus’ deal with the devil presents “as a metaphor for a more contemporary form of soul-selling...” (Francis 118). In other words, England’s “violent and gluttonous domination of the indigenous peoples of Africa, India, and the New World” are represented in the play as “England’s descent into Hades” (Francis 118).

Interestingly, Faustus’ knowledge of the natural and unnatural sciences is associated with the eastern orient in the text, albeit the associations are far subtler than those presented in *Tamburlaine* (wherein Tamburlaine is depicted engaging in the same cruelty of which he accuses the Turks). As Samira Al-Khawaldeh argues, these associations are not explicit but are woven throughout and can thus be treated as a consistent manifestation of the context (a British preoccupation with both the Ottomans and the Spanish Catholics) in which the play was written (30).

In many ways, the general English sentiment regarding the Orient at the time supports the association between Faustus’ power and the east. As Metlitzki explains,

Europe was the site of the “discovery that it was the Arabs who were the true representatives of classical knowledge and the giants on whose shoulders Latin science and philosophy had to be placed” (qtd. in Al-Khawaldeh 30). It had long been clear that the Arabs of the east (including the Turks) were exceptionally advanced in the sciences and philosophies, and despite their cultural differences with the West, were somewhat admirably associated with the general concept of knowledge (especially of the forbidden variety).

To further elucidate the comparison, Al-Khawaldeh argues Marlowe also employs magic as a metaphor for “all types of knowledge extant outside the Church, unsanctioned by it and falling beyond its authority” (31). Essentially, advanced sciences (especially astrology) were viewed with unease because they originated from a geographic region existing outside the Church’s influence. Thus, the knowledge of magical control of nature in *Faustus* is likened to forbidden knowledge in general, already associated with the oriental east.

Of course, specific connections exist between Faustus’ power and the east as well. Al-Khawaldeh points out the various portions in the text that may have been inspired by Qur’anic verses (31). For example, Mephistopheles uses magic to conjure Helen, Faustus’ desired wife, “in the twinkling of an eye” (A.5.1.88). This is quite possibly borrowing from a similar Qur’anic verse: “The one who had knowledge of the book said: ‘I can fetch it for you before your eye blinks’” (Qur’an XXVII, 40). As Al-Khawaldeh notes, such allusions were quite possible given that “the Qur’ān was already accessible to European intellectuals like Marlowe; history books document that the first translation of

the Qur'an into Latin was completed in 1143" (33). In using this type of language, Marlowe alludes to the presence of the Orient in Faustus' powers.

Of course, additional similarities between Faustus and the East exist. As Al-Khawaldeh notes, Faustus is depicted as harnessing a degree of his power through the practice of astrology, an activity inextricably associated with the Arabs (31). By becoming a practicing astrologer, Faustus employs forbidden knowledge exceeding that which is naturally accessible to humankind:

Now would I have a book where I might see all  
Characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know  
their motions and dispositions.

(A.2.1.104-11)

It is noteworthy that astrology should be central to Faustus' pursuits, because the English viewed astrology as knowledge unsanctioned by the church (Al-Khawaldeh 33). By appropriating the specific branch of science most associated with the Arabs (and thus, the Turks), Faustus employed the forbidden power of the east to exert dominance over the peoples of the world.

This appropriation was at least partially intended to reflect the diplomatic dynamic unfolding between England and the Ottoman Empire in response to the rising Spain. As previously discussed, the burgeoning relationship between the English and the Turks was an unlikely one, as the Turks were primarily a Muslim people. England capitalized on their religious similarities, however (primarily distaste for idolatry, of which both nations accused the Spanish), and established a strategic alliance meant to fortify both peoples against Spain (Burton 131). In this way, England used the military

proWess and manpower of the Wast in its attempts to maintain dominance in the region like Faustus used the forbidden knowledge of the east to dominate those around him.

This comparison becomes especially important when juxtaposed with the anti-Catholic rhetoric embedded throughout the text. As Bassi explains, this is continually reinforced by the consistent portrayal of the clergy as “inept, foolish characters” (62). This first presents when Faustus instructs the devilish Mephistopheles to “Go, and return an old Franciscan friar / that holy shape becomes a devil best” (1.3.26-27). Bassi argues that this command, present in both versions of the text, was likely intended to possess comedic effect (62). Indeed, considering that Mephistopheles presumably dresses as a Friar for the rest of the play until he explicitly takes another form in the third act, this anti-Catholic jab would “have registered with, and possibly evoked laughter from, Elizabethan audiences” (Bassi 63).

Aside from Mephistopheles’ satirical portrayal, however, the actual Catholics in the play are ridiculed as well. In particular, this occurs by means of representing the various priests and friars as gluttonous and overweight. For example, Mephistopheles and Faustus play pranks on the pope using Faustus’ new powers, interrupting him as he attends a feast. Once there, he finds “...a troupe of bald-pate friars / whose summon bonum is in belly cheer” (A.3.1.52-53). As Bassi explains, “summon bonum” is usually used to refer to the infinite goodness of God, but is used here to insult the friars for being jovial and overweight (64).

There is also some significance to Faustus finding the Pope and the friars in the midst of a banquet. As Bassi notes, it was typical for the clergy to be represented as overweight or sexually overactive, as Protestants generally associated them with qualities

of materiality and worldliness (62). This was especially true of friars, whose frequent travels were thought to consist of drinking, overeating, and overtaxing citizens (contradicting the monk's traditional vow of poverty). Thus, Marlowe was appealing to these associations by selecting a feast for the setting.

Finally, Marlowe implicitly mocks the Pope for his failure to expel Faustus using Catholic rites. Despite performing a Catholic ritual intended to exorcise the unfriendly presence from the area, the Pope and his friars are completely unable to do so effectively. As Bassi notes, "this seems to suggest that Faustus and Mephistopheles do not believe that their ritual has much power, as they continue to heckle them before they make their escape" (66).

Thus far, Toni Francis has argued that Faustus' ambitions were reflective of English imperialism; Al-Khawaldeh has argued that Faustus' power was a reference to the forbidden assistance of the east; and Bassi has argued that the play's Catholics were intended to represent the real-world anti-Catholic sentiment in England. I argue that the full effect of these arguments is best understood when they are examined alongside each other, at which point Marlowe's establishment of the Turks as the lesser of two evils becomes clear.

This comparison occurs quite explicitly, though only in the B-text. In that version, a scene is added to act three that features a budding rivalry between the Pope and a man named Bruno, who claims that he is the true heir to the papacy:

Raymond: Saxon Bruno, stoop,  
    Whilst on thy back his Holiness ascends  
    Saint Peter's chair and state pontifical.  
Bruno: Proud Lucifer, that state belongs to me,  
    But thus I fall to Peter, not to thee.

(B.3.1.89-93)

The pope desires for Bruno to physically submit to him, much in the way Bazajeth physically submits to Tamburlaine by being his footstool. Bruno, however, refuses. In a moment of violent impulse meant to characterize Catholics more generally, the Pope decides Bruno's execution is warranted in response to his defiance. Before he can complete the deed, however, Faustus, present and invisible, intervenes:

Faustus: Go; haste thee, gentle Mephistopheles,  
Follow the Cardinals to the consistory,  
And as they turn their superstitious books,  
Strike them with sloth, and drowsy idleness;  
And make them sleep so sound that in their shapes,  
Thyself and I may parley with this Pope,  
This proud confronter of the Emperor,  
And in despite of all his Holiness  
Restore this Bruno to his liberty,  
And bear him to the states of Germany.  
Mephistopheles: Faustus, I go.

(B.3.1.112-122)

This scene is of particular significance because it depicts Faustus using his abilities to free a fugitive of the papacy from underneath the thumb of the Catholic church (though Bruno is himself, ironically Catholic), just as Tamburlaine rescues Christian slaves. In this way, Marlowe both casts doubt on the legitimacy of the papacy (as the current Pope might not actually be the true heir) and shows an otherwise condemnable protagonist completing commendable actions against the Spanish empire (resisting the Pope). Still, Marlowe doesn't portray these characters as virtuous role models. Marlowe consistently uses anti-heroes to remind playgoers that even though moral ambiguity may assist in the fight against the Catholic Empire (such as England's alliance with the Turks), that ambiguity requires developing associations with distasteful parties (such as Ithamore, Tamburlaine, Mephistopheles, or the Ottoman Empire).

Faustus, the epitome of English imperialism wielding the forbidden power of the east, undermines and antagonizes the representatives of the Catholic Church. The scene featuring Bruno invokes a parallel to England wielding the somewhat controversial assistance of the eastern Turks against the rising Catholic Spanish. Indeed, this scene within the play conveys a reflection of the current events unfolding in England's foreign policy: a development which was controversial and subject to dramatic investigation and critique.

Though Marlowe depicts parallels to England's alliance with the Turks as somewhat successful (Bruno is, after all, saved), he also seems to caution playgoers about the potential consequences of such an alliance. This is especially true of the final scene of the play. On his deathbed, Faustus realizes that despite the temporary advantages of aligning with the unholy powers of Satan, it was not worth the cost of his soul (a cost he must now pay):

No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer  
That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of heaven.  
*[The clock strikes twelve.]*  
O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,  
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!  
*[Thunder and lightning.]*  
O soul, be chang'd into little water-drops,  
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!

*Enter DEVILS.*

My God, my god, look not so fierce on me!  
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!  
Ugly hell, gape not! come not, Lucifer!  
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis!  
*[Exeunt DEVILS with FAUSTUS.]*

(A.5.2.113-119)

Throughout the play Faustus praised the forces of hell for adding to his powers as a magician and scholar. As he faces his demise at the hands of those forces, however, he curses them openly, wishing he had not dealt with Lucifer after all. The subtext of this epiphany is clear: allying with unholy powers may be effective, but there are always consequences. Faustus eventually had to pay for the help he received from Mephistopheles, and someday, England may have to pay for the help it receives from the Ottoman Empire (though what the cost would be is never made clear).

*Doctor Faustus* has a long and convoluted history involving a series of revivals spanning multiple centuries and several different versions produced at various times. Because of these factors, the play's intended message and original content is difficult to pin down. Whatever Marlowe's intent, *Faustus*' portrayal of Catholics and Protestants presents a dramatized version of the "heated debates about the place of religious non-conformists in English society," debates that would have resonated with playgoers who were struggling with such issues themselves (Bassi 1). A study of *Doctor Faustus* elucidates these discussions, helping to illustrate Marlowe's comparison of Turks and Catholics and his critique of England's alliance with the former. Indeed, *Doctor Faustus* uses contrast to reinforce the era's anti-Catholic stereotypes, portraying Catholics as comparatively worse than the Muslim Turks of the East. At the same time, he uses Faustus' eventual demise as a cautionary tale to remind playgoers that associating with the Turks to fight the Catholics may work, but it may also come at a steep price. In this way, Marlowe employs dramatic use of the devil, himself, to be the devil's advocate, both critiquing anti-Turk fervor in England as well as acknowledging the risks of allying with outsiders.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Christopher Marlowe died too prematurely to offer any clarity to the intentions driving his work, though his motives were unclear and shrouded with secrecy even during his lifetime. Despite this ambiguity, however, his plays were as popular as they were complex, enchanting audiences with their challenging and novel approach to drama. Marlowe's construction of difficult and uncomfortable situations intended to elicit self-reflection from playgoers helped to elucidate England's extensive reliance on colonial rhetoric in its confrontation of domestic nonconformity on its own soil.

In the case of Barabas in *the Jew of Malta*, this revelation occurred in tandem with the Jew's characterization. Initially portrayed as selfish and greedy, Barabas would certainly have resonated with Protestant audience members, who were already antagonistic towards the very idea of Judaism, considering it archaic. As Barabas' qualities unfold over time, however, this one-sided portrayal unravels, demonstrating that Barabas is truly too complex to pin down underneath the hegemonic stereotype of the English Jew. Once the Christian characters (such as Ferneze) are shown to be just as morally bankrupt as Barabas, this revelation fully deconstructs the dichotomy of Jewish depravity and Christian ethics, undermining the legitimacy of this kind of dichotomous rhetoric in cultural marginalization.

In *Tamburlaine*, like in *Jew of Malta*, Tamburlaine experiences two phases of characterization: one that sets up the character to conform to audience expectations, and one that undermines that expectation. Initially, Tamburlaine presents as a loyal Christian inspired to expand militarily as an act of loyalty to the Christian God. In part two, however, he appears more complex, praying to an array of different gods and even blaspheming against many of them. As Tamburlaine develops from a technologically refined leader into a morally barbarous dictator, his enemies, the Muslim Turks, experience the opposite. Tamburlaine initially describes them as savages whose conquest is justified, but by the end of part two, even the Turks marvel at Tamburlaine's uninhibited cruelty (though this begins as early as part one). By setting up expectations for his characters and then violating them, Marlowe critiques the notion that all Christians are civil and all non-Christians are unrefined, implying that in some cases, the reverse may be true.

While Marlowe uses the violation of audience expectation in *the Jew of Malta* and *Tamburlaine*, he uses expectation a bit differently in *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*. During the exposition, Faustus sells his soul to the devil in exchange for power and knowledge. The primarily Christian audience would thus have expected the consequences of such a transaction to arise at some point, only to have their suspicions confirmed when Faustus' soul falls to hell. Though Faustus uses his power (often derived from astrology) to fight the Catholic papacy, the expected consequences of allying with such a dangerous force were ultimately inescapable, implying Marlowe may have had misgivings about England's similar alliance with the Muslim Turks.

Though employing different techniques in different plays, Marlowe consistently uses the notion of expectation to remind or familiarize playgoers with the religious and cultural stereotypes that permeated early modern England, and then violates audience expectation to cast doubt on those stereotypes. This violation, however, does more than criticize English society. In many instances, such as when Marlowe implements the physical stereotype of Jewishness, he is intentionally undermining the biases established by his contemporaries. For example, Bartels mentions records of a lost sixteenth century play entitled *The Jew*, which relies heavily on the physicality of the Jew (“Fictions of Difference” 108). When Marlowe used this exact physicality (curly hair, big nose, etc.) but then disproved the stereotype’s ability to accurately describe Barabas’ character and predict his behavior, he was critiques the English for developing these stereotypes– but he also critiques his fellow playwrights for using them in drama. In this way, Marlowe may have been carrying on two separate conversations simultaneously: one with his audiences, and one with his contemporaries.

Similarly, analyzing Marlowe’s use of social critique in drama may also yield new conclusions on disunity among England’s population when it came to colonial activity. Though the British Empire would eventually come to exercise its rhetorical and physical prowess at the expense of less developed peoples, it is clear that even in colonialism’s infancy, many in England were not on board with this type of aggression. Marlowe was very well educated and his plays were attended by vastly diverse audience members. His willingness to confront the difficult notion of colonial activity despite the risk of backlash from English politicians indicates an uncertainty regarding England’s expansion among both himself and the educated population. Though recorded discussions

of England's colonial future are, from this time period, rare, Marlowe's stance demonstrates that not everyone in England was on board for the empire's aggressive expansion. This helps to further refine our understanding of the role of the public when studying England's colonial era.

Regardless of how Marlowe uses and foils dramatic expectation, he consistently toils to sow seeds of discomfort and reflection among playgoers, analyzing religious oppression through the lens of colonial strategy. Thus, Marlowe resists categorization as a simple critic of religion. Rather, his discourse surrounding religious nonconformity is an application of England's contemporary colonial discourse. By appealing to and then undermining existing religious stereotypes in his audience members, Marlowe critiques the use of colonial rhetoric in religious persecution, postulates that this rhetoric may entail inaccurate biases, and contributes a subversive voice to discussions about religious nonconformity and the English identity.

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