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“THE ALIEN WITHIN”: RESIDUAL CATHOLICISM AND THE EMERGING NATIONAL  
IDENTITY OF POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
English Literature

May, 2011

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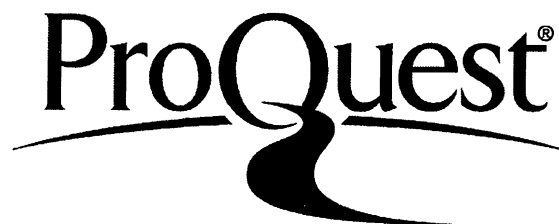
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Dedicated to my husband, Nicholas, for all his love and support during these long years, and to my grandmother, Margaret, who set me on this path when I was a child. I also want to thank my family, especially my sisters Katie and Samantha, for all the babysitting they provided, which allowed me to get these pages written.

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## ABSTRACT

### “THE ALIEN WITHIN”: RESIDUAL CATHOLICISM AND THE EMERGING NATIONAL IDENTITY OF POST-REFORMATION ENGLAND

by

Melissa K. Siik (Femino)

University of New Hampshire, May, 2011

This dissertation contributes to the current critical discourse in Early Modern English Studies on the conceptions and literary representations of national and racial identity in 16th- and 17th-century England. Central to this discourse is an examination of how the English defined themselves in relation to those they deemed as “others”: the foreign and marginalized members of society. My study is unique because I look at individual figures of “otherness” – the Irishman, the Turk, and the Jew – in light of their common characteristic: their shared significance as coded figures of Catholicism. Ultimately, my dissertation unifies disparate conversations about race, religion, and politics in Early Modern Studies. Central to this study is an examination of the work by major canonical writers: specifically Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare.

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## INTRODUCTION

***“This Sceptred Isle”: Creating a Nation in Post-Reformation England***

*And for your one kingdom of England*

*I have with me all the kingdoms of Christianity.*

-Thomas More

In Westminster Hall, in the summer of 1535, the former Lord Chancellor of England Sir Thomas More spoke these words in answer to the charge of high treason: “For in this realm you stand alone, in opposition to the unanimous consent of Christendom. Your law has dissolved the unity, the peace, and the concord of the Church, although the Church is, as you all know, a body which is one, whole and undivided” (De Silva 123). In his last speech before being executed on July 6, 1535, More speaks of the unity of Christendom and European culture which the English people had been part of for a thousand years until the momentous events of Henry VIII’s reign. His words represent a view of the English past that had been common in England up to the time of the Reformation. More, like most Englishmen, had believed that he could concurrently be both a patriotic Englishman and a loyal member of the Catholic Church. Yet, during the course of the sixteenth century, this idea would be seriously challenged by a series of royal proclamations and popular writing, which stressed a new set of assumptions in which the central and exclusive loyalty of the English was to their own nation and ruler. These assumptions would soon form the basis of England’s national identity, an identity that required a new version of the English past to be created to accommodate its tenets. This was accomplished not only through royal proclamations and parliamentary acts, but

also through a historical narrative created by the era's greatest poets, dramatists, propagandists, and early ethnologists.

Historian G.R. Elton asserts that, after 1536, England, “retreated within its own borders” (179). This retreat began with the 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals, which declared, “by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles, it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an Empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one Supreme Head and King having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial Crown of the same” (Elton 353). The Act declares for England not only complete sovereignty for its monarch, but also the title of “empire”; significantly, the Act does not declare that England has been made into a sovereign empire, but that it has always been one, as evidenced by “divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles.” In proclaiming itself an empire and thus, “a country of which the sovereign owes no allegiance to any foreign superior” (OED def. 7<sup>1</sup>), England severs itself from Rome and, consequently, from a largely Catholic Europe. Thus, in asserting its imperial, sovereign identity, England – in the figure of Henry VIII and his parliament – asserted its autonomy from the authority of the Pope. This was the first great move in the establishment of an independent nation of England. The Act of Supremacy was the second move, which made the King the head of the Church for the first time in English history. Such moves, based on such radical assertions, required an ideological narrative to strengthen and support its claims. Central to this narrative of England's past would be

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<sup>1</sup> Significantly, the Act in the Restraint of Appeals is cited as the first use of the word in this sense.

an emphasis on its status as an autonomous entity, independent from the influence of the Roman Church.

### **The National Narrative**

All nations see themselves as natural and God-given, yet as the major theorists of nationalism – E.J. Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, among others – will attest, all nations are created.<sup>2</sup> A nation is created not only in the sense of being politically fashioned, but also in the sense that it needs to be ideologically supported and represented to itself. However, this creation is not always evident. Walker Conner writes, “The essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way. The nature of that bond and its well-spring remain shadowy and elusive, and the consequent difficulty of defining the nation is usually acknowledged by those who attempt this task” (36). Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Ernest Gellner makes a comparable point when he writes, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist” (6). According to these theorists, there is a central paradox at work here, which says that nations are imagined into existence by nationalism -- by the will of an imagined community that wants to define itself as a community. The

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Gellner states, “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures” (63-64).

paradox is that such an assertion implies that nationalism precedes the nation. This paradox is explained by the central tenet adopted by the above theorists that there is no natural community, no preexisting sense of unity or inclusion; at least, there is none on the large scale that nationalism seeks to create.

Communal identity tends to be restricted to the smaller communities in which people live: families, villages, and parishes. To conceive of unity within a larger group of people requires the creation of a common narrative, which stresses communal characteristics as well as a communal history.<sup>3</sup> This common narrative is both fed by and feeds the dominant cultural narrative of the day: that is, national identity is both represented and formed by the cultural “byproducts” (its literature and entertainment) of contemporary society. In order for what would otherwise be scattered, autonomous communities to see themselves as part of a larger “whole,” a unifying narrative must be produced and promulgated. Popular culture is a crucial means for this promulgation. However, equally important to a nation is what lies outside its common narrative. As Anderson argued above, nations are essentially *limited*. This is because even the largest of them, encompassing millions of human beings, needs finite boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. As such, Anderson continues, “no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in

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<sup>3</sup> It may be useful here to turn to the OED’s definition of a “nation” as, “A large aggregate of communities and individuals united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory, so as to form a distinct people,” with the note that, “In early examples notions of race and common descent predominate. In later use notions of territory, political unity, and independence are more prominent, although some authors still make a pointed distinction between nation and state” (def. 1a). The definition stresses the importance that a sense of shared characteristics and origins are necessary to the creation of nation.



certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet” (7). It is for this reason that the creation or identification of an “other” or “others” upon which to project all that the nation is not is critically important for the creation of a national identity, especially in its nascent stages of formation, as England’s was in the sixteenth century.

Anderson further designates the nation as sovereign: “It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm” (7). Anderson, then, isolates the “beginning” of the idea of nation as occurring in the eighteenth century, which “marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought” (11). The toppling of the religious conception of reality by the rise of a new secular view of the world culminated in the eighteenth century with the creation of the modern nation-state. Though Anderson, as well as other theorists of nationalism, isolates the eighteenth century as the origin of nationalism, I will be arguing that the national sentiments of eighteenth-century England began in the sixteenth century; specifically, they began with the Reformation, where the idea of society and country as instituted by God is challenged by the reforms taking place under Henry VIII, and the basis for imagining a “larger-than-local” community is shifted by a new understanding of personal and public identity.

Recent scholarship has shattered the long-established consensus concerning pre- and post-Reformation English Catholicism and its popularity amongst English society.

Heralded by the work of Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy,<sup>4</sup> the notion of a decadent late medieval church heading for extinction has been challenged, effecting a new understanding of how the church lingered on in the widespread observance of the rituals, devotions, and faith of the Catholic Church despite the general acquiescence of the English public with the newly established Church of England. Consequently, the toppling of traditional religion created a void – which challenged traditional assumptions about personal and public identities – and this produced a need for a new ideology that would supplant the old.

Critics such as Cathy Shrank and Richard Helgerson<sup>5</sup> have detailed how a consciousness of nation was prevalent in the writings of Early Modern England, even if “nationalism” – in our modern understanding of the term – was not. These critics often refer to England as manifesting a “national consciousness,” which could be seen as patriotism, that sense of Englishness that dates back to Bede in the seventh century. However, I argue that this national consciousness – or proto-nationalism – leads to our modern understanding of nationalism. As theorists of nationalism have shown, the

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<sup>4</sup> Haigh’s *The English Reformation Revised* redefines the popular understanding of the English Reformation by bringing together a number of essays by prominent early modern historians to demonstrate that much of what modern history believes about pre-Reformation English Catholicism is based on misrepresentations of the period by eighteenth-century historicists. Duffy’s voluminous work *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* adds to this revisionist history by cataloguing and analyzing how the common Englishman experienced his Catholic faith in pre-Reformation England; he ultimately shows that the Reformation represented a violent rupture from a popular and theologically respectable religious system.

<sup>5</sup> In *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580*, Shrank outlines how England’s break with Rome impacted the formation of English nationhood and the development of a national language and literature. She shows how this development is prevalent in a number of works from this period, and how works by writers like Andrew Borde, John Leland, William Thomas, Thomas Smith, and Thomas Wilson engaged with and promoted concepts of national identity. Helgerson’s *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* is one of the seminal works on early modern English nationalism and its expressions in the literature of major canonical writers: Spenser and Shakespeare, prominently, with a shorter focus on Marlowe and others.

modern understanding of national identity is exclusionary: one nation regards itself as separate from other, distinct nations. This exclusionary way of thinking leads to the consideration of other groups of people first as different, then as inferior. Since most nationalism is largely ideological -- that is, the ideas upon which a nation sees itself as united and similar are largely imagined -- there will be a set of national characteristics and beliefs that are commonly agreed upon to be the basis of that nation. Those who do not conform or fit within that set of national characteristics and beliefs exist as "others" within society. Thus, the concept of the alien is introduced. As one of the results of the Reformation, the English Catholic becomes an alien within the English nation, a nation that was defining itself in a way that was inherently exclusionary of Catholicism.

Anthony Giddens<sup>6</sup> defines the nation as a community of descent, but distinguishes it from ethnic communities by its degree of self-consciousness; whereas an ethnic group may be other-defined, a nation must be self-defined. However, it cannot be denied that most nations see themselves as connected by some sort of common blood; as such, there will inevitably be those groups of people, "others," who are excluded from that connection. Indeed, Walker Connor discusses how the etymology of "nation" implies this: "The word nation comes from the Latin and, when first coined, clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. It was derived from the past participle of the verb *nasci*, meaning to be born. And hence the Latin noun *nationem*, connoting breed or race" (38).

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<sup>6</sup> In his book *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Giddens writes, "A 'nation,' as I use the term here, only exists when a state has a unifying administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed. The development of a plurality of nations is basic to the centralization and administrative expansion of state domination internally, since the fixing of borders depends upon the reflexive ordering of a state system [...] A nation-state is, therefore, a bordered power-container -- as I shall argue, the pre-eminent power-container of the modern era" (119). Thus, the nation is not something natural; it is something that needs to be created, enforced, and maintained by an organized group of people.

He points out that, “It was the recognition of this dimension of the nation that caused numerous writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to employ race as a synonym for nation, references to a German race or to the English race being quite common” (37). But this was not merely a modern invention, as in Raymond Williams’ *Keywords*, “nation” is defined according to its etymological and cultural ties to race: “Nation (from *fw* nation, F, *nationem*, L - breed, race) has been in common use in English from 1C13, originally with a primary sense of a racial group rather than a politically organized grouping” (213). Williams also shows that the word “race” had an intrinsically political and national dimension. Originally, as a word classifying groups of people, its definition drew more from citizenship, civil order, morality and government than from any form of natural history or biological science. The word was also commonly used to denote family lineage (248).<sup>7</sup> Significantly, the OED includes a quotation from Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* to demonstrate the use of its definition of race (6.a): “Thou, faire ymp, sprong out from English race” [the rest of the quotation reads, “of Saxon kings,” but is not included in the OED] (I.x.60). Here, “English race” does not refer to all of England’s inhabitants, but specifically to an elite group within the nation.

Conner continues, “Ethnicity (identity with one’s ethnic group) is, if anything, more definitionally chameleonic than nation. It is derived from Ethnos, the Greek word for nation in the latter’s pristine sense of a group characterized by common descent” (43). Yet it is difficult to define a nation without a sense of what lies beyond it – of its “other.”

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<sup>7</sup> The OED includes the following early modern definitions of the word: “a limited group of persons descended from a common ancestor; a house, family, kindred (2.a.); A tribe, nation, or people, regarded as of common stock (b.); Without article: denoting the stock, family, class, etc. to which a person, animal, or plant belongs, chiefly in phr. of (noble, etc.) race (6.a).” Central to these definitions is an emphasis on the issues of genealogy and family lineage.

Thus, a theory of ethnicity is integral to a theory of nation. Before we move on to a consideration of ethnicity, however, we will look at an equally important aspect of English nation building: a shared vision of the future.

### **The Reformation and English Nationalism**

According to Max Weber<sup>8</sup>, what distinguishes a nation from mere patriotism is a commitment to a political project. Weber's consensus seems to apply well to early English nationalism. If true, then there was no larger or more important political project for England than the Reformation. The Reformation was a process, not an event; moreover, the Henrician reformation was very different from its Edwardian and Elizabethan counterparts. The standard label of the changes and fissures in the universal Christian church as the Reformation is misleading. In many ways, to view the separatist Protestant movements of Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII, and others as the "Reformation" misrepresents Catholicism as well as Protestantism. This perspective assumes a simple, binary opposition between a uniform Catholicism – static and corrupt – and a uniform Protestantism – dynamic and purifying. For these reasons, one must use such a contentious term with an acknowledgement of its limitations. Yet, in the broadest sense, England's split from Rome, effected by a series of parliamentary acts between 1533 and 1536, had arguably the greatest influence on the construction of English national identity. This construction included the following necessary changes: the establishment of boundaries between England and other nations; the creation of an insular mentality that was inflected more aggressively – stressing England as a separate and autonomous

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<sup>8</sup> In *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Weber asserts, "to have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have accomplished great things together, to wish to do so again, that is the essential condition for being a nation" (26).

“island unto itself”; the need to create a new history; and, first, the creation of monarchical sovereignty – the Act in Restraint of Appeals in 1533, which highlights the jurisdictional power of the monarch as protected by the limits of the realm, asserting the supremacy of indigenous common and statute law over canon law. The sovereign rules without foreign interference.

Moreover, scholars tend to think of the Reformation as a religious movement, when what Henry VIII began in the 1530s was a revolution that was primarily political and jurisdictional rather than doctrinal and devotional. The 1533 Act in Restraint of Appeals broke juridical ties with the Catholic Church, and the 1536 Act of Supremacy pronounced the King as the supreme head of the Church of England. The early years of theological and devotional changes in England were considerably less radical than those taking place on the continent: specifically, in Germany and Switzerland. Henry VIII promulgated the conservative Six Articles (1539), which affirmed the Catholic doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as well as the Catholic practices of clerical celibacy and auricular confession. Moreover, his government executed Anne Askew for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation (1546).

In the early English Reformation (Henrician), the problem with the Catholic Church stemmed more from issues of papal allegiance than from issues of doctrinal acceptance. In the 1530s, the only aspect of Catholicism that seemed to be under “national” attack was English fidelity to the Pope and his authority on earth. According to Eamon Duffy, in 1534, the same year Thomas More went to the tower, “The orthodoxy which mattered most to the regime was adherence to the new doctrine of royal supremacy

[...] Preachers were to set forth the supremacy and denounce the power of the Pope, but were to preach ‘neither with nor against purgatory, honouring of saints, that priests may have wives; that faith only justifieth; to go on pilgrimages, to forge miracles, ... considering that thereupon no edification can ensue in the people, but rather occasions of talk and rumour, to their great hurt and damage” (381, Duffy quotes a 16th-century pamphlet found in Burnet’s *History of the Reformation* 1850). Thus, despite the fact that “iconoclasm had been a growing feature of the 1520s,” such events were still being treated as heresy, and what really counted – in the eyes of the law – was loyalty to the crown. However, many preachers ignored the ban, preaching freely against the many forms of traditional Catholic piety. Part of the reason why Henry may have been loath to openly attack traditional devotion was that such an attack would agitate an otherwise docile and obedient people, content with the faith of their fathers. It seems in the beginning of the English Reformation, however, that Henry was far more concerned with the issue of his royal supremacy over any foreign authority than he was with the popular practice of the faith.<sup>9</sup> The Ten Articles (see Duffy 392-95) were the first official doctrinal formulary of the Church of England; they reflected the struggle between radical and traditionalist ideas within the Convocation. But the articles were relatively conservative, allowing images to remain in churches and people to pray to saints, as long as they never think any saint more merciful than Christ.

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<sup>9</sup> Contrarily, those writers who denounced the traditional religion of England were more interested in denouncing its folk practices: pilgrimages, prayers to the saints, etc. See Duffy’s description of William Marshall’s primer, which omits the Litany of the Saints and prayers for the dead; however, “this primer produced a public outcry, and within a year Marshall published a second edition which restored both the litany and the ‘Dirige’” (382).

Though Henry's Reformation was more doctrinally conservative than what occurred in Germany or what would occur during Edward's reign, its anti-Papal and imperial stance initiated an insular mindset that would become central to England's narrative of nation. In many ways, the insular mentality that would later fuel England's colonial efforts has its roots in Henry's establishment of English sovereignty, which began with the English Reformation. In the Henrician statutes the Pope was depicted as the hated foreign enemy of the English people, and this reaction was soon applied to other Catholic countries in Europe: a reaction that was further exacerbated by the increasingly antagonistic response of England's Catholic neighbors to the theological upsets within England. This began to be a strong force in the psychology of the English people, strongly influencing their outlook on the outside world. English Catholics were regarded as traitors for not giving absolute and exclusive obedience to the King in all things. For both Catholic and Protestant English subjects, religious faith now became a matter of monarchical obedience and *national* identity.

As evidenced by the Acts that severed England from Rome, the supreme power of the monarch was crucial to initiating the Reformation in England. As such, the English monarchy as head of both church and state is essential to England's understanding and conceptualization of itself as a nation. The figure of the monarch himself becomes a key symbol of national communal identity in the period. Such an understanding explains the imperial language used in the famous "Sceptred Isle" speech from Shakespeare's *Richard III*: "This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle [...] this teeming womb of royal kings / Feared by their breed and famous by their birth, / Renowned for their deeds as far from



home / For Christian service and true chivalry / As is the sepulcher, in stubborn Jewry, /  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son" (II.i.40, 51-56). Significantly, not only is the language in this speech overtly nationalist, it is laden with references to kings and kingship as the defining nature of England – indeed, England becomes a “teeming womb” for kings – and it stresses the Christian mission of these Kings. This language demonstrates the influence that the Reformation had on creating for England a national church.

Tudor images of the church as the nation gathered in prayer, or as the nation turned toward God in penance and praise, are very different from modern images of the church as a voluntary association of like-minded people. Tudor iconography identified the state with the church, and religious authority operated within a framework created by acts of parliament. The monarch as supreme authority for both church and nation forms the context for our understanding of the course of Christian history in England in the sixteenth century. With the monarch rather than the Pope as “Supreme Head” of the church, there came a sense of a national, rather than either an international, or merely individual or local, community; the future of the church in England would now be tied to the destiny of an England understood to be an “elect nation” in whose history God was at work.

Theorist Anthony D. Smith, in his article “Chose Peoples,” argues that the idea of a God-given national purpose is a crucial component to the formation of a national community. Smith argues that members of a national community must be convinced, “not only that they form a single ‘superfamily,’ but that their historic community is

unique [...] that their heritage must be preserved against inner corruption and external control, and that the community has a sacred duty to extend its culture values to outsiders” (188).<sup>10</sup> This is accomplished with various “Myths of common ancestry” and fabricated “memories of a golden age,” which serve to unite and inspire the members of a national community over several generations. Even more important for the creation and survival of a nation is the cultivation of a “*myth of ethnic election*” (188).

The “myth of ethnic election” is a dramatic tale that links the present with a communal past, serving to draw the members into a distinctive community, and “conferring on them a special aura, that of ‘the elect’” (194). Its ultimate goal is to unify the disparate groups within the nation, while also “strengthen[ing] a community’s attachment to its historic territory” (194). The goal, then, is unity. However, this is not an all-encompassing unity. It is limited to those who have been deemed participants in the national myth, by birth. There will be those who are left on the outside, purposely, to serve as the group against whom the national community will define itself.

One of the central achievements of the Reformation was its formulation of the “Catholic other” against which Protestant England could define itself as a nation. Catholicism was associated with disloyalty, subversion, conspiracy, and treason. Most importantly, it was by aligning the Catholic faith with all that was foreign and linking it with the menace of internal disorder and external invasion and domination that created it

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<sup>10</sup> Given the inherently exclusive nature of nationalist thinking, the idea that the nation should extend its boundaries refers more to territorial conquest and the assimilation of other nations into itself than to the idea of an “open border.”

as the hated enemy and biggest threat to the emergence and continuation of the English nation.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in the Reformation statutes we find the first presentation of the official version of English history, which was to influence the thinking of most English people up to our present time: that they had always been separate and sovereign to themselves, in terms of both political and religious governance. The Reformation was depicted as freeing the English nation from the “slavery” inflicted upon it by the Papacy in medieval times, and restoring it to its original imperial state in which the English King had reigned supreme over all aspects of national life. The Reformation, then, was portrayed more as a reclamation of sovereign nationhood than a religious revolution.

“Unofficially,” however, what the Reformation did was bring further separation and isolation from the mainland, creating the conditions within which the old patriotic love of their country and their sense of Englishry was turned to distrust of their European neighbors. This distrust, paired with the separatist thinking endemic to nationalism, became part of the racial dialogue that was emerging in England at this time.

### **Race, Reformation, and English Nationalism**

*Miranda:*       When thou didst not, savage,  
                          Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like  
                          A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
                          With words that made them known. But thy vile race,  
                          Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures

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<sup>11</sup> This is covered in detail by my subsequent chapters, as I compare representations of the Catholic with representations of other forms of national, religious, and ethnic “otherness.”

Could not abide to be with. (1.2.429-34)

In this passage from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* the play's only occurrence of the word "race" takes place. As Anthony Appiah asserts, "an unprepared modern reader risks misunderstanding it" (279) because, according to Appiah, Miranda's words to Caliban do not bespeak race in the modern sense of the word. Miranda's phrase describing Caliban's "vile race" is not symptomatic of an emergent "racialist" discourse because her remark is directed solely to Caliban and not to an entire race. Racialist discourse does not emerge, Appiah explains, until the Enlightenment, when the idea of shared features and inherited characteristics are mapped onto specific groups of people. In the context of early modern England, "race" referred merely to the inherited dispositions of a single person or family.

However, the discourses that would eventually lead to a modern English understanding of race began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the English began examining what made them English. At this time, "Englishness," as both an ethnic and national marker of identity, was, at best, unclear or indefinable and, at worst, an unflattering characterization of an inferior people.

The Reformation, specifically England's severance from Rome, forced Englishmen to acknowledge and address many preconceptions about their own identity. Involved in a process of self-definition as well as self-fashioning, the English sought to reconstruct their ideas of English ethnicity not only by studying their lineage, but by comparing themselves to their closest European neighbors and, later, to the southern regions of Africa and the Middle East. Through their examinations, they sought to

catalogue and classify prevalent characteristics shared by a common people; such thinking – while not racial in the modern sense – may be termed “proto-racial” in that it essentially set the groundwork for the birth of a modern racial philosophy in the eighteenth century.

Ivan Hannaford writes, “between the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain [1492] and the landing of the first Negro in the North American colonies in 1619, the word ‘race’ entered Western languages” (147). With this statement, Hannaford imbeds the ideological and linguistic heritage of the word in its religious and political context. Yet the word’s early definition bore little resemblance to our modern understanding of it. Hannaford identifies the end of the seventeenth century as the time when the word acquired the meaning we now attach to it: that is, as a designation based on anatomical and physiological differences (148). Such “biological” categories of differentiation were foreign to the early modern period.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, from its very origins, the word “race” was essentially connected to the political. It wasn’t until Europeans began traversing the globe that the word began to be used when describing and classifying the various peoples from the lands to which their colonizers and adventurers traveled. Astonished by the contrast between known public ways of governance and what appeared to be the barbarity of foreign cultures, discoverers and reformers sought a way to reformulate their ideas of ancient race<sup>13</sup> and turned to the new historical methodologies such as those put forth in the writing of Jean Bodin

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<sup>12</sup> Margaret Hodgen discusses this at great length in her book *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*.

<sup>13</sup> Race based on biblical genealogies and classical exegesis of law, government, and politics: most notably, the works of Aristotle, Argippa, and Machiavelli.

(*Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, 1565) and, later, to the work of Francois Hotman. These new methodologies moved away from a theological approach to ethnicity and attempted to formulate a more scientific approach to understanding human cultures. In their attempts to classify and understand foreign “races,” English “ethnographers” were forced to turn a critical eye upon themselves and re-examine their notions of the English race.

Though ethnographers were moving away from theologically determined notions of racial difference, the Biblical account of race still influenced English writers of nation. As such, the Bible continued to support the belief in the ultimate connection between all races. A scriptural understanding of race pre-dated the newer “pseudo-sciences” of sixteenth-century ethnography and the empirical evidence gathered by England’s world travelers and royal propagandists. Scriptural understandings of race stressed a common ancestry for all of mankind in the form of a lineage that stretched all the way back to Adam and Eve. Ultimately, the Bible dictated that beneath the world’s apparent ethnic diversity there was a network of family relationships.<sup>14</sup>

This stress on a theological understanding of race became even more important in the move from a Catholic to a Protestant understanding of scripture as a literal narrative of the world: “The Old Testament set out, in plain terms and unmediated by allegory – so early modern Protestant scholars believed – the creation of the world, the origin of humankind and the ancient history of the world from earliest times. In parallel, the realm of nature was too denuded of symbolic significance. Nature and scripture consisted of

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<sup>14</sup> See chapter one for a complete discussion of Biblical monogenesis and its influence on early modern English understandings of race and colonialism.

facts, not of signs and symbols” (57).<sup>15</sup> Thus, considering the increased “scientific authority” to which the Protestants afforded the Bible, all genealogies led back to Noah, and “to suggest that racial distinctions were innate and the gulf between races unbridgeable was to risk courting accusations of heresy” (57). Though the same problems would have been present in a Catholic understanding of the Bible, they were given even more immediacy with the Protestant prioritization of *sola scriptura*.

But even the Protestant preoccupation with the need for a racial unity, based on the Bible, was itself, in many ways, color-blind. According to Kidd, “the problem of racial Otherness tended to be overshadowed by a more pressing concern about pagan Otherness. What struck early modern commentators about the diversity of the world was not so much the differences in physical appearance and colors between peoples, but the curious range of pagan religions found across the globe” (71). Thus, “the dominant mode of discourse during the early modern era in the field of ethnic difference was what would now be called comparative religion. Understanding pagan differences from Christianity was a matter of greater concern, it seemed, than making sense of physical differences from the white European norm” (73). Central to this discourse was the need to stress the unity and singular validity of Christianity, even amongst seemingly diverse religious beliefs and practices. As Kidd asserts, “the notion that there might be a plurality of genuine gods was beyond the pale of Christian possibility. It seemed much more likely that the various religions of the world were degenerate forms of an original Judeo-

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<sup>15</sup> This is why in a book where Genesis is an overwhelming influence, Book One of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, the inherent contradiction between what seems and what is -- between reality and perception -- is so crucial for Redcrosse to learn before he can fully become the representative knight of Holiness. Seeing correctly is something that needs to be learned in the post-Lapsarian world. I examine this issue more fully in light of monogenesis in chapter one.

Christian Ur-religion once shared by all the people of the world in the immediate aftermath of the Flood” (73). Thinking of the disparity between what was seen in the world and what was presented in the Bible, the idea of “degeneracy” became a prominent understanding of racial diversity.

In St. Paul’s address to the Gentiles in Acts 17, the same unifying trend is seen in his sympathetic and gentle handling of pagan religiosity – this tolerance is appropriately the focus of a chapter that deals specifically with the inherent unity of all nations.

You Athenians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything [...] For ‘In him we live and move and have our being,’ as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination. (17:22-25, 28-29)

Yet Paul’s tolerance and declaration of ethnic unity is concluded with a demand for religious unity: “God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent” (17:30). Though disparate religions and races are



acknowledged to exist, they are not allowed to continue as equally viable with Christianity; they need reformation. This is especially true during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which seems to best follow the line taken by St. Paul: “early modern Christian ethnographers were on the lookout, first and foremost, for suppressed similarities – not differences – between cultures. Significantly, what tended most to catch the early modern eye in the world’s ethnic diversity was not the appearance of other races, but the religious lineaments of other cultures, and in particular the glimpses these seemed to offer of an ancient unified religious culture” (Kidd 77). Therefore, it was theologically imperative that early modern writers of ethnology discern the inherent religious unity of the world’s population, while discounting “apparent facts of racial, linguistic and religious difference [...] as superficial distractions from the underlying unity of humankind” (77). Ironically, this need for unity enables racist ideology. The recognition that racial unity was the divine plan for human beings, and that racial diversity was a cause of sin,<sup>16</sup> did not foster an appreciation for racial diversity. Indeed, it was quite the opposite, there was the need to reassert this unity through colonization efforts, as a way to homogenize other cultures and ethnicities under a dominant nation.

Racial, and thus religious, differences were not accepted as natural or God-given, but as “accidental, epiphenomenal mask[s] concealing the unitary Adamic origins of a single, extended human family” (Kidd 26). More specifically, diversity was represented as a result of sin, where disunity begins with Adam and Eve and continues with the descendants of Noah. And, as Kidd argues, in order to defend monogenist orthodoxy,

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<sup>16</sup> See my discussion in chapter one about the understanding of sin in relation to racial diversity. Central to this discussion is a reiteration of the theory of monogenesis, with an added emphasis on the early modern English understanding of the Genesis stories: mainly, the creation and the flood.

discourses on race “fixated not upon the empirical facts of human difference, but upon ways to reconcile such differences with the deeper truth (and theological necessity) of aboriginal human unity” (26).<sup>17</sup>

### **Barbarians at the Gates**

Over time, what motivated proto-racial discourse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became England’s need to define and establish its own national identity as something separate and, indeed, superior to that of their “barbaric” neighbors. This new introspection occurred because of increased mercantile and military contests with other countries, which moved England from its traditional insularity to a new and unfamiliar interaction with various international cultures and societies. Yet at the same time that England became more of a presence internationally, the nation’s symbolic ties to the Mediterranean – the perceived center of the world – were severed by its break with Rome.<sup>18</sup> Because it realigned theological and political affiliations, the Reformation also encouraged England to imagine its identity in terms of detachment and division from the center. Despite England’s contact with the New World, the classification of people and nations during these times still conformed to the ancient tripartite divisions of climatic regions: southern, northern, and temperate zones. These ancient tripartite divisions were

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<sup>17</sup> These issues are at the heart of Spenser’s discourse on the reforms necessary in England’s relations with Ireland, a topic that dominates my analysis in chapter one of this study. Both *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and Book V of *The Faerie Queene* reveal Spenser’s anti-pluralist recommendations for the direction of Irish culture, while also displaying impatience with contradictions to monogenesis. Yet the type of monogenesis Spenser was championing was the one-way monogenesis of the colonialist. He wrote for unity between England and Ireland, but only if Ireland could, in a sense, become England. The source of his impatience with and criticism of the Irish is their inability or unwillingness to make this transformation. It is the native’s resistance to becoming English, and the pagan’s resistance to becoming Christian, that destroys the colonialist’s dream.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the Reformation’s effect on England’s ethnic and national self-perception, see the introduction to Bridget Orr.

known as a form of ethnic philosophy called “Humouralism” (also termed “Geohumoralism”), which used the environmental factors of geography and temperature to classify human ethnicity. Humoralism, reductively construed as “climate theory” by some modern scholars, was the dominant mode of ethnic distinction in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. According to this ancient form of ethnological classification, England was a “race” of barbarians.

Derived from the classical texts of Aristotle, Galen, Vitruvius, Pliny, and others, humoralism aimed to comprehend the northern and southern climatic extremes that bordered the Mediterranean.<sup>19</sup> To understand the English comprehension of ethnicity – their own as well as others’ – we must begin with the recognition that they conceived of themselves and their island as “northern”; England’s northern climate and the English people’s northern status colored their perspective on everything from fashion to medicine to politics. As Mary-Floyd Wilson points out, “this is not to say simply that chilly weather compelled the English to wear wool, but that a fundamental sense of displacement – derived from the British Isles’ marginalized status in a set of classical texts that were revered and considered authoritative – gave rise to the notions that their bodies were intemperate, their culture borrowed and belated, and their nature barbarous” (3). According to these texts, “humoral temperance,” or civility, was held to be attainable only in a temperate clime. In this tripartite scheme, ancient Greece and Rome were construed as the temperate – and thus civilized – middle between the barbaric lands of north and south. Contrarily, laborers and effeminate men prosper in the extreme

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<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed description of the inception and characteristics of classical geohumoralism and its application to early modern British ethnology, see Bridget Orr.

regions of the north and south.<sup>20</sup> As people living in the “extreme” northern region, the English had little chance of having or becoming a temperate “race.” As a culture that exalted the virtues of temperance, the fact that England was not “humorally” temperate bespoke a people of incivility. Mary Floyd-Wilson explains this idea in the following quotation: “distinct from modern racial thinking, which relies on fixed categories and a fixed hierarchy, early modern ethnology values the good of temperance – an elusive, but theoretically achievable, balance of humors” (12). Yet to achieve this balance, an extreme region would need the balancing influence of a temperate society, and since the Reformation severed England’s connection to the humorally temperate society of Rome, the English had to recognize their own humorally determined identity.

Prior to their break with Rome, the English invested heavily in the myth that they were descendents of Troy, and thus connected, by blood, to what they considered the most civilized race in all of history. The story of Britain’s Trojan ancestry is told first in Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum* (c 800) and then most authoritatively in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britannicae* (c1139). Claiming to translate an ancient book from the original “British” language into Latin, Geoffrey relates that after the destruction of Troy, Aeneas fled to Italy where he founded a second Troy, later to become the Roman Empire. Soothsayers predicted that his great-grandson Brutus would one day kill his own father (Silvius) and wander the world in exile, but eventually would end his life with great renown. The prophecy was fulfilled: Brutus accidentally killed his father while

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<sup>20</sup> When describing these men as “effeminate,” I am borrowing the cultural vocabulary established by the model of Gail Kern Paster’s work, which has shown that humoral texts are never socially neutral but are inherently inflected with narratives of gender and class distinctions. And as Joyce Green MacDonald points out, “the larger framework of geohumoralism is organized by the hierarchies of gender and class” (13). And as she further explains, it is this effeminacy that made their northern identity so troublesome for “English constructions of the elite male” (14).

hunting; in exile, he was told by the goddess Diana of an island which awaited him and his followers and which she prophesied would become another Troy. The island, inhabited only by a band of giants, was called Albion. Brutus renamed the island after himself and renamed his companions Britons (see Geoffrey's *Historia* I.16). From this beginning, Geoffrey traces British history through almost 2000 years to the death of Cadwallader and the end of the first British Empire. It has been argued by numerous literary critics that what Virgil did for Rome in his *Aeneid*, Geoffrey does for England in his legendary genealogy. Even Geoffrey's critics, such as Giraldus Cambrensis and William of Newburgh, accepted the Trojan origins of Britain; and the Tudor chroniclers – Fabyan, Grafton, Holinshed, and Stow – tell the same story with variations. Perhaps the strongest encouragement to uphold the Trojan origins of Britain came from the Tudor monarchs. The notion of ancient and imperial lineage appealed to these recent descendants of dynastic compromise. Their coats of arms included Brutus and Arthur, and official genealogies traced their titles back to Brutus.

The Trojan myth, it can be argued, was established as a way to alleviate Britain's distaste with its own barbarous origins. As descendants of Troy, the Britons had claimed a noble lineage, which could be accommodated to the traditional terms of classical ethnography. Giraldus Cambrensis, a Welsh monk hired by Henry VIII to investigate the purported "inferiority" of foreign people, explained, "the Britons [...] transplanted from the hot and parched regions [...] still retain their brown complexion and that natural warmth of temper from which their confidence is derived [...] from thence arose that courage, that nobleness of mind, that ancient dignity, that acuteness of

understanding” (54).<sup>21</sup> Thus, the warm Mediterranean climate had implanted the Trojans’ innate virtues, which succeeding generations maintained despite Britain’s northern environment.<sup>22</sup> By tracing its earliest ancestors to the Mediterranean, England’s myth of a Trojan genealogy had circumvented the embarrassments of a northern descent. Yet, when the contemporary and historical realities of England’s connection (or lack thereof) to Rome were discounted by sixteenth-century scholars such as William Camden as well as by re-examinations of ancient accounts such as Caesar’s *Commentaries on the Gallic War*, England eventually relinquished a belief in this myth of lineage and sought alternate methods of establishing its own ethnic civility.

However, England’s knowledge of its own northern ethnicity created a type of inferiority complex – a sort of geographical determinism, making English ethnographers grapple with their own subscription to classically derived medical theories and natural philosophy. Consequently, in both imaginative and non-imaginative literature, English writers struggle to stabilize and rehabilitate their notions of northern identity. Estranged and marginalized from the middle, temperate climate of the Mediterranean, English writers were compelled to interpret their classically derived natural philosophies to reconstruct their own ethnic identity.

Having loosened or broken ties with Roman authority and Mediterranean heritage, and confronted by the dismaying possibility that they were the barbaric progeny of a dissolute, mingled, and intemperate race, the English turned to contemporary

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<sup>21</sup> See below for a further discussion of Cambrensis and his ethnological ideas – specifically, of how his writing became the primary source for the justification of colonialism in Ireland during the early sixteenth century.

<sup>22</sup> The geohumouralist position is implicitly complicated, as it argues that climate both does and doesn't affect the Britons.

scholars for a better explanation of their ethnic roots. William Camden provided one. In his thesis, *Britannia* (1586), Camden introduced the idea that the English people's native barbarism had been purged – not by an ancient lineage with Rome, but by the Roman conquest. With this theory, the English could still lay claim to civility – but not an innate civility. While the previous myth had allowed the English an ethnic connection to the greatness of their conquerors, Camden's thesis explained how English barbarity was extirpated by the civilizing force of foreign colonization. This theory was also promulgated by another major sixteenth-century writer of ethnic identity -- Edmund Spenser, who follows Camden in dismissing the Briton's noble Trojan lineage and attributing England's current state of civility not to its ancestry, but to its status as a conquered nation. This theory, articulated by two of Tudor England's most prominent writers, throws a new light on our modern understanding of the sixteenth-century attitude toward colonialism – at least in regards to England. It would seem that the English viewed colonialism not as an evil, repressive force, but as a chance for social, and perhaps ethnic, improvement. In essence, England's understanding of its own ethnicity was initially salvaged by its history of Roman colonization.

In Camden's *Britannia*, the Britons had been tempered and – in so many words – improved by Roman law and government. When commenting on Camden, Bridget Orr states, “Camden's narrative model [...] configures history as the gradual acquisition of civility – a civility, moreover, apparently dependent upon the *forcible imposition* of a more advanced culture [my italics]” (51). Spenser's prose work, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, I would argue, serves as an extension of Camden's historical logic:

translating the English from colonized to colonizers as they take up the task of “civilizing” the Irish. Just as the Romans brought civility to the English, the English would now bring civility to the inhabitants of its colonial holdings; and, in the same manner that England gained civility from the Norman Conquest, it is Ireland’s role to submit to England’s rule.<sup>23</sup>

England’s Roman history, then, functioned as a foundation for the English nation, the English race, and English ethnicity. It was the source from which the English established their sense of national identity and prestige. But in the years when the Roman Empire became the Holy Roman Empire, did this ethnological understanding of Rome’s influence in England extend to its Catholic identity? If Tudor writers revised how the English understood the civilizing influence of the (pagan) Romans, did they also revise the English’s understanding of England’s Catholic history? If so, how?

In thinking of such questions, one should consider Walker Conner’s assertion that, “when analyzing sociopolitical situations, what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is*” (37). As we have seen in the basic ideas of geohumoralism, though individuals within ethnic groups are born with a certain set of characteristics common to their group, ultimately ethnic identity is mutable – through invasion. In the same way, individuals may be born into a religious group, but that religious identity is also mutable – through conversion. It would seem that ethnic and religious identities are imagined along similar lines.

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<sup>23</sup> See Chapter Two for my analysis of Anglo-Irish relations in light of this ethnological theory.



The relation of ethnicity to religion has been the topic of a number of theorists. In her essay “Religion and Ethnicity,” political scientist Cynthia Enloe remarks, “It may be futile and unrealistic to separate religion and ethnic identity. Many individuals behave as if their ethnic affiliation and professed religion are one and the same: to be born Croatian is to be born Catholic” (199-200). She furthermore points out that “There are few multi-religious ethnic groups and their relative scarcity suggests that religion is the root of ethnic differentiations or that religious distinctiveness is a key to ethnic saliency” (201). This understanding of the connection between religion and race made England’s break with Rome even trickier for English writers of nation. Two of the major ingredients of the “imagined community” of the nation – a common history and common blood – had long been aligned with the Catholicism they had recently outlawed. Protestant<sup>24</sup> writers were thus forced to conceive of an English past that both elevated the ethnicity of the nation while simultaneously extracting that past from its Roman – hence Catholic – connections. The narratives being written, by both major and minor writers, during the years of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries provided new interpretations and representations of English ethnicity and history -- new myths that were compounded by theologians, historians, dramatists, and poets alike. Each writer was seeking to provide ways, whether explicitly or implicitly, consciously or subconsciously (i.e. unintentionally), to answer the question of what made England English.

### **Writing the Nation**

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<sup>24</sup> I use the word “Protestant” rather loosely here to mean the religious group of separatists from the Catholic Church. I realize that it is not until 1547 that we can even talk of “English Protestants”; moreover, the word Protestant originally referred to Lutherans (OED I).

The poets and playwrights of Elizabethan England usually derived inspiration from the political atmosphere of the day. The poetry and drama of this period reflects the inherent tension of these years as religious and political identities were being questioned and redefined. Canonical authors reflected and responded to the politics of the day, while also carefully avoiding outright assaults on those policies and individuals with whom they disagreed. In the Tudor period English culture was dominated by themes such as the exaltation of the monarchy, the Reformation as the saving grace of England, and the glorification of the “ancient history” of the English nation. The treatment of these themes, however, differed according to the writer.

In the construction of a national identity, which began with the Henrician Reformation, there was a precedent put upon the sovereignty of the monarch, on the “elect” status of England, and on a fabricated notion of national ancestry. Central to this construction was also the identification and classification of national, religious, and racial “others.” This process, of course, allowed a number of individual stereotypes to emerge, which were partially informed by medieval notions, but also newly recast and re-imagined. Limited contact with the perceived “others” of Europe allowed such stereotypes to flourish in sixteenth-century England. However, representations of Jews, the Irish, and Muslims are filtered through the common prejudices against Catholics because, in many ways, these figures functioned for the English imagination more as concepts than as real individuals, as figures more from narrative than from personal experience. The figure of the Catholic made them real. This representation of foreign and domestic “otherness” through the lens of anti-Catholicism is the focus of this study.

In Chapter One, I analyze the figure of the Irishman/woman, within whom exists nearly every major criticism, prejudice about, and danger of Catholicism. Indeed, unlike the other figures under analysis in my dissertation, the Irishman is seen as Catholic first and foremost; indeed, his very ethnicity is based on his religious affiliation – making Catholicism less of a spiritual choice than a racial marker of his Irishness. In discussing this figure, I continue to develop many of the ideas of nation-building and early ethnology that have been established by this introduction. Much of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of Book II and Book V of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, which are read in the context of England’s colonial efforts in Ireland as well as the larger project of nation-building at home.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the complex figure of the Jew. In the 16th century, most of the Jewish population in England was comprised of those who migrated to Europe during the Spanish Inquisition. Jewish exiles from Spain and Portugal were usually required to profess Christianity in their new countries; the converts were called Marranos. As figures of forced conversion, the Marrano became a displaced image of the duplicity that was feared to be inherent in those who were equally forced to convert from Catholicism to Protestantism in post-Reformation England. It is this figure that will occupy most of my analysis in this chapter.

My final chapter, Chapter Three, deals with the provocative figure of the Turk. Unlike the previous two figures, the Turk represented for the English not only barbarism and heathenism, but also a serious threat: the danger of invasion. It is for this reason that the figure of the Turk – who is sometimes portrayed merely as a Moor or Muslim – is

usually a militarized figure: the figure of the soldier, the general, etc. Thus, the figure of the Turk represents not only the fear of Turkish invasion, but more pressingly, the danger of invasion from powers closer to home: England's Catholic neighbors, Spain and France. Though Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is again a major subject of analysis, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Robert Daborne's play *A Christian Turned Turk* are also considered.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Cannibals, Catholics, and English Apes: Conversion Anxiety and The Figure of the Irishman in Pre-and Post-Reformation England*

The essential nature of national thinking is oppositional; in other words, national identity is construed in terms of its opposite, of what it is not. To constitute itself as a nation, then, a community must differentiate itself from its neighbors. For early modern England, Ireland had seemingly always occupied the place of other – the counterpoint from which England defined itself. Thus, integral to the efforts for national self-definition was the need for England to distinguish itself from Ireland. Yet, conjoined to this need was an equal desire to distinguish England’s present state from its former self, as nationalism tends to be forward thinking. In the case of England’s relationship with Ireland, these efforts were one and the same, as the two countries shared a common history; indeed, writers of history and literature often construed Ireland as a primeval England. However, the disturbing knowledge of their common ancestry, as well as their shared geography and physiognomy, forced the English to formulate a stable point of difference on which to base their own definition of national identity.<sup>25</sup>

As my chapter will show, early modern scientific and biblical theories of ethnology could not provide this stable point of difference; in fact, theories such as

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<sup>25</sup> This idea has been explored by other literary critics, most notably by Michael Neill. In his article “Broken English and Broken Irish: Nation, Language, and the Optic of Power in Shakespeare’s Histories,” he makes a claim similar to mine: “if the Irish were essential to the formation of English identity, they also threatened it. For in the English mind, Ireland constituted not merely a defining limit but a dangerously porous boundary, a potential conduit of papal subversion which the tenaciously held Irish conviction of their own Spanish origins did nothing to allay. Thus while the ideology of national difference required that the Irish be kept at a distance and stigmatized as a barbaric Other, the practicalities of English policy more and more pressingly required that Ireland be absorbed within the boundaries of the nation-state” (3). However, Neill stops short of connecting nationalistic and racial language to a specific fear of Catholic conversion (or, more specifically, English Catholic reconversion). He also looks primarily at the figure of the stage Irishman as the figuration of English otherness, while my argument is based largely on Spenser’s prose and poetry (though I do integrate a discussion of the stage Irishman later in the chapter).

monogenesis and geohumoralism confirmed rather than destroyed the fraternal link between the two countries. The English Reformation eventually provided a crucial point of difference. In the country's severance from the Roman Catholic Church, national self-articulation was given a solid point from which it differentiated England not only from Ireland but also from England's own cultural and religious history. Subsequently, Ireland – its history, customs, and ethnology – becomes intrinsically linked to Catholicism. Ireland may be like England, but it is like the pre-Reformed England. While England benefited from the civilizing force of the Reformation, Ireland remained mired in the darkness of its "heathen" religion.

What I essentially demonstrate in my analysis of English writing on Ireland is that, for a number of English writers, Catholicism becomes both the source and symptom of Ireland's barbarism. However, as one of England's closest neighbors, its barbaric civilization is a danger to the English way of life, and to English identity itself. This danger becomes the basis of English colonial rhetoric in regards to Ireland. Ultimately, the Irish represent England's anxieties about conversion: religious, cultural, and, even, ethnic conversion.

In presenting this argument, I draw from a number of literary works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* is the dominant literary consideration of the chapter, as this work best represents the theoretical and historical bases of my analysis of English representations of Irishness. Books II and V of *The Faerie Queene* also feature prominently in my analysis. This chapter adds to the current dialogue on Spenser's Irish writings by showing how

religious and racial rhetoric work together to fashion an image of Englishness divorced not only from its Irish neighbors but also from its own unpalatable past.

At the end of the chapter, I move beyond Spenser to show how the mirror image of Irishness informs other English national writers both during and after Spenser's time. In my analysis of John Derricke's poem "The Image of Ireland," I show how the Irish are portrayed as violent aggressors against the English nation. From there, my analysis of MacMorris in William Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Irishmen in Ben Jonson's *The Irish Masque* shows how this figure becomes a two-dimensional representations of cliched Irish stereotypes: effectively rendering them innocuous, ridiculous figures. Significantly, religion is the central disparity among these works. The Catholic identity of the Irishman is stressed in works portraying him as dangerous, aggressive, or subversive. In later portrayals, when the Irishman becomes merely a stage buffoon (as in Jonson's play) the Catholic identity of the figure is obscured or caricatured to the point of irrelevancy. This chapter aims to explain why Catholicism is always at the heart of the Irish "threat" against the English.

### **Separate Sameness: Irish and English Stereotypes**

As I have attempted to establish in this chapter, the sixteenth-century English were entrenched in an ethnological struggle with their own ancestry – they found temporary respite in the writings of scholars who purported that their innately barbaric natures were tempered by the civilizing forces of their Roman conquerors. Yet this explanation led to an additional, almost equally dangerous, recognition of another ethnic distinction: their particularly "English" impressibility. The sixteenth-century writer,

Roger Ascham, while viewing the Norman Conquest as the civilizing force in England's history, simultaneously saw the phenomenon that produced this improvement, mainly England's adaptability, as a source of great danger for the English. In *The Scholemaster* (1570), Ascham laments that the Englishman's impressible nature – and “naturally spongy brain!” (4) – would lead him not only to absorb the civilizing influence of a superior culture but also to absorb foreign vice indiscriminately. Anthropological as well as physiological evidence of this fear appears in various texts from this time. In his thesis, *The English Ape* (1588), William Rankins maintains that his countrymen's “incessant importation of foreign customs and fashions” had succeeded in tainting their “innately malleable complexions [dispositions]” (14). In these and other writings, foreign travel, education, literature, government, religion, diet, fashion, and theater were all cited as sources of both remedy and further corruption in England's pursuit of temperance and civility.<sup>26</sup>

Aside from the Englishman's “naturally spongy brain,” the English people's status as islanders further exacerbated their mutability. Drawing from the precepts of geohumoralism, Medieval and Renaissance writers often attributed the Englishman's perceived fickle and inconstant nature to the island's environs. Peter of Celle, a twelfth-century traveler, writes to Nicholas of St. Albans the following description of the English environment: “Your island is surrounded by water, and not unnaturally its inhabitants are affected by the nature of the element in which they live” (qtd. in Hadfield, *Amazons* 108).

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<sup>26</sup> Along with the influx of non-fictional, pseudo-scientific writing on English ethnicity, satires of English “apishness” were also prevalent: in them, the English are epitomized by their inability to project a fixed national identity. Below, I cover a number of these writings, predominantly those written by Moryson and Boorde.



Centuries later, James Howell, in *A German Diet: or, the Balance of Europe* (1653), asserts that “the sea tumbleth perpetually about [...] so their braines do fluctuat in their noddles, which makes [the British] so variable and unsteady” (qtd. in Hadfield, *Amazons* 87). Also, in *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (1547), often considered the earliest ethnography, the physician Andrew Boorde, provides a visual and verbal portrait of the Englishman’s “naturall dysposicion.” Boorde asserts that the Englishman proves rash, changeable, and faithless. According to Boorde, the Englishman, by nature, lacks fixed beliefs, allegiances, and loyalties. Even his way of dress is cited as an indication of his weak and mutable constitution: the Englishman’s love of fashion “is a symptom of his general tendency to vacillate and waver – and inability to hold himself ‘styl’” (Hadfield, *Amazons* 25). As Andrew Hadfield asserts, “throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English writers came back again and again to Boorde’s portrait, to decry the ‘constant [...] inconstancie of [their] attire’ and nature” (*Amazons* 55). As an identity susceptible to foreign influence, with inherently malleable and inconstant natures, “Englishness” was always about the forgetting or subverting of one’s self in place of the “other’s” self.

Consequently, the most prominent characteristic of English ethnicity proves to be its impressibility. Conversely, the Irish were believed to have as their prominent ethnic characteristic a nature stubbornly resistant to any external influence. For example, Hector Boece, in his *Scotorum Historiae* (1526), points out that the Irish were condemned for possessing “racial” characteristics directly opposed to those possessed by

the English.<sup>27</sup> While the Englishman was condemned for his malleability, the Irishman was condemned for his intractability. The Irishman's intractability was explained partially by Camden, who makes a point of stressing that Rome forgot Ireland in its conquest of Britain, and as a result, the neglected "Irish-Scythians" (a pejorative term used by Camden, as well as by future generations of English writers)<sup>28</sup> failed to gain the "civility, learning, and elegance" that the Romans typically brought to "whom[ever] they conquered" (Orr 61). As a people untouched by the civilizing force of Roman colonization, the Irish remained imbued with the barbarous nature characteristic to all northern ethnicities.

Yet, the idea of Irish barbarity was not new to sixteenth-century Englishmen. As Richard Lebow writes, "the stereotypic characterization of Irishmen actually dated back to the twelfth century, when Irish 'barbarism' and 'paganism' provided the pretext for the invasion of that country by Henry II [...] To provide a pretext for the invasion Henry sent defamatory reports of Irish customs and religious practices to Rome and offered to subdue Ireland in order to bring both civilization and Christianity to its people" (74). To further prove the savagery of the Irish, Henry dispatched a Welsh monk, Giraldus Cambrensis, with the intent to gather evidence supporting his claims of Ireland's "racial" inferiority. As Lebow documents, "Cambrensis [...] served his master well. He described the 'wild Irish' as eaters of human flesh, murderers and thieves who reveled in sodomy and incest" (75). Moreover, Cambrensis discredits the Irish religion, which he viewed as "a superstitious doctrine" that was basically paganism couched in a "nominally

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<sup>27</sup> I should note that the use of the word "racial" in this context is my own and not Boece's.

<sup>28</sup> The significance of the insult is discussed below.

Christian form” (75). He asserts that, “This is a filthy people, wallowing in vice. Of all peoples it is the least instructed in the rudiments of the Faith” (106). Much of his denigration of the Irish church includes a number of criticisms that will later preoccupy the majority of post-Reformation accounts of Irish Roman Catholicism – mainly reports of cannibalism (a deliberate misrepresentation of the Eucharistic mass) and corrupt, licentious clergy:<sup>29</sup> such insults are ironic considering that at the time of Cambrensis’s account, England and Ireland shared the same religion.

He reports that after “the celebration of Mass and the prayers of the priests [and] for greater confirmation of their friendship and completion of their settlement, each in conclusion drinks the blood of the other which has willingly been drawn especially for the purpose” (108). While he initially commends the monastic observances of the Irish clergy, he soon follows with a searing portrait of them as hypocritical and unfit shepherds for such a rebellious flock: “But it would be better if after their long fasts they were as sober as they are late in coming to food, as sincere as they are severe, as pure as they are dour, and as genuine as they appear” and “they omit almost everything to which they are obliged as clerics and prelates” (113, 112). The implication, here, is that Irish priests are good at observing superstitious practices, but they are inept at doing the things that truly matter: such as remaining sober in order to subdue the naturally recalcitrant Irish population.

Aside from, but perhaps related to, his criticism of Irish religion, Cambrensis provides what may be the first account of the Irish people’s soon-to-be notorious

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<sup>29</sup> For examples, see my discussion of post-Reformation representations of Irish Catholicism below.

ethnological link to the Scythian race.<sup>30</sup> It is this ancestry that makes the Irish “a wild and inhospitable people,” who “live on beasts only, and live like beasts” (101). As “wild beasts,” they cannot hope to have a true understanding of religion, which is what makes their partaking of the Eucharist a form of cannibalism rather than a holy sacrament. Thus, as Cambrensis shows, in pre-Reformation accounts, it is Irish barbarism that makes their practice of religion heathenish. This is how the English are able to criticize the Irish religion while also practicing it themselves. In post-Reformation representations, Catholicism itself, and not merely how it is practiced, becomes both a symptom and a cause of Irish barbarism.<sup>31</sup>

On the whole, Cambrensis’s account was, to the delight of Henry II – whom Cambrensis terms “our Western Alexander” (124) – completely successful in painting the Irish as a “brutish” and “savage” race that needed to be reformed by a more advanced nation (just as the northern barbarians needed to be reformed by the Roman nation centuries before). While serving the dynastic needs of England’s current monarch, the account also established the reputation by which Ireland was to be regarded from then on. Lebow reflects on the tract’s lasting effect on England’s social imagination. Limited contact allowed this largely fabricated image of the Irishman to flourish for centuries, to the point that it dominated, “the perception of Englishmen who had never even visited

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<sup>30</sup> Here, Cambrensis describes their racial ancestry: “The aforesaid Bartholanus and all his race having been wiped out by the sword of a cruel and long-enduring pestilence, the land remained for some time deprived of anyone to inhabit it, until Nemedus, the son of Agnominius a Scythian, arrived with his four sons at the shore of the abandoned land [...] His sons and grandsons and great-grandsons multiplied in a short time to such an extent that they filled every corner of the whole island with more inhabitants than it ever had”; however, “most of them were quickly destroyed in the frequent wars that they waged with the giants who then flourished in the island,” only to be re-occupied by new Scythian colonizers generations later (95-96).

<sup>31</sup> I discuss this further in my analysis of Edmund Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*.

Ireland,” spread by “the steady stream of commentaries, travel descriptions and reports written by colonists, administrators and casual visitors to Ireland. When they came to Ireland, they brought their preconceived notions with them” (Lebow 81). Thus demonstrating the power of political propaganda, Cambrensis’s account represents the beginning of a process of “othering” that Ireland would be subjected to for the next five centuries by the English.

After the Reformation, English travelers such as Fynes Moryson (1566-1630) continued the process that was started by Cambrensis. In 1599, Moryson was employed as secretary to Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy of Ireland. It was during this time that Moryson wrote an itinerary on his Irish experiences; this itinerary would become England’s most well-known account of Irish modes of behavior during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an unfortunate fact, as Andrew Hadfield points out, since Moryson conforms to the common practice of most travelers during this time to use his wide experience as a way to denigrate the cultures with which he came into contact. Though he is unflattering in his portrayal of northern Europeans in general, the Italians, Irish, and Turks aroused his “particular ire.”<sup>32</sup> As Hadfield surmises, “the Turks represent the epitome of barbarism; the Italians, the forces of evil Catholic Europe; and the Irish, perhaps the worst of all, both tendencies, being superstitious Catholics who refuse to obey the legitimate English sovereign who rules them” (*Amazons* 82). Moryson touches upon the many weaknesses and villainies of the Irish: from their proclivity to cavil in

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<sup>32</sup> As a side note: one should remember that Ireland was the name given to the country by the English, and that the name intentionally included the word “ire.” The pun on Ireland as a “land of ire” is a familiar feature of contemporary English colonial discourse. For example, the anonymous author of the “Dialogue of Sylvanus and Peregrine” (1599) opens with the following play on words: “Sylvan: In Ireland man? Oh what a country of wrath is that, It hath not the addicon of the syllable in vayne.” Thus, in the very name “Ireland,” we find a negative English image.

battle to the impurity of their women, painting them as inferior in every way. He repeats a recurrent description of the Irish when he describes their “idleness.” He says, “they are *by nature* extremely given to Idleness [italics mine]. The Sea Coasts and harbors abound with fish, but the fishermen must be beaten out, before they will goe to their Boates [...] This Idleness, also makes them to love liberty above all things” (92). This complaint is characteristic of the English mentality: they appreciate the pastoral – mainly in literature, but only as a temporary respite from the more important affairs of urban building and mercantile productivity. Among many other complaints, Moryson also derides the Irish “superstitions,” mainly their “papist” faith. In the end, he concludes that, “the meere Irish<sup>33</sup> being barbarous and loving so to continue, can not be acquainted with [civil governance], which they affect not” (94). Thus, the native Irish are barbarians, and because they love being barbarians, they do not have any use for the institutions of civility – mainly, English government.

Moryson reiterates many of the subjects in Cambrensis’s account, mainly the charges of cannibalism amongst the Irish and the theory of their Scythian ancestry. “Yet will they upon hunger, in time of war, open a vein of the cow and drink the blood, but in no case kill or much weaken it. A man would think these men to be Scythians, who let their horses blood under their ears and for nourishment drink their blood; and indeed, as I have formerly said, some of the Irish are of the race of Scythians, coming into Spain and from thence into Ireland” (428). He also compares them to animals, an analogy frequently used by the English in their portrayal of the Irish: “these wild Irish are not

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<sup>33</sup> The term “meere Irish” is not considered pejorative in early modern English. Elizabeth I could refer to herself as “meere English.” The term basically means, “native.”

much unlike to wild beasts, in whose caves a beast passing that way might perhaps find meat, but not without danger to be ill entertained, perhaps devoured, of his insatiable host” (430). This particular analogy not only likens the Irish to wild beasts, but also includes the threat of cannibalism that the Irish were popularly believed to pose.<sup>34</sup>

Like Moryson, other English travelers and writers of Irish history and culture returned to the themes established by writers like Cambrensis. Aside from frequent descriptions of their bellicose natures and sub-par hygiene, cannibalism continues to be a prevalent charge against the Irish well into the seventeenth century. What emerges in post-Reformation accounts, however, is a more direct linking of barbaric social and cultural practices with Ireland’s stubborn adherence to the Catholic religion. In 1610, Barnabe Rich writes,

To speak now of the Irish more at large, I say they are *beholden to nature*, that hath framed them comely personages, of good proportion, well limbed [italics mine] [...] Not to speak of their dispositions, whereunto they are addicted and inclined. I say, besides they are rude, uncleanly, and uncivil, so they are very cruel, bloody minded, apt and ready to commit any kind of mischief. I do not impute this so much to their natural inclination, as I do to their education that are trained up in treason, in rebellion, in theft, in robbery, in superstition, in idolatry, and nuzzled from their cradles in the very puddle of popery. This is the fruit of the Pope’s doctrine [...] From hence it doth proceed, that the Irish cannot endure the English, because they differ so much in religion. (18)

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<sup>34</sup> Cannibalism was a common charge used against peoples and cultures deemed barbaric or dangerous; indeed, as a number of historians have indicated, it is the number one claim used as a way to demonstrate the utter savagery of a society. In his article from *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, Robert O’Brien addresses the prevalence of this stereotype in sixteenth-century English literature. He shows how cannibalism is used as an essential marker of difference and otherness, most frequently used in depictions of Native Americans.

Rich asserts that the Irish are everything from rude, unclean, and bloody-minded to treasonous, rebellious, and idolatrous not because of nature, but because of their education in Catholic doctrine. Rich continues with his portrayal, “The wild uncivil Scythians, do forbear to be cruel the one against the other. The cannibals, devourers of men’s flesh, do leave to be fierce amongst themselves, but the Irish, without all respect, are evermore cruel to their very next neighbours” (32). Here, the Scythian ancestry of the Irish is not even questioned – indeed, the Irish are Scythians. The comment that the Irish are “evermore cruel to their very next neighbours,” however, had a graver import for the English. As I discuss below, the fear of Irish “contagion” is prevalent at this time. The geographical proximity of the Irish created anxiety, not only over the threat of Irish aggression, but also of Irish influence. In Rich’s case, he expresses the fear of being cannibalized by the Irish. Sometimes, however, the fear lay in becoming a cannibal -- of becoming Irish. Both fears are commonly expressed, often simultaneously, by a number of English writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It would seem that, as a people, the Irish posed a triple threat to the English. I have established that they were considered barbarians and that they were stiffly settled in observing their own ways. Yet, a third – and most significant – danger was their potential to influence the easily swayed and impressible English to adopt their barbarous ways. Fynes Moryson writes about the dangers of “becoming Irish,” mainly in regards to the English citizens living in Ireland. The language of contagion is prevalent in his description. He writes, “many of the English-Irish, have by little and little been infected with the Irish filthiness” (44). Like any contagious disease, “Irishness” is presented as a



danger to those who are inured in it; it is a gradual infection, which seems to occur unnoticed.

Moryson continues with his analogy, this time drawing from the imagery of cattle: “as horses Cowes and sheep transported out of England into Ireland, doe each race and breeding decline worse and worse, till in fewe yeares they nothing differ from the races and breeds of the Irish horses and Cattle [sic]” (90).<sup>35</sup> The bestial imagery further dehumanizes the Irish natives and the so-called “Old English,”<sup>36</sup> and the metaphor of infection is further developed. Here, it is presented as a permanent disease, which gets into one’s genes and is passed on to one’s progeny. It becomes something that is inherited by future generations of colonists.

Moryson explains the English susceptibility to this “disease,” by drawing from common stereotypes concerning both the Irish and the English. He asserts, “the English are naturally inclyned to apply themselves to the manners and Customes of any forrayne nations with whome they live and Converse, whereas the meere Irish by nature have singular and obstinate pertinacity in retayning their old manners and Customes, so as they could never be drawne, by the lawes, gentile governments, and free conversation of the English, to any Civility in menners, or reformation in Religion” (91). By nature (or race), the English are more vulnerable to this influence because they are inherently more impressible.

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<sup>35</sup> The likening of English settlers in Ireland to animals, and sometimes insects, is recurrent in English literature: see below for my discussion of a similar image used in Book V of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*.

<sup>36</sup> English settler in Ireland.

In presenting the English as naturally impressionable and the Irish as stubbornly “stuck” in their barbaric ways, Moryson demonstrates the dangerous position English colonists were believed to be in when in Ireland -- the danger of “becoming Irish.” His comments also imply that because the Irish cannot be easily reformed, due to their perceived obduracy, they would need to be “civilized” by some other, more persuasive manner. In 1553, John Bale conveys similar anxieties in his *Vocacyon*; significantly, however, he uses theological terms to express an ethnological fear.

[T]o bring their conceyved wickednesse to passe  
they can do great miracles in this age  
by vertue of transubstanciacion belyke  
for therein are they very conninge.  
For they can very wittely make  
of a tame Irishe a wilde Irish for ned  
so that they shall serve their turne  
so wele as though they were of the wilde Irishe in dede. (85)

Here, Bale describes the cross-cultural transformation of the native Irish: how the “tame” becomes “wild.” Bale uses explicitly theological language to discuss ethnological concerns; transubstantiation can only be found in the Roman Catholic mass and is here used as the key word to describe the ethnological metamorphosis of the Irish. The passage, thus, offers an intriguing blend of both ethnological and religious anxieties – both of which are embodied by the figure of the Irishman. Both Bale and Moryson voice many of the latent fears the English had that England’s civilization and true religion –

and, indeed, their very natures – may be overwhelmed by their savage neighbors. Within these fears, one can distinctively hear the rhetoric of colonialism rising to the surface.

### **Early Modern Theories of Race & The Problem of Monogenesis**

Yet even as England became increasingly aware of the differences between itself and the nations immediately surrounding it, as well as those across the sea, the Bible promulgated the idea of an inherent racial connection between all people. A scriptural understanding of race pre-dated the newer “pseudo-science” of geohumoralism and the empirical evidence gathered by England’s world travelers and royal propagandists. Scriptural understandings of race stressed a common ancestry for all of mankind in the form of a lineage that stretched all the way back to Adam and Eve. Ultimately, the Bible dictated that beneath the world’s apparent ethnic diversity there was a network of family relationships.

In his climactic speech at the Areopagus, St. Paul preaches to the Gentiles: “And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 18:26). What he refers to is a common origin for all the nations of the world, which is a belief stemming from the re-population of the earth in the post-diluvian Genesis accounts of Noah and his descendants. According to the Bible, Adam and Eve are the first parents of all people, by way of Noah, his wife, and their three sons: Ham, Shem, and Japher.

In Genesis 10, the Table of Nations delineates in some detail the lineages descending from the sons of Noah, concluding with the statement, “These are the groupings of Noah’s sons, according to their origins and by their nations. From these the

other nations of the earth branched out after the flood” (Gen 10:32). Yet, as historian Colin Kidd points out in his work on the scriptural sources of racism, what is conspicuously absent from this detailed list is an attention to the ethnic or racial designations of these tribes/nations. Although the Bible has served as an integral source for the creation of racial dialogue, Kidd argues that it “treats of issues apparently pertinent to race and ethnicity [...] in a manner oblivious of the fact of racial difference. It describes, for example, the peopling of the world, but ignores the racial identity of the detailed lineages it describes” (20); furthermore, according to Kidd, “the Bible itself is largely colour-blind,” as “racial differences rarely surface in its narratives” (3). Though the Bible is relatively silent about the racial appearances of the individuals and nations it relates, “it is this very incongruity between the Bible’s significance for an understanding of ethnicity and its silence on matters of race that has tempted theologians and other readers of scripture, including anthropologists, race scientists and ideologues of all sorts, to import racial meanings and categories into the Bible” (20). Though scripture was frequently used to support racist ideologies, these ideologies were formed primarily by cultural and social ideologies, which manipulated biblical passages to serve their own ends. Race, it seems, mattered little to the writers of the Bible.

The belief in monogenesis further lessened the importance of racial differences between groups of people: having a single progenitor made all races related, even if only

in the sense of a distant cousinship.<sup>37</sup> However, although biblical monogenesis helped unify individuals and groups under the same “family tree,” the existence of many disparate races – and their disparate cultures and religions – initially threatened the theological imperative of monogenesis. Kidd explains this:

A monogenist theory of race is inextricably interwoven with some of the central tenets of Christian doctrine. The overriding importance of the unity of mankind for the biological transmission of original sin and indeed for defending the historical truths set out in Genesis meant that Christian commentators on race were inclined to refuse the apparent fact of distinctive races or racial types for fear of endorsing the destructive heresy of polygenesis. So much discussion of race was framed by the question of monogenesis that it distorted western ethnology in an anti-pluralist direction. Theology tended to inhibit a full acceptance of racial diversity. (25)

This stress on a theological understanding of race became even more important in the move from a Catholic to a Protestant understanding of scripture as a literal narrative of the world: “The Old Testament set out, in plain terms and unmediated by allegory – so early modern Protestant scholars believed – the creation of the world, the origin of

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<sup>37</sup> This is only one way to read this complicated issue, of course. While monogenesis often argued for a single, unified racial heritage, the genealogies that pertain to Noah (in particular, the “curse of Noah”) were also frequently used to assert racial distinctions. In the introduction to *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton’s discuss this issue at length, analyzing how early modern definitions of racial distinction were based on readings of Genesis and, specifically, of Noah’s three sons. Moreover, Benjamin Braude’s article “The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Period” also serves as a counterpoint to Kidd’s discussion.

humankind and the ancient history of the world from earliest times. In parallel, the realm of nature was too denuded of symbolic significance. Nature and scripture consisted of facts, not of signs and symbols” (Kidd 57). Thus, according to the “scientific authority” to which the Protestants afforded the Bible, all genealogies led back to Noah, and it was dangerous, even heretical, to suggest that people were innately separate and diverse.<sup>38</sup>

But even the Protestant need for a biblically-based racial unity was itself, in many ways, color-blind: not in the sense that these writers and thinkers ignored color, as they certainly did not, but that they acknowledged an ideal state of unity where there were no physical markers of difference. In his *True Discourse of the late voyages of discoverie, for the finding of a passage to Cathaya by the Northwest*, George Best (1578) responds to the disparate races he sees by commenting on Noah and his sons. The well-known story is that Noah forbade his sons to engage in sexual relations with their wives while on the ark. His son “Cham” (usually called Ham) disobeyed, and his wife birthed a child “who not only itself, but all his posterity after him, was so black and loathsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the world” (25). Best then surmises, “the cause of the Ethiopian’s blackness is the curse and infection of blood and not the distemperature of the climate” (26). Racial difference, then, is purported as a result of sin. Accordingly, it was not part of the original divine plan for humanity.

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<sup>38</sup> The differences between Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the Bible as a “scientific” text are complicated and, indeed, still being worked out by theologians and scholars today. As such, in making this claim, some nuance may be in order. Though previous generations of English Catholics had looked to the Bible for both theological and scientific insight, as Kidd points out and as a number of theologians popularly confirm, Protestants are generally more likely to read the Bible literally rather than allegorically or figuratively. As such, it is not too much of a theoretical leap to say that Protestants would afford the Bible greater scientific authority than Catholics would; however, this is, of course, an arguable point.

However, the disparities between people's appearances was not nearly as shocking to early modern English as the disparities between their religions. What was a more pressing concern for the English as they tried to make sense of the reports of various other cultures was religious otherness, and how to reconcile these reports with their prevailing fear of paganism. William Strachey, secretary to the English ambassador at Constantinople and member of the Virginia Company, writes the following about his exposure to the native populations in the "new world": "it were perhaps too curious a thing to demand how these people might come first, and from whom, and whence [...] As also to question how that it should be that they (if descended from the people of the first creation) should maintain so general and gross a defection from the true knowledge of God, with one kind, as it were, of rude and savage life, customs, manners, and religion" (187). As Strachey's comments show, physical difference and cultural "abnormalities" are less offensive to his sensibilities than the "gross" defects of religious difference. Strachey's commentary combined with Kidd's historical analysis show that it was more important for the English to make sense of the plurality of religions and religious practices than it was to understand physical differences.

Theological language and concerns dominate racial discourses in the early modern era. As Kidd asserts, to suppress "the notion that there might be a plurality of genuine gods," it was important to stress the unity and singular validity of Christianity, even amongst seemingly diverse religious beliefs and practices. "It seemed much more likely that the various religions of the world were degenerate forms of an original Judeo-Christian Ur-religion once shared by all the people of the world in the immediate

aftermath of the Flood” (73). In returning to St. Paul’s address to the Gentiles in Acts 17, the same unifying trend is seen in his sympathetic and gentle handling of pagan religiosity – this tolerance is appropriately the focus of a chapter that deals specifically with the inherent unity of all nations.<sup>39</sup> Yet his tolerance and declaration of ethnic unity concludes with a demand for religious unity: “God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent” (17:30). Though disparate religions and races are acknowledged to exist, they are not allowed to continue as equally viable with Christianity; they need reformation.

This is especially true during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which seems to best follow the line taken by St. Paul. Early Modern English ethnographers searched for suppressed similarities between disparate religions rather than further differences (Kidd 77). Therefore, it was theologically imperative that early modern writers of ethnology discern the inherent religious unity of the world’s population, while discounting apparent physical and cultural differences. Ironically, this need for unity enables racist ideology. Racial, and thus religious, differences were not accepted as natural or God-given, but as “accidental, epiphenomenal mask[s] concealing the unitary Adamic origins of a single, extended human family” (Kidd 26). Again, diversity was represented as a result of sin, where disunity begins with Adam and Eve and continues

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<sup>39</sup> “You Athēnians, I see that in every respect you are very religious. For as I walked around looking carefully at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ What therefore you unknowingly worship, I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything [...] For ‘In him we live and move and have our being,’ as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination” (17:22-25, 28-29).



with the descendants of Noah. These issues are at the heart of Spenser's discourse on the reforms necessary in England's relations with Ireland.

In Book II of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser provides England with a lineage that glorifies their ethnological identity, and in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, he provides an equally destructive account of Ireland's inferior ethnological heritage. His prose work portrays the Irish as living in a current state of savagery, stressing that they needed to be reformed in order to save themselves and the English from further corruption. In Book II, Spenser constructs the glorious ethnological past of his nation. In Book V, his concern is to show how the English need to preserve an equally grand ethnological future; central to this preservation is the protection of English society from the contaminating effects of Irish culture and religion. The Irish, represented in the poem by giants, tyrants, and scattered dishonorable knights and villagers, stand as the greatest threat to that future. Lord Grey, the Protestant, English force of justice, and Talus, the inhuman "yron man" who represents the English army under Grey's command, are the only ones who can preserve the past and secure the future. The Irish are reformed "by the sword."

### **Ireland as a "Mirror" and a "Hammer"**

The deplorable nature of the world, in its sinful and disparate state, is evoked in Spenser's opening stanzas of Book V of *The Faerie Queene*. It is appropriate that a book dealing almost explicitly with the colonial affairs of Ireland, and thus with issues of religious and ethnic difference, the image of Noah is immediately invoked, along with issues of monogenesis and degeneration. With his first acclamation that, "Me seemes the

world is runne quite out of square,” Spenser begins to describe how far civilization has gone from its ideal.

For from the golden age, that first was named,  
It's now at earst become a stonie one;  
And men themselves, the which at first were framed  
Of earthly mould, and form'd of flesh and bone,  
Are now transformed into hardest stone:  
Such as behind their backs (so backward bred)  
Were throwne by Pyrrha and Deucalione:  
And if then those may any worse be red,  
They into that ere long will be degendered. (proem 2)

If we read the “golden age” to which he refers as the pre-diluvian world of Genesis, where a single nation, with a single set of parents (Adam and Eve), existed, then humanity – “men themselves” – lived according to the way God intended for them. In being “transformed” from an “earthly mould [...] of flesh and bone” to one of “hardest stone,” Spenser describes the effect of sin on humanity. This corresponds to his opening statement that “Me seemes the world is runne quite out of square, / From the first point of his appointed sourse, / And being once amisse growe daily wourse and wourse” (V.proem.1). The reference to “stone” is a provocative one for a discussion of the racial undertones of the passage. Men are transformed into the stones that are tossed backwards by Pyrrha and Deucalione, the only survivors of a world-devastating flood as related in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (I.313-415). The myth is the classical counterpart to

the story of Noah's flood. Pyrrha and Deucalion re-populate the world by throwing stones over their shoulders, from which grew living shapes that became men. This myth counters the monogenesis of the biblical account. Post-diluvian man is not descended from a single-set of parents. He is, in a sense, a mutation – formed from the many diverse stones that are haphazardly thrown backwards – “so backward bred.” Rather than a single source, the Ovidian myth supports polygenesis, which for Spenser is “degendered” (degenerated). Degeneration, as we saw in *A View*, is a central subject in Spenser's treatment of the Gaelic Irish and the Old English.

The problems with the above view of race become apparent when monogenesis becomes the base logic of the colonialist endeavors of imperial (and proto-imperial) countries. This is most clearly represented in early modern England by Spenser's writings. Both *A View of the Present State of Ireland (A View)* and Book V of *The Faerie Queene* reveal Spenser's anti-pluralist recommendations for the direction of Irish culture, while also displaying impatience with contradictions to monogenesis. Yet the type of monogenesis Spenser was championing was the one-way monogenesis of the colonialist. He wrote for unity between England and Ireland, but only if Ireland could, in a sense, become England. The source of his impatience with and criticism of the Irish is their inability or unwillingness to make this transformation. It is their resistance to becoming English that destroys the colonialist's dream.

As both the theology of monogenesis and the theories of geohumoralism have shown, England was intensely aware of its shared history and geographically-determined ethnicity with Ireland. It is for this reason that “degeneracy” becomes such a contentious

issue. The first few lines of dialogue in *A View* open with this fear. Irenius refers to Ireland as an “unquiet state still for some secret scourge”: a “scourge” that will eventually “come unto England,” which is “hard to be knowne, but yet much to be feared” (11). Ireland is due for a scourge, but its destiny threatens to “spill over” into England. Thus, the fear of influence and the fear of a shared heritage result in the fear of a shared future; England cannot turn its back on Ireland, as its own future is at stake.

In Spenser’s *A View*, these are the primary concerns – not only in regards to the native Irish, but also to the so-called “Old English,” who, in many parts of his discourse, are portrayed as more dangerous and more savage than the Gaelic Irish.<sup>40</sup> Declan Kiberd presents a similar reading of the “Old English” in Spenser’s work; he shows how these are the real villains of Spenser’s Irish writings, as they had assimilated into Irish culture to such an extent that they had lost “their will to extirpate native traditions” (10). The extirpation of native culture is, of course, the goal of the colonialist. Instead of achieving this goal, these “Old English” have become Irish.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, their presentation within Spenser’s text is fraught with more anxiety.

This is largely because the Old English population represents the ever-looming danger of conversion – not only of religion, but also of their very natures. In many of his descriptions, Irenius/Spenser describes how the Old English have supplanted their English customs, behaviors, dress, language, and religion for Irish ways, largely due to

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<sup>40</sup> Irenius asserts, “the cheifest abuses which are now in that realme, are growne from the English, and some of them are now much more lawlesse and licentious then the very wilde Irish: so that as much care as was by them had to reforme the Irish, so and much more must now bee used to reforme them; so much time doth alter the manners of men” (67).

<sup>41</sup> This was seen as such an important issue during the early years of Anglo-Irish colonial relations that the Statutes of Kilkenny, a series of thirty-five acts passed at Kilkenny in 1366, were drafted to curb English and Irish miscegenation.

their prolonged stay in the country and their fraternization with its people. In casting off their English traditions, the English colonizers “are degenerated and growne almost mere Irish” (54). Eudoxus later responds by marveling, “That seemeth very strange which you say, that men should so much *degenerate* from their *first natures*, as to grow wilde [italics mine]” (63). The language here harkens to the opening cantos of Book V. The cause of this degeneration, Irenius says, is “liberty and ill examples” (67), equating the degeneration of the Old English to too much freedom and the spoiling influence of the Irish.<sup>42</sup> Part of Spenser’s colonial solution to the problem of degeneration is the total elimination of this liberty.

Spenser’s proposed remedies to the colonial situation in Ireland are not unprecedented. Anyone who has studied imperialism knows that the treatment of native populations of colonies flagrantly violate the behavioral norms of the metropolitan societies. Richard Lebow examines colonial rhetoric and ideology in his book *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy*. He explains why seemingly “civilized” societies are capable of inflicting such horrors on another nation by examining the structure of colonial relationships. He states that the colonial relationship is different from other political relationships because of its two defining conditions: “1. the loss of autonomy on the part of the indigenous inhabitants of the colony and 2. the exploitation of the colony in the interests of the metropolitan power” (16). A colonial situation develops, he says, “when a political system achieves

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Stanihurst (Stanyhurst) was a Catholic "Old English" writer of the late sixteenth century whose literary contribution to Holinshed’s *Chronicles* complicates these attempts to make Catholicism ethnically Irish. An Englishman, and a Catholic, he was as concerned about the differences -- and similarities -- between the English and the native Irish as he was about what writers like Spenser were trying to do. His works provide an interesting counterpoint to Spenser’s *View*. See "A Treatise Containing a Plaine and Perfect Description of Ireland" (Holinshed 6:14, 66-69) and "On Ireland's Past" (Lennon).

domination over another society by reason of its military, economic and administrative superiority and uses that power to exploit the wealth, human resources, and geographical position of the colony” (16). The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized was therefore fundamentally antagonistic, by reason of the superfluous or subservient role to which most of the colonial population was relegated.

Moreover, the methods of colonization often flouted the moral rules of conduct in the metropolitan societies of the conquerors and was rationalized with the utilitarian argument that the ends justified the means. Lebow terms it, “the ‘white lie’ syndrome” (17). Using the analogy of lying, he explains how lying is deemed “good” if it used for altruistic purposes: like when someone suppresses the truth to spare someone’s feelings. The “commendable ends” legitimize the unethical means: “this type of rationalization was endemic to colonial situations. Supporters of the empire have been loath to admit that some form of exploitation was the goal of colonial expansion. While not denying the advantages that accrued to them from the colonies, they sought to justify empire in terms of some higher good that would result from it” (17-18). By these rationales, the policies that may otherwise have been reprehensible become permissible. Essentially, the harsh measures often employed by colonizers are defended as being in the best interests of the natives themselves.

The idea of monogenesis also supported the homogenizing goals of colonization to create one nation, one culture, and one religion. Even if the natives of a colonized land are never really included within the colonists’ society, the colonist could legitimize his actions as a way of bringing civility to a people who were otherwise exiled from it. In

looking specifically at the history of slavery, Loomba asserts something similar to this idea: “the possibility of conversion could also be invoked as a *justification* for English slavery” (“Introduction” 11). The colonial dream is elucidated here as the dream of bringing “civility” to people who would otherwise never know it. Moreover, when paired with the Biblical idea of monogenesis, the colonist was uniting what should never have been separated; indeed, in this case, the colonist is doing “God’s work.”

Another rationalization commonly employed to harmonize the contradiction between normal modes of behavior and the colonizer’s treatment of indigenous populations is the idea that the behavior is a special case in which the moral code is inapplicable. This is accomplished by differentiating the colonized people by criteria that place them outside the realm in which the moral code is thought to apply. As Lebow concurs, this differentiation process most frequently involves some attempt to dehumanize the indigenous population of the colony. If the population can be alienated from the colonizers, it is less difficult to argue that a code of behavior unacceptable among the inhabitants of a nation or empire can be applied without qualms to the natives. Moryson’s account – as well as those by countless other sixteenth-century English writers – of Ireland’s heathen and uncivilized society was, no doubt, published for this end. Because the Irish are inherently stubborn and stuck in their barbaric ways, the need for violent colonization in Ireland was, therefore, justified.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> This justification, although blatantly part of the “white lie” of colonization, is more “humane” than the one put forth four centuries earlier by Giraldus Cambrensis. Considered the most significant “English” writer on Ireland from the twelfth century to the Renaissance, Giraldus concluded from his reading of Old Testament history that the Irish deserved to be conquered because they had fallen so far from civilized and religious values. He asserts, “you will never find that any race has been conquered except when their sins demanded this as a punishment” (26).

Yet, the nature of the colonial relationship between Ireland and England is complicated when one considers that, unlike England's contact with people of India, Africa, or (what would become) America, the Irish had a propinquity to the English not only in terms of geographical proximity, but also in physical appearance. In other words, the Irish looked like the English, so there were no physical attributes that could effectively differentiate the two nations from one another.<sup>44</sup> Andrew Murphy, in his chapter entitled "'White Chimpanzees': Encountering Ireland," addresses how this lack of "physical" barriers between the indigenous populations of Ireland and England deems the Anglo-Irish colonial experience unique. He writes, "the white skin of the Irish signifies a certain connection of racial kinship between the colonizer and the colonized" (15). Moreover, both parties share the European continent; thus "even as they are the subjects of colonial oppression, [the Irish] are still connected to a common European social and cultural realm, a realm to which England and Ireland jointly belong" (15). Being neighbors, separated merely by a sea a hundred miles across, "Britain and Ireland thus inevitably shared an extended common history stretching back over several centuries" (20). It was not as easy to cultivate a language of difference based on history, ancestry, and physical appearance. Moreover, unlike the pagan nations we discussed above, Ireland's religion was not alien; the English had to *make* it alien. It is for this reason that its status as a Protestant nation becomes one of England's primary markers of difference between itself and Ireland. Consequently, the uniqueness of the colonial relationship between England and Ireland is that the

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<sup>44</sup> Kiberd also comments on the particularly aggressive colonial relationship between Ireland and England, postulating that, "this tyrannizing may have owed much to the remarkable similarity of the two opposed peoples" (11).



English find themselves confronted by an “other” who is neither fully alien nor wholly identical to the English self.

Central to this “separate sameness” is the effort of sixteenth-century English rulers to incorporate the Irish within the English polity. As part of this effort, Henry VIII’s title was amended in the 1541 Act from “Lord” of Ireland to “King” of Ireland. As Brendan Bradshaw indicates, this amendment was intended to make “explicit the sovereign status of the English crown in Ireland, [the reformers] repudiated the divided structure of the medieval Lordship and replaced it with a constitution that envisaged the island as a political unity, its inhabitants a single community of subjects, governed by the unilateral jurisdiction of the crown” (238). The significance of this move is explained by Steven Ellis, “in the case of North America, it was never seriously intended by the crown, as it was in Ireland, to incorporate the territory as a core region in the English state, and to turn the natives there into civil Englishmen [...] to be governed by the normal structures of English administration and law” (14). Thus, presumably, the violent English regime – which flouted the “normal structures of English administration and law” – in Ireland was not intended to be a permanent force, but a temporary method of “turning” the stubborn, barbarous Irish “into civil Englishmen.” The English were not merely adding another colony to their imperialist ventures, but they were expanding their own kingdom by making Ireland England.

Yet the commonality between the two nations must have been, to say the least, distasteful for the English considering their apprehensions about their own obscure ethnological origins. That the English clearly regarded the Irish as inferior had to be

reconciled to their knowledge that they shared a common history, a geographical proximity, a set of similar physical characteristics, and, after the 1541 amendment, a political identity with the Irish. As we have already seen, one way in which the English reconciled the idea of Irish and English commonality was to focus on ethnicity and the Roman occupation of England.<sup>45</sup> Another way they sought to distance themselves from the Irish was religion. Unlike in England, the Reformation failed in Gaelic Ireland, and the majority of the Irish population remained devoutly Catholic. And, as Andrew Murphy points out, “the religious rupture to which the Reformation gave rise was, in a certain measure, convenient for the English, because it provided them with a serviceable means for effecting a distinction between themselves and their fellow Christian neighbors” (24). Catholicism becomes the central point of difference between the English and the Irish.

Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley assert that in early modern England, “Ireland was both a mirror and a hammer – reflecting and fragmenting images of England” (15). This assertion is a comment on the way that English identity became oddly contingent on their comprehension of Irish identity. Hadfield and Maley further note that, “one of the most important ways in which Ireland was read in this period was as a series of negative images of Englishness. Ireland, in this respect, as well as being a text, is a negative of a photograph of English identity which never comes into view; we have only the negative, not the original print” (7). Hadfield and Maley’s comment here is significant; as they point out, precisely who or what England wanted

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<sup>45</sup> This was discussed in the introduction.

to be, or saw themselves as, is never completely clear. Instead of a stable image of English national and ethnic identity -- the "original print" -- readers of this period are only given a series of shifting characteristics based largely on the presentation of what the English did not want to be: namely, Catholic or Irish. The differentiation of English from Irish is filled with anxiety and, therefore, all the more urgent. The English needed to find a point of stable difference and superiority upon which to base their own identity. Touting their status as a Protestant nation was a means to do this. Indeed, the only stable point of difference between the Irish and English was religion. Yet, ultimately forced to recognize their inexorable connection to the Irish, the English apparently chose to view this connection as oppositional: Ireland represented the opposite of England. Whatever "Englishness" was, it was dependent upon the negation of "Irishness." This negation, however, furthered the link between the two countries. As Andrew Murphy points out when commenting on Hadfield and Maley's chosen metaphor, although "a photograph and its negative are different entities and carry different images," those images are "not entirely divorced from each other, and the negative image is always recognizable as a version of its 'positive' counterpart" (31). This identification indeed reinforces Hadfield and Maley's assertion that Ireland was "a mirror and a hammer" for the English. As a mirror, Irishness is not the sharply defined "other" of Englishness; instead, it is a version of Englishness adumbrated by the "shadow" of otherness. As a hammer, Ireland shatters the image of the colonial stereotype of the "other" and fragments England's own understanding of its "racial" superiority and difference. These issues are the

fragments that sixteenth-century English writers sought to reshape and assemble into a desirable and unblemished image of English national identity.

### ***The Faerie Queene & Spenser's Irish Experience***

In accord with his efforts to reshape English identity, Edmund Spenser included with the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* “A letter of the Authors expounding his whole intention in the course of this worke,” which was addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh.<sup>46</sup> In his letter, he states that his intention is to “fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline.” Stating that “doctrine” is more potent “by ensample, then by rule,” Spenser shadows his moral under the history of Arthur, often regarded as England’s greatest national hero.<sup>47</sup> In writing England’s first national epic, and in centering it around the figure of Arthur, Spenser locates himself amongst the classic Greek writers, and claims inclusion – for himself and for his country – in a classic tradition long valued for its excellence in literature and, as we have already seen, in ethnicity.<sup>48</sup>

Like the grand poems of his ancient Mediterranean predecessors, Spenser’s epic would celebrate not only his own poetic skill, but it would function as a tribute to

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<sup>46</sup> The piece is often referred to, by critics, simply as the “Letter to Raleigh.”

<sup>47</sup> Arthur breaks briefly into the narrative of each book, each of which has its own central knight; he then disappears until the following book. Consequently, he is not the focus of the narrative in the way that, for example, Aeneas is in the *Aeneid*.

<sup>48</sup> Spenser writes: “I have followed all the antique Poets historicall, first Homere, who in the Persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensample a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his Odyssis: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Aeneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso [...] By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight.” In citing Homer, Virgil, Ariosto, and Tasso, Spenser was setting grand paradigms for the poem. Not only were these poets who wrote heroic or epic poetry, considered the supreme form of poetry undertaken only by writers whose skill and knowledge had fully matured, but they were also the national poets of their country; it was through their epic stories that the classical nations formed an understanding of their national heritage. In *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser attempts to do the same.

his native country. Like the classical writers of antiquity, Spenser would create a glorious history for his nation, one that would elevate the status of his people. Thus, in a manner of speaking, Spenser was involved in a form of nation building; if England was unable to accept its “barbarous” lineage, he would supplant the historical version with his poetic one.

In creating a “fairy” history for the English, Spenser shows the world what England’s history – and in Book V, what England’s present day – should be.<sup>49</sup> The distinction Spenser maintains throughout the poem between “Briton” and “Faeryland” may be seen as his concern to celebrate his nation and redefine the ancestral issues that cause the English embarrassment. With a frequency and detail that may puzzle readers unacquainted with sixteenth-century English ethnic insecurities, Spenser returns to accounts of English and Tudor genealogies (II.x; III.iii and x; V.vii). While each genealogy serves its own purpose within the context of its specific book or episode, each also establishes England through its royalty as a nation with a great destiny. While previous English generations held on to the myth that they were descended from the ancient Trojans, Spenser’s generations would revel in a revised myth of an even greater lineage -- or, at least, that seems to have been his intention. In Faeryland the capital is Troynovaunt (“new Troy”), but, as its name suggests, it is one that outstrips its pagan prototype in terms of a grand ancestry. The genealogies place the Tudor dynasty, and thus England, at the culmination of a providential plan

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<sup>49</sup> Thus, he was harkening to what Sir Philip Sidney described as the true function of poetry. In *An Apology for Poetry* (1579-80), Sidney argues that the poet is unique because he is not bound to imitate the world as it is, but “doth grown in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew ... [Nature’s] world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden” (100). The historian, Sidney argues, is “too tied, not to what should be, but to what is” (101).

unfolding in history, with Gloriana's Court (and, thus, the Elizabethan court since Gloriana is the primary poetic figuration of Queen Elizabeth in the epic) as its ideal pattern.

An example of the dichotomy Spenser creates between Briton and Faeryland occurs in Book II when the knight of temperance, Guyon, and Arthur find two volumes of history located in "Memory's Library" in the House of Alma (x). Guyon reads from the volume entitled *The Antiquitie of Faerie Lond*, while Arthur reads from the "ancient booke," *British Moniments* (x.60-1). Arthur's book describes the Tudors' descent from ancient legendary kings of Britain, which was taken very seriously and actively promulgated as part of the Tudor monarchy's propaganda. The long line of descent gave status to the female and Protestant Elizabeth, and to the nation it provided a sense of authority and continuity. The chronicle of Faeryland is also a written account of Kings and Queens, but it represents the ideal and fictional history of Britain. The chronicle ends with the reigns of Eflicleos, Oberon, and Gloriana, whose representations seem to prefigure and, in an idealized way, represent the reigns of the three key figures of the Tudor dynasty: Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I. By presenting the histories of Faeryland and Britain together, Spenser can conjoin the real with the ideal. In this manner, the truth of England's barbaric ancestry and status as a humorally intemperate state can be overcast by the shadow of two glorious chronicles: one displaying the ancient, glorious lineage of England's monarchy, and the other relating the "golden" history of England's fictional counterpart. As the self-proclaimed national poet for England, Spenser provides his nation with a proud history by re-

writing the English past; as the introduction of this dissertation shows, this was a common effort in the formation of English identity in the early modern period. Yet, it seems ironic that England's national poet spent very little of his adult life in England. Moving to Ireland sometime in the year 1577, Spenser remained in that country until his death in 1599. While it was not uncommon for men of modest social standing and limited financial means – as the son of a London merchant, Spenser was not part of the aristocracy – to take advantage of the ample opportunities Ireland provided, it was somewhat uncommon for an Englishman to make Ireland his lifelong home. Most Englishmen viewed their stay in Ireland as a temporary and uncomfortable, if not completely detestable, exile from the civilized world.<sup>50</sup> Why Spenser remains so long while so many other Englishmen did not has been a compelling question for a number of literary critics.<sup>51</sup>

A major effect of Spenser's relocation to, and extended stay in, Ireland may have been the critical distance it provided him from the English court. This distance

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<sup>50</sup> This sentiment is portrayed in various writings of the time. For example, Joseph Hall's satire *Virgidemiarum* features a "threadbare malecontent" who, after selling his lands and shirking his hounding creditors, finds Ireland a convenient, if dangerous, hiding place until his luck turns. Hall's satirical portrait of the young English gentleman, down on his luck and seeking refuge in Ireland, was something of a commonplace by the late 1590s. This stereotype is reinforced by real life examples such as Barnabe Googe, who was appointed Provost Marshal of Connaught in 1582, and who informed Lord Burghley (Queen Elizabeth's chief advisor) that he saw his service in Ireland as a temporary expedient for managing a financial crisis. Although only a short-term resident (he stayed for only two years), Googe belongs to an expatriate group of English writers, poets, translators, intellectuals, and humanists who in the mid to late sixteenth century secured positions in the administrative and military offices of colonial Ireland – Spenser is the most well-known of this cadre.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Highley notes the issue of class as a primary motivator for Spenser's stay in Ireland: "that Ireland represented a viable, even attractive, long-term option for Spenser but not for Googe, is explained by the two men's different social positions, resources, and expectations" (8). Whereas Googe – the son of a middle-ranking royal officer – was a gentleman by birth, with a powerful patron at court, and a prospective legacy, Spenser was a gentleman only by virtue of his education, and – like many other university-educated men of non-aristocratic stock – was forced to compete for scarce offices at court, in noblemen's households, and in the civil service. Highley further states, "for the likes of Spenser as well as for the younger sons of gentry families, prospects in Ireland for employment, self-advancement, and for land – that indispensable marker of gentility – were irresistible" (14). Ireland, then, offered a more fertile ground for self-fashioning, which would appeal to a self-made man like Spenser.

was effective in establishing a conducive environment for his writings on Ireland: mainly, his political, prose work *A View of the Present State of Ireland (A View)* and Book V of *The Faerie Queene*. As literary critic Christopher Highley notes, “public discussion about Ireland was, if not officially prohibited, extremely sensitive; the subject of Ireland represented a marginal, ‘gray,’ area included under the rubric of ‘matters of later yeeres that concern the State,’ and an area which writers in the public domain approached with extreme caution” (5). The controversy over Ireland is evidenced by the paucity of printed materials dealing openly with the country in the 1590s.<sup>52</sup> Aside from the constraints these restrictions placed on a burgeoning writer, Spenser had many objections to Queen Elizabeth’s foreign policies, and probably wanted the distance from her court to comment on them. His two works represent the artistic outpouring of these objections.

Spenser as well as other zealous Protestant members of the English court were unhappy with Queen Elizabeth’s reluctance to undertake a more active and state-funded colonization effort in Ireland. Many believed that her “half-measures” in dealing with the Irish were due either to her foolish (“womanly”) pity or her inability or refusal to act as the “Protestant conqueror” they wanted and expected her to be. For Spenser, Elizabeth I’s gravest error occurred in July 1582 when, after years of disapproval, she recalled Lord Grey de Wilton, a Puritan professional soldier, from Ireland because of his excessively cruel – and, not to mention, expensive – methods of

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<sup>52</sup> As Highley notes, there were far more dramatic works that dealt openly with the issue of Ireland: “Enjoying a peculiar license within the cultural world of early modern London, the stage had greater latitude than the printing press, in part because dramatic performance was more difficult to police than the printed word” (5). The “fixed” texts of Renaissance plays constructed by modern scholarship provide little sense of the “open,” adaptable nature of the script in performance.



dealing with the Irish. Even by sixteenth-century standards, Lord Grey's policies and actions were considered brutal and uncalled for, shocking even Lord Burghley, who was by no means a tenderhearted politician. Lord Grey was a staunch believer in the inherent barbarity of the Irish; well-versed in the writings of Cambrensis and Moryson, he wished to pursue a religious war in Ireland to stamp out Catholicism, which he believed to be the source of Irish wickedness (Bruce 129-31). He believed the only way to implement a Protestant order in Ireland was to convert the people "by the sword" (FQ 5.iii.20). Spenser was an ardent supporter of Grey, having served as his deputy secretary for two years. Apparently incensed by the queen's actions, Spenser wrote the prose work *A View*, which is a defense of Grey's methods as well as an expression of his own opinions concerning Ireland and the proper ways of dealing with recalcitrant Irish rebels. The main speaker, Irenius (which is the masculine form of the Classical Greek name, *eirene*, from which Ireland's name was derived), is not a figuration of Spenser but merely a spokesman for Grey's policies. However, his name suggests his role as a personification of an Ireland that wants and needs a man such as Grey to help save it from the Catholic rebels who hold it prisoner.

In *A View*, Irenius presents Irish barbarity as an inherited disposition, going to great lengths to map a dubious genealogy onto the Irish: a genealogy which seeks to render Ireland a "savage nation" (1). He accomplishes this by stressing their ties to a Scythian ancestry. While acknowledging that "not of one nation was [Ireland] peopled," he contends that the "chiefest which have first possessed and inhabited it, I suppose to be the Scythians" (37). The insult was a heavy one: while a Trojan

ancestry was considered the greatest lineage a nation could have, a Scythian ancestry was considered the worst. To understand the significance of this claim, one must first consider that the representation of the Scythians in ancient Greek and Roman historiography was as utter barbarians. As Erasmus notes in his *Adages*, “The cruelty of the Scythians became proverbial in Greek: when they wanted to convey that something was boorish or barbarous or ferocious, they called it ‘Scythian’” (148). Given Tudor England’s reverence for these classical nations, it is not surprising how such a racial demarcation would convince the English of Ireland’s inherent savagery. What is more important, by identifying Irish cultural practices with Scythian ones, Spenser’s character sets the groundwork for an ideology of conquest and colonization. To be uncivilized was to be unproductive, and to be unproductive meant relinquishing one’s right to the land; ultimately, Irenius’s claim legitimizes English appropriation of Irish land.

Conjoined with this motive is Spenser’s desire to promulgate his support for the Protestant faith and, by doing so, his denigration of the Catholic Church – both for itself and for its corruptive influence in Ireland. This motive is especially evident in canto ii in Artegall’s encounter with Munera (Latin, *munus*, “gift” or “bribe”) and Pollente (Latin, *pollens*, “powerful”). The Munera episode is Spenser’s illustration of the Catholic Church’s economic corruption. The toll that Pollente extorts from people on the bridge is especially an indictment of the Roman Catholic exploitation of the people through the sale of indulgences: the bridge representing the “path” to heaven. Within the context of English Protestantism, Artegall rightfully seeks to stop this

injustice and punish the wrongdoer. The fight between him and Pollente is between two equals; they are described as being locked together in their fury (v.ii.13). During the scene, the reader sympathizes with Artegall because he is straining to defeat an enemy of equal strength.

The same, however, cannot be said of the fight between Munera and Talus. Talus is endowed with superior strength and, to complete his role as the unfeeling executioner, he is inhuman and unmoved by human emotion or reason. Thus, Munera's mutilation (the cutting off of her hands and feet) and execution is the most brutal of any in the book. Yet the scene is a powerful commentary and allegorical representation of the solution needed to combat Catholicism in Ireland. The description of her "golden hands and silver feete" (v.ii.9) alludes to her metallic and nonhuman representation while simultaneously alluding to the Catholic Church's corrupt wealth. Munera is a "nonhuman" representation of corruption, and her pitiless execution is used as Spenser's message concerning the Catholic faith. The message reads thus: although the Catholic Church seems vulnerable (the praying posture she takes when pleading for her life) and beautiful (silver and gold limbs), it is nonetheless a formidable and corruptive force in Ireland that must be eradicated without pity.

In the above scene, Munera and Pollente represent the intangible force of Catholic corruption, which posed a considerable threat to both the Irish and the English. In the next scene, the Egalitarian Giant – as he's come to be called – represents the dual forces of Irish savagery and English impressibility, which are two complementary threats to English ethnicity. Artegall and Talus come upon a "mighty

Giant” who holds “An huge great paire of balances [scales] in his hand / With which he boasted in his surquedrie [arrogance], / That all the world he would weigh equallie” (ii.30). That the episode features a giant is significant. As Susan Stewart asserts, “the giant is a mixed category; a violator of boundary and rule; an overabundance of the natural and hence an affront to cultural systems” (73). Moreover, in the *British Moniments* of Book II, the ancient race of the allegorical representation of Ireland was said to be composed of “hideous giants.” Thus the figure of the giant represents ethnological barbarity. The claim of “weighing [the world] equallie” was also a real threat to the English. It was associated with the rebellion of the Anabaptists in Munster in the 1530s who were also fighting for social equality. To worsen the import of the situation, the giant is surrounded by a crowd of ardent listeners – willing converts to his cause. And when the giant meets the same end as Munera and Pollente, the image of the leaderless, angry mob may represent the ragged, plebeian rebels who followed the freedom fighter, Kent, at Dussingdale in 1549, or of the followers of the Desmonds in Ireland during the early 1580s (Bruce 130-132). Or, an even more evocative reading of the scene could be that the mob represents what happens to the ever-impressionable English after living amongst the influence of Irish corruption.

In the final episode of the book, Artegall meets his archenemy Grantorto (Italian, “great wrong”), who seems to be the representation of all the corruptive forces in sixteenth-century Ireland: the rebels, the Catholic Church, and even the savagery of the Irish. This representation is implied by the fact that Grantorto’s crime is the

unlawful imprisonment of Irena, which means “Ireland” (the feminine form of the Greek word, eirene). In the rescue scene that ensues, the colonial dream is played out, and the “white lie” of the colonists is given credence. Irena, the “damsel in distress” and the figuration of Ireland, is saved from impending doom by Artegall and Talus, or Lord Grey and the English imperial army. This allegorical representation demonstrates the good that would come out of colonial reform in Ireland: England would, in essence, be rescuing a lady wronged. However, the only way this can be accomplished is through a (presumably temporary) violent regime, such as the one Lord Grey commandeered in Ireland before his recall. Hence, the Irish, like the English, can be civilized, but only through the forcible imposition of another, more advanced nation.

Consequently, in Spenser’s work, we see not only an attempt to re-establish England as a civilized nation, but we also see a defense of an active colonization effort in Ireland. At the heart of both these ventures is the need to determine and, indeed, fashion national ethnicity. In these ventures, Ireland plays an indispensable role – if only as the photographic negative of what the English wanted to be.

### ***A View of the Present State of Ireland: Representing the Irish***

The central purpose of Spenser’s *A View* is not only to propose methods for dealing with the recalcitrant Irish population, but also to describe in full the source of the “evils, which seeme to [him] most hurtfull to the common-weale of that land.” Irenius isolates them as threefold: “The first in the Lawes, the second in Customes, and the last in Religion” (13). Significantly, and somewhat surprisingly, religion is given the briefest

attention of the three; this seems inconsistent with Spenser's reputation as a staunch Protestant poet. He highlights what he views as the primary fault of the Irish: "throughout all that countrey, that is, that they be all Papists by their profession, but in the same so blindly and brutishly informed, (for the most part) that not one amongst a hundred knoweth any groud of religion, or any article of his faith, but can perhaps say his Pater noster, or his Ave Maria, without any knowledge or understanding what one word thereof meaneth" (85). The same charge of religious ignorance is seen, centuries earlier, in the work of Giraldus Cambrensis.<sup>53</sup> Here, Irenius/Spenser isolates the problem with religion as being "universall" – perhaps a play on the word "catholic" – and it is the fact that all Irishmen are "papists." Papists is the common moniker for Catholics of the day, but it is especially significant for Spenser's work because Irenius repeatedly isolates as the source of all problems in Ireland the leadership of the people. Here, the leadership of the church, the Pope, is given the same treatment as the leaders of Irish government and the rebels who incite violence against their colonial "superiors": he is seen as the source of all the troubles in the whole of the religion. The danger of this, according to the subtext of Irenius's commentary, is that the Irish are naturally stubborn in their resistance and the English are naturally mutable. Under the wrong influence, the English will never advance. Again, the rhetoric of colonialism is never far from Irenius's ideas.

Church government is further cited as an explicit problem with Irish religion. When Eudoxus asks whether there are abuses amongst the ministers of the religion, Irenius responds that there are, and he outlines them: "grosse simony, greedy

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<sup>53</sup> Refer to my discussion above.

covetousnesse, fleshly incontineny, carelesse sloath, and generally all disordered life in the common clergyman: And besides all these, they have their particular enormities; for all Irish priests, which now enjoy the church livings, they are in a manner meere laymen, saving that they have taken holy order” (86). Because they are untrained, he says that Irish priests, “neither read scriptures, nor preach to the people, nor administer the communion, but baptisme they doe, for they christen yet after the popish fashion” (86). Much of this is not new; indeed, it sounds reminiscent of Cambrensis with his focus on the lack of proper pastoral care and the hypocrisy in which Irish priests live.

Irenius continues to criticize the government of the church, and, significantly, race is cited as one of the major problems with the practice of religion in Ireland. Aside from the lack of proper English ministers in Ireland, there is the fact that “the bishop himselfe is perhappes an Irish man, who being made iudge, by that law, of the sufficiency of the ministers, may at his owne will, dislike of the Englishman, as unworthy in his opinion, and admit of any Irish, whom hee shall thinke more for his turne” (87). Irenius then implies that there is no hope to reform the Irish since their wicked, stubborn resistance to the reformed religion is part of who they are: “And were all this redressed (as haply it might bee) yet what good should any English minister doe amongst them, by teaching or preaching to them, which either cannot understand him, or will not heare him?” (87). When Eudoxus asks Irenius for more examples of the abuses of the clergy, Irenius is strangely reticent, saying that his “speech [grows] too long” (88). This reticence is inconsistent with Irenius’s lugubrious style throughout the dialogue. The religion section is ostensibly the shortest, with the fewest number of explicit examples; however, the

implication is that the earlier sections are part of the religious problems in Ireland, as they can be read in the sections on law and customs. Indeed, it can be argued that though religion is discussed last and only briefly, it is nevertheless the main subject of most of the dialogue.

Rather than discuss the issue of religion explicitly, Spenser uses a form of “coded” language to refer to Catholicism in his discussion of laws and customs. There are a number of places within the dialogue where the issues described could stand for common doctrinal and ritual aspects of Catholicism. This is seen especially in his discussion of ethnicity and customs. Significantly, both are discussed simultaneously; indeed Spenser thinks it’s necessary to discuss ethnicity before he discusses customs. He begins by identifying the Irish as “[Eudoxus] a nation so antique” (45).<sup>54</sup> Irenius/Spenser then begins to lay out his argument for an Irish-Scythian heritage. In doing so, a provocative comment is made about how to detect the ethnological origin of a people when there is little historical documentation: “but having made mention of Irish cries I thought this manner of lewd crying and howling, not impertinent to be noted as uncivill and Scythian-like: for by these old customes, and other like coniecturall circumstances, the descents of nations can only be proved, where other monuments of writings are not

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<sup>54</sup> Irenius earlier established, that “the antiquity of that people, which in truth I thinke to bee more auncient then most that I know in this end of the world” (43).



remaying” (61). Thus, it is through the customs and habits of people that their race and lineage can be discerned.<sup>55</sup>

Basing ethnic distinction on folk customs becomes a provisional solution to the problem that there are no physical markers of difference that distinguish English from Irish. In the previous example, he is also discussing the “Scythian” manner in which the Irish mourn for their dead, which Eudoxus identifies as “an abuse in religion”: “For it is the manner of all Pagans and Infidels to be intemperate in their wailings of their dead, for that they had no faith nor hope of salvation” (61). The Catholic treatment of the dead can be read as inherent to this comment: the pagan “wailings” for their dead symbolize Catholic indulgences and prayers for the dead.

Before discussing Irish customs more specifically, Irenius asserts that they must consider the Irish’s various ethnic origins: “for from the sundry manners of the nations, from whence that people which now is called Irish, were derived, some of the customes which now remain amongst them, have been first fetcht, and sithence there continued amongst them; for not of one nation was it peopled, as it is, but of sundry people of different conditions and manners” (44). He then identifies the Scythians as their main progenitors, despite the Irish’s claim to come from “Gathelus the Spaniard” (44). Irenius asserts that no such lineage could exist for, “the very Chronicles of Spaine (had Spaine

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<sup>55</sup> In his article “Etymology, Names, and the Search for Origins: Deriving the Past in Early Modern England,” Angus Vine analyzes Spenser’s diction in *A View*. His central argument is that Spenser’s language is politicized with the intent of showing the intrinsic barbarity and backwardness of the Irish: “Few works better exemplify the potential of etymology for pejoration than Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. Etymology is integral to its rhetoric, as linguistic origins underpin Spenser’s attempts to articulate the barbarism and dangerousness of various Irish customs and practices.\*<sup>1</sup> Etymologies are given for tanistry, palatine, coigne, livery, kincogish, Scot, ferragh and gallowglass.”<sup>1^</sup> In almost every case, the etymology is negative and derogatory. Take the etymology of palatine.\*<sup>^</sup> The etymology is occasioned by a discussion of the inconveniences of certain privileges relating to Ireland granted by former English kings” (14). Thus, according to Vine, language itself is manipulated to demonstrate the inherent difference of the Irish.

then beene in so high regard, as they now have it) would not have omitted so memorable a thing, as the subduing of so noble a realme to the Spaniard, no more then they doe now neglect to memorize their conquest of the Indians” (44). Instead, he argues further for a Scythian and Scottish ancestry.<sup>56</sup>

Irenius seems concerned about linking the Irish to the Scots as a British people, as he opposes all attempts made by Eudoxus to have the Irish and the Spanish equated. This is an obvious aim in the years after the Armada and in light of Irish attempts in the 1590s to have their rebellion recognized as a Catholic crusade against English rule: thereby gaining military and financial support from powerful Catholic countries. Eudoxus asks why the Irish want to be linked to Spain when the “old Gaules are a more auncient and much more honorable nation?” To which, Irenius answers: “they derive themselves from the Spaniards, as seeing them to be a very honorable people, and neere bordering unto them: but all that is most vaine; for from the Spaniards that now are, or that people that now inhabite Spaine, they no wayes can prove themselves to descend; neither should it be greatly glorious unto them; for the Spaniard that now is, is come from as rude and savage nations as they, there being, as there may be gathered by course of ages, and view of their owne history” (49).<sup>57</sup> Irenius continues by showing that although Spain was also originally conquered by Rome, this civilizing force is later undone by the “barbarian”

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<sup>56</sup> “But surely the Scythians (of whom I earst spoke) at such time as the Northerne Nations overflowed all Christendome, came downe to the sea-coast, where inquiring for other countries abroad, and getting intelligence of this countrey of Ireland, finding shipping convenient, passed thither, and arrived in the North-part thereof, which is now called Ulster, which first inhabiting, and afterwards stretching themselves forth into the land, as their numbers increased, named it all of themselves Scuttenland, which more briefly is called Scutland, or Scotland [...] for Scotland and Ireland are all one and the same” (44-45).

<sup>57</sup> The issue of Spanish ethnicity is also an intriguing one for this conversation. With the emphasis on their disparate origins, and the influence of Muslim and Moorish invasions on their civilization, the issues of race and religion intersect in profound ways.

invasions.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, by linking the Irish with the Scythians, Irenius traces Irish identity back to a “race” where there is an element of strong physical, national, and religious distinction.

After laying out the ethnological history of Ireland (and, by way, of Spain) Irenius returns to his point about customs as revealing ethnological history: “And by the same reason may I as reasonably conclude, that the Irish are descended from the Scythians; for that they use (even to this day) some of the same ceremonies which the Scythians anciently used” (63). Here, religion and race are conflated in Irenius’s discussion of Scythian and Irish religious ceremonialism. By linking the two cultures, he categorizes Irish religion as pagan. As the theories of monogenesis show, paganism was more troublesome to the early modern English mindset than physical differences were. Irenius then discusses something that could be a coded reference to the Catholic rite of blessing objects and making them sacramentals: “So doe the Irish at this day, when they goe to battaile, say certaine prayers or charmes to their swords, making a crosse therewith upon the earth”; he relates this to a Scythian custome of making oaths on their swords, which would enact “speciall divine powers, which should worke vengeance on the perjurers” (63). This establishes two things. By bringing up the religious aspect, it alludes to Catholicism; and by deeming the custom as Scythian, the passage connects both Irish and Catholic rituals to a “barbarous” past. This juxtaposition continues: “Also the Scythians used, when they would bined any solemne vow or combination amongst

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<sup>58</sup> “All which tempests of troubles being overblowne, there long after arose a new storme, more dreadful then all the former, which over-ran all Spaine, and made an infinite confusion of all things; that was, the coming downe of the Gothes, the Hunnes, and the Vandals: And lastly all the nations of Scythia, which, like a mountaine flood, did over-flow all Spaine, and quite drowned and washt away whatsoever reliques there was left of the land-bred people, yea, and of all the Romans too” (50).

them, to drink a bowle of blood together.” This is an implicit comment on the Eucharist, for Protestant propagandists often paint the drinking of Christ’s blood, and transubstantiation itself, as a form of Catholic cannibalism.<sup>59</sup> By linking the central Catholic rite of transubstantiation to a form of cannibalism, propagandists linked the entire religion to what were considered the worst crimes of paganism. Thus, by this inference, Catholicism is recast as a form of racial barbarity.<sup>60</sup>

He again references cannibalism and the drinking of blood later in the dialogue: “Also the Gaules used to drinke their enemyes blood, and painte themselves therewith. So also they write, that the old Irish were wont, and so have I seen some of the Irish doe, but no their enemyes but their friends blood [Christ, their advocate]. As namely at the execution of a notable traytor at Limericke, called Murrough O-Brien, I saw an old woman, which was his foster mother, take up his head, whilst he was quartered, and sucked up all the blood that runneth therout, saying, that the earth was not worthy to drinke it, and therewith also steeped her face and breast, and tore her haire, crying out and shrieking most terribly” (66). This scene parallels an episode from the Book of Holiness in *The Faerie Queene*, where the monster Errour’s children suck up their “dying mother’s blood” from “her bleeding wound,” to which Spenser asserts, “Making her death their life, and eke her hurt their good” (I.i.25). In the Roman mass, the following words are spoken during the preparation of the gifts for the Liturgy of the Eucharist: *per huius aquae et vini mysterium eius efficiamur divinitatis consortes qui humanitatis*

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<sup>59</sup> See above for references to Cambrensis and Moryson for examples.

<sup>60</sup> I discuss the claims of Catholic cannibalism and its connection to “heathenish” forms of religion more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

*nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps.*<sup>61</sup> Through Christ's sacrifice, and the spilling of his blood, those who partake in the Eucharist – drink his blood – are accordingly improved by it – are, in a way, made participant with his divinity: thus, making his death their life, and his hurt their good.<sup>62</sup>

Another Catholic ritual is described: “Likewise at the kindling of the fire, and lighting of candles, they say certaine prayers, and use some other superstitious rites, which shew that they honour the fire and the light” (64). This can be read as a comment on Catholic vigils, prayer candles, Paschal bonfires – all of which were accounted part of superstitious and idolatrous rites. In keeping with the ideas about geohumoralism, he connects these rites to the geography of the north: “for all those Northerne nations, having beene used to be annoyed with much colde and darknesse, are wont therefore to have the fire and the sunne in great veneration.” Interestingly, these are compared as contrary to the customs in Africa: “like as contrarywise the Moores and Egyptians, which are much offended and grieved with extreame heat of the sunne, doe every morning, when the sunne ariseth, fall to cursing and banning of him as their plague” – geography and, thus, ethnography determine religious worship. “Moreover the Scythians used to sweare by their Kings hand, as Olaus sheweth. And so do the Irish use now to sweare by their Lords hand, and, to forswear it, holde it more criminall than to sweare by God” (64). This may be a reference to the Catholic devotion to the Pope and his clergy –

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<sup>61</sup> “Through this water and wine and the mystery of his divinity, may we be made participants of his divinity who deigned to be a participant in our humanity.”

<sup>62</sup> There are also a number of Eucharistic prayers that include similar statements, any of which Spenser could have been thinking of when he created this scene.

the ceremonial kiss of the bishop's ring as breaking the first commandment: putting a person above God.

At the end of this catalogue of customs, Eudoxus exclaims, "I have heard, in these few words, that from you which I would have thought had bin impossible to have bin spoken of times so remote, and customes so ancient" (64). Irenius responds with, "It is no cause of wonder at all; for it is the maner of many nations to be very superstitious, and diligent observers of old customes and antiquities, which they receive by continuall tradition from their parents, by recording of their Bards and Chronicles, in their songs, and by daylie use and ensample of their elders" (64). "Old," "ancient" and the past seem to be treated derogatorily in *A View*. This may be because Catholicism is equated with the past, with what is old – traditional. The Reformation stresses renewal, progress, and, obviously, reform; thus, in a sense, it is the denial of the old, and turning away from the past. And as I mentioned above, Irenius begins his discussion of Ireland by declaring that it is one of the oldest nations in present existence. If this is so, then Ireland itself needs to be renewed.

Significantly, Irenius/Spenser discusses issues of heritage, lineage, and ethnicity in his section on customs. This implies a connection between them. It is in the composition of one's customs that one's race is revealed. If we take this logic to its end, then, it is in one's religion that race is revealed: Catholicism is most often condemned for its leadership (the pope and "corrupt" clergy) and its rites (superstitious customs). Irenius spends very little time actually discussing religion in specificity because, in many ways,

it has been the central subject for most of his discussion – in his ideas on law and customs.

In discussing his recommended methods for reform, the rhetoric of both monogenesis and colonialism can be detected in his insistence on the need for unity between England and Ireland. In response to Eudoxus's idea that the Irish and English should be segregated, Irenius/Spenser says, "I thinke it best by an union of manners, and conformity of mindes, to bring them to be one people" (144). He also comments on how the separation of the two nations breeds further rebellion. However, given his earlier fears about the English becoming Irish, it is obvious that this unity is dependent upon the Irish becoming English. In merging Ireland with England, the two nations would live in peaceful unity. Yet, earlier, Irenius isolates religious allegiances as a deterrent to this union. Here, he relates how the taking of a sacrament conflicted with Irish fealty to the monarch of England: "I would wish them all to bee sworne to her Majestie [...] because many of them are suspected to have taken an other oath privily to some bad purposes, and thereupon to have received the Sacrament, and beene sworne to a priest, which they thinke bindeth them more then their alleagiance to their Prince, or love of their countrey" (139). Previously shown to be a method of cannibalism, the Eucharist is here shown to be the seal that cements Catholic dissent against the English and their monarch. This presentation of the sacrament touches upon the general fear of the Catholic as foreign, even (and perhaps especially) the English Catholic. Because Catholics are loyal to a foreign pope, there is the sense that their loyalties lie outside of England's borders.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> See the introduction for my discussion of how Catholicism was aligned with foreignness and, ultimately, treason.

Aligned with foreign loyalties, the Catholic himself is often coded as foreign. By sealing his tyranny by taking the sacrament, the Irishman thus confirms his otherness in an act that was thought to do the same for the English Catholic.

### **Beyond Spenser ...**

Though he is arguably the most prolific commentator on the “Irish problem,” Spenser is certainly not the only early modern English poet who had something to say about the Irish: their customs, their religion, and the dangers they presented to the English. A number of the themes and subjects from Spenser’s *A View* are present in the poetry and drama of various early modern English writers: specifically in works by John Derricke, William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson. Chief among these themes is the idea that Catholic loyalty is central to the Irish threat and that Ireland needs to be colonized because of it.

In my last section, I ended with a look at how Irenius connected treason to the Irish subject’s partaking of the Eucharist. A similar portrayal of how Catholic clergy incite treason occurs in the poem from John Derricke’s *The Image of Ireland* (1581). An English engraver who took part in the campaign against Hugh O’Neill in the 1570s, Derricke includes a verse description of Irish manners and topography in his collection of evocative engravings on the campaign and the Irish way of life. Unofficially, Derricke was a rather bigoted and unsympathetic observer of Irish culture, often portraying the Irish as subhuman and, at times, even demonic. The main substance of his argument is that the Irish are incapable of being civilized under normal conditions, and thus can only be subdued by force. Described as being “sprung from a wicked tree,” Derricke writes



that the Irish “grow through daily exercise / To all iniquity” (94, 95-96). In the poem, the Irish literally have “bad roots,” thus the imagery evokes the common understanding of the Irish as having a degenerate ancestry and ethnic lineage.

The wickedness of their innate barbarity is made even worse with “daily exercise”: that is, through their daily social and, especially, religious customs. He comments on the degenerative quality of their religious rites when he writes that the friar’s primary counsel is to encourage rebellion: “affirming that it is / An almost deed to God / To make the English subject taste / The Irish rebels’ rod” (101-04). Derricke explicitly connects Irish rebellion to the Catholic faith, presenting the Catholic clergy as political inciters to treason rather than as religious leaders. Indeed, the implication is that these incitements to treason are part of their religious practice. His inflammatory accusations increase in severity in the next few lines: “To spoil, to kill, to burn, / The Friar’s counsel is, / And for the doing of the same, / He warrants heavenly bliss” (105-08). Derricke ends his poem with an image of bloodthirsty Catholic clergy and laity serving as his final description of Ireland.

Clearly Derricke’s poem was meant to drum up enthusiasm for the campaigns in Ireland. His engravings as well as the poem do their best to portray the Irish as threats not only to the English way of life, but also to English life in general, as the list of menacing verbs in line 105 portend: “spoil,” “kill,” and “burn.” Moreover, he explains that the Irish Catholic’s reward for this destruction will be “heavenly bliss”; this would undoubtedly cause greater anxiety for the English because, after all, nothing is scarier than killers who believe they are doing God’s work.

In drumming up support for the campaigns against Irish rebels, Derricke also returns to another theme explored by Spenser: the idea that the Irish do not deserve Ireland. He begins the poem by expounding on the wondrous natural beauty of the Irish landscape, even using mythical creatures as a way to increase the majesty of the scene. This discourse leads into his description of the Irish works, who “work the land’s decay, / Procuring what they can: / The ruin and undoing quite / Of many an honest man” (49-52). Much in the same way that Irena is held captive by the abusive Grantorto, Ireland is controlled by the ruinous Irish, whose degeneration is so thorough that they have a “decaying” effect on the land. As in Spenser’s Book V, and colonial rhetoric in general, the implication is that Ireland -- the land -- needs to be saved from the Irish; it needs the cultivation of a more civilized and less abusive breed of people.

Rallying English support for foreign campaigns was often a necessity. The colonial efforts in Ireland were expensive and, at times, very unpopular. For this reason there are a number of plays, which feature portrayals of the Irish, whose performance dates coincide with major campaigns. One such play is Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, whose performance date puts it close to a major campaign that Elizabeth’s favorite, the Earl of Essex, was mobilizing for against Ireland in 1599. Henry’s foray into France typified the kind of aggressive enterprise some of Shakespeare’s contemporaries wished their nation to underwrite and others denounced as wasteful and dangerous. As such, the play generates both the patriotic excitement and the customary dread of military venture. Though the tone is generally celebratory, it is complicated by a number of the problems that haunt the play. Chief among these is its ending, which is colored by a sense of

transitory, even futile, success by the Chorus's final comments.<sup>64</sup> Ever the clever diplomat, Shakespeare seems to avoid making any clear comment on the necessity or commendableness of such a military venture. He does, however, include an Irish character in the action of the play.

Though his role is small, MacMorris's inclusion in a play about military expansionism is significant. Equally significant are his comments about his "nation" in Act Three. Responding to the Welshman, Fluellen's comment about how there are "not many of his nation," MacMorris exclaims, "Of my nation? What ish my nation? Ish a villain and a basterd and a knave and a rascal? What ish my nation? Who talks of my nation?" (III.iii.62-64). Here, MacMorris displays the stereotypically fiery temper of an Irishman. He also speaks in the broken and heavily accented language with which stage Irishmen were typically portrayed. The subject that incites his particular ire is the subject that would undoubtedly have been on the minds of the English audience viewing the performance: the Irish nation, and how many people were there.<sup>65</sup> His comments about the Irish nations as a "villain and a basterd" are also phrased as questions. Thus, he is parroting the common appellations used to describe the Irish.

In Shakespeare's play, the presentation of the Irishman is far less incendiary than the one presented by Derricke, even if he still conforms to a number of common stereotypes. Shakespeare's Irishman is also fighting on the side of the English; he is part

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<sup>64</sup> "Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned king / Of France and England, did this king succeed, / Whose state so many had the managing / That they lost France and made his England bleed, / Which oft our stage hath shown -- and, for their sake, / In your fair minds let this acceptance take" (V.ii.9-14).

<sup>65</sup> Kiberd makes a comment in his book, which relates to this issue. He says, "Ireland would be a sort of absence in English texts, a utopian 'no place' into which the deepest fears and fondest ideas might be read" (12).

of the English nation. Yet even more significant than the stereotypes used to portray him are the ones that are left out. Specifically, the stereotypes about his religion. This omission is also remarkably prevalent in a later work by Ben Jonson, *The Irish Masque* (1616).

Jonson's masque represents a shift in the way the Irish were imagined in the early seventeenth century. In contrast to the Elizabethan period, when much of Ireland was in the state of a semi-permanent rebellion against English rule, Jonson's characters are bumbling fools rather than incorrigible rebels. Under James I, the island was temporarily at peace, and England's central mission was no longer to subdue the Irish by military means. Jonson, thus, imagines his Irish characters not as threatening rebels but as half-civilized buffoons -- so harmless that they could safely be presented to the King himself, even if they are unable to properly recognize him. Although loyal to James, the Irishmen are mockingly presented with broken English and strong accents -- to the point of being almost illegible: "For Chreesh's sake, phair ish te king? Phich ish he, an't be? Show me te shweet faish, quickly." As a contrast, we are also given the concluding image of the Anglicanized Irish gentleman, who represents the realization of the colonialist's dream. He speaks in perfect English and pays proper deference to the English King, while also apologizing for the uncivilized behavior of his fellow, native Irishmen.

Tellingly, Catholicism is left out of both portrayals, of Shakespeare's Irish soldier and Jonson's buffoons and Anglo-Irishman. It is telling because allusions to religion are omitted when the characters are portrayed in a positive or, at least, innocuous way. These characters are not threats, thus they are not aligned with the Catholic faith. In contrast, in

the works most intent on revealing the dangers of the Irishman, Catholicism takes center stage. This is a small, but interesting, indication of how the fear of the Irishman was actually, really the fear of the Catholic -- whether foreign or domestic.

### **Final Comments**

Ireland is presented as England's counterpart -- its mirror image. Through the portrayal of this opposite, England affirms a version of their own national identity. However, this identity is never clearly presented; we only see it refracted in the negative portrayal of Irish identity. But in reading its opposite, we learn much about how the English wanted to present themselves. Ireland is savage, cannibalistic, and backwards. It is aligned with England's past more than its present, as it is mired in the cultural and religious practices of England's past. For this reason it is coded as superstitious and idolatrous, brutish and dark. As its mirror image, England is thus refined, civilized, and progressive. Above all, it is Protestant -- a designation that reinforces and cultivates the former characteristics, according to the English, since Catholicism is painted as a degenerative influence on cultural and national identity.

The Irishman, as a figure related to the English in so many ways, has a representative quality beyond his traditional set of stereotypes. He represents the English recusant. Like the Irishman, the recusant is aligned with England's past. Mired in idolatry and superstition, both the recusant and the Irishman refuse to progress -- to become Protestant, thus fully English. Both the recusant and the Irishman represent the danger of conversion -- or, rather, reconversion to England's old faith.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Cannibals, Converts, and Covens: Catholics and Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination*

Unlike the figure of the Irishman, who is straightforwardly and consistently represented as irredeemably Catholic, the representation of the Jew is varied and frequently contradictory. At times the Jew is aligned with the Catholic as a domestic threat to the nation of England; other times, he is the representative of a low-church Protestantism, another figure threatened by the dangers of Catholicism, specifically of English recusants.<sup>66</sup> These contradictory images, sometimes appearing in the same work by a single author,<sup>67</sup> make the figure of the Jew a complicated study in the issue of Protestant renderings of Catholicism. The reason for the Jew's multivalent and often contradictory representation by Elizabethan authors may be due to the Jew's relative absence in the common experiences of sixteenth-century English society.<sup>68</sup> Despite the almost complete lack of firsthand contact with Jews, however, there was no shortage of anti-Semitic stereotypes in circulation. Functioning more as concepts than as real individuals in the English imagination -- in contrast to the apparently genuine threat of the infiltrating Papist -- the Jew was largely a culturally-imagined bogeyman.<sup>69</sup> The Jew,

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<sup>66</sup> See Michael Ferber's article "The Ideology of *The Merchant of Venice*" for a detailed analysis of how Shylock represents low-church Protestantism in Shakespeare's play.

<sup>67</sup> For example, in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* stories of Jewish complicity with the Papists are told amidst stories of Protestant martyrs who suffer like the persecuted Jews under the tyranny of the Catholic Church.

<sup>68</sup> As historian Bernard Glassman points out, "four almost four centuries [after the 1290 expulsion] the English people rarely, if ever, came into contact with flesh-and-blood Jews" (14).

<sup>69</sup> For example, as Stephen Greenblatt asserts, "For Marlowe, as for Shakespeare, the figure of the Jew is useful as a powerful rhetorical device, an embodiment for a Christian audience of all they loathe and fear, all that appears stubbornly, irreducibly different" (203).

then, is less an individual than a representation of general xenophobia – less a representative of a particular ethnicity or religion than a representation of collective fears about religious and national difference and, more specifically, infiltration. Though there were stereotypes that were exclusively “anti-Jewish”<sup>70</sup>, most of the common stereotypes about Jewish people were grafted with characteristics common to more familiar, individualized groups of subversives.

As Catholicism was increasingly aligned with what was alien and foreign, Jewish stereotypes became useful analogies for describing English Catholics.<sup>71</sup> The Jew was an effective representation of otherness because he was already hopelessly alien in English society: “hopelessly alien” in that Jews were popularly regarded as innately non-Christian and non-English, and thus unassimilable. Thus, the Jew provided a ready-made model for a religious, cultural, and political “boogeyman”; to be linked with the Jews was to be maligned and made foreign. This alignment in England between early modern Catholics and ancient stereotypes of the Jews illustrates the extent to which the Roman Church was hated and feared during this period of English history. As such, the demonized Jew functions as a template for which Catholics were represented and discussed. This trend

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<sup>70</sup> It is important to note the distinction between anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism is a racial prejudice that many historians agree does not truly exist until the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (see Kaspar von Greyerz, *Religion and early modern Europe, 1500-1800*, p.135). Anti-Judaism is more of a theologically based prejudice, which the general historical consensus has determined is more applicable to pre-Modern societies.

<sup>71</sup> Sharon Achinstein makes a similar point in her article “John Foxe and the Jews.” Though this is not the main argument of her essay, she posits that Jews functioned as a kind of metaphor for Catholics in sixteenth-century England: “With respect to the Jews, the Reformation put theological matters first, but theology, history, and ambivalent identities of Christians in the modern world intersected. At the center of this intersection we find Jews: Jews standing for the Catholic church from which Protestant England sought to separate; Jews standing for that which needed to be removed in the name of purity; Jews’ continued existence standing as a challenge to the universal truth of Christian salvational history [...] In their repudiation of the Roman Church, reformers laid fresh eyes on the history of ancient Israel, both in political and prophetic terms, as a model of a prior ‘church’ that had to be repudiated” (88).

aligns the Catholic recusant with a religious figure of otherness who is also regarded as a racial and cultural “other,” thereby becoming the means by which Catholic otherness is made all the more impermeable. Indeed, it becomes the means by which the “otherness” of Catholics becomes all the more impermeable; it aligns the Catholic “other” with a religious other who is also regarded as a racial and cultural “other.”

Jewish and Catholic stereotypes commonly overlap and inform each other because of a number of parallels between both religious groups. One major parallel is the issue of conversion, as both groups were subjected to forced conversion by the state. The other major parallel occurs in the charges of sorcery and witchcraft, which were leveled at both the Jew and the Catholic – charges that stemmed largely from the religions’ shared emphasis on ritualism and ceremonialism. This chapter will closely analyze how ceremonialism and conversion linked the Catholic to the Jew in the imaginations of sixteenth-century English writers. In addressing this issue, I analyze the characters of Jessica and Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice*; however, Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris* are the key texts under analysis. Central to this chapter is an examination of how the “Catholic as Jew” represented the deeper conflict within English society about the formation of its national identity in light of England’s perceived “inferior” ethnological and religious ancestry.

### **Jews and Catholics in Sixteenth-Century England**

Aside from artistic representations, there are a number of similarities in how Jews and Catholics were treated in sixteenth-century English society. Broadly, there is a social and political connection between Jews and Catholics: both groups were economically



disenfranchised in order to provide funds to the state that persecuted them. Jews were prohibited from owning land or from engaging in any profession outside of usury; this limited their assets to money,<sup>72</sup> which was easy for the government to confiscate on theological grounds when convenient, a common historical occurrence in England since the middle ages, which is given representation in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. Catholic assets in the form of land holdings – monasteries, convents, and churches – as well as gilt altars, statuary, and other treasures were also liquidated to fund the Tudor government during and after the Reformation, thus also on theological grounds. In Anglican and Puritan writing, Jews and Catholics are frequently described and derided together, often interrelated in the theological and social dangers they posed. For example, the Puritan William Prynne surmised that any Jewish immigrant was likely to be a foreign agent working for the Catholic faith: “If extraordinary care be not taken ... under pretext of Jews, we shall have many hundreds of Jesuits, Popish priests, and friars come over freely into England ... under the title, habit, and disguise of Jews.” Famously, a broadside verse illustrates the conjunction between the two groups, describing a plot against the queen as “Hatcht by the Pope, the Devil, and a Jew.” And, of course, the most famous Jewish plot against the queen, the Roderigo Lopez case, is usually set in a context of, and often in conjunction with, other conspiracies against her majesty: plots that are

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<sup>72</sup> The economic disenfranchisement of Jews in England and Europe is well documented by a number of sources. James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews* presents a compelling survey of the economic conditions of Jews in sixteenth-century London and its presentation in Shakespeare's plays. For further information about Catholic economic disenfranchisement, including the dissolution of monasteries and parishes, as well as the fines levied against English Catholics for recusancy, see Christopher Haigh's *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors*; S.J. Barnett's *Idol Temples and Crafty Priests: The Origins of Enlightenment Anticlericalism* also has a chapter that deals with the economic forms of anti-Catholic political measures in early modern England, “Church, State, and Priest-Kings.”

always Catholic, often implicated Jesuits, and usually involved foreigners.<sup>73</sup> And in the minds of many English subjects, Jews and Catholics were equally foreign. As a member of the “scattered nation” (Deut 28: 25), the Jew was irredeemably alien, a foreigner no matter where he was. As such, the Jew functioned as the quintessential representation of the alien living within society.

Though not a “scattered nation,” Catholicism was linked to a number of European nations. As the very names “Papist” and “Romish” indicate, Catholics were termed as foreign.<sup>74</sup> Aligned with the foreign powers of Spain and Rome, as well as of France and Italy, Catholics were deemed as essentially un-English, and Catholicism was frequently portrayed as an ethnic and/or national designation rather than merely a religious one. As I’ve argued in the introduction and chapter one, anti-Catholicism supplied the other, the enemy against which England defined itself as a nation. Concurrently, the Jew became a prime figure for the representation of Catholic fears and stereotypes because Jews were strangers in the midst of society – alienated not only by their religious beliefs but also by their national and ethnic origins. The figure of the Jew was useful as a way to present the fear of the alien living amongst the English; this was analogous to the fear that the recusant provoked.

More specifically, however, Judaism and Catholicism shared two major features that united them in the English Protestant imagination. The first feature that linked the

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<sup>73</sup> See David S. Katz’s chapter on “The Jewish Conspirators of Elizabethan England” in his book *The Jews in the History of England: 1485-1850* for a complete description of popular Jewish conspiracies and their links to Spain and the Pope. These conspiracies between Jews and Catholics were, as Katz points out, both real and imagined, because “Despite their wariness about the countries of the Inquisition, the Jews of Elizabethan England did move in Spanish and Roman Catholic circles, and the opportunities for financial profit and personal gain were plentiful” (49).

<sup>74</sup> The universalist assertion implicit in the name “Catholic” is one Protestant writers never legitimized.

two groups together was their fervent ceremonialism. The Jewish and the Catholic religions were based on material practices that the Protestant church, as a whole, found distasteful, at best, and heretical, at worst.<sup>75</sup> Jewish observances of material practices such as circumcision, dietary laws, and days of obligation, were aligned with the detested rituals of the Catholic church: primarily the sacrament of transubstantiation, fasting, and the feast days of the liturgical year. Both religions were portrayed by the Protestant Church as being steeped in idolatrous superstition, as the above ceremonies were considered by both to be necessary components to the soul's salvation. This link is featured prominently in John Foxe's treatment of Jews in his *Actes and Monuments* (1563).

In keeping with contemporary reformers' vitriol against Roman ritual, Foxe's attacks on Jewish ceremonialism and superstition are recurrent themes in his treatment of the Jews, whom he links with the Catholics in their "irrational" obedience to the letter of the law. He discusses the danger of ceremonialism in regards to Catholicism and the degeneration of the Christian faith: "For after that man's brain was once set on devising, it never could make an end of heaping rite upon rite, and ceremony upon ceremony, till all religion was turned well nigh to superstition" (382). In general, all ceremony eventually devolves into superstition. Connected to his railings against ceremony are his admonitions against strict forms of legalism, which was also believe to be practiced by Jews. "The Jews did greatly brag of the knowledge of the law, and of the Saviour that they waited for. But what availed it them? [...] Howbeit doth the law of the Jews convert

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<sup>75</sup> This is also a crucial distinction that Christ makes in his formative remarks on the nature of Christianity in the gospels: a distinction that many members of the reformed church took very seriously, given their emphasis on *sola scriptura*.

their souls [...] No, but those Jews sticking so much to the old custom and face of their church, and not seeking for knowledge, by ignorance of the Scriptures were deceived” (512). Thus, not only does Catholic ceremonialism and Jewish legality lead to superstition, they are also ineffective means to salvation. Indeed, an obsession with legality, laws, and contracts dominates the central figure of Jewishness in this period: Shylock, whom I discuss below.

Interestingly, in Foxe, as well as in the writings of other Englishmen at this time, Jewish stereotypes were altered according to the changes enacted by the Reformation. No longer did Jewish stereotypes illustrate the medieval fascination with host desecration and stories of Jewish iconoclasm; reformers, it must be remembered, also attacked the host and performed actions of iconoclasm. Instead, they featured Jews as sorcerers, who could conjure spirits and concoct poisons to threaten and kill their Christian neighbors. Their link to sorcery parallels Catholicism’s link to witchcraft. Catholic rituals, like those of witchcraft, relied on the power of words and gestures to transform the physical world. This belief in the power of the human language, human agency, to impact the elements of the earth was criticized as supernaturalism. Ultimately, the Jew, the Catholic, and the witch are connected via their fervent ceremonialism, and all three are triangulated in Protestant attacks on religious ritualism. William Lithgow (1582-1650), a noted travel writer, lumped the Jew and the Catholic (specifically, the Jesuit) together and condemned them as “brethrens in blasphemies”: “for the Jews are naturally subtil, hateful, avaricious, and above all the greatest calumniators of Christ’s name; and the ambitious Jesuits are flattering bloody gospellers, treasonable tale tellers, and the only railers upon the sincere

life of good Christians” (cited in Cohen, 324). As forms of blasphemous religions, indeed as religions associated with types of witchcraft, Judaism and Catholicism represented dangerous heresies that threatened the safety of English society.

The second feature that linked Jews to Catholics was their common status in Elizabethan England as converts. Both groups were the subjects of forced conversions to the Anglican Church. More than anything else, Jewish and Catholic converts threatened England’s emerging national identity, for conversion challenged many of the central assumptions on which this identity was based. Ceremonialism was presented as the defining marker of both religions, yet religious identity was also seen as something that was inherited, especially in the case of the Jew. Therefore, when a Jew converted to Christianity and abandoned his Jewish rites, there was always the question of whether this really changed him -- his inherent nature -- from Jew to Christian, or whether there would always be a Jewish “residue” within him. Moreover, if the Jew became a member of the Anglican Church, did this make him English? A deposition to the Inquisition terms London *conversos* as Jews “by race” despite outward professions of Christianity (Adelman 6). And a similar sentiment is represented in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* when Lancelot tells Jessica that she is “damned both by father and mother” despite her hopes that her husband “hath made [her] a Christian” (3.5.12-13, 15-16); the implication here is that by birth, by race, she is a Jew and is cursed despite her marriage to a Christian.<sup>76</sup> Thus, mass conversions threatened the sense of identity amongst English

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<sup>76</sup> Her belief in salvation via her husband is derived from a passage in 1 Corinthians: “the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband” (7:14).

Christians, as they were unsure how to identify or differentiate the converted Jewish-Christian from Jews and “pure” Christians.

When a Catholic converted to Protestantism, the ideological “stakes” were even higher. The new Protestant state of England went to great lengths to subvert its Catholic heritage, even to the extent of saying that the ancestral Church of England was not “really” Catholic.<sup>77</sup> Or, in other words, the medieval church was not like the Catholic Church of the sixteenth-century because it was somehow less foreign and less ceremonial.<sup>78</sup> The medieval Catholic Church was also regarded as the imperfect precursor to the Protestant Church (much in the same way that Judaism was seen as the imperfect precursor to Christianity). For this reason, Catholicism was often labeled as arcane and outmoded, while the Protestant Church was progressive and enlightened.<sup>79</sup> Continued adherence to Catholic ways, then, was regarded as a superstitious, outdated attachment to ceremony, and, more importantly, as a stubborn refusal to evolve from England’s barbaric heritage. Such adherents to the faith were dangerous to the formation of English identity because they denied its Protestantism, which is what severed England from its ancestral link to northern barbarism (i.e., its link to Ireland). Catholicism, then, acted as a demonized antagonist in opposition to which English nationalism first crystallized. The two central tenets of early modern English identity were reformation

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<sup>77</sup> See my discussion of national myth-making in chapter one and my analysis of the Irishman as antithetical Englishman in chapter two for further examples of this subversion.

<sup>78</sup> This dichotomous view of Catholicism as different through history is related to a similar belief about Jews: mainly that the Jews of the Old Testament, the prophets and heroes revered by Christianity, were not the same Jews of Jesus’ time. Thus, for example, Moses would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah and would not have crucified him. For further evidence of this way of thinking, see Katz and von Greyerz as well as my discussion of Protestants and Biblical theology below.

<sup>79</sup> Again, see chapter two for how this idea is translated into the representation of the Irishman as the barbaric ancestor of the Englishman.

and nationalism: the casting off of a foreign and antiquated identity based on the Church, and the adoption of a uniquely English subjectivity. Both operated as binaries; the new and improved required the old and inferior – the native and the foreign – to provide a boundary. If England was to develop its own national identity, it needed to designate what it was not (or no longer was) as the outmoded and the alien. It was able to do this by combining these elements into a single villain, the Catholic Church. Catholicism is frequently infused with the presentation of the stereotypical figure of the Jew, for the villainy of Catholicism was seen as more dangerous. Looking at conversion in light of this danger shows how the Catholic convert was more threatening than the Jewish convert.

There was always the fear that the convert to Anglicanism was not fully sincere and continued to practice his native religion in secret. Jewish conversos who surreptitiously maintained their Jewish rites while publicly professing Christianity were called Marranos (von Greyerz 135), and history shows us that these figures were treated with greater leniency than were the Catholic converts who did the same. Historian Barnard Glassman comments on the relative tolerance shown to Marranos in English society: “Although the place of the Jews in the theoretical general order was fairly well determined, there was no real attempt to either punish or segregate them in the real world. As in the years immediately following the expulsion, the few Jews who resettled in England were left alone as long as they did not make their presence too obvious because of the commercial benefits that they brought to the country and the skills that they as individuals possessed. A handful of Jews who practiced their religion in secret were no

real threat to society, and they were generally ignored” (53-54). Glassman also reports that many Jews were allowed secret synagogues and other amenities in order to worship in private (132).<sup>80</sup>

David Katz also details the general tolerance of crypto-Jews in English society (107-114), despite – or maybe because of – the fact that Jews could never really become full members of the Anglican Church, as a converted Catholic could: “most Englishmen saw Roman Catholics [...] as a mistaken religious group or even part of a traitorous political organization. But a Catholic who abandoned his faith and converted to Protestantism was completely purified, and promised for himself a secure and equal future limited only by his social standing. The Catholic was an *Englishman* who had chosen membership in the wrong club. This was not the case with the Jews” (108, italics mine). Because the extent of Jewish difference went beyond mere religion, as they were seen as both ethnically and politically distinct from Englishmen, the Jew could never fully become Protestant or English. The Jew, then, is unassimilable into English society. There was the sense that a crypto-Jew, a Marrano, could be spotted as such. Of course, this is not the case with the crypto-Catholic, who could assimilate him or herself into English society. This made the crypto-Catholic an even more dangerous figure than the

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<sup>80</sup> Glassman provides an example of the relative tolerance shown to crypto-Jews: “Evidence exists that the Jews of London were sometimes able to hold religious services. For example, when Solomon Cormano was in the city in 1592 as the envoy of the Jewish Duke of Metilli, he used his diplomatic privilege to hold services in his home. Edward Barton, in a letter to Lord Burghley dated August 19, 1592, mentioned that Cormano was boasting that ‘he and all his trayne used puclickely the Jewes rytes in prayinge, accompayned with divers secret Jewes resident in London.’ If such statements were circulated, the presence of an active Jewish community must have been an open secret. Though the existence of practicing Jews was known to the authorities, nothing was done to outlaw them. Only when there was a public scandal did the government take action [...] As long as Jews did not break the law or outrage the public sentiment, they were allowed to live in peace. One very prominent member of the Jewish community, Dr. Roderigo Lopez, the personal physician to Elizabeth, was tolerated as a secret Jew until he was involved in a case of treason. Only then did experience the bitter hatred of the nobility and the mob as well” (56).



Jew, because the crypto-Catholic was granted the social privileges and the national standing or identity of the Anglican. As an “insider” – a member of the English Protestant community – the crypto-Catholic was harder to identify. The crypto-Catholic’s acceptance into society was perceived as more dangerous in large part because of the Catholic association with the foreign powers of Rome and Spain.<sup>81</sup>

A number of statutes were issued in both Henry VIII’s and Elizabeth’s reigns addressing the issue of Catholic recusancy in England. The most notable is Elizabeth’s 1593 “Act against popish recusants,” which proclaims the Catholic recusant as a traitor to the crown and to England itself:

For the better discovering and avoiding of all such traitorous and most dangerous conspiracies and attempts as are daily devised and practiced against our most gracious sovereign lady the Queen’s Majesty and the happy estate of this common weal by sundry wicked and seditious persons, who terming themselves Catholics and being indeed spies and intelligencers, not only for her Majesty’s foreign enemies but also for rebellious and traitorous subjects born within her Highness’ realms and dominions, and hiding their most detestable and devilish purposes under a false pretext of religion and conscience do secretly wander and shift from place to place within this realm to corrupt and seduce her

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<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, by aligning the crypto-Catholic with the Marrano, a representational goal is reached: as the Catholic is now made irredeemably alien. As a figure aligned with the unassimilable Jew, the Catholic convert could also never fully become Protestant.

Majesty's subjects and to stir them to sedition and rebellion.

(Elton 437)

The language contained in the act is significant. Catholics are not merely the enemies of the monarch, but also of the “happy estate of [the] common weal”; this implies a harmonious English community and puts the Catholic decidedly outside of it. It is also noteworthy that English Catholics are merely “terming themselves Catholic,” but are really “spies and intelligencers” for “foreign enemies” and “rebellious and traitorous subjects” within England. This statement encourages distrust in appearances by highlighting the discrepancy between what these recusants “term” themselves to be and who they really are. It also aligns the English Catholic with foreign and domestic enemies. In addition to being aligned with foreign foes, English Catholics are further cited with “hiding their [...] devilish purposes” to “wander and shift from place to place within this realm to corrupt and seduce” other Englishmen. Thus, Catholics are demonic traitors who hide in plain sight within English society. Furthermore, they have so well infiltrated England that it is nearly impossible to discern them. As such, the official English position was that English Catholics posed a serious threat to domestic safety.

After detailing the threat crypto-Catholics posed to the realm, the statute details how recusants are to have their land and holdings confiscated and are subject to imprisonment upon discovery of their hidden faith (439-42). The language of the statute is important in how it portrays the Catholic recusant as a government spy and traitor, a “dangerous” conspirator with England's enemies. The same language is not used against crypto-Jews unless they are found to be in league with Catholics (as was the case with Dr.

Roderigo Lopez and Hector Nuñez). As a figure of forced conversion, Jews became a displaced image of the duplicity inherent in those who were equally forced to convert from Catholicism to Protestantism in post-Reformation England. However, according to Von Greyerz's definition, a converso was not identified as a Marrano until his Jewish recusancy was revealed; this made all Jews living in England suspected conspirators with the foreign powers of the Catholic Church. Sharon Achinstein links anti-Catholic prejudice specifically to anti-Jewish prejudice: "Foxe's theological placement of the Jews alongside the papists reflects counter-Reformation controversies taking place on the continent that bred an increasingly virulent strain of anti-Judaism" (104). Thus, increased stereotyping and persecution of the Catholic Church coincided with an increased feeling of anti-Judaism; moreover, the fact that virulent anti-Judaism is best illustrated by Jewish association with Catholics demonstrates the extent to which the Roman Church was hated and feared.

### **Ceremonialism as Witchcraft: Religion, Magic, and Poison**

Catholic ritualism was one of the major targets of the English Reformation; more dangerous than the theological tenets of the Roman Church, Catholic rituals were increasingly aligned not only with ungodly superstition, but also with satanic

witchcraft.<sup>82</sup> Yet despite these dangerous associations, Catholic ceremonialism seemed to be the hardest aspect of the faith to eliminate in England. An anonymously written ballad “From Winter Cold into Summer Hot” (believed to have been composed between 1553 and 1558) bemoans the absence of ceremonialism and catalogues the changes in religion as deformation not reformation, highlighting the devaluation of Catholic ritualism – fasting, prayer, and good works – the dishonoring of saints and the Virgin Mary, the loss of unity, and the sacraments.

Fasting, prayer, and all good works  
Avoid, for only faith  
Doth bring us all to heaven straight –  
A doctrine very strange,  
Which causeth men at liberty  
Of vice and sin to range.  
From angels honour taken is,

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<sup>82</sup> I should note that when talking about Protestant attacks on Catholic ritualism, we should be clear that we are discussing a dispute that takes place in the later years of the English reformation. Henry VIII seems to have adhered more to a Lutheran form of Protestantism, which retained many Catholic rituals and sacraments: the true presence in the Eucharist, confession, and the veneration of the saints (though they are stripped of any intercessory powers). Though no mention is made of the veneration or intercessory powers of the Virgin Mary in either his *Augsberg Confessions* (1530) or *The Small Catechism* (1529), the lack of the virulent attack on the Blessed Mother, which characterizes the polemics of later reformers, gives the topic a certain level of neutrality. What Luther’s major works do attack, quite consistently, is the clericalism of the Roman Church. This is the reformed tradition that conforms most specifically to the Henrician Reformation; it was marked more by anti-papal and anti-clerical attitudes than any systematic attack on the Catholic faith itself. As some critics have noted, in Henrician England, “many zealous Protestants condemned the Anglican Church as but little reformed. It was thought to be quasi-Catholic in ceremony and especially in structure, for it retained its episcopate, the core of the medieval Church hierarchy” (Barnett vii).

From saints all worship due ... (17-26)<sup>83</sup>

The author of the ballad cites the loss of ceremonialism as the source of “vice and sin,” as he bemoans the new Protestant theological tenet of *sola fide*. This causal argument continues by condemning the loss of contrition, confession, and the theology of Purgatory in religious practice, as these losses “causeth fear of sin to flee” (41-45). And rather than finishing his conditional clause – “Where sole faith doth suffice / To amend all that is amiss” – the writer hastily interjects, “-- But none thinks so that’s wise” (46-48). The ballad ends with an interesting parallel between the loss of ceremonialism and the rise of monarchical power.

They deem themselves predestinates,  
Yet reprobates indeed;  
Free will they will not have; good works  
With them are void of need.  
Which points of doctrine do destroy  
Each commonwealth and land;  
Religion old in order due  
Makes kingdoms long to stand. (49-56)

Ostensibly, the ballad is bemoaning the substitution of Calvinist doctrine for Catholic doctrine, yet a form of nationalism surfaces in the final three lines, as if the writer were

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<sup>83</sup>The next part of the ballad reads, “The mother of our living God – / A thing most strange yet true! / Compared is by many a Jack / Unto a saffron bag, / To a thing of naught, to a paltry patch, / And to our vicar’s hag!” (27-32). The “saffron bag” refers to a sermon by Hugh Latimer, preached at St Paul’s on 18<sup>th</sup> of January in 1548, in which he compared the Virgin Mary to a saffron bag: “as the saffron bage that hath been full of saffron or hath had saffron in it doth ever after savour and smell of the sweet saffron that it contained, so our Blessed Lady, which conceived and bare Christ in her womb, did ever after resemble the manners and virtues of that precious babe” (*A Notable Sermon*, 1548, sig. Aiiii). The comparison rejects Mary’s intrinsic worth and holiness.

trying to counter the emergent link between English nationalism and Protestantism. The date of the ballad is noteworthy as well (1548), since it comes from the mid-century shifts between Catholic and Protestantism. Consequently, a link is established between the rise of Protestantism and the rise of English nationalism with the concurrent suppression of Catholic ceremonialism. This link is interesting in light of the social changes wrought by the Reformation.

According to Calvinist doctrine -- which heavily influenced the English Reformation, especially during the Edwardian period -- humanity is morally and spiritually unable to follow God or escape condemnation, and it is only through divine intervention that people can be turned from rebellion to willing obedience. In this view, all people are entirely at the mercy of God, who would be just in condemning all people for their sins, but who has chosen to be merciful (to some). One person is saved while another is condemned, not because of a foreseen willingness, faith, or any other virtue in the first person, but because God chose to have mercy on him or her. In his "Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind, By Only Christ our Saviour, from Sin and Death Everlasting," Thomas Cranmer echoes Calvinist theology in the following declaration: "Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his law and commandments, therefore can no man by his own acts, works, and deeds (seem they never so good) be justified, and made righteous before God" (239). Moreover, because salvation is beyond the control of man, man's observance of the law is stripped of its salvific powers: "God sent his only son our saviour Christ, into this world, to fulfil the law for us, and, by shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice and satisfaction, or (as it may be

called) amends to his Father for our sins” (240). As such, fasting, intercessory prayers, confession, abstinence, and all other good works are worthless in the eyes of the reformed church. With the elimination of these acts, and of transubstantiation, the clergy also becomes obsolete. With no church clericalism and hierarchy, the kingdom – which under the “Religion old” was longing “to stand” – becomes autonomous, free from the power of the clergy and, thus, of the pope. This was, of course, the motivation behind the early English Reformation under Henry VIII. In the later Reformation under Edward VI and Elizabeth I, the issue of papal loyalty (and, thus, of treason against the English monarchy) would become assimilated into an equally virulent attack on the ritual aspects of Catholicism. This is evidenced by the frequent depictions of the pope as the anti-Christ and, sometimes, even as the devil himself – which would, presumably, make the Catholics who follow him his demons and witches.

In reality, and in the imaginations of the Reformed Church, Catholicism was based on a tradition of rituals and ceremonies. Contrarily, Judaism, it could be argued, was less familiar to the average church-going Anglican in the sixteenth-century. Despite renewed reading of the Old Testament by Protestant reformers, aside from the tradition of circumcision, little was popularly known about the rites and practices of Judaism. Therefore, common beliefs about Jewish ritual were based largely on myth and prejudice. Some of these prejudices stemmed back to those propagated by the Medieval Church, but others were newly created, based on popular stereotypes that were now being circulated about (ironically) the same church that had begun the demonization of the Jew in English society. Catholic stereotypes were used to describe Jews because Catholicism was, first,

a more prevalent threat in English society and, two, because it was a better-known religion, since it had been the official religion of England for hundreds of years.

Stereotypes have a tendency to cross racial, religious, and national borders – borrowing from each other to create an increased sense of “us versus them.”

Jews and Catholics shared a repudiated past of superstition and idolatry. As Sharon Achinstein indicates, “the end of the Jewish church was an end of its prophecies; likewise, Romanism was outdated. Foxe rewrites Old Testament history to highlight God’s mission as revealed by the ongoing struggle between the forces of Christ and Antichrist: ongoing Reformation. After the first Reformation, the coming of Christ, the Jews’ stubborn resistance leads to God’s abandonment. The Roman case can be aligned to the Jewish [...] The supercession of the Jewish church by Christianity is thus a type of supercession of the Roman church by Reformed Protestantism” (102). Both Judaism and Catholicism are aligned with what is old, outdated, and divinely derelict. By maintaining their obsolete practices, rather than embracing the progressive and divinely sanctioned practices of the Protestant Church, Jews and Catholics were engaging in ungodly superstition because they had abandoned God’s true church. As one sixteenth-century contemporary wrote, “Surely, if a man will but take a view of all Popery, he shall easily see that a great part of it is mere magic” (William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine*, 1591). In the Renaissance mindset, if one was not worshipping God, he or she was worshipping His enemy. For this reason, Catholic and Jewish ceremonialism in general and certain rituals specifically were equated with those of witchcraft.



The Roman mass – and with it the doctrine of transubstantiation – was the central target of anti-Catholic polemics and comparisons to witchcraft. The rituals of the Roman mass were based on the belief that words possess a sacred power. Prior to the Reformation, the belief in the sacred power of language was widespread largely because of the doctrine of transubstantiation: the belief that the spoken words of the priest transform the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ. The English Reformation led to a critical reduction in the power attributed to holy words, at least at the level of official ideology, thus limiting the need for and power of the clergy. The Protestant belief was that only God was capable of miracles; that words were able to transform objects was to credit them with a supernatural or even miraculous power. Protestants found it easy, therefore, to identify the “supernatural” rites and utterances of the Roman Church with the spells and incantations of witchcraft.<sup>84</sup> As the central ritual of the Catholic Church, the mass becomes a major symbol of Catholic superstition, sorcery, and deception.

“Black masses” were also common to Medieval portrayals of Jews.<sup>85</sup> The blood of Christian children and a consecrated Host were often considered integral parts of the Jewish black mass. In the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, a fifteenth-century English drama, one such ceremony is performed. The central part of the play (lines 385-797) details the physical abuses performed on the Eucharistic Host by the Jewish characters

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<sup>84</sup> The Protestant shift of importance from the spoken to the written word is given an evocative illustration in Shakespeare’s *Titus Adronicus*, where Lavinia loses her tongue, yet is able to gain power from writing the names of her abusers in the dirt. This dramatizes the religious change from oral to written means of communicating spiritual power in a play set in Rome and featuring a number of Catholic themes and images.

<sup>85</sup> See my discussion of “blood libels” below.

who perform a crude parody of the Catholic Mass (and crucifixion). In addition to enactments of Host desecration the central scene of the play also includes a cauldron of boiling oil. Thus, the play implies a strong connection between Jewish ceremonies, witchcraft, and ritual murder. The same connection is part of post-Reformation representations of Catholic ceremonies.

Consider, for example, the representation of the Catholic Mass in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, in a panel of illustrations depicting the murder of King John by a monk.<sup>86</sup> The first panel shows the absolution given to the monk to commit the murder. In the second panel, the monk mixes the poison in a wassail bowl – looking very much like a witch stirring her potion in a cauldron. The next two show the monk giving the bowl to the king, then the king's death. The fifth depicts the monk's death: "The Monke lieth here dead of y poison that he dranke to y King." And, in the last panel, "A perpetuall Masse sung daily in Swinsted for y Monke that poysoned King John"; hence, communion memorializes a murder in a sense opposite to that customarily incarnated. Instead of celebrating the killed (Christ), the monks celebrate the killer (the monk, who is thus aligned with the devil), and the Mass thus becomes a "black mass" – a satanic rite marking the absolute apostasy of Rome from Christianity.<sup>87</sup> It is significant that in an illustration depicting the concoction of poison and subsequent murder of a king by a member of the Roman clergy, the mass would be offered as the concluding image. These

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<sup>86</sup> "The Description of the Poysoning of King John by a Monke of Swinsted Abby in Lincolne Shiere" appears in the first edition of *Acts and Monuments*, published in 1563 (also appearing in the 1570 and 1684 editions).

<sup>87</sup> A similar scene is played out in Shakespeare's *King John*. It is a critical commonplace to acknowledge Shakespeare's use of Foxe as a source for his plays; thus, this parallel is not surprising. However, it does leave open the possibility of future projects to analyze whether the same sorts of tensions are being explored in Shakespeare's play as well.

three elements – poison, regicide, and the Roman mass – would appear in other works featuring anti-Catholic polemics.

The connection between Jew and Catholic as poisoners and sorcerers, as well as political usurpers (or as accomplices to political usurpation), is explored most notably in two provocative plays by Christopher Marlowe: *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris*. Critics often connect the two plays thematically as portraying Marlowe's most unsympathetic villains, the Duke of Guise and Barabas, the Jew. Barabas and the Duke of Guise are often treated as figures irredeemably evil and unrepentantly destructive to society. Though the composition dates of Marlowe's plays continue to be, like the details of his life in general, a matter of conjecture, critical agreement puts the composition of the two plays relatively close together, with *The Jew of Malta* around 1590 and the *Massacre at Paris* around 1592, and only one other play being written simultaneously, *Edward II*. This could mean that one play was in his mind as he was constructing the other. And there is some textual evidence that the plays respond to and inform each other.<sup>88</sup>

### **Marlowe's Jew, Barabas: *The Jew of Malta***

*The Jew of Malta* features one of the most common stereotypes of the Jew as the poisoner of Christians. In Act II, Marlowe's protagonist embodies Jewish stereotypes in his notorious monologue when he tells Ithamore that he, "Sometimes [goes] about and poisons wells" (iii.179), which was a stereotype promulgated in various travel writings,

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<sup>88</sup> For a full analysis of the thematic and textual connections between the two plays, see Douglas Cole's chapter "Machiavellian Tragedy: The Massacre at Paris and The Jew of Malta" in his book *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy* and his chapter "Incarnations of Evil: Barabas the Jew and the Duke of Guise" in *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*. Critic John Parker also makes connections between the two plays in his book *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe*.

religious pamphlets, and popular literature from the thirteenth-century to the time of Shakespeare. Indeed, one can almost hear the echo of Martin Luther's diatribe against the Jews in Barabas's speech: "[The Jews] have been bloodthirsty bloodhounds and murderers of all Christendom for more than fourteen hundred years in their intentions, and would undoubtedly prefer to be such with their deeds. Thus they have been accused of poisoning water and wells" ("Of the Jews and their Lies" 268). The source of the stereotype may have been the prominence of Jewish physicians in England.

With specialized knowledge of human physiology and of the minerals and elements of the earth, the belief was that the Jewish physician had the dangerous ability to either concoct medicines to cure or toxins to kill his patients and society as a whole. In one account from the 1600s, the writer connects this penchant for poisoning to the Jew's commitment to the ceremonialism of his religion: "[The Jews] observe still all their old ceremonies and feasts, sacrifices only excepted. Yet some of them have confessed that their physicians kills some Christian patient or other, whom they have under their hands at that time, instead of sacrifice" (Biddulph 1342). As such, the murder of Christian patients by Jewish physicians were fabled to be a new form of Jewish ceremonialism -- a way for the Jew to observe the ritualistic requirement of offering a sacrifice.

Furthermore, with the prevalence of Jewish doctors administering to the monarch and other government figures, the danger of poisoning extended to the head of the nation and, thus subsequently, to the nation itself. However, a physician's knowledge was not requisite to the perceived ability the common Jew had when it came to poison. When Barabas, a moneylender by trade, decides to wreak havoc on the Christian society that

persecutes him, there is no question as to his method or any need to defend his skills; he concocts not one but two powerful poisons to kill his enemies, the first an ingested poison transmitted via a broth and the second an olfactory poison transmitted via a flower. As historian Jonathan Gil Harris points out, Renaissance writers often associated the Jew with not only with knowledge of poison, but with poison itself: “For Elizabethans, the belief that Jews poisoned wells readily translated itself into a more general association of Jews, and specifically their bodies, with poison” (82). The belief is enacted in the scene discussed above in *The Jew of Malta*. Jews were believed to have a supernatural ability to cure and kill the human body: “it was believed that Jewish physicians possessed unique, semi-magical powers to cure sick patients” (85). As uniquely “Jewish,” these powers were part of every Jew, not just Jewish doctors.

The scene in which Barabas and Ithamore concoct the poison to kill the nuns parallels the descriptions of witches conjuring over a cauldron, and of the monk in Foxe’s illustration. With his “long spoon” and pot (III.iv.60), he procures the poison, which he displays for both Ithamore and the audience to see: “Ithamore, seest thou this? [He shows a poison.] / It is a precious powder that I bought / Of an Italian in Ancona once, / Whose operation is to bind, infect, / And poison deeply, yet not appear / In forty hours after it is ta’en” (68-73). The reference to the Italian poison reflects the common Elizabethan presumption that Italians were accomplished poisoners; but there is also, of course, the link with Rome, Catholicism, and witchcraft – each seen as interconnected. Ceremony is invoked only a few lines later, again a reference to Catholicism in this “witchy” scene: “Belike there is some ceremony in’t” (84). With his invocations over the potion, Barabas

also makes a vow to Ithamore as he adds the poison, “My purse, my coffer, and myself is thine” (94). In the next lines, he certainly sounds like a witch listing the deadly ingredients of her demonic potions: “first let me stir it [...] In few, the blood of Hydra, Lerna’s bane, / The juice of hebon, and Cocytus’ breath, / And all the poisons of the Stygian pool” (101-103).<sup>89</sup> He then utters an invocation over the pot to curse his daughter, “Break from the fiery kingdom, and in this / Vomit your venom and envenom her / That like a fiend hath left her father thus!” (104-106). As he stirs his “cauldron,” his words are spoken with the belief that they hold some kind of magical power. A similar belief is expressed during the Catholic Mass, with the elevation of the host and the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Ostensibly, without acknowledging the role of Christ’s grace in the act of transubstantiation, this could be maligned as a form of conjuring (which it frequently was in various Protestant polemics). This connection is expressed when Ithamore remarks, “What a blessing has he given’t!” (107), furthermore establishing the connection between this scene and the practice of using words to make things holy in the Roman Church.

In the play and in sixteenth-century English society, the connections between Jewish stereotypes and the Catholic mass do not end here. Early in the play, Barrabas swears by “*Corpo di dio*” (I.ii.90), the body of God, which could be read as the body of God in the Eucharist; he also says this in Italian, which links the statement to Rome.

Prior to the Reformation, the Jew was often connected to the Eucharist, a feature

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<sup>89</sup> Consider, for comparison, the witches’ conjuring scene in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*: “[First Witch] Round about the cauldron go, / In the poisoned entrails throw. / Toad that under cold stone / Days and nights has thirty-one / Sweltered venom sleeping got, / Boil thou first i’th’charmed pot. / [All] Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn, and cauldron bubble” (IV.i.4-11). The spoken litany of ingredients, followed by curses and/or incantations seems to be the *modus operandi* of the conjuring witch (and of Barabas and Ithamore).

prevalent in medieval miracle plays. Historian Eamon Duffy gives an example of the Jew's common function in the miracle stories of the church: "a Jew following a Christian friend into a church witnesses what he thinks is a revolting act of cannibalism, when he sees the priest and every member of the congregation devour a beautiful child [*Corpus Christi*]. His friend explains that this vision is in fact a sign of God's wrath against the Jews who crucified his Son; had he been a faithful Christian, he would have seen only the Host [...] What is torn and bleeding flesh to the Jew, in other words, is the bread of Heaven to believers, and is intended by God to be experienced in the reassuring form of bread. This is enough for the Jew, who immediately seeks baptism, so that he may never again be harrowed by such a vision" (105).<sup>90</sup> After the Reformation, there were a number of new stereotypes that linked the Jew to the Catholic mass. For example, it was commonly believed that Jews needed the body and blood of Christians in order to enact their religious ceremonies – Jewish forms of the mass (Glassman 52). Perhaps this explains Shylock's demand for a "pound of flesh" in *The Merchant of Venice*.<sup>91</sup>

Commonly believed to be part of the "Jewish mass" was the ritual known as the "blood libel," where Jews would kidnap, scourge, and then crucify a Christian child before drinking his blood. In his travelogue, Pierre Boaistuau relates this myth, "these

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<sup>90</sup> The miraculous powers attributed to the consecrated host was not limited to its ability to convert Jews. Historian Keith Thomas comments on this belief in his book *Religion and the Decline of Magic*: "The communicant who did not swallow the bread, but carried it away from the church in his mouth, was widely believed to be in possession of an impressive source of magical power. He could use it to cure the blind or the feverish; he could carry it around with him as a general protection against ill fortune, or he could beat it up into a powder and sprinkle it over his garden as a charm against caterpillars. Medieval stories relate how the Host was profanely employed to put out fires, to cure swine fever, to fertilize the fields and to encourage bees to make honey. The thief could also convert it into a love-charm or se it for some maleficent purpose. Some believed that a criminal who swallowed the Host would be immune from discovery" (34-35).

<sup>91</sup> See below for my discussion of Shakespeare's play.

wicked people in the despite of the passion of Jesus Christ, upon Good Friday, when they judged the Christians were most occupied in celebrating that day, they enclosed themselves yearly in a cave, where having stolen a young child, they whipt him, crowning him with thorns, making him to drink gall, and in the end crucified him upon a cross [...] They confessed that they had used this many years before, murdering a great number of infants in this sort” (26-27).<sup>92</sup> In these stories, the cannibalistic nature of Jews is stressed, as it is the central ritual of their mysterious ceremonies (just as it is, in some form, in the Catholic mass).

In Marlowe’s plays, the power of the spoken word to elevate and transform the lives and statuses of his protagonists cannot be overstated. As it is with such monumental characters as Tamburlaine and Faustus, so it is with Barabas. Stephen Greenblatt asserts, “Barabas first wins the audience to him by means of the incantatory power of his language [...] mak[ing] his entire life into a project, transforming himself into an elemental, destructive force, driving irresistibly forward [...] All of Marlowe’s heroes seem similarly obsessed, and the result of their passionate willing, their insistent, reiterated naming of themselves and their objects, is that they become more intensely real to us, more present, than any of the other characters” (216). And this power of language, of naming, of making the figural into the real is occurring at a time when the “magical” properties of language were demeaned, made illegitimate as superstition and popery. The elevation of the spoken word is one of the defining rhetorical moves/ thematic devices of

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<sup>92</sup> A similar tale is told by Thomas Calvert, “So much are they bent to shed the blood of Christians that they say a Jew needs no repentance for murdering a Christian [...] But beyond all of these they have a bloody thirst after the blood of Christians. In France and many kingdoms they have used yearly to steal a Christian boy, and to crucify him, fastening him to a cross, giving him gall and vinegar, and running him in the end through with a spear, to rub their memories afresh into sweet thoughts of their crucifying Christ, the more to harden themselves against Christ, and to show their curst hatred to all Christians.”



Marlowe's work. Language itself performs symbolic moves within his plays. At one point, Barabas uses Latin not Hebrew to proclaim his life's motto: "*Ego mihi met sum semper proximus*" [I am always closest to myself] (I.i.187). Latin, in a number of religious contexts, is associated with the Roman mass and Catholicism in general.<sup>93</sup>

### **Marlowe's Bloody Play: Corporal Symbolism in *The Massacre at Paris***

Marlowe's lurid play is littered with bodies and covered with blood – literally, as the word "blood" dominates the play, appearing sixteen times and spoken by eight different characters (both Protestant and Catholic). Poisoning, bodies, and blood occupy the dialogue, action, and stage directions of a play that begins and ends with references to the Roman mass: a Catholic ceremony dependent on the body and blood of Christ. The play begins with a mention of a mass in a festive, nuptial context: Charles says, "We think it good to go and consummate / The rest with hearing of a holy mass" (i.19-20).<sup>94</sup> This mass begins the bloody actions of the massacre. The last mention of the mass concludes and commemorates them. The Guise's final words are in praise of the mass: "*Vive la messe! Perish Huguenots!*" (xxi.85). The two exclamations are next to each other, as though related: the blood of the mass and the blood of the massacre. There is also the reference to the mass within the title of the work itself, as "massacre" has "mass"

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<sup>93</sup> It could be argued that Marlowe was not familiar enough in Hebrew, as he was in Latin, to include an accurate translation. However, there is evidence that the language was more prevalent during this time than any before in England: "Under the influence of the northern and southern humanists, the Hebrew language developed considerably during the reign of Henry VIII. Medals struck in 1545 to commemorate his recognition as head of the church contained Hebrew inscriptions. In addition to this, the Act of Uniformity that was passed in 1549 authorized its use in private devotions. The interest in this ancient language ultimately brought Hebraic scholars to England to teach at the universities" (Glassman 49).

<sup>94</sup> There is also here an implicit joke with the word "consummate" and the Catholic emphasis on chastity; rather than consummating the marriage in the usual sense, the Catholics consummate with mass.

as its root: an interesting point since this work was titled after an event and not, like Marlowe's other plays, titled after a character.

The bodies and blood of the play take on subtle religious connotations. Though the Duke of Guise is the arch-villain of the play, it is Henry who is the "bloodiest" character of the bunch: Henry uses the word "blood" more than any other character (five times, compared to the Guise's three), and blood is associated with his character more than with any other as it is referenced in his presence more than in that of any other character's.<sup>95</sup> For Henry, the shedding of the Guise's blood performs his coronation as king. After the murder of the Guise, Henry proclaims, "And in remembrance of those bloody broils / To which thou didst allure me, being alive, / And here in presence of you all, I swear / I ne'er was King of France until this hour" (xxi.94-97). By the Guise's blood and in reparation of the blood of the massacre, Henry attains kingship. Significantly, in the Roman mass, the shedding of Christ's blood is reenacted; in drinking the blood of Christ, the partaker is granted communion with Christ's kingship in heaven, a form of symbolic coronation. Marlowe does not seem to be making a parallel between Christ and the Guise; however, he seems to be teasing out the evocative meaning of blood in a play dominated by the mass.

In his final speech before succumbing, significantly, to the poison polluting his blood, Henry lashes out at the pope and the king of Spain: "These bloody hands shall tear his triple crown, / And fire accursed Rome about his ears" (xxiv.60-61). In the same

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<sup>95</sup> We must always remember that the surviving text of *The Massacre at Paris* is considered by many critics to be a poorly preserved one, most likely pieced together from extant fragments. This limits one's ability to exercise close textual analysis on the artistic elements of the play. Thus, in basing some of my argument on the issue of how many times a specific word is uttered, I am placing a lot of trust in the text itself. However, though the number may not be exactly what Marlowe had included in his original text, the general point is that the word "blood" is frequently referenced throughout the play.

passage, he promises, “To ruinate that wicked church of Rome / That hatcheth up such bloody practices” (65-66). His reference to Rome’s “bloody practices” is both an indictment on the papal complicity in the massacre and Henry’s death, and a pun on the Eucharist. His final words praise Elizabeth and call out for further war against Rome: “He loves me not that sheds most tears, / But he that makes most lavish of his blood” (100-101). To make “most lavish [use] of his blood” is to pursue a religious war against Rome, which has committed regicide in France and threatens the monarchy in England. The body of the slain monarch, poisoned by a monk, would also, no doubt, be reminiscent of the panel of illustrations in John Foxe’s popular work.

Bodies, as the symbols of the primary form of the Eucharist,<sup>96</sup> are also given religious significance. The bodies of slain Protestants and Catholics litter the play, dominating the stage directions and, at times, the dialogue. We’re constantly being directed to a consideration of what to do with the corpses onstage. At one point, this preoccupation becomes the source of a darkly humorous scene. Soldiers are carrying the admiral’s body, when one soldier asks what to do with it and the other suggests that they burn it: “O no, his body will infect the fire, and the fire / the air, and so we shall be poisoned with him” (xi.5-6). The first soldier then suggests they throw it in the river, “O, ‘twill corrupt the water, and the water / the fish, and by the fish ourselves when we eat them” (8-9). The idea here is that the body is so corrupted by its heathenish religion that it actually becomes poison, and thus a civil pollutant. Thus, poison, regicide, bodies, blood, and the mass come together in a play that vilifies the Catholic enemies of

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<sup>96</sup> In the Catholic mass, though there are two forms of the Eucharist – the bread and wine, the communion wafer is the full embodiment of both the body and the blood of Christ and is, thus, the essential element of the Eucharist; therefore, consumption of the wafer alone is sufficient to be in full communion with Christ.

Protestant England. This portrayal of Catholic brutality moves beyond Marlowe's mere imagination, as the play is derived from equally lurid written sources. In an examination of some fifty contemporary pamphlets in both French and English dealing with the historical events upon which the play is based, Paul Kocher has found that practically every sensational action or characterization in the play can be traced directly to "the luridness of typical Protestant imagination" (153). The play represents rather than invents the extreme prejudice and propagandistic nature of Protestant fears of Catholic insurrection and regicide, as evidenced in the common pamphlets of the day.

Proclivities for poisoning and regicide were stereotypes that further linked Catholic and Jewish representations, as Jews were notoriously portrayed as prolific poisoners. Moreover, similar to the fears posed by the Catholic recusant, there was common anxiety over how the Jewish infiltrator would use his skills. The historical example of Dr. Lopez, and the charge that he tried to poison Queen Elizabeth may have been in the mind of the viewer encountering Foxe's illustration of King John's poisoning and the spectator watching Henry of Navarre's death in Marlowe's play. In the Protestant imagination, both Jew and Catholic used their dark arts of poisoning and sorcery to threaten the English monarchy.

Consider Abraham from the 1594 play *Selimus* (which is commonly attributed to Robert Greene). Abraham is a one-dimensional representation of the common stereotype of Jew as poisoner, and of Jew as greedy conniver. In this play, he functions as a sort of "plot device." When Selimus wants to usurp power from his father by surreptitiously murdering him, he calls upon Abraham, who assures Selimus that, "He shall be quickly

sent unto his grave; / For I have potions of so strong a force / That whosoever touches them shall die” (xvii.132-34). Thus, this is another case where the Jew is represented with dangerous knowledge of potions, and this knowledge is a direct threat to the state, as it is used as a way to usurp power.

Witchcraft and poisons, which are represented by both the Catholic Mass and common Jewish stereotypes, symbolize a basic fear within early modern English society: the fear of duplicity. This may seem like an overgeneralization, but legislations like the Sumptuary Laws suggest that this was a society that cared about things *being* what they *seemed* to be.<sup>97</sup> It is for this reason that a common literary motif during this period are images that play with the discrepancy between seeming and being. It was unclear, by sight, who was practicing witchcraft or concocting poisons. There was also the distrust of someone who could change the very nature of a thing into something else (e.g. the priest with Eucharist or the sorcerer with his poison). As such, the transformation of a thing’s very essence and being into something else is a troubling act, made even more troubling by the fact that most of these transformations take place during some sort of ceremony or ritual. This troubling aspect is seen in the period’s obsession with witchcraft and sorcery. These anxieties are also seen in the period’s equal fascination with conversion.

### **Conversion**

In which him chaunced false Duessa meete,  
Mine onely foe, mine onely deadly dread,  
Who with her witchcraft and misseeming sweete,

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<sup>97</sup> The so-called “Sumptuary Laws” are a series of statutes enacted in many countries and in many centuries. In Elizabethan England, specifically, these laws attempted to (among other things) make clear the distinctions between the members of various levels of society. During Elizabeth’s reign, statutes indicating who could where what were issued at Westminster in 1562 and Greenwich in 1574.

Inveigled him to follow her desires unmeete. (*The Faerie Queene*  
I.vii.50)

Falsity, duplicity, and the basic discrepancy between seeming and being are the main obstacles in the individual Christian's search for Holiness, as allegorized by Redcrosse's quest in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenser's book comments on a number of issues that Christians of his time considered paramount to their and their society's move toward the true Christian faith: English Protestantism. The Knight of Holiness, sometimes read as the allegorical representation of England itself, begins his travels toward holiness with Una (Latin, "one"), the one true faith, but is soon led into Error. Under the influence of Archimago (the "arch-image" maker), he abandons Una and takes up with Duessa (Latin, "to be two"), who leads him further away from his quest for holiness. Duessa, the representative of religious duplicity, is often read as the allegorical representation of the Catholic Church as a whole, which leads men away from holiness by its false appearances. Though Spenser's book does not deal specifically with conversion, it does touch upon many of the fears inherent in the figure of the convert living in Elizabethan England: mainly, the fear of duplicity and the unseen threat of religious insurrection. Moreover, Spenser's epic is concerned with the project of English nation building, which lies at the heart of religious questions about identity and social assimilation in post-Reformation England.

Converts provoked disquieting questions about both religion and nationhood. In the case of the Catholic convert to Protestantism, questions frequently involved the true loyalty of the convert. There was always the fear that many professed Anglicans were

secretly harboring priests in their homes, communicating with the foreign enemies of Protestant England, or plotting acts of domestic terrorism against their reformed communities. This climate of mistrust only intensified with the issuance of the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsio* in 1570, which excommunicated Queen Elizabeth “from the unity of the Body of Christ,” nullified her claim to the crown and absolved her subjects of any allegiance towards her. Indeed, Pope Pius V ordered the English nation not to obey Elizabeth and threatened anyone who did with excommunication. With this bull came an increased infiltration of missionaries and willing martyrs from The Society of Jesus (Jesuits), fortifying the Catholic resistance. Newly ordained priests were imported to England from the seminary at Rheims, which received protection and support from the Duke of Guise – the lurid villain of Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*. The Duke’s use of the English College to advance the Catholic cause in England and the political fortunes of his cousin Mary, Queen of Scots are recalled in Marlowe’s play at the scene of the Duke’s death. Henry, his killer, justifies his death by asking, “Did he not draw a sort of English priests / From Douai to the seminary at Rheims / To hatch forth treason ‘gainst their natural queen?” (xxi.100-102). Adding to his list of offenses, Henry then blames the Duke for the Spanish Armada, “Did he not cause the King of Spain’s huge fleet / To threaten England and to menace me?” (103-104). Here, the threat of internal division, of domestic deception, leads to the threat of foreign invasion.

Such fears about the converso predate similar fears about the converted Catholic.<sup>98</sup> Irredeemably alien by their native religion and status as a “scattered nation,” the converso represents the stranger living within. Contemporary works deriding the Jewish presence in England like *Actes and Monuments* are primarily concerned about the Jews as an alien *nation* living within England’s midst. Regardless of whether they practiced their Jewish rites, it was believed that they carried the bodily residue of their Jewishness within them, making them indelibly alien within Christianity. Despite loyal conformity to the Church of England, as members by lineage of what Shylock persistently calls the “nation” of the Jews, they could never become full members of the newly consolidating English nation. The Jew, like the Catholic convert, was a danger to the state as he complicates the relationship between national allegiance and religious profession; there was always the danger of double-dealing, of professing allegiance but secretly working for a foreign enemy.

Both *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris* explore the sixteenth-century anxiety over the possibility of invasion “from within.” As the above passage illustrates, the considerable military power of Spain looms heavily over the figure of the Guise, and it is his subversive planting of recusant priests within England that makes a Spanish invasion more of a possibility. The same menacing figure of Spain haunts *The Jew of Malta*. Within the first lines of the play, the threat of recusant priests and of a Spanish invasion via the Duke of Guise is invoked with a reference to the man himself: “Albeit

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<sup>98</sup> The issue of Jewish conversion is further complicated by a belief in the divine necessity for the conversion of Jews. Critic Sharon Achinstein reports, “Millenarians [those who believed the second coming of Christ was at hand] in the 1560s believed that they could hasten the Second Coming by actively converting the Jews to Christianity” (93). Consequently, though some saw the need for Jewish conversion, there was nonetheless the anxiety the converted Jew caused in general English society.



the world think Machevil is dead, / Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps, / And, now the Guise is dead, is come from France / To view this land and frolic with his friends” (Prologue 1-4). And in the opening scenes of Act I, the Spanish threat against Malta is laid out. Aside from these textual references to the Spanish menace, there were also contextual links to England’s Catholic enemy.

The play reflects a popular belief that Jews living in England were connected with Spain and Spanish interests in subjugating the English and their religion. This connection would become of major import in the trial of Roderigo Lopez: “By all accounts, Lopez spent 1592 and the first half of 1593 conducting negotiations with Spanish agents for payment towards a plot against the queen. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether or not he was acting secretly on behalf of the English, it is clear that Lopez was deeply involved in the plan” (Katz 82).<sup>99</sup> There is also the telling moment within the play when the stateless saboteur of Malta, Barabas, allows the foreign enemy free entry into the state.

Act five begins with a scene that demonstrates one of the central fears of conversion as invasion: Barabas says,

For by my means Calymath shall enter in.  
I’ll help to slay their children and their wives,  
To fire the churches, pull their houses down,  
Take my good too, and seize upon my lands.  
I hope to see the governor a slave,

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<sup>99</sup> See Katz 79-83 for further details about these connections.

And, rowing in a galley, whipped to death. (V.i.63-68).

In these lines the fear of invasion is articulated with lurid detail: The enemy within the state gives entry to the enemy without, and destruction entails. With the arrival of the Turks, normal government is inverted and the alien is given control: Calymath, “Ay, villains, you must yield, and under Turkish yokes / Shall groaning bear the burden of our ire. / And, Barabas, as erst we promised thee, / For thy desert we make thee governor” (V.ii.7-11). Marlowe seemingly enjoys triangulating Jews, Catholic, and Muslim in the *Jew of Malta*, tapping into a cultural trend; in this scene, the triangulation is posed as a triple threat to the welfare of the nation. This threat of foreign invasion was a real one, as England was threatened on all borders by the foreign powers of both Catholicism and Islam. Thus, a scene like the one in Act 5 would have been met with urgent concern by a sixteenth-century Anglican audience.

In a culture obsessed with fears of conspiracies, hidden plots and agendas, the convert’s attempts at assimilation were often regarded as duplicitous – as efforts to conceal hidden treason. This was a cultural phenomenon that applied to public opinions about both Jewish and Catholic converts. During this period, the traditional equation between outward compliance and good citizenship came under an intolerable stain. David Riggs comments on the extent of this anxiety: “One Protestant demagogue reasoned that conforming Catholics who ‘show to have a good outward carriage to civil matters’ were actually ‘more dangerous’ than recusants’ [...] The same obsession with double-dealing colours the spy and journalist Anthony Munday’s grotesque reaction to the hanging, castration and disemboweling of Edmund Campion. ‘The outward

protestations of this man,' he complained, 'moved some there present to tears, not entering into conceit of his inward hypocrisy'" (147). Such sentiments bred the fear that external consent concealed inward treachery, thus putting converts to the state religion in an impossible situation.

Historian Jonathan Gil Harris comments on how this attitude colored the perception of the Jewish converso by citing the opinion of English writers who viewed "mimetic performance – and specifically an imitation of Christian behavior" as a form of posturing that was "one of the hallmarks of Jewish malevolence, and the means by which the Christian *corpus politicum* [was] infiltrated" (99). He continues by explaining that this fear was due to a belief that the Jews could counterfeit Christianity to such a successful extent that it would be impossible to discern an "authentic" Christian from a converso. "Claiming on one hand to abhor the refusal of Jews to relinquish their wicked rites and customs, [Georg Meier] nonetheless deplores at considerable length the idea that they should be assimilated, lest neither citizens nor foreigners '*istos porcos ab honestis Christianis discernere queant* [know how to distinguish these pigs from honest Christians]" (99). This fear over a covert Jewish infiltration based on imposture was a common one. A number of documents at the time purport that Jews become, or impersonate, Christians in order to avenge their persecution: there were thus, according to Harris, "elaborate links between Jewish mimesis, infiltration, and revenge" (100). This fear of assimilation for the purpose of revenge is illustrated in the *Jew of Malta*. As Stephen Greenblatt points out, Barabas's "actions are always responses to the initiatives of others: not only is the plot of the whole play set in motion by the Governor's

expropriation of his wealth, but each of Barabas's particular plots is a reaction to what he perceives as a provocation or a threat. Only his final strategem – the betrayal of the Turks – seems an exception, since the Jew is for once in power” (206). Even when given power by the Turkish invaders, Barabas continues to act out violently against his state because he feels hated and threatened by it. He says, “I now am governor of Malta. True, / But Malta hates me, and, in hating me, / My life's in danger; and what boots it thee [...] And since by wrong thou got'st authority, / Maintain it bravely by firm policy” (V.ii.29-31, 35-36). A little later, he voices a similar sentiment regarding his loyalties, or lack thereof, to either the Christian (Ferneze) or Turkish (Calymath) state: “Thus, loving neither, will I live with both, / Making a profit of my policy; / And he from whom my most advantage comes / Shall be my friend” (V.iii.111-14). Barabas then justifies his religio-political philosophy by stating, “This is the life we Jews are used to lead, / And reason, too, for Christians do the like” (115-16). This gives his double-dealing a universal context, as something all Jews and Christians (meaning Catholics, considering the setting of the play) do.

Wedded to fears of invasion and national safety, the presence of the Jewish convert within England posed unsettling ideological concerns for the notions governing many of the precepts of the newly forming idea of English nationality. The figure of the converso represented the permeability of religious, national, and personal (perhaps even racial) borders – shattering the notion that identity was fixed and stable. Conversion also fragmented the idea that social identity was inherited or that one's status could be determined by lineage; though it took place in a cultural context that was very different

from England's during this time, it is worth noting that this ideological upset led to such legal changes as the *limpieza de sangre* statutes in Spain.<sup>100</sup> As critic Janet Adelman posits, "like Shylock, the conversos not only troubled boundaries and definitions but also gesture toward a certain strangeness both within Englishness and within Christianity itself. The conversos were Jews who had become Catholics who had become Protestants who were – maybe – still Jews after all; their own history of conversion disquietingly echoed the vexed and imperfect recent history of conversion in England. And it echoes the Protestant understanding of a broader pattern of conversion as well: the passing of the promise not only from Jew to Christian but from Catholic to Protestant" (11). Adelman makes a very interesting point when she further says, "The converso is a haunting figure in part, I think, because the Jew-as-stranger has the potential to recall Christianity to its own internal alien; converted or not, he can become a figure for the disowned other within itself" (12). Jews harkened, metaphorically, to the conversion England itself underwent in the ongoing process of the Reformation. Though England was a loyal member of the Protestant Church, its lineage was Catholic. The question then remained of how much of its national identity was still Catholic.

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<sup>100</sup> As Adelman explains, "In the face of massive Jewish conversion and acceptance into Spanish society, the pure-blood laws were a strenuous attempt to ground an increasingly invisible difference specifically in bodily inheritance; in Friedmans' account, with the mergence of these laws, sixteenth-century Spain succeeded in transforming 'medieval religious anti-Judaism into a racial anti-Semitism' precisely at the point that the difference between Christian and Jew threatened to disappear. According to the logic of the pure-blood laws: 'All descendants of converts were really still Jews because they came from Jewish ancestors. The sixteenth-century 'purity of blood' laws stipulated that anyone with at least one Jewish ancestor was himself still a converso and therefore was not a real Christian [...] These new exclusionary legal conventions were called 'pure blood laws' because it was maintained that degenerate Jewish blood was impervious to baptism and grace. If mixed with Christian blood, the Jewish blood would contaminate subsequent generations and would continue to do so indefinitely'" (80).

These tensions -- between political, religious, cultural, and racial identification, and between ceremonialism and conversion -- come to a head in Shakespeare's comedy *The Merchant of Venice*.

### **Shylock and Jessica**

Although Shylock is arguably a more sympathetic character than the devious Barabas, he still conforms to a number of common sixteenth-century English stereotypes about Jews. Moreover, in the play, Judaism is not presented clearly for itself; rather, it functions as a foil for Christianity, just as Shylock functions as a foil for the Christian characters of the play. The opposition between Shylock and the Christians is rooted in religious disparities: the differences between the religions themselves. The Christians of the play preach (whether they actually live it, however, is a matter of debate) a form of Protestantism based more on forgiveness, love, and faith than on the more "Catholic" bases of law and ceremonialism -- both of which are represented by Shylock. Indeed, Shylock's strict observance of law is what ultimately undoes him in the end.

Shylock's fervent ceremonialism is highlighted in his first scene onstage: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, talk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (I.iii.29-32). Shylock follows the strict rules and traditions of his faith, observing dietary and dining prohibitions. He cites his observance of ceremonialism as the source of his separation from his Christian neighbors. This representation upholds the common image of the Jew, while also showing how ritualism separates rather than unites people.

Aside from conforming to stereotypes concerning Jewish ceremonialism, Shylock also expresses sentiments that align him with the common stage-Jew and further distinguishes him from the tenets of Christianity when he says, “I hate him for he is a Christian” (37). As a stereotypical stage-Jew, Shylock bears enmity against his Christian neighbors, regardless of anything they have personally done to him (at this point). This enmity is portrayed as inherent to the “Jewish condition,” and it was often cited as being rooted in the Jew’s fundamental difference from Christians.

Shylock frequently alludes to his ethnic difference from the Venetian Christians. “I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. / He hates our sacred nation [...] Cursed be my tribe / If I forgive him” (42-43, 46-47). Significantly, he deems his antipathy towards the other characters as stemming from his difference from them, attributing it to his status as an outsider. When Salerio asks what Antonio’s pound of flesh will be good for, Shylock answers in a flippant way that he will “bait fish with it” (45). He proceeds with, “If it will feed nothing else it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked my gains, scorned my nation” (45-48). An insult to him is perceived as an insult against all Jews. Shylock acknowledges the collective identity he shares with other Jews, and there is the sense that one stands for all. Perhaps this was another reason why conversion was seen as so problematic. Indeed, “nation” and “tribe” would have racial connotations during this period, as ethnicity was commonly believed to be something that was communal, inherited, and related to family. Shylock highlights both his religious and racial difference from his fellow Christians. He is an outsider living within a Christian nation.

Given his frequent allusions to his inherent differences from the other characters, and his specification of himself as a Jew through an ancient lineage, the question of inheritance is at stake in relation to his daughter, Jessica. Desperate to become and marry a Christian, she presents her case for conversion: “Alack, what heinous sin is it in me / To be ashamed to be my father’s child! / But though I am a daughter to his blood, / I am not to his manners” (II.iii.15-18). She creates a disparity between blood and manners: between seeming and being. Interestingly, though she is a Jew by blood, and thus like her father, she is not so in her actions. In her actions she is a Christian (and is identified as one by other characters)<sup>101</sup>. While this says much about her “likability” in this particular society, it also touches upon one of the fears of the convert: the instability between seeming and being. The fear the convert generates is the fear that appearances do not accurately represent reality. Though she seems a Christian, she is a Jew by blood. Thus, her status in this society is unclear.

Ania Loomba comments on the ways that religious and ethnic/racial identities were conflated during this period. “Fears that outward appearances might not match inner beliefs were exacerbated by the fact that ‘Jew,’ ‘Moor,’ or ‘Christian’ were never simply religious categories, but always complicated by nationality, ethnicity, and often colour” (70). Thus, religious identity was inherently bound up with other forms of personal and public identity as well. Significantly, Shylock highlights Jessica’s discrepancy between seeming and being, as well as Jessica’s unnatural rebellion against

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<sup>101</sup> See Salerio’s comments to Shylock about how “there is more difference between thy flesh and her than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish” (III.i.35-7). Ania Loomba offers an interesting reading of how racialized language is used in this passage (157). According to Salerio, then, Jessica’s conversion was successful in separating her not only from her father’s religion, but also his lineage -- his blood.



her lineage, when he exclaims, “She is damned for it [...] My own flesh and blood to rebel” (III.i.28-30). She is part of his flesh and blood, thus part of the Jewish “tribe” and “nation”; in a sense, it seems like she cannot change this part of herself. This was the inherent conflict that conversion posed: the question of whether or not a person can ever really change his or her religious identity. This was a contentious issue because, as we have seen, religious identity was tied up with a number of less mutable personal forms of identity: most especially, ethnic identity.

Given the tension within the figure of the convert, Jessica, it is interesting that the comedy ends with Shylock’s forced conversion (IV.i.382-396). This is, of course, a parallel to the forced conversions that regularly took place during this time period, specifically the forced conversion of Catholics to the Anglican Church. Again, because Jews were such rare figures in regular English society, conversion is almost always tied to Catholicism. Most English playgoers would be far more familiar with Catholic conversions than they would be with Jewish conversions to Protestantism. The question, of course, is what happens to Shylock after he is converted; indeed, in the case of this play, the question is whether he is ever really converted, as his conversion is never shown onstage. As such, the resolution to the conflict within the play occurs offstage and only presumably. This creates an unsettling ending for a rather problematic play.

In Marlowe’s play, Barrabas is killed off at the end, as is his daughter, and the issue of conversion is safely put to rest. There is no question about what happens to the converts after the action ends. Shakespeare’s converts are left alive. The viewer is never given any idea whether a true conversion has taken place within Shylock or whether

Jessica really “becomes” Christian. The unsettled tone of the play’s resolution reflects the anxiety about conversion within sixteenth-century England. The questions surrounding Shylock’s conversion would also surround the converts living within English society at this time. The central question concerned the sincerity of the convert: specifically, the convert from Catholicism to Anglicanism. Shakespeare’s play suggests that Shylock’s conversion, since it is forced and never shown, is not sincere. Moreover, it is unlikely that a man so hateful of his Christian neighbors would become a true convert. The implication, then, is that his conversion is in name only -- a mere facade. This would undoubtedly have been a troubling development for theatergoers during this time. Given the tone with which the play ends, it would seem that religious appearances are illusory and misleading.<sup>102</sup>

Loomba also notes the unsettled ending of the play: “Jessica’s conversion does not appear to have resulted in a fairy-tale ending; Launcelot’s teasing suggests that marriage and conversion have been unable to save Jessica from the damnation her lineage confers upon her.” Moreover, “Shylock’s resistance to Christianity [...] reinforces the idea of a Jewish difference which cannot be easily erased” (158). The differences between Shakespeare’s ending and Marlowe’s may be due to the differences in time periods. By the early seventeenth century, England had undergone three quarters of a century of religious and political transformation. It had seen the social effects of forced and voluntary conversions, and people were probably a little more cynical about the

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<sup>102</sup> Interestingly, at this moment when the disparity between appearances and reality is being developed in relation to Shylock, Portia is also in disguise as a lawyer. Here, her costume reflects a form of gender inversion, which highlights the religious inversion being enacted in the trial scene. Portia’s disguise is a visual representation of the convert’s disparity, illustrating the disconnect between what seems and what is.

authenticity of these religious “transformations.” The play reflects this cynicism or, at least, the doubt that conversion provoked from the English at this particular cultural moment.

### **Final Comments**

Though the relationship between Jewish and Catholic representations in the literature of the day is not always straightforward or explicit, both figures provoked comparable anxieties from a theologically and politically unstable society. The Jew and the Catholic revealed the tensions that existed beneath the narrative of Protestant English nationhood, a narrative that was being forged during this time. While not widespread, the connection was made often enough to reveal interesting ways in which Catholics and Jews were aligned in the English imagination. Both the Jew and the Catholic were associated in the English imagination as sharing a repudiated past of superstition and idolatry: stereotypes that were culturally inherited rather than theologically-based, as they stemmed from misunderstandings and misrepresentations (often deliberate) of both figures.

Given their representations in the major works under discussion in this chapter, it can be reasonably concluded that the demonized Jew of medieval literature and theology was one of the major templates upon which the demonized Catholic of early modern England was forged. The connections between these maligned figures as equal representations of otherness was used for the purpose of unifying the English under the banner of Protestantism, a unification that was necessary for the formation of a national identity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *England's Second Turk and the Turkish Whore of Babylon: Tyrants, Renegades, and Sexual Deviants in Post-Reformation English Literature*

*If Mahomet, that prophet false,  
Eternity do gain,  
Then shall the Pope, and you his saints,  
In heaven be sure to reign ...*  
- John Philips

In looking at the broad representation of the Turk, we are dealing with a figure who diverges in many ways with the figures under discussion in the other parts of this project. Most strikingly, we are dealing for the first time with a figure who represented a nation – indeed, an empire – of people commonly considered by the early modern English to be superior to themselves. Associated with the Ottoman Empire, the Turks represented for the English a society with the military and imperial success lacking in their own country. In seeking an imperial model to emulate, English authors often expressed praise for the Ottomans. Imperial envy, ambition, desire, and fantasy were common features of English writing about Turks before 1600. However, though the Turk represented the coveted qualities of military and imperial might, his religion and culture were seen as liabilities in that they were consistently represented and indubitably labeled as heathenish and barbaric. Islam and Islamic culture was seen as sinfully luxurious and sensual, and, like all sinful things, incredibly seductive. Accordingly, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, England saw many Christians become Muslims, especially those English merchants and sailors doing business in the Mediterranean. It was for this reason that English and continental authors stood in awe of a social system that could produce mass conversion so effectively while European Christians engaged in violent conflict, Protestant against Roman Catholic. Consequently, instead of possessing

a long-standing position of cultural superiority, Turks were characterized as upstarts and thieves – an expanding and dangerously absorptive nation of idolaters and renegades that had come into existence by consuming other nations.<sup>103</sup>

Seen through English eyes, what it meant to be a “Turk” was itself a disturbingly illusive and unstable identity. Indeed, the word “Turk” itself consisted of a number of ethnic and national connotations. As Daniel Vitkus describes, “The words Moor and Turk, for example, were sometimes used to refer specifically to the people of Morocco or Turkey, but more often they signified a generalized Islamic Other. English popular culture, including drama, rarely distinguished between Muslims: the Moors of Barbary were often called Turks, and, in spite of their iconoclastic monotheism, Muslims were still condemned as ‘pagan idolaters’ by many writers” (1997, 161). In my examination of the varied figure of the Turk, I follow the “reasoning” of the early modern English and look at such disparate figures as the Moor, the Saracen, the Ottoman, and the Muslim, since these representations each inform the other in the plays and poetry of this period. Consistent with the disparity inherent in the word “Turk” itself, there was never any one single strategy of Turkish representation, but a number of politically and generically consistent models. This model usually featured a Turkish figure divested of any real religious signification, more of a loose representative of Islamic martial prowess and insatiable lust for power, money, and women. Sometimes this martial and secular figure was portrayed as an honorable and valiant Turk, other times as an unredeemable tyrant.

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<sup>103</sup> The “exoticization” of Islam specifically and the orient in general is, of course, a large part of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. In *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities*, Barbara Fuchs also discusses this aspect of the Turkish image in sixteenth-century British representations, but she also focuses on how this image was something that the English both feared and admired.

The effect of making the model of Turkish representation somewhat theologically neutral is that the figure is imbued with cultural rather than theological attributes; the figure becomes an amalgamation of cultural as well as religious stereotypes. This is especially the case in the use of the Turk as what I call “a literary device,” albeit one with contemporary resonance, which functions primarily as a marker of falsity and otherness. In this use, to be associated with the Turk was to be declared a barbarian, a heathen, and an alien. It is for this reason that in post-Reformation polemics, Catholics compared Protestants to the Turks, and Protestants returned the insult. Though the sixteenth century began with Catholics accusing Protestants of being Turks,<sup>104</sup> the Catholic-as-Turk and pope-as-Sultan (or the equally ubiquitous Phillip II-as-Sultan) model of representation becomes common in English (as well as some European) texts from the mid-sixteenth century well into the seventeenth century.

In looking at the Catholic-as-Turk model in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we will be returning to a number of themes established in our examination of the Irishman and, especially, the Jew. Especially relevant to this chapter is the issue of conversion and the anxieties that the convert elicits in English culture and literature. Within the figure of the convert many of the same fears of the marrano and converso are represented – the fear of assimilation, the anxiety about national and ethnic identity being mutable and fluid – but the Turkish convert represents and elicits new fears. The biggest difference in looking at the Turkish convert as opposed to the Jewish

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<sup>104</sup> See Thomas More’s *A Dialogue: An Answer Unto Sir Thomas Mores Dialogue* (1531) and More’s point-by-point rebuttal of Tyndale’s subsequent response in *The Co[n]futacyon of Tyndale’s Answer ...* (1532).

convert is that this time it is the English who are the converts, as it was much more common for Christians to turn Turk.

By the early seventeenth century, “thousands of European Christians” including many English subjects, had become renegadoes in North Africa and the Middle East, “either because their poor social conditions forced them toward such a choice, or because they sought to identify with a powerful empire” (Matar 1998, 15). The fear of conversion in regards to the Turk also represented the larger fear of invasion, a fear that was nonexistent in our discussion of the Jew and, in many ways, the Irishman, who were often seen as figures to be colonized rather than as colonizers. Vitkus discusses the fear of turning Turk as slightly irrational for the English, given their relative distance from the source of Turkish colonization and conversion. He says, “Perhaps the authors [...] speak out of a collective psychology of fear that transcends the rational facticity of geographical distance” (1997, 151). In answering this, Vitkus looks to the real threat of the military force of the Ottomans: “but English fears of ‘the Turk’ were not entirely paranoid or hysterical. By 1604 [...] there had been extensive, direct contact with Muslim pirates – both in the British Isles and in the Mediterranean, where English merchant ships sailed with greater frequency” (151). So there was a real threat, but it was still somewhat removed from the average English city or town dweller. I argue that it is the added and equal fear of the Catholic that accounts for the increased sense of urgency in England’s fears of conversion.

The anxiety about impending invasion was likely augmented by the even closer threats of encroachment by the Catholic European powers that bordered the island. As

historians Nabil Matar and Samuel Chew have documented, the threat of Ottoman invasion was a real one. However, the sense of alarm felt in England, as expressed in the influx of materials written on the subject during the mid- to late-sixteenth century presents the threat as little more immediate than would initially be thought. This is because the English were also beset by the much closer and more dangerous threat of Catholic invasion. Moreover, the threat of conversion was more immediate with Catholicism because of the recusant population living amongst the English. “Turning Turk,” though equally pernicious, was still something that occurred hundreds of miles away from England’s shores. It is due to the immediacy and intimacy of the Catholic threat that Turks and papists were often lumped together in polemical tracts against spiritual corruption. Often, the fear of the Catholic invader was explicitly represented as the fear of a Spanish invasion. It is for this reason that the Spanish Armadas of the late sixteenth century become powerful symbols of tyranny in a number of works from this period – tyranny that is often represented via a connection to or representation of Turkish power.

English Protestant texts, both literary and scholarly, conflated the political and religious enemies of the English church, associating both the pope and the Ottoman sultan with Satan or the Antichrist. According to Protestant polemics, the devil, the pope, and the Turk all desired to “convert” good Protestant souls to a state of damnation, and their desire to do so was frequently figured as sexual/sensual temptation of virtue, accompanied by a wrathful lust for power.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> In this way, the “sinful” seductive qualities of the stage Turk are related to those of the figure of the Vice character in morality plays and other tragedies.



## England's Second Turk

In 1518, Martin Luther's exposition on the remission of sins turned into an angry tirade against the theological implications of Turkish power. At the very start of English Protestantism, its major writers and theologians equated Catholicism with Islam. Both John Foxe and Luther conflate the Turk and the Catholic, detailing how the two foes are commensurately evil in their antagonism against true Christianity and equally idolatrous in their practice of religion. In his *On War Against the Turks*, Luther renews his earlier attacks on indulgences and describes Catholic theology as an Islamicization of Christianity. The pope, he writes, "is not much more godly than Muhammad and looks very much like him, for he, too, pays lip service to the gospels and all the holy scriptures, but he believes that many parts of them are too difficult and impossible, and these are the very parts that the Turks and Muhammad also consider too difficult." Luther discounts the common denominator of the English and Roman Church – the gospels – by citing the pope as an unreliable mediator of the word of Christ.

He further denigrates the Roman Church by associating it with Islam. Luther's attack on both religions takes a slightly different turn than Foxe's, when he writes, "[The pope rules] not with the gospels or the word of God, but has also made a new law and Alcoran, namely, his Decretal, and this he enforces with excommunication, just as the Turk enforces his Koran with the sword." The chief weapon of the Roman Church is excommunication, while the Turks use the sword. This disparity is consistent with the nature of the decade in which Luther was living, which was characterized by the pope's ecclesiastical resistance to Reformation theology more than his military response. By the

time Foxe writes his second edition, papal power has come to be associated largely with the considerable military force of Spain.

In *Table Talk*, Luther is quoted as saying, “Antichrist is at the same time the Pope and the Turk. A living creature consists of body and soul. The spirit of Antichrist is the pope, his flesh the Turk. One attacks the Church physically, the other spiritually” (24). The image of the Turk and pope as a single body expresses the belief that the two were incidental to each other. The Turk represents the flesh, which is characteristic of Turkish stereotypes painting the figure as someone who could not control his lust. The spirit of this beast is the pope, who thus seems to represent the greater heresy. For Luther, the chief threat of the Turk was his military prowess, his ability to physically invade and alter the Reformed church. The pope threatened with his heretical ideas and his threat to the spiritual integrity of the church. This was a common early modern association, which is also explicit in figures like the “three-headed Pope,” inevitably with at least one Ottoman head, and would later be further explored in the visual polemic of artists like Peter Gottland and Mathias Gerund (see Scribner 180-83). A similar sentiment would be revealed in Foxe’s work.

Published in 1596, the vastly augmented second edition of Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* was one of the most widely read and widely known books in Elizabethan England. In his first edition, published in 1570, Foxe deals with the threat of the Ottoman Turks in a rather cursory way. A mere eight years after the spectacular defeat of the Spanish Armada, Foxe’s new edition divided the work into twelve books encompassing the five periods of the Christian church: covering its establishment, rise,

decay, and reformation. As a consequence of his new design, the tales of martyrs around whom the work is based became part of a coherent philosophical view of history in which the Antichrist is firmly identified with the Roman papacy. It is in this context that Foxe expands his description of the Ottoman threat.

As critics have noted, this digression, in an otherwise unbroken demonization of the “Byshop of Rome,” demonstrates Foxe’s vacillation between the Turk and the Pope as the ultimate embodiment of the Antichrist (I: 745). The question is not whether the Turk or Pope is evil, their corruption is a given; instead, the central question in his section on the Turks is who is more evil and, thus, more likely to be the Antichrist. In answering this question, he repeats the prophecy that the Antichrist shall not “be borne among the Saracens, or Turkes, but among the people of God, and of the tribe of Israel” (745). Thus, he concludes, “the Pope may seeme rather than the Saracen or the Turke, to be described” (745). Significantly, it is the enemy who is closer in proximity via his loyal European congregates who is given the title of Antichrist. This is endemic of England’s greater anxiety about the Catholic forces of Spain, France, and Italy, than about the relatively far off Ottoman Empire.

But Foxe is very clear in expressing just how evil the Turks are: “The whole power of Sathan the prince of this world, goeth with the Turkes” (1:675). And he is also sure to disabuse the English of any feelings of comfort due to their geographical detachment from the Turkish foes: “though the Turke seemeth to be farre off, yet do we nourish within our breasts at home, that [which] may soon cause us to feele his cruell hand and worse, if worse may be, to overrunne us: to lay our land waste: to scatter us

amongst the infidels” (1:677). He says that the English “nourish within [their] breasts at home, that [which] may” bring the Turks to their door. Here, he seems to be alluding to the idea that the Turks were sent as a divine punishment to be enacted on a divided Christendom. This idea is often found in providentialist propaganda directed against the Spanish and the Turkish powers, who were often associated in a Protestant historiography that found causal connections between the rise of papal tyranny or corruption and the coming of Islam as a divine scourge. Indeed, this connection is apparent in the very fact of Foxe’s inclusion of the Ottoman Turks in his presentation of the five periods of the Christian church.

In a number of early modern writings on race and ethnology, the history of Moorish occupation in Spain is often emphasized. In his *Pseudoxia Epidemica* (commonly known as the “Vulgar Errors”), Sir Thomas Browne corrects what he sees as common misapprehensions about a number of subjects in English society. One of these subjects is the nature of different races. With a matter-of-fact tone, in the tenth chapter of the sixth book, he includes a lengthy description of blackness in which he says the following about the Spanish: “most Negroes [have] great lips and flat noses and thus many Spaniard, and Mediterranean inhabitants, which are of the race of barbary moors, (although after frequent commixture) have not worn out the Camoys nose [“pug-nosed”] unto this day” (276). The language is significant: the Spaniard is “of the race of barbary moors.” A direct, biological connection is made here between Spain and the Turks (via the Moors). Medieval Spain’s occupation by the Moors (which spanned the years roughly between a.d. 711 - 1212) was often used by anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic English

polemicists to draw an ethnological link between Turks and Spaniards. It was yet another way to highlight the inherent barbarity of their Catholic neighbors. Here, Browne uses this common association to argue that early modern Spaniards had inherited physical traits from the Moors; thus, Spain shares a history and an ethnology with the Turks. This association appears in a number of Turkish representations in both non-fictional and fictional works.<sup>106</sup>

We also see the association between papal tyranny and the coming of Islam as a divine scourge in a number of other texts from the period. While on a mission to Vienna in 1574, Hubert Languet wrote to Sir Philip Sidney on 26 March that, “These civil wars which are wearing out the strength of the princes of Christendom are opening the way for the Turk to get possession of Italy; and if Italy alone were in danger, it would be less a subject for sorrow, *since it is the forge in which the causes of all these ills are wrought* [italics mine]. But there is reason to fear that the flames will not keep themselves within its frontier, but will seize and devour the neighbouring states” (48). Theologically, Rome was seen as one avenue through which the Turkish threat could infiltrate England, for it was the corruption of the Roman Church that caused the scourge upon Christendom. This equation is seen also in John Ponet’s concluding prayer to his “A Notable Sermon Concerninge the Right use of the Lords Supper and Other Thynges ... Preached before the Kynges Most Excellent Majestye” (1550), entitled, “A prayer against the popes and Turkes, whiche be the morall enemies of Christ, hys word, and hys church.” In this short prayer Ponet laments how “the devil, Pope, or Turkes” are used against the true

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<sup>106</sup> Below, I discuss further how Spenser makes the same ethnological claims about the Spaniards and the Turks in his *View*; I also show how this association becomes a central motif in *The Faerie Queene*.

church of Christ by “God almighty” as “thy fearful scourge, against use which against the [e] have offended and deserved all mischief.”<sup>107</sup> The prayer asserts the equivalence between what were perceived as the three strongest threats against Christianity. Foxe’s narration of the Christians’ resistance to Ottoman expansion ends with a ten-page section on “Prophecies of the Turke and the Pope, which of them is the greater Antichrist” (1:701-10). Though the concluding paragraph of this section gestures toward a distinction between papal and Turkish evil, Foxe ultimately declines to discern the difference:

... in comparing the Turk with the pope, if a question be asked, whether of them is the truer or greater Antichrist, it were easy to see and judge, that the Turke is the more open and manifest enemy against Christ and his church. But if it be asked, whether of them two hath bin the more bloody and pernicious adversary to Christ and his members: or whether of them hath consumed and spilt more Christian blood, he with sword, or this with fire and sword together, neither is it a light matter to discern, neither is it my part here to discusse, which doe onely write the history, and the Actes of them both. (1:710)

Both Catholic and Turkish forces have, according to Foxe, sought to subdue, corrupt, and destroy “Christ and his church” by the “sword,” thus with their military might. This connection between the military strength of both antagonists – the “sword” – is an

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<sup>107</sup> Martin Luther, in his *Vom Kriege*, also famously makes the association between the Turks and the Pope as “God’s scourge” on good Christians. See my discussion on page

important one since it appears so frequently in the literature, both popular and learned, representing Turkish and Catholic subjects. “He with sword” refers to the Turks, and “this with fire and sword together” refers to the pope and his ability to persecute Protestants with both his military and ecclesiastical might, as such the pope and the Turk share military might; in both cases, they represent military aggression. In identifying both antagonists with “the sword,” Foxe’s comparison of both foes is somewhat of a divergence from how Martin Luther defined their respective threats a few decades before Foxe’s work.

A similar distinction is made in one of Foxe’s earlier works. In his 1570 “A Sermon of Christ crucified, Preached at Paules Crosse ...”, Foxe, in emulation of many contemporary texts, describes how, “For the *Turke* with his sword is not so cruell, but the Byshop of Rome on the other side is more fierce and bytter agaynst us, sturring up hys Byshops to burne us, his confederates to conspire our destructio[n], setting kynges agaynst their subjectes, and subjectes disloyally to rebel agaynst their princes, and all for thy name” (sig.T.2r). Again, both are forces of evil, yet here the “Byshop of Rome” gains the upper hand, as he does in most Protestant polemical writing from this period. In his attempt to historically place “the greatest tyran[t]s that ever governed. I meane the Pope, and the Turke, whereof this by force, and hee by fraude, and both most wretchedlie for these 900 years” (sig.\*.3r), Protestant writer Niels Hemmingsen reveals a conception very similar to the evangelical notion expressed in Luther’s and Foxe’s works: again, that the “Turke” and the pope represent two complementary sides of the antichrist – one who tyrannizes by “force,” the other through “fraude.”

The same imagery used in the artwork of Gottland and Gerund, and in the polemical writings of Foxe and Luther, is seen in John Bale's *The Image of Both Churches*. "Rome the mother of all whoredome," he writes, "had subject unto the [?] climates of universal partes of the worlde"; and now, though many "heads" have grown from that Roman Antichrist, the "body" is still the same: "I do take it for one universal Antichrist ... comprehending in hym so well Mahomete as the Pope, so we ye rayn tyraunt as the still hypocrite, & all that wickedly worketh are of the same body" (g5v-g6r). Islam and Catholicism are the dual inheritors of Rome's legacy, splitting between them the world once ruled by a unified Christian church (i.e. the fantasy of an original Christian church untainted by the idolatry of Rome).

According to Bale, both Catholicism and Islam foster a fastidious but empty observance of outward signs of faith. The fact that the actual rituals differ is of no consequence since all ritual represents the same violation, the same refusal to recognize faith alone as the path to salvation; thus, both faiths represent an identical abjuration of Christ, scripture, and salvation. "The pope in hys churche hath ceremonyes without nombre," Bale warns, and "Mahomete in his churche is plentuous also in holye observations" (B4v). Both attempt to seduce the faithful with glorious appearances, so that "a man seyng them ... wolde thynke nothyng too be more pure, honest, godly, innocent, cleane, holy, & angelyck than are theyr tradicions" (2H8v). Bale writes of "Popishe ceremonies without nombre," which in fact he tries to number, or at least to suggest in their almost infinite variety: "None ende is there of theyr babiling prayers, theyr portases, bedes, temples, aulters songes, houres, belles, Images, organs, ornamentes,



Jewels, lyghtes, oyllynges, shavings, religions, disgisings [,] diversite of feastes, constrained vowes, fastinges, processions, & prattlinges” (B4v). But this overwhelming multiplicity of evils is reduced to a single turning away from the doctrine of faith, an apostasy that is the same wherever it occurs: “The same abhominacions mayntaine they the worlde over, that the pope mayntayneth at Rome, & Mahomete in Barbary, of [or?] Turkye. Yea, the same supersticions and sorceryes, the same execrable tradicions and beggeries. The same ceremonies have they, . . . the same orders, and the same masses” (i3v). These images of ceremonialism and superstition, as well as the linking of these devotional practices to sorcery, is, as we have seen in previous chapters, endemic to the representation of Catholicism in early modern English texts. Here, they are explicitly related to the religion of the Turk.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, a number of Protestant writers described the wars against Roman Catholic rule and religion as crusades against what Foxe called England’s “second Turk.”

The connections between Catholic and Turk, pope and sultan are seen in one of the most influential works of the sixteenth century: *The Faerie Queene*. In it, we see the unmistakable influence of Bale’s ideas, as well as those of Foxe and Luther, in Spenser’s portrayal of religious and political tyranny in nearly all six books of his epic.

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<sup>108</sup> The same relation between Catholic and Turk via ceremonialism is made in Tyndale’s “Answere”: the pope and the “turke” both worship God not “as his godly nature is to be worshipped, but after their own imagination”; not “in the spirit with faith, hope, and love,” but “with bodily service” building upon “free-will” and ascribing “their justifying unto their works.” In doctrinal matters Tyndale is careful to manufacture the impression that the papists are closer to the Ottomans than they are to the evangelists – and the “turke” of course remains “contrary unto the doctrine of Christ” (quoted in Dimmock 33). Turks and Catholics are connected with a doctrinal emphasis on works. As Dimmock further shows, there was also the idea that the Ottomans had their own version of an Islamic Purgatory (35).

## Spenser and the Islamic Whore of Babylon

The Whore of Babylon from Revelation is regularly interpreted by sixteenth-century Protestant commentators as an image of the Roman Catholic religion and the Roman Catholic Church. We see this in John Bale's *The Image of Bothe Churches*, but also in a number of contemporary works: Bullinger's *A Hundred Sermons upon the Apocalips* (English translation, J. Daus 1561), Fulke's *Praelections upon the ... Revelation of S. John* (trans. Gyffard 1573), and Van der Noot's *Theatre*. Bale's discussion of this figure as a representation of Catholicism seems to have had the deepest impact on Spenser, especially on his creation of the two women of Revelation: Una and Duessa. Una stands as the literary foil to Duessa; she is literally "one" (Latin, *unus*), thus conjuring the image of the One True Church, as well as representing purity and a lack of duplicity or double-dealing. Duessa, whose name literally means duplicity (Latin, *duo*, two, + *esse*, to be = "to be two"), represents the dual foes of the Reformed Church (Una) and England itself (Redcrosse): the Catholic Church and the Turks. Her dual embodiment of Turkish and Catholic danger is established from the first moment we see her. She enters Book One as a "goodly Lady clad in scarlot red, / Purfled with gold and pearle of rich assay / And like a Persian mitre on her hed / She wore, with crownes and owches garnished, / The which her lavish lovers to her gave" (ii.13). These details link her to the passage from Revelation 17: "And I saw a woman [...] arrayed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold, and precious stones and pearls, and had a cup of gold in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication" (3-4). Duessa is the Whore of Babylon in her dress and in her adornment of herself with the "garnish[ments]" of "her

fornication[s]” – the gifts “the which her lavish lovers to her gave.” The “Persian mitre on her hed” links her with the East; thus, Persia, always associated with opulent, false show is here associated with the falsity of the Roman church, represented by the mitre, a bishop’s hat.

Duessa is represented as the principle of falsehood itself: “I that do seeme not I, Duessa am” (I.v.26). She is the “daughter of Deceit and Shame” (26). In book one, she specifically embodies religious falsehood. Though intrinsically ugly, she regularly appears in “faire” guises until the facts are discovered (her disrobing at I.viii.46-8), in line with Spenser’s sense that untruth often presents itself with an alluring surface. Indeed, she is the literary expression of the fraud with which Bale charges the Catholic Church: she seduces the faithful with glorious appearances, so that “a man seyng them ... wolde thynke nothyng too be more pure, honest, godly, innocent, cleane, holy, & angelyck than are theyr tradicions” (2H8v). Initially revealed as the Scarlet Whore of Babylon (Rev 17.4) in ii.13, and named “Fidessa” (Latin, *fides*, faith + *esse*, to be = to be faithful) in 26, she is not identified as Duessa until stanza (44). Again, a simple faith in the one-to-one correspondence of signifiers to their signifieds deceives Redcrosse.

Significantly, she rides with a companion, presumably one of her “lavish lovers”:  
“A faithlesse Sarazin all arm’d to point, / In whose great shield was writ with letters gay / Sans foy: full large of limbe and every joint / He was, and cared not for God or man a point” (I.ii.12). Her companion and “lavish lover” is the archetypal Turkish knight: large, heavily armed, threatening, and atheistic in his theology. Our first look at Sansfoy (French, *sans* + *foy*=without faith) and Duessa occurs as Redcrosse runs away from Una

after being deceived by the Catholic Archimago, “Will was his guide, and griefe led him astray” (ii.12). Reading the allegory for its religious meaning, the suggestion is that England (Recrosse) loses its faith and abandons the Protestant Church (Una) because it is deceived by the false images of the Catholic Church (Duessa). It is in this state of faithlessness (i.e. as Redcrosse travels without Una) that England is thrust into a confrontation with the equal dangers of the Turk (the Sans brothers) and the Catholic (Duessa). In an allegorical gesture that seems to illustrate Foxe’s contention “that the Turke is the more open and manifest enemy against Christ and his church” than the Catholic church is, Redcrosse immediately recognizes the threat of the Turk and engages him in battle.

However, Duessa’s false appearance of beauty beguiles him and he is unable to see her for who she really is: “A loathly, wrinckled hag” (I.viii.46). Broadly, she represents the central theme of the book, which is an allegory concerning discrepancies between signifiers that refer to holiness. Multiple confusions result from faulty relationships between signs and the things that they refer to, and one of the major tests of the book’s knight is to learn how to see things correctly. Historically, she has a number of allusions – all Catholic. She represents Mary Tudor when she is connected to the persecution of the innocents – who are representative of the Protestant martyrs – with Orgoglio (I.viii.35). She also represents Mary Stuart when she claims by letter at I.xii.26 that Redcrosse (an image of the English nation) belongs to her and not to Una (the true church and momentarily Elizabeth I). With her host of sinister connotations, Duessa is

the common denominator of evil in the book. This is reinforced by her constant connection not only to Catholicism but also to the Turks.

Duessa tells Redcrosse that she is the “sole daughter of an Emperour” (I.ii.22); significantly, she is the daughter of an emperor and not a king, as Una is. This establishes her imperial connections, which suggests the imperial powers of Spain and the Ottomans. Her connection to the imperial powers of Spain as well as the papal power of Rome is further expressed in her description of her father: “He that the wide West under his rule has, / And high hath set his throne, where Tiberis doth pas” (22). Duessa’s father as Emperor of the West stands opposed to Una and her father, whose realm extends from East to West (I.i.5). The throne set upon the banks of the Tiber allusively links the Emperor of the West to the pope. Her heritage is linked to the main quest of the book, for Redcrosse to free Una’s parents, monarchs “Of ancient Kings and Queenes,” from captivity (I.i.5). The description of Una’s parents resonates with contemporary events: they, “that had of yore / Their scepters stretcht from East to Westerne shore, / And all the world in their subjection held; / Till that infernall feend with foule uprore / Forwasted all their land, and them expeld: / Whom to avenge, she had this Knight from far compeld” (I.i.5). The “infernall feend” could represent a number of military foes during the early modern period: the King of Spain or the Ottoman Sultan would be two of the top contenders for the position. Indeed, the suggestion is that this fiend is the same father of Duessa. Throughout Book One, this “infernal feend” is seen merely a general representation of sin; thus, he is linked specifically with the devil.

As Foxe, Luther, and Bale have demonstrated, Protestant writers of the period associated the devil with the pope and the sultan: each working in league with each other to seduce and damn good Protestants. In book one, the unlawful imprisonment of the true church's (Una's) parents, who have hereditary claims to the throne, is the allegorical representation of this correlation. Moreover, it is a correlation that is expressed in the figure of Duessa, who not only represents the duplicitous idolatry of the Catholic Church, but is also seen in the constant company of "popes" (Orgoglio and Archimago are the main representatives) and Turks. Duessa is courted by the Saracens, and there are hints of sexual liaisons (I.iv.44), thus reinforcing her personification as sexual duplicity.

In his attachment to Duessa, Redcrosse courts the vices of Sansfoy, Sansjoy, and Sanloy. Sansfoy is the first of three Saracen brothers we meet in Book One. These brothers, "all three bred / Of one bad sire" (I.ii.25), play important roles in the allegory of *The Book of Holiness*. They are the descendants of Night (I.v.20), who also identifies them as sons of Aveugle (Blindness; v.22-3); thus, they are born from darkness and blindness. The theological allegory of Book One might be inferred from Galatians 5:22-3: "But the frute of the Spirit is love, joye, peace, long suffring, gentleness, goodness, faith, Mekenes, tempreancie: against suche there is no Law." The allegory implies a progression from the state of infidelity or faithlessness (sans + foy = without faith) occurring with Redcrosse's separation from Una in ii.6, through a condition of lawlessness (sans + loy = without law), to a state of despair or joylessness (sans + joy = without joy). Broadly, they represent the progressive deterioration of the human soul through spiritual blindness; specifically, they represent the physical danger of the Turk

and the spiritual threat of the Catholic Church. One is first without faith (Sansfoy) and then without law (Sansloy) and finally ends in spiritual death or joylessness (Sansfoy). This spiritual progression can also be read as the allegorical rendering of the “scourge of God” theology. The patron saint of England, St. George, has been deceived into abandoning the true Church (Una), and is faithless. Being faithless, he is susceptible to the Saracens – the Turks – who are the scourge of God, coming to punish the faithless and bringing lawlessness and joylessness (or death) with them.

Though the Saracen brothers do most of the fighting in the Book, they are represented as the mere weapons of a larger, more powerful enemy of England (Redcrosse) and the Protestant Church (Una). The Catholic enemy (indeed, someone who refers to himself as the “holy father” in his first appearance in the book, I.i.30), Archimago, is seen as superior to the Turkish enemy. Aside from being the one who sets Redcrosse’s decline in motion with his concoction of the false image depicting Una copulating with a squire, Archimago is portrayed as the arch villain of the book. Indeed, his name indicates this role, as he is the “arch image-maker” in a book that features the dangers of misreading reality and being deceived by appearances. For example, Archimago’s false signs dupe the champion of lawlessness. Sansloy thinks he has found his brother’s murderer “When nigh he [Sansloy] drew unto this gentle payre / And saw the Red-crosse, which the knight did beare” (I.iii.34). But when Archimago reveals his true self, Sansloy is humbled and a little fearful:

[he] would /

Have slaine him straight: but when he sees his aged,

And hoarie head of Archimago old,  
 His hastie hand he doth amazed hold,  
 And halfe ashamed, wondred at the sight:  
 For that old man well knew he, though untold,  
 In charmes and magicke to have wondrous might (38)

Archimago, who has in previous passages been equated with the Catholic Church and the pope himself,<sup>109</sup> is here represented as a “well kn[o]w[n]” friend of the Turkish knight – “though untold,” which could mean that this relationship is not something that has been publicly disclosed, or that it is not widely known that Archimago (thus, the Catholic Church) practices sorcery. This untold friendship relates to the contemporary accusation of the pope’s complicity with the Ottomans as dual antagonizers of the Church of England. As secret associates, the Turk has great respect and even fear of Archimago’s “wondrous might” in “charmes and magicke.” Once again, we see Reformation theological polemic at work in Spenser’s portrayal of Archimago: the association of Roman Catholicism with black magic and, more particularly, the identification of popes as necromancers. Archimago’s strength comes not from his physical or martial prowess, but from his ability to seduce and deceive his victims. It is his pugilistic associate, the Turk, who is endowed with physical and martial skill. At this point in the book,

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<sup>109</sup> The first appearance of Archimago is as a devout monk. “An aged Sire, in long black weedes yclad, / His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray, / And by his belt his booke he hanging had; / Somber he seemed, and very sagely sad, / And to the ground his eyes were lowly bent, / Simple in shew, and voyde of malice bad, / And all the way he prayed, as he went, / And often knockt his brest, as one that did repent” (I.i.29). He tells Redcrosse and Una that he is a “Silly old man, the lives in hidden cell, / Bidding his beades all day for his trespas, / Tydings of warre and worldly trouble tell? / With holy father sits not with such things to mell” (30). He claims to be outside the world of war and politics, to be cloistered, and to spend his days praying his rosary for his sins.



Archimago has successfully deceived both Redcrosse and Una,<sup>110</sup> leading them away from their original purpose and into the dangers of Turkish aggression. Having established his world of delusive images, he officially disappears from the action of Book I after this scene, leaving his work to be done by the remaining Saracen knights (he reappears in xii, but is no longer part of the action). This illustrates Luther's and Foxe's declaration that the pope and the Turk are the same enemy: one spiritual and the other martial.<sup>111</sup>

The word "Turk" appears only once in *The Faerie Queene*, near the end of Book One (I.x.40). Spenser's choice of the word "Saracen" over "Turk" is consistent with the deliberately archaic use of language throughout his poem. The word "Saracen" was largely associated with the representation of the Turks from the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. Moreover, the word linked Spenser's characters to the medieval

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<sup>110</sup> When Una (the true church) is abandoned by Redcrosse (England), she is equally susceptible to being led astray. In Canto III, we have a number of representations of lawlessness and faithlessness, as the characters we meet are full of greed, which they satisfy through church-related crimes: Kirkrapine, the church robber; Abessa, his accomplice and representative of an Abess (the head of a female monastery); and her daughter Corceca (whose name means "blind heart"). The fact that Abessa "could not heare, nor speake, nor understand" (I.iii.11) is an allusion to Christ's words to his disciples:

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear ... To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things be done in parables. That they seeing, may see, and not discern: and they hearing, may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should turn, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4: 9-12)

Further connections to Catholicism occur in the description of the old woman's activities: "Where that old woman day and night did pray / Upon her beades devoutly penitent" (I.iii.13). Abessa's constant praying of the rosary links her to Catholicism, as do a number of other references to Catholic rituals: "Pater nosters" (13), "Aves" (13), "ashes" and a "sackcloth" both symbols of penitence (14) and penitential fasting (14).

<sup>111</sup> Prince Arthur appears for the first time in the poem at the end of Book One. Arthur is the legendary hero of national significance: in many respects, he represents not only the nation of England, but English monarchy as well. In Spenser's time, he was seen as an ancestor of Queen Elizabeth I. He enters the poem after Una has learned of Redcrosse's imprisonment by Orgoglio (often read as the representation of the pride of the Roman Church); Arthur defers his quest for the Fairy Queen in order to come to the rescue. In Book One, he kills Orgoglio (I.viii.24) and is the one who strips and exposes Duessa (I.viii.46-9). Thus, he is the one who rescues the Knight of Holiness from the clutches of Catholic and Turkish power. This becomes a standard formula for the rest of the poem: Arthur appearing at the right moment to save the knight of the book.

world of romance and legend, as Benedict Robinson explains: “Originally the Roman name for the nomads of Syria and Arabia, and a word itself of uncertain origin, over the course of the Middle Ages ‘Saracen’ became a mobile and resonant term of difference [...] While ‘Saracen’ could mean ‘Arab,’ the word also functioned as a broad designator for the whole Muslim world – like its cousin, ‘Turk,’ which would largely come to replace it in the early modern period. From Jerome on, the word ‘Saracen’ was understood as a spurious claim to descent from Sara by a people properly identified as ‘Agarens,’ the children of Hagar: at stake in the word ‘Saracen’ are competing claims to a special relationship with the divine, claims that were put to judgment in romance” (33). In other words, the “Saracen” is “a multivalent figure produced at the intersection of history and theology, and as such represents both a typology of violent unbelief and a series of real, historical non-Christian identities: the Turk, the Persian, the Muslim” (Robinson 34). Typical of Spenser, he references contemporary concerns (i.e. the threat of the Ottoman Turks) under the guise of classical, medieval signifiers. This is also seen in his representation of the Knight of Holiness. Redcrosse, who both carries and is named for the cross of the crusades, is also the representative of St. George, the patron saint of England; thus, he represents the Protestant nation of England. Significantly, his identity as “The true Saint George” is revealed in the stanza where he fights his first Saracen knight (I.ii.12). With these references, Spenser seems to be testing the possibility of appropriating crusade romance as the enabling fiction of a Protestant nation. Crusade becomes a national endeavor not merely a religious one. It also becomes something that Spenser aligns with a Protestant rather than a Catholic purpose;

the same can also be said of the genre of the romance, which was derived from medieval – and, thus, Catholic – English literature.

When he fights the Saracens, it could be said that a microcosmic “crusade” battle is taking place. In presenting these battles, though, Spenser touches upon one of the dangers often associated with the Crusades: the danger of proximity. Undertaking war against the Saracens only brings the crusader closer to the infidel, and emphasizes the conjunction of opposites inevitable in the confusion of a fight. This danger is realized during Redcrosse’s fight with Sansfoy, as he eventually falls into unbelief himself. He kills the “faithlesse Sarazin” only to take his place as Duessa’s lover (I.ii.12). The doubling of crusader and infidel is suggested when the two knights fight: both are “fell and furious,” and both merge without difference in a stanza-long simile that compares them to “two rams stird with ambitious pride” (I.ii.15-16). This scene, the merging of the two characters while in a moment of close, intimate combat, expresses one of the common fears of invasion: conversion. In bringing the two close together, there is the danger of one overcoming the other not only physically but spiritually as well. In their encounter, signifiers and their signifieds become blurred.

One blurring occurs in a confusion of pronoun references. The welter of pronouns in ii.15 effaces any distinction between Redcrosse and Sansfoy. Their “equal puissance” (17) implies both that Redcrosse is equal to fight Sansfoy and that he may share some of his moral qualities. When Redcrosse appropriates Sansfoy’s shield as a “signe” of victory (20), the significance is highly ambiguous. After claiming the shield of faithlessness, Redcrosse abandons his quest to free Una’s parents. The danger of

conversion occurs when the foes are too close in proximity. “As when two rams stird with ambitious pride, / Fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke, / Their horned fronts so fierce on either side” (I.ii.16). They are both “stird with ambitious pride,” thus Redcrosse is not fighting for a more noble end. They are also likened to “two rams” who “fight for the rule of the rich fleeced flocke,” which implies a sexual motive. They are fighting for Duessa, but they are not likened to courtly knights fighting for a lady; instead, “as two rams,” they are bestialized equally. This is common in portrayals of the Turk, who is often seen as led by his violent passions, especially lust – it is even more common in the portrayal of Christian converts to Islam, since they are shown in the drama of the day to be led by their lust for Turkish women. In fact, religious conversion itself was frequently described in erotic terms: converts to Catholicism were accused of sleeping with the papal “Whore of Babylon” and spiritually fornicating with the devil’s minions, the same was said of converts to Islam – though they were accused of sleeping with the “Turkish Whore of Babylon” and sometimes with sleeping with the devil himself.<sup>112</sup>

Though the Saracens play a larger role in Book I than in any other book, in *The Faerie Queene* the path toward the moral self-fashioning of the knights repeatedly involves the overcoming of Turkish characters. In the eighth canto of every book, except Book III and only marginally in Book VI,<sup>113</sup> Prince Arthur fights Saracens and rescues the knights so that they can continue their quests. The Turk, then, becomes an essential element in the knights’ allegorical formation. Indeed, it is significant that Spenser’s

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<sup>112</sup> See the sermons of Edward Kellett and Henry Byam for examples of this type of language.

<sup>113</sup> The Salvage Nation of cannibals (viii.35-36), who attack Serena after she has run away from Timias’ fight with Disdain and Scorn (viii.37-45): though primitive, the savage nation may refer to Ottoman empire.

knights are not the complete representation of their particular virtue until they have succeeded in conquering the Turkish antagonists in the epic. The “national” implication of this is that England cannot fully achieve its destiny until its spiritual and military foes are conquered. The portrayal of Turkish characters in the other four books of the poem conform to some of the most dominant stereotypes of Spenser’s day. The Turkish characters are presented as lustful pugilists and imperial tyrants, and though the Catholic connection is not always there, the Turks’ association with sin and the devil makes them dangerous influences on the Christian characters in the poem.

In Book II Spenser again uses the trope of Turkish brothers to explore two distinct dimensions of the “weakness of will” with which the Book of Temperance deals. The two Paynim knights, Pyrochles (Greek, *pyr*, fire + *ochleō* = to trouble or disturb by tumult with fire) and Cymochles (*kuma*, wave + *ochleō* = to move with waves), represent the concupiscible and irascible passions often associated with the Turks, who were believed to be unable to control their passions – both sexual and violent. Pyrochles’ name suggests volatility and wrathfulness, while Cymochles’ suggests dissoluteness and sensuality. As Saracens, they swear by Termagaunt (name believed by medieval Christians to be that of Muslim deity) (30) and Mahoune (Mohammad) (33). Moreover, they work in league with Catholic Archimago, who uses images to deceive, tempt, and damn intemperate and weak people.

Typical of the fiery Turkish soldier, the chief image associated with Pyrochles is fire. At his first entrance, his armor “round about him threw forth sparkling fire, / That seemd him to enflame on every side” while his steed he “prickt so fiers, that underneath

his feete / The smouldering dust did round about him smoke” (v.2-3). His motto, “Burnt I do burne” (iv.38) captures his willing self-destructiveness. That he is a victim of his own willfulness is shown literally in canto v when Pyrochles convinces Guyon to unbind Occasion. Not surprisingly, the release of Occasion only occasions new strife: Furor and Pyrochles fall to battle, and the scene ends with Furor triumphantly dragging Pyrochles “through durt and myre without remorse” (23). Pyrochles thus renders himself victim to his own willfulness.

Pyrochles appears again in canto viii where his willfulness takes one last ironic twist. There together with Cymochles, he tries to plunder the fallen Guyon’s armor, but is stopped by the arrival of Arthur. In the ensuing battle Pyrochles is defeated, but when Arthur offers to spare his life (51), Pyrochles “wilfully refused grace” (52) and thus forces Arthur to behead him, ironically realizing a phrase with which Pyrochles was introduced: “His owne woes author” (v.1). “Foole (said the Pagan) I thy gift defye, / But use thy Fortune, as it doth befall, / And say, that I not overcome do dye, / But in despite of life, for death do call” (52). His willing refusal of grace suggests the inability of Turks to accept Christian salvation. This is due not to any theological weakness, but personal weakness, as the Turks are seen as lust-driven for power and sin. Before he dies, when he begins to be defeated in battle, Pyrochles engages in the typical blaspheming of his own god: “Horribly then he gan to rage, and rayle, / Cursing his Gods, and himselfe damning deepe” (37). In defeat, he shows the weakness of his faith.

In contrast to Pyrochles’s unrestrained will for action, Cymochles’s akrasiac weakness is an unrestrained will for self-indulgence – a willfulness that Spenser renders

as paradoxically aimless, and which results in very little action at all. The chief images associated with Cymochles are those of water and sleep. Through wordplays that link various liquid seepings with the moral condition of “dissoluteness,” Spenser etymologizes Cymochles’s “incontinence” as an incapacity to hold himself in. Thus, Cymochles has “poured out his idle mind / In daitie delices, and lavish joyes [...] And flowes in pleasures, and vaine pleasing toyes, / Mingled amongst loose Ladies and lascivious boys” (v.28). He is thus associated with the lustful Turk. This is the complementary side to the wrathful Turk, which is why Cymochles is Pyrochles’s brother. The “lavish[ness]” of his “joyes,” “pleasures, and vaine pleasing toyes” would no doubt conjure up images of the Ottoman empire, which seduced Christians with its wealth, and a social system that was viewed as less morally stringent than Protestant England’s.<sup>114</sup>

There is also a suggestion of effeminateness in Cymochles’s sexuality, which was sometimes associated with the Turk because of his supposed circumcision or castration (both were acts believed to be part of the process of becoming a Turk). When prostrate in the Bower, Cymochles is so dissolute that Atin must “prick” him with “his sharpe-pointed dart” to get him to move at all: “Up, up, thou womanish weake knight, / That here in Ladies lap entombed art” (36). The double entendre is clear: though Cymochles lies “in Ladies lap,” he is nevertheless impotent and needs Atin’s “prick” to rouse him. This was

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<sup>114</sup> In his *Geographical Historie of Africa*, Leo Africanus gives a lengthy explanation of why so many Christians “turned Turk.” Chief among his reasons is the “sensualitie,” “licentiousness[,] and libertie of the life [Turks] lead” (386). See my discussion below for a full analysis of Africanus’s work and the purported lures of the Turkish lifestyle.

one of the many contradictory stereotypes of the Turks: their unquenchable sexual lust combined with a tendency toward impotence.<sup>115</sup>

In canto viii, in the description of Cymochles' death while battling Arthur, Spenser's language abandons images of water and renders Cymochles instead through a martial version of self-destructiveness. In this respect, Cymochles grows more like the warlike and similarly self-destructive Pyrochles. He doesn't die because he "wilfully" refuses Arthur's grace; he dies while striving with a confused and misdirected sense of honor (44). Read allegorically, this change in temperament shows that the Turk can easily move from one form of intemperance to another – each to his own detriment. The only thing that can save these two brothers is the grace of Arthur. Instead, at one point, they look to Archimago for help. Again, the Saracens' connection to the Catholic forces within the poem is reinforced, as Archimago works to heal Pyrochles and expresses his wish to help aid him in his fight against Arthur (viii.19-21). But as the representative of false preaching and healing, Archimago is unable to help the Saracen, and the canto ends with Archimago fleeing the scene of the battle. A further connection to the Catholic Church occurs in Pyrochles's and Cymochles's relation to Acrasia (iv.41), who represents the visual seductions of the Catholic Church in her ability to entrap men without words, using only her physical beauty and her artfully sensuous environment.

In Book IV, the image of the intemperate Turk reappears; this time, he lives in an actual Cave of Lust, where he also lures and imprisons lovers (viii.47-48). Our Turk, Corflambo (Latin, *cor*, heart + French, *flambeau*, flaming torch = flaming heart) is

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<sup>115</sup> Daniel Vitkus discusses this contradictory representation of Turkish sexuality: "the Turks are both immoderate and disciplined, excessively masculine and perversely unmasculine [...] They are both virile and impotent, procreative and self-destructive" (2003, 119).



characterized by his “infectious sight” which vanquishes all his victims: “For from his fearefull eyes two fierie beames, / More sharpe then points of needles did proceede, [...] Full of sad power, that poisonous bale did breede / To all, that on him lookt without good heed [...] Like as the Basiliske of serpents seede, / From powrefull eyes close venim doth convey / Into the lookers hart, and killet farre away” (viii.39). His eyes are related to “fierie beames,” thus recalling the imagery used in Book II to describe the Saracen Pyrochles. Even more significant are the words used to describe the power of his gaze. His ocular power is described as a form of infection of the blood with the passage’s emphasis on images of “needles,” “serpents,” a “Basiliske,” “poison,” and “venom.” The object of his deadly gaze is thus infected with his influence. As a representative of lust, these images of penetration, via needles, “fierie beames,” and serpent’s fangs, are suggestive of sexual intercourse, and the words conveying infection suggest the miscegenation that results in the mixing of Saracen blood with that of a Christian woman.

Once again, fear of “turning Turk” is expressed through sexual means, but we also see the threat of infection and contagion as corollary aspects of this anxiety. And it is this fear that overlays the scenario of canto viii. A squire provides the backstory of

Corflambo’s sexual transgressions:

Ne woman yet so faire, but he her brought  
Unto his bay, and captived her thought.  
For most of strength and beautie his desire  
Was spoyle to make, and wast them unto nought,  
By casting secret flakes of lustfull fire

From his false eyes, into their harts and parts entire. (48)

Using his power of influence, characteristic of the Turks, he seduces women and imprisons them in order to “spoyle” them. This is one of the scenarios of the Book IV, where the lover, Aemylia, has been taken captive by Lust and imprisoned in his cave. Of course, the crisis is solved with Arthur’s intervention. He kills Corflambo and restores Aemylia to her proper, non-Saracen mate (IV.viii.38-ix.17).

During the fight, Corflambo proves himself as a Saracen when he invokes Mohammed’s name: “All full of rage he gan to curse and sweare, / And vow by Mahoune that [Arthur] should be slaine” (44). But, as we saw with the Saracens from Book I and II, Corflambo is quick to curse his prophet when he meets with defeat. Indeed, even in death, this Turk continues to blaspheme: “His head before him tumbling on the ground. / The whiles his babbling tongue did yet blaspheme / And curse his God, that did him so confound [as] / His soule descended downe into the Stygian reame” (45). Aside from his ability to seduce and captivate women with the help of Lust, Corflambo represents the Turkish ruler. Manipulating the weak via the senses was also considered one of the problems with the Catholic Church, which was seen as overemphasizing the sensual in its prayers and masses: thus entrapping the heart and mind of its viewers by appealing to their baser inclinations for spectacle, sound, smell, taste, and touch.<sup>116</sup>

Again, this is told to us via the squire’s narration: “This mightie man [...] by his strength rule to himselfe did gaine / Of many Nations into thraldome led, / And mightie kingdoms of his force adred; / Whom yet he conquer’d not by bloudie fight, / Ne hostes

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<sup>116</sup> For an example of this polemic, see Martin Luther’s *Table Talk (Tischreden)*, where he discusses ways in which the “conceits” of the mass entrap and cloud the mind of the participant in his chapter entitled “Of Idolatry” (68-76).

of men with banners brode dispred, / But by the power of his infectious sight, / With which he killed all, that came within his might” (47). Interestingly, the Turk does not expand his strength by conquering kingdoms and nations through war, nor is he portrayed as a soldier. Instead, he conquers through seduction. This detail evokes two equally viable interpretations: he represents the seductive power of Islam in its ability to convert, subdue, and damn the Christian “nation”; and he represents the power of the pope, who conquers without swords (according to Foxe and Luther), but with the seduction of his false images and doctrines, the visual qualities of the Catholic Church. Either way, Corflambo’s representation seems to conflate the earlier representations of Saracens in *The Faerie Queene*: he is faithless, lawless, and connected to joylessness in his prisoners; he is intemperate, fiery, and lusty; he is connected to the sexual threats of Catholicism and Islam; and he is an adept conqueror of Christian nations. It seems that with each representation of the Turk, Spenser raises the bar, making the next more threatening and terrifying than the first.

Unlike Books I and II, however, Book IV ends on a more positive note. The subject of procreation is recalled in the last scenes of the Book. In rescuing Amoret and traveling with her under his care, Arthur’s thoughts return to his quest, but his thoughts are on progeny: “Him selfe, whose minde did travel as with chylde, / Of his old love, conceav’d in secret brest, / Resolved to pursue his former quest” (ix.17). This image of gestation reminds us of his similarity to Britomart, whose quest for Artegall will result in her bringing forth the line of Briton kings. It also ends a book that deals with wanton lust

and dangerous liaisons, which could have resulted in miscegenation, with a “rightful” image/reference to procreation: a line of noble English heirs, not Turkish bastards.

In Book V, however, the stakes are higher than ever. In the eighth canto of Book V, Arthur and Artegall defend Queen Mercilla against “the Souldan,” that is, a sultan, a “Paynim king,” who “Seekes to subvert [Mercilla’s] Crowne and dignity” (18). The archaic spelling of his title links him to both the Islamic world and the representation of that world in romance. The reference to the Souldan’s desire to subvert Mercilla’s (read as Elizabeth’s) royal authority could be a reference to the historical figure of Pope Pius V who in 1570 formally excommunicated Elizabeth, declaring her a bastard pretender to the throne of England. However, Spenser’s description of the Souldan looks to an enemy closer at hand, Philip II of Spain, and the battle scene in canto viii is almost universally understood to figure the attempted invasion of England by the Spanish Armada in 1588.

The Souldan’s high war chariot aptly portrays the turreted Spanish galleons of the Invincible Armada and at the same time cleverly plays on Philip II’s emblem of Apollo driving his chariot of the sun toward the west, a reference to the westward advance of his empire (viii.28). In his meeting with Arthur and Artegall, the Souldan displays the fiery temperament usually attributed to Turks: “Wherewith the Souldan all with furie fraught, / Swearing, and banning most blasphemously” (28). The “swearing and banning most blasphemously” could refer to Catholic cursing and excommunication of English Protestants (and, specifically, to Pope Pius V’s excommunication of Elizabeth), especially in regards to the Spanish Armada. It is, according to Benedict Robinson, a response to the “rhetoric of the Armada, which claimed to be a crusade against heretics: the pope

proclaimed indulgences for the sailors and the ships were decorated with banners displaying crusade insignia” (42). In what turns out to be one of Arthur’s most dangerous battles, Arthur is compelled to unveil the terrible light of his shield when he is unable to wound the Souldan decisively. Arthur’s removal of the cover from his blinding shield suggests (as in Book I) God’s grace protecting England, here in the storm which scattered the Spanish fleet (37-44). Like the scattered Armada, the Souldan is torn apart and left in pieces on the battlefield (42-44).

In choosing to figure Philip as a sultan, Spenser contributes to common English polemics that associated early modern Spain with its Islamic history. Spenser himself wrote that the Arab invasions left Spain a mongrel nation. In his prose tract, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser’s mouthpiece, Irenius, declares that, “the Moores and the Barbarians, breaking over out of Africa, did finally possesse all Spaine, or the most part thereof, and did tread, under their heathenish feete, whatever little they found yet there standing” (50). He continues with, “through the marriages which they had made, and mixture with the people of the land, during their long continuance there, they had left no pure drop of Spanish blood, no more than of Roman or Scythia. So that of all nations under heaven (I suppose) the Spaniard is the most mingled, and most uncertaine” (50). In writing Philip II as a sultan, Spenser transforms Spain from a national to a religious enemy, the “proper” object of a holy violence, thus figuring this battle as a form of crusade. Spenser was also utilizing the common language of the time, which commonly made an association between Philip II and a sultan.

As I have discussed in earlier sections, this association was a common aspect of anti-Spanish and, by extension, anti-Catholic writing. “Moreover,” as Robinson contends, it “seems itself to have constituted an ongoing Protestant polemic: years later, reflecting back on this moment in history, Fulke Greville would refer to Philip as the ‘Suleiman of Spain’; and a manuscript at the Huntington Library presents in parallel ‘The kinge of Spayne his style’ and ‘the great Turk his style,’ inviting comparisons between the Habsburgs and their Ottoman enemies precisely on the basis of their mutual imperial claims” (42). Hatred of Catholic Spain was a defining feature of Protestant England, which sought to define its own empire in opposition to that of Spain. To portray the Spanish King as a Turkish sultan was to align him with paganism. Despite Islam’s monotheism, Muslims were frequently called pagans in the early modern period; the Souldan referred to as a “Pagan” at least four times (32, 34, 39) and the devil. By assimilating Catholicism and Islam in the tyrannical figure of the Souldan, Spenser’s allegory further conforms to Protestant polemical writing, which identifies Islam and Catholicism as manifestations of Antichrist and forms of false belief.

Yet, even more important than the figure of the Souldan himself is the figure of his wife, who is presented as the source and instigator of his tyranny. We are told of her wickedness through the narration of one of Mercilla’s subjects, a maiden, Samient: “[this] mighty man” is “provokt, and stird up day and night / By his bad wife, that hight Adicia” (20). Adicia, whose name means injustice, could just be the allegorical representation of that crime, and the Souldan’s (Phillip II’s) union with her could be the allegorical union of tyranny with injustice. She “counsels him through confidence of

might, / To breake all bonds of law, and rules of right” (20). Adicia is thus the real force behind the Souldan’s tyranny.

We see this also in Samient’s description of her administration of her husband’s soldiers: “And her good Knights, of which so brave a band / Serves her, as any Princesse under sky, / [The Souldan] either spoiles, if they against him stand, / Or to his part allures, and bribeth under hand” (18). Indeed, Adicia is the one who sends out the Paynim knights for Samient, “To be by them dishonoured and shent” (23, 26). This refers to our initial meeting of Samient and the Saracen knights of the Souldan’s empire: “With locks all loose, and raiment all to rent” (viii.4), Samient is pursued by three knights: one of which, we learn, is Arthur, who is chasing the two knights pursuing her. The two knights in pursuit are referred to as “Pagan” (8) and “Paynims” (11). The language used to describe Samient’s appearance, as well as the comment that Adicia sent the Saracens to “dishonour and shent” her, once again alludes to the threat of sexual invasion. This time, the impetus for this danger is a woman. This scenario is a particularly “Turkish” one. Adicia represents the danger of Turkish women, who were believed to be just as licentious as Turkish men, but whose crimes were compounded in their use of sex to subvert men and seduce them to evil. Often, Turkish women were seen as the “bait” for luring Christians into conversion. Though conversion is not specifically mentioned here, the rape of a Christian woman by Turkish soldiers could result in children without a clearly defined religious or ethnic identity – which was something that was bound up with the central fears of conversion.

Adicia's "masculinity," in regards to her administration of her husband's knights, her control over her husband himself, and her over-sexualized nature, makes her an unnatural representation of womanhood. This unnaturalness is vividly expressed in her reaction to the Souldan's death. First, she is described as being "much appald [...] Yet not, as women wont in dolefull fit, / She was dismayd, or fainted through affright, / But gathered unto her her troubled wit, / And gan eftsoones devize to be aveng'd for it" (45). Her immediate need for revenge, as we've seen in other books of the poem, is a Turkish quality. Her Turkishness, then, is what provokes her unwomanly response. If her emotions make her unwomanly, her actions make her subhuman: She runs at them "like an enraged cow [...] All flaming with revenge and furious despight" (46). This description of her fit of rage is continued in stanza 49 and is especially censorious, going a long way in dehumanizing her – quite literally, since her rage literally turns her into a "Tygress," but before that she is likened to a "mad bytch."<sup>117</sup> Women, it seems, are treated with greater opprobrium than their Turkish male counterparts are.

Spenser's work appropriates and develops many of the themes and literary tropes common to the literature of this time; most especially, it influenced many stage representations of the Turk. The Turk as Scythian, the Turk as lustful tyrant, and the Turk as imperial foe of England are all features of plays written at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. On the stage, though, the connection between

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<sup>117</sup> This violent expression of grief is part of Spenser's opinion that only savages are unable to control their emotions. In *A View*, Spenser comments on the intemperate mourning of the dead in Ireland as a sign of their barbaric ancestry: "Others thinke this custome to come from the Spaniards, for that they doe immeasurably likewise bewaile their dead. But the same is not proper Spanish, but altogether heathenish, brought in thither first either by the Scythians, or the Moores that were Africans, and long possessed that cuntry. For it is the manner of all Pagans and Infidels to be intemperate in their wailings of their dead, for that they had no faith nor hope of salvation." To which Eudoxus replies: "This is sure an ill custome also, but yet doth not so much concerne civill reformation, as abuse in religion" (61).



Catholic and Turk becomes less explicitly drawn as it is in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. However, there are subtle details that connect the stage Turk with the Catholic. In dramatic works heavily influenced by Spenser, such as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Robert Greene's *Selimus*, there are a host of references to the paradigms set up by Spenser's epic -- paradigms featuring martial Turkish characters with uncontrollable passions.

Lustful Turks and the spiritual corruption of Christians via sexual immolation and emasculation also become standard features of conversion plays, such as Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* and Philip Massinger's *The Renegado*. Though these plays feature Christians "turning Turk," the representation of conversion on the stage reflected the current climate of anxiety over both Turkish and papal invasion. The idea of conversion that terrified and attracted audiences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a fear of the loss of both essence and identity in a climate of ecclesiastical and political instability.

### **Conversion and Invasion Anxieties on the English Stage**

England's relationship with imperialism was a historically and ideologically fraught one. On the one hand, the English were threatened and repulsed by the imperial powers around them, the Spanish and the Ottomans specifically; but there was also within their culture a desire for an English form of imperialism, as seen in their colonial activities in Ireland and the New World. Though there was much interest and hope in England's early colonial holdings, there was no way of knowing when or if the English would build an enduring empire. It is for this reason, as a number of critics have pointed

out, Ania Loomba and Daniel Vitkus most notably, that England becomes a culture of “mimic men,” with English culture adopting a number of the characteristics of their imperial neighbors.<sup>118</sup> This mimicry was usually performed onstage.

Within English culture, the theater played a special role in adapting, articulating, and disseminating foreignness as a model for the formation of an English national identity. During this period, as commodities, travelers, and merchants cycled back and forth between English ports and the Mediterranean, the English sense of identity was strongly affected by the flow of information that ensued. English encounters with exotic otherness, and the theatrical representations inspired by them, helped to form the emerging identity of an English nation that sought its own empire, but was still in the preliminary phases of its colonizing effort. As I have shown in my analysis of the *Irishman and the Jew*, English subjects understood themselves by comprehending their difference from outsiders, but their identities were also changing as their outlook and behavior were affected and altered by foreign practices that they were learning to emulate. On the London stage, audiences encountered representations of the Christianized Moor, the renegade pirate, the convert, and the shepherd turned emperor – all figures that embodied political flexibility, mobility, and adaptability in relation to Turkish identity. Each figure carried with it a host of particular threats and attractions for the English and their construction of a national identity during this period. For this reason, their presentation involves various contradictions, as the Turks are both demonized and exalted, admired and condemned. When presented on the early modern

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<sup>118</sup> See Barbara Fuchs’s study for a full analysis of how imperial fantasy led to imperial mimicry in early modern England.

stage, Turks are often militarily heroic and always dynamic, but they are also potentially transgressive. Essentially, the drama of the period reflects a pattern of attraction and repulsion in the portrayal of various Turkish figures, as these works play upon and respond to English anxieties about both Turkish and Catholic invasion, conversion, miscegenation, and, subsequently, the pollution of English culture.

Nowhere is this conflation of negative and positive representations more powerfully illustrated than in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine I*. Tamburlaine represents the quintessential "self-made man" in his ability to cast off his lowborn ancestry and scale the heights of the social ladder to become an emperor. Clearly, given the fears of the Ottomans in English society at this time, *Tamburlaine* was meant to provide pleasure in the spectacle of its protagonist defeating the imperial power of the Turk and in subduing other Islamic potentates such as the Persian emperor and the sultan of Egypt. Any English anxieties about the Turks' growing dominion find relief in the paradoxical fantasy of the play: that of Turkish defeat and humiliation. This pleasing fantasy is initially what pulls the English audience in. Once they are implicated in Tamburlaine's actions, however, it seems that the audience would be made increasingly uncomfortable by his excessive cruelty and religious atheism.

Tamburlaine gets what he wants, not through hereditary right, but by the sword. As an implement of war, and as a symbol of military aggression, the sword is a provocative image. Given its associations, the stage Turk was often portrayed with a prominent sword, conveying prevalent conversion and invasion anxieties in early modern

England.<sup>119</sup> In Marlowe's play, it becomes the dominant symbol of Tamburlaine's ambitious might. At the moment of his personal conversion, he discards his shepherd's garments and dons the military apparel of the Turkish warrior. "This complete armor and this curtal ax [short sword] / Are adjuncts more beseeming to Tamburlaine" (1.2.42-43). Significantly, central to his transformation from shepherd to warrior is his sword, which becomes not only his main weapon but also the centerpiece of his rhetoric on his power as a warrior and a King. In his encounters with his victims, both civilians and Kings alike, he draws as much attention as possible to it. When Cosroe tells him to "whet thy winged sword / And lift thy lofty arm into the clouds, / That it may reach the King of Persia's crown" (2.4.51-53), Tamburlaine responds with a lengthy stanza. First, he draws attention to the sword, presumably holding it up so that the audience can see it: "See where it is, the / keenest curtal ax" (54-55). He then endows it with divine power in an implied simile: "These are the wings shall make it fly as swift / As doth the lightning or the breath of heaven / And kill as sure as it swiftly flies" (57-59). As the "breath of heaven," his sword becomes the divine instrument of the Scourge of God, the appellation applied to the Turks in various Protestant texts and which Tamburlaine enthusiastically adopts as his title: "I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God" (3.3.44). Most of his speeches, and the speeches of his followers, feature the image of the sword: "By this my sword that conquered Persia" (3.3.82) and Theridamas's "I long to see those crowns won by our swords" (98). Tamburlaine would, "with [his] sword make Jove to stoop" (4.4.78). With his military might, he antagonizes even God himself.

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<sup>119</sup> We saw this in Spenser's portrayal of Corflambo in Book IV,

Images of penetration are conveyed in a number of speeches about Tamburlaine, a number of which prefigure the passages about Corflambo in Book IV of *The Faerie Queene*. At the beginning of Act 4, the Sultan describes the sound of Tamburlaine's approaching army as the sound of "basilisks" approaching. The same image is used to describe the power of Corflambo's eyes: the image of the serpent again conveying the image of fangs and venom. The Messenger's description of the Scythian army is even more over-laden with penetrative objects of war: "Five hundred thousand footmen [...] Shaking their swords, their spears, and iron bills [...] As bristle-pointed as a thorny wood" (4.2.24, 25, 27). Though these descriptions would conjure images of the army England had been fearing for decades, at this point in the play, the audience is still, conceivably, on the side of Tamburlaine, for he enacts the English imperial fantasy in striking down Turkish sultans despite his meager ancestry; this is a key paradox in the play.

However, this rallying would undoubtedly become less enthusiastic as Tamburlaine transitions from the Turkish "scourge of God" to an outright, ruthless tyrant. It begins in this scene with the Messenger's description of Tamburlaine's merciless slaughter of civilians: "His spear, his shield, his horse, his armor, plumes, / And jetty feathers menace death and hell, / Without respect of sex, degree, or age / He razeth all his foes with fire and sword" (4.5.60-63). Again, the same weapons of penetration are described, but also the common Turkish symbol of fire is used to convey his intemperate lust for violence (recalling Pyrochles from Book II). The most telling scene is when he makes the virgins of Damascus meditate on his sword:

[Tam] Virgins, in vain ye labor to prevent  
That which mine honor swears shall be performed.  
Behold my sword. What see you at the point?  
[Virgins] Nothing but fear and fatal steel, my lord.  
[Tam] Your fearful minds are thick and misty, then,  
For there sits Death, there sits imperious Death,  
Keeping his circuit by the slicing edge.  
But I am pleased you shall not see him there.  
He is now seated on my horsemen's spears,  
And on their points his fleshless body feeds. (5.1.106-115)

Tamburlaine then commands his men to “charge these dames, and show my servant Death / Sitting in scarlet on their armed spears” (117-18). After the virgins are killed and their bodies hoisted on Damascus’s walls (130), Tamburlaine charges his men to “put the rest to the sword” (134). The sword as a phallic symbol of invasion and conversion is here given vivid detail, as it dispatches the virgins of a conquered city. The glee with which Tamburlaine describes the power of his sword and his men’s spears would undoubtedly have resonated with the fears of the English audience. A Turkish invasion would bring invasion, death, and conversion – by the sword, both literal and figurative.

*Tamburlaine* is explicitly a play about invasion, but as I’ve been arguing, it implicitly conveys the larger threat of conversion.<sup>120</sup> This is endemic to a number of popular Turkish plays in England at this time. The fear of invasion expresses the fear of

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<sup>120</sup> His seduction of Zenocrate is a representation of this danger. Though she is not converted in the traditional sense, she is transformed by her attraction to Tamburlaine. This is also something that she regrets later in the play.

being penetrated by an outside force, this finds a corollary in the fear of being religiously and culturally penetrated by a foreign antagonist; this fear of penetration is connected in no small way to the threat of rape that always accompanied invasion. The language of conversion, as well as the dramatic scenarios depicting conversion, is always sexual when presented as a Christian turning Turk. What follows from this sexual transgression is the immolation of the apostate's body, soul, and community, expressed in images of infection, disease, and contamination. For the female apostate, it is the threat of miscegenation; for the male, it is the threat of emasculation, for it was believed that to "turn Turk" a man would have to be circumcised or castrated completely. The true fear is that of the convert in general. As a dangerous and subversive figure, the Christian turned Turk represented the much more dangerous -- because more local -- Catholic or Jew turned Protestant.

The stigma of apostasy was sometimes seen as an irremovable source of shame. For example, Baptist Goodall's poem, *The Tryall of Travell* (1630), describes the apostasy of the Turkish convert with a sense of contamination and horror that does not allow for reconciliation: "No Jew or Turk can prove more ruinous / Then will a Christian once apostulate thus / Avoid as death a reconciled foe, / Nor ever with him reconciled go. / The sore smooth'd up not cured out will fly, / And soon't infect a careless stander by. / Man of a cross religion do not trust, / He hath evasion t'be with thee unjust" (Goodall 12). The language here bespeaks disease. He is not cured after reconciliation, only his "sores" are covered up. He can still "*infect* a careless stander by." Here, proximity is dangerous, as he can spread the disease of apostasy. The association

of the convert with contagion was common. With it, there is the fear that in allowing an apostate back into society, you were allowing disease to infiltrate the community.

This notion of converts as disease-bearing threats to the health of the community is also expressed in the play titled *A Christian Turned Turk* by the French sea captain Monsieur Davy, who says that the English pirates, whom he refers to as a “race of thieves,” “have lain / Upon their country’s stomach like a surfeit; / Whence, being vomited, they strive with poisonous breath / To infect the general air” (2.44-47). Piracy, though not explicitly maligned at this time (especially when piracy was targeted at the Catholic powers of Spain and Italy), was dangerous to the individual and to the nation of England because of the common trend of pirates becoming Turkish renegades. The language Davy uses presents apostasy as a form of plague that converts bring back with them and spread amongst the English public. Thus, the Turkish convert was aligned with contagion, often as a form of contagion that was contracted and transmitted sexually.

The sexual aspect of conversion is presented in Daborne’s play, where the source of the Englishman’s, Ward’s, conversion is sexual, as he is enticed by his lust for a Turkish woman. At the beginning of the Daborne’s play, Ward has not renounced Christianity, but his piracy, moral depravity, pride, and lack of Providential wisdom indicate a figure flirting with damnation. Like Tamburlaine, Ward is also led by his ambition, which he sees as part of his destiny: “He’s only worthy state / From Fortune’s wheel plucks boldly his own fate, / And here’s an arm shall do’t” (4.64-66) and “What Nature in my birth / Denied me, Fortune supplies” (85-87). His will to power, despite his nature (his lowborn English status), is what drives him. Such qualities are perhaps the



reason why the renegado Jew, Benwash, says that “He’s half a Turk already” (7.443).

The only thing the Turks need to seal Ward’s fate is the lure of a woman: “if the flesh take hold of him, he’s past redemption [...] Woman is hell, out; in we ne’er return” (442, 444).

Benwash knows well of what he speaks, since his conversion to Islam was also via a Turkish woman. Paradoxically, however, he converts to keep his wife sexually monogamous: “I bought my liberty, renounced my law / (The law of Moses), turned Turk – all to keep / My bed free from these Mahometan dogs” (6.74-76). His biggest fear is to be “a monster [...] a man-beast, / A cuckold” (77-78). Yet, the play suggests that this is the risk one takes when he converts for the love of a woman: he is left a cuckold, a circumcised one to boot.

A number of critics have read the play as a cautionary tale against conversion. It can also be read as a modernized morality play, with Islamic culture as a whole taking over the role of the devil as the seducer of Christian souls. Both readings seem applicable in the temptation scene, where Benwash, a Turkish Governor, a Turkish captain – Crosman – and his Turkish sister, Voadia, work to convince Ward to “turn Turk” (7.57).

Significantly, religion does not factor in as one of the perks of this transformation. As Benwash says, “Christian or Turk, you are more wise, I know, / Than with religion to confine your hopes” (25-26), implying that obstinacy based on religious misgivings is a form of ignorance. The English Reformation was largely focused on the usurpation of religious forms of authority for secular ones: the monarch replaces the pope as the figure of divine authority, and allegiance to the King (or Queen) becomes paramount. The idea

that certain English Catholics could not accept this transfer of power was seen as a form of foreign allegiance and as “un-English.”<sup>121</sup> As such, the secular is prioritized over the spiritual. Recusants are not “wise” in “confin[ing]” their “hopes” in religion.

The Governor furthers this claim by focusing on secular rewards rather than spiritual gains: “Life, liberty, / Wealth, honor [...] If any odds be, ‘tis on Mahomet’s side: / His servitors thrive best” (30-33). The argument, then, is that the spiritual rewards are worthless, but the worldly rewards are clearly on the side of the Turk. Typical to the morality play, the Christian “everyman” is not so easily convinced, which leads his tempters to up the ante. Crosman says to himself, “[Ward] enjoys too much by promise to be won. / T’ must be a woman’s act, to whom there’s nought / That is impossible. What devils dare not move / Men to accomplish, women work them to” (85-89). His misogyny is proven correct. Ward agrees to turn Turk, saying “I’ll rather lead on slaves / Than be commanded by the power of kings. / Beauty, command, and riches – these are the three / The world pursues, and these follow me” (191-94). Islamic culture, with its promise of liberty, sex, power, and wealth, wins in this morality play.

Ward’s motivations reflect a number of early modern assumptions about Islam. Christian writers not only criticized Islam for offering sensual pleasure to the virtuous as a reward in the next life; they also condemned the sexual freedom allowed in this life under Muslim law. Islamic regulations governing concubinage, marriage, and divorce

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<sup>121</sup> Consider, once again, Elizabeth’s 1591 proclamation against Jesuits and any recusants who cooperated with them. The implicit idea within this proclamation is that recusants are subversives who may be harboring traitorous loyalties to foreign, and antagonistic, enemies. Consider also the response made by English Catholics like Robert Southwell, who asserts in his prose work *An Humble Supplication* (1591) that his purpose as a Jesuit and as a Roman Catholic priest is not to stir up treason but to “confirm [the English] in the ancient Catholic faith which their forefathers lived and died these fourteen hundred years” (11). Much of his *Supplication* is built around an argument for the unwavering loyalty of English Catholics to their “nation” and their Queen.

were misunderstood and reviled by Western Europeans. In his *Geographical Historie of Africa* Leo Africanus, an Andalusian “Moor” who converted to Christianity reinforces this belief with his statement that the religious law of Mohammed “looseth the bridle to the flesh, which is a thing acceptable to the greatest part of men” (381). Africanus and others claimed that the attraction of conversion to Islam – and the reluctance of Muslims to convert to Christianity – stemmed primarily from the greater sexual freedom allowed under Islamic law.

Africanus offers a detailed account of Muslim success in converting Christians to Islam. He maintains that those who convert to Islam do so because they “follow that which best agreeth with sense, and measure the grace of God by worldly prosperity” (381). “Sense” in this quotation seems to mean “sensuality”: a life of sensual indulgence. Though Catholicism was not commonly linked to sexual immorality, the sensual -- as in appealing to the senses -- nature of the faith was often under attack during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The idea that Catholicism “bewitched” the viewer with spectacle -- the incense, the bells, the elevation of the host, etc. -- was considered immoral and, as we saw in my previous chapter, linked with witchcraft. Islam is also attacked for its prioritization of the senses; the sensuality of both religions serves as a major source of attraction for converts.

Africanus offers further reasons for the prevalence of “turning Turk”:

the Christians become Turkes, partly upon some extreme & violent passion ... [others] abjure the faith to release themselves of torments and cruelties; others for hope of honors and temporall

greatnes: and of these two sorts there are a great number in Constantinople, being thought to be Christians in hart: and yet through slothfulness, or first to gather together more wealth, or expecting opportunitie to carry with them, their wives and children, or for fear of being discovered in their departure and voyage, or else through sensualitie, and for that they would not be deprived of the licentiousnes and libertie of the life they lead, resolve not to performe that they are bound unto; deferring thus from moneth to moneth & from yeere to yeere, to leave theis Babylon & sinke of sin (386).

Interestingly, Africanus does not try to paint his prior religion as virtuous or noble; he admits the utter “licentiousnes” of it, and actually champions the “libertie” of what he calls “theis Babylon & sinke of sin.” Religious conversion was frequently described in erotic terms: converts to Catholicism were also accused of sleeping with the papal “whore of Babylon” and spiritually fornicating with the Devil’s minions. Africanus’s reference to “Babylon” suggests this connection. From the perspective of English Protestantism, these correspondences were not merely metaphorical: the Flesh, the Church of Rome, and the Turk were all believed to be material means for the Devil to achieve his ends. It was only natural that they would often work in conjunction for the souls of “true” Christians (i.e. Protestants). Conversion to Islam, or to Roman Catholicism, was considered a kind of sexual transgression or spiritual whoredom, each

representing the same fears of contagion. Protestantism proclaimed the same judgment for all those who were seduced by either the Prophet or pope: eternal damnation.

For the stage convert, the end was usually the same; his conversion to Islam led to a progressive deterioration of his life, ending in death and the damnation of his soul. As he makes his way to the ceremonies of conversion, he is implored by a number of characters who sound increasingly like those found in morality plays, who plead with the Christian everyman from the allegorical positions of Faith and Conscience. We begin with the Christian Alizia who says, “Sell not your soul for such a vanity / As that which you term ‘beauty,’ eye-pleasing idol” (7.206-207). It’s hard not to read the subtle references to Catholicism here, as it was often referred to as a religion of the visual, which ensnares the mind and soul with its idols. Also implicit here is Spenser’s Book I, where the Knight of Holiness is led astray by the “eye-pleasing” false “beauty” of Duessa, the representative of the Catholic Church in the poem. Ferdinand and Raymond’s sons, who have been sold by Ward into slavery, also lend their voices: “we will forget / That we were sold by you, and think we set / Our bodies ‘gainst your soul, the dearest purchase / Of your Redeemer, that we regained you so. / Leave but this path damnation guides you” (261-265). But, like Redcrosse, Ward has fallen into “despair[‘s]” clutches (277), and he is without a Prince Arthur to save him.

The dumb show in which Ward is formally initiated as a Muslim is based on the descriptions of such ceremonies in contemporary travel narratives, most notably Hakluyt’s account of Arthur Edwards in *Principall Navigations* (1:418). Symbolically, he is stripped of his sword during a ceremony that would include (according to English

misconceptions) either a circumcision or a castration. Emasculated in ceremony, he is later emasculated in fact, when he is cuckolded by the woman for whom he turned Turk (16.261-85). In his final scene before dying, he cries out his hope that “Christendom / Be reunited” and together bring down the Turkish empire (16.309-10); he also proclaims that “heaven is just” in its punishment of the convert, as “despair attends on blood and lust” (320-21). Ward, then vocalizes the sentiments of an English audience that would presumably agree with his assessment of the convert’s proper fate.

### **Final Comments**

Though essentially imbued with an illusive and often unstable identity, the Turk existed as the figuration of a particularly virulent and antagonistic form of religious, cultural, and racial “otherness.” Feared, maligned, and yet strangely admired, the Turk is a dynamic figure in early modern English writing. More than a mere “exotic” villain, the Turk represents the conversion and invasion anxieties of a nation that was militarily vulnerable as well as politically and religiously unstable.

These anxieties, of course, are further augmented by the Turk’s similarities with and often deliberate connections to the power of the Catholic Church. Working together, the Turk and the Catholic represented the dual forces of antichrist as they threatened the burgeoning nation of England: the pope and his recusants as England’s spiritual corruptor, and the Turk as its military -- and thus physical -- aggressor.

Though the issue of conversion remains a potent one in the representations of all three major figures of otherness in this study (the Irishman, the Jew, and the Turk), the Turk remains the most threatening. The threat of the invading “other” and the subsequent

conversion of the English lay not only in the inherent fear of losing one's national identity, but also in losing one's soul.

## CONCLUSION

As I hope my study demonstrates, to better understand how these figures are presented in the literature of the time, one must understand the central, menacing figure of the Catholic that *both informs and is formed by* the representations of the Irishman, the Jew, and the Turk. These figures have been the subject of a number of critical works (many of which are represented in this dissertation) analyzing how racial and religious identity is presented in early modern English literature. What makes my study different from what has come before it is that I look at these individual figures of “otherness” in light of their common characteristic: their shared significance as figures of Catholicism. By doing so, my study illustrates the unity that exists in the disparate conversations about otherness, religion, and politics in early modern England. Religion, specifically religious otherness, unites these discourses. In examining this central unity, my hope is that I have fleshed out a deeper understanding of how race was portrayed and, ultimately, created in early modern England, and how this society viewed itself and its “others.”

Significantly, as critics like Stephen Greenblatt and Richard Helgerson have shown, it was during this time of suspicion and paranoia about religious and political identification that the ideas of what makes England *English* were beginning to be fashioned. Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and Helgerson’s *Forms of Nationhood* established the idea that England was developing its own sense of identity in the sixteenth century and that its major writers were part of this definition. As these theorists have shown, religious and political identifications were part of this formation; however, the Catholic aspect has been underplayed. My study seeks to make up for this.



However, I am not alone in emphasizing the importance of the Catholic “issue” for understanding the way that national identity was being created in post-Reformation English society. In picking up the themes established by Greenblatt and Helgerson, a number of revisionist critics have also emphasized the importance of Catholicism in the formation of English identity. Most notably, in *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England*, Arthur Marotti’s central argument is that “English nationalism rests on a foundation of anti-Catholicism” (9). His thesis presents a compelling and complementary argument to my own, as he also analyzes historical and literary figurations of early modern English Catholicism. His claims are similar to mine in that he traces the antagonistic and binary ways in which Catholicism is reflected in and shaped by Protestant texts. His analysis begins and ends later than mine does -- beginning with the arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries in England in 1580 and ending with the 1688 “Glorious Revolution” -- and it deals with number of issues that are tangential, but not completely related, to the ones presented in my study.

Specifically, Marotti looks at representations of recusant women, martyrdom accounts, and the close association of print culture with the survival of residual Catholicism in England. Also working from revisionist historical texts by Haigh, Bossy, and Duffy, Marotti traces the development of English nationalism as it is presented in the works of Catholic and Protestant writers. While his analysis of recusant writers like Robert Southwell and William Alabaster develops a number of themes established in my dissertation, Marotti’s study stops short of analyzing the major canonical writers of the

time. He spends very little time discussing the authors who make up the bulk of my analysis, specifically Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. As such, it is my hope that this dissertation adds to the field of early modern English Catholic studies by filling in the gaps left by scholars like Marotti, Greenblatt, and Helgerson.

The foundational work of Marotti, Greenblatt, and Helgerson helped to shape the scope of my study. In each chapter of my dissertation, I traced the development of the above occurrences and examined the ways in which the English defined themselves in the prominent literature of the time. Essential to each chapter was a look at how Catholicism – images, rituals, and traditions of – appears recurrently throughout the poetry and drama of post-Reformation England. I applied these methods to an analysis of major authors from the period, with a particular focus on Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare. I chose these particular authors because their works seem to be engaged most especially with issues of English nation-building in light of political and religious “otherness” and because they seemed underrepresented within critical texts that explored themes similar to my own.

The literary works examined in this dissertation are the products of an early modern English culture; thus, they were conditioned by the social, political, and religious forces working upon them. As such, they reflect, participate in, and ultimately contributed to the process of othering taking place in various forms of nonliterary works. Because literature is part of the cultural fabric of the author’s world, it is a crucial element in one’s understanding of this time period.

As a representation of reality, a work of literature is an object made by an author. Consider, for example, the fact that our word “poet” comes from the Greek verb *poieo*, “to make.” Our word “fiction” is similarly derived from the Latin *finco*, “to fashion,” “to feign,” or “to form.” Given its etymological origins, fashioning, creating, and representing are central to the function of literature. It would thus make sense that when we analyze forms of self-fashioning and the representation or creation of “others” in the sixteenth-century, we would look carefully at the literature of the period. It is in the literature of this period that this process of Catholic “othering” is most apparent because it is in the literature that this process occurs. At the center of imaginative literature is imitation or mimesis: the representation of human experience. While literature is the self-expression of the author, it is also the representation of the reader -- of the author’s audience, which informs and helps to shape the content within the work. Literature, like language, presupposes a communal culture. The author is always speaking to someone else.

For this reason, one risks missing this process if unaware of the claims being made during this period by nonliterary authors. Consequently, it is necessary to couch the discussion of literary representations within a thorough nonliterary context. We must understand how early modern English society understood these figures before we can recognize the cultural resonances within the literary works themselves. This is why the historical background is such a large and crucial aspect of my study. As James Cleland in *The Institution of a Young Noble Man* (1607) asserts: “learning is circular, and the Muses stand round about Apollo, having no beginning nor ending more than a geometrical

circle, so that he who would enjoy one of the disciplines must labour to be acquainted with them all.” My dissertation represents this sentiment in “labour[ing]” to present the whole scope of the perspective available about these issues. I draw from various sources, texts, and disciplines to help widen the perspective on the issue of national identity and to inform the reader’s understanding of a few canonical texts from the period.

In delving into these works with the theme of English nation-building and anti-Catholicism in mind, I came to a number of conclusions. The first related to the success of the country’s national project. Despite the fact that Catholicism maintained a strong hold over much of the country, the propagandists were able to capitalize on a number of elements that made the religion particularly dangerous for the English people; central to these elements were the portrayal of the pope as the antiChrist, the charge that Catholicism was a form of heathenish idolatry, and the threat of foreign invasion and war. This fear campaign was remarkably successful largely because of the hold that Catholicism still had on the English “nation” and because the presentation of the Catholic threat to England was both imagined and real. England was in a vulnerable position because of its religious identity. As I have shown, the country was isolated from and threatened by much of Catholic Europe. Accordingly, for most of the sixteenth century, the Catholic Church was a real enemy of England.

The significance of the Catholic threat in regards to the development of a national self-identity is difficult to conceptualize because there really is no perfect parallel in our own culture that illustrates its pervasiveness. Current American culture has the figure of the Arab (or, for some, it is the figure of the Muslim himself), which emerges in our

mainstream culture as the terrorist or revolutionary (depending on whatever “spin” the director or writer wants to give it); however, the figure of the Arab pales in comparison to the figure of the Catholic in post-Reformation English society. The Arab in contemporary American culture is always foreign. And as much as Tudor propaganda wanted to create in the Catholic the same foreign-ness, it was difficult to get beyond the Catholic heritage of the country and to suppress a religion that had maintained a long and vibrant existence in the country. At the beginning of the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations, much of the country outwardly practiced a Protestant faith, but secretly maintained Catholic devotions. Given the historical and contemporary “pull” of Catholicism in early modern England, Catholicism needed to be “made” foreign and alien in order for the Reformation to succeed. To do this, the figure of the Catholic had to be aligned with figures of otherness who were already seen as “foreign and alien.” It is for this reason that non-Catholic figures of “otherness” are useful examples to analyze in light of English anti-Catholicism.

This process has become the focus of a number of revisionist historians, whom I referenced above and elsewhere in my study. In finding these tensions within the works of canonical authors, though, the revisionist history is corroborated by those who lived within this society and who were immersed in all of its cultural anxieties and political fears. In a sense, this corroboration is needed because literature is so centrally tied to the idea of *vox nova* in the way that history and other nonliterary sources are not. When the same ideas that are espoused by historians and theologians (both early modern and modern) are given expression in the literary works of the day, then there is the sense that

these really were prevalent concerns during this period. When literary authors are seen grappling with issues of otherness by portraying characters and scenes as various forms of anti-Catholicism, then we know that this was a social issue.

By studying the literary figurations of these political tensions and cultural anxieties, we are given a firsthand glimpse at how they were refracted in society. While it is virtually impossible to know what the authors' true motives were when creating these figures, we are able to see how the issues at stake in nonfiction works also influenced the literary output of the day. Yet, literature is unique from other forms of writing as it allows the writer more freedom to work out and represent the various political and religious tensions within society. The writer of fiction can filter his or her opinions through fictional representations. This allows a great deal of freedom.

Tudor monarchs understood this; they also understood literature's importance in the creation of a national narrative. Both of these considerations explain why literary output was often so tightly controlled, chiefly through the processes of patronage and other financial incentives. Drama was harder to regulate, it seems, but from 1581 plays were scrutinized by the Master of the Revels before they were performed. Key to the inspection was the portrayal of monarchs in the work, but equally important was the presentation of religious opinion. This was a period in which representations were a crucial tool of government (usually via royal iconography), which is why literature is so important. As an art of representation, literature is crucial to the discussion of early modern "myth-making," as it both participates in and pushes back against the efforts to create a national narrative. English monarchs consciously sought to fashion an image for

themselves and to construct a version of history for popular consumption. Some of the authors under analysis in this work were part of these efforts, others were antagonistic to it, and others apparently delighted in complicating them.

But the mechanisms for literary control left room for creative writers to fashion invisible or semi-visible means of reconfiguring and representing possibly objectionable religious and political content within their works. This has been the subject of my analysis: to understand the ways that the highly contentious figure of the Catholic, and Catholicism in general, was presented and formed via more “acceptable” representations of otherness. This led to the other major conclusion I came to in the course of my studies. In creating for itself both a nation and a national identity, England drew heavily upon figures of otherness.

The figures of otherness I have highlighted in my study – the Irish, the Jew, and the Turk – functioned as the means by which Catholicism was discussed and by which it was “made” foreign. This representation also served as the indispensable anvil upon which the notion of Englishness was violently hammered out. As with most prejudices and fears, there are often no clear and logical boundaries between those who are targeted. For this reason, representing the Catholic via the Turk or the Jew is, in many ways, a natural process. The articulation of cultural anxieties and stereotypes tends to be blurred, and disparate figures begin to take on the qualities and representations of other maligned figures. Essentially, though, the fear of the Catholic permeates the fear of the Irishman, the Jew, and the Turk.

Ultimately, the works under analysis within this dissertation show that in the sixteenth century English national identity was not completely formed yet. The ideologies that would form the basis of English national identity were formulated more precisely in later centuries; however, the questions that would lead to their formation are posed during the years of the sixteenth century. National identity begins to become an issue during the years when England's traditional sense of its history and lineage was uprooted by the theological and religious changes enacted by the Reformation. Though the English couldn't say for sure who they were, they could say for sure who they were not. They were not Irish; they were not Jewish; and they were not Turkish. They recognized who the "others" of their society were. And because they knew they did not want to be Catholic anymore, they aligned this designation with known forms of "otherness." Ultimately, Catholicism becomes the central point of opposition for English national identity in this period. It is for this reason that all other forms of otherness are represented via the Catholic. Catholic stereotypes are both informed and, in turn, inform stereotypes about other figures of otherness. Intriguingly, as my chapters show, each figure of otherness represents a different aspect of the Catholic threat.

The Irishman represents English history and, with it, English lineage. As such, the Irishman represented the past from which the English were attempting to distance themselves. Moreover, the Irishman shares the same geographical location with the English; thus, according to the theory of geohumouralism, they shared an ethnic or "racial" identity. In representing the Irishman, both literary and non-literary works emphasized the Irishman's central identity as inherently "not English."



The Jew represents the threat of conversion. He represents the inherent inability to see truth beyond appearances: to discern identity by sight. As such, he reflects the fear of duplicity and deception via religious and, by extension, political allegiances. Because it was impossible to tell who had really converted to Protestantism, whether Jew or Catholic, there was always the implicit anxiety over where the convert's loyalties lay.

The Turk, sometimes represented as the Moor, represents the threat of invasion, as he is always aligned with militaristic or imperial forces. As the soldier, the conquistador, or the sultan, the Turk represents superior physical and political might. For this reason, papal power and the Spanish threat are always at the heart of Turkish representations. However, as Chapter Three shows, the Turk also represented the related anti-Catholic anxieties about both conversion and degeneration.

The process of othering is more complex in literary representations, however. In works of fiction, there are multiple layers of identity since the reader (or viewer) is dealing with a fictionalized persona. As such, there will undoubtedly be competing aspects of the character's identity working against its dominant and subversive representations. Yet the presentation of literary figures of otherness is often more profound. This is because of the experience of literature, which works on a number of levels: visual (especially in the case of drama), aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional. For this reason, these figures become "real" in a way that they do not when described in most historical accounts and polemical pamphlets.

Ultimately, by analyzing the figures of literary and nonliterary otherness, the full significance of the Catholic threat is revealed. And in fully recognizing and

understanding the threat of religious and political otherness, as it was presented in writing of this time, readers are better able to understand how England began to shape an understanding of itself as a nation.

Apart from shedding light on the way that the English conceived of themselves as a national community, my hope is that this dissertation also contributes to the ways in which racial identity is understood and discussed during the early modern period. My dissertation shows that an understanding of religion is central to an understanding of racial identity, especially in sixteenth-century England. Religious identity permeates and informs the formulation of racial identity during this period. Recognizing this intrinsic relationship expands and develops our understanding of how identity is presented and reflected in the literary works of early modern English period. It can furthermore be helpful in understanding how these permutations influenced, affected, and, perhaps, lead to the development of a modern racial ideology -- a development that took place largely in the eighteenth century.

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