UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Becoming English: Religion, Race, and Racial Capitalism in Early English Drama

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

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The Dissertation of Celine Joana Khoury is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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DEDICATION

To my parents—Elias and Mirna—for giving me the courage to pursue my passion and the strength to see it through. To Matt, for your unwavering encouragement, support, and love.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PCRS   Premodern Critical Race Studies

CRT   Critical Race Theory

CWS   Critical Whiteness Studies

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Simply put, this dissertation would not exist without the members of my committee—Dr. Daniel Vitkus, Dr. Lisa Lampert-Weissig, Dr. Seth Lerer, Dr. Nina Zhiri, and Dr. Janet Smarr—each of whom have helped to shape not only this project, but also me in my journey to becoming a literary scholar. I owe a great deal of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Daniel Vitkus, for his guidance and mentorship throughout my entire time in this program. His support began in my very first year, when I enrolled in his introductory theory and "Global Shakespeare" seminars. He has continued to support me ever since; working with him on concepts important for global studies, Marxist theory, and early modern cross-cultural exchange laid the groundwork for my dissertation, afforded me illuminating insights into my research, and helped me envision the kind of scholar that I hope to be.

I would like to especially extend my gratitude to Dr. Nina Zhiri for her patience and guidance with my independent study work in Arabic. With her help, I was not only able to explore a subject somewhat unrelated to my dissertation, but also to enhance my Arabic language skills and on a personal note, to make my family proud. I also sincerely thank Dr. Lisa Lampert-Weissig for her guidance and care in the development of this project, which would not have been possible without her intellectually stimulating course, "Aesthetics and Race: The Example of Anti-Semitism," that ignited my passion for premodern critical race studies. The feedback she offered me on drafts with her wealth of knowledge on Anglo-Jewish history, antisemitism, and medieval literature has been vital to my first chapter. I am honored to have worked with these mentors. I am a more confident researcher and teacher because of their continued confidence in me.

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better than walking alone in the light." I am so fortunate to have been able to walk with all of these friends in the darkest of times, in the light, and the haziness of the in between.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Becoming English: Religion, Race, and Racial Capitalism in Early English Drama

by

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Professor Daniel Vitkus, Chair

This dissertation explores "racial capitalism" as it relates to late-medieval and early modern English literature and literary culture, especially drama, in order to reframe the stories we tell about human difference as we seek to reconstruct our contested pasts. This dissertation uses methodologies employed in critical race theory (CRT) and critical white studies (CWS) to re-examine the long history of Western race thinking and racialization alongside the

development of emergent capitalism. It examines "whiteness" in English drama as a racial category not solely defined by skin color. The purchase this dissertation gets from focusing on "race" is in an illumination of systemic *racism*—in the premodern past and today. The first chapter illuminates systemic racism by examining England's history as the earliest "nation" to expel its Jewish population (in 1290). This chapter analyzes Anglo-Jewish history, which has been marginalized in the field of English history, to study England's role in the forefront of antisemitic thought and practice. By close reading a fifteenth-century drama, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, this dissertation shows the relationship between antisemitic thought and mercantilism. The second and third chapters illuminate the development of capitalism and systemic racism by examining the invention of "whiteness" and "Christian identity" on and off stage. Throughout these chapters, the English theater is an important site in the development of racial capitalism—Elizabethan theatrical companies like the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe were one of the earliest forms of the joint-stock company— and an important site of cultural production. This dissertation examines how racial constructs work together to produce and reproduce processes of exclusion, systems of signification, and social hierarchies to argue that the invention of the "white race" is rooted in racial and class-based threats to the established social order.

INTRODUCTION

The Fascists know that we long to be rid of hatred and terror and oppression, to be rid of conquering and of being conquered, to be rid of all the ugliness of poverty and imperialism that eat away the heart of life today. We represent the end of race. And the Fascists know that when there is no more race, there will be no more capitalism, no more war, and no more money for the munition makers, because the workers of the world will have triumphed.

> —Langston Hughes, "Too Much of Race," 1937[1]

We got to face some facts. That the masses are poor, that the masses belong to what you call the lower class, and when I talk about the masses, I'm talking about the white masses, I'm talking about the black masses, and the brown masses, and the yellow masses, too. We've got to face the fact that some people say you fight fire best with fire, but we say you put fire out best with water. We say you don't fight racism with racism—we're gonna fight racism with solidarity. We say you don't fight capitalism with no black capitalism; you fight capitalism with socialism.

> —Fred Hampton, "Power Anywhere Where There's People," 1969[2]

This dissertation engages with ongoing discussions about the concept of race in the Late Middle Ages and early modern period. This focus allows me to interpret early texts in new ways while at the same time investigating how the early histories of race continue to inform, construct, and maintain modern racisms. Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to engage with the theoretical debates in recent work on premodern race by offering a different approach. My goal is to analyze the Western European Christian understandings of race by focusing on the intersection between race, religion, and emergent capitalism from the late-fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. I complicate previous scholarship on early modern culture by

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[1] Langston Hughes gave the speech, "Too Much of Race," at the Second international Writers Congress held in Paris in July 1937. The speech was printed in *Crisis Magazine* in September 1937.

[2] Former Black Panther Party member and revolutionary martyr, Fred Hampton, gave the speech, "Power Anywhere Where There's People" at the Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago in 1969. It has been made available by the Hampton Institute: https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/power-anywhere-where-theres-people-fred-hampton

understanding emergent capitalism as "racial capitalism" and discussing racial capitalism as it relates to late-medieval and early modern English literature and literary culture, especially drama, in order to reframe the stories that we tell about human difference as we seek to reconstruct our contested pasts. By using the methodologies employed in critical race theory (CRT) and critical whiteness studies (CWS), I re-examine the long history of race thinking and racialization alongside the development of emergent *racial* capitalism. While many scholars working in late-medieval and early modern studies have focused on somatic difference, anti-Blackness, and skin color prejudice and its relationship to literature, very few have discussed this period's drama and its representation of "race" in relation to emergent capitalism. My dissertation examines "whiteness" in English drama as a racial category not solely defined by skin color. Throughout this study, I ask: What is the relationship between the primitive accumulation of capital and historical processes of racial formation? What does it mean to present issues of race and class on stage before an audience? What does it mean to put racialized bodies on the stage, especially for the development of a capitalist system that commodifies bodies and even souls? The purchase my dissertation gets from focusing on "race" is in a clarification of how systemic *racism* emerged from early cultural productions, like ones on the London stage, and how these texts exemplify an early stage of racialized representation that differed from, but prepared the way for, recent constructions of race.

As I began to conceptualize my dissertation in the Fall of 2020, I was energized by contemporary political movements, specifically the Black Lives Matter Movement, left critiques of identity politics, and discussions of race and capitalism. These discussions and debates have recently permeated the public consciousness, leading *The New Yorker*, for example, to publish an article titled "Is Capitalism Racist?" that argues against the central role of slavery in the rise of

capitalism and finds fault with the concept of "racial capitalism."[3] "Racial capitalism" is a concept developed by Cedric Robinson to explain the history of modern capitalism. Robinson builds on the work of intellectuals that used "racial capitalism" to understand South Africa's economy under apartheid. Robinson challenges his readers' assumptions about the origins of racism in the West. He argues that capitalism was "racial" because "racialism" had already seeped into feudal society in premodern Europe. He maintains that "racism was not simply a convention for ordering the relations of European to non-European peoples but has its genesis in the 'internal' relations of European peoples" (Robinson 2). I will expand on the concept of racial capitalism as it relates to my dissertation argument in another section of this introduction.

Periodization and Presentism

Unfortunately, both CRT and theories of capitalism(s) encounter a similar problem: periodization. At a broad level, "capitalism seems to arise *sui generis*" and race is understood "to occur only in *modern* time" (McMahon 2; Heng 16, emphasis in original). Marx disrupts this notion of capitalism in the first volume of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), arguing for the need to conceptualize "primitive accumulation" (or "previous accumulation" in Adam Smith's terminology) to account for the violent processes that "precede capitalistic accumulation" and create its preconditions (Marx 873 qtd. in McMahon 2). Therefore, Marx contends that "certain pre-capitalist forms of accumulation *are* in fact a prerequisite of the establishment of the [capitalist mode of production], if not a condition of its continued existence" (Smith 32, emphasis in original). This is not to say that *all history* becomes the history of the unfolding of racial capitalism.[4] As Joseph E. Inikori reminds us, "the history of capitalism is not

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[3] See Nicholas Lemann, "Is Capitalism Racist?," *The New Yorker*, 25 May 2020, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/05/25/is-capitalism-racist
[4] See Kaveh Yazdani and Dilip M. Menon, Introduction in *Capitalisms: towards a global history*, 2020. They argue that "in order to better understand the transition to and the history of capitalisms, developments in East, Central,

the history of everything" (252). It is important to complicate the notion of a history of capitalism by recognizing that there are multiple historical roles that various global regions played in the making of capitalisms; what I discuss throughout this dissertation is not *the history* of racial capitalism but *a history* of racial capitalism that is a contribution to a larger conversation about the entangled histories of racial capitalisms.

My dissertation pushes the boundaries of periodization and engages with history not simply as context, but as the necessary and inevitable foundation that enables us to explain our present. To a certain extent, we study our past through the lens of our present concerns, like the recent intensification of economic inequality and the problems with neoliberal identity politics. While I acknowledge that it is not productive to study the past only to confirm that it contains our own world in the making, I argue that this dissertation embraces a kind of productive and positive "presentism," or a productive way to study the past through the lens of scholar-activism.[5] The emergent fields of premodern critical race studies (PCRS) and early modern race studies often support this kind of legitimate presentism.[6] This presentism is a "value-conscious engagement with the past" (DiPietro and Grady 44). For example, in her book *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (2008), Lara Bovilsky "troubles the periodization of race that has been increasingly taken for granted among those who study race's early forms, a periodization that, [her] book will argue, has limited our ability to understand the history of race"

West, South, and Southeast Asia between the eighth and nineteenth centuries should be included in the narrative" (10).

[5] For detailed critiques of presentist criticism, see Good, "Presentism: Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism; Holbo, "Shakespeare Now: The Function of Presentism at the Critical Time"; Pechter, "What's Wrong with Literature?"; and Wells, "Historicism and 'Presentism' in Early Modern Studies" and *Shakespeare on Masculinity*. See also the three papers critical of presentist criticism given in Loewenstein. For brief overviews, see Moore; and Brown. Arguments on both sides can also be found in Grady, "SHAKSPER Roundtable: Presentism."

[6] In *Shakespeare's Universal Wolf*, Grady used the term "presentism" in a positive way to describe the critical methods that acknowledge the present's productive influence on interpretation (4–8). For another positive account of presentism see Fernie, "Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism."

(2). Embracing a kind of productive presentism, Bovilsky describes how race is presented on the English Renaissance stage through narratives of fluidity and through the representation of an individual crossing a racial boundary or changing an affiliation. She notes that because these narratives "characterize racial experience transhistorically, they should be seen as central to the study of race—not as an impediment to substantive analysis as has often been assumed by early modern historicism" (3). She argues that "early modern racial logics have much in common with modern and contemporary ones, including most of all those elements that make racial identities unstable and incoherent, elements long believed specific to the earlier period" (3). English drama is particularly well suited to this kind of analysis because, as Bovilsky mentions, English plays are full of "interracial relationships," "cross-racial disguises," "discourses of conversion," "class transgression, troubled national boundaries, and narratives of physical and moral degeneracy" (3). This methodology will help me illuminate and analyze race-thinking that is already prevalent and constantly formulated and re-formulated with the emergence of capitalism throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Associated primarily with New Historicism, the initial opposition to PCRS or early modern race studies was encapsulated in one word: anachronism. Often, "anachronism" was informally implemented as a strategy to arouse fear and discomfort or stop a conversation about premodern race altogether. This "automatic reflex" response, as Peter Erickson and Kim F. Hall describe it, too easily slides into "blanket denial" (4). As many early modern race scholars have suggested, the overemphasis on anachronism in early modern literary studies has died down. On the one hand, this has encouraged a wave of scholar-activists to pursue various intellectual perspectives on race in the early modern period and its political significance. This created a collective energy in expanding the scope of early modern race scholarship globally,

transnationally, cross-historically, and across disciplines, languages, and archives. On the other hand, this proactive acknowledgment of the connection between the early modern and contemporary periods has caused problematic moments of genuine anachronism, or conflation between the past and present, especially in the "public" humanities and liberal journalism.

Presentism is not always productive. It can be risky and controversial; it can create illegitimate readings of the past that impose our own attitudes and anxieties. This was the case with aspects of "The 1619 Project" in *The New York Times Magazine* created by Nikole Hannah-Jones.[7] With a one-hundred-page magazine and a sixteen-page section in the *New York Times*, the 1619 Project's goal is to "reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation's birth year" (Hannah-Jones 4).[8] Certain events transpired in 1619, events that form the basis for declaring a point of origin: in that year, an English privateer, the *White Lion*, attacked a Portuguese ship, the *San Juan Bautista*, and stole around twenty captured Angolans. On August 20, the *White Lion* landed in Jamestown, and the Angolan prisoners were traded for food, marking the arrival (perhaps the *first* arrival, though we may never know for certain) of indentured Africans and European women at the first permanent English settlement in the New World. Four hundred years later, the 1619 Project aims to highlight the year 1619 (as opposed to 1776) to place "the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country" (Hannah-Jones 5).[9] It has since been criticized by historians Michael Guasco, Victoria Bynum, James

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[7] Nikole Hannah-Jones was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 2020 for her work on the project. Hannah-Jones is not a historian; she is a journalist and the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant." In 2022, she was paid over $1 million to speak about race at colleges.
[8] Originally published in August of 2019, *The New York Times Magazine'*s "1619 Project" is a series of essays that range in topic from the importance of 1619 as a foundational date in the history of our country to tax and healthcare policy, city planning, voter turnout, education reform, and the politics of race in the present-day. For more information, please see: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html
[9] *NYT Magazine*, August 18, 2019, p. 5

McPherson, James Oakes, Gordon Wood and Sean Wilentz, among others, for its historical inaccuracy and over-simplification of the past, especially the nature and origins of slavery in British North America, and eventually had to be corrected seven months after its initial release.[10]

Despite dispute from fact-checkers like historian Leslie M. Harris, the 1619 Project's characterizations of slavery in early America reflected laws and practices more common in the antebellum republic than in colonial times, incorrectly claimed that the central motive of the American Revolution was to maintain slavery, and did not accurately illustrate the varied experiences of the generation of African people that arrived in Virginia around 1619.[11] Critics of the 1619 Project, including right-wing conservatives, have used some of the project's misleading claims to undermine its aim to reinterpret American history through the lens of the history of African American subjugation.[12] This includes Mary Grabar's *Debunking The 1619 Project: Exposing the Plan to divide America* (2022), Phillip W. Magness's *The 1619 Project: A Critique* (2020), and Peter Wood's *1620: A Critical Response to the 1619 Project* (2020). The latter argues that the "proper starting point for the American story is 1620, with the signing of the Mayflower Compact aboard ship before the Pilgrims set foot in the Massachusetts wilderness" (Wood 7). Wood further claims that America "was and is humanity's great attempt to create a society based on principles of freedom and equality" (Wood 7). He also warns readers about

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[10] See the *NYT Magazine*, "We Responded to the Historians Who Critiqued the 1619 Project," December 20, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html. This response was criticized in an article titled "The 1619 Project and the falsification of history: An analysis of the *New York Times'* reply to five historians" by David North and Eric London on the *World Socialist Web Site*, https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/12/28/nytr-d28.html. See "An Update to the 1619 Project," March 11, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/magazine/an-update-to-the-1619-project.html; and Michael Guasco, "The Fallacy of 1619: Rethinking the History of Africans in Early America," *Black Perspectives*, September 4, 2017, https://www.aaihs.org/the-fallacy-of-1619-rethinking-the-history-of-africans-in-early-america/
[11] Leslie M. Harris, "I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. *The Times* Ignored Me," *Politico*, March 6, 2020, https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/03/06/1619-project-new-york-times-mistake-122248
[12] See Sean Wilentz, "A Matter of Facts." *The Atlantic*, January 22, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/1619-project-new-york-times-wilentz/605152/

adopting the 1619 Project in public school curricula.[13] Former U.S. President Trump established

the 1776 Commission (also known as the "1776 Project") as an alternative to the 1619 Project,

helping to ignite the culture war over CRT in public schools. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in

2021, the 1776 Commission issued a forty-five-page report supporting "patriotic education," a

document that was not authored by historians and did not include citations or scholarly

references.[14] Although this commission has been terminated, the members of the commission

have created a Political Action Committee (PAC) called "1776 Action" to "correct egregious

instances of anti-American indoctrination" and fund campaigns to promote blatant American

nationalist propaganda.[15]

On the other end of the political spectrum, David North and Thomas Mackaman's *The*

New York Times' 1619 Project and the Racialist Falsification of History (2021) criticizes the

1619 Project for marginalizing and even eliminating "class conflict as a notable factor in history

and politics" by prioritizing racial conflict without discussing class struggle.[16] The 1619 Project

remains an ongoing conversation among scholars and journalists and has been revised, expanded,

and published into a book titled *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (2021) with both

articles—including an essay by Matthew Desmond on "Capitalism"—and works of fiction.[17]

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[13] See the Pulitzer Center's *The 1619 Project* Curriculum: https://pulitzercenter.org/lesson-plan-grouping/1619-project-curriculum. Wood argues against teaching children "that America is a four-hundred-year-old system of racist oppression," advocating instead for teaching children "that what has always made America exceptional is our pursuit of liberty and justice for all." Wood has been praised by right-wing scholars like Mary Grabar, author of the book *Debunking The 1619 Project: Exposing the Plan to divide America* (2022) that teaches readers "how to fight CRT in your school." Grabar describes the 1619 Project as a "jumble of lies, half-lies, logical fallacies, bad history, and bad faith [that is] motivated by greed and hatred of America."

[14] *The 1776 Report* was released on January 18, 2021, two days before the end of Trump's term. Two days later, the report was removed from the White House website and the 1776 Commission was terminated by President Biden.

[15] The 1776 PAC is "dedicated to electing school board members committed to abolishing CRT from public school curriculum." See the "1776 Action" website, especially their "About" page: https://www.1776action.org/about/.

[16] This book draws from the articles on the World Socialist Web Site that I mentioned earlier in the introduction.

[17] This topped the *NYT* best-seller list. The *NYT* has also released the "1619" podcast hosted by Nikole Hannah-Jones. "The 1619 Project," a documentary series that explores the legacy of slavery in modern day America, premiered January 26th, 2023, on Hulu.

Matthew Desmond's essay has also been criticized by historians of American capitalism for historical inaccuracies and contradictions; for example, Desmond states that the U.S. has a "peculiarly brutal version of capitalism" that he calls "low-road capitalism" due to American slavery (166).[18] Desmond generalizes and reduces the experiences of poor white workers and yeoman to the privilege of their "white" skin color, stating that the American slave system "allowed [white workers] to roam freely and feel a sense of entitlement."[19] The essay promotes an American-exceptionalist viewpoint by failing to examine the history of capitalism in colonial America and American capitalism in context with the histories of global capitalism and the world economy. Simply put, as Anievas and Nişancıoğlu argue in *How the West Came to Rule* (2015), "the origins and history of capitalism can only be properly understood in international or geopolitical terms" and "this very 'internationality' is constitutive of capitalism as a historical mode of production" (2). Instead of examining capitalism as a transient and historically specific unit of study, Desmond claims that "America promotes a particular kind of…racist capitalism that ignores the fact that slavery didn't just deny Black freedom but built white fortunes, originating the Black-white wealth gap that annually grows wider" because "American capitalism was founded on the lowest road there is" (185). He asserts that "rare and muscular moments of multi-racial solidarity" were "exceptions" (Desmond 185). At the end of his essay, a reader steps away thinking that there is no alternative to this kind of capitalism, a sentiment that has often prevented capitalism from being "a 'respectable object of analysis" in university

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[18] "Low-road capitalism" is Wisconsin sociologist Joel Rogers's term.
[19] For more information on the first version of Matthew Desmond's essay in The 1619 Project, please see: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html

history departments across the world until the Great Recession of 2008[20] and the international

socio-political movements that followed, including the Occupy Movement.[21]

While the questionable methodology of the 1619 Project serves as a cautionary tale, the

debates that it sparked afterwards are valuable. As a productively presentist project, my

dissertation will contribute to the collective effort by anti-racist and anti-capitalist scholar-

activists; I hope that by centering the conversation on emerging racial capitalism in the late-

medieval and early modern periods, I will effectively engage with liberal American

exceptionalist thinkers like Nikole Hannah-Jones, in order to build resistance to racial capitalist

structures of oppression. My dissertation does not seek to completely disvalue liberal identity

politics and its goals; instead, my hope is that it will improve them by both acknowledging and

moving beyond individual identities and towards collective struggle and solidarity.

My methodological framework follows race scholars Michael Omi and Howard Winant's

concept of "racial formation," defined "as the sociohistorical process by which racial categories

are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" through "historically situated *projects* in

which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized" (55-6, emphasis in

original). A "*racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of

racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial*

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[20] Anievas and Nişancioğlu discuss this in the introduction to *How the West Came to Rule*. They emphasize that "after stock markets came crashing down in 2008, the force of history reasserted itself in a series of revolutions, occupations of public places, anti-austerity protests, strikes, riots and anti-state movements taking place from London to Ferguson (Missouri), Athens, Cairo, Istanbul, Rojava, Santiago and beyond. Such movements have torn at the hubristic certainties of 'capitalist realism' and started to sporadically – if inconsistently – challenge such long-held 'common sense' truisms and the power structures that undergird them" (1). In 2013, *The New York Times* discussed this renewed attention to the study of capitalism. See Schuessler, Jennifer. "In History Departments, It's up with Capitalism." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 7 Apr. 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/07/education/in-history-departments-its-up-with-capitalism.html?hpw
[21] In eighty-two countries across the globe, protestors occupied spaces with the slogan "We are the 99%" and participated in the decentralization of power from the top 1%. See the introduction to *Shakespeare and the 99%: Literary Studies, the Profession, and the Production of Inequity*.

lines" (Omi and Winant 56, emphasis in original). *NYT Magazine*'s "The 1619 Project," for example, is a "liberal" racial project, while the blocking of a proposed Advanced Placement course focused on African American studies by Florida's education department is a "neoconservative" one.[22] Omi and Winant's concept of "racial formation" exposes the historically conditional and unstable ways in which human difference is transformed into race and the deep involvement of the state in organizing and interpreting racial categories to support social systems and hierarchies. Although their study focuses on modern-day racial formation and racial projects in the United States, they trace the roots of racial formation and racial projects to early modern European encounters with Indigenous peoples, identifying race as an important "master category" of human difference in the early modern period (Omi and Winant 106). As decades of early modern race scholarship similarly argue, race was a significant category in early modern cultural formation. I contribute to this fruitful and exciting field of early modern race studies by coordinating the concept of racial formation with the structure of racial capitalism in order to analyze and interpret representations of racial difference on the late-medieval and early modern English stage.

Racial Capitalism

One of the primary aims of this dissertation is to reject racial identity as the principal and essential analytic category that has replaced social class and instead offer a way to consider racial identity formation as deeply intertwined with social class. In the field of PCRS, racial theorizing cannot be void of analyzing both the origins of race-making *and* emerging capitalism in early modern England. I argue that the field must center its collective energy on exploring

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[22] For more information on "liberal" versus "neoconservative" racial projects, see Omi and Winant, p. 53-61. For more information about Florida's department of education, see "High schoolers threaten to sue DeSantis over ban of African American studies course," *NPR*, https://www.npr.org/2023/01/25/1151376707/advanced-placement-african-american-studies-desantis-crump-lawsuit

racial formation through the transhistorical and transnational economic and political processes that gave rise to capitalism. In other words, it is important to examine not only the historical processes of race-making, but also their relationship to the primitive accumulation of capital in order to articulate a history of racial capitalism.

The first example of primitive accumulation of capital is an image all too familiar to us in American political discourse: "an individual, by dint of hard work and their own labour, and by virtue of saving and frugality, builds up (i.e. accumulates) a sufficient surplus to set him- or herself up as a capitalist and thereby frees themselves from the necessity to labour in future" (Smith 32). This image of an individual pulling themselves up by their bootstraps is an ideal type of pre-capitalist accumulation that is often celebrated by defenders of the capitalist system. By contrast, Marx emphasizes that "the chief momenta of primitive accumulation" are robbery, conquest, murder, the forcible enclosure of common lands, "the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies," and "the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins" (Marx qtd. in Smith 33). Despite this explanation of the racial aspects of the primitive accumulation of capital, most scholarship on the histories of capitalism, from Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (1946 and 1963) to the two-volume *Cambridge History of Capitalism* (2014), have neglected to offer a global approach to the emergence and development of capitalism and have paid little attention to the relation of Atlantic slavery to capitalism.[23] That said, it is important to highlight scholars like sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein

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[23] Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* was published soon after the end of World War II; when his immediate expectations of the imminent end of capitalism were disappointed as capitalism stabilized after the war, his work provoked considerable debate throughout the 1950s, and he published a revised edition of his text in 1963. For a global approach on the discussion of the relation of slavery to capitalism, see Chapter 2 in *Capitalisms: towards a global history*.

and historian Henry Heller who acknowledge the early modern origins of world capitalism. Heller discusses "the role of the state in the fostering of colonialism and slavery, which were critical to overcoming the global marginality of the capitalist West and enabling it to impose itself politically, and eventually economically, over so much of the world" (Heller 8-9).

It is also important to acknowledge the Eurocentrism prevalent in certain political Marxist scholarship. Scholars "from Dobb onwards took both an economistic and a Eurocentric view of capitalism's origins, conceiving capitalism as a purely economic system and either assuming it to be a quintessentially European phenomenon or defining it in ways that left the distinctiveness of capitalism outside Europe out of account;" these views are "historically incorrect" (Heller 4). For example, Robert Brenner and his school—including Ellen Meiksins Wood—contribute to this Eurocentrism within Marxist scholarship. Brenner is most famous for his interpretation of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. He argues that capitalism arose in late medieval England as the unintended consequence of landlords' practical attempts to maintain control during a time of peasant revolt and decline of serfdom. Unlike most landlords across Europe, English landlords could enclose and engross peasant holdings, and lease them out as large-scale tenancies to yeomen who employed the wage-earning former peasants who no longer had subsistence holdings.[24] According to Brenner, England's economy developed distinctly from other European countries because of a persistent class and power structure. Many scholars have debated his claims; for the purposes of my dissertation, it is important to highlight that Brenner's economism "downplays the significance of primitive accumulation and absolute exploitation on a world scale" (Heller 5). In *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (2017),

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[24] See Robert Brenner's essay, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe." For a thorough defense of Brenner's argument on the origins of capitalism, please see Spencer Dimmock's *The Origin of Capitalism in England, 1400-1600.*

Wood, like Spencer Dimmock, builds on and defends Brenner's work on the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England. Wood defines capitalism as "a system in which goods and services, down to the most basic necessities of life, are produced for profitable exchange, where even human labour-power is a commodity for sale in the market, and where all economic actors are dependent on the market" (2). Rather than dismissing this Marxist scholarship because of its Eurocentrism, I argue that it is useful to think about this definition of capitalism and its origins in England alongside Robinson's notion that capitalism is racial capitalism.

In *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), Cedric Robinson traces the roots of Black radical thought, rewrites the history of the rise of the West, and provides a critique of Western Marxist theory's inability to comprehend the racial character of capitalism. Robinson explains that "the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions" (2). Robinson not only traces the roots of racism or "racialization" to premodern European civilizations, but also the origins of capitalism.[25] In other words, Robinson argues that capitalism and racism evolved from premodern Europe together "to produce a modern world system of 'racial capitalism' dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide" (Kelley xiii).[26] It is important to highlight Robinson's emphasis on racial capitalism as a world system; this interpretation is where Marxist scholars like Brenner and his school fall short. About a decade before Robinson's text, sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein published the first volume of his most famous work, *The Modern World System I* (1974) that theorizes capitalism as a world system with a core-periphery economic structure.[27]

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[25] A similar concept to Omi and Winant's "racial formation," racialization is not static "race" but refers to how race is made.

[26] See Foreword to *Black Marxism* by Robin D. G. Kelley.

[27] Both Wallerstein and Robinson studied postcolonial Africa and the African diaspora and both scholars criticized the traditional Marxian view of the development of capitalism from feudalism. Although Wallerstein does not directly discuss "race," his world systems theory is an analytical tool or framework that lends itself to the examination of systemic inequalities at a macroscopic level. Robinson briefly engages with Wallerstein's work

For Wallerstein, capitalism is defined at the basic level as a world system that prioritizes the endless accumulation of capital. As Jodi Melamed explains in her article "Racial Capitalism" (2015): "Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups," including social construct of racial hierarchies (77). Accumulation requires loss, dispossession and disposability, and the notion of unequal human value. By understanding that "the procedures of racialization and capitalism are ultimately never separable from each other," we can see that the capitalism that Marx discusses is already racial capitalism.[28] Racism, Melamed argues, "enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires" (77). Remarkably, capitalism is underexamined in many works on modern race, including David Theo Goldberg's *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (1993), which offers an anti-essentialist and non-reductionist account of racialized discourse and racist expression by prioritizing racial identity. More recently, Antonio Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres have provided a useful example of moving beyond the "race versus class" debate. In *After Race* (2004), they present a definition of race as "an ideology that has served well to successfully obscure and disguise class interests behind the smokescreen of multiculturalism, diversity, difference, and more recently, whiteness" (Darder and Torres 1). Throughout my dissertation, I aim to recover class analysis as an

several times throughout his book; for example, he cites Wallerstein's work and claims that, in the seventeenth century: "As the capitalist strata of western Europe achieved political, social, and ideological maturity, their jockeying for hegemony over the world system reduced African labor in its homelands and in the New World peripheries to pawns of power" (Robinson 140).

[28] On the Black radical tradition: "At the center of the Black radical tradition is 'the shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being, the ontological totality.' In the hundreds of acts of resistance Robinson recounts, from seventeenth-century maroon communities in the Americas to twentieth-century national liberation struggles, collective resistance takes the form of (re)constituting collectives. Defying racial capitalist modes of differentiation that would undermine conditions for peoplehood, the Black radical tradition is antiracist, anticapitalist, and collective-making because it is a name for struggles that arrange social forces for Black survival over and against capital accumulation" (Melamed 80).

analytical tool in examining racism by defining capitalism as racial capitalism *and* by engaging with a subfield of PCRS that focuses on premodern critical whiteness studies.

Like many scholars in the fields of medieval and early modern studies, Robinson locates racialization of the proletariat within Europe, before the European encounter with African laborers in the Virginia Colony around 1619. Unlike many scholars, however, he examines the issue of racialization alongside the development of capitalism. Although the aim of his work is to explore the "Black Radical Tradition" and the history of the Black radical movement, both of which are outside the scope of this dissertation, I posit that his methodology is useful for current literary scholars to take our field in a direction that might bring us closer to understanding race-making in late-medieval and early modern literature and drama.

Late Medieval and Early Modern Race

The histories of race have been recently mobilized to support a wide range of political and social movements; because of this, there is a lot at stake when researching, narrating, and understanding any history of race. Throughout Europe, premodern societies employed the concept of "race" for centuries before the dawn of modernity. Premodern European societies were divided and bound together by "race;" they often gave "race" multiple meanings at once, creating "imagined" racial communities that became the foundations of social relations, institutions, and the structures that continue to shape our lives in the present day. In her introduction to the Bedford Texts and Contexts edition of Shakespeare's *Othello*, Kim F. Hall claims, "when examining race in the play…, it is fruitful to think beyond notions of color or physiognomy; rather, consider that race may include religion, geography, family, nationality, body shape, and adornment, speech, sexuality, and habits of consumption" (5). For Hall, early

modern "race" or "race-thinking" becomes so broad a category that it can be equated with larger categories like "identity" and "difference."

The word "race" had multiple meanings in early modern England and indicated a wide range of discourses and practices. While England did have a specific history of racialization and race-thinking that I will analyze throughout this dissertation, England's race-making discourses are also a part of a larger transnational history. Written in French in 1684, François Bernier's anonymous essay, "A New Division of the Earth, according to the Different Species or Races of Men who Inhabit It," is presumably the first use of the term "race" to classify human beings according to their skin color and physiognomy.[29] Throughout the text, Bernier uses the term "race" interchangeably with "species." Although most writers did not yet use the term "race," notions of race in premodern Europe travel and transform in their circulation; they "might be drawn from one location or people and conceptually assimilated to another to confer value or contempt, and in turn to facilitate political practice" (Burton and Loomba 20). This "discursive scrambling" or "discursive transferability" is "an integral part of attempts to engage with, manage, and control peoples considered exotic, strange, or hostile" (Burton and Loomba 20). For example, in terms of physical appearance and "unchangeable" qualities, the Jews were compared to "gypsies," Africans, "Moors," and Native Americans; the "wild" Irish were compared to Native Americans; and Herodotus's contention that gender roles are reversed among Egyptians becomes a pattern used to describe alien cultures (Burton and Loomba 20-1).

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[29] In French the title is "Nouvelle division de la terre, par les différentes espèces ou races d'hommes qui l'habitent." It was translated into English by T. Bendyshe (London, 1863-64). See Burton and Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, pp. 272-4.

Rather than focusing on finding a singular definition of race in the Middle Ages or a definition of race in our contemporary period, I engage with recent scholarship that analyzes race as a structure and explores the ways in which that structure changes in specific contexts, places, and time periods. With the exception of those who study certain inherited disorders like Tay-Sachs disease and Sickle Cell anemia, researchers in the biological sciences reject "race." I engage with race as a social construct, not a natural or a biological category, tied to the economic processes that gave rise to capitalism.

In her important and influential study, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018), Geraldine Heng provides a useful conceptualization of race in the European Middle Ages. Her book begins with a helpful explanation of race drawn from the cultural-anthropological work of Ann Laura Stoler:

> "Race" is one of the primary names we have – a name we retain for the strategic, epistemological, and political commitments it recognizes – that is attached to a repeating tendency, of the gravest import, to demarcate human beings through differences among humans that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups. Race-making thus operates as specific historical occasions in which strategic essentialisms are posited and assigned through a variety of practices and pressures, so as to construct a hierarchy of peoples for differential treatment. My understanding, thus, is that race is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content. (Heng 3)

Race is continually being negotiated; it has "no singular or stable referent" (Heng 19). While the structure of race remains the same by distinguishing human beings through difference, the

content changes throughout time and place. Heng views race as "a blank that is contingently filled under an infinitely flexible range of historical pressures and occasions" (Heng 20). For Heng, "our current moment of flexible definitions—a moment in which cultural race and racisms, and *religious* race, jostle alongside race-understood-as-somatic/biological determinations—uncannily renews key medieval instrumentalizations in the ordering of human relations" (20). Building on Heng's work, I explore how race can be both old and traditional and, at the same time, new and recently developing, and go beyond her scope by rooting racial formation to not only mercantilism in late-medieval England, but also the processes of the primitive accumulation of capital and emerging capitalism in the early modern period.

In the early modern period, the term "race" is a slippery one. "Race" is at once semiotically malleable and fixed. While race is defined as a kind of categorical sorting of human similarity and difference, in this period, racial categories can be fluid and unformed. That is to say, early modern "race" can simultaneously mean a class-based genealogy, essentialized nature, lineage, species, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religion *and* be very specifically defined for multiple purposes. Throughout this dissertation, I will address the variety of early modern concepts of human difference with particular attention to whiteness, religion, and class. It is important to note that even when racial ideologies and racist practices became more entrenched and deep-rooted in later periods, there still was no singular approach or agreement about human difference. This is often overlooked by scholars and non-scholars alike who emphasize only the gap between the malleable early modern racial ideologies and the more rigid modern ones.[30]

For example, in *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (2010), Jean E. Feerick uses the concept of early modern race as blood to focus on racial formation while

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[30] See Loomba and Burton, p. 7

neglecting to discuss class or the economic processes tied to emerging capitalism. In an endnote, she attempts to explain the differences between race and class. Feerick states, "where *class* is a term that names a social identity, early modern *race* names a 'natural' or 'pre-cultural' identification, one believed to be transmitted generationally through the blood" (183, emphasis in original). The distinction that she makes between class and race is unclear. What does she mean by class as a "social identity?" What does she mean by race as a "'natural'" or 'pre-cultural' identification?" She further states that race "suggests a fundamentally different conception of the relationship between society and nature than exists for modern class formations, one wherein social divisions are ordained by nature" (Feerick 183). It seems that she is choosing not to discuss class and instead choosing to theorize race as separate from class by focusing on blood and blood relations. This is in direct conflict with defining emergent capitalism as emergent *racial* capitalism. While the theory that racism can be connected to capitalism has been around for several decades, some of the questions that remain are: how does this connection work in late-medieval and early modern England? To what extent are racism and capitalism inseparable? How is this reflected and represented in, or influenced by, English drama? To begin to answer these questions, I turn to the subfield of critical whiteness studies.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Today's scientists argue that racial categories are weak proxies for genetic diversity; they contend that "whites and blacks have more genes in common than the ones that distinguish them—the variability between the average white and the average black, in genetic makeup and physical appearance, is less than the variability within each group (Delgado and Stefancic 1). Meanwhile, the law has continued to play a large part in defining who is part of the "white race," and even in changing the physical features of the American population so that southern-

European immigrants, for example, became "white" in the twentieth century. In fact, many scholars locate the invention of the "white race" in the late seventeenth-century Virginia legal codes. Historians have known the details of these Virginia statues from surviving county records and William Waller Hening's *The Statues at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia*, *from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year of 1619*, published in thirteen volumes between 1809 and 1823. However, the paucity of surviving evidence regarding the legal status of Africans and their descendants in the Virginia Colony has frustrated historians of the transatlantic slave trade, particularly those researching the development of anti-Black racism in early America. As previously stated, we do know that in August of 1619, Angolan captives were taken from the Portuguese slave ship *São João Bautista* by the English pirate ships *White Lion* and *Treasurer* and traded with Virginia colonists for provisions at Point Comfort. This could likely be the first documented presence of Africans in the Virginia colony. While we know that among them there was a man named Anthony and a woman named Isabella who gave birth to a child named William, the surviving record contains disappointingly little direct information regarding their status and treatment.[31]

Although the first session of the Virginia legislature began that same year, the surviving demographic documentation from 1619 throughout the 1620s consists of only three censuses. These documents establish "that arriving African captives were initially placed under some sort of service obligation and that the number being delivered to Virginia continued to increase;" but, they offer little in the way of definitive information on their geographical and social distribution or social standing (Coombs 213). Although the evidence from the 1630s includes fifty land patents and three land certificates among other records, these documents do not establish the

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[31] See Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin* Story, p. 2.

legal or social standing of non-European bondspeople. In short, "regarding the key issue of their legal status, throughout the first thirty-five years of an African presence in Virginia there remained what effectively amounts to statutory silence" (Coombs 214). This silence can be interpreted in many ways, and scholars have debated the purpose and meaning of this silence beyond chalking it up to insufficient record-keeping and inadequate archival practices. This silence may have to do with the crucial fact that, "from a strictly technical point of view, slavery was not legal in the English-speaking world before the mid- seventeenth century" (Guasco 4).

Some scholars argue that this silence stemmed from a lack of clarity and the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of "slave(s)" and "Negroe servant(s)." Michael Guasco, for example, argues that until the 1650s, there was uncertainty about how to define the status "of the earliest generation of African peoples" and "how to deal with them under the law" that reflected reticence (Guasco qtd. in Coombs 214).[32] In 1661, both Barbados and Virginia enacted laws to legalize slavery; before the 1660s, however, the Africans that were taken to the British North American colonies may have been held in perpetual bondage, but "slavery was neither systematic nor routine" (Guasco 4). Therefore, the English colonists did not initially regard African forced labor as life-long and inheritable servitude.[33] Others disagree, however, and argue that the English embraced racial hierarchies that held Africans as perpetually enslaved people and exploited their labor from 1619 onwards. Coombs takes this position one step further and argues that the Virginia government's prolonged statutory silence concerning the legal standing of African captives "stemmed not from any reticence or lack of clarity about their eligibility for enslavement, but rather from certitude that they could be reduced to such a condition" (216).

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[32] See also Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern World,* p. 204–6
[33] See Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585*–1660, p. 312–23.

Participating in this "origins debate," scholars disagree on the importance of the year 1619. Many historians maintain that the arrival of the first generation of captive Africans in the Virginia Colony was rather unremarkable.[34] The year 1619 is not necessarily the beginning of slavery in early Anglo-American history and because of this, its significance really depends on how *historians tell the story*. "If historians are to be believed," Guasco proclaims, "1619 represents the beginning of all that America would come to be in subsequent decades and centuries" (197). Guasco is not alone in challenging the importance of the year 1619; he asserts that "the arrival of a small shipload of Africans, much like the occasion of an accidental English invasion of an unwanted island, merely created another opportunity for Anglo-Americans to build on their previous experiences with slavery and African peoples in the early modern Atlantic world" (197). He maintains that "it is parochial at best and misleading at worst to imply that 1619 was all that new" because the English had become deeply familiar with Africans by the time the *White Lion* and *Treasurer* appeared at Point Comfort (197). These scholars assert that in the early decades of the Virginia Colony, the word "slave" did not have a fixed meaning and even in the 1660s, the Virginia courts had not defined whether the status of enslaved Africans was perpetual. I maintain that while the year 1619 *may* be the first documented presence of Africans in Virginia, it is not necessarily the marker of the beginning of slavery in the British North American Colonies. It is still unclear whether these Africans were considered slaves in the Colonies and therefore, difficult to assess 1619 as a significant year in both the history of pre-plantation slavery in the U.S. and the histories of racism in the Western world.

I present a very different way to tell this story: although a thorough examination of the debate over the meanings of the terms "slave(s)" and "Negroe servant(s)" in the Colonies is

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[34] For an overview of this so-called "origins debate," see Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," in Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism*, p. 136–74.

outside the scope of this dissertation, I am interested in the usage of the term "slave" and its relationship to racial formation in early modern English literature and on the English stage. My dissertation engages with the questions raised by early modern scholars from the perspective of CWS and studies of the roots of racial capitalism. CWS is an interdisciplinary field that examines the role of race and racism in the construction of white identity. Whiteness or white identity is not a biologically determined fact, but a social and historical construct that is constantly changing and evolving over time. As a subfield of PCRS, early modern critical whiteness studies is a relatively new field that analyzes the history of the formation of whiteness as a racial category. Early modern scholars engaging in CWS have examined the social construction of whiteness, whiteness as a source of systemic racism, the roots of white supremacy, white privilege, and the invention of the "white race."

When the first documented Africans arrived in Virginia, some scholars assert that there were no *white* people there.[35] In *The Invention of the White Race: Volume I* (2012), Theodore Allen draws on scholarship about seventeenth-century Virginia and the ruling elite's struggle to maintain social order to locate the beginnings of the "white race." While "African-American bond-laborers were increasing in number," they "still made up only one-fourth or one-fifth of the bond labor force until the 1690s" (Allen 16). Therefore, the largest threat to social order came from "propertyless, discontented, poverty-ridden European-Americans, mainly former limited-term bond-laborers" (Allen 16). The plantation bourgeoise feared the threat of labor solidarity. To respond to this fear, the Virginia Assembly passed "a series of acts" beginning in 1656 to "foster the contempt of whites for blacks and Indians" (Allen 17).[36] Thus, in the English colonies

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[35] See Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*. See also Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump*, p. 52.

[36] See also Act I (1643), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 1:242; Act VIII (1645), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 1:292; "An Induction to the Acts Concerning Indians," Act I (1656), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 1:396; "What

in North America, the "white race" was invented by the ruling class as a social-control formation tied to racial capitalism; in its own class interest, the ruling elite deliberately instituted a hierarchical system of racial privileges to define and maintain "the white race." The concept of a "white race" as a means of categorizing workers based on skin color and perceived cultural differences "became the pattern only where the bourgeoisie could not form its social control apparatus without the inclusion of propertyless European-Americans" (Allen 19). This concept of race as "whiteness" that can be inherited through the blood directly contradicts Jean E. Feerick's distinctions between race and class. This approach dulled class antagonisms among "the diverse settlers—Protestant and Jewish; English and Irish et al.—there was a perverse mitosis at play as these fragments cohered into a formidable whole of 'whiteness,' then white supremacy which involved class collaboration of the rankest sort between and among the wealthy and those not so endowed" (Horne 10-1). Creating this "white race" and the racial hierarchy not only maintained social order in the English colonies in North America, but also protected capitalists' interest. This argument highlights how the construction of whiteness is tied to class and how white privilege was created as a means of social control to maintain the capitalist system.

Moreover, in areas where the plantation bourgeoisie could maintain its social hierarchy without poor or propertyless white, European, Christian men, the means of social control was not necessarily tied to the construction of whiteness as a racial category. In the case of some of the

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Persons are Tithable," Act XLVI (1658), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large,* 1:454; "An Act for the Dutch and all other Strangers for Tradeing to this Place," Act XVI (1660) in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 1:540; "English Running Away with Negroes," Act XXII (1661) in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 2:26; "Negro Womens Children to Serve According to the Condition of the Mother," Act XII (1662), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 2:170; "An Act Declaring that Baptisme of Slaves Doth Not Exempt Them from Bondage," Act III (1667), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 2:260; "What Tyme Indians to Serve," Act XII (Oct., 1670), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, 2:283; "An Act to Repeale a Former Law Making Indians and Others Free," Act I (Nov., 1682), in Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large,* 2:490–92.

colonies in the British West Indies, for example, Allen posits that there were "too few free poor to matter" and therefore, the "white race" was not "the essence of the social control policy of the Anglo-American continental plantation bourgeoisie" (19). Allen is referring to Jamaica, where, according to Guasco, "the English did more than simply try to neutralize Afro-Jamaicans with peace treaties, they tried to incorporate them into their emerging colonial society" (196). Unlike Virginia and Jamaica, in the case of Barbados, the status of African bond-laborers was quickly determined by law; nearly a decade after the English settlers arrived with ten Africans in 1627, the Barbadian council and governor proclaimed unambiguously "that Negroes and Indians, that came here to be sold, should serve for life, unless a contract was before made to the contrary" (qtd. in Coombs 214).[37] The English colonists in Barbados quickly constructed a society rooted in the enslavement of African people and yet, unlike the Virginia Colony, the commodification of African labor in Barbados did not rely on the "invention" of the "white race." The difference here is tied to the economic institution of slavery. In Barbados, there was virtually no distinction between White servants and slaves. The indentured servants were treated similarly to the enslaved Africans; they were "'a species of property,' and could be pledged, mortgaged, and sold with estates to which they bore indentures" (Schorsch 8).[38] The Barbadian plantation owners held their White servants as enslaved workers and, though an exiguous amount, at least over a hundred African individuals were manumitted and maintained their status as free between 1650 and 1700.[39] I shed light on the "invention" of the "white race" in the Colony of Virginia and the lack thereof in the British West Indies to stress the importance of examining a multitude of racial

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[37] See also *Some Memoirs of the First Settlement of Barbados and Other the Carribbee Islands with the Succession of the Governours and Commanders in Chief of Barbados to the Year 1741 . . .* (Barbados, 1741), p. 19.
[38] This changes after the 1861 Slave Act. See Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century."
[39] See Guasco, pp. 214-5.

structures throughout the English colonies in and around the year 1619 alongside emerging capitalism.

In a recent book, *Creolizing Rosa Luxemburg* (2021), authors Rachel H. Brown, Siddhant Issar, and John McMahon turn to medieval race-making to complicate Luxemburg's analysis of imperialism and primitive accumulation as crucial and ongoing parts of capitalism. The authors bridge scholarship in the field of PCRS, especially the work of Geraldine Heng, and Rosa Luxemburg's reworking of the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation to "theorize the relationship between capital accumulation and constructions of race and whiteness from the European Middle Ages onwards" (McMahon et. al 2). They argue that what they call "*primitive accumulation of whiteness*" is "a necessary condition of possibility for the ongoing primitive accumulation of capital" (McMahon et. al 3, emphasis in original). Their concept of the primitive accumulation of whiteness is useful for theorizing racial capitalism.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Journalists have often presented a "whitewashed" version of the European Middle Ages. Nearly twenty years ago, "neomedievalists" represented "a vision of medieval Europe that is frozen within traditional notions of periodization and that is uniformly Christian and normatively white" in publications like "*Foreign Affairs*, *Time*, and the *Atlantic*" (Lampert 392-3). With the flooding of "medieval memes" in the mainstream media during Brexit and the 2016 U.S. presidential election, several popular newspapers and online magazines including *The Washington Post*, *HuffPost*, *The Economist*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* began publishing articles about the far-right's ongoing fascination with the European Middle Ages.[40]

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[40] See J. Clara Chan, "Medievalists, Recoiling from White Supremacy, Try to Diversify the Field." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 16, 2017, http://www.chronicle.com/article/Medievalists-Recoiling-From/240666 and S.N., "Medieval Memes: The Far Right's New Fascination with the Middle Ages," *The Economist*, January 2, 2017, http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2017/01/medieval-memes

Since the rise of Islamophobia after September 11, 2001, the alt-right has been weaponizing the medieval past as "a golden age of white racial homogeneity" (Whitaker 10). Drawn by the false narrative of cultural and racial homogeneity of the European Middle Ages, the far-right movements in the United States and abroad argue for the return to this fantasy age. They associate the European Middle Ages with both an imagined "Anglo-Saxon race," a pure white culture that is fundamentally innocent, and feudalism, a system that supposedly organized workers so that everyone was happy with their economic position. In recent years, members of the alt-right movement have been using their versions of the medieval past to normalize racist hatred, elect politicians that are sympathetic to their message, and incite racist violence.

In August 2017, members of the alt-right, neo-Confederates, neo-fascists, white nationalists, and neo-Nazis adopted medieval iconography, including "Deus Vult" (or "God Wills It") Crusader crosses, at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.[41] Most recently, rioters appropriated medieval symbols, including a "Deus Vult" flag, during the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.[42] #DeusVult has become a rallying cry for these (terrorist) groups because it evokes the distorted image of a Christian Crusader defending "the West" and its Christian and democratic values against the threat of Islam and the undemocratic "East."[43] During a time of rising neofascism, white supremacy, and xenophobia, it is our ethical responsibility as medieval and early modern scholars to push back against this reactionary misconstruction of the past.

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[41] For more information about Steve Bannon's role in this racist and violent movement, see Joseph Bernstein's *Buzzfeed* article from 2017, "Alt-White: How the Breitbart Machine Launched Racist Hate," https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/josephbernstein/heres-how-breitbart-and-milo-smuggled-white-nationalism

[42] Both turned deadly. The "Unite the Right" rally resulted in three deaths. The insurrection resulted in five deaths during the attack and four officer deaths by suicide.

[43] See Dorothy Kim's response to the second "Unite the Right" rally in Georgetown's *Berkeley Forum*: https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/the-alt-right-and-medieval-religions

My argument draws on medieval studies and critical race studies, and their intersection, studies of race in the European Middle Ages, or PCRS. The dialogue between those engaged with race as a historical and theoretical framework for analysis and medievalists began to take shape in the late-1990s. Before the turn of the twenty-first century, medieval historians and medieval literary scholars vacillated between various racial terminologies. They avoided using the terms "race," "racism," or "antisemitism" to discuss racial practices and racial formulations in the medieval period. Instead, many have preferred to use the terms "ethnicity," "difference," "ethnocentrism," "xenophobia," "premodern discriminations," "prejudice," "chauvinism," "fear of otherness and difference," and "anti-Judaism."[44] By dithering about the category of race, though, medieval scholars neglected the important tools of analysis that race studies can offer and disregarded a key piece of the long histories of race. Since the 1996 International Congress on Medieval Studies, however, there has been a shift in academic and public discussions on race in the Middle Ages.

In his article "The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World," Thomas Hahn describes the session "Race in the Middle Ages" with Michael Awkward at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo in 1996 that became a turning point for both the field of medieval studies and race studies. One of the main questions asked at that session was: "What, if anything, does medieval studies have to do with racial discourses?" (Hahn 1). The answer by most scholars at the conference was: very little. Medievalists regarded race studies as "a fashionable, politically driven niche subject whose single-minded, universalizing models import inappropriate or irrelevant interests to the study of the past" (Hahn 4). Race studies scholars regarded the Middle Ages as a period before race,

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[44] See Heng.

where race did not exist, or at the very least, where race did not function as a trope of difference. Medievalists, like William Chester Jordan, also deployed the accusation of presentism to deter the use of the terms race, racism, and antisemitism in medieval and early modern contexts.[45] Within the field of English literary studies, which this dissertation primarily engages with, the period after the Middle Ages, the "Renaissance," is often the key point of cultural development, including the development of racialism, in the West.[46]

Since the late-1990s, however, many medieval scholars have continued to explore questions of race, racism, antisemitism, and orientalism in numerous books and articles. The earliest discussions and critical examinations of premodern race includes a series of essays titled *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (2000) edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, the special issue titled "Race and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages" (2001) in the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* edited by Thomas Hahn that discusses the 1996 conference, and Lisa Lampert's "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages" (2004). In my first chapter, I will build on this work and continue to examine the Middle Ages within the theoretical framework of the histories of the concept of race to illuminate racism and racial capitalism. Then, I will analyze the late-medieval play, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, and examine its portrayal of religious and pseudobiological notions of race.

Race has recently become an important and very prominent field of investigation in medieval literary studies in particular. Over the last several years, medieval England has proved to be fertile ground for tracing the formulation of contemporary categories of race through an analysis of English literature and the history of England. However, Anglo-Jewish history has often been marginalized within the much larger field of "English history." In *Racism: A Short*

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[45] See William Chester Jordan, "Why 'Race'?" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31, 2001
[46] See Lampert, "Race and Periodicity," p. 395.

History (2002), George M. Fredrickson notes that investigations of antisemitism and "white supremacism" have "not engaged each other" but have remained distinct bodies of scholarship (157). For example, the special issue on race in the Middle Ages edited by Thomas Hahn (which I mentioned earlier) neglected a discussion of Jews, antisemitism, or anti-Judaism. Even though medieval Anglo-Jewish relations still have significance for contemporary notions of racism, traditional periodization often prevents some scholars from engaging with these medieval religious discourses.

My first chapter draws from Geraldine Heng's explanation of race to explore Christian identity in medieval England as a racialized identity. I argue that Christian identity is racialized through the ways it demarcates difference. This will elucidate the connection between Christian identity and the roots of emergent racial capitalism, as both forms of social ordering intertwine and seep into the dominant social structure. While building on Heng's work and the work of her predecessors, I will also address their gaps and limitations. Recently, S. J. Pearce criticized Heng for mischaracterizing source material about medieval Jews, for her exclusive use of English archives, and for presenting "the Jews of England in the language of England" (155). According to Pearce, Heng adopts anti-Jewish language to write about medieval Jews and therefore she does not follow through on developing her argument about the racialization and racialized representation of Jews, especially on the topic of moneylending and usury.[47] The most useful point in Pearce's argument is that Heng's focus on England and medieval English literature leads to misrepresentations. Pearce criticizes Heng for using medieval England and Anglo-Jewish

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[47] While Pearce makes it clear that she is not criticizing Heng's book because of the topic, the tone of her criticism is often unnecessarily condescending and nasty. Resorting to vitriolic attacks, she claims that Heng's book is "a masterclass in how not to write" (154). See Pearce, "The Inquisitor and the Moseret: *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* and the New English Colonialism in Jewish Historiography" (2020) and Heng's response, "Why the Hate? *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages,* and Race, Racism, and Premodern Critical Race Studies Today" (2020).

relations as "archetypes;" in Heng's book: "medieval England is an archetypal home for Jewish life in the Middle Ages which gives way to archetypal treatment and representation of Jews by Christians" (Pearce 157). I seek to avoid using England as an archetype for medieval Europe and creating distortions; thus, I organize my chapter around three main loci: medieval England, Spain after the Reconquista, and late nineteenth-century Europe, specifically "Germany" during the long nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 Introduction

Early modern English dramatists represented the foreign on their domestic stages, exposing the allure of the so-called Other while also limning the boundaries of the self. Racial difference was key to how the English self and non-English other were made legible. However, race was not then—as it is not now— a stable category or signifier; rather, it was in the process of being formed, negotiated, and circulated across continents. Throughout my second chapter, I highlight not only the importance of transhistorical perspectives, but also the importance of transatlantic perspectives of racialization rooted in English mercantile expansion and imperial conquest. Rather than focusing solely on England, I develop a historical perspective which considers the processes of circulation of racialism between continents during the crucial time of emerging racial capitalism. This chapter explores the historicity of racism as a transhistorical and transnational phenomenon that manifests in multiple forms of ideologies of "race" and racial discrimination in England, Iberia, and the transatlantic world. Thus, in this case, it is necessary to situate this chapter in the study of not a singular racism with a long history from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century and beyond, but *racisms* in the plural.

Preceding the formation of the "white race" in the Virginia legal codes, ideologies about English identity began to take shape in late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century England.

Race was negotiated through early modern English texts even as it was being discursively produced in official cultural documents, such as Queen Elizabeth I's 1601 draft proclamation calling for the collection and deportation of "divers blackamoors" from her kingdom (qtd. in Dadabhoy 30).[48] English race-thinking as somatic and cultural difference signaled power and domination; it was used as a tool to authorize exclusion and define who is an English subject and therefore allowed to consume resources and who is an outsider and thus "an infidel having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel." English race-making is linked to English trade, especially in Africa, and emergent English imperial ambitions intimately tied to racial capitalism. Benedict Anderson's conceptual toolbox, *Imagined Communities* (1983), has urged us to consider the category of "imagination" when analyzing the development of nationalism. The "nation," Anderson argues, is a socially constructed "imagined community" that develops through imagination and processes of communication that construct, for example, what it means to be "English" and the history the English "nation."[49]

Although most scholars agree that the concept of England or Great Britain as a nation came into existence in the eighteenth century, what is striking is that the English nation imagines itself as ancient. English nationalism imagines intellectual genealogies that date back to ancient Greece and Rome and religious genealogies that are bible-based, rooted in the Exodus narrative of the Israelites fleeing Egypt. English nationalism is a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant construction that excludes other religions and races. The development of this English

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[48] I quote Queen Elizabeth I's 1601 draft proclamation from Dadabhoy, "Barbarian Moors: Documenting Racial Formation in Early Modern England," pp. 30-46.

[49] In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000), Dipesh Chakrabarty further interrogates "this one European word, 'imagination'" and makes visible the heterogeneous practices of seeing we often bring under its jurisdiction (149). The term "imagination" has a long and complex history in European thought. When discussing Indian nationalism and Rabindranath Tagore's literature, Chakrabarty carefully suggests the limits of "the analytical reach of the European category of 'imagination'" and points to the plural ways of seeing or imagining (174). It is important to keep this in mind and make room for the plurality when using the "European category" of imagination to analyze texts early modern English texts as well.

nationalistic ideology predates the modern English nation. It is expressed not only in official documents like Queen Elizabeth I's edicts calling for the deportation of "the great number of Negros and blackamoors" but also in music, art, literature, and drama.

Early modern English racial thinking emphasized difference, often rooting racialization in human biological or somatic variation (like skin color), religion, and class to stake claims of knowledge, power, and authority, which were motivated by England's emerging imperial ambitions. From early modern English plays like Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589) to John Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1621), English dramatists represented racial formation on the stage. For example, Jews were often portrayed as having distinctive physical characteristics, such as having dark skin or hooknoses. This chapter will build on the discussions of religious identity, racial formation, and mercantilism in Chapter 1 and further investigate the way that religious teachings conflicted with the practices of the slave trade and with the new economic mechanisms of racial capitalism. This chapter examines the connections between slavery and racial capitalism—the moral problem of commodifying human beings, a capitalist phenomenon that violated Christian teaching—keeping in mind that the captivity, enslavement, and sale of English subjects was a direct result of early modern commercial expansion.

Chapter 3 Introduction

Despite the ongoing engagement in comparative approaches to early modern race studies, there has been what Peter Erickson and Kim F. Hall (2016) describe as a "pathological averseness to thinking about race" in the field of Shakespeare studies (2). Although there was a boom in scholarship about race in the Renaissance in the 1980s and 1990s, Erikson and Hall reflect on the disconnect between early modern race scholars and Shakespeare scholars that came into full view at the Shakespeare Association of America (SAA) meeting in 2013. While it is

unrealistic to expect all Shakespeare scholars to be familiar with at least forty years of

scholarship on CRT or the field of CWS, it is reasonable to expect some knowledge of race

inquiry in early modern studies that has taken place since the 1980s. Instead of productively

engaging with this scholarship, many Shakespeare scholars have ignored the importance of race

or focused on "the same (already addressed) questions" so that their "only investment in race

seems to be disciplinary" (Erickson and Hall 2). In response to critics who claim that questions

of race are anachronistic, Erickson and Hall argue that institutional resistance to scholarship on

early modern constructions of race ignores the evidence of racial formation in Shakespeare's

works.[50] This phenomenon masquerades as a desire to protect "historical difference" and the

universality of Shakespeare by not only suggesting that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

were void of racial difference, but also by willfully ignoring the ways in which English

commercialization and imperial expansion led to the rise of racial capitalism that would have

detrimental effects on poor, non-white, non-Christian, and non-English people.

For many years, American scholars and the modern American public have associated

William Shakespeare with "high culture." Shakespeare not only refers to the playwright, the

historical figure, and his body of work, but also, more ambiguously, he is the Bard, and his name

signifies divine status and artistic genius, both the literary genius of his product and the

exceptional genius of his individual capabilities. Generally, "high culture" includes intellectual

works of philosophy and history, art, and literature of high value. This value determines *what*

regional American theaters perform and *who* pays to attend the performances. Inextricably linked

to the predominantly white middle and upper socioeconomic classes, Shakespeare plays came to

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[50] See Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh, *Anti-Racist Shakespeare*, 2023

embody an elitist space. The Shakespeare purists guaranteed a "high-class performance" by white actors for white audiences.

While Shakespeare has played a key role in cultural capital for many centuries, Shakespeare's association with high culture and authority is relatively new; and more recently, this association may have waned a bit with postmodern adaptations and mass-media versions of Shakespeare's texts that have arisen in pop culture and digital media forms. This idolization of Shakespeare, also known as "Bardolatry," presents a problem for anyone who is non-white or not a part of the elite social class. The cultural force of Bardolatry is a powerful one. Bardolatry enables Shakespeare's plays to be simultaneously timeless and universal and exclusive to the elite social class. The Bard at once speaks for everyone and can only be truly understood and therefore performed by very few. In the U.S., Shakespeare often stood for the "greatness" of the white, "Anglo-Saxon," English fatherland, England. Thus, Shakespeare's work has played a key part in the construction of whiteness and the debates over the origins of racial prejudice. This chapter seeks to intervene, or to come between, the correlation of Shakespeare and universality.

CHAPTER 1: Race in the European Middle Ages:
Antisemitism and the Roots of Racial Capitalism in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*

It would be a mistake to end without reckoning, briefly, with that beginning. Many people in the United States and the British Commonwealth still yearn for a homogeneously white, universally Christian, splendidly isolated Middle Ages that never existed. In Europe, men gather under crusader flags, arm themselves with assault rifles, and form militias to patrol their borders in hopes of turning away Islamic refugees from war in Syria in the name of that imaginary Middle Ages. In New Zealand, a white supremacist cited First Crusade rhetoric before murdering Muslims at prayer. In San Diego, another white supremacist wrote about medieval blood libel before murdering Jews. Narratives of European medieval whiteness continue to be used to support some of the most dangerous ideologies in the world. Meanwhile, medieval studies as a field is slowly, haltingly, organizing itself against oppressive ideologies.

—David Perry, *Whose Middle Ages?: Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*[51]

Introduction

  While race in medieval England is at once parallel to and different from later conceptions of race, it is connected to the construction of modern racism. In this chapter, I will detail how race is an important framework for understanding late-medieval *drama*. I will integrate premodern studies with the methodologies in critical race studies, arguing that premodern race and racial discourses do, in fact, exist and are crucial to understanding contemporary racism. I will examine how belief in what some scholars call "difference," or the emergence of polarizing racial structures and violent practices, configured race thinking in ways that are unique to medieval England but also transcend it. By focusing on medieval "race," I hope to illuminate systemic *racism*.

  This chapter also seeks to push back against the problems with traditional periodization by focusing on Anglo-Jewish history and engaging with the history of Jews in Spain. My chapter will examine systemic racism by examining England's history as the earliest "nation" to expel its

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[51] See Perry, p. 6.

Jewish population and its role in the forefront of antisemitic thought and practice. I will build on the already prominent field of investigation of race in medieval studies by analyzing the concept of "Jewish race" and "Christian race" in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. Like the *chansons de geste* or medieval romances, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* features a climactic scene of Jewish conversion to Christianity. The play is centrally concerned with conversion: the conversion of Jews to Christians and the conversion of a Christian merchant to a Christian ascetic. Throughout the play, Christianity's wholeness is presented as the mirror image of the fragmented Jewish bodies on the stage. At the end of the play, the Jews are made whole physically and spiritually through their miraculous conversion from Jewish merchants to Christians.

This text is an important example of how religion and religious difference could play key roles in the development of early racialization and race-making. From the very beginning, Christianity was a sect of Judaism. Despite the fact that Jesus was a Jew, and the early Christians were deeply connected to Judaism (if not also Jews themselves), Christian leaders starting with Paul have long been attempting to distinguish between Christianity and Judaism. Even as the religions separated, Christianity deeply depended on Jewish practices and beliefs and because of this, Christians could not simply set aside Judaism altogether. Christians' sense of identity (Christian identity) forced Christians to come to terms with Judaism. To claim the "distinctiveness and superiority of their own identity, Christians had to think about Judaism and argue amongst themselves and with Jews that Christians were right and Jews wrong" (Langmuir 7). Therefore, "the ability of Jews to maintain their own identity was not only annoying or hateful in the way ethnic differences so often are; it was an intimate and enduring threat to [Christian identity], a challenge built into their own religion" (Langmuir 7). Throughout the

twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the notion of Christian identity led to constructions of "Christian race" and "Jewish race." I find the terms "Christian race" and "Jewish race" useful in illuminating the emergence of antisemitism in this period.[52] Beginning in the twelfth century, legislation in northern Europe repeatedly expressed the intense Christian anxieties about intimate Christian-Jewish relations (Kruger 31). English Christians, in particular, began to turn to religious texts and ideologies to construct medieval race in this period. They often invoke the categories of Jew, pagan, Moor, or Saracen when attempting to think through or explain a wide variety of topics including plagues, famine, taxation, commerce, and property.

As the historian David Nirenberg explains in *Neighboring Faiths* (2014), the three major Abrahamic religions—Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—are not independent of one another. The three religions are "interdependent, constantly transforming themselves by thinking about each other in a fundamentally ambivalent form of neighborliness" through a process that Nirenberg calls "coproduction" (4).[53] For example, medieval Jewish and Christian exegetes consulted one another in learning centers across Europe. Medieval Jewish scholarship influenced Christian intellectual practices and biblical exegesis. In the twelfth century, an intellectual movement emerged from "a 'reborn' learning dependent upon the recovery and translation of ancient—philosophical, mathematical, medical—works mediated through Arabic and (to a lesser extent) Hebrew learning, and this intellectual movement involved significant and complex crossings of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian cultures" (Kruger 31). Alongside this coproduction and intellectual movement came an intense Christian repudiation of Judaism and Islam. I argue

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[52] Gavin Langmuir traces the emergence of antisemitism to northern Europe in this time period.
[53] Coproduction refers to the ways in which communities of Muslims, Jews, and Christians have imagined and reimagined themselves and their religion by thinking about each other (Nirenberg 10). While it is important to examine the category of the Jew in Muslim thought and theology in this time period, that is out of the scope of this chapter.

that it is important to understand how Christianity and Christians position themselves in relation to Jews by defining a unified Christian racialized identity, or a unified "Christian race." I focus on the construction of Christianity and Christendom in late-medieval England through the examination of the Jew as a racial category. Jews function as an abstraction in religious thought and a racial category in theology in the late medieval period through the ways that Jews are marked as different. This category is neither stable nor unchanging. By examining the racial category through the lens of coproduction and interdependency, I shed light on the instability of Christianity and Christian identity.

I am certainly not the first person to examine European Christian thinking about Jews and Judaism. In *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (2013), David Nirenberg studies how "Jewish questions" have shaped the history of Christian thought and suggests that questions about Judaism are instilled into the habits of thought with which we make sense of the world today, regardless of our own religious affiliations and belief systems. The term "Jewish question," or "Judenfrage" in German, became widely circulated by a group of German philosophers in the nineteenth century, including Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx.[54] The two famous philosophers entered a heated debate with Bruno Bauer and other young Hegelians about whether German Jews needed to convert to Christianity to be politically emancipated and become German citizens with full civil rights. This "old" Jewish Question asked how a Jew could be a citizen.[55] Marx insists that this is the wrong question to debate. He argues that "the critique of the Jewish question is the answer to the Jewish question" (Marx, "On the Jewish Question"). Marx

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[54] See Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question." See also Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism*, 1844.

[55] In his recent article, Daniel Boyarin asks a "new" Jewish Question, how a nationality can exist without a state, and argues that "there is no reason why Jews have more or less right to collective existence than any other, what I call here, *nation*" (Boyarin 43).

emphasizes that the universal form of citizenship itself, not religion, is the actual theological category in this debate. In other words, it is important to critique what Christians consider Jewish and what Christianity considers Judaism. He describes how "the absolutist state in western Europe had depoliticized social relations that were once defined by castes, guilds, and estates to make the theological abstraction of citizenship possible as a universal form" (Devji 86). Marx seems to suggest that "the Jews were or at least were seen as being the only remnant or survival of such a politics" (Devji 86). Marx seems to use this "apparently anachronistic figure" to provide "a genealogy for class conflict as the motor of history and its destiny in the future politicization of civil society" (Devji 86-7). His illumination of capitalism intersects with the categories that I analyze throughout this dissertation, especially the category of "the Jewish race."

By arguing that German Jews would not receive emancipation by converting to Christianity because Christian society under capitalism will continue to "Judaize" certain attitudes and behaviors, Marx illuminates how European Christianity produces its own distorted image of Judaism. Therefore, the "old" Jewish Question is not only about the presence of Jews and Judaism, but also about what Christian culture understood as "Jewish" in a capitalist society. Rather than analyzing or criticizing how European Christian concepts develop figures of Judaism, Marx exploits these habits of thought to criticize capitalism. He famously put "old ideas and fears about Jewishness into a new kind of work: that of planning a world without private property or wage labor" (Nirenberg 4). Marx asserts that the conversion or assimilation of the Jews is impossible unless capitalism is destroyed. It is important to acknowledge that from Marx's perspective, all religions pose an obstacle to his revolutionary goal of universal

emancipation for all citizens of the world, which must be based not on a metaphysical understanding but on a "scientific" understanding of sociopolitical problems and solutions.

Although Marx is writing several centuries after the medieval period and the dawn of the Renaissance, his insight that Christian concepts can create Judaism is applicable to the Middle Ages. Marx inherits what he considers "Jewish" from a long history of Christian race thinking that identifies money, usury, and property with Jewishness. Judaism, thus, is not only a religion, but also "a category, a set of ideas and attributes with which non-Jews can make sense of and criticize their world" (Nirenberg 3). Nirenberg uses "Judaism" and "anti-Judaism" in this broad sense. For this reason, he chooses not to use "*anti-Semitism*," a term that he argues "captures only a small portion, historically and conceptually, of what [his] book is about" (Nirenberg 3). For Nirenberg, "anti-Judaism" came first and existed in communities where no real Jews were present, while "anti-Semitism" came much later. He makes a distinction between his book and projects like Robert S. Wistrich's *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to Global Jihad* (2010), which examines the long history of antisemitism.

Rather than using *anti-Judaism* to analyze Christian identity and Christian thought, I choose to use *antisemitism*. Gavin Langmuir explains the difference, or lack thereof, between antisemitism and anti-Judaism. If "one focuses on Jews and maintains that real millennial Jewish characteristics (whether judged good or bad) have always inspired the same kind of hostility in non-Jews of very different kinds, then, as Bernard Lazare maintained a century ago, hostility to Jews has varied only in intensity and historical specifics, not in kind or cause" (Langmuir 5). In that case, antisemitism and anti-Judaism are not different. If, on the other hand, "one examines the characteristics of non-Jews and thinks that [there are] major differences" and if one considers that "the irrational hostility of Hitler (whose knowledge of real Jewish characteristics was

minimal)" is "the most undeniable example of antisemitism, then antisemitism cannot be explained primarily as a reaction to some real millennial characteristics of Jews, and antisemitism can be distinguished from anti-Judaism" (Langmuir 5-6). Langmuir falls in the latter category. He defines antisemitism as "as irrational prejudice against Jews, with Hitler's irrationality as the clearest example" and traces it back to northern Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but "no further" (6). Rather than using anti-Judaism in this context, I build on Langmuir's work and use the term antisemitism.

I use *antisemitism*, spelled in lowercase and without the hyphen, because the term *anti-Semitism* is misleading. Deborah E. Lipstadt, nominated in August 2021 by President Biden to the U.S. Department of State as the special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism, argues that the term *anti-Semitism* suggests that one opposes "Semitism." This is deceptive because "it assumes there is such a thing as a Semitic people, when in fact there is not" (Lipstadt 23). The term "Semitic" was coined in 1781 not to describe a group of people, but a group of languages: Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Amharic, Akkadian, and Ugartic. In *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, Lipstadt makes a statement by using the lowercase "antisemite" as opposed to the uppercase "Antisemite." It is her way (and she is certainly not alone in this) of "validating Sartre's and Julius's contention that antisemitism is an illogical, delusional passion full of self-contradictions and absurd contentions. It doesn't deserve the dignity of capitalization, which in English is reserved for proper names" (Lipstadt 25). A century after the invention of the word "Semite," the term "anti-Semitism" was popularized by Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist and publisher who wrote influential "anti-Semitic articles and pamphlets such as *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* (1879)" or *The Way to Victory of Judaism over Germanism*.[56] Marr "contended

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[56] See "anti-Semitism, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/8854

that Jews, including those who had converted into Christianity, were incapable of assimilating"

into German culture and their goal was "to harm Germanic identity" (Lipstadt 24). While Marr

popularized the term *antisemitism*, his ideology has a long history that can be traced back to late-

medieval England. By choosing to use the word *antisemitism*, I do not erase the differences

between late-medieval antisemitism and later periods, but instead focus on the connections. The

ideological category of the English Jew is important to understanding antisemitism as not only a

modern phenomenon, but as a discourse with a long history of attitudes that have been shaped

over centuries.

The construction of the English Jew is fundamental to not only the formation of Christian

identity, but also England's history and collective identity. However, this is not frequently

examined in Anglo-Jewish historiography of the Middle Ages. While recent scholarship has

successfully identified race ideologies in the medieval period and dismantled the idea of race as

an exclusively modern phenomenon, more work remains to be done in tracing how categories of

race in medieval England are read and analyzed by later writers and scholars. For example, too

often, medieval scholarship assumes that religion automatically means Christianity and that

society means a European Christian society that isolated itself from non-Christians and non-

Europeans. While Christianity was a large part of the dominant medieval construction and has

continued to be a part of the contemporary Western hegemony, it is not enough to study

Christianity in isolation. A new wave of medieval scholarship that employs critical

methodologies like feminism, queer studies, disability studies, and race studies needs to

undertake both medieval hegemony and the entities against which it defined itself.[57] This chapter

will be a small contribution to this new wave of medieval scholarship.

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[57] See Kruger, "Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories."

Throughout the medieval period, Christians used Jews as the standard to define and assess all racial others. Modes of racial thinking were dependent on Christian formulations of Jews as figures of difference. "Jew" was often applied to Christians who were being attacked for their allegedly "jew-like" behavior like the practice of usury, or like "Judaizing" heresies. English Christians were afraid of becoming "Judaizers." I argue that examining Christian formulations of Jews as *racial* formulations and acknowledging the harmful stories about ritual murder and host desecration as *antisemitic*, makes clearer the roots of racial capitalism in medieval England and its long history.

Jews of Medieval England

While the Anglo-Jewish community of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has long attracted attention from historians and literary scholars, only recently has the medieval Anglo-Jewish community attracted attention from scholars of critical race theory.[58] Part of this problem is the argument that race is a modern phenomenon. Another part of this problem is the availability of source material. In *Licoricia of Winchester: Marriage, Motherhood and Murder in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community* (2009), Suzanne Bartlet and Patricia Skinner address the problem of the lack of source material about the lives of Jews in England. What we do know of England's characterization as "a racialized state" comes from records "produced by non-Jews, and much of what we know comes specifically from the judicial and fiscal records generated by

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[58] For studies of the organization and social lives of Jews in England between 1066 and 1290, including local studies and fiscal histories, see: V.D. Lipman, *The Jews of Medieval Norwich* (1967); Cecil Roth, *The Jews of Medieval Oxford* (1945); Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (3rd edition, 1964). In "The Marginalisation of Early Modern Anglo-Jewish History," David Katz criticizes Roth's work for having "mistakes, undocumented assertions, and numerous gaps." Most recently, see Michael Jolles, *A Short History of the Jews in Northampton, 1159-1196* (1996); Patricia Skinner, *Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary, and Archaeological Perspectives* (2003); Bartlet and Skinner, *Licoricia of Winchester: Marriage, Motherhood and Murder in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community* (2009).

England's precociously bureaucratized government'" (Bartlet and Skinner 5 qtd. in Heng).[59] This is a crucial point. These extensive fiscal records portray the Jewish community as a revenue machine for the Norman and Angevin Kings of England. There is very little evidence of Jewish presence in England before the Norman conquest of 1066. Many of the earliest Jews were invited by William I to lend money to the kingdom. Christians were forbidden to lend money at interest, but they could borrow it from Jewish moneylenders. The Jewish community was highly financially valuable to the kingdom, so much so that by 1194, King Richard I (*r.* 1189-99) and the Archbishop of Canterbury Hubert Walter created the "archae" or chest system of recording, collecting, and preserving the records of Jewish moneylending.[60] By 1198, the king expanded the Exchequer to create the Exchequer of the Jews, a department of appointed justices that managed the collection of the revenues exacted from the Jews.[61] With the creation of the Exchequer of the Jews, a form of tallage, or collective taxes, was increasingly levied on the Jews into the thirteenth century.

Robert C. Stacey provides helpful historical context to understand the emergence of the Jewish Exchequer and its significance for the subsequent history of the Anglo-Jewish community. Rather than understanding the creation of the "archae" system and the Jewish

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[59] See Heng, "Why the Hate? *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages,* and Race, Racism, and Premodern Critical Race Studies Today."

[60] The Archbishop of Canterbury adapted the "archae" system, Archa Aaronensis from Aaron of Lincoln. An archa, or chest, was established in twenty-seven centers around England. Two Christians and two Jews, called chirographers, serviced the centers with a clerk. The chirographs, or bonds, were written out twice. One was kept by the debtor, and one was placed into the chest as an official record. All debts and repayments had to be recorded and a copy had to be kept in the chest. These copies were available for scrutiny when assessing tax or heritage fines. Tallage or taxes were also recorded on tallies, or pieces of wood marked with a notch for each item on the account and then split in halves, one for each party to keep. See Bartlet and Skinner, p. 6-7. They also quote Joseph Jacobs, *The Jews of Angevin England* (1893).

[61] The Exchequer is a "department of state managed by the Treasurer, the Justiciary and the other judges of the King's Court, and Barons appointed by the King. Its functions combined the collection and administration of the royal revenues with the judicial determination of all causes relating to revenue. In the subsequent development of this institution, it was gradually divided into two distinct branches, the one being charged with judicial, the other with administrative functions." See "exchequer, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/65768.

Exchequer as responses to the destruction of Jewish debt records during the massacres of 1189-90, Stacey explains that they must be understood against the background of the unique royal jurisdictional monopoly that evolved from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. Unlike other medieval European kingdoms, "only in England did the crown successfully establish a claim to be the sole protector of its Jewish subjects and the sole judicial arbiter of legal cases in which Jews and Christians clashed" (Stacey 107). While King John's (*r.* 1199-1216) royal jurisdiction over the Jews in Normandy collapsed by 1204, in England, his claim to be the sole lord of all the Jews was an accurate portrayal of the legal realities of Jewish life—realities that would continue to characterize Jewish life in England for the rest of the thirteenth century. By the mid-1230s, King Henry III's (*r.* 1216-72) "jurisdictional monopoly over Jews, and the consequent 'rightlessness' of Jews under the common law of the kingdom, was sufficiently complete that it could be cited […] as evidence that the Jews of England were, in effect, serfs, insofar as both Jews and serfs depended utterly for their 'rights' upon the will of their lord, and so could own nothing that was truly their own" (Stacey 108). This is a powerful statement. In England, Jewish status became a servile status. This solidified the notion that Jewish status was unique, as Jews were excluded from equitable remedies that were made available to male Christians. The legislation throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries made clear that not only Judaism, but also major economic activity set Jews apart from Christians in England until their expulsion in 1290.

The "absent presence" of Jews in England

On July 18, 1290, King Edward I (*r.* 1272-1307) issued a royal decree, "The Edict of Expulsion," to expel all the Jews from England. The "English monarchy and aristocracy had become so impossibly indebted to the Jews, and the expulsion of the Jews was a symbolic

assertion of the king's control of his realm" (Bale 13). Most historians estimate that the Jewish population grew to 5,000 in 1200 and fell to 2,000 by the Expulsion of 1290, but it is difficult to assess the exact size of the community.[62] Over three centuries later, Oliver Cromwell officially readmitted the Jews in 1657. In *Shakespeare and the Jews* (1996), James Shapiro notes that "from 1290 until the mid-sixteenth century there is no evidence of organized communities of Jews in England" (68). However, Shapiro argues that "this changed after 1540," more than a century before the traditional date of "readmission" (68).

In the article "Jews and Saracens in Chaucer's England: A Review of the Evidence" (2005), Henry Ansgar Kelly presents evidence to suggest the possible presence of a small number of Jews in England between 1290 and 1400. Kelly analyzes the historical records of the Domus Conversorum, or House of Converts, in London. Established in 1232 by King Henry III, by the 1340s the House of Converts became Chancellor's Lane, a ''hospital'' or hospice for converted Jews (Kelly 130). Kelly finds fifty-two to ninety-seven members between 1290 and 1308, but by 1312 "the Domus was given new life under Edward III, who assigned to it some children of converts. We know of two in 1336, another two in 1337, and one in 1344, and we hear of another in 1349" (Kelly 130-131). Although these numbers seem small, Kelly argues that "it is beyond a doubt that there was a suspicion that Saracens as well as Jews were living in England under false pretenses" (145). This suspicion and the consequences of this paranoia connect to Wilhelm Marr's nineteenth-century antisemitic articles and pamphlets mentioned earlier in this chapter. He fought against the emancipation of Jews, even those who had converted to Christianity in Germany, by using antisemitic rhetoric parallel to that of the antisemitic rhetoric in medieval England.

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[62] See Bartlet and Skinner, p. 5.

When examining English texts post-1290, we will not be surprised that they contain Jewish figures that do not accurately represent the lives of real Jews. Although Jews had been expelled from England in 1290, and therefore the *Croxton* playwright and the audience members were perhaps unlikely to have met any Jewish people in real life, the virtual presence of Jews in the play must be recognized. The "absent presence" of Jews in England after the expulsion of the Jews allowed for the creation of imaginative Jewish figures in many medieval plays and other literary texts (Kruger; Tomasch; Delaney; Cigman). This stereotyping or othering of Jews, however, was not necessarily monolithic. Kelly notes that "there was an abundance of positive characterizations of Jews" and that "Jews, like Saracens, were often praised as having morals and characters superior to those of Christians" (Kelly 166). Although these stereotypes are not monolithic, I posit that they all served the same general purpose: to mark Jews as different and to construct the hegemonic Christian identity in England.

Since the late twentieth century, historians and literary scholars have studied medieval Christian engagements with Judaism throughout Europe. Many have emphasized the way in which "the Jew" serves an ideological purpose within the hegemony of medieval Christian thought. These studies focus on the "the Jew" as a figure constructed by Christian thinking. This "Jew" has very little to do with any real Jew or Jewish community; in fact, it was often constructed in places with no (or very few) Jews present. Instead, "the Jew" serves a crucial role in the construction of medieval Christian identity. Scholars define this role in many ways, including "paper Jews," "the virtual Jew," "the spectral Jew," "the theological Jew," and "the hermeneutical Jew" (Biddick; Tomasch; Kruger; Cohen).

In *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (1999), Jeremy Cohen explains the development of what he names the "hermeneutical Jew." Cohen argues that

"in order to meet their particular needs, Christian theology and exegesis created a Jew of their own" (2). This "hermeneutical Jew," or "the Jew as constructed in the discourse of Christian theology and above all in Christian theologians' interpretation of Scripture," shaped Christian "self-definition" (Cohen 2-3, 13). Even though the "hermeneutical Jew," in its inception, function, and power in the Christian mindset, had little to do with Jewish civilization, the "hermeneutical Jew" influenced the Christian treatment of the Jewish minority of medieval Christendom (Cohen 5). Medieval Christian perceptions of the "hermeneutical Jew's personality," characteristics, and attributes, contributed to the significance of Judaism and antisemitism in Western intellectual and cultural history (Cohen 5). More broadly, these medieval Christian perceptions shed light on the place and purpose of racial minorities in the collective mentality of the racial majority.

In her study of theological, poetic, and dramatic texts, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (2004), Lisa Lampert employs Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew" to argue that both the hermeneutical Jew and the gendered figure of what she aptly calls "the hermeneutical Woman" play "important roles in the ways that Christian writers pose questions of understanding, meaning, and being" (Lampert 10). While this chapter will not be directly addressing gender, Lampert's understandings of the relationship between Jewish and gendered difference is useful to my investigation of the concept of race, the problems of racism, and the formulation of racial capitalism.

In medieval England, the hermeneutical Jew is a complex and unfixed figure. Although its representations are not unified, and are not entirely negative, its depictions in late medieval drama attempt to reinforce a sense of a unified English Christian identity and therefore a unified racial identity. I will analyze the hermeneutical Jewish figure in a late medieval play, the

Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, as a conceptual tool through which Christians defined themselves. I will also examine how this figure served as a tool for Christians to claim Christianity as a universal religion and to shape Christian hegemony.

Whether or not scholars can use the terms "race" and "antisemitism" to discuss the premodern period is not the only highly contested question in this chapter; the question of whether or not scholars can discuss Jews as a racial category and therefore, whether or not scholars can examine antisemitism as a type of racism is also highly contested. To examine Jews as a racial category and antisemitism as a type of racism, we must consider the case of Spanish Jews in the fifteenth century. While my chapter focuses on England, the formation of English Christian identity, and English Jews, I need to discuss the religious turmoil in late medieval Spain for two reasons: first, the magnitude of the situation in Spain made it an epicenter of both questions of Jewish conversion to Christianity and the exploration of the construction of Christian identity; and secondly, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* is set in the Kingdom of Aragon in 1461.

In his important article "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism" (1987), Jerome Friedman explains how racial antisemitism developed from the infamous Spanish pure blood laws. He locates the origin of our contemporary notion of race in Spain in the early modern period with the idea of *limpieza de sangre*. In *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews, A History* (2001), James Carroll also emphasizes that "the Inquisition would pawn the idea of 'Jewish blood,'" a concept crucial to the development of the idea of the "Jewish *race*" (Carroll 318). Many scholars, including Friedman and Carroll, point to the sixteenth century as a period of "transition of medieval religious anti-Judaism into a racial antisemitism laying the foundation

for modern hatred of Jews" (Friedman 3). By defining the sixteenth century as a period of transition from anti-Judaism to racial antisemitism, these scholars assert that race is a concept that emerges in the early modern era, and not beforehand. Throughout this chapter, I will argue against this idea by showing the emergence of racial thinking about Jews in late medieval Spain and connecting it to how Jewish and Christian identities could be determined in the *Croxton*.

Discussions that focus on the transition from anti-Judaism to antisemitism to understand the development of the category of race still rely on rigid notions of periodization. On the other hand, continuity theorists like Heng criticize periodization and the division of history into three neat categories: ancient, medieval, and modern periods. Heng describes models of history alternative to the linear model. One view is history as "a field of dynamic oscillations between ruptures and reinscriptions, or historical time as a matrix in which overlapping repetitions-with-change can occur, or an understanding that historical events may result from the action of multiple temporalities that are enfolded and coexistent within a particular historical moment" (Heng 21). Nonetheless, she still titles her book *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* and uses the tripartite model of history while criticizing it.

Traditional periodization

For medieval historians and literary scholars, the "traditional concept of the 'Middle Ages' is a mere construction, a label of convenience to render historical time manageable" (Skinner 220). However, "even this functional utility is challenged when applied to the histories of historiographically under-represented or minority groups" (Skinner 220). For example, both social historians and gender historians have argued that peasant society and women's history "do not fit into the picture of dynamic change suggested by the tripartite framework" (Skinner 220).[63]

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[63] See also Joan Kelly's seminal article, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?"

Furthermore, the tripartite scheme is problematic both within and outside the history of Europe, as illustrated by Kathleen Biddick and Kathleen Davis. Both scholars have thoroughly demonstrated how present-day scholarly fields developed out of the same seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century, and nineteenth-century methods that "deliberately erected barriers between the early modern era and the Middle Ages in order to disenfranchise contemporary subalterns" (Kennedy 215). More specifically, Biddick explains how "Indian history has also appropriated the ancient/medieval/modern schema to describe periods of Hindu, Muslim and British hegemony, with an inherent value judgement of the Muslim as some kind of 'dark age'" (Skinner 220). [64] Although the periodicity model is difficult to disentangle and move away from, I hope that my chapter and my dissertation as a whole blur the rigid boundary between the medieval and the early modern period by analyzing race in a way that devalues, deprioritizes, and reduces the influence of periodization categories.

Though scholars like Friedman and Carroll locate the emergence of the "Jewish race" in the sixteenth century, there is evidence to suggest that the "Jewish *race*," from the Spanish *raza*, referred to *both* a religious or theoretical body *and* a "biological" or "genetic" body with a particular emphasis on blood before the sixteenth century. In first half of the fifteenth century, words like *raza*, *casta*, and *linaje* (and their cognates in the various Iberian romance languages) were already embedded in identifiably biological ideas about animal breeding and reproduction.[65] The use of this vocabulary to describe Jews "coincides chronologically (the 1430s) with the appearance of an anti-*converso* ideology" that can be traced back to the fifth century under the Visigothic Kingdom (Nirenberg 182). A *converso*, or the pejorative *marrano,*

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[64] See also Kathleen Biddick, 'Translating the Foreskin', *Queering the Middle Ages*, edited by Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger. Minneapolis, 200, p. 193.
[65] See Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, p. 182.

which translates to "swine" or pig, referred to a Jew who converted to Christianity and then returned to Judaism later or a "crypto-Jew" who converted but remained practicing Judaism in secret (Lampert 109). It could also refer to anyone who had converted, though the term often implied a suspicion about the sincerity or permanence of that conversion. Between 1391 and 1412, an estimated one hundred thousand Spanish Jews converted to Christianity to escape persecution. Despite these two periods of massive conversions, antisemitism and anti-converso ideology spread like wildfire throughout the fifteenth century.

For the first time, Jewishness and Judaism were seen as genetic traits encoded in a person's blood. Due to the mass conversions from Judaism to Christianity, the Spanish authorities could no longer use a person's outside appearance to mark their religious identity; thus, many were pushing for a distinction to be made through "biology" or "genetics" by focusing on blood. By linking Christian identity to Christian blood, this construction undermined the significance of conversion from Judaism and Islam to Christianity through baptism. To be a Christian was no longer about internal belief or external behavior (participation in the mass, in rituals, piety, faith, sincere belief, etc.) but was given a crucial basis in "biology" or "genetics" (blood and birth). The Christian identity was defined not only by a code of ethics, morality, baptism, and the belief in a monotheistic religion based on the Holy Trinity and the teachings of Jesus the Messiah, but also by an innate trait outside of a person's control: their blood. In 1433, Queen Maria of Aragon "decreed on behalf of the converts of Barcelona that no legal distinction could be made between 'natural' Christians on the one hand and neophytes and their descendants on the other, a decree which implies that some people were attempting to make precisely those distinctions" (Nirenberg 182). The people who were pushing for a legal distinction between "natural" Christians and converts wanted a rigid and idealized Christendom and Christian

identity based in uniformity and unity. They regarded "natural" Christians as superior to not only Jews and Muslims, but also converts. With their ambiguous status, the converts or *conversos* and actual Jews threatened this idealized Christian identity and the superiority of the "Christian race."

In 1478, King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile created the Spanish Court of Inquisition to handle the problems brought forth by religious conversion; this institution was a court of religious inquisition with the basic premise that some New Christians were "Judaizers" or crypto-Jews and that certain procedures and methods of investigation might lead to their discovery and forced assimilation. By 1492, around the time the *Croxton* was written and performed, the Castilian monarchy had officially converted and expelled all Moors and Jews. In *Neither Settler Nor Native* (2020), Mahmood Mamdani traces the modern nation-state to this moment of ethnic cleansing in late-fifteenth century Iberia. While Christian Spaniards began creating "a homogenous national homeland," antisemitism became a viable vehicle for reinforcing a unified Christian population. Through analyzing the *Croxton*, an English play set in Spain, I will demonstrate that, in this kind of theatrical representation of Jewishness, the figure of the Jewish convert to Christianity both confirms and destabilizes a sense of firm Christian identity and thus both confirms and destabilizes the notion of a unified "Christian race" in late-medieval England.

The play

Christian identity is like an unfinished project that is actively being worked on; fragile and fragmented, it must be performed constantly. Christian identity or membership in the "Christian race" is thus a matter of performance.[66] Christians perform their belief through a

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[66] Judith Butler uses the term "performative" to mean both "dramatic" and "non-referential."

variety of rituals like baptism, confirmation, confession, penance, communion or the Eucharist, ordination, and even marriage. Those who fail to perform their Christian identity correctly may be punished.

This concept of race and Christian identity is important to keep in mind when examining the *Play of the Conversyon of Ser Jonathas the Jewe by Myracle of the Blyssed Sacrament*, known as the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*. This fifteenth-century East Anglian drama survives in a sixteenth-century manuscript copy of the script. While the details of the "original" text remain unknown, Gail McMurray Gibson has persuasively argued that the *Croxton* was first performed near Bury St. Edmunds. While Gibson and other scholars have argued that the play's Jews are really meant to represent English Lollards or "general" doubters, Lisa Lampert has convincingly claimed that the play alludes to the Bury Jews and more specifically, the blood libel or ritual murder accusation of 1181.[67] Lampert has also examined the importance of the setting of the play, Aragon in 1461.[68] I will further analyze the play's East Anglian context, the importance of the play's setting, and the Western traditions of host desecration and blood libels to situate the play within fundamental questions about the "Jewish race" and the nature of Christian identity in the medieval period.

The first eighty lines of the play, or the "banns," inform the audience that the plot is based on a real-life event in Spain. The vexillatores, or banner-bearers, announce their "mater to tell the entent, / Of the marvellys that wer wondursely wrowght / Of the holi and blyssed Sacrament" (6-8). In this equivalent of a modern-day teaser-trailer, the second Vexillator informs the audience of the purpose of the play, giving them a short synopsis of the plot:

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[67] See Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, 1989. See also Lisa Lampert, "The Once and Future Jew: The Croxton 'Play of the Sacrament."
[68] See Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare*

Sovereyns, and yt lyke yow to here the purpoos of this play

That ys representyd now in yower syght,

Whych in Aragon was doon, the sothe to saye,

In Eraclea, that famous cyté, aryght:

Therin wonneth a merchaunte of mekyll myght —

Syr Arystorye was called hys name —

Kend full fere with mani a wyght,

Full fer in the worlde sprong hys fame (9-16).

As suggested by the statement "That ys representyd now in yower syght," this proclamation may have been accompanied by a short show in which the main action of the play was mimed in order to invite the audience to watch the climax and conclusion on the date of the actual live performance (10). The second Vexillator additionally reminds the audience that the plot of this play may be familiar to them by linking it to narratives of ritual murder accusations and host desecration libels lodged against the Jews throughout the medieval period:

Thys marycle at Rome was presented, for sothe,

Yn the yere of our Lord a thowsand fowr hundder sixty and on,

That the Jewes with Holy Sacrament dyd woth

In the forest seyd of Aragon (56-60).

Another miracle play centering on the host desecration accusation against the Jews was performed in Rome to honor Queen Eleanor of Aragon, the Holy Roman Empress. By mentioning Rome, the Vexillator's exclamation further connects the *Croxton* to a long tradition of false accusations against the Jews that the community has passed down through their collective memory, or at the very least, that the community is aware of.

Blood libel, or ritual murder accusations, were one of the oldest antisemitic falsehoods in which a Jewish community or Jewish individuals are falsely blamed for killing Christian children (usually a young Christian boy) in a religious ritual. Christians claimed that the Jews used Christian blood for their Passover ceremonial celebrations. For centuries throughout the medieval and early modern period, these ritual murder accusations have resulted in expulsions and executions of the Jews. The host desecration libel refers to the violation of the altar bread consecrated during the Eucharist ceremony. In the play, a group of Jewish merchants purchase the host from a Christian merchant, Aristorius, for one hundred ducats. Then, they proceed to desecrate the host by performing a series of grotesque acts meant to test the Christian belief in transubstantiation. The Vexillator recalls the Jews' violent acts against the host. Rather than referring to the host as a physical object, the Vexillator uses the pronouns "He," "Him," and "His" to signify that the host is not just a piece of sacramental bread used during Communion or a symbol of Jesus Christ, but Christ himself. Therefore, the Vexillator unsurprisingly deems the Jews' actions as a reenactment of "a new passyoun:"

> They grevid our Lord gretly on grownd
>
> And put Hym to a new passyoun,
>
> With daggers goven Hym many a grevyos wound,
>
> Nayled Hym to a pyller, with pynsons plukked Hym doune (37-40).

Christians paradoxically believed that Jews desecrated the host in order to renew the Passion upon the body of Jesus Christ, which would require the Jews to believe that the host is not just a wafer, but actually the body of Christ. After the Jews bribe Aristorius to steal the Eucharist for them, Malchus explains that they stole the host because they want to test the Christian doctrine of transubstantiation. He emphasizes that his "dredfull Judge shal be thys

same brede" (435). Jasdon exclaims: "by Machomyth so myghty […] with owr strokys we shall fray Hym as He was on the Rood" (453-455). Jasdon expresses his faith in "Machomyth," linking the worshipping of Muhammad with the heretical act of host desecration. In the Middle Ages, some writers who portray Islam as heresy "more consciously pattern the depiction upon Western views of Judaism: the 'law of Muhammad' is presented not as a development from Christian doctrine, but rather as a perverse turning back to the 'law of Moses'" (Akbari 35).[69] I will discuss the relationship between the play's representations of Islam and Judaism in more depth later in the chapter, but for now, I want to emphasize that by testing the host, the characters portray what Christians considered a commonality between Judaism and Islam: the literal understanding of the law. The Jewish characters show the limits of their understanding of transubstantiation; they cannot understand transubstantiation because they perceive the host as a material object, as nothing more than a wafer or a piece of bread.

By participating in the desecration of the host, the Jews in the play also portray Jewish eternal reenactment of the Crucifixion, or Jewish deicide. Their desire to reinforce "a newe passyon" is elaborately described in a series of intricate and grotesque acts of violence against the Eucharist. At the foundation of the host desecration accusation was the assumption that Jews accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation established in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council.[70] The Fourth Lateran Council also established that Jews and Saracens must wear distinctive clothing, or physical markers, to distinguish them from Christians. Antisemitism, therefore, becomes a vehicle to reinforce Eucharistic orthodoxy. The blood libel, ritual murder accusation, and host desecration libel are closely related. The host and the young Christian boys become interchangeable with Christ, first as crucified martyr, then as murdered versions of the divine-

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[69] Akbari, "Placing the Jews in Late Medieval English Literature"
[70] See Stacey.

innocent Christ Child. The libels create a Jewish identity based on hypermasculinity, violence, the literal understanding of the law, and the perpetual reenactment of the Crucifixion.

The play not only draws on global narratives that accuse the Jews of crucifying Jesus Christ and reenacting the Crucifixion by stealing and defiling the host, but also draws on local ritual murder accusations, like the story of Little Robert of Bury. The Vexillator tells the audience to watch the performance "At Croxston on Monday," a town near Bury St. Edmunds (74). Lampert shows that the history of the Jews in Bury St. Edmunds is crucial to the creation of Christian identity and, I argue, the "Jewish race" as an important identity category. On June 10, 1181, the Jewish community in Bury St Edmunds was accused of kidnapping, torturing, and murdering a young boy, Little Robert of Bury, during the interregnum between Abbot Hugh and Abbot Samson (Lampert 237). Similar to the charge of murdering William of Norwich in 1144, this ritual murder accusation led to the creation of a religious cult. By 1190, after the election of Abbot Samson, the abbot asked King Richard I for permission to expel the Jews from St Edmunds. The abbot argued that because everything in the town belonged to Saint Edmund, the Jews needed to be Saint Edmund's men or be expelled. The Abbey owed a large sum of money to the Jews and their expulsion solved the Abbey's financial problems (Lampert 237-8). The play draws on this history by showing the power of the Jewish characters. Unlike other host desecration narratives that accuse Jews of breaking into a church and stealing the host, this play portrays the Jews accessing the mass through the power of their wealth. Drawing on images and narratives of the Jews attacking Christ, Antony Bale explains that in medieval Europe, "Jews are understood as physically powerful" (Bale 15). Medieval Christians portray Christ and themselves "as spiritually strong but physically weak" victims of persecution by "powerful" Jews (Bale 15). Like images of the Passion, the *Croxton* play works to associate Jews with all worldly matters or

"the imposition of violence" as opposed to spiritual matters or "the transcendence of this violence" (Bale 15).

In this play, it is important to note that the Jews are not thieves. Jonathas, one of the Jewish merchants, has no doubt that with "gold and sylver" they "shall get þhat cake to [their] paye" (227-228). With one hundred ducats, Jonathas bribes "the myghtest merchaunte of Arigon," the Christian Aristorius, to steal the host from the church and give it to the Jews (267). This is critical. Aristorius becomes a thief and, much like Judas, commits betrayal in exchange for money. The Jews have purchasing power, a power that resonates with the merchants in the East Anglian audience. The ease with which the Jews purchase the "cake" has further potential to render fear in the audience, fueling local anxieties about commercialization and more specifically, about commodification (of sacred objects, etc.), the stability of Christian identity, and the notion of a firmly unified "Christian race."

Although the Jews were expelled from Bury St Edmunds about a century before they were expelled from England, Christian identity remains dependent upon a relationship to the "Jewish race" despite the absence of actual Jews. Both the ritual murder accusation in Bury St. Edmunds and the host desecration libel in Croxton "demonstrate the conflation of Judaism with a range of hypermasculine behavior, most especially a penchant for physical violence, duplicitous bargaining, and impulsive, irrational decision making" (Biberman 21). The play's performance of the host desecration connects fifteenth-century Spanish Aragon to the local history of Bury St Edmunds through both violence against Jews and the ideology of a firm Christian identity dependent upon the construction of a Jewish racial category. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, this category is based on a stereotype that viewed Jews as materialistic, greedy, sadistic, violent, and hyper-masculine.

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Unlike Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, texts that were composed centuries later, the *Croxton* lacks female characters. The all-male cast works to further perpetuate Jewish hyper-masculinity by downplaying emotions, emphasizing violence, and exaggerating aggression to represent Jews as eternal murderers. After the Jews bribe Aristorius to steal the host, the Jews "test" the host by covering the bread in cloth, stabbing it repeatedly, and nailing it to a rod. As Malchus performs these acts of violence on the host, he understands that for Christians, "To turne us from owr beleve ys ther entent" (439). Though he does not use the word "convert" here, his conversion from Judaism to Christianity is foreshadowed, occurring just a few lines later, as the host begins to perform miracles.[71] The Jewish characters take turns stabbing the host with their daggers and then, when Jonathas strikes the middle of the host, blood miraculously gushes out. When the host bleeds, they fry it in a cauldron full of boiling oil. Boiling the eucharist bread is a common trope of host desecration narratives.[72] In this narrative, as the Jewish characters attempt to boil it, the eucharist sticks to Jonathas's hand: "Yt werketh me wrake!" (499). Jasdon and Jason try to remove the host from his hand by nailing it to a post:

> Here is an hamer and naylys three, I seye.
>
> Lyffte up hys armys, felawe, on hey
>
> Whyll I dryve thes nayles, I yow praye,
>
> With strong strokys fast. (508-511)

Even when Jonathas and the host are nailed together to a pillar, they cannot be separated. When the host sticks to Jonathas's hand, and nailing it to a rod does not work, the Jews decide to

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[71] "To turn" was a synonym for "to convert." Thomas Cooper's thesaurus (1517) defines "Converto, convertis, conversum, convuertere" as "To return: to convert or turn: to change or transform: to translate" (Cooper qtd. in Loomba 280). This conversion begins a few lines later.

[72] See Gibson, *Gentile Tales*, p. 72.

perform an amputation: "*Here shall thay pluke þe arm, and þe hand shall hang styll with þe Sacrament*" (stage direction, Walker 224). As they amputate Jonathas's arm, the Jewish characters perform an act of circumcision, a procedure that serves as a marker of Judaism. When Jonathas becomes dismembered, Jonathas's fragmented body stands in opposition to the wholeness of the "spiritual" body of the eucharist.[73] Christians have identified with the spiritual and have long associated the Jews with the literal. For example, Christians construct Jewish identity by defining Jews as preferring the bodily or literal meaning of scripture over the spiritual meaning. Christians linked this Jewish preference of the body to Jewish circumcision, portraying Jews as valuing the bodily sign of circumcision over its spiritual significance. Although Jonathas's fragmented body contrasts the spiritual wholeness of the eucharist, the play fails to represent Christian identity as whole. The following series of events in the play portray Christian identity as fragile and fragmented. The Jewish characters reenact the Crucifixion and "crucify" Jonathas, nailing Jonathas's hand to the rod along with the host. Next, the Jews remove Jonathas's severed arm, throw the host into an oven, and trap it until the oven explodes and the piece of bread remains whole and then miraculously portrays the image of Jesus Christ. Foreshadowed by Malchus just a few lines earlier, this moment begins Jonathas's and subsequently the other Jewish characters' conversion to Christianity. As punishment for his actions, Aristorius must also "convert" from a Christian merchant to a Christian ascetic. I will return to this conversion and its significance later in the chapter.

Like Marlowe and Shakespeare, however, the *Croxton* playwright(s) thought new Christian mercantile identities through the Jewish racial category. Both Aristorius, the Christian merchant, and Jonathas, the Jewish merchant, boast about their mercantile success to the

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[73] See Camille, p. 74.

audience. Aristorius opens the play with the assertion that he is the wealthiest merchant in all of Aragon. He claims that if he wanted to buy a country right now, he would not hesitate to (87-88). He maintains that he is well-known around the world:

> Syr Arystory ys my name,
>
> A merchaunte myghty of a royall araye,
>
> Ful wyde in this worlde spryngyth my fame,
>
> Fere kend and knowen, the sothe for to saye.
>
> In all maner of londys, without ony naye,
>
> My merchaundyse renneth, the sothe for to telle,
>
> In Gene and in Jenyse and in Genewaye,
>
> In Surrey and in Saby and in Salern I sell. (89-96)

Aristorius's merchandise circulates in Britain, Belgium, France, Galacia, Geneva, Germany, Rome, Denmark, the Netherlands, the Faeroe Islands, Alexandria, Syria, Jerusalem, Jericho, the Kingdom of Saba (Ethiopia or East Africa), Tharsia (Turkestan), and the Kingdom of West Cathay (China). Many of these place names appear in fourteenth-century travel narratives such as John Mandeville's *Travels* and *The Travels of Marco Polo* and are associated with opulence. The Kingdom of Saba, for example, was thought to have precious stones and an abundance of spices; Tharsia and Cathay were known for their expensive fabrics, especially silk. Although Aristorius is not of noble birth, he equates himself with the nobility because he matches and even exceeds their financial status: "No man in thys world may weld more rychesse" (117). The presbyter further acknowledges that Aristorius is the wealthiest merchant in Aragon and rather than condemning Aristorius for his excessive love of wealth as an intrinsic evil, he reminds him to thank God. Aristorius follows the presbyter's suggestion: "All I thank God of Hys grace for

He that me sent, / And as a lordys pere thus lyve I in worthynesse" (118-119). This scene is at once parallel to and in contrast to Jonathas's introduction.

Similar to Aristorius, Jonathas's role as a successful merchant-capitalist is heavily romanticized. Jonathas's excessive and overwhelming relationship to material objects functions to mark him as a Jewish "other." At the beginning of the play, Jonathas is described as "a Jewe, / With grete rychesse for the nonys, / And wonneth in the cyté of Surrey — this full trewe — / The wyche hade gret plenté of precyous stonys" (17-20). Here, "Surrey" refers to Syria, a place where Aristorius's merchandise has also been circulating. It is very unlikely that the *Croxton* playwright(s) visited Syria; thus, what "Surrey" refers to then, is not the physical space, but the imaginative space of Syria as an "otherworld." Christendom is defined against this imaginative Syria, a place where Syrian Jews worship Muhammad, the Muslim prophet. On the one hand, Christianity and Christian identity are defined against this "otherworld." On the other hand, this imaginative space is where Christian merchants like Aristorius circulate and sell their merchandise to maximize their profits. This space begins to blur the line between the Christian merchant and the Jewish merchant. As in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* at the heart of this play is Portia's question: "Which is the merchant here and which the Jew?" (4.1.175).[74] In the *Croxton*, a stage direction marks the different merchants by their racial category. It simply reads: "Here shall the Jewe merchaunt and his men come to þe Cristen merchaunte." This distinction between the Jewish and Christian merchants constructs Christian identity as contradictory.

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[74] Disguised as Balthazar, Portia asks this question during the trial scene, but the audience has this question circulating in their minds much earlier. Shylock, Antonio, and Bassanio are all clearly merchants. See Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, edited by Leah S. Marcus.

While the audience members define themselves against the Jewish merchants, they are invited to examine their relationship to wealth through an analysis of the relationship between mercantilism and religious moral codes more generally and the concept of the Christian merchant. The relationship between Christianity and wealth dates to fourth-century Rome. Peter Brown argues that "it was the entry of new wealth and talent into the churches from around the year 370 onward, rather than the conversion of Constantine in 312, which marks the turning point in the Christianization of Europe" (528). From the late-fourth century onward, "as members of a religion that had been joined by the rich and powerful, Christians could begin to think the unthinkable—to envision the possibility of a totally Christian society" (Brown 528).[75] Broadly speaking, medieval theologians began to synthesize Christian theology and Aristotelean philosophy; most famously, Thomas Aquinas "agreed with Aristotle that slavery and social inequality were in accordance with natural law" (Chalk 332).[76] The general belief among medieval Christians was that any commercial activity motivated by the desire for profit violated both natural law and divine law. Thus, "the church attempted to establish moral precepts which would at all times take precedence over the expediency of market forces" (Chalk 332).

To understand this in the context of the play, we must examine English mercantilism in the medieval period and how it relates to biopolitical and sociocultural race markers. In *Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe* (2002), Peter Spufford examines the commercial and financial revolutions of "the long thirteenth century" that led to the rise of modern, capitalist banking, lending, insurance, and holding companies. Spufford explores the development of international Italian trading companies that established shareholders. "In addition to the *corpo*,

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[75] See Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*

[76] See Chalk, "Natural Law and the Rise of Economic Individualism in England"

that is, the capital raised by the shareholders when a company was formed or re-formed,"

Spufford explains, "additional capital could be put in later, by shareholders, by employees, and

by outsiders," including English noblemen who "placed appreciable funds with the London

branches of Florentine companies" (22-3).[77] Thus, the "sedentary merchant at home was no

longer a simple individual capitalist" (Spufford 23). The merchant was now responsible to his

shareholders and depositors. In the decades that followed, trading companies across Europe were

modeled after the Italian pattern and eventually formed groups of companies with separate

branches or enterprises, each with its own capital and shareholders.

In *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350*, Robert Lopez emphasizes

that we "often hear, in early medieval sources, of 'large' cities, 'rich' merchants, 'famous'

smiths: that is what they looked like in the context of the time" (Lopez 21). One of the earliest

depictions of these "rich merchants" is an English caricature drawing of a Jew from the

thirteenth century.[78] Sketched by an anonymous court scribe, this group caricature can be found

at the head of a vellum Tallage Roll from 1233; it depicts the crowned figure of Isaac of Norwich

(d. 1235), known as the wealthiest Jew in England at the time.[79] He appears to have four faces—

one in full, two in profile, and a suggested fourth face—symbolizing a careful watch over his

goods to the north, south, east, and west. The faces protrude into a goatee, a Christian aesthetic

symbol used to link Jews to the Devil. The drawing also alludes to Isaac's political influence: he

"loaned huge sums of money to the abbot and monks of Westminster, despite the support they

enjoyed of Pandulf, Bishop Elect of Norwich and former Papal Legate, a clergyman who had

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[77] For example, "the Earl of Lincoln had money with the Frescobaldi, the Earl of Hereford with the Pulci, and the younger Despenser with the Bardi and Peruzzi" (Spufford 23).

[78] See Appendix for a copy of the image on p. 77.

[79] See Felsenstein, "Jews and Devils: Antisemitic Stereotypes of Late Medieval and Renaissance England," p. 15. The Tallage Roll is now in the Public Record Office London.

tried to have the Jews expelled from England" (Felsenstein 15). Other Jewish figures (racially marked by the cone-shaped pointed hat or *pileus cornutus*), devils, and pagan deities surround Isaac. One unidentified Jewish figure holds up a pair of scales filled with coins, symbolizing the role of the usurer associated with Jews in the Middle Ages. The demonic and pagan figures make it all too clear to the viewer that the Jews should be seen as hellish agents of the underworld. The crowned Isaac may be interpreted as the ruler of this demonic world and as a threat to the monarchy, perhaps instilling fear into the viewer of his potential to usurp King Henry III. To the left and right of Isaac are two named Jewish figures: Mosse Mokke and Avegaye (i.e. Abigail). Mosse Mokke was allegedly "involved in an assault in Norwich in 1230" and "hanged for coin clipping in 1242" (Felsenstein 16). The image suggests a marriage between Abigail and Isaac and an illicit relationship between Abigail and Mokke, a "union that has the sanction of the Devil" who stands between them with "his index finger upon the pronounced nose of each" as if he were highlighting a physical racial marker that binds them with the horned demon. What I find most intriguing about this image is that, right below these antisemitic representation, the scribe depicts a *locus*-and-*platea* or the place-and-scaffold play setting. Cecil Roth describes "the setting as it were of a contemporary miracle play," the long curtains representing "the stage, and the architecture [...] that of the church where such plays were generally performed" (Roth 22-23).

Locally, East Anglia itself was rooted in commercialization. East Anglia was self-sufficient, self-enclosed, and "the thriving center of the English cloth trade" (Gibson 19). By 1525, "the great Norfolk port of Norwich was richer than London" (Gibson 19). Gail Gibson posits that most of the wealthy East Anglian merchants that were "wrestling with their consciences, their pocketbooks, and their driving need for memorial images and posthumous prayers were also consciously trying to add humility to those virtues of conspicuous piety and

largesse that had built their spectacular parish churches" (Gibson 28). This play thinks through the relationship between Christian identity and commercialization by inviting the audience to compare Jonathas and Aristorius. While merchants in this period need not be Jewish (and according to Nirenberg, most of them were not), regardless of their faith or their "genetics" (their blood), their mercantile practices were often mapped onto Jewishness and Judaism.[80] Furthermore, the Jewish characters' mercantile practices are also mapped onto Islam. Although the terms "Moor" or "Moorish" are never used, the Jewish characters profess devotion to the prophet Muhammad.

In the late Middle Ages, Islamicate imports into England increased, especially textiles and lusterware. Kathleen Kennedy has demonstrated that, first laid out in a formal agreement with Edward II (*r.* 1307-1327), fine Islamicate textiles, ceramics, and housewares arriving in England were most commonly trans-shipped by Venetians from the early fourteenth century through the early Tudor era. Following increased trade with the Venetians, English ports like East Anglia imported a new, larger volume of Islamicate goods decorated with Arabic and pseudo-Arabic script.[81] Kennedy notes that "the patterns woven into liturgical vestments of imported silk would have been the most common sight of Arabic and pseudo-Arabic script for the average late medieval Englishperson" (237). The English identified this Arabic and pseudo-Arabic lettering as "Moorish."

Modern anti-Islam or anti-Arab ideology is still closely connected to antisemitism. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said states that in the 1970s, Arabs were portrayed as "clearly 'Semitic:' their sharply hooked noses, the evil mustachioed leer on their faces, were obvious reminders (to a largely non-Semitic population) that 'Semites' were at the bottom of all 'our' troubles" (286).

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[80] See Nirenberg, p. 143.
[81] See Kennedy, "Moors and Moorishness in Late Medieval England," p. 234.

This "transference of a popular anti-Semitic animus from a Jewish to an Arab target was made smoothly, since the figure was essentially the same" (Said 286). The image of the Jew and the Muslim are complexly connected in the Middle Ages. Jeremy Cohen asserts that "the classification of the Jews together with the Muslims" are "subsets in a larger genus of hermeneutically constructed *infidels* who undermined the unity of Christian faith" (Cohen 162).[82]

Before even announcing his name, Jonathas enters the stage and begins to count the heaps of commodities that his glorious God "almyghty Machomet" has sent him from around the world: gold, silver, diamonds, amethysts, sapphires, emeralds, rubies, topaz, agates, onyx, and pearls and special spices and fruits like ginger, figs, dates, almonds, rice, raisins, cloves, mastic, cinnamon, sugar, pepper, Indian licorice, oranges, apples, and pomegranates. Finally, he emphasizes that he has "moche other merchandyse" (172-188). The othering of Jonathas is layered; he simultaneously represents a multiplicity of non-Christian others and a specific Jewish identity that construct Christian identity by opposition. Jonathas constructs Jewish-Christian relations through his worship of "Machomet" in terms that are similar to Christian devotion of Jesus Christ (149). This play's conflation of Judaism and Islam is a part of a pattern in medieval drama. Other medieval plays also depict the interchangeability of Jews and Muslims. Medieval mystery plays "depicting the nativity of Jesus, for example, characterize Herod using the conventions associated with Muslim sultans in the *chansons de geste* and romance" (Akbari 33).[83] Herod is lavishly dressed and extremely violent, both of which are characteristics of Muslim sultans throughout medieval literature. In one of the fourteenth-century Chester plays, "The slaughter of the innocents," Herold invokes his God "Mahound" or Muhammad: "Now

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[82] See Jeremy Cohen, "The Muslim Connection or On the Changing Role of the Jew in High Medieval Theology"
[83] See Akbari, "Placing the Jews in Late Medieval English Literature"

mightie Mahound be with thee, / and ever to dwell in feare" (187).[84] As Marianne O'Doherty states, "the discourse of the Orient converges in the late medieval period with a discourse of Islam to produce a distinctive but more associative, non-literal 'medieval Orientalism'" (3).[85] European Christians, including English Christians, mapped Muhammad's imaginary characteristics onto not only all Muslims, but also other non-Christian groups. Heng notes that "practices of generalization, through which the personality of a singular individual becomes transcoded into the character of a collective totality of peoples, exemplify processes of race-thinking and racialization" (116). The Christian audience in East Anglia not only wrongly conflates Islam with Judaism, but also equates the worship of "Machomet" with the adoration of material things. "To worship the image is to adore the matter itself rather than the spiritual good it represents" (Akbari 35). Jonathas's act of worship through a counting of valuable material objects may seem marginal in comparison to the actions yet to come in the play but is a crucial element of the Christian construction of "Jewish race."[86]

This scene is adapted in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-92), which I will discuss in my next chapter. Drawing on a long tradition of representing materialism and worldly powers as Jewish, the *Croxton* playwright(s) attempt to construct Christian identity in opposition to Jewish identity. Throughout the play, although Aristorius is a Christian merchant, he is Judaized through his mercantile practices and his actions of betrayal. At the end of the play, he needs to be "saved" by rejecting any activity that is considered "Jewish"—any activity that links

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[84] See "The slaughter of the innocents," *The Chester Mystery Cycle*. Edited by Lumiansky, R.M. and Mills, David. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974. ProQuest. https://www.proquest.com/books/slaughter-innocents-1974/docview/2138576416/se-2?accountid=14524

[85] I am careful not to analyze medieval pre-imperial English culture using Edward Said's model in *Orientalism*. Said's paradigm is based upon the history of Western imperialism and colonialization. Because the British Empire did not yet exist in this period, Said's postcolonial theory is not necessarily a helpful theoretical framework. I will return to it in Chapter 3.

to power. Medieval Christians created this narrative of Jewish violent agency and purchasing power and continued to perpetuate it even long after the expulsion of the Jews from England.

The *Croxton* is a play that blurs boundaries—boundaries between Christians and Jews, "natural" Christians and converts, merchants and non-merchants, and good and evil—that it so desperately attempts to solidify. The concept of a Christian merchant supposedly contradicts itself so much so that by the end of the play, the bishop Episcopus forces the Christian merchant Aristorius to renounce his profession and no longer participate in any mercantile activities:

> **EPISCOPUS**   Now for thys offence that thu hast donne
>
> Agens the Kyng of Hevyn and Emperowr of Hell,
>
> Ever whyll thu lyvest good dedys for to done,
>
> And nevermore for to bye nor sell.
>
> Chastys thy body, as I shall thee tell,
>
> With fastyng and prayng and other good wyrk,
>
> To withstond the temtacyon of fendys of Hell.
>
> And to call to God for grace looke thu never be irke.
>
> Also thu, preste, for thy neclygens,
>
> That thou were no wyser in thyn office,
>
> Thou art worthy inpresunment for thyn offence:
>
> But beware ever herafter and be more wyse.
>
> And all yow creaturys and curatys that here be,
>
> Of thys dede yow may take example,
>
> How that yor pyxys lockyd ye shuld see,
>
> And be ware of the key of Goddys temple. (912-927)

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While the Jewish merchants are forcibly converted to Christianity, the Christian merchant forcibly "converted" from a Christian merchant to a Christian ascetic. The penance that Episcopus imposes on Aristorius is more than just a punishment for being a "bad" merchant. Episcopus equates the profession with an "evil" that is essential to Jews, not Christians. This highlights the foundational tensions in Christian hermeneutics. Aristorius must no longer identify as a merchant in order to be a part of Christendom.

Though the Jews become New Christians through baptism, they do not renounce their professions as merchants. Although both the Jewish merchants and the Christian merchant conspired together, Episcopus does not require the same penance for the Jewish characters and Aristorius. In his final words, Aristorius declares that he will:

> **ARISTORIUS**   Into my contré now wyll I fare,
>
> For to amende myn wyckyd lyfe,
>
> And to kep the people owt of care
>
> I wyll teache thys lesson to man and wyfe.
>
> Now take I my leave in thys place;
>
> I wyll go walke my penaunce to fullfyll.
>
> Now God, agens whom I have done thys trespas,
>
> Graunt me forgyfnesse, yf yt be Thy wyll! (972-979)

Aristorius is no longer a merchant; he accepts his penance and dedicates the rest of his life to "teache thys lesson to man and wyfe." But what exactly is the lesson that he will be teaching them? To not steal the host? Or to not participate in mercantile activities? In contrast to Aristorius, by retaining their mercantile identity, the New Christians are marked as converts from Judaism to Christianity and thus, still maintain their otherness and Jewishness. This is an

example of racial capitalism—how the emerging capitalist system perpetuates racial formation. Though the Jews convert to Christianity, they are still allowed to participate in mercantile affairs that contribute to the rise of capitalism. As a "natural" Christian, Aristorius is viewed as superior to the converts. No matter what the Jewish characters or the converts do or do not do, they can never rise above the "natural" Christians in this racial hierarchy. Because the play Judaizes commercialization and the Jewish characters remain merchants, they cannot escape this discourse that equates them to essential evil. Though the Jews are supposedly converted to an identity that prioritizes the spiritual over the material, their labor operates as a marker of otherness that the East Anglian audience can simultaneously identify with and reject. This creates a major pressure point in Christian identity that stems from and continues to fuel false accusations against Jews. This Christian eschatology equates the accumulation of wealth as an essential characteristic of the Jews, "one destined to survive even the prophesied act of conversion, for its endurance enables the Christian individual to cast off the economic concerns in order to imagine a fully idealized spiritual life" (Biberman 22). Here, Christian ideology is fragmented. The *Croxton* play operates not simply as a solution or a release for East Anglian commercialization and the merchants' guilt, but as a complex construction and simultaneous deconstruction of Christian identity. Despite the play's efforts to solidify a Christian identity and a superior Christian race, it presents a fragile and fractured Christian identity that continuously needs to construct and reconstruct itself against Jews and Judaism throughout the fifteenth century and into the early modern period, as we will see in the next chapter. As I will explore in the next chapter, commercialization in England continued to drive a new conception of economic morality that constituted religious hypocrisy. English mercantilism, "as a body of economic rationalizations, began to assume importance in England by the middle of the sixteenth century"

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(Chalk 333).[87] This intensified tensions between Christian teachings and principles—like human universalism, anti-usury, and charity—and the newly emerging practices of capitalism that began to commodify everything from souls to human beings.

Conclusion

In recent years, new collectives of scholars led by the "Medievalists of Color" group have worked to transform and disrupt our notion of the Middle Ages. These scholars have been writing both inside and outside of academic contexts and working at all levels to challenge the separateness of a "medieval past." In *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past* (2019), David Perry reminds us that: "It's fine to believe in the Middle Ages, as long as you remember they didn't exist" (Perry 7). As I have shown in this chapter, the nostalgic notion of a homogenously white and universally Christian Middle Ages is a fantasy. In late-medieval England, this fantasy is represented in texts and on the stage in an attempt to construct a stable "Christian identity" in an increasingly unstable society. Sierra Lomuto highlights the importance of studying "race" in the Middle Ages, stating that "when we refuse to see race in the Middle Ages, the stakes are much greater than etymology or linguistics; we are refusing to see how hierarchical structures of difference operate in all of their nuanced complexities, including within multicultural and transnational contexts. We are allowing the Middle Ages to be seen as a preracial space where whiteness can locate its ethnic heritage" (Lomuto qtd. in Perry 7).[88] Lomuto's call and the call of many medieval scholars, "connects the urgency in the streets of Charlottesville, the mosque in New Zealand, and the synagogue in San Diego to what happens in academic spaces. They are all connected. They always have been" (Perry 7). Throughout this

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[87] Any fixed dates for the origin and decline of English mercantilist ideas would be arbitrary.
[88] See Lomuto, "White Nationalism and the Ethics of Medieval Studies," *In the Medieval Middle*, www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2016/12/white-nationalism-and-ethics-of.html.

chapter, I have heard this call and I will continue to address this important topic in my future
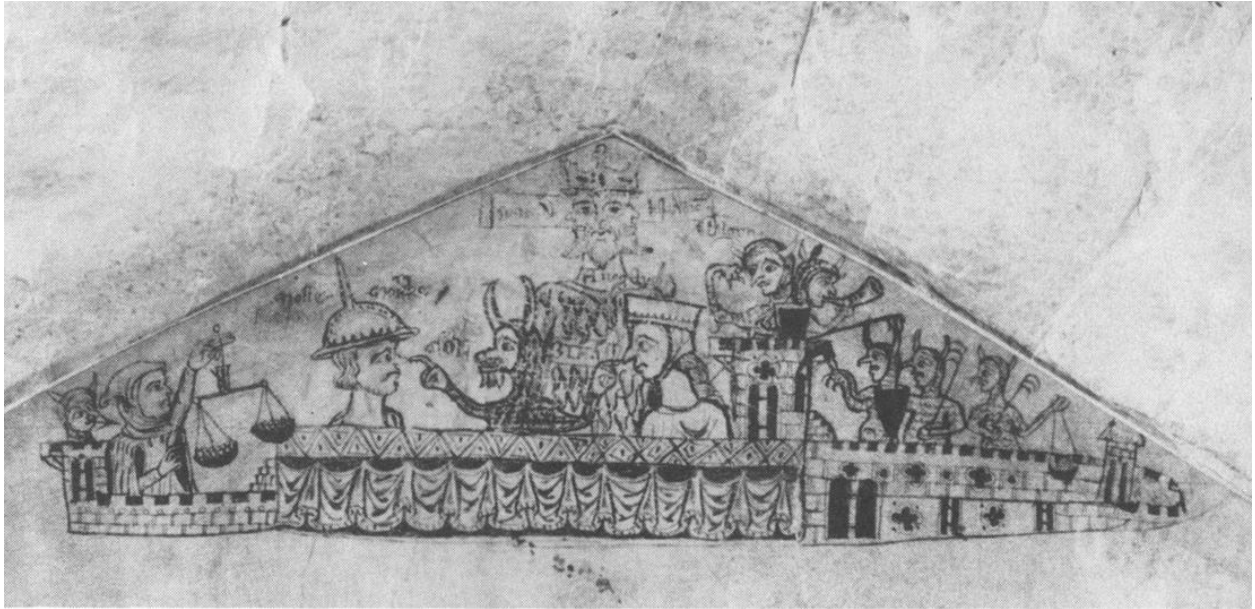
work.

Appendix

Figure 1.1: Caricature drawing on Exchequer of Receipt, Jews' Roll, 1233, The National Archives, London, no. 87, Hilary Term, 17 Hen. III (P.R.O. Doc. Reference E 401). See also, http://www.thehistoryblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Anti-semitic-cartoon-from-Norwich-tax-record.png

Religion, Race, and Racial Capitalism in Early Modern English Drama

A Libell, fixte vpon the French Church Wall, in London. Anno 1593

Ye strangers yt doe inhabite in this lande
*   Note this same writing doe it understand*
Conceit it well for savegard of your lyves
*   Your goods, your children, & your dearest wives*
Your Machiavellian Marchant spoyles the state,
*   Your usery doth leave us all for deade*
Your Artifex, & craftsment works our fate,
*   And like the Jewes, you eat us up as bread.*
The Marchant doth ingross all lande of wares
*   Forestall's the markets, whereso 'ere he goe's*
Sends forth his wares, by Pedlers to the faires,
*   Retayle's at home, & with his horrible showes: Vndoeth thowsands*
In Baskets your wares trott up & downe
*   Carried the streets by the country nation,*
You are intelligencers to the state & crowne
*   And in your hartes doe wish an alteración,*
[…]
Weele cutt your throtes, in your temples praying
*   Not paris massacre so much blood did spill*
As we will doe iust vengeance on you all
*   In counterfeitinge religion for your flight*
When 't'is well knowne, you are loth, for to be thrall
*   your coyne, & you as countryes cause to flight*
With Spanish gold, you all are infected
*   And with y1 gould our Nobles wink at feats*
Nobles said I? nay men to be reiected,
*   Upstarts yl enioy the noblest seates*
That wound their Countries brest, for lucres sake
*   And wrong our gracious Queene & Subiects good*
By letting strangers make our harts to ake
*   For which our swords are whet, to shedd their blood*
per. Tam-   And for a truth let it be vnderstoode/ Fly, Flye, & never returne.
berlaine.

> —"A Libell, fixte upon the French Church Wall," more commonly known as the Dutch
> Church Libel, 1593[89]

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[89] Citations of "A Libell, fixte upon the French Church Wall, in London. Anno 1593," are from Freeman, "Marlowe, Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel," p. 45. Although contemporary accounts refer to the "Dutch" Church libel, Griffin notes that the surviving transcription reads "fixte upon a French Church wall." See Griffin, "Marlowe Among the Machevills," p. 115. See also *Jew of Malta*, ed. Siemon, p. 115–18.

We are the American heartbreak —
The rock on which Freedom
Stumped its toe —
The great mistake
That Jamestown made
Long ago.
        —Langston Hughes, "American Heartbreak: 1619," (1951)[90]

The fact is "black" has never been just there either. It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally, and politically. It, too, is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found.
        —Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," (1987)[91]

Introduction and Literature Review: Early Modern "Race"

In England, the term "race" provided English writers a flexibility of meaning as they conceptualized and ordered English society throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[92] While this flexibility had its benefits, it also produced English anxiety about English identity, power, and belonging. This chapter will trace and analyze this English anxiety and its connection with the emergence of capitalism by focusing on Renaissance drama written by Christopher Marlowe (1564-93). It is important to emphasize that we cannot understand early modern England without discussing the development of ideologies of human difference. Within this early modern context in which difference could be "everything and everywhere, race competes with other features as the distinguishing mark of identity, preventing any easy correlation between race and difference" (Bartels 212). To examine how complicated, uncertain, and indistinguishable early modern terms of racial identity are, in this chapter, I will examine

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[90] This version of Hughes's poem was recorded by Hughes for "Langston Hughes Reads Langston Hughes," (31:02), "We Are the American Heartbreak:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG14NTT0zj4. Originally, the first line of the poem reads: "I am the American heartbreak." See Hughes, "American Heartbreak," 1951.
[91] Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in *Identity: The Real Me*, p. 45
[92] See Hendricks, "Race: A Renaissance Category?"

religious conversion and theatrical representations of racial stereotypes as fraught sites for the play of anxieties about skin color. I will build on my previous chapter and discuss religious conversion and skin color in relation to inner essence and outer physical features; in other words, I will examine the development of Christian hegemony alongside the development of racial capitalism; then, I will close-read Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

In defining race as a cultural construct, my reading of *The Jew of Malta* engages with foundational early modern critical race scholars such as Peter Erickson, Kim F. Hall, Arthur L. Little Jr., Ania Loomba, Joyce Green MacDonald, and Ayanna Thompson to analyze how racialized representations of the consequences of the global economy contributed to the ongoing and conscious construction of England as a white, Protestant nation and emerging colonial power. Throughout this chapter, I will examine this complex race-thinking in the context of global conquest and the emergence of racial capitalism as I analyze the play's characters: Barabas, the Jew of Malta; Abigail, his daughter; Ithamore, his Turkish slave; and Ferneze, the Governor of Malta. Stephen Greenblatt has argued that Marlowe's plays characteristically encourage "subversive identification with the alien" and link "the idea of a stranger in a strange land" with European imperialism (203). What has been overlooked in scholarship on early modern race and *The Jew of Malta*, however, are the ways in which the play's subversive characters expose the kind of race-making that was brought forth by England's imperialist endeavors in the context of emergent racial capitalism. Marlowe goes beyond encouraging his audience to subversively identify with the alien; his play functions as a space of meaning-making where the meaning of a racial other is rejected, reexamined, and reformed. Marlowe's play problematizes the construction of racial difference by displaying the unresolved tensions between the local and global and between nation and empire while questioning how these

tensions relate to the ways in which racial and class-based difference is constructed in the emerging global capitalist system.

On the early modern page and stage, the English came to imagine themselves as colonizers and their failed colonies as a vast overseas empire. The theater, in particular, was a place of English self-grandiosity, where the English could talk the talk of empire and represent themselves as colonizers, when in reality, England and the English were none of those things (except in Ireland). The "self-fashioning" of Englishness functions "without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life" (Greenblatt 3). As the English began to imagine themselves as colonizers, the creation of English identity and English "imagined community" gave rise to anxieties about purity: purity of faith, morality, blood, complexion or skin color, and, most importantly, the purity of "Englishness." As these anxieties permeated public debates and literature, the meaning of Englishness was changing and shifting. Normative English national identity "began to coalesce via the exclusion of the poor and homeless, as well as of racial or religious outsiders, and that such exclusions were established by describing these different groups in interchangeable terms" in the literature of the period (Burton and Loomba 16). Representation of liminal spaces, cross-cultural encounters and contact zones all played an important role in the ideological development of identity in England, helping to define "English identity" and "to alter English thought and practice" (Vitkus 25).[93] It is no surprise, then, that Christopher Marlowe's plays offer outstanding examples of racialized characters that negotiate Englishness, English identity, and the anxieties surrounding their meaning and construction on stage. By setting *The Jew of Malta* on an island in the Mediterranean, Marlowe turns the audience's attention to the key sites of England's imperialist exploits and the anxieties of

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[93] See Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630*, 2008.

emerging English imperialism. This chapter analyzes these anxieties in literary texts and Marlovian drama to show how the construction of race and racial biases was rooted in emergent English imperialist and racial capitalist ideologies.

On the Page: English Mercantilism and Religious Hypocrisy in the Early Modern Period

An economic history of the Jewish diaspora in the early modern period is outside the scope of this dissertation.[94] However, a brief exploration of both early modern English mercantilism and the role of Jews in the emergent capitalist economy as bankers, merchants, and commercial agents in the Mediterranean is crucial to both my central argument about antisemitism, race, and emergent capitalism and to historicizing Marlowe's play and his concerns with religious hypocrisy. The term "mercantilism" has been used by early modern historians to denote the "deliberate pursuit of the economic interest of the state, irrespective of the claims of existing law, privilege, and tradition, as well as of religion" (Israel 2). Early modern English mercantilism, as employed throughout this chapter, does not denote a specific economic *system* but rather a new political perspective that connects to the development of racial capitalism.

The perspective of merchants, though contrary to Christian doctrine, dominated many early modern English texts on economic life. In fact, English mercantilism has been described by economic historians as an alliance between the state and growing capitalist interests. Although the old approach condemned loans at interest because of the ecclesiastical doctrine of usury, "a new approach was needed to cope with productive loans that enabled the borrower to expand the scope of his business" (Spufford 43-4). Throughout the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, protests were made in favor of "the free play of market forces" or, in other words, a separation of the government from the economy, long before Adam Smith popularized the concept in *The*

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[94] For a broad socioeconomic perspective, please see Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds, *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2001.

Wealth of Nations, which was first published in 1776 (Chalk 333). A "sharp separation of the spheres of economic expediency and the life of the spirit" began at this time (Tawney 110). This tension between traditional Christian morality and the mercantilist point-of-view created conflicts within Christian hermeneutics.[95]

In Marlowe's time, capitalists' economic practices were on the one hand, deemed sinful and condemned as un-Christian usury, and on the other hand, simultaneously encouraged by the mercantilist and emerging capitalist classes as "natural." Despite attempts made by Parliament under Elizabeth to regulate usury, like the Act of 1571, in practice, the legislation restricted little. Although usury continued to be condemned in sixteenth-century England as the antithesis to the law of God, "the edge of its denunciation was being insensibly blunted through a more accommodating classification of the types of transaction to which the word usury might be held to apply" (Tawney 114). For example, since land and capital were interchangeable investments, many theologians argued that "interest was ethically as justifiable as rent, and that the crucial point was not the letter of the law which condemned the breeding of barren metal, but the observance of Christian charity in econoimie, as in other, transactions" (Tawney 170). By the Jacobean period, unlike 1552 and 1557, Parliament was not asked "to decide whether interest is lawful or unlawful: it has merely to consider the respective merits of ten per cent and eight per cent" (Tawney 171). The usage of the word "usury" in early modern England began to denote "not only exorbitant interest rates, but the full range of innovative capitalist practices involving speculation, credit, debt, currency exchange, and other ways to breed money from money" (Vitkus 166).

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[95] For example, Jean Bodin asserted "*Il vaut beaucoup mieux s'arrêter à la loi de Dieu qui défend totalement l'usure.*"

Although it was not yet recognized as racial capitalism, early modern English writers observed the ways in which these capitalist practices benefitted "the new bourgeois members of the ruling class" and harmed "the 99 percent" (Vitkus 165).[96] For example, Thomas Wilson challenges the well-established credit system in his work *A Discourse Upon Usury By Way of Dialogue and Orations, for the Better Variety and More Delight of All Those That Shall Read This Treatise* (1572).[97] His work was quoted by subsequent writers on the subject including: Thomas Rogers, *A General Discourse against the damnable Sect of Usurers* (1578), Miles Mosse, *The arraignment and conviction of Usurie* (1595), Fenton, *Treatise of Usurie* (1612), and John Blaxton, *The English Usurer* (1634).[98] Wilson defines usury as lending money with interest, "makinge the lone of money a kinde of merchandise, a thinge directlye against all lawe, against nature, and against god" (177). Wilson describes English "men of wealth" in terms usually used to refer to non-white or non-Christian outsiders. He states that these wealthy Englishmen are greedy and idle: "I do not knowe anye place in christendome so muche subject to thys foule synne of usurie as the whole realme of Englande ys at thys present, and hathe bene of late yeares. For men of wealth are nowe wholy geeven every wheare all together to idelenss, to gett their gaine with ease, and to lyve by lending upon the onely sweate and labour of others" (178).

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[96] See Vitkus, "How the One Percent Came to Rule the World: Shakespeare, Long-Term Historical Narrative, and the Origins of Capitalism"

[97] See R. H. Tawney's introduction and the edited text of Thomas Wilson, *A Discourse Upon Usury By Way of Dialogue and Orations, for the Better Variety and More Delight of All Those That Shall Read This Treatise* (1572). G. Bell & Sons Ltd., London, 1925.

[98] David Jones, a Church of England clergyman, "who was indiscreet enough to criticize what had become the chief occupation of his wealthy parishioners found himself obliged to seek a cure elsewhere" after he gave his sermon to the united parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth, and St. Mary Wool-Church-Haw, later published as *A Discourse upon usury, or, Lending money for increase (occasioned by Mr. David Jones's late farewel sermon) proving by undeniable arguments the lawfulness thereof and answering the plausible objections from Scripture, councils, and fathers against it / published at the request of several judicious and sober Christians for the information and satisfaction of all such as have or may be concerned in the matter of so general and weighty importance*, 1692. See also R. H. Tawney's introduction, p. 112.

Anti-usury pamphlets like Wilson's argue that usury was not only an act of hostility or an offense against the Christian concept of charity, but also an act of idleness and revenge. For example, in *The Examination of Usury* (1591) Henry Smith explicitly links the usurer with revenge by claiming "that without usury, there would be no 'revenging'" (Thurn 161). In Marlowe's play, while Barabas is not primarily a usurer in the sense of moneylending, he is a merchant that participates in capitalist practices and an actor, director, and playwright who writes and acts out a revenge plot. Marlowe draws on the early modern English connection between usury and revenge in a play that is all about conflicting economic and religious ideologies, hypocrisy, and exchange.

On the Page: Connecting Anti-Blackness and Antisemitism in Early Modern England

It is important to view evocations of blackness in English early modern texts in the contexts of sexual politics, imperialism, and racial capitalism. These evocations contributed to the formation of a White, male, and Christian identity in English culture. For example, Saracens—or "Muslim" figures—and Jews were thought of as essentially different in religious and bodily terms. In Western Christian views, they had long been described as both metaphorically and literally black. In Sebastian Münster's *The Messias of the Christians and the Jewes held forth in a discourse between a Christian, and a Jew*, the Jew asks the Christian how he knew him to be Jewish and the Christian replies: "[…] from the form of your face, I knew you to be a Jew: For you Jews have a peculiar colour of face, different from the form and figure of other men; which thing hath often fill'd me with admiration, for you are black and uncomely, and not white as other men" (Burton and Loomba 248-9). Originally printed in German in the

1530s, this text was reprinted in English by William Hunt in 1655, more than a century after the author's death in 1552.[99] This text remained an important source for the notion that Jews were *black* or, more broadly, physically distinct from Christians.[100]

In the next few lines of the text, the Jew argues against the notion that Jews are "black and uncomely," stating that the Jews "are the elect people of God, and his inheritance," and "are more comely than all the nations of the earth" (Burton and Loomba 249). He describes Jewish children as "fairer and fatter in flesh than all the other children" (249). He then ascribes the reason for the comeliness of Jews to the notion of maternal impression *and* differences between Jewish and Christian blood. While "Israelites […] are free from menstruous blood, have not in their original any drop of redness," the "Gentiles, who do not dread that uncleanness, nor abstain from women in the time when they ought to abstain, […] contract a certain redness, and for that cause […] their children, are white" (249). Here, we see the author engaging with the concept of "fairness" and its connection to whiteness. The English (and more broadly European) division of beauty "into 'white' or 'black' not only served aesthetic purposes but supported an ideology that still continues to serve in the interests of white supremacy and male hegemony" (Hall 4). In her landmark study *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (1996), Kim F. Hall examines the gendered and racial politics of whiteness. She argues that "depictions of dark and light, rather than being mere indications of Elizabethan beauty standards or markers of moral categories, became in the early modern period the conduit through which the English began to formulate the notions of 'self' and 'other' so well known in Anglo-American

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[99] Although there is little to no evidence of organized communities of English Jews between Jewish expulsion in 1290 until the mid-sixteenth century, this changed around 1540. Oliver Cromwell officially readmitted the Jews in 1657.

[100] *The Messias of the Christians and the Jewes held forth in a discourse between a Christian, and a Jew* (London: Printed by William Hunt, 1655), 1–9.

discourses" (Hall 2). In Münster's text, and many others like it, gender concerns are crucially embedded in the discourses of race.

It is also important to note the text's engagement with terminology from the Spanish Inquisition purity of blood laws. As I stated in the previous chapter, the purity of blood laws, that came into full effect during the sixteenth century, spearheaded the development of biological notions of race centuries before the Enlightenment. As early as the 1450s, Spanish institutions with official positions, like the military and professional guilds, created purity by-laws that demanded proof of uncontaminated or "clean" blood. The "pure blood laws" defined Jewish and Muslim converts to Christianity (*converso*s and *moriscos,* respectively) as anyone with at least one Jewish or Muslim ancestor. These statutes meant to prevent conversos and moriscos, their descendants, and heretics from accessing public and ecclesiastical offices, certain professions, and honors.[101] This discriminatory concern about Jewish ancestry was based on the biased belief that the unfaithfulness of the Jews not only endured in the conversos who converted to Catholicism, but also had been inherited by their descendants through blood, regardless of their sincerity in professing the Catholic faith. This developed because of anxiety about one's "purity" of Catholic faith. These laws maintained that Jewish blood was impervious to baptism and therefore, if mixed with Christian blood, the Jewish blood would contaminate subsequent generations and would continue to do so indefinitely.[102] Therefore, a converso could not be considered a real Christian.

In Münster's text, the Jewish character draws on Inquisition terminology to disconnect the concept of the contamination of blood or "impure" blood from Jewishness. Instead, he argues

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[101] See *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, eds. Herring Torres, Martinez, and Nirenberg, p. 1.
[102] See Friedman, "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism" (1987)

that blood becomes impure when contaminated by menstruous blood. In this instance, bodily contamination is linked to a behavior or "ethnic habit." Friedman explains that New Christians were often convicted of being "secret Jews" because they participated in certain "ethnic habits" like abstaining from pork, using olive oil rather than lard, changing sheets every Friday, calling their children by Old Testament names, praying standing rather than kneeling, or turning to face a wall when hearing of a death. Most subsequent historians, Friedman adds, "ignorant of Judaism, have often not realized that such practices were not religious in nature and were no more Jewish than reading the *New York Times*, eating bagels, or supporting the American Civil Liberties Union" (15). In the text, the Jewish character relates an "ethnic habit" to "biological" contamination. He states that because Jewish men abstain from intercourse with menstruating women, they do not contaminate their blood; therefore, they do not have red blood and thus, they do not have "white" complexions. Because Christian men, on the other hand, do not abstain from intercourse with menstruating women, their blood is red and therefore, their children have "white" complexions.

The Jewish character, still concerned with pure and impure blood, participates in misogynistic discourse that links impurity with menstrual blood. It is the menstruating female bodies that serve as the testing ground for the symbolic boundaries of culture and race. It is menstrual blood that is considered impure and the reason behind white complexions. This highly charged concept of gender challenges the traditional Christian associations of white and black. Rather than associating whiteness with purity, the Jew associates the Christian's whiter complexion with impure "red" blood that stems from sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman. The Christian character, however, challenges this logic. The Christian replies to the Jew's descriptions by stating that not even one in one thousand Jews are "of a comely

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countenance" because Jews are no longer "God's inheritance, and beloved people," but instead "are an abomination in his eyes, and a stink in his nostrils, wherefore he hath left [the Jews], so that [they] go wandering up and down as sheep which are without a pastor, and have no certain dwelling in any place" (249). This description evokes disgust. It reinforces the traditional Christian associations of whiteness with purity and blackness with impurity. The Christian character's response illuminates the fears and beliefs that fueled the hatred of Jews beyond its connection to the Crucifixion, like the ritual murder or host desecration libels that I have discussed in the previous chapter. The Christian engages with the myth of the "Wandering Jew," a medieval legend about a Jewish man condemned to an eternal life of wandering for an offence against Jesus.[103] As Regine Rosenthal explains, the legend of the Wandering Jew is yet another Christian construction of identity; it constructs Christian identity by defining the Jew as an Other that is "shunned and excluded from participation in the discourse of power" (Rosenthal 127). The widespread European fears of the non-Christian "Other," the loss of power, and the loss of a stable English identity is tied to racial and gender discourses about the loss of "purity" that would come with cultural mixture and hybridity. Münster's text serves as an example of how discourses of race are crucially linked to concerns about gender, especially in terms of the control of gendered bodies.

As anxieties about the "purity" of the Christian faith became heightened by mass religious conversions, religious differences began to be increasingly expressed in somatic terms. Both on the Continent and in England, conversion spearheaded the biological vocabularies of race and racialism and the biological vocabularies of racial capitalism that soon followed. Throughout Europe, "concerns over interracial sexual contact and mixed-race children

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[103] See Steinitz, Tamar. "The Wandering Jew."

increasingly drew together and mystified religious and somatic vocabularies, especially in circumstances with the potential for cultural mixture" (Burton and Loomba 17). Marlowe exploits anxieties over miscegenation, their representations, the political and socioeconomic motivations behind them, and what perpetuates them throughout his play. He evokes racial stereotypes in contexts that defy and deconstruct those stereotypes and pushes audience members to examine their biases and assumptions about English identity, racial others, and the arbitrary boundary between the English (White, Christian) "self" and non-English (non-white, non-Christian) other. His play elicits audience sympathy rather than condemnation for racial others that often enact unlawful things onstage.

On the Stage

Clearly, the anxieties about one's "purity" of Christian faith and its connection to their "purity of blood" was not limited to Iberia. Shakespeare draws on Inquisition terminology in *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), a play that I will further analyze in the next chapter.[104] When the Messenger tells Cleopatra the good news that Antony is still alive, Cleopatra offers him "[Her] bluest veins to kiss, a hand that kings / Have lipped and trembled kissing" (2.5.35).[105] The phrase "bluest veins" refers to *sangre azul* or blue blood. This biological notion of race stemmed from the claims of Spanish families who declared they had never been contaminated by Moorish or Jewish blood and proved it with their blue veins that were clearly visible through their fair skin.[106] At the core of this racist ideology was the idea that

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[104] In *The Merchant of Venice*, when the Prince of Morocco enters the stage, he sets out "To prove whose blood is reddest—his or mine" (2.1.7). When Shylock learns of Jessica's—his own "flesh and blood"—conversion to Christianity and refuses to convert himself, Salerio undermines Shylock's relationship with his daughter, stating: "There is more difference between thy flesh and hers / than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than / there is between red wine and Rhenish" (3.1.32-4).

[105] In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra's reference to her blue veins contradicts other descriptions of her throughout the play as "tawny" and "black." I will explore this further in the next chapter.

[106] See Burton and Loomba, p. 16.

blood was "a vehicle for the transmission of not just physical but also cultural traits: moral, characterological, spiritual" (Herring Torres 1). Because of the push for (forced) Christian homogenization, Spanish authorities could no longer exclude New Christians based on religious membership to Judaism or Islam. Therefore, they began to discriminate conversos or moriscos based on familial and cultural origins or religious genealogy instead. Blood became a racial concept, deeply connected to the Castilian word *raza* or "race." In the previous chapter, I explored the concept of race as blood in the context of fifteenth-century Spain and the Spanish blood laws to analyze a late-medieval English play, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, set in Aragon. In this chapter, I analyze early modern Spanish concepts of race and blood and their adaptation to different cultural contexts in order examine how racial constructs work together to produce and reproduce processes of exclusion, systems of signification, and social hierarchies. I aim to show how these concepts develop into hegemonic narratives and how these narratives are perpetuated and weaponized or challenged and subverted on the early modern stage.

Many of Marlowe's plays, most famously *Tamburlaine the Great I* (1587) and *Tamburlaine the Great II* (1588), explicitly explore the concept of race as blood. Issues of lineage, bloodlines, and inherited identity as they relate to power relations, nationhood, and global conquest play out on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage through Marlowe's language. The most significant exploration of the English construction of identity on the stage is Marlowe's *The famouse tragedie of the Riche Jewe of Malta*. Projecting England's imperialist and capitalist desires into an island in the Mediterranean, the playwright thoroughly examines and exploits English attitudes and anxieties towards outsiders or "others." Throughout the play, Marlowe's racial discourse questions the meaning of Englishness: its essence, form, representation, stability, and the motivations behind the formation of an English identity that is singular and unified.

Marlowe's language is an example of what Kim F. Hall calls the language of race in the early modern period. In *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe creates a Maltese community that bears a resemblance to early modern England just as much as it resembles the archipelago. Marlowe's fictional Malta is a liminal space in which the separations of black and white, dark and light, good and evil, Christian and non-Christian, and self and other are challenged, broken down, and subverted. The play, then, explores the anxieties that ensue in the aftermath of the collapse of these binary oppositions.

The first recorded performance of *The Jew of Malta* was on February 26, 1592, by Lord Strange's Men (Derby's Men) at the Rose Theater. The play was revived many times for over forty years and beyond.[107] Both Richard Perkins, who revived the role of Barabas in 1633, and Edward Alleyn (1566-1626), the renowned actor who first played the Barabas, likely wore a "fiery red wig," red beard, and prosthetic nose on stage.[108] Despite the association between blackness and Jewishness in early modern texts that I have discussed earlier in this chapter, curiously, this association did not translate into material practices of racial impersonation of Jews on the stage. Actors did not use "black-up" or cosmetic blackness to perform Jewish characters.[109] Instead of using "blackface," actors dressed in red wigs, red facial hair, and prosthetic noses to "Judaize" their performance of Barabas, which afterwards became the standard costume of the stage Jew. These materials are not simply ornamental. Early modern

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[107] Most recently, the Royal Shakespeare Company directed by Justin Audipert performed the play at the Swan theater in Stratford-upon-Avon in an "impeccably timed revival" in March 2015. Richard Perkins (d. 1650) famously revived the part of the Jew of Malta (Barabas) in 1633, the same year it was published with additions by Thomas Heywood (1574-1641), "as it was playd before the King and Queene, in his Majesties Theatre at *White-Hall*, by her Majesties Servants at the *Cock-pit*," one of the two principal Caroline theaters located in Drury Lane. See the title page. *The Jew of Malta* was undoubtedly performed at Philip Henslowe's Rose theater in the 1590s. Scholars suggest that the Rose differs from other Elizabethan theaters in its ability to stage large scenes on two levels.

[108] See Gross, John. *Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy*, p. 27 and p. 55.

[109] For more information on "black up," see Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness*, p. 3-4

English actors wore red wigs and red facial hair "as a visual shorthand of Jewry and its supposed cultural and religious associations with Satanic practice" (Kahan 42).[110] These materials provided viewers with a visual representation of Jewishness as a racial category. Red hair was also associated with Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus Christ in all four canonical Gospels of the New Testament; in the Gospels of Luke and John, Judas is possessed by Satan.[111] Judas is also described as having "the common purse" and being in charge of the apostle's money (John 13:29). Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (written and performed between 1582 and 1592) refers to the red color of Judas's beard when Hier states "O, let them be worse, worse: stretch thine art, and let their beards be of Judas his own colour" (3.85). Judas is often evoked in libels and false accusations against the Jews; for example, Doctor Roderigo Lopes (*c.* 1517–1594), the infamous royal physician and indicted traitor who allegedly attempted to poison the Queen, was labeled "a perjured murdering traitor, and Jewish doctor, worse than Judas himself" (*ODNB* qtd. in Griffin 115).[112] Linked to one of the seven vices—lust—and often seen as "poisonous," red hair functions as an important technique in the racial technology of early modern England that works alongside performative blackness to fuel racist practices and violence off the stage. Performative Jewishness further invites audience members to think about the Jew as a racial category embedded in a lust for power and wealth and a major threat to the fantasy of a unified England under one Christian ideology.

The villain-hero of the play, Barabas is the wealthiest Jew in Malta with a desire for wealth that drives his schemes for revenge on the island's Christians who launched a racist

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[110] Middleton's song, "Black Spirits," inserted in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, lists a variety of demonic ingredients including "blood of a bat," "libbard's bane," "juice of a toad," "oil of adder," and "three ounces of the red-haired wench" (4.1.43).

[111] See *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Matthew 26:47-9; Mark: 14:44; Luke 22:3; John 13:27.

[112] See Samuel, Edgar. "Lopez [Lopes], Roderigo [Ruy, Roger] (c. 1517–1594), physician and alleged conspirator." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 03.Oxford University Press. Date of access 28 Apr. 2023, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-17011>.

campaign against him. His name alludes to "Barabbas" who was the prisoner chosen to be pardoned and released over Jesus Christ by the crowd of Jews during Crucifixion in all four canonical Gospels of the New Testament.[113] Barabbas is a patronym from the Aramaic בַּר אַבָּא meaning the "son of the father" or "son of Abba" (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 1824). In Hebrew, the name אבא or Abba could be used in conjunction with another name or as a name on its own. The etymology of the name "Barabbas" may be linked to the Greek βάρβᾰρος or *barbarous* meaning "non-Greek" (non-Hellen) or "foreign." This term was also used to refer to "all non-Greek-speaking peoples, then specially of the Medes and Persians."[114] Although the origin of the term βάρβᾰρος is unknown, some historians speculate that the word may have been onomatopoeic, relating to the sounds of non-Greek languages that were unintelligible to the Greeks. "Barbarians" did not speak Latin or Greek and if they did, they spoke the languages ineptly. The term began to have negative connotations during the Persian Wars in the 5th century BCE. [115] As a result of the Greco-Persian wars, barbarianism began to be associated with rudeness, brutality, and cruelty. In the English historical imagination, there was an uncritical acceptance of an inherited idea of history or an idea of history that is inherited from the ancient Greeks and Romans. The concept of the barbarian is a key example of how this idea of history is rooted in the development of "Englishness" as a collective identity. The barbarian as a rhetorical concept was reanimated in the early modern period and embedded into racial logic and vocabulary. This is an early example of the function of "national" memory. This kind of

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[113] See *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Matthew 27:16; Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18; John 18:40. In different manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew, his name is Ἰησοῦς Βαῤῥαββᾶς or "Jesus Barabbas."
[114] See https://logeion.uchicago.edu/βάρβαρος, U of Chicago Logeion
[115] Rather than using "BC" and "AD," in recognition of the fact that many people do not consider Jesus Christ to be their "Lord," historians settled on the labels that I will use throughout this dissertation: "BCE" or "Before Common Era" and "CE" or "Common Era."

collective memory attempts to create seamlessness by connecting early modern England to ancient Greece and Rome without any ruptures in time.

In ancient Greece, and later in early modern England, barbarians were people whose presence along imperial borders was a political and cultural threat to the "civilized master race" (Smith 2). In *Barbarian Errors: Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (2009), Ian Smith investigates language, by way of barbarism, "as a historically accurate and productive ground for racial analysis" in "a particularly 'Renaissance' perspective that acknowledges ancient antecedents and foregrounds the role of rhetoric in early modern racial self-fashioning" (2-3). Rhetoric is crucial in the construction of imagined racial communities. Smith argues that the "Renaissance inherited a powerful conceptual template" in the rhetorical concept of barbarism "for imagining the outsider, one that was ready-made for racial exploitation" (2). Smith addresses language as constitutive of race and examines language as a category for defining African identities in the early modern period. As I close read the *Jew of Malta*, I build on Smith's useful method of establishing language as a racial marker. While he theorizes a historical relationship between language and color in relation to race and Africa, I will build on this method to think through heterogeneous racial codes and their performance in early modern England.

Before Barabas enters the stage, the language of the play already marks him as a "barbarian," or racial other, but as the audience quickly realizes, easy racial categorizations or definitions become impossible in this play. Barabas is linked to Machevill—his name a play on "much evil"— who presents the audience with several ideas that, to a certain extent, significantly differ from Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469-1527) own writings but continue to maintain the

traditional view of Machiavelli as synonymous with deception and moral corruption.[116] On stage, Marlowe's Machevill is part of the long Vice tradition made popular in the Middle Ages. The Vices were allegorical characters in medieval literature, especially Christian morality plays, that represented the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth.[117] The English often demonized Machiavelli, using him as a strawman that advocates for an amoral "policy," or saying and doing whatever it takes to get into power. The term "policy," used in the early modern English sense of cunning political tactics, is repeated a dozen more times throughout the play. Marlowe takes this sense of policy and complicates it, giving the audience a play that complexly connects imperialist politics with emerging capitalist ideals. Marlowe's Malta is an island of "infinite riches" where profit is the goal shared by all, even those who claim to be virtuous. This space becomes one where cross-cultural competition, and not Christian virtue, preoccupies the plot and drives the characters' actions.

Setting the tone for a play, Machevill introduces a Malta that is preoccupied by greed. He presents a story of religious anxieties and racist violence, of ambiguous and entangled motives, played out against a fictitious Maltese society whose true creed is not religious ideology, but materialist greed. A caricature, Machevill crudely defines religion as "a childish toy," condemns belief in superstition, and "hold[s] there is no sin but ignorance" (Prologue, 14-5). Though some speak openly against [his] books, he states that "Yet will they read [him], and thereby attain / To Peter's chair" (Prologue, 10-11). He warns the audience that "when they cast [him] off, / [they] Are poisoned by [his] climbing followers" (Prologue, 12-3). This oddly specific threat, that those who reject his teachings are poisoned by his followers, may be referring to the infamous case of

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[116] Machevill is based on the hostile propaganda against the real Niccolò Machiavelli. For example, see Innocent Gentillet's *Discours contre Machievel*, 1576.
[117] These are in opposition to the Virtues, personifications of the seven capital virtues: chastity, charity, temperance, diligence, kindness, humility, and patience.

Roderigo Lopes, the royal physician-in-chief who, when threatened with torture, admitted to attempting to poison Queen Elizabeth I. Lopes was a Portuguese *converso*, also known as a "New Christian," the son of a Jew who was forced to be baptized in 1497.[118] As I discussed earlier in this chapter, a *converso* was often accused of practicing Judaism in secret or returning to Judaism later in life; unsurprisingly, during the Portuguese Inquisition, Lopes was one of many accused of practicing Judaism in secret and fled Portugal to London in 1559. When Lopes was charged with high treason for allegedly plotting to poison Queen Elizabeth I and executed in 1594, Marlowe's play was revived. It is important to note that in early modern London, practicing Judaism was a capital crime. While there were no openly practicing Jews, and Jews were not officially readmitted until 1657 by Oliver Cromwell, after 1540, there were a small number of New Christians who could have conformed to the established church while continuing to practice Judaism in secret.[119] By 1593, there were by "official count" about "4,300 aliens resident in London" or approximately "4 to 5 percent of the population;" and of this small group, very few would have been "Jews" though they have been the subject of extensive scholarly research (Griffin 113). For example, some scholars speculate that Sarah Anes (Roderigo Lopes's wife) and the Anes family lived, traded, and prospered in Tudor and Jacobean London for ninety years by publicly assimilating to Christian hegemony and practicing Judaism in the privacy of their homes. Though we cannot know for certain if the Lopes and Anes families practiced Judaism in private, we do know that they lived a prosperous life. In 1584, Doctor Lopes sought and was granted a monopoly of the importation of sumac and aniseed for ten years, and it was renewed a year before his trial and execution. With the absence of economic competition, he had

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[118] See Samuel, Edgar. "Lopez [Lopes], Roderigo [Ruy, Roger] (c. 1517–1594), physician and alleged conspirator." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 03. Oxford University Press. Date of access 28 Apr. 2023, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-17011

[119] See James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, p. 68.

significant market power and control over the herbs.[120] Marlowe's early modern audiences would have been aware of the families' financial circumstances because of the infamous story surrounding Lopes's alleged plot. While Barabas refuses to convert to Christianity and therefore is not a "converso," his character is possibly linked to both Machevill and Lopes, despite the fact that Marlowe was murdered in May 1593, a year before Lopes's trial and execution. A decade earlier, the defamatory *Leicester's Commonwealth* mentions "Lopez the Jew," crediting him with "skill in poisoning" (Katz 59-61 qtd. in Griffin 114).[121] This is significant because, in the early modern English audience member's imagination, Barabas is reminiscent of both the medieval Vice character *and* a racialized historical figure whose "barbaric" image continued to circulate throughout seventeenth-century England.[122]

Barabas evokes multiple traditions and ideologies in the readers' or audience members' minds—Greco-Roman barbarism, the medieval Vice, and Inquisition religious racialism—that the English inherit and build upon as they think about organizing power relations and formulate racial categories. While Machevill questions systems of power, especially those prevalent in antiquity, he asserts that those who follow his doctrine will gain political victory. Converging with Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* for a moment, Machevill asks the audience, "What right had Caesar to the empire?" (19). This question refers to Caesar's wealth and power; with it, Machevill sets the stage for a play that centers on economic interests and structures of power. After discussing his obsession with power, Machevill suddenly makes clear his intention "to present the tragedy of a Jew" (30). Machevill introduces Barabas, proudly claiming that

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[120] See Freeman, "Marlowe, Kyd," p. 50. After Lopes's first petition for a monopoly on sumac and aniseed was denied, Walsingham seems to have intervened in his behalf. See Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1589, July 12, 609.

[121] See Katz, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850*. For a discussion of the Lopez case, see p. 49-106.

[122] See Hulsen, Frederik van. "Lopez, Roderigo (c. 1517–1594)." *The British Library* via *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1009379

Barabas's riches were gained by following Machevill's doctrine, and asks the audience not to

judge the Jewish merchant based on his support of Machiavellianism:

> But whither am I bound, I come not, I,
>
> To read a lecture here in Britaine,
>
> But to present the tragedy of a Jew,
>
> Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed,
>
> I crave but this, grace him as he deserves,
>
> And let him not be entertained the worse
>
> Because he favors me (Prologue, 28-35)

After unabashedly offering the audience a list of his own subversive policies and blasphemous

beliefs, Machevill introduces the Jew of Malta by begging the audience members to let Barabas

"not be entertained the worse" because Machevill favors him. Although Machevill is an

unreliable narrator, he sets the tone of the play by introducing Barabas in a space of otherness

before the Jew even steps foot on the stage with racial markers like a prosthetic nose, red wig,

and red beard. This space of otherness is essential to early modern England's construction of

Englishness, which was situated in antisemitic constructions of the "Jewish race" as devils,

infidels, usurers, desecrators, and murderers, especially ritual murderers of Christian children. In

his edition of the play, James R. Siemon discusses the marginal group of merchant "Strangers" in

Elizabethan London whose capitalist practices were denounced in racist terms linked to the

popular notion that Machiavellianism legitimizes immoral self-interest and contributes to English

construction of identity. This construction of Englishness is also situated in racist constructions

of the Turks as slaves (like Ithamore) or diabolical emperors with powerful forces that would

render the English fleet obsolete (like Calymath). Marlowe plays with this idea by creating a

Malta where boundaries, binaries, and antagonistic opposition between religious and racial identities melt, and the audience is left questioning the arbitrary nature of these distinctions in a capitalist environment.

Throughout the play, the audience discovers that Barabas is not the only character who "favors" Machevill and participates in policy in the sense of Machiavellian stratagems. Barabas states: "Long to the Turk did Malta contribute; / Which tribute all in policy, I fear, / The Turks have let increase to such a sum, / As all the wealth of Malta cannot pay" (1.1.179-82). Here, we see that money is deeply entangled with warfare and power. While Barabas is the richest and most powerful Jew in Malta, he is not the only Machiavel. Marlowe creates a Malta that is inhabited by Machiavels, including Christians and Turks, that blur the boundaries between the good Christians and evil non-Christians. In fact, when we meet Barabas at the beginning of the play, he seems to have assimilated into Malta's multicultural society. Like Barabas, the Christians and Turks desire wealth, property, and power, and will stop at no lengths to ensure that they procure them. The audience discovers that the "alien" characters are more similar than different to the Christian characters in their devious desires and strategies. Therefore, Marlowe destabilizes the English hegemonic constructions of the racialized other and has the potential to subvert them by situating the "other" as the status quo in the play.

Moreover, in early modern England there were groups of merchants whose capitalist practices were denounced in *both* terms linked to the notion that Machiavellianism promoted sinful self-serving practices *and* Judaizing terms. Regardless of their faith, merchants were Judaized; mercantile practices were mapped onto Judaism. In Barabas's counting-house, the play begins with his speech mid-sentence as he counts the heaps of coins before him. He moves from one "venture summed and satisfied," referring to the "Persian ships," to another (1.1.2-3). As he

counts the silverlings from "those Samnites, and the men of Uz, / That bought [his] Spanish oils, and wines of Greece," he complains: "Here have I pursed their paltry silverlings" (1.1.4-6). Barabas reenacts the actions of Jonathus from the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* and exclaims "Fie, what a trouble 'tis to count this trash!" (1.1.7). This "trash" is what David McNally refers to as "a technology of power" (1).

Furthermore, Barabas laments that not all his customers are like "the Arabians" who can pay "with wedge of gold" or like "the merchants of the Indian mines, / That trade in metal of the purest mould" (1.1.8-9,19-20). He wishes he could be like the "wealthy Moor, that in the Eastern rocks / Without control can pick his riches up, / And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones" (1.1.21-23). As Barabas grows weary of counting such an excess of coinage, he imagines the wealthy Moor receiving "Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts, / Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds, / Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds, / And seldseen costly stones of so great price" for free and selling "them by the weight" (1.1.24-28). These scenes in the *Croxton* and *The Jew of Malta* are more than just coincidental parallels. Jonathas and Barabas reenact a specific English performance tradition rooted in antisemitism. The Judaizing of merchants draws on an antisemitic tradition of presenting "satanic aspects of worldly powers as Jewish" (Nirenberg 143). What matters to Barabas the most is winning a maximum profit in its smallest and most concentrated physical form.

Throughout his speech, Barabas represents a racialized figure of the new capitalist system. Here we see the beginnings of capitalism at work as Barabas tries to control space; in his counting-house, he desires to concentrate wealth by cramming as much money as possible in his space:

This is the ware wherein consists my wealth:

> And thus methinks should men of judgement frame
>
> Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
>
> And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose
>
> Infinite riches in a little room (1.1.33-37).

He advises the "men of judgement" in the audience to distinguish their commerce or "means of traffic" from "the vulgar trade." His ultimate desire is to enclose, to trap, and to hoard infinite riches in a small space. Barabas encourages an emergent capitalist logic and the policies that it enables. Although Barabas is not primarily a usurer, his profession as a wealthy merchant with a desire for infinite money establishes him among the other powerful forces in the play. As McNally argues, rather than a benevolent medium for promoting the exchange of commodities, money is rooted in warfare and domination, and, therefore, a discussion of money must tether money to the body and its labor and "situate bodies in networks of power and oppression—among them class, patriarchy, and slavery" (2). Marlowe's play especially speaks to the lived experience of emergent racial capitalism, the expansion of capitalist policies like the accumulation of capital, and the emergence of world money. McNally situates the theory of world money in an international space "constituted in and through world competition among capitals and international rivalry between dominant nation-states" (3). An analysis of international conflict and war is integral to a theory of world money. Both in Marlowe's play, and offstage, war and international conflict are not background stage effects, but "*intrinsic* elements of the history of money" (McNally 3, emphasis in original).

Finally, Barabas ends his speech hoping that his ships "laden with spice and silk […] are smoothly gliding down by Candy-shore / To Malta" (1.1.46-47). It is important to note that although 1610 is approximately when capitalism emerges in Europe and as a world system, the

economic depression of the 1550s helped catalyze Elizabethan interest in new goods and new markets that European imperialism promised. Though England did not yet have an explicit imperialist agenda, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, the English relentlessly searched "for north-east and north-west passages to the East as well as for *Terra Australis*, development of trade with Russia, India, the East and Far East, and exploration and colonization of the recently discovered 'New World'" (Bartels 4). Emerging with this impetus was an intellectual desire to construct and maintain the rigid boundaries between the racialized English self (like the audience member) and racial other (like Barabas). To prevent the dangers of dissolving boundaries between English and non-English identities, the emerging English capitalist-imperialist agenda needed to define Englishness as a racial category and control transgression by producing and promoting Englishness in drama. Rather than conforming to this hegemonic discourse, Marlowe was in a unique position to exploit it and capitalize on English race-making.

Christian Hypocrisy

Barabas's othering is not only rooted in this emerging capitalist system, but also rooted in Marlowe's world picture that has the potential to challenge English propaganda and question the development of the rigid category of race, especially Englishness as "white" and Christian. Unlike other religious plays that end with mass conversions of non-Christians to Christianity, Barabas is not the anti-hero to be pitied, redeemed, and saved at the end of the play by converting to Christianity. Instead, he is the hero that the audience members should love to hate, but ultimately sympathize with, or at the very least, pity. Barabas explains: "Rather had I a Jew be hated thus, / Than pitied in a Christian poverty: / For I can see no fruits in all their faith, / But malice, falsehood, and excessive pride, / Which methinks fits not their profession" (I.i.113-7). Ironically, while there are characters that are "pitied," there are no characters "pitied in a

Christian poverty" in the play. While Barabas is surrounded by racial discourses that define and promote him as the "Jew," Marlowe complicates and at times even subverts these discourses by pushing back against the construction of racist stereotypes and creating Christian characters that fall into the prefabricated meanings of barbarians, Machiavels, and Jews.

Marlowe's Christian characters leave the audience confused about the place and meaning of Christian charity; rather than offering mercy and forgiveness, the Christian characters operate in a logic more like *lex talionis* or "an eye for an eye." For example, when Barabas discovers that his ships have safely docked in Malta, three Jews arrive to inform him that they must meet Ferneze, the Christian governor of Malta, at the senate house; once there, Barabas discovers that a new law requires all Jews on the island to forfeit half of their wealth and estate to help the government pay tribute to the Turks. When Barabas refuses to pay half of his wealth in financial tribute, Governor Ferneze unjustly confiscates all Barabas's wealth and converts his mansion into a nunnery. Although Barabas turns to cruel revenge, his figure raises moral questions about class and mercantile culture and exposes the tensions surrounding the notions of human difference and English identity. Marlowe exploits this tension by creating Christian characters that, according to Barabas, practice "policy" as "their profession" and not "simplicity, as they suggest" (I.ii.161-2). He criticizes the Maltese Christian for their hypocrisy because while they profess Christian honesty, charity, and "simplicity," they continue to practice greed and cruelty. For example, later in the same scene, Friar Bernadine and Friar Jacomo make suggestive sexual comments about Abigail, Barabas's daughter, who, in the words of Don Mathias (Ferneze's son and Abigail's suitor), is a child: a "fair young maid scarce fourteen years of age" (I.ii.375).

Later in the play, when Barabas pretends to want to convert to Christianity, Marlowe exposes the Christians' hypocrisy by using language that commodifies souls. Although Barabas

claims that "for lucre's sake" he would have "sold [his] soul," the audience quickly discovers that it is the Christian friars who commodify Barabas's soul. Despite their knowledge of Barabas's murderous plots, rather than condemning Barabas for causing Don Mathias and Don Lodwick's fatal fight and murdering the nuns (including Abigail) by delivering poison rice to the nunnery, the friars drool over him and his wealth. Barabas states: "But yesterday two ships went from this town, / Their voyage will be worth ten thousand crowns / […] / All this I'll give to some religious house / So I may be baptized and live therein" (IV.i.69-76). Friars Bernadine and Jacomo compete with one another, each begging Barabas to join their "house" (IV.i.77-8). Although the dying Abigail asks Friar Bernadine to convert her father to Christianity to save his soul, Marlowe quickly turns this concept of religious conversion on its head in the very next scene. When the friars learn how much wealth they could receive from Barabas, they each repeat the phrase "come with me" and fight with one another over the Jew's conversion. In response, Barabas strategically emphasizes his wealth, telling the friars that he has "highly sinned" and repeating that once he has converted, he will give all his wealth to one of them. Each friar foolishly believes that he has earned Barabas's favor and will be the one to convert Barabas and therefore, obtain his wealth. This exchange exposes the friars' hypocrisy. Rather than associating religious conversion with redemption or salvation, the friars focus on procuring wealth. Thus, Barabas's soul becomes a commodity in their eyes. Throughout the play, all characters—Jewish, Christian, and Turk—are bought and sold in in different ways. For the Christians, their religious principles are being used to foster emergent racial capitalist values for wealth and profit.

Marlowe's imperialist plot presents shifting oppositions that prevent the audience from easily rooting for any one character and pledging allegiance to one "good" side, and in doing so, blurs the boundary between "us" and "them." Barabas is not the only character who shifts his

alliances, first aligning himself with the Turks and then betraying them, then betraying and

realigning himself with the Christians. Ferneze's alliances constantly shift as well; first the leader

of Malta aligns himself with the Turkish "Bashaw" and "Selim-Calymath" (1.2.1-32), then he

confiscates Barabas's wealth and converts his mansion into a nunnery (1.2.97-130), but later, he

betrays the Turks and breaks "the league / By flat denial of the promised tribute" (3.5.19-20).

This is decided in Act II, Scene ii, when Ferneze seems to side with the Catholic King of Spain.

When Vice-Admiral Martin del Bosco convinces Ferneze to keep the tribute money, however,

there is a confusion of pronouns in the text that implies a changing sense of who is the enemy for

whom:

> My lord and king hath title to this isle,
>
> And he means quickly to expel them hence,
>
> Therefore be ruled by me, and keep the gold:
>
> I'll write unto his Majesty for aid,
>
> And not depart until I see you free. (2.2.37-41)

Like the confusion of enemies earlier in the scene (line 11), there is a confusion of pronouns here

with the word "them." Some editors assume that there is a mistake; however, the uncertainty is in

line with the idea of a constantly shifting enemy. Although Ferneze seems to join the Spaniards

against "these barbarous misbelieving Turks," he betrays them by aligning with Barabas

(II.ii.46). But Ferneze then betrays the Jew when Ferneze suspects that Barabas murdered his

son, Don Mathias, after Barabas promises both Don Mathias and Don Lodwick his daughter

Abigail's hand in marriage. The constantly shifting enemy highlights the lack of distinction

Marlowe sees between Christian, Turk, and Jew. The distinctions between Christian and

multicultural non-Christians become a façade of racial capitalism, a tool used to create distance

between the English and non-English to justify capitalist behaviors.

Marlowe further highlights religious hypocrisy and the façade of Christian ethics in racial

capitalist terms during the Maltese slave market scene where Barabas buys Ithamore, one of the

newly landed Turkish enslaved people, from a Spanish admiral. Marlowe's slave market scene

has been explored in different ways by early modern scholars like Stephen Greenblatt, Lawrence

Danson, and Daniel Vitkus, as a symbol for the alienating forces of an emerging racial capitalist

system.[123] This scene taps into the paradoxical anxieties surrounding the English presence in the

Mediterranean. Many plays staged in London's commercial theaters, including this one,

portrayed the Mediterranean world as a place where English men could venture to make a

fortune by participating in highly competitive markets. Indeed, the play's Maltese slave market is

a symbol for Elizabethan anxieties about threats to English racial identity posed by market

exchange and "multicultural mixing" (Vitkus 196). "The Mediterranean, with its Barbary pirates,

Turkish galleys, and slave markets," Vitkus explains, "must have seemed to Londoners to be a

place where everything was up for sale and subject to exchange, a place like Marlowe's Maltese

slave market where 'Every one's price is written on his back' (2.3.3)" (196). Vitkus argues that

much like Barabas in Malta, the English in the Mediterranean on the one hand, "felt their

difference as outsiders acutely, as alienation; on the other hand, the English felt drawn into

exchange and relations that threatened to 'convert' them to a foreign condition or, at least,

contaminate them" (194). Greenblatt emphasizes that this contradiction is seen most clearly in

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[123] Greenblatt argues that Marlowe's slave market is "the concrete emblem of [Christian] alienation," a symbol of "the triumph of Christianity which 'objectifies' and hence alienates all national, natural, moral, and theoretical relationships, dissolving 'the human world into a world of atomistic, antagonistic individuals'" (Greenblatt 206-7). See Greenblatt, "Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play," in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, 2005. Here Greenblatt turns to Marx's essay, *On the Jewish Question*, to explain Marlowe's rhetorical strategy. For a fuller explanation, see also Greenblatt, "Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 291-307.

the character of Barabas, who simultaneously serves to represent all that the Christian audience members "loathe and fear, all that appears stubbornly, irreducibly different" and, at the same time, a reflection upon Englishness (Greenblatt 203-9). This emerging English racial identity is rooted in accumulation and behaviors motivated by financial gains. The free market becomes a place where the English can take on shifting roles that contradict Christian doctrine; thus, a façade or an illusion of Christian ethics must be created to distinguish the English from "infidels" and to allow the English to participate in this emerging racial capitalist system. In other words, the English must (re)construct a Christian doctrine that complements capitalist principles and their proto-imperialist discourse. This set of Christian principles is constructed in order to distinguish them from the Spanish, Turks, and Jews, when, in many ways, the English are "mixing" with them and participating in the same economic behaviors.

Moreover, the captivity, enslavement, and sale of English subjects was a direct result of early modern commercial expansion. Perhaps this was an impetus for the use of Christian ethics as a tool to distinguish the English from the non-English along religious or racial lines. This is not a simple self-other binary; instead, the English were worried about becoming like the multicultural people that they encountered, read about in travel narratives, or watched on stage. This fear created the need for a rigid racial discourse that was deeply rooted in capitalist behaviors. The English feared not only losing their agency, but also losing their sense of Englishness or English purity. Marlowe acknowledges this in the slave market scene, where Christians sell Turks and Moors to Jews and the Jewish merchant refers to a Christian man as a "slave [who] looks like a hog's cheek new singed" (2.3.42). The idea that English behavior in the Mediterranean is somehow righteous or void of greed or desire for wealth is untrue and yet, because of their fear of dissolving the boundary between Englishness and heterogenous or

multicultural identity, the English established a sense of Christian ethics that justified capitalist behavior and simultaneously established differentiation between them and other capitalists in the Mediterranean region.

In this play, Marlowe represents various forms of trade and exchange—slave, sexual, commercial—and the religious hypocrisy involved in adopting these economic behaviors that prioritize profit. Even the religious institution of marriage becomes motivated by financial gains and personal revenge. Against a backdrop of global ventures, Barabas plots a trap to further his financial interests: the marriage of his daughter to Don Lodwick. Throughout the Maltese slave market scene, Abigail becomes "a diamond," a commodity that "ne'er was foiled" (2.3.48-56). Marlowe exposes the marital system for its commodification of women. This "diamond" also represents the most moral character in the play in the eyes of Christian doctrine: as a penance for her sins, Abigail joins the nunnery and converts to Christianity and even after she was poisoned (along with all the other nuns) by her father, she worries about his salvation and begs the friar to save him. While describing her chastity in terms of the cut of a gem, Barabas suggests the hypocrisy of the nuns' and friars' claims to chastity, saying that "they do awhile increase and multiply," fulfilling God's command to Noah (2.3.89).[124] Abigail becomes a precious commodity, analogous to Christian morality, whose price is being negotiated by her father and a Christian man, and who eventually dies. Therefore, in Marlowe's Malta, if someone is "ne'er foiled" and pure, they do not survive in this capitalist environment. Marlowe critiques the façade of ethics by following this logic of racial capitalism throughout the scene; he shows his audience how, with this logic, it is not a big leap to go from negotiating the price of Abigail, an unfoiled

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[124] "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (King James Bible, Genesis 9:1).

diamond, to negotiating the price of a Moor and Turk, dehumanized slaves being sold by Christians.

Marlowe uses the Mediterranean as a framework to think through and problematize the development of the façade of a stable English racial identity dependent upon an unstable sense of Christian morality. Although there are no English characters in the play, Marlowe stages capitalist behaviors, that his audience would be familiar with, in the Mediterranean, a place that his audience would recognize as both different and familiar. At the Maltese slave market, when Barabas has finished discussing the deal with Don Lodwick, he turns to the Spanish officer to negotiate the price of an enslaved person. Inquiring about price disparities, Barabas asks: "what's the price of this slave, two hundred crowns? Do the Turks weigh so much?" (2.3.97-8). He questions the Spanish officer's pricing, asking if "Turk be dearer than the Moor" because he can steal, or because he has the philosopher's stone. This question, if the Turk might weigh more than the Moor, is meant to mock the Christians' unwitting ideological blindness, or, in Barabas's words, the "unseen hypocrisy" within Christianity (1.2.293). As if choosing a piece of meat, or cattle, Barabas stresses that he "must have one that's sickly" and asks the Spanish officer to "let [him] see one that's somewhat leaner" (2.3.123-5). He chooses to purchase Ithamore, whom I will analyze in the next section of this chapter. Then, Don Mathias (Abigail's lover and Don Lodwick's friend) and his mother Katherine, enter the slave market. When Katherine sees her son conversing with Barabas, she warns her son to "Converse not with [Barabas], he is cast off from heaven," or, in other words, because he is a Jew (2.3.157-8). In the very next line, she purchases an enslaved person from a Spanish officer. Therefore, not only does the audience witness a Christian selling a Turk to a Jew, but also a Christian man selling a Moor to Christian woman. The audience quickly realizes that Marlowe's Malta is rooted in "a mutually beneficial

system of exchange" between the Turks, Spanish, and Maltese (Panja 75). The slave market was made possible by Ferneze. In exchange for their help against the Turks, the Governor of Malta promises the Spanish a market to sell their slaves.[125]

On the Turks and Ithamore, the "Turkish slave"

About twenty years before Marlowe wrote *The Jew of Malta*, the Great Siege of Malta took place in 1565. As Lisa Hopkins remarks, even two hundred years after the siege "Voltaire could still say '*Rien n'est plus connu que le siège de Malte*' (nothing is better known than the siege of Malta)" (86, emphasis in original).[126] The siege was also seared into English collective memory. When the Turks attacked Malta, "the English dioceses appointed prayers to be read 'every Wednesday and Friday' 'to excite all godly people to pray onto God for the delivery of those Christians that are now invaded by the Turk'" (Hunter 52). According to the *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, the English dioceses emphasized the unification of Christendom against the Turk, a common enemy:

> Forasmuch as the Isle of Malta…is presently [*at the moment*] invaded with a great Army
> and navy of Turks, infidels and sworn enemies of Christian religion…it is our parts,
> which for distance of place cannot succour them with temporal relief, to assist them with
> spiritual aid…desiring Almighty God…to repress the rage and violence of Infidels who
> by all cruelty and tyranny labour utterly to root out not only true Religion, but also the
> very name and memory of Christ our only Saviour, and all Christianity (qtd. in Hunter
> 52).[127]

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[125] See Yazdani and Menon. Although England was not yet a significant force behind the slave trade, the "early Iberian empires were built on slavery, inasmuch as the Spanish colonies between 1501 and 1640 received 335,000 slaves who were involved in grain production, silver mining, wine making, and textile production" (Yazdani and Menon 16).
[126] See Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life*, p. 86–9.
[127] See the *Liturgical Services of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. W. K. Clay (Parker Society (1847)), pp. 519-23.

The Turks were "infidels and sworn enemies of Christian religion" and described as angry, violent, cruel, and tyrannical. Th emphasis on "spiritual aid" and routine prayer stressed to English churchgoers the importance of the unity of Christendom. The English dioceses appointed prayers not for peace, but for war; their sermons often perpetuated hatred and encouraged churchgoers to pray for the defeat of the Turks. This perpetuated the notion that the Turks were a threat that needed to be defeated and that Christendom needed to be defended against Muslim invasion. Six years later in 1571, despite England's own struggles with Spain and Pope Pius V, the English celebrated the major defeat of the Ottoman fleet by Don John of Austria and the Holy League at the Battle of Lepanto. In St. Paul's at London, "a sermon was preached…by maister William Foulks of Cambridge, to give thanks to almightie God for the victorie, which of his mercifull clemncie it had pleased him to grant to the Christians in the Levant seas, against the common enemies of our faith, the Turks" (qtd. in Hunter 52). After the sermon, there were "bonefiers made through the citie, with banketting and great rejoising, as good cause there was, for a victorie of so great importance unto the whole state of the Christian common-wealth" (qtd. in Hunter 53). Elizabethans were both afraid and fascinated by the widespread news of the Turkish conquests and defeats in Europe and the Mediterranean.

Marlowe taps into the Elizabethans' fear and fascination of the Turks by weaving the memory of the Siege of Malta into his play. For example, Ferneze's confiscation of Barabas's house for a nunnery "seems to reflect the convent installed in the ruins of a Jewish residence" and "Barabas's blowing up of the house containing the Turkish soldiers, too, mirrors the collapsing wall" (Panja 77). While, as Hopkins and Panja observe, Marlowe includes many minor details of the siege, he does not conclude his play with a climactic siege scene. Moreover, while he does allude to an Ottoman defeat at the end of the play, he does not offer audiences a

heroic Lepanto-like figure to root for. Even after Marlowe wrote *The Jew of Malta*, and well into

the seventeenth century, the glory of Lepanto did not fade in the English collective memory; this

is made evident by King James VI and I's famous poem on the subject, *The Lepanto* "first

published in 1591 and probably written in 1585—James's most significant and widely circulated

accomplishment as a poet" (Appelbaum 333). The heroic poem is over a thousand lines long and

"participates in a European-wide effort to depict the Battle of Lepanto as a florious victory,

despite evidence that the battle was neither unambiguously heroic nor unambiguously

triumphant" (Appelbaum 333). Instead of depicting a Lepanto figure on the stage, however,

Marlowe thrusts his characters into a world of imperial politics where they question the basic

teachings of religion and morality and are driven by the accumulation of profit.

Marlowe gives the slave Ithamore a crucial role in the play. He is "the only confidante of

the suspicious Barabas (apart from Barabas's daughter Abigail), and one who dares to try to

outwit him" (Panja 76). Ithamore's rapid rise from slave to witty blackmailer could reflect "the

mobility of Malta's slaves who could become, as did the Jews, slaves because their wealth was

confiscated, or could, through conversion to Christianity, marriage, and business acumen, be

integrated within mainstream Maltese society" (Panja 76). When Barabas and Ithamore first

meet, the two participate in a back-and-forth competition, boasting of their felonies. The English

stage had a long tradition of representing "Turks" who boasted about their felonies.[128] This

exchange culminates in Ithamore claiming that in Jerusalem, "where the pilgrims kneeled," he

once "strowèd powder on the marble stones," and "their knees would rankle, so / That I have

laughed a-good to see the cripples / Go limping home to Christendom on stilts" (2.3.207-211).

For Elizabeth theatregoers, who were accustomed to tyrannical "Turkish" leaders bragging about

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[128] See Vitkus, "Introduction," *Three Turk Plays From Early Modern England*, pp. 1-53.

their crimes on the stage, this speech coming from Ithamore's mouth might have bordered on black comedy. Barabas is so impressed by Ithamore's egregious wrongdoings that he confides in him. Ithamore quickly grasps Barabas's revenge plot—promising his "diamond" Abigail to both Mathias and Lodwick—and asks: "Faith master, I think by this / You purchase both their lives; is it not so?" (2.3.364-5). Ithamore recognizes that Barabas has purchasing power, is constantly analyzing opportunity cost, and seizing every opportunity for profit. Barabas, "as merchant/usurer and revenger," "demands interest, guaranteed returns, and therefore deals in a surplus that violates the law: he always knows more than he can "tell," and he uses his surplus to selfish advantage both in the Malta road and in the plot" (Thurn 165). Barabas is more than capable of making smart investments and mitigating investment risk. Observing Barabas's capitalistic behaviors, Ithamore learns how to navigate the emerging racial capitalist society, which leads to Barabas's downfall.

Throughout the play, Ithamore seems to become Barabas's "fellow," "love," "trusty servant," and "second life:"

O Ithamore, come near;

Come near, my love, come near, thy master's life,

My trusty servant, nay, my second life;

For I have now no hope but even in thee,

And on that hope my happiness is built. (3.4.13-7).

Although Ithamore becomes Barabas's "friend," adopted son, and "heir" when Barabas convinces him to help kill Abigail, Barabas does not actually give Ithamore the keys and wealth that he promises:

O trusty Ithamore; no servant, but my friend;

I here adopt thee for mine only heir,

All that I have is thine when I am dead,

And whilst I live use half; spend as myself;

Here take my keys, I'll give 'em thee anon:

Go buy thee garments: but thou shalt not want (3.4.42-7).

Some scholars note that this speech connects to John 15:15-16, a passage familiar to the Elizabethan audience "as a part of the ritual of *The Book of Common Prayer*" (Hunt116).[129] This passage further emphasizes the characters' lack of moral principle in the play. In Marlowe's Maltese society, there is no true friendship and no charity for one's neighbor. When Ithamore realizes that Barabas is not serious about his promises, he—with the help of Bellamira the courtesan and Pilla-Borza the thief—blackmails him. As the three are penning a letter and extorting money from Barabas, Barabas enters disguised as a French musician and poisons them. Before they die, the three confess Barabas's crimes to Ferneze.

Although the play does not end with a dramatic siege of Malta, the Turkish forces do briefly capture Malta with Barabas's help. Although Barabas is made Governor of Malta by the Turks, this power is not enough. He creates a plot to betray the Turks and murder Calymath by allying with Ferneze, who promises to give Barabas "Great sums of money for thy recompense: / Nay more, do this, and live thou Governor still" (5.2.88-9). Finally, Ferneze betrays Barabas by cutting a rope and opening the trapdoor over a cauldron, which Barabas had initially constructed for Calymath. As Barabas burns alive and cries out for help, neither the Christians nor the Turks offer him sympathy. In the final scene of the play, there is no room for Christian mercy. Ferneze

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[129] The passage reads: "Henceforth call I you not servants: for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, have I made known to you" (qtd. in Hunt 116).

delights in seeing Barbas's "treachery repaid" and Calymath imprisoned in Malta (5.5.73, 5.5.118). In the final speech of the play, Ferneze vows to defend Malta from future attacks:

> […] for come call the world
>
> To rescue thee, so will we guard us now,
>
> As sooner shall they drink the ocean dry,
>
> Than conquer Malta, or endanger us.
>
> So march away, and let due praise be given
>
> Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven (5.117-123).

This vow rings with irony because the characters'—Jew, Spaniard, and Turk—actions throughout the play are not driven by moral values or the belief in God and an afterlife. For Elizabethan audiences there would be further irony in the knowledge that the Spanish Governor is no hero they would root for because they were living under the threat of Spanish invasion.

Conclusion

In the emergence of modern forms of power, there is "a dialectical tension between monarch and money;" as a racial capitalist society develops, individual "rule must give way to the impersonal rule of capital; monarchy must yield to the power of money" (McNally 84). Although there is an absence of Protestant Christianity in the play, Marlowe asks his audience members to identify with characters that are at the intersection of trade, exchange, religious conversion, and religious hypocrisy. He emphasizes that while the dehumanizing treatment of enslaved people conflicts with religious teachings, it is an integral part of the Christians' socioeconomic system. The new economic mechanisms of racial capitalism make it difficult to distinguish vice from virtue and Machiavelli from decent human being, and simultaneously create the English need for a stable racial identity.

CHAPTER 3: 'I cannot hold this visible shape:'
Religion, Race, and Racial Capitalism in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

They are a people more scattered than Jews, and more hated: beggarly in apparel, barbarous in condition, beastly in behavior, and bloody if they meet advantage. A man that sees them would swear they had all the yellow jaundice, or that they were tawny Moors' bastards, for no red-ochre man carries a face of a more filthy complexion, yet are they not born so, neither has the sun burnt them so, but they are painted so, yet they are not good painters neither: for they do not make faces, but mar faces. By a byname they are called gypsies; they call themselves Egyptians; others in mockery call them moon-men. If they be Egyptians, sure I am they never descended from the tribes of any of those people that came out of the land of Egypt: Ptolemy (king of the Egyptians) I warrant never called them his subjects: no nor Pharaoh before him. Look what difference there is between a civil citizen of Dublin and a wild Irish kern, so much difference there is between one of these counterfeit Egyptians and a true English beggar. An English rogue is just of the same livery.[130]

  —Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and candle-light. Or, The bell-mans second nights walke*

So distribution should undo excess, and each man have enough.

  —Shakespeare, *King Lear*

My more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more; that I should forge
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
Destroying them for wealth.

  —Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

  The world is constantly evoked throughout Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare uses the

word "world" over six hundred and fifty times in total, twenty-eight times in *Hamlet* (1601) and

forty-five times in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607). Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, more

than any other Shakespearean text, navigates the world. Set right before "the time of universal

peace" under Octavius Caesar, *Antony and Cleopatra* stages a complex narrative involving the

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[130] See Dekker in *Race in Early Modern England*, pp. 169-70. In 1609, over fifty years after the first banishment of the "gypsies," Thomas Dekker, a contemporary playwright famous for his popular comedy *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), describes "gypsies" in the rhetoric of emerging racial capitalism.

two major empires of the ancient Mediterranean world: Rome and Egypt. De Sousa demonstrates that the play "coincides with a heightened interest in Egyptian ecology" (129). Shakespeare "seizes the uniquely Elizabethan construct of the Egyptian identity as a composite of ancient Egyptian culture and habitat, gypsies, and English vagabonds in order to interrogate his own culture's understanding of Egyptians and Romans" (De Sousa 129). To negotiate these cross-cultural encounters, Shakespeare's play draws on texts from antiquity, on the geopolitical anxieties of the early modern period, and on the deeply hierarchal concerns about racial difference, contrasting Cleopatra and her court with Octavius and the Romans and marking the former as "oriental."

The play references early modern concerns with the relationship between the East and the West, and in doing so, the tragedy has often prompted the "Roman" interpretation of the text. Nonetheless, *Antony and Cleopatra*, I argue, is open to a reading that does not decide between a dissolute East and a rational West. I will pursue in this chapter an interpretation that acknowledges and even celebrates the possibility of the dissolution of the boundaries and borders of racial and gendered difference shaped by an emerging capitalist system. The play's engagement with race-making rhetoric and what Noémie Ndiaye calls the *script of blackness* creates characters that have subversive potential to break down the association between evil and the non-white, non-Christian, non-English "Other" (in this case, Cleopatra and her court). This chapter will analyze this subversive potential by engaging with English performance culture and "stagecraft" as crucial sites for cultural negotiations of English self-fashioning during a time of emerging racial capitalism.[131]

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[131] See Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race*, 2022. Ndiaye examines three specific techniques of scripts of blackness—"black-up (cosmetic blackness), blackspeak (acoustic blackness), and black dances (kinetic blackness)—in order to map out the poetics of those techniques by tracking metaphorical strains regularly associated with them in performance" (3).

While examining *Antony and Cleopatra*, many scholars including Ania Loomba have turned to post-colonial theory and studies of globalization.[132] Within the last twenty years, scholars of early modern literature and culture like Ania Loomba, Daniel Vitkus, Jyotsna Singh, and many others have examined the transnational commerce and cross-cultural exchange that shaped the European early modern period. Many scholars define "the world" in terms of the circulation of commodities and the global market exchange. Many scholars have been primarily concerned with the world as an object—the material, spatial, geographical, physical world—and its relationship to the world economy. Sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein developed a world systems theory based on the conceptualization of the world as an object that can be quantitatively measured, mapped, and understood (Palumbo-Liu, Robbins, Tanoukhi 1). Wallerstein's book, *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1974), deals with global-spatial relations and economic history to theorize the world as a global capitalist system with a core-periphery structure. This core-periphery structure is not a geographical phenomenon, but an economic concept that measures the profitability of production. According to Wallerstein, the modern "world system" is a capitalist world economy that emerged from the European colonial expansion in the sixteenth century defined by the endless accumulation of capital. Throughout the early modern period, this world system is "a network of commerce and travel connecting the various European nations with places as diverse as the Ottoman Empire, India, Northern Africa, and the Americas" (Dawson 174).

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* displays the world with two "cores" on the stage, making global networks of commerce visible to English audiences. Scholarship on Shakespeare

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[132] See Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, pp. 75-9, 124-30. See also Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, pp. 20, 112-134.

and post-colonial theory and global studies informs my analysis of religion, race, and racial capitalism in this chapter. An assessment of the canonization of racial difference is crucial to understanding Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* as a global text, one that responds to English anxieties about the consequences of the developing global economy, England's role in it, global conquest, and English hopes to become a colonial power like Portugal or Spain. As England searched for new markets and colonies abroad, they became increasingly more aware of outsiders and began to be threatened by their power and wealth. This only exacerbated tensions between the English and "foreigners," intensifying expressions of race thinking and race-making as England focused on constructing itself as a nation in the modern sense.[133] According to Liah Greenfeld, in the sixteenth century, England was the first country in Europe to become a "nation." England began to construct its "nationhood" through rhetoric; in Shakespeare's time, "a whole new class of people emerged whose main preoccupation was to do research and write—chronicles, treatises, poems, novels and plays—in English about England" (67). England constructed what it meant to be "English;" becoming "English" was not a straightforward or stable process, but a nonlinear historical process that involved emerging racial capitalist frameworks and global issues.

In early modern London, rather than learning about foreigners from in-person interactions, playgoers learned about non-English people from the stage. It is estimated that by 1600, about 18,000 to 20,000 visits were made to the London theaters each week.[134] This is a time of racial and cultural crossovers, when colonial enterprises reshaped global relations and the London stage became both a mirror and a playground. While the scripts of blackness, or performative blackness, on the early modern English stage do have a religious legacy inherited

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[133] See Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,* 1992.
[134] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 8.

from the performance culture of the Middle Ages, they are also influenced by cross-cultural

encounters in an expanding global world. Many early modern scholars have studied "the

benevolent role of cross-cultural influence in effecting cultural change" and examined "issues of

power and inequality by showing how xenophobia and racial ideologies emerge in response to

increased contact and interdependence" (Dawson 175). My contribution to this wealth of

scholarship[135] is the focus on the development of racial ideologies in an emerging racial capitalist

system and how these ideologies are strategically defined on the stage in response to geopolitical

needs of the English "nation." Furthermore, Shakespeare's theater shaped not only the way that

Londoners imagined outsiders—Jews, Moors, Turks, Africans, gypsies, Tartars, non-English

Europeans, Irish, Indians—but also the image of the English in the English imagination. In

examining Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* alongside other primary texts, we will see how

early modern racial difference is projected onto not only the outsider, but also those within

English culture, like the English poor. In Shakespeare's play, we find both continuities between

and breaks from early modern English ideologies of race and our own ways of thinking about

race in a neoliberal global capitalist society. This play, I argue, gives audiences snapshots of

alternative ways of negotiating race within an emerging capitalist system.

To analyze Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*'s engagement with and potential

deconstruction of the East-West divide and racial and gendered difference, some scholars have

followed a historicist-Orientalist discussion.[136] Orientalism has promoted the racial, gendered,

and colonialist stereotypes of Eastern difference for centuries. In his prominent text *Orientalism*

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[135] See Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England*, pp. 1-28; See also the introduction and collection of articles in *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, edited by Jyotsna Singh; Jerry Brotton and Lisa Jardine, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West*
[136] For a more in-depth discussion, see Aamir Mufti's *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*

(1978), Edward Said analyzes Europe's complex relationship to outside cultures, using the term "orientalism" to examine the West's portrayal of the East or the "Orient." Said argues that the labelling of Egyptians as "Oriental" was canonical; "it had been employed by Chaucer and Mandeville, by Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, and Byron" (31). Since Said, many first-wave postcolonial scholars have used his paradigm to analyze pre-imperial European culture. For example, in *Inventing Europe* (1995), Gerard Delanty explains that Europe's construction of "self" was based on the exclusion of an "other."[137] Europe's self-fashioning depended upon the construction of an "Orient" that represented Europe's opposite: an inferior civilization that was strange, deviant, emotional, irrational, backward, lazy, hyper-sexual, aggressive, effeminate, and even evil. This Orient was everything that Europe was not. More specifically, England constructed the "Orient" as its "other" in part to sustain England's self-definition as a superior civilization and colonial power.

First-wave postcolonial scholars were pushing back against traditional scholars who, for many years, studied the Egyptian "Orient" during the age of imperialism and claimed to "know" oriental populations better than they know themselves; if this is not their outright claim, it is hidden within the Eurocentric intellectual history of the scholarship. For example, in the twentieth century, Arthur James Balfour commanded authority over the Egyptian people, whom he called "Oriental." At the House of Commons in 1910, Balfour explained the superiority of British knowledge about Egypt: "We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it" (Balfour qtd. in Said 32). According to Balfour, the British have been able to study Egypt from its origins to the height of its civilization, the fall of the empire, and into the

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[137] See Delanty, "Europe in the Mirror of the Orient," *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, MacMillan Press, 1995, pp. 84-99.

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twentieth century. There is no discursive Egypt without British knowledge; following this logic, Egypt itself becomes Britain's knowledge of it. The "Oriental nation" would not exist without Britain's ability to create its history. As Said explains, Balfour's logic moves from Britain's superior knowledge to the justification of the necessity for Britain's occupation of Egypt (Said 32). The relationships—between knowledge and power, between the study of the "Oriental" and the imperialist propaganda—have a long and complex history. Balfour's assertion of a cohesive, intellectual history of Egypt is a falsehood. Britain's knowledge of Egypt is based on a long history of confusion, conflation, and misrepresentation fueled by geopolitical anxieties, racism, and emerging capitalism—including an early history of "the East" that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* stems from, draws upon, shapes, and deconstructs.

　　As I have emphasized in the previous chapter, England had not yet become the British Empire in Shakespeare's time. Since the first-wave of postcolonial scholarship, more recent scholars have emphasized this important fact and criticized Said's *Orientalism* for "its theoretical rigidity," and "its attempt to extend the historical limits of orientalism to include two thousand years of Western culture, from Homer to the present, arguing that during those two millennia every textual or imaginary construction of the non-Western world to the East was an orientalist construction" (Vitkus 11). Said's paradigm is reductive and does not account for the complexity of the early modern world and the intricacies of early modern cross-cultural encounters.[138] For the early modern English, an "Orient" can refer to a wide range of populations throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. The English fashioned their racial identity at least partly against images of not simply an Orient, but a *variety* of "others," like the "gypsies" and Irish,

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[138] See Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, and "Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. D. Blanks and M. Frassetto. St. Martin's Press, 1999. 207-30, for comments on the problems with Said's claims that European views of "the Orient" were consistent from ancient Athens to Victorian England and beyond.

Spanish, Turks, and Jews in the Mediterranean, the "Orient" in the East, and "savages" or "uncivilized natives" in the New World.

This chapter builds on more recent postcolonial scholarship and examines Shakespeare's England as early colonial or, in Imtiaz Habib's terminology, "protocolonial," meaning that the imperial desire and imagination of this time period ideologically fuels the English territorial colonialism of later periods due to English transoceanic commercial exploration and encounters with multicultural populations (Habib 238).[139] As Habib notes, a "responsible postcolonial critical practice seeks to trace both the consequences as well as the origins of the early modern Anglo-European colonial project, that is, examines colonialism's phenomenology in the temporal modes of both its post- and prehistories, within period- and region-specific narratives" (34).[140] In his book *Old Worlds* (2001), John Archer introduces the term "paracolonial" to describe Europe's attitude toward the "Old World" areas where its colonial reach was intermittent or nonexistent in the early modern period (1). He contends that "the New World was almost always conceived as a lost part of the Old World, a fold in its global immensity and temporal endurance" (Archer 2). Archer claims that "Europeans reinterpreted their place in the Old World and managed their own anxieties about internal instability and decay" by reconceptualizing various "old worlds" in terms of dissolution and degeneration (7). This "rewriting" is what he calls "para-colonial;" it includes "travel accounts, geographical works, and literary texts that rewrite European traditions about a plural antiquity from the English perspective, with consequences for developing notions of racial and sexual difference" (Archer 19). Archer uses his concept of "para-colonial" to analyze the representation of Egypt in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* by

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[139] See Habib, "Shakespeare's Spectral Turks: The Postcolonial Poetics of a Mimetic Narrative," *Shakespeare Yearbook*, 2004, p. 238.
[140] See Habib, "Racial Impersonation on the Elizabethan Stage: The Case of Shakespeare Playing Aaron," pp. 17-45.

reading the text "in relation to a number of historical, geographical, and travel writings that became available roughly within a century of its publication" to trace "the relation between racial and sexual constructions during the period" (24). He concludes that the text's "narrative of degeneration" overshadows sexual transgression and "leaves the text open to appropriation by the developing radical, and ultimately imperial, system of European modernity" (Archer 61). While I push back against Archer's reading of the play, I find Archer's concept of the "para-colonial" useful in analyzing Shakespeare's play alongside many other texts to explain the extent to which Shakespeare reinterprets "Old World" foreigners in the English imagination and leaves the text open to a subversive interpretation.

Within Shakespeare studies, Loomba's scholarship on *Antony and Cleopatra* highlights how the play's many spatial shifts and geographic metaphors sit "at the intersection of racial difference, colonial expansion, and gender from a very different angle" (112). Loomba carefully considers the tensions between a masculine, imperial Rome and Egypt as its threatening feminine and seductive "other" while moving away from Said's reductive binary. In the play, the "Orient" is the Egypt represented by Cleopatra, who in real-life was a Ptolemaic (Greek) ruler, and the others found at her Egyptian court. This "Orient" represents "a multicultural zone" that can be theorized using Homi Bhaba's concept of the "liminal space, in-between the [binary] designations of identity" (Bhaba qtd. in Vitkus 13). Before and after the first performance of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Egyptian "Oriental" in the English imagination drew upon multiple images: a single subject, a group, personal trait, geographical location, moral code, and cultural history. In Shakespeare's time, antiquity's respect for ancient Egyptian values was tainted by anxieties of degeneration—racial, cultural, sexual, moral—that emerged as consequences of the development of racial capitalism.

Issues of race and colonial difference were central to the culture of Shakespeare's England. Shakespeare's source texts have been discussed at length by scholars like Michael Neill and Ania Loomba, both of whom prepared scholarly editions of *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1994 and 2011. Without participating in intentionalist theory and arguing for what Shakespeare did and did not "intend," I would like to trace the history of Western depictions of Egypt and begin to historicize these larger ideas of race and colonialism by first analyzing Shakespeare's most probable source texts. It is important to place the racial question in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* alongside other texts that it converses with to show the complexities of racial thinking. Drawing on Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, I treat Shakespeare as a "guest," "a paper author" (Barthes 526). I read and examine *Antony and Cleopatra* as an intertext and highlight the importance of its intertextuality. In her essays "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" and "The Bounded Text," Julia Kristeva coins the term "intertextuality" to propose the idea that the text is a "permutation of texts" (36).[141] Trained under the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, Kristeva focuses on semiotics, signs, signifiers, and the signified. She argues that textual analysis is a relational process rather than a static product. The "intertextuality in which any text is apprehended, since it is itself the intertext of another text, cannot be identified with some *origin* of the text: to seek out "sources," the "influences" of a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation; the quotations without quotation marks" (Barthes 525). Intertextuality, therefore, requires an understanding of a text not as a self-contained system with a fixed meaning, but as an open system. This open system not only encompasses other texts during its creation, but also encompasses the responses of readers, spectators, performers, and authors of adaptations.

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[141] See Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art.*

Rather than seeking out the "origin" of *Antony and Cleopatra*, I argue for the importance of analyzing the text as intertext. Intertextuality is tied to Barthes's assertion that "the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*" (Barthes 525). This network is traversal and cross-temporal; the network creates a plurality of meaning "experienced only in an activity, only in a production" (Barthes 524). The "text is held in language" (Barthes 523). In other words, the text is held in a cultural system, or cultural languages. As Barthes asks: "what language is not cultural?" (525). The act of the production and reception of a text is neither outside of language nor outside a complex cultural, sociopolitical system. Authors and readers alike "are constituted by their cultural placement" (McLaughlin 7). By destabilizing the authority of the "original" Shakespeare play, these theories of intertext and intertextuality also destabilize the notion of a fixed Shakespeare and enable multiple productions of meaning and therefore, multiple Shakespeares. Thus, *Antony and Cleopatra* functions within systems of gender, class, and race. As an intertext, the play navigates historical representations of the East and West in early modern England and gives us insight into a history of racial difference.

Early Modern English knowledge of Egypt: **Moors, gypsies, and vagabonds**

In this section of the chapter, I will build on my earlier discussion of intertextuality and situate Shakespeare and his play within the framework of local anxieties about empire formation and English racialization. In doing so, I push back against the problems that stem from the idea of Shakespearean universality. Shakespearean universality perpetuates the notion that Shakespeare is a genius whose work is universal because it speaks to people around the globe and transcends history and politics. Since their first performances in the early modern period,

Shakespeare's plays have been performed around the world, in numerous languages, and in a variety of sociopolitical contexts over many centuries. In the Arab world, for example, Shakespeare's plays first entered Egypt "through French, not as literary works but as script fodder for the Egyptian stage, where francophone Syro-Lebanese immigrants adapted Shakespeare's tragedies to suit the tastes and theatregoing habits of a rapidly emerging urban middle class" in nineteenth-century Cairo (Hennessy and Litvin 1). Translations, appropriations, and adaptations of Shakespeare came at a time when Egypt was under British occupation in the second half of the nineteenth century and at a time when part of the "entry to the middle class required the cultural capital that knowledge of Shakespeare signals" (Hutcheon 101). Many scholars have addressed the idea of Shakespeare's "cultural capital," a noneconomic factor that marks class, and how Shakespeare is tied to what some scholars call "cultural training," or "the acquisition of the body of knowledge that makes the internalization of a prestigious habitus possible" (Hutcheon 105).[142] Most recently, Ambereen Dadabhoy and Nedda Mehdizadeh have connected Shakespeare's "cultural capital" to his "racial invisibility" in their book *Anti-Racist Shakespeare* (2023).

By focusing on his whiteness and the construction of his whiteness, the authors of *White People in Shakespeare* render Shakespeare's "racial invisibility" visible. The book examines "how Shakespeare's poems and plays actively engage in 'white-people-making' and how white people have used Shakespeare to define and bolster their white cultural racial identity, solidarity, and authority" (Little 1). In two parts titled "Shakespeare's White People" and "White People's Shakespeare," the twenty-three contributors examine the early modern development of whiteness

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[142] Cultural capital can also be "embodied cultural capital." This refers to "upper-class accents or manners so internalized to constitute a habitus" (Hutcheon 105). See also Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice, Harvard University Press, 1987.

as an embodied identity and explore the institutional dissemination of "a white Shakespeare" in key cultural sites like contemporary classrooms, theaters, and politics.[143] However, they do not attend a discussion of class and capitalism in a significant capacity. While the authors resist the idea that whiteness is a non-racialized category, negotiate Shakespeare's whiteness (what Little calls Shakespeare's "white skin") and the whiteness that Shakespeare helped to construct, the authors do not address the construction of whiteness alongside the emergence of racial capitalism in seventeenth-century England. Furthermore, they do not examine the systemic legacies of global capitalism that tie Shakespeare, "whiteness," and contemporary U.S. culture together.

Many other scholars have challenged the idea of Shakespearean universality by showing how Shakespeare has always been political. Around the world, scholars and theatergoers have produced knowledge about the meanings of Shakespeare plays, often challenging the meanings traditionally attributed to them. I push back against the problems that stem from the notion of Shakespearean universality by recognizing that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is an intertext that engages with early modern racial formations, Christian hegemony, constructions of whiteness, and discourse on morality and social inequalities in an emerging racial capitalist society.[144]

I focus on Shakespeare's local particularity not to recreate the work of scholars of New Historicism, who studied specific moments in time and sought to emphasize the past as radically different and therefore incomparable to the present. According to the New Historicist school of literary criticism, one could not possibly understand Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, for

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[143] There are twenty-three contributors in this volume: Dennis Austin Britton, David Sterling Brown, Keith Hamilton Cobb, Eric L. De Barros, Jason M. Demeter, Peter Erikson, Ruben Espinosa, Evelyn Gajowski, Katherine Gillen, Kyle Grady, Imtiaz Habib, Kim F. Hall, Margo Hendricks, Jean E. Howard, Robin Alfriend Kello, Anchuli Felicia King, Arthur L. Little, Jr., Joyce MacDonald, Peter Sellars, Justin P. Shaw, Ian Smith, Ayanna Thompson, and Andrew Clark Wagner.
[144] See Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh, *Anti-Racist Shakespeare: Elements in Shakespeare and Pedagogy*, 2023

example, without an understanding of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, rival political parties in Lombardy, Masuccio Salernitano's texts and Arthur Brooke's translation. While New Historicists reconstructed the past by focusing on its strangeness, differentiating it from the familiarity of the present-day, I reconstruct Shakespeare's local particularity to draw attention to multiple textual surfaces within his play. Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is like a mosaic, inhabited by the presence of echoes, guests, or ghosts of previous texts.

The sixteenth-century knowledge of Egypt in England was based on a variety of texts from travel literature of the period to vernacular translations and printed editions of ancient historical manuscripts from Greece and Rome. Egypt was a place of simultaneous awe and suspicion. Its ancient history was the subject of many books, both secular and religious, including Sir Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* in 1579 and an English translation of Herodotus's *The Histories* in 1584 that has been attributed to Barnabe Rich.[145] Herodotus (c. 484–c. 425 BCE) lived and died nearly four hundred years before Cleopatra's reign and nearly six hundred years before Plutarch (c. 46-119 CE). However, the English translations of their works seems to have caused some confusion between ancient, pharaonic, Ptolemaic, Roman, and more contemporary Egypt in the English imagination. Herodotus describes pharaonic Egypt as having "more strange wonders than any nation in the world" (Herodotus qtd. in Loomba 40).[146] Herodotus's argument that Egyptians have a variety of

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[145] For more information about North's translation of Plutarch's text from French to English, see the Folger Shakespeare Library: https://collections.folger.edu/detail/plutarch-the-lives-of-the-noble-grecians-and-romanes--compared-together-by-that-graue-learned-philosopher-and-historiographer-plutarke-of-chaeronea-translated-out-of-greeke-into-french-by-iames-amyot-abbot-of-bellozane-bishop-of-auxerre-one-of-the-kings-priuy-counsel-and-great-amner-of-fraunce-and-out-of-french-into-englishe-by-thomas-north/d1ce719e-9ecb-43d1-90c3-cbe592c8e6ca. For more information about Barnabe Rich's *The famous history of Herodotus*, please see the Folger Shakespeare Library: https://collections.folger.edu/detail/Herodotus-The-famous-hystory-of-Herodotus/4a89c0aa-1b64-4bbc-b2c4-a759e52ad9f2#.

[146] See Herodotus, *The famous hystory of Herodotus* (London: Printed by Thomas Marshe, 1584), in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, p. 40-1.

"things" that are "more worthy of memory than any other nation under the sun" continues to resonate in the early modern period (Herodotus qtd. in Loomba 40). Egypt was known as "the land of ancient religion, philosophy and learning" (Loomba 114)[147] Egypt not only referred to the geographical space, but also included its "Oriental" production of capital like wine, corn, and honey. Egypt was especially famous for its "flourishing trade in mummies, which were sold in vast quantities because they were used in various medicines" (Loomba 114).

In *The Histories,* Herodotus describes ancient Egyptians using bitumen to embalm mummies during the mummifying process; he also explains that the Babylonians used hot bitumen as mortar to bind stones for their walls, using the bitumen as a waterproofing agent along the Euphrates. Throughout Europe, medical manuscripts as early as the thirteenth century encourage the use of bitumen, which was often a powder made from mummified human flesh. For example, in 1400, the English translation of Lanfrac of Milan's *Science of cirurgie* (1296) tells its readers to "Take oile of rosis..terbentine..mummie" (*OED*).[148] In Richard Hakluyt's famous *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589), Cairo (Egypt) is mentioned over a hundred and fifty times.[149] Hakluyt describes the excavation of mummies just outside of Cairo, emphasizing the use of bitumen: "Out of one of these are dayly digged the bodies of auncient men, not rotten but all whole, the cause whereof is the qualitie of the Egyptian soile, which will not consume the flesh of man, but rather dry and harden the same, and so alwayes conserveth it. And these dead bodies are the Mummie which the Phisitians and Apothecaries doe against our willes make us to swallow" (Hakluyt, Section 396, Perseus Digital

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[147] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 114.
[148] See "bitumen, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/19588. "Belief in the medicinal powers of the bituminous liquid which could be extracted from the bodies of ancient Egyptian mummies apparently arose because of its resemblance to pissasphalt (see sense 2a). Later, similar powers were ascribed to mummified flesh itself, which was often used in the form of a powder" (*OED*).
[149] See the data set through the Perseus Digital Library Project.

Library).[150] In early modern Europe, Egypt became known as "the home of mumia" and in 1586, Englishman John Sanderson shipped six hundred pounds of mummies back to England (Dannenfeldt 169). Egyptian mummies "usually in broken pieces or powder, could be found in the shops of all European apothecaries as a drug for prescriptions" (Dannenfeldt 163). Along with wine, corn, and honey, the "mummified" bodies of ancient Egyptians and those more recently dead became valuable commodities. While the deceased Egyptian body was commodified and highly valued, the living Egyptian body was identified as idle, malicious, effeminate, backwards, and malleable. From the sixteenth century on, many English books about Egypt were reproductions of older writings that included a repetition of Herodotus's view that Egypt was a land filled with gender role reversals. In early modern England, this idea was further perpetuated and connected to newer associations of Egyptians with gypsies and Moors.

The memory of the Egypt of antiquity, as the exotic land filled with rich goods, is tainted by the European nostalgia for early Christianity. Andrew Boorde describes the Western nostalgia for the Egypt before the rise of Islam, focusing on Egypt's greatness during the years of early Christianity in his *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (1542) which "doth teach a man to know…the usage and fashion of all maner of countreys" (Boorde qtd. in Loomba 87).[151] Boorde claims that while the "great wilderness" of Egypt with "many great wild beasts" was once inhabited by "many holy fathers, as it appeareth in *Vitae Patrum*," "Egypt is repleted now with infidel aliens" and "joined to Jewry (Boorde qtd. in Loomba 88)." Boorde's memory of Egypt is highly influenced by the popularity of newly translated historical texts like *Vitae*

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[150] See Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation Made by Sea or Overland to the Remote & Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth at any time within the compasse of these 1600 Yeares.* New York. E. P. Dutton & Co. Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University. https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0070%3Anarrative%3D396

[151] See Andrew Boorde, *The fyrst boke of the introduction of knowledge. The which doth teach a man to know…the usage and fashion of all maner of countreys*, in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, pp. 87-9.

Patrum, a hagiographical encyclopedia on early Egyptian Christians from the third and fourth century that narrates the lives of the "Desert Fathers" and "Desert Mothers." For Boorde, this historical narrative of an early Christian Egypt is "worthy of memory," not the current state of the country filled with "infidels" who are "swart" and "doth go disguised in their apparel" (88). Boorde's view of the eradication of the "true Egyptian" by people of "disguise" was reinforced by the conflation of the term Egyptian with gypsy. While discussing the West's notions about who the "true" Egyptians were and are, it is important to emphasize that the "true" or "real" Egyptian is not a biological category, but a cultural or biopolitical one. A discussion of both the West's (more specifically, early modern English writers') *making* of the "true" Egyptian as a racial category *and* a discussion of early modern English writers' making of the "true" Englishman are key to this chapter. In order to contrast the known demographic history of the "Egyptian" population from the West construction of the "true" Egyptians, I will first give a brief account of the history of the inhabitants of the Nile Valley region.[152]

In an article examining the concept of "ethnicity" in ancient Egypt, Egyptologists Christina Riggs and John Baines state that scholars "have often adopted the Egyptians' own ideological stance, by accepting and perpetuating the vision of a monolithic, definable Egyptian state and culture subject to 'incursions' and threatened by other 'races'" (2). They emphasize "the range of elements that individuals and communities could bring to bear in defining ethnicity in opposition to a dominant cultural group" such as religious rituals, dialects, and regional differences in the production of art and forms of architecture (Baines and Riggs 2). For example, in the Middle Kingdom, "the Nubian C-Group, Pan-Grave, and Kerma cultures" had "distinctive burials and pottery assemblages" that "disappear in the New Kingdom, in a development that

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[152] I would like to thank Dr. Ted Kelting for consulting with me about this intriguing and complex topic over email and office hours.

may be due both to the Egyptian acculturation of these groups and to a broader trend for cultural homogeneity after the political reunification of Egypt, both within Egypt and progressively throughout the Nubian Nile Valley" (Baines and Riggs 3). Ethnic Nubians defined themselves as Egyptians; nonetheless, "the ethnonym 'Medjay,' which is generally assumed to have designated the bearers of the Pan-Grave culture, remained the term for 'policeman' throughout the New Kingdom, long after they had ceased to be archaeologically identifiable" and "may have constituted both a professional and an ethnic group within Egyptian society" (3). In terms of naming practices, "New Kingdom and later instances of the personal name Panehsy (*PA-NHsj*, literally "the Nubian") occur so frequently as to suggest that not everyone bearing this name necessarily identified himself, or was identified by others, as Nubian" (5). Baines and Riggs conclude that "any notion that the ancient Egyptian population was ethnically uniform in any period should be abandoned as a fiction projected by the dominant ideology and often largely accepted by Egyptologists" (Baines and Riggs 9). Decades before this study on "ethnicity" in ancient Egypt, in his influential book, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (1974), Senegalese scholar and humanist Cheikh Anta Diop pushed back against the notion of an ethnically uniform ancient Egypt. Diop highlights mixture and hybridity among the people who inhabited the Nile Valley region, especially after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander. He claims that "under the Ptolemies, crossbreeding between white Greeks and black Egyptians flourished" (Diop 5). Although his work has been met with criticism over the years, it remains an important contribution to African history, and raises valuable questions about the political construction of Western Egyptology in the nineteenth and early twenties centuries.[153]

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[153] For more information on the importance of Diop's work, please see: Clarke, John Henrik. "The Historical Legacy of Cheikh Anta Diop: His Contributions to A New Concept of African History." *Présence Africaine*, no. 149/150, 1989, pp. 110–20. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24351980; Okafor, Victor Oguejiofor. "Diop and the African Origin of Civilization: An Afrocentric Analysis." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1991, pp. 252–68. *JSTOR*,

Associated with anxieties about skin color, religious transformation, and the relationship between inner essence and outer physical traits, the Egyptian became an elastic term, synonymous with the "gypsy" and infused with the idea of the "Saracen" and the "Moor." John Cowell's *The Interpreter* (1607) defines Egyptians not as the people that inhabit "the lands of the infidels" or that "know the law of Mahomet," but as "*Cingari*" or "Gypsies," "people, who, from a corrupted word, since they are also called Saracens, wander through Italy by permission of princes and other lords, yet never pass through the lands of those lords in Italy" (Cowell qtd. in Loomba 282). They are "almost all Italians" that "live wickedly by theft, crooked commerce, and trickery, by which means they commit the greatest crimes, and they are baptized [as Christians]" (Cowell qtd. in Loomba 282). Although historical research now traces their roots to Northern India, these so-called gypsies were known in the statues and laws of England as "Egyptians" or "counterfeit Egyptians." I will expand on this point later in the chapter. For now, I would like to focus on how the "gypsy," or "counterfeit Egyptian" was understood as a Saracen and often included in the early modern concept of the "Moor." The "Moor" is a conflation of religion, skin color, class, and ideologically charged discourse between sinful behavior and outward appearance.

Written and performed only a couple of years after Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604) around 1606-7, *Antony and Cleopatra* also examines race-making and sexuality through the concept of the Moor. This was not a new concept. Many stories and plays centered on Moors in and around Shakespeare's London. The term does not refer to a precise racial identity or ethnic origin, but rather "a complicated—and contradictory—web of associations" (Hall 3). Modern scholars

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784597. For more information about the history of British Egyptology as a colonial project, please see: Gold, Meira. British Egyptology (1822 – 1882). In Rune Nyord and Willeke Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2022. http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz002kprhg.

"generally understand *Moor* as an extremely malleable term used to mark geographic and religious differences" (Hall 3, emphasis in original).[154] The Moor is connected to so many cultural ideas that it is not always possible to understand the specific image associated with the figure on stage or in an audience member's mind. Although many contemporary scholars agree that the figure can denote a non-Black Muslim, Black Muslim, or Black Christian, I would like to draw our attention to the literary conjunction of Moor and blackness. Despite the diversity of "skin color" across Islamic cultures, "whiteness" is not associated with the Moor. Hall identifies how early modern English literature, especially poetry, associates "whiteness" with Christianity, innocence, fairness or beauty and "blackness" with non-Christianity, guilt, and ugliness. In *White People in Shakespeare* (2023), Evelyn Gajowski emphasizes that the association between blackness and inferiority began with early Christian writers which "occurs, in particular, in Christian constructions of the blackness of the Saracen, whose 'dark skin and diabolical racial physiognomy' were the most familiar, 'the most exorbitant embodiment of racial alterity'" (Gajowski 53).[155] Gajowski claims that skin "colour prejudice and anti-Black sentiments have been traced to the founders of the Christian church such as Paul and Origen," and according "to the Roman Catholic formulation, blackness became equated with sin, demons, and devils" (53). It is important to note that Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* is set in a time before Christianity, before the Bible-centered conception of the world, and before the Christian association of whiteness with goodness and blackness with sin.

Although I will not be analyzing Shakespeare's *Othello* in depth in this chapter, I would like to acknowledge that many scholars discuss Othello and Cleopatra together. For example, in

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[154] See Hall, Introduction, *Othello*, p. 3.
[155] See Gajowski, "Staging the *Blazon*: Black and White and Red All Over," pp. 45-64. These early Christian writers included Albertus Magnus, Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Gregory the Great, and Paulinus of Nola.

his introduction to *Antony and Cleopatra* (1994), Michael Neill argues that while *Othello* is a play that centers on racial identity, "the issue of racial difference" is "relatively insignificant" in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Neill 87). Neill compares "Othello's anguished 'Haply for I am black'" with "Cleopatra's playful sense of herself as 'with Phoebus's amorous pinches black'" (87).[156] Although he does not explore a definition of "race" in early modern English culture, in the article "Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*," Neill recognizes "the stubborn fact that Othello is a play full of racial feeling—perhaps the first work in English to explore the roots of such feeling; and it can hardly be accidental that it belongs to the very period in English history in which something we can now identify as a racialist ideology was beginning to evolve under the pressures of nascent imperialism" (394).[157] As I have argued throughout my dissertation, skin color is not the only marker of racial identity in the early modern English imagination. As Neill points out, Cleopatra does play with her own sense of racial identity and the Romans' racialization of her, but that does not mean that the issue of race is unimportant in the play. It is important to discuss figures like Othello and Cleopatra together when discussing the fluidity of racial iconography in Shakespeare's plays because of how they are connected through the idea of the "Moor." Loomba persuasively argues that literary scholars "need to notice how both blacks and Turks can be glamorized as well as hated in contemporary representations, and how the two were interconnected, both in *Othello* and the culture at large, via the Spanish discourse on Moorishness, via the medieval stereotypes of black Turks, or

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[156] See *Othello*, 3.3.267 and *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.5.28 quoted in Neill, p. 87.
[157] Neill states that his earlier essay, "Changing Places in *Othello*," is one of "those liberal critiques that rob the play of its danger by treating Othello's color simply as a convenient badge of his estrangement from Venetian society" (394). He admits that he "ought to have noticed more clearly the way in which racial identity is constructed as one of the most fiercely contested 'places' in the play" (394). For more information see Neill, "Changing Places in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 37, 1984, pp. 115-31.

Egyptians, and also by more recent developments in global relations" (206).[158] I also emphasize

this interconnectedness between racial representations like the "Moor" and "Egyptian" within a

broader understanding of early modern texts in relation to emerging racial capitalism.

Like the "Moor," the "Egyptian Moor" is a contradiction; this discourse of religious

difference created divisions between people of similar ethnic origin. In the early modern English

imagination, therefore, the Egyptian was not a stable race, but a superimposition of images of a

variety of "others," all associated with the "Moor" and the "Orient." Egyptian "Moors" have

"little manners" and "evil lodging;" their complexion is conflated with their non-Christian

religion (Boorde qtd. in Loomba 88). Boorde's view that the "Egyptians" no longer exist—

"There be few or none of the Egyptians that doth dwell in Egypt"—is further reinforced by the

early modern fear of conversion (Boorde qtd. in Loomba 89). In reality, the Egyptians

themselves were a multicultural group of people. Perhaps their diversity exacerbated early

modern English anxieties surrounding interracial sexual conduct and mixed-race children. In the

Orientalist imagination, the Egyptian "Moor" was a figure of conversion to Islam; the Egyptian

"Moor" arose confusion, fear, and even hatred.

Furthermore, Muslim and Jewish Egyptians were described as metaphorically and

physically darker skinned and were differentiated from the Ottoman Turks. This was fueled by

the Western association between light skin and Christianity. On one hand, contemporary Egypt

was known as a land of flourishing trade and wealth. On the other hand, Egypt was marked as

Ottoman territory and understood to be overrun by the Turkish "infidels." For "early colonial"

writers like Andrew Boorde and George Sandys, the gypsy and the Egyptian were to be

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[158] See Loomba, Ania. "'Delicious Traffick': Alterity and Exchange on Early Modern Stages." pp. 201–214. For an overview on how the methodologies of cultural studies informed scholarship on race and Shakespeare in the late 1980s and beyond, see the introduction to *Shakespeare and Race*, pp. 1-22.

condemned for their lack of fixed identity, lack of stable and permanent residence, and for their ability to change and be changed. In a travel book titled *A relation of a journey begun an: Dom: 1610*, George Sandys claims that "the Coptics are the true Egyptians" (Sandys qtd. in Loomba 192). After the Muslim conquest of Egypt, the term "Copts" began to refer to Christians in the region. The term "Copt" or "Coptic" came into the English language in the seventeenth century with Sandys's text as one of the earliest uses.[159] By defining who is and is not a "true Egyptian," the early modern English writers conceptually separated the Coptic Orthodox Christians from "the Egyptian Moors" and "the counterfeit kind of rogues" through an arbitrary labelling of skin colors.[160] Although Egyptian Christians presumably have the same complexion as the non-Christian Egyptians, "the Egyptian Moors" are described by some Renaissance writers as "tawny" (Sandys qtd. in Loomba 191). The "inhabitants" of Egypt are "not black, but rather dun, or tawny, of which Cleopatra was observed to be" (Abbot qtd. in Loomba 147).[161] However, to demonstrate that "the inhabitants of Colchis were of Egyptian origin and had to be considered a part of Sesostris' army who had settled in that region," Herodotus described Colchians as having woolly hair and black skin (Diop 1).[162] Both "black and white persons are depicted on Egyptian vases and artifacts of the time" (Loomba 113).[163]

Moreover, Renaissance writers did not necessarily describe someone with the skin color "tawny" as having better qualities than someone with "black" skin color. Generally, both were associated with the "Moor" and met with fear and disgust. For example, in Shakespeare's *The*

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[159] "Copt, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/41283. Accessed 10 March 2023.

[160] See Sandys qtd. in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, p. 192. See also Cowell qtd. in Loomba, p. 282.

[161] See George Abbot, *A briefe description of the whole worlde (London: I. Judson, 1599)* in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, pp. 145-150.

[162] Heodotus states: "The Egyptians said that they believed the Colchians to be descended from the army of Sesostris. My own conjectures were founded, first, on the fact that they are black-skinned and have wooly hair…" (Herodotus qtd. in Diop 1).

[163] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 113.

Merchant of Venice (1600), when Morocco enters the stage, he is described in a stage direction as "a tawny moor all in white."[164] Before he actually appears on the stage, Morocco is described to the audience by Portia, who states: "If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me" (1.2.112-3). Therefore, similar to descriptions of blackness, this appraisal of Morocco's "tawny" skin is related to color prejudice, one that defines brown skin as equally devilish. The early modern public theater negotiated black-up's religious legacy which was in part inherited from the performance culture of the Middle Ages; in Western Europe, "the blacked up medieval devil had a double epistemology: he was both, in Robert Weimann's words, a comedic folk figure providing 'a subversive expression for class frustration and protest' and a theological figure that spectators truly believed in and feared most deeply" (Ndiaye 36). In *Lust's Dominion* (1600), Eleazer "is clearly black; yet he is called *tawny* (ed. Brereton (Louvain, 1931), line 231); he comes from Barbary (229), but is said to be an *Indian* (1819, 2316)" (Hunter 63).[165] These "scripts of blackness" may have been influenced by the August 1600 arrival in London of Abd el-Ouahed ben Messaoud, Ambassador of Muley Ahmad al-Mansur, King of Barbary or Morocco. The embassy had the goal of building an Anglo-Moroccan alliance against Spain. Therefore, the "scripts of blackness" on stage were "not simply ornamental: operating across national borders, they constituted resources, as they provided spectators and participants with new ways of thinking about the Afro-diasporic people who lived or could live in their midst, and conceptually brought blackness into being as a racial category organizing power relations" (Ndiaye 3). Thus, the early modern "scripts of blackness" merged with the negative perspective surrounding Egyptians and gypsies, un-rootedness and

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[164] Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, edited by Leah S. Marcus
[165] See Hunter, "Elizabethans and foreigners." Hunter also mentions *King Leir*: "As easy is it for the Blackamoore / To wash the tawny colour from his skin (MSR 1271 f.t)" (63).

mobility, and the dangers of theatricality. This rhetoric used to describe the "Moor," Egyptian, and gypsy is also rooted in the language of emerging racial capitalism. Although many early modern writers observed the harmful effects of emerging racial capitalism (which was not yet known as capitalism), the ruling classes sought to make capitalist practices morally justifiable within a Christian government.

For example, although Egypt was praised for its commodities that produced profit and wealth, "Egyptians" or gypsies encountered within the borders of England were condemned for deceit, idleness, and lack of labor. Elizabethan and Jacobean texts placed gypsies on the borders of uselessness, criminality, and roguishness. English people were prohibited from associating with gypsies because it was feared that the foreigners would corrupt them with their alleged use of sorcery. English legal vocabulary confused or conflated gypsies with Egyptians in the sixteenth century. Since King Henry VIII (1491-1547) first banished and executed gypsies around 1531, various acts of parliament criminalized "Egyptians," "forbidding their entry, ordering their expulsion, and eventually making them liable to the death penalty" (Cressy 45).[166] In 1554, Queen Mary I (1553-58) and her consort Phillip issued an act of banishment of the gypsies, "any such persons calling themselves, or commonly called, Egyptians" for allegedly using witchcraft and sorcery "to deceive the king's subjects" and with "subtlety deceive the people of their money and committed diverse great and heinous felonies and robberies, to the great hurt and deceit of the people" (qtd. in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, 81-82).[167] Rather than participating in the commercial world-system and the emerging global economy, these "Egyptians" use some type of pagan "magic" to "deceive" English people of their wealth

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[166] Cressy states that there is no reliable evidence that documents the Romani people's first coming to England, but he speculates that it was around the time of the reign of Henry VII.
[167] See "An Act against Certain Persons Calling Themselves Egyptians"

and were banished. In 1562, Queen Elizabeth I's act of banishment of the gypsies not only included this language of anxiety towards deceit and financial gain without labor, but also the language of racial capitalism that further condemned gypsies for their lack of participation in the Elizabethan economy.

This early modern concern about the laziness and idleness of foreigners and entertainers alike was influenced by the rise of racial capitalism. As I have discussed throughout my dissertation, racial capitalism "involves a minority section of society grabbing the surplus created by the toil of the rest of the society" (Harman 1). Racial capitalism arose through the implementation of boundaries and borders on communal land. Throughout the sixteenth century, the enclosures of open fields in England drove people away from the common lands, causing "the forcible separation of the workforce in Britain from control over the means of production" (Harman 4). By forcibly ending farming, grazing, and foraging on the open fields of the commons, the ruling class ensured that those with the agrarian labor power no longer had control over their production. Capitalist ruling classes obtain the surplus through the expropriation of labor power, or "buying people's capacity to work" (Harman 1). With the rise of racial capitalism, any populations that were driven away from working on the land and could no longer contribute to the agrarian labor power of the nation, lacked value. "Egyptians" or gypsies became subject to further regulation or banishment as punishment for their lack of productivity and participation in the workforce.

As I have previously stated, John Cowell echoes the statues and laws of England in his description of gypsies. They are "a counterfeit kind of rogues, that being English or Welsh people" that disguise themselves in "strange" clothes, "blacking their faces and bodies, and framing to themselves an unknown language, wander up and down," telling fortunes, using

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magic, and "stealing all that is not too hot or too heavy for their carriage" (Cowell qtd. in

Loomba 282).[168] While Cowell connects "gypsy" to "English or Welsh people," Thomas

Dekker, a contemporary playwright famous for his popular comedy *The Shoemaker's Holiday*,

both casts doubt upon their Egyptian origin and differentiates them from the English poor. In his

text *Lanthorne and candle-light. Or, The bell-mans second nights walke* (1609), Dekker

describes "gypsies" or "moon-men" in racial capitalist terms:

> They are a people more scattered than Jews, and more hated: beggarly in apparel,
>
> barbarous in condition, beastly in behavior, and bloody if they meet advantage. A
>
> man that sees them would swear they had all the yellow jaundice, or that they
>
> were tawny Moors' bastards, for no red-ochre man carries a face of a more filthy
>
> complexion, yet are they not born so, neither has the son burnt them so, but they
>
> are painted so, yet they are not good painters neither: for they do not make faces,
>
> but mar faces. By a byname they are called gypsies; they call themselves
>
> Egyptians; others in mockery call them moon-men. If they be Egyptians, sure I
>
> am they never descended from the tribes of any of those people that came out of
>
> the land of Egypt: Ptolemy (king of the Egyptians) I warrant never called them his
>
> subjects: no nor Pharaoh before him. Look what difference there is between a
>
> civil citizen of Dublin and a wild Irish kern, so much difference there is between
>
> one of these counterfeit Egyptians and a true English beggar.[169]

Dekker's description shows the important fact that race is a construction. Here, Dekker

constructs the "gypsy race" and racializes the "gypsy" by drawing on racist ideologies like

antisemitism (they are a people "more hated" than Jews) and anti-miscegenation or racial

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[168] See Cowell, *The Interpreter*, in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, p. 282-3.
[169] See Dekker in *Race in Early Modern England*, pp. 169-70.

(im)purity (they are "more filthy" than "tawny Moors' bastards"). As people "more scattered than Jews," Dekker perpetuates the idea that as a people without roots, "gypsies" were a danger to English society. Dekker pushes back against their Egyptian origin, not because he recognizes that they are actually known as the Romani people, "a widely dispersed ethnic group, found mainly in Europe and North and South America, tracing its origins to South Asia," but because he cannot imagine associating the "moon-men" with descendants "from the tribes of the people that came out of the land of Egypt" that are linked to early Christians (*OED*; Dekker).[170] A "moonman" refers to a "madman" or "lunatic," a foolish person with an unsound mind; this further places gypsies outside of the moral and social order in early modern England (*OED*).[171] Dekker continues to draw on racist ideology when he compares the "difference" between a "civil citizen of Dublin and a wild Irish kern" to construct the "counterfeit Egyptian" as distinct from the "true English beggar." A "kern" from the Old Celtic *keterna and* Irish *ceithern* refers to a "light-armed Irish foot-soldier (cf. quot. *c*1600); one of the poorer class among the 'wild Irish', from whom such soldiers were drawn. (Sometimes applied to Scottish Highlanders)" (*OED*).[172] By Dekker's time, the "wild Irish kern" developed in the English popular imagination to become a monster, a semi-mythic bogeyman lurking in the woods, and a figure of hatred. Dekker draws on anti-Irish sentiment to places gypsies, like "wild Irish kern," on the margins of society. The word beggar "had become famous through its (originally contemptuous) application to the Netherlands revolutionaries in the early days of the revolt against Spanish overlordship. 'They call us beggars', said one of the revolt's leaders: 'let us accept the name'. '*Vivat les gueulx*'

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[170] See "Romani, n. and adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/167141.
[171] See "moonman, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/121940.
[172] See "kern | kerne, n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2023, www.oed.com/view/Entry/103018.

became the rebels' rallying cry" (Hill 23, emphasis in original).[173] There were many plays about

the Dutch revolt in early seventeenth-century England. Dekker and many others emphasize that

the "gypsies" or "counterfeit Egyptians" differed from the English poor in their heritage,

language, and social status. His text further establishes the "gypsy" stereotype of misconduct and

deception that has remained largely unchanged and continues today.[174] Despite evidence "'that

false and subtle company of vagabonds' known as 'Egyptians' were found to be English-born,

not 'strangers'" and "could not be deported under existing law," during Dekker's time, new laws

were enacted "to make it a felony for anyone to be 'seen or found…in any company or

fellowship of vagabonds commonly called or calling themselves Egyptians, or counterfeiting,

transforming or disguising themselves in their apparel, speech or behaviour like unto such

vagabonds'" (Cressy 56). In other words, regardless of someone's birthplace, if they were a

gypsy, looked like a gypsy, or consorted with gypsies, they could be punished by death—"a

crime of status rather than activity" (Cressy 56). It is important to highlight the construction of

race in an emerging racial capitalist system at play here; the Elizabethan "law offered Gypsies

the choice of entering 'some honest service' or taking up 'some lawful work,' so long as they

'utterly forsake the said idle and false trade, conversation and behaviour of the said counterfeit or

disguised vagabonds, commonly called or calling themselves Egyptians'" (Cressy 56-7). To

emphasize the immorality of idleness, the law stressed that it "was not intended 'to compel any

person or persons born within any of the queen's majesty's dominions to depart out of this realm

of England or Wales, but only to constrain and bind them…to exercise themselves…honestly in

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[173] There were many plays about the Dutch revolt in England in the early seventeenth century, around the time Dekker and Shakespeare were writing. See Christopher Hill, *Liberty Against the Law*, p. 23.

[174] For example, the British documentary series "Big Fat Gypsy Weddings" was criticized for its racist attitudes towards the Roma and Irish Traveler populations and deemed a "work of fiction." This series inspired North American spin-offs: "My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding" and "American Gypsies." See Pusca, Anca. "Representing Romani Gypsies and Travelers: Performing Identity from Early Photography to Reality Television." *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2015, pp. 327–44. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44218788.

some lawful work, trade or occupation" (Cressy 57). The Romani population is still a part of important debates on the treatment of migrants, ethnic minorities, and the rising numbers of people without housing in Europe. These representations offer important insights into the long history of racial capitalism that connects Shakespeare's time to our own.

Similar to the "gypsies," from 1530 onwards, theatrical performers were also criticized for their idleness and lack of contribution to the labor power of the nation. In John Northbrooke's *A Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes* (1577), Northbrooke explains that he has created a treatise "against Diceplaying, Dauncing, and vayne Playes, or Enterluds, dialogue wise, between Age and Youth, wherein thou shall finde great profit and commoditie" (16).[175] He argues that "in al ages, times, and seasons, these wicked and detestable vices of ydlenesse" have been "abhorred and detested of al nations, and also among the heathens, to the great shame and condemnation of Christians, that vse no play nor pastime, nor any exercise, more than diceplaying, dauncing, and enterludes" (16). Although Northbrooke uses religious rhetoric to demonize entertainers, the rhetoric of true capitalism is embedded in his language. This rise of an early modern racial capitalist society, coupled with the dominant perspective that placed actors on the same social level as gypsies, vagabonds and beggars, led to a series of laws that required players to be sponsored by aristocratic patrons (McDonald 120). The 1843 introduction to John Northbrooke's work (1577), details a legislative statute in 1572 that attempted to regulate and control all performers "not belonging to any baron of this realm, or towards any other honourable personage of greater degree" (ix). The "evil" was that many entertainers "strolled about the kingdom without any authority or protection, although pretending to have it; and all such by the

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[175] See Northbrooke, *A Treatise against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes Pastimes from the earliest edition, about A.D. 1577 with an introduction and notes,* London: reprinted for the Shakespeare Society, 1843

statue are declared rogues and vagabonds, and liable to the treatment and punishment inflicted upon such persons" (ix). After this law was enacted, groups of professional performers sought new ways to protect themselves from the Elizabethan Poor Laws: they "formed, merged, dissolved, and reconstituted themselves under a variety of patrons: Lord Strange's Men, Lord Pembroke's Men, Lord Worchester's Men, the Lord Admiral's Men, and the Lord Chamberlain's Men" (McDonald 120). With the implementation of the act, the theaters became some of the earliest joint-stock companies under the emerging capitalist system. Performers were no longer idle and lazy, but now contributed to England's labor power in the organized commercial playhouses in London. The joint-stock theater companies transformed entertainment. Under this rise of the English capitalist society, entertainment became an industry, the performer became a productive laborer, and performance became a commodity. By the late 1590s, the queen's executive committee, the Privy Council, declared the Lord Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's Men (who became the King's Men in 1603) the only adult companies licensed to perform in London (McDonald 120). Thus, the Elizabethan government's attitude towards gypsies remained largely unchanged, while attitudes towards performances, theaters, and actors shifted from uneasiness with vagabonding towards limited support that came with royal control over the content of plays; this had much to do with the financial gain of the highly profitable theater companies. Shakespeare lived and wrote plays at a time when London's culture shifted "from a sense of community and commonality toward an increasingly individualized subjectivity marked by the ideology of emergent capitalism with its new forms of possessive individualism and commodity fetishism" (Vitkus 167).[176]

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[176] See Vitkus, "How the One Percent Came to Rule the World: Shakespeare, Long-Term Historical Narrative, and the Origins of Capitalism"

Although the theater was eventually met with political support from the Elizabethan court, it was also subject to continued suspicion and criticism, most notably from the bourgeois masters of the City and from militant Protestants and puritans. This condemnation of the theater was not only linked to the dissolution of cultural borders, but also the melting of gendered boundaries. In the early modern period, the rhetoric of antitheatricality was fueled with misogynistic notions of the dangers of female sexuality. In Stephen Gosson's *Pleasant quippes for upstart newfangled gentlewomen* (1596), Gosson condemns plays for being "effeminate" and softening "the hearts of men" (Gosson qtd. in Singh 104). Gosson and others were afraid of theater's power to transform. They feared the "backwardness" of "Orient" men and did not want the theater to influence English men into transforming into "effeminate" males as a result of their imitating or watching the "Orient" on stage.

Although one of the main points of Herodotus's *The Histories* is his emphasis that key aspects of Greek culture are Egyptian in origin,[177] Herodotus describes Egyptian men as "effeminate:" "the women follow the trade of merchandise in buying and selling […] whereas contrariwise the men remain at home and play the good housewives in spinning and weaving such like duties" (Herodotus qtd. in Loomba 41). Aristotle "had argued that Egyptian women […] were too prolific and therefore more prone to engender monsters" (Finucci 146). Following these authorities, ancient and medieval authors claimed that "Egypt had more monsters than other countries because there men were more fertile and prone to intercourse, just like cats, dogs, pigs, birds, chickens, and doves; where there was too much matter, monsters could result"

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[177] See Alan B. Lloyd, *Herodotus, Book ii. Introduction, Commentary 1-98*. Leiden: Brill, 1975. See also Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Diop emphasizes Herodotus's claim that key aspects of Greek culture are Egyptian in origin: "Herodotus, after relating his eyewitness account informing us that the Egyptians were Blacks, then demonstrated, with rare honesty (for a Greek), that Greece borrowed from Egypt all the elements of her civilization, even the cult of the gods, and that Egypt was the cradle of civilization" (Diop 26).

(Finucci 146). This perception continued in early modern England. The theater and the "Orient" were seen as threats to English masculinity and the rigid gender construct. For critics, the practice of performing an "Oriental" ritual or character on stage creates biological deformation, specifically in turning a male into a female. The stage, where actors performed everything from "feminine" cosmetic rituals to "Oriental" cultural practices, was considered to be a place where people defied God's creation of two distinct and stable sexes, male and female, with separate identities and gender roles. For critics of theatricality and performance like Gosson, "the stage is a site of contamination—a place where natural distinctions of identity are blurred, confused, and adulterated in a parody of God's act of forming human nature" (Singh 104). Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* plays with this conception of the theater. When approaching the play as an intertext and contextualizing the play within the major debates and discussions, *Antony and Cleopatra* represents these performative contradictions through the figure of Cleopatra. The play simultaneously draws from and disrupts the representations of gender and the Egyptian "Orient," portraying the tensions within the patriarchal order in early modern England.

Close-reading Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* plays with local, particular issues through the representation of the divide between Rome and Egypt. While Shakespeare's reimagining of the character of Cleopatra draws on a tradition that stems from Plutarch, this Cleopatra adds to the tradition the incongruities present in contemporary racial, cultural, and gender anxieties of a rising global, capitalist society. Cleopatra is a model figure that reveals the contradictions within the existing ideology in early modern England that associates the feminine with the theatrical "by

which traditional sexual and social hierarchies were held in place" (Singh 108). For centuries, "Roman writings routinely and disparagingly called the historical Cleopatra *regina meretix*, Latin for the "prostitute queen"" (Stanton 93). The term "prostitute queen" in early modern English is a pun: "queen" or "quean" means "whore" (Stanton 93). Although associated with these stereotypes of the "prostitute queen," the deceitful "Orient," and the fickle female, Shakespeare's Cleopatra uses her qualities to "enrich and empower Cleopatra's artistry in shaping her own self-representations and in challenging those of the Romans" (Singh 113). Cleopatra (and Egypt) has been interpreted to embody femininity (or effeminacy), excessiveness, disorder, emotion, backwardness, drama, desirability playfulness, performativity—and these very qualities, which were used to justify claims for the superiority of the West over the East, are the source of Cleopatra's power.

Cleopatra's qualities are described throughout the play by various characters. In the opening scene of the play, Philo introduces the audience to Cleopatra through a description of Antony's gaze:

> Nay, but this dotage of our General's
>
> O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,
>
> That o'er the files and musters of the war
>
> Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
>
> The office of devotion of their view
>
> Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart,
>
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
>
> The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper.
>
> And is become the bellows and the fan

To cool a gipsy's lust (1.1.1-9)

Once an embodiment of Roman qualities and ideology—masculinity, heroism, logic, stability, rigidity, and imperialism—Antony is introduced to the audience as a man now in decline because of his feelings for Cleopatra. Antony is "our General." Philo identifies the audience with him and invites the audience to experience his passionate devotion to Cleopatra as "dotage" throughout the play. In doing so, Philo encourages the audience to remember the Roman interpretation of the Antony and Cleopatra historical narrative. Philo's language guides the audience's gaze, telling them what to look for. Antony's "goodly eyes" once "glow'd like plated Mars" but "now bend" and "turn." While Philo links Antony with Mars, he does not identify Cleopatra with Venus, but rather with a gypsy. She is a "tawny front"—a pun on "battle front"—and a lustful "gipsey." As I have stated earlier in this chapter, the color "tawny" was used to describe various foreigners, especially "Moors." I will return to Cleopatra's description later. The act of Antony's bending and turning signifies not only a change in direction of his gaze, but also the changeability and malleability of his identity. In early modern England, "to turn" was a synonym for "to convert." Thomas Cooper's thesaurus (1517) defines "*Converto, convertis, conversum, convuertere*" as "To return: to convert or turn: to change or transform: to translate" (Cooper qtd. in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, 280). Randle Cotgrave in *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues* (1650) defines a convertor as "one that hath turned to the faith" (Cotgrave qtd. in Loomba, *Race in Early Modern England*, 283). The expression "to turn Turk," for example, referred to the conversion of a Christian to Islam. Although set in a historical period before the time of Christianity or Islam, Antony and Cleopatra are figures that represent the local religious tensions in early modern England. Antony's turning, his "dotage," is boundless and immeasurable, just as his nobleness and bravery "burst" the buckles on his chest. His turning

"upon a tawny front" engages with his identification as a general, his "turn" or "conversion," and with the Roman interpretation of Cleopatra. The "tawny front" also signifies Cleopatra's "tawny" forehead or face.

Right at the beginning of the play, Philo collapses a key boundary: the distinction between Cleopatra and the physical land of Egypt. A "front" simultaneously signifies the furthest position or foremost line of an army at war and the anterior or forward viewpoint of the "tawny" figure, Cleopatra. This rhetoric encompasses the tension between the immeasurability of Antony and the imperial desire to create boundaries. The collapsing of boundaries encourages the possibilities of an anti-imperial interpretation of the text. A front is a place, a physical divide between the enemy and the allies. The color "tawny" can refer to the brown land or dirt at the Egyptian front, or Cleopatra's skin color. Therefore, not only do the words on the page express the desire to solidify the rigid borders of the Roman Empire, but also simultaneously collapse distinctions, presenting the paradoxes within these ideological discourses. Philo does not mention Cleopatra by name; instead, he introduces her to the audience through Antony's transformation. We are introduced to Cleopatra through the changing of Antony from a general with a "captain's heart" to a "bellows and the fan / To cool a gipsy's lust." Philo directs the audience to see Cleopatra and Antony step onto the stage and watch Antony's metamorphosis: "Look where they come: Take but good note, and you shall see in him / The triple pillar of the world transformed / into a strumpet's fool" (1.1.11-13). Antony is described as "the triple pillar of the world," "the demi-Atlas of the earth," and the one whose arm "crested the world" (1.1.12, 1.5.23, 5.2.82). This could imply that Antony is key to the Roman Empire's structure as "the structure of the world, that is, what makes the world a world" (Dawson 173). This play displays the Roman imperial idea of a unified globe with a rigid structure. Antony's transformation from

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a triumvir of Rome to "a strumpet's fool" is complex; while it invites the Roman explanation of the Antony and Cleopatra historical narrative, it highlights the contradictions within this perspective.

Although some early modern texts highlighted the difference between "tawny" and black, like Heylyn's *Microcosmus* that says "that Egyptians are 'not black, but tawny and brown,'" in this play, Shakespeare uses both tawny and black to describe Cleopatra (Loomba 113).[178] Although her skin color is only explicitly described twice, once by Philo and once by Cleopatra herself, Cleopatra's darker complexion is reinforced by her constant association with Egypt, which becomes a metonym for Cleopatra throughout the play. Famously, the real-life Cleopatra was the only Ptolemaic ruler to learn the local Egyptian language; "retrospectively, some Egyptian histories even cast her as a nationalist" (Loomba 114).[179] Contemporary historians, however, speculate about Cleopatra's race, with some arguing that she was of mixed race, others asserting that she was white, and some stating that she was black. The "race controversy" surrounding Cleopatra stems from the fact that her mother and grandmother's ancestry is not known. This "race controversy" has been recently re-ignited as a result of two upcoming depictions of Cleopatra on the screen. First, Israeli-born actress Gal Gadot was cast to portray Cleopatra in an upcoming film. In Gadot's words from a Tweet on October 11, 2020, the actress expresses her excitement "to tell her story for the first time through women's eyes, both behind and in front of the camera."[180] Most recently, Cleopatra's "race controversy" has gone "viral" because of an upcoming season of the four-episode historical docuseries, Netflix's *African Queens*. While the first season explored the seventeenth-century Queen of Ndongo and

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[178] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 113.
[179] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 114
[180] See Twitter, https://twitter.com/GalGadot/status/1315443922957729792?s=20.

Matamba (present-day Angola) Njinga Mbandi, the second season premiering on May 10, 2023, will explore Cleopatra. In the description of the YouTube trailer narrated by Jada Pinkett Smith and featuring British actress Adele James as Cleopatra, Netflix announces that the second season will be a "reassessment" of the ruler's heritage:

> From Executive Producer Jada Pinkett Smith comes a new documentary series exploring the lives of prominent and iconic African Queens. This season will feature Cleopatra, the world's most famous, powerful, and misunderstood woman -- a daring queen whose beauty and romances came to overshadow her real asset: her intellect. Cleopatra's heritage has been the subject of much academic debate, which has often been ignored by Hollywood. Now our series re-assesses this fascinating part of her story.

After the trailer's release on April 13, 2023, diasporic Egyptians Maha Shehata, a model, and Aikk Yasser, an artist, started a petition on the Change.org platform to cancel the "Afrocentric" show; it received about 85,000 signatures in less than 48 hours before being removed by the platform.[181] Since then, the creators of the petition have emphasized that "the outrage is NOT because they [Netflix] got a black actress, the outrage is because we know they're trying to push the agenda of 'modern day egyptians [sic] are colonizers.'"[182] They are urging viewers to boycott Netflix if the show is not cancelled. Egyptologist and Egypt's former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs, Dr. Zahi Hawass, described the documentary's ideas as "falsifying facts."[183]

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[181] See Nayyar, Rhea. "Internet Perplexed by Netflix's Black Cleopatra." *Hyperallergic*, 17 Apr. 2023, https://hyperallergic.com/815568/internet-perplexed-by-netflix-black-cleopatra.
[182] See Maha Shehata on Instagram: 'Edit: The Outrage Is Not Because They Got A Black Actress, the Outrage Is Because We Know They're Trying to Push the Agenda of 'Modern Day Egyptians Are Colonizers.' *Instagram*, 15 Apr. 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CrB8nGeoost/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link
[183] See "Netflix's Queen Cleopatra Documentary Sparks Backlash in Egypt - Screens - Arts & Culture." *Ahram Online*, 16 April 2023, https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/32/495882/Arts--Culture/Screens/Netflix%E2%80%99s-Queen-Cleopatra-documentary-sparks-backl.aspx. See also, Gale, Alexander. "New Netflix Documentary Forgets Cleopatra Was Greek." *GreekReporter.com*, 14 Apr. 2023, https://greekreporter.com/2023/04/14/netflix-documentary-cleopatra-greek.

Hawass emphasized that Cleopatra was a Ptolemaic ruler and therefore of Greek origin, "meaning that she was blonde, not Black," and accused Netflix of "trying to stir up confusion to spread false information that the origin of Egyptian civilization is black."[184] Most recently, Dr. Mostafa Waziri, the current head of the Supreme Antiquities Council, coauthored a statement reiterating that Cleopatra had "white skin and Hellenistic characteristics" and that depicting Cleopatra as Black is "a falsification of Egyptian history."[185] Egyptian lawmaker Saboura al-Sayyed has urged the Egyptian parliament to ban the platform. An Egyptian lawyer has filed a case to also ban Netflix in Egypt.[186] This conversation—the hyperfocus on Cleopatra's actual skin color and ethnic origin—is not productive. Cleopatra is multicultural. Both in general and in Shakespeare's play, Cleopatra is defined by mixture and represented neither simply as black nor simply as white. Therefore, it is important for scholars to resist U.S. exceptionalism and to not anachronistically impose an interpretation of Shakespeare's text that focuses on the U.S.-centered black versus white racial binary. Instead, scholars (and documentarians) must pursue a critical and nuanced understanding of premodern race and racial capitalism.

In Shakespeare's play, while Cleopatra flirts with the notions of idleness and laziness, she represents herself as the queen of performance. She *acts*. She takes action throughout the play, wielding power through navigating her many identities to her own advantage. She presents herself in multiple ways. Though Philo describes Cleopatra as "tawny," the queen defines herself as having black skin: "Think on me, / That am with Phoebus' amorous pinches black, / And wrinkled deep in time" (1.5.27-29). In the early modern period, one popular theory that sought to

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[184] See Al-Youm, Al-Masry. "Hawass Criticizes Depicting Cleopatra as Black in Netflix Film." *Egypt Independent*, 15 Apr. 2023, https://egyptindependent.com/hawass-criticizes-depicting-cleopatra-as-black-in-netflix-film.
[185] See "Egypt Says Cleopatra Was 'White Skinned' amid Netflix Documentary Row." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 28 Apr. 2023, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/egypt-cleopatra-white-skinned-netflix-b2328739.html.
[186] See Egypt Independent. "Egyptian Lawyer Sues Netflix over Queen Cleopatra." *Egypt Independent*, 19 Apr. 2023, https://www.egyptindependent.com/egyptian-lawyer-sues-netflix-over-queen-cleopatra/.

explain the origin of black skin was the climate theory, which stated that darker complexions resulted from exposure to the sun in hot climates. The boy actor on stage playing Cleopatra may have "blackened up" his face, further playing with the notions of the "gypsy" queen, the "Egyptian Moor," and the "sun-kissed" complexions of the vagabonds in early modern England. Cleopatra's assertion subverts other early modern theories of complexion that claimed that black skin was a curse from God, inherited from Noah's son Ham. Cleopatra plays with the theories of darker complexions by claiming that Phoebus, the sun god, amorously pinched her skin and caused its black color. As the god of light, Phoebus also connects Cleopatra to early modern associations of light: fairness, beauty, and morality.[187] By invoking the love bestowed by a Roman deity, Cleopatra rejects the racist notions of black skin as a deformation, disease, or curse and equates herself with the one of the Roman gods. This connects to the real-life Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt who "identified strongly with the Egyptian gods Orisis and Isis" (Loomba, *Shakespeare*, 114).

Many historians throughout the centuries identified Cleopatra as Egyptian. Many Egyptians have also identified Cleopatra as Egyptian. Cleopatra has been referred to as a national icon and a symbol for Egyptian feminism. For the ancient Romans, the "identification between Cleopatra and Egypt was strategically necessary in order to highlight an absolute division between Rome and Egypt" (Loomba 114).[188] Rather than telling the story of one Roman defeating another Roman, Romans opted to stress a continuity with a past that isn't there; by using orientalizing rhetoric to represent Cleopatra and marking her as different, they could celebrate the Roman defeat of a foreign queen rather than celebrating the Roman defeat of another Roman (which was illegal). This association does not immediately lend itself to the

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[187] Phoebus, linked to the Greek Apollo, is also the god of poetry and music.
[188] See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, p. 114

dominant Roman interpretation of Shakespeare's play. When Antony tells Cleopatra of Fulvia's death and indicates his conflicting feelings of love for Cleopatra and duty for Rome, Cleopatra at first feels betrayed, but then as Antony tries to convince her about the depth of his love, she teases him by using a phallic innuendo—"I would I had thy inches"—and in the next line, she calls herself Egypt first, referring to her heart as "a heart in Egypt" or Egypt's heart (1.3.40-1). After this interaction, Antony calls her "Egypt" several times throughout the play. This detail, however small it might seem, is striking to me because it establishes Cleopatra's subversive potential. Rather than going along with the men's descriptions of her, she takes control of her own narrative, and presents the possibility of an alternative understanding of the text.

Although the Egyptian queen is reduced to a lustful gypsy in Philo's speech, this representation of her is challenged by Cleopatra in the following lines:

> Cleopatra: [To Antony] If it be love indeed, tell me how much.
>
> Antony: There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned.
>
> Cleopatra: I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.
>
> Antony: Then must thou needs find out a new heaven, new earth.

Cleopatra speaks first, playfully asking Antony to tell her how much he loves her. Cleopatra's question is phrased as an imperative. She commands Antony to measure the boundaries of his love for her. Antony's reply is not one of rigid limitations. He states that if one can measure love, then it is "beggary," or of little worth. One of the triumvirs of Rome refuses to create worth through the drawing of borders between Rome and Egypt. Cleopatra takes the initiative in the next line, stating that she will then set the limitation to "how far" Antony loves her. Cleopatra's language is not the language of the submissive "oriental," nor is it that of a lustful, "prostitute queen," either. She complicates the traditions of the representations of Egypt through her

theatricality, countering his notion of "beggary" with an implementation of her own rules about value, worth, and love. Her performance of both romance language and colonial rhetoric pushes back against the traditional Roman bias. Cleopatra takes on the role of the cartographer or Roman emperor and draws her own boundaries. She stands her own ground but does not dominate Antony. The two act more like a comic duo, bantering back and forth about love. Antony's response does not reinforce Philo's introduction of him as a foolish, unstable man. Instead, Antony's answer to Cleopatra's query is a proposal for her to find "new heaven, new earth." Antony evokes the "new"—a boundless, immeasurable space or place not yet discovered, perhaps imaginary, or possibly a realm of transcendence. This suggests that both Antony and Cleopatra are figures of equal power and independence, capable of playing with the concepts of the global, local, racial, colonial, imperial, romance, theatricality, and sexuality.

When Antony is in denial about his malleable and changeable identity, he attempts to follow the Roman perception that contrasts the masculine hero with the feminine lover. Antony labels Cleopatra as: a "foul Egyptian," "Triple-turned whore!," and "a right gipsy" (4.12.10,12, 28). He exclaims that "this false soul of Egypt! This grave charm" is the reason for his downfall (4.12.25). For the Romans, "authentic human identity is clearly the prerogative of a universalized and coherent male subject, who must resist being seduced and "feminized" by the possibility of changeable, multiple selves" (Singh 101). Throughout the play, Antony resists his Roman roles as general, warrior, hero, and husband. Antony's change in his descriptions of Cleopatra epitomizes the contradictory cultural discourse characteristic of early modern ideas of race, class, gender, and theater. In Cleopatra's palace with Eros by his side, Antony rejects the Roman idea of a coherent male subject and acknowledges his multiple selves by describing himself as dissolving and melting. He proclaims, "Here I am Antony, / Yet cannot hold this visible shape,

my knave" (4.14.13-4). By the end of the play, as he commits suicide, he accepts his flexible,

open identity and acknowledges that he "will be / A bridegroom in [his] death" (4.14.99-100).

Antony's suicide can be reduced to a conservative, Roman reading, a misogynistic

interpretation that represents Cleopatra as a femme fatale who "robbed" Antony of his "sword"

and betrayed him. When Mardian, a eunuch in Cleopatra's court,[189] enters the scene, Antony

exclaims:

> O, thy vile lady!
>
> She has robbed me of my sword.
>
> MARDIAN   No, Antony,
>
> My mistress loved thee and her fortunes mingled
>
> With thine entirely.
>
> ANTONY   Hence, saucy eunuch! Peace!
>
> She hath betrayed me and shall die the death.
>
> MARDIAN
>
> Death of one person can be paid but once,
>
> And that she has discharged. What thou wouldst do
>
> Is done unto thy hand. The last she spake
>
> Was "Antony, most noble Antony."
>
> Then in the midst a tearing groan did break
>
> The name of Antony; it was divided
>
> Between her heart and lips. She rendered life
>
> Thy name so buried in her. (4.14.23-33).

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[189] In the ancient world, eunuchs became royal servants, teachers, priests, members of the court, and even generals. Potheinos, a eunuch, was a regent and a general who is believed to have turned Ptolemy against Cleopatra.

As Cleopatra's messenger, Mardian lies to Antony and tells him that Cleopatra has died with "Antony, most noble Antony" on her lips. Plot-wise, Mardian's primary purpose in the play is to tell Antony this lie, but recently, scholars have analyzed his character using the methodologies in gender studies and queer theory. In an essay in *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, Hanson analyzes Mardian as "a queer figure of paradox, desexualized but obscene, the freethinker serving as high priest, the outsider as insider, the castrato as ideal lover" (51). Mardian's message from Cleopatra and his exchange with Antony can be read as a Roman moral platitude about masculine duty compromised by foreign female lust. Antony's undoing can be interpreted as paradoxical effeminacy of a Roman man's loving a foreign woman too much and the consequences of that seduction and feminization. In the audience's imagination, Antony's claim that Cleopatra "robbed" him of his "sword" can illicit fear of castration that for the early modern English is "a fear of incompleteness and imbalance as much as a loss of manly embodiment" (Sellberg and Wånggren 296). Yet, Shakespeare's play undermines the Roman interpretation and conservative reading. With Antony's death, Cleopatra describes "his delights" as "dolphin-like" showing "his back above / The element they lived in" (5.2.88-90). As Hanson notes, the play leaves the audience with this "odd image of Antony as phallic and transcendent," rendering "Antony most attractive when he is least Roman" and "the dutiful Romans sterile and unremarkable" (53). Antony's transcendent image has the potential to be interpreted as transcending masculinity, rigid Roman roles, and "stable" early modern English constructions of racial and gendered identity.

Through the use of rhetoric and theatricality to constantly represent herself as a god, Cleopatra defines her transcendence. While more traditional critics condemned the Egyptian pharaoh's "histrionics intrinsic to her nature as a femme fatale," recent critics, informed by

feminist theory, interpret her performativity and transcendence "as a source of empowerment and as a positive value in the play" (Singh 100). Although Cleopatra's suicide has been viewed as a negative, her "doing and undoing" of herself further reinforces the "positive value" of her empowerment in the play. Cleopatra asks the audience to "think on her" and to remember her long after her death, foreshadowing her suicide. While Cleopatra embodies the local and particular issues in early modern England, in moments like this one, she also evokes the cross-temporal and transcendental. This further complicates her suicide and the "victory" of Octavius Caesar by presenting the possibility of Cleopatra's otherworldliness—her transcendence into a "new heaven, new earth" with Antony.

Antony and Cleopatra is a play that carries out important cultural work as a global text by presenting the early modern English audience with the complications and contradictions within their racial thought, geopolitical anxieties, patriarchal tradition, the gender binary, female sexuality, rising capitalist society, "early colonial" representations of the Egyptian "Orient" and the debates surrounding vagabonds, entertainers, and gypsies. By the end of the play, through the model of Cleopatra, the audience experiences the tension between the Roman interpretation of the narrative and the subversive quality of the theatrical performance of the world on stage.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation demonstrates that these premodern periods—the late Middle Ages and early modern period—already show the emergence of racialization along with the emergence of capitalism in England. This dissertation argues for the importance of studying the emergence of racialization (and racism) and the emergence of capitalism together to narrate a long history of what Cedric Robinson terms *racial capitalism*. This means that racism and capitalism emerge in tandem within Europe. The first chapter reads the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* as a kind of Christian hegemonic text. The second and third chapters demonstrate the potential for early modern English plays—like Marlowe's the *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*—to push back against hegemony. When read together, these chapters make a unique contribution to the field of premodern critical race studies by centering an examination of premodern drama on questions about the long history of racial capitalism. As a whole, this study demonstrates the pervasiveness of English race-thinking in premodern discourse, connecting different varieties of racial thought on the figure of the Jew, Moor, Egyptian, and gypsy, together with Christian discourse on commercialization. It explores the role of racial ideas in the politics of England and argues that as racial capitalism emerged and caused a shift within Christian morality, a crisis produced by the tension between, on the one hand, traditional Christian teachings about charity, the renunciation of material wealth, and usury and, on the other hand, the new practices that were emerging under early capitalism (with its expansion of interaction with other cultures abroad and its primitive accumulation at home). One ideological response to this crisis was a collective cultural project, one seen in the theater of early modern England: the English needed to construct a stable racial identity in order to control the lower classes and their labor, and in order to define English-Christian virtue against various foreigners and their

religions. Therefore, scholars in the fields of comparative literature, English literature, premodern critical race studies, and even scholars that examine race in the modern era, must consider Robinson's theory of racial capitalism in order to attend to the enmeshment of racism and capitalism. This dissertation argues that while there are differences between the premodern periods and our own world, contemporary global capitalism is rooted in a long history linked to identity construction, and specifically to English racial identity.

This dissertation analyzes the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* alongside other documents to show how *longue durée* or broader analyses of racial capitalism in the premodern periods benefits from a discussion of both skin color and Christianity, of both the constructions of whiteness and a Christian identity. This discussion of Christian theology is not often part of *longue durée* analyses. By analyzing the figure of the Jew through the lens of critical race theory (and whiteness) throughout the chapters, this dissertation contributes to discussions of antisemitism, which are often marginalized in broad histories and analyses of race and capitalism.

Another important analytic view, one that comes into focus through this juxtaposition of race and class, lies in this dissertation's attention to practices of periodization in literary studies. In terms of periodization, this dissertation challenges the idea of sequential history; however, it does not completely do away with its valid principles. In choosing between the more traditional notion of sequential history and continuity history, this dissertation prioritizes the usefulness of continuity history because there are clear through-lines of racialization and capitalism that may be traced from the premodern period into our own twenty-first century world. It poses this question for future scholarship: what alternative models of history can be used to chart the development of racial capitalism from the premodern periods to today? This dissertation explores

a model that prioritizes a broad transhistorical and often transnational way of thinking about

racial capitalism; and in doing so, it forgoes a commitment to regional micro-analyses. This

exploration allows researchers to attend to the verticality of history rather than its sequential,

horizontal or lateral movements. By focusing on the through-lines and the verticality of history,

this dissertation invites scholars to critically examine the history of the contemporary neoliberal

system and actively resist it in classrooms where early modern texts are being taught.

CODA

In the contemporary United States, race often centers on physical characteristics or features like skin color and hair type. For example, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requires the U.S. Census Bureau to collect race data from five groups: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. "White" is defined as any "person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as 'White' or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian."[190] The term "white" includes a wide range of people with different cultural backgrounds. For example, a Moroccan American is considered "white" and not "African American." According to the OMB, "Black or African American" is a skin color-based category that signifies any person perceived as having mid-to-dark brown skin. When thinking about race versus ethnicity in this context, race seems to be tied to whiteness or blackness, while ethnicity seems to be related to culture, place of origin, religion, language, etc. Therefore, according to the OMB, a person's ethnicity may be Moroccan, but their race is white. This does not mean, however, that modern race is a simple term. While these are interesting definitions and conceptions of race and identity, as Robert Bartlett states, the "expedients of the U.S. Census or Immigration administration are no starting point for scholarly inquiry" (39). The federal standards on racial and ethnic data set by the White House's OMB serve as examples of how the U.S. government can reduce the complexities of the term race to simplistic categories based on ideas of whiteness and blackness. The data collected by the OMB defines voting districts, school districts, the enforcement of civil rights protections, policymaking, research, and the allocation and distribution of federal funds to

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[190] See Census Quick Facts, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/RHI625219.

local, state, and tribal communities.[191] The complexities of race in our own contemporary

moment connect to conceptions of race in late-medieval and early modern England, complexities

that deserve to be properly and critically studied and understood.

Why critical race theory? Why discuss race in histories, literatures, and cultures before

the modern period? Why talk about racialization in conjunction with emerging capitalism? Why

now? As I write this, the study of race remains an important and controversial topic in the U.S.;

critical race theory continues to be subject to fierce political debate. CRT has not only played an

important role in school board races but has become one of the central issues that will define the

upcoming 2024 Presidential election.[192] The conflict surrounding CRT has been playing out in

public school districts and the higher education system across the country. As parents, teachers,

and school administrators grapple with how to teach the histories of U.S. slavery, race, and

racism in the classroom, CRT has been turned into a disinformation umbrella term by

conservatives who claim that it is a "divisive concept" that should be banned. This began on

September 2, 2020, when Christopher Rufo declared CRT "to be the ideological catalyst of the

riots and subsequent anti-racism efforts and a threat to American core values" on a Fox News

interview. Two weeks later, former President Trump used Rufo's talking points during a press

conference and released the (now-rescinded) Executive Order 13950 "on Combatting Race and

Sex Stereotyping" to "explicitly denounce a misinformed version of 'CRT'" (9).[193]

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[191] Under the Biden administration, the OMB is reviewing the federal standards on racial and ethnic data. In order to shrink the category "Some other race" (which is now the second-largest racial category in the U.S. after "White"), the OMB is considering asking about race and ethnicity in a single combined question. This question includes separate checkboxes for "Hispanic or Latino" and "Middle Eastern or North African," for a total of seven categories. See Wang, Hansi Lo. "Changing How U.S. Forms Ask about Race and Ethnicity Is Complicated. Here's Why." *NPR*, 27 Apr. 2023, www.npr.org/2023/04/27/1170743721/omb-race-and-ethnicity-statistical-standards.

[192] The 1776 Project (that I mentioned in the introduction) claimed that their candidates won 71% of their school board races in 2022.

[193] See "CRT Forward Tracking Project." *Tracking Project – Tracking Anti-CRT Efforts Introduced at the Local, State, and Federal Levels.*, crtforward.law.ucla.edu/.

A filmmaker and conservative activist, Rufo successfully kept Seattle from imposing a 2017 income tax that would have taxed income over $250,000 a year for individuals and over $500,000 for couples at 2.25 percent.[194] While directing the 2019 documentary "America Lost," Rufo claimed that U.S. poverty stemmed from "social, familial, even psychological [dynamics]" and could not be solved by public policy.[195] Why does Rufo, a lobbyist on behalf of the wealthy, have such an investment in anti-CRT? Rufo's anti-CRT movement is deeply tied to anti-Marxism. In an eighteen-minute YouTube video, Rufo frames CRT in completely misleading historical, academic, and political terms. He dramatically overgeneralizes, operating through misrepresentation aimed to incite hysteria that is reminiscent of the Second Red Scare. He claims that while CRT "is everywhere," "rapidly becoming orthodoxy in America's public institutions," "most Americans have no idea where it comes from and what kind of society it envisions" (0:00-0:10). He claims that CRT is really Marxism in disguise:

> Most Americans believed they could transcend their origins through education, hard work, and community support. But rather than abandon their political project, the Marxist scholars of the [1960s], calling themselves critical theorists, simply updated their theory of the revolution. They set out in search of another entry point for their politics, and found it in the social and racial unrest of the 1960s. Over the course of the decade, the critical theorists gradually abandoned

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[194] See Boiko-Weyrauch, Anna. "Seattle Defends Its New High-Earner Income Tax in Court." *NPR*, 16 November 2017, www.npr.org/2017/11/16/564650399/seattle-defends-its-new-high-earner-income-tax-in-court.

[195] See documentary: Rafael Pi Roman (host), Christopher Rufo (guest), "'America Lost' finds community, poverty in three rust belt cities." *PBS*. https://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/stories/america-lost-cities/. See also, Wallace-Wells, Benjamin. "How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict over Critical Race Theory." *The New Yorker*, 18 June 2021, www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-inquiry/how-a-conservative-activist-invented-the-conflict-over-critical-race-theory.

the old economic dialectic of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and replaced it with a

new racial dialectic of White and Black. (1:45-2:19)[196]

This is politically strategic; Rufo aims to reignite the conservative hysteria over communism and

Marxism by presenting CRT as a Marxist revolution inherited from the "number of regimes

[that] attempted Marxist revolution" that "ended in disaster" "over the course of the 20th century"

(0:57-1:00). For Rufo, CRT is "a program of revolution that rejects the founding principles and

would overturn the premise of the Constitution" (16:48-16:52). In reality, Rufo is invested in

anti-CRT because maintaining a simplistic and reductive understanding of race maintains his

pro-capitalism ideology. Conservative activists and politicians oppose critical inquiry into race

and racism because this inquiry will lead to a critical inquiry into and fundamental shift from

capitalism and capitalist ideology. In January 2023, with no training as a lawyer, or in any field

related to CRT, Rufo was appointed by Governor DeSantis as one of six board of trustees to the

New College of Florida.[197] In his opening statements to parents, faculty, staff, and students, Rufo

claimed that the university's "echo chamber culture" and its "extraordinary focus on social

justice" has been negatively affecting enrollment numbers and would cost the university its state

funding. While his statements may be useful in critically examining the problems with neoliberal

identity politics, his serve to perpetuate a pro-capitalist agenda that is determined to defund

social programs for the most vulnerable students. According to the UCLA School of Law's

report released on April 6, 2023, "Tracking the Attack on Critical Race Theory," "Between

January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2022, government actors (federally and across 49 states and

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[196] Rufo, Christopher F. "Critical Race Theory." *YouTube*, 14 June 2021,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfmpnGV0IGc.
[197] Ortiz, Omar Rodríguez. "Records Lawsuit Filed against Christopher Rufo, New College." Tampa Bay Times, 23
Feb. 2023, www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/2023/02/23/rufo-new-college-lawsuit-center-government-
accountability-texts-calls/.

their localities) introduced a total of 563 anti-'CRT' measures, 241 of which have been enacted or adopted."[198] Among legislative measures "at least one-third propose withholding funding from teachers, schools, and districts as a consequence for violations" (25). Although forty of the adopted measures ban the *NYT*'s controversial 1619 Project, their reasoning has little to do with the historical accuracy of the project; the project is just one example of "ten forbidden 'divisive concepts' derived from the 2020 E.O. [Executive Order]" (29). While individual measures aimed at institutions of higher education are less numerous than those targeting K-12 schools (affecting twenty-two million children), such measures still impact hundreds of thousands of undergraduate and graduate students.

Scholars of the medieval and early modern period are in a unique position to study race alongside capitalism—to study *racial capitalism*—across historical and geographical periods for three main reasons. Firstly, as I have shown throughout my dissertation, in early England, there is a connection between the emergence of racial categories and emerging capitalism that deserves scholarly attention. Secondly, this research creates opportunities for critical inquiry across periods and specializations; it would be especially valuable for not only Americanists but also global studies scholars. Finally, the fields of medieval and early modern English literature and history connect to the earliest days of higher education. Humanities scholars must foster change not only within premodern studies, but also across higher education institutions by connecting premodern studies to the history of the neoliberal system and problems with neoliberal identity politics.

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[198] "As of December 31, 2022, seven of 11 measures introduced in California school districts have been adopted, affecting approximately 110,000 students statewide" (5). In San Diego County, the Ramona Unified School District adopted Board Policy 6142.3, "employing boilerplate ban language" that lists "ten forbidden 'divisive concepts'" derived verbatim from Trump's 2020 Executive Order (29). For more information about the Ramona Unified School District's BP 6143.3, see: Bd. Policy 6142.3, https://perma.cc/6K7Q-WNZG; Kristen Taketa, "Ramona School Board Bans the Teaching of Race Theories," *RAMONA SENTINEL*, August 29, 2021, https://perma.cc/FX39-WW4C.

By focusing on the continuous history of racial capitalism, we can connect our contemporary struggles to a larger, long-term historical narrative. As I hope I made clear throughout this dissertation, when we read premodern plays like the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, or Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, we find evidence of racialization, the link between race-thinking and emerging capitalism, and how this developed into a racial capitalism that we see in our own time. When reading these plays, we can point to the tensions between emerging capitalist markets and their instigation of moral discomfort as an impetus for the English to imagine communities as "others" and to imagine themselves. We can discuss the tensions between the representations of racial identity on the stage and the consequences of an emerging capitalist system. We can analyze the commodification of human beings as the consequence of a racial capitalism that requires the commodification of the flesh, soul, body, and eventually, *everything*. We can analyze the development of a merchant's role and discussions of Christian morality that begin to accept the exploitation of workers and the members of the lower classes for the accumulation wealth and power of the elites. We do not need to maintain distance between premodern English texts and questions of race and class under the guise of historical accuracy.

In the classroom, we can move away from the idea of a race-neutral past and teach these plays by incorporating an understanding of racial ideology, emerging racial capitalism, and specific sixteenth-century English laws alongside questions of race and racism. Both inside and outside of the classroom, it is imperative for scholars to connect the early English constructions of race in an emerging capitalist system to our own time and our own crises, such as the ongoing efforts to fundamentally shift capitalist ideology, achieve income equality, and address the financial and educational disparities that exist across racial groups.

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