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"The Badge of All Our Tribe": Contradictions of Jewish Representation on the English Renaissance Stage

Becky S. Friedman
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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“The Badge of All Our Tribe”:
Contradictions of Jewish Representation on the English Renaissance Stage

A Dissertation Presented

by

BECKY SARA FRIEDMAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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English

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Approved as to style and content by:

Jane Hwang Degenhardt, Chair

Adam Zucker, Member

Harley Erdman, Member

Randall Knoper, Department Chair
English

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ABSTRACT

“THE BADGE OF ALL OUR TRIBE”:
CONTRADICTIONS OF JEWISH REPRESENTATION ON THE
ENGLISH RENAISSANCE STAGE

MAY 2021

BECKY SARA FRIEDMAN, B.A., UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Jane Hwang Degenhardt

Literary and historical records fueled fantasies of intense difference between the Jews and Christians of early modern England. Representations of Jewishness in the Renaissance theater drew on many of these enduring pejorative fictions, which associated Jews with financial manipulation, corporeal abnormalities, and an innate predilection for iniquity. At the same time, depictions of stunningly beautiful Jewish women and sympathetic, relatable Jewish commoners also emerged on the stage, complicating centuries-old attitudes of antipathy with suggestions of fascination, compassion, and similitude. *“The Badge of All Our Tribe”: Contradictions of Jewish Representation on the English Renaissance Stage* sheds light on this broader spectrum of Jewish portraiture in the period’s theater. Examining both canonical and lesser-known play texts, the study reveals the contradictory logics associated with Jews and Jewishness in performance and closet drama. Even as unfavorable stereotypes persisted in plays such as *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*, flattering portrayals embedded within those same works and in others—including *The Tragedy of Mariam* and *The Jewes Tragedy*—

challenge assumptions regarding the dominance of anti-Jewish feeling in the English imagination.

Gendered divergences, as captured by Cary's Mariam and Marlowe's Barabas, for example, enrich this study of incongruity by demonstrating the ways that a single period of English theatrical history produced Jewish characters who, on the one hand, embodied goodness and a host of Christ-like attributes, while, on the other, typified villainy and a variety of diabolical proclivities. These conspicuous distinctions contribute to the complex representational work of the stage.

This project focuses in particular on the theatrical uses of gesture, mobility, and material elements, including costumes and props, to analyze the embodied performance of Jewishness and its multidimensional layers of signification. Additionally, it examines the language of Jewishness, including a close analysis of speech patterns and vocal diversity that contribute to the heterogeneity of Jewish dramatic representations. By offering a new account of the representational complexities and contradictions of Jewishness on the early modern stage, this dissertation seeks to enhance our scholarly understanding of Anglo-Jewish culture, English attitudes towards Jews, and the important contributions of drama to constructions of Jewish difference and likeness.

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INTRODUCTION

QUINTESENTIALLY CONTRADICTORY

I cannot but weep bitterly, and with much anguish of soul lament that strange and horrid accusation of some Christians against the dispersed, and afflicted *Iewes* that dwell among them, when they say (what I tremble to write) that the *Iewes* are wont to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread, fermenting it with the bloud of some Christians, whom they have for this purpose killed.

Menasseh Ben Israel, *Vindiciæ Judæorum* (1656)¹

When Menasseh Ben Israel writes about the accusation that Jews consume Christian blood for disturbing rituals in *Vindiciæ Judæorum*, he reveals how distressing he finds the claim. “I cannot but weep bitterly,” he admits. “With much anguish of the soul,” he continues, committing to paper “what I tremble to write.” One of a whole host of damaging thoughts about the Jews in early modern Europe, the widespread accusation that they drank the blood of Christians at Passover originated in medieval England. Geraldine Heng has shown that “popular belief circulated for centuries through the countries of Latin Christendom—after the ritual murder accusation’s emergence in England—that Jews constitutionally needed to imbibe the blood of Christians.”² That the blood belonged to children is another layer in the hateful narrative; it shows the extent of Jewish monstrosity, for it simultaneously insinuates elements of cannibalism at the same

¹ Menasseh Ben Israel, *Vindiciæ Judæorum, or A letter in answer to certain questions propounded by a noble and learned gentleman, touching the reproaches cast on the nation of the Jevves; wherein all objections are candidly, and yet fully cleared. By Rabbi Menasseh Ben Israel a divine and a physician* (London: Printed by R[oger] D[aniel], 1656), 2.

² Geraldine Heng, “England’s Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews,” *MLN* 127, no. 5 (Dec. 2012): S56.

time that it debases the purest and most innocent of Christians.³ Ben Israel begins *Vindiciæ Judæorum* by refuting the veracity of this Blood Libel narrative, using a proof-like approach to make his arguments. “It is utterly forbid the *Iewes* to eat any manner of bloud whatsoever,” he says, quoting the biblical passages in Deuteronomy and Leviticus which prohibit the consumption of animal blood.⁴ “Since then it is thus,” Ben Israel reasons, “how can it enter into any mans heart to believe that they should eat humane bloud; which is yet more detestable, there being scarce any nation now remaining upon earth so barbarous, as to commit such wickednesse?”⁵ As a Jew, Menasseh Ben Israel was a fitting defender of Jewish belief and custom. Coupled with his personal connections to high-ranking Christians,⁶ he was also a suitable liaison to plead the Jews’ case to authority figures as he does in *Vindiciæ Judæorum*.

Ben Israel attempts to shift the narrative away from superstitions of the past, distinguishing his arguments about the Jews from the unfounded beliefs that had taken hold of the English imagination centuries prior and which refused to desist. Indeed, from the historical documents, which alleged Jews to be perpetrators of horrific crimes, to the literary record, which substantiated those criminal proclivities, English archives

³ It also reinforces the Jews’ commitment to rejecting Christ through a form of reenacting his execution; this is an element that Heng claims is crucial to the myth’s staying power. She notes that there was significant attention on the Ritual Murder Libel in the English literary imagination throughout the medieval period, observing that Christ’s execution is an intrinsic part of the plot, not only as an expression of the Jews’ permanent guilt but also their abiding need to deny and debase Christian goodness.

⁴ Ben Israel, *Vindiciæ Judæorum*, 2.

⁵ Ibid., 2–3.

⁶ Well educated, Ben Israel established the first Hebrew press in Holland, and developed a broad and impressive list of contacts through printing and teaching there. In addition, he actively engaged in cultural and political affairs and even became friends with Rembrandt; the Dutch master drew a portrait of Ben Israel in 1636, a drawing which is now held in the Cincinnati Art Museum.

aggressively conjured fantasies of vile Jewish behavior. The persistence of those beliefs at the time that Ben Israel was writing, hundreds of years after the claims first emerged, illuminates the vigor and embeddedness of anti-Jewish feeling in English culture, and provides a catalyst for Ben Israel's missive.

Travel writing, which was immensely popular at the time that *Vindiciae Judæorum* was composed, amplified the narratives of difference between English nationals and people from elsewhere, including Jews. As works like Nicolas de Nicolay's *The nauigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie* (1585) show, people from across the world were regularly categorized on the basis of dress, behavior, belief, and physical appearance. Jews, however, both typified and defied this kind of methodical categorization, as they were understood to be inherently dissimilar from the English, though their features were difficult to chart. Often adopting the clothing, language, and cultural conventions of the areas they inhabited, the Jews took assimilationist measures that were interpreted by Christians as cunning and deceptive. Jewish people were viewed as attempting to falsify their fit within chosen environments rather than as authentically embodying local custom.⁷ Adding to the complexity of categorizing Jews who defied the rules of geographic associations was this assumption of duplicitous behavior: that Jewish people sought to hide themselves within the general populations of the places where they settled. Indeed, the dangers posed by this alleged posturing are behind the mandates issued by the Fourth Lateran Council:

⁷ For more on the ways that Jewish attempts at reinventing their identities was both a perfect encapsulation of the English convention of "self-fashioning" as well as a violation of what was permissible for Jews to achieve, see Peter Berek, "The Jew as Renaissance Man," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1998): 128–162.

A difference of dress distinguishes Jews or Saracens from Christians in some provinces, but in others a certain confusion has developed so that they are indistinguishable. Whence it sometimes happens that by mistake Christians join with Jewish or Saracen women, and Jews or Saracens with Christian women. In order that the offence of such a damnable mixing may not spread further, under the excuse of a mistake of this kind, we decree that such persons of either sex, in every Christian province and at all times, are to be distinguished in public from other people by the character of their dress.⁸

This injunction to delineate Jews and Muslims from the Christian populace was borne out of a fear of similitude, that dissembling habits or any other suggestion of resemblance could conceal objectionable people within Christian contexts. Consequently, Jews and Muslims were made to wear a badge “at all times.”⁹ Across Europe, difference was enforced through the application of these external signifiers in an attempt to override subterfuge in fitting in and to manifest alterity between Christians and non-native Others in the event that somatic dissimilarity was insufficient.

Some nations doubled down on this rationale, even seeking to distinguish Jews and Muslims who had newly converted to Christianity from the more established Christians born into the correct faith. Spain’s *limpieza de sangre* laws functioned precisely in these ways, illuminating how internal difference participated in the logic of Christian superiority just as much as external signifiers did. David Nirenberg explains that Christian converts would continue to be treated as subordinate because of perceived internal impurities:

⁸ Norman Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 266, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015021846079>.

⁹ For more, see Flora Cassen, “The Jewish Badge in Early Modern Italy: A Social and Political Study of Anti-Jewish Discrimination” (PhD diss., New York University, 2008).

According to this doctrine [*limpieza de sangre*], Jewish and Muslim blood was inferior to Christian; the possession of any amount of such blood made one liable to heresy and moral corruption; and therefore any descendant of Jews and Muslims, no matter how distant, should be barred from church and secular office, from any number of guilds and professions, and especially from marrying Old Christians.¹⁰

The discrimination against new Christians was deemed valid on the basis of bloodline in the most literal ways. *Limpieza de sangre* was not a theoretical notion of bias based on ancestry or even prior religious custom but on the grounds of internal physical difference, incorporated within the body itself. As such, even the Jews who sought to shed their inherited beliefs and practices were regarded as problematic, making them ineluctably non-Christian after converting, and racializing them as undesirable through sullied blood.¹¹

At the time that Ben Israel penned his missive in 1656, the subordination of Jewishness was thus well established on the level of legality as well as on the level of imagination. *Vindiciae Judæorum* sought to expose the fallacies of these multifarious anti-Jewish allegations and, in so doing, revealed a crucial characteristic of early modern English belief about Jewishness: contradiction. That is, in his attempts to prove the irrationality of Christian feeling towards—and regulation of—the Jews, Ben Israel shows that perceptions were invented, implausible, and inconsistent. By showing how the Jews were forbidden to drink blood, for example, he exposes the spuriousness of the Blood Libel narrative; in explaining how the Decalogue prohibits murder, he elucidates why

¹⁰ David Nirenberg, “Was there race before modernity? The example of ‘Jewish blood in late medieval Spain,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 242.

¹¹ Jean Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in Renaissance Literature* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Jews could not pursue supposed homicidal fantasies; by citing historical cases in which Jews were put to death for crimes, he reveals how those executions were based on false testimony and ersatz evidence. Various, Ben Israel recognizes these narratives to be “fabulous,”¹² calls them “slander,”¹³ “mere calumny,”¹⁴ and “much contrary”¹⁵ to Jewish precepts. He observes that many of the allegations were put forth as if they had no “contradictions” at all,¹⁶ even as they were entirely contradictory. Consequently, he illuminates how the Jews had accrued a distorted historical profile founded upon illogic, variously reinforced by irrationality, and made even more unwelcome based on the resulting paradoxes. These racist conceits did not align with facts.

Similar negotiations between fiction and fact are expressed in contemporary theatrical works that broach Jewishness. The stage, which presented familiar defamatory sentiments, routinely contends with the inherent contradictions of those feelings. After all, even the idea that Jews were inhuman monsters was immediately undercut by the reality of staging, which required a Christian actor to play the part of the Jew. If performing Jewishness was a matter of costuming, then how intrinsically different could Jews really be? If they shared the same biblical origins and ancestors, then how could Christians rationalize their ineffaceable differences? Such controversial questions are regularly raised in English Renaissance drama, with definitive answers evaded. This ambiguity discomfits modern scholars seeking to access contemporary English beliefs about Jews, and many have claimed to identify *the* point of difference that provides

¹² Ben Israel, *Vindiciæ Judæorum*, 12.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

answers to the period's "Jewish questions." Often, erudition settles on a singular pejorative theme which serves as the basis for interpreting contemporary feelings about Jews. James Shapiro, for example, argues that circumcision was the reason for the abhorrence of Jewish bodies.¹⁷ Abraham Oz identifies economic issues and financial accusations as inextricably linked with Jewishness and what he calls "the commodification of nationhood."¹⁸ Peter Berek cites Marranism, the pretense of Christian faith while upholding secret Jewish tradition, as the main feature of contemporary Jewry.¹⁹ Jeffrey Shoulson likewise sees "fictions of conversion" as the grounds for animus,²⁰ while Kathy Lavezzo argues that supersessionism was at the root of perspectives concerning Jewish inferiority from before and through the early modern period.²¹

Identifying Jewishness through a unidimensional lens is not unlike the badge enforcement of historical precedent; it marks the Jewish characters with essentializing and insuperable fault and conceals evidence of similitude and affinity. Thus, while many scholars have proposed explanations for unfavorable representations of Jewishness in contemporary English drama, an overarching recognition that these renderings are often supplemented by positive and thus deeply contradictory features has been missing.

¹⁷ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Abraham Oz, "Early Mimics: Shylock, Machiavelli, and the Commodification of Nationhood," in *Religious Diversity and Early Modern English Texts: Catholic, Judaic, Feminist, and Secular Dimensions*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goldblatt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 107–135.

¹⁹ Peter Berek, "The Jew as Renaissance Man," 128.

²⁰ Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

²¹ Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

Indeed, there is a flagrant and well-documented assortment of negative elements in the period's depictions of Jews, but there are also a variety of flattering, commendatory, and sympathetic characteristics, many rendered in the same stage productions that call attention to anti-Jewish feeling. Such juxtapositions have long gone unacknowledged but are, in fact, crucial to early modern England's depictions of Jewishness because they reflect the negotiations of fact, fiction, and feeling which orbited the evolving reputation of Jewish people. Hateful and congenial, heinous and lovely, criminal and unfairly castigated, the coupling of contradictory qualities in the representation of Jewish stage figures is quintessential to the period's representation of Jewishness. And, as Ben Israel achieves with *Vindiciæ Judæorum*, this study also seeks to clear the record, and to reveal a multivalent rendering of Jewishness that challenges prevailing criticism of the period's stage Jews and sheds light on these meaningful contradictions.

Contradictions of Jewishness

This dissertation explores the depictions of Jews and Jewishness in English Renaissance drama, with particular focus on contradictions and the ways that the theater both enforced and undermined attitudes of Jewish difference. It uncovers these diverse renderings to access a fuller range of contemporary feelings about Jewish people and ideas, which are reflected in theater even as they have often been oversimplified or neglected in literary scholarship. Popular dramas like Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598) capture this phenomenon of contradiction well, but so too do less canonical texts from the period. William Heminge's *The Jewes Tragedy* (c. 1628), for example, offers a remarkable

meditation on similitude between Jewishness and Englishness. The work itself has received only modest attention from scholars and, consequently, so too have Heminge's analogies between the Jews and the English; this dissertation specifically seeks to look beyond the canon in order to identify such overlooked parallels, including studies of closet dramas which benefited from more creative license than staged works. Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), a play written by a Catholic woman, offers another entry point for analysis of sympathy with the Jewish experience. Indeed, without the visual accompaniment of stagecraft, her closet drama communicates much about the theoretical associations with Jewishness rather than the commonly examined corporeal concerns. Altogether, this dissertation considers a variety of dramatic works—iconic to inglorious, performed to unstaged—in order to reveal a range of contemporary interpretations and representations of Jews.

Of particular concern to this project's analysis is the way that gender is an important point of distinction in Jewish representation. While Cary's Mariam, Marlowe's Abigail, and Shakespeare's Jessica are rendered extremely favorably and with Christian or even Christ-like qualities, their male peers are often depicted with contempt. Characters like Barabas and Shylock are persistently odious, their Jewishness unchangeable, and their general presence problematic. Indeed, the divergences in the physicality of Jewish men and women are pivotal to my examination of the way that the theater incorporated Jewishness on stage. My dissertation thus also looks at performative and sartorial elements, such as props and costume, as well as embodiment, including gesture, posture, and movement, in order to more fully access the ways that contemporary drama presented the Jews.

Chapter one begins with an exploration of Jewish voice and language, taking William Heminge's text as its focus. Incorporating plurality and polyvocality into its very title as well as broadly within its pages, *The Jewes Tragedy* is a rich resource in the investigation of contemporary representations of Jewishness. Aside from the quantity of Jewish figures, the play integrates issues of class, education, and politics in ways that further distinguish its treatments of Jews from renderings in contemporary productions, which tend to locate them in isolated, diasporic settings that lack community and collective concerns. The tragedy's unique approach reaches its zenith when analogizing the Judean Commons with England's own commonwealth and when drawing equivalences between Jewish judicial proceedings and parliamentary processes well known to contemporary English audiences. Heminge also weaves understanding and a shared sense of humanity throughout the play. Such tenderness towards the Jews is not only a meaningful departure from Heminge's source text—which scholars like Martin Goodman and Joanna Weinberg have observed functioned as a moral tale for readers across the Continent²²—but also a significant deviation from the narrative of rejection found elsewhere in works featuring Jewish characters. As the subject of the first chapter of my dissertation, it is a prime example of a play from the English Renaissance period that contradicts the literary and historical records of Jewish representation even as it also enriches it.

In the second chapter, I turn to Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, which features a female protagonist and spotlights the entire work around her character.

²² Martin Goodman and Joanna Weinberg, "The Reception of Josephus in the Early Modern Period," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 23, no. 3 (Oct. 2016): 167–171.

Contemporary English drama seeking to depict Jews and Jewishness usually does so by way of a masculine lens. The volume of scholarship on contemporary Jewry reflects that as well, an observation that Harley Erdman makes when stating, “In the beginning, there was Shylock. Or, when it comes to the stage Jew, so it has always seemed.”²³ There has been an extraordinary amount of work done on *The Merchant of Venice*; a search for articles dealing with the play in MLA International Bibliography yields an impressive 1,665 results, while a search for those mentioning *The Tragedy of Mariam* produces a mere 74.²⁴ A close examination of Cary’s text is thus warranted.

Mariam is a unique work, not only because it focuses on a Jewish woman, but because it ventures to reconstruct the definition of Jewishness in the English cultural imagination by inviting audiences to consider the possibility that Jews are unfairly castigated. The text draws comparisons between Mariam and Christ and Christian martyrs to convey this message. It also integrates ideas of a future-oriented nature through Mariam’s supportable intermarriage, the creation of her mixed offspring, and her analogy to Judeo-Christian matriarch Sara. As such, Cary provocatively suggests that Englishness and Jewishness are not in opposition, and that a rich and socially diverse future featuring Jews and Christians living together is a viable enterprise.

The second half of my dissertation turns to theatricality and performance, examining material and embodied dimensions of Jewish representation, and shifting to a broader study of canonical works featuring Jewish characters. The third chapter looks at *The Jew of Malta*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *A Christian Turned Turk* (c. 1610) for

²³ Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860–1920* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 15.

²⁴ This search was conducted in January 2021.

expressions of the Jews' mythical profiles as wanderers, their early modern roles in international trade and commerce, and their historical experiences with ghettoization and expulsion. Concerns about Jewish physicality were dominant across the early modern world; the contemporary use of the word "Jewry" to refer both to the Jewish people and also to the areas where they resided substantiates this fact.²⁵ The stage reflects these spatial connections, often problematizing places where the Jews dwell to illustrate the complicated attitudes about Jewish bodies and the way they moved or were controlled.

English Renaissance theater manifests a widespread disquietude with the Jewish presence using displacement, segregation, and isolation as regular elements in performances that feature Jewish characters. And while supersessionist readings have accounted for the recurrent incorporation of such measures, further attention must be paid to suggestions of their inefficacy. After all, Jewish fixity is often signalled in these texts even as it is threatened. Chapter three investigates these spatial negotiations in performance, and reveals conventions of Jewish mobility, containment, and traversal, as well as matters pertaining to Jewish permanence and transience, in contemporary drama.

The final chapter of my dissertation examines the embodiment and performance of Jewishness on the period's stage, broadening the range of plays explored to include John Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* (c. 1619) in addition to canonical works like *The Jew of Malta* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Christian actors tasked with depicting Jews had to utilize specific conventional devices to communicate the physicality long associated with Jewishness. After all, the subordination of Jewish corporeality was

²⁵ Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 168.

widespread in both image and language, particularly in terms of diminutive physical features and infirmity. A search for Shylock in the Folger Shakespeare Library's Digital Image Collection (LUNA) proves as much, yielding just under 200 illustrations, drawings, and photographs of Shakespeare's famed Jew in performances. Despite the range in time period—from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries—the collection shows a consistent presentation of Shylock's bent back, gesticulating hands, and grasped accessories. The concluding chapter of my dissertation examines such performative elements as preserved in the text and as captured in related images in order to identify signifiers that contributed to the early modern construction of the stage Jew. The chapter also explores notable cases which undermine those practices and complicate our assumptions about contemporary Jewishness, in and out of the theater. Rather than making Jewish representation a simple, materially constructed phenomenon, as Shylock's "badge of all our tribe" reference would suggest, Jewish performance was complex, multidimensional, embodied, intangible, and inconsistent (1.3.120).

The backdrop for all of these plays, practices, and performances was a culture that was disentangling myths from truths. Enduring rumors of supernatural figures like the Wandering Jew—a man bound to roam the earth generation after generation until the time of Jesus's return—and the apocalyptic Red Jews—living near the Sambatyon River and colored to match their fiery, bloodthirsty temperaments²⁶—contributed to a wide-ranging folkloric aura associated with early modern thought about Jewish people. Hearsay concerning Jewish male menstruation and faulty accounts of Jewish ritual

²⁶ Rebekka Voss, "Entangled Stories: The Red Jews in Premodern Yiddish and German Apocalyptic Lore," *AJS Review* 36, no. 1 (2012): 15.

practice are another kind of mythmaking connected to the Jews, fanciful and outrageous as they might have been. And yet, even as apocryphal accounts proliferated in English culture, such mythos was complicated by the reality of Jewish people living at the time. Observations of Jewish customs as captured in texts like Thomas Coryate's *Crudities* (1611) and Henry Blount's *A Voyage into the Levant* (1638) reveal that the English regularly encountered Jews in their travels, proving their existence to be genuine rather than fictitious or mythical. England's own early modern archives and historians attest to the reality of Jewish people on English soil. John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598), for example, illustrates the quotidian awareness of Jews dwelling within the capital's city limits in historical periods, as he explains that the neighborhood known as Jury was given its name "because of old time many Jews inhabited thereabout."²⁷ William Hughes's *Anglo-Judæus* (1656) offers more evidence of Jewish history in England in its attention to the specific allegations against the Jews who once dwelled there. As such, Londoners were routinely confronted by conflicting chronicles attesting both to the Jews' fabled alienness and to their shared history in England.

Adding to the complexity of Anglo-Jewish records is the contradictory belief that Jews did not live in England during the time of their expulsion, from 1290 through 1656. Hughes's treatise suggests that "if ever permitted to meet again," the Jews would pose the same dangers to English wellbeing as their ancestors.²⁸ His language insinuates the

²⁷ John Stow, *The Survey of London*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (Project Gutenberg, 2013), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42959/42959-h/42959-h.htm>.

²⁸ William Hughes, *Anglo-Judæus, or The history of the Jews, whilst here in England: Relating their manners, carriage, and usage, from their admission by William the Conqueror, to their banishment. Occasioned by a book, written to His Highness, the Lord Protector (with a declaration to the Commonwealth of England) for their re-admission,*

absence of Jews in England at the time that he writes, protesting against their future return. Modern scholarship has followed a similar logic for many years and has promoted the position that Jews did not inhabit England during the expulsive period. Even within the last decade, literary critics like Vanita Neelakanta have published work attesting to:

...a new urgency in the mid-1650s with the controversy over Jewish readmission, which generated en masse political pamphlets, tracts, and sermons in support of each position. Suddenly, the Jews—who had morphed into the stuff of fable in their three-hundred-year absence from England—were poised to become a very real political entity rather than exist primarily as biblical or literary stereotypes.²⁹

Neelakanta's language echoes the narrative that Jews had been absent from England, having become "the stuff of fable" and "biblical or literary stereotypes" rather than a "real political entity." In contrast, Lucien Wolf, among others, have shown that "there was quite a goodly company of Jews in England throughout the reign of Elizabeth."³⁰ As the co-founder of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Wolf sought to remedy a narrative that neglected the study of the Jewish presence during the expulsive centuries.³¹ Subsequent to his efforts, scholars like James Shapiro have examined a considerable number of contemporary records, determining that hundreds of Jews lived in England at the time.³² Emily Vine observes that "in the absence of a synagogue, the small Sephardi community of early seventeenth-century London...were able to fully observe their faith

by Rabbi Menasses Ben Israel. To which is also subjoyned a particular answer, by W.H. (London: Printed by T.N. for T. Heath, 1656), 47.

²⁹ Vanita Neelakanta, "Reading Providence out of History: The Destruction of Jerusalem in William Heminge's *The Jewes Tragedy*," *Studies in Philology* 111, no. 1 (2014): 85.

³⁰ Lucien Wolf, "Jews in Elizabethan England," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 11 (1924): 1–91.

³¹ Sara Coodin, *Is Shylock Jewish?: Citing Scripture and the Moral Agency of Shakespeare's Jews* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 28.

³² Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 75–76.

through the domestic routines of Bible reading and Sabbath observance.”³³ Academe itself seems divided on this issue, given its conspicuously contradictory nature: if Jews were officially expelled from England, how could they have resided there? Further, how could they have done so openly?

The (in)famous case of Doctor Roderigo Lopez, accused of poisoning Queen Elizabeth and executed for that alleged crime, manifests this variance well. After all, Lopez’s trial directly engaged with his identity as a Jew as an explanation for his criminal intent. Emma Smith explains that “the evidence placed before the jury described Lopez as ‘a perjured murdering traitor, and Jewish doctor, worse than Judas himself’.”³⁴ How could he have been permitted to live in England, practice medicine, and even treat the Queen if he was a known Jew? The answer, contradictory though it may be, is that a certain level of Jewish tolerance did exist during the time of the Jews’ expulsion,³⁵ but that it was dependent upon the Jews behaving appropriately. Lopez’s presence was endured despite the official policy until the time that he was associated with trouble; it was at that point that his Jewishness made him culpable regardless of the proof. In contrast, the famously musical Bassano family was absorbed into London cultural life because of their contributions to English society and “evidence of their Christian piety,” even though “the family were of Jewish origin.”³⁶

³³ Emily Vine, “‘Those Enemies of Christ, if They are Suffered to Live Among us’: Locating Religious Minority Homes and Private Space in Early Modern London,” *The London Journal* 43, no. 3 (2018): 200.

³⁴ Emma Smith, “Was Shylock Jewish?,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2013): 192.

³⁵ Indeed, scholars like Sara Coodin have shown that Jews were even sought after for academic purposes, particularly in tutoring Christian Hebraists. For more, see *Is Shylock Jewish?*.

³⁶ David Lasocki, “Bassano, Alvise (d. 1554), musician and instrument maker.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 9 Jan. 2021. <https://www->

The stage reflects this selective reception of Jewishness in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. While Shylock himself is rejected by Venetian society, Jessica is absorbed as a result of her good behavior. The attention to her "gentility" or "gentleness" is elucidated by the regular application of the word "gentle" to her conduct (2.4.21, 2.4.38, 2.7.53).³⁷ In this way, the theater echoes contemporary attitudes towards the Jews, who were on the receiving end of an English rationing of tolerance. Just as the Bassano family was accepted in contemporary London while Dr. Lopez was spurned, so too are Jessica and Shylock, respectively; both cases demonstrate that a capacity for Jewish acceptance existed at the same time that the official policy of rejection was upheld.

The fact is that many Jews and New Christians lived in plain view across early modern London, contesting the position of a centuries-long period of Jewlessness in English history with evidence of their presence in the Tower Ward, Crutched Friars, and Creechuch Lane neighborhoods. The issue of the Jews' formal readmittance to England, one which Ben Israel argues for in *Vindiciæ Judæorum*, is itself predicated on a contradictory position, as Jews were already in England when Oliver Cromwell arranged for their resettlement in the 1650s. Their abiding, if unsolicited, presence prior to that time is mimicked in theatrical performance when Barabas and his daughter Abigail are ejected from their house in *The Jew of Malta*. Even as the villainous Jew remains on the exterior of the property, Barabas explains how some personal possessions linger within the building. "There have I hid, close underneath the plank / That runs along the upper-

oxforddnb-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-70535.

³⁷ For more on this, see Lara Bovilsky, "'A Gentle and No Jew': Jessica, Portia, and Jewish Identity," *Renaissance Drama* 38 (2010): 47–77.

chamber floor, / The gold and jewels which I kept for thee” (1.2.197–199). He sends Abigail back into the house under the guise of a would-be nun in order to gain access to what he left behind, doubly undermining the expulsion measures taken by Maltese authorities. That is, he not only leaves traces of himself in the space by hiding possessions within the building’s construction, but even arranges for a Jew to enter that space in an infiltrating action that recalls the presence of Jews living in England even as official policy dictated their removal.

Concerns about the presence of Jews in Christian spaces were widespread across the European continent. Venice famously established a system of ghettoization to sequester the Jews from the rest of the population, permitting them to remain within the city under significant restrictions and making the ghettos “part residential quarter...and part prison,” as Julia Reinhard Lupton has shown.³⁸ The careful application of control over Jewish movement in the case of Venetian ghettoization contrasts starkly from the wandering, diasporic profile of early modern Jewry observed by other scholars. David Ruderman has explained that “in their wanderings [the Jews] fulfilled a highly distinctive function in the commercial and colonial expansion of Europe well into the eighteenth century.”³⁹ The spatial confinement of the Jews in Venice at the same time that those people were dispersed across the Continent reveals another contradiction about the nature of Jewishness in the early modern period. Were they inmates or rovers? Were they isolated or part of Jewish commercial networks and established communities?

³⁸ Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Shakespeare’s Other Europe: Jews, Venice, and Civil Society,” *Social Identities* 7, no. 4 (2001): 483.

³⁹ David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 34.

This contradictory position is evoked variously in contemporary drama, with *Merchant*, for example, plainly set in the Venetian trading center. Shylock's fears about portals and windows recall ghetto living when he tells Jessica to "lock up my doors" and "stop my house's ears (I mean my casements)" (2.5.30; 2.5.35). Boarded windows capture the essence of the containment procedures at that time. Meanwhile, in direct opposition to the sequestered lifestyle of Shakespeare's Jew, Barabas of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* claims, "They say we are a scattered nation" (1.1.119). At one point, he boasts about his travels "abroad" and prides himself on his perverse experiences in Italy, France, and Germany (2.3.175–201). In addition, he spends the majority of the play sneaking around Malta with criminal intent and without restriction or supervision. As such, a wide-ranging spectrum of Jewish containment, expulsion, and dispersion is represented in the period's theatrical rendering of Jewishness.

Of course, Jessica's ability to traverse the blocked casements in Shylock's house displays a special level of access granted to some Jews, not unlike Abigail's ability to infiltrate the building from which she and her father had been evicted in *The Jew of Malta*. Mariam's admission to Herod's court as his queen in *The Tragedy of Mariam* represents another kind of special dispensation for Jews that challenges the general injunctions against the population. This is one manifestation of several significant departures between the Jewish women in early modern drama and their male counterparts. Their integrable nature is another, especially when compared with the unassimilable ilk of Jewish men. Jessica illustrates this when insisting on her ability to evade villainous Jewish associations and general ruin by virtue of her marriage to Lorenzo. "I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made me a Christian," she states with

confidence (3.5.18–19). In contrast, even as Shylock’s conversion is promised at *Merchant*’s conclusion, it is never staged, leaving unresolved the question of whether Jewish men can actually convert successfully.

Jeffrey Shoulson argues that “the figure of the Jew is the embodiment of both the promise and the peril of change,” such that conversion, if forced upon the Jew, meant Christian triumph even as it also called into question the success of that conversion.⁴⁰ The suggestion of Jewish ritual maintenance behind closed doors was a constant anxiety for nations which accommodated Conversos and Marranos. At the same time, as Peter Berek notes, the experience of Marranism entailed “a covert state” for the Jews worshipping in secret.⁴¹ The simultaneity of Jewish concerns in pretending to be Christians, and of Christian worries about the authenticity of Jews’ conversion to Christianity, offers insight into the complexities surrounding Jewishness in the period.

Such uncertainty is expressed in moments that convey ambiguity about Jewish characters, as in Shylock’s 3.1 “hath not a Jew eyes” speech. His lines communicate deep ambivalence about the nature of Jewishness and about the negotiation of the Jew’s assumed monstrous essence. Even with the play-long rendering of Shylock as an avaricious and bloodthirsty Jew, this conspicuous suggestion of underlying humanity is a crucial part of his characterization, one which Robert Sanford-Brustein, among many others, sees as redeeming *Merchant*’s moneylender.⁴² The ambiguous extent of Shylock’s redemption, however, reflects spectators’ incertitude about him and Jews more broadly.

⁴⁰ Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion*, 10.

⁴¹ Berek, “The Jew as Renaissance Man,” 132.

⁴² Robert Sanford-Brustein, *The Tainted Muse: Prejudice and Presumption in Shakespeare and his Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 185.

The principled usurer Gerontius in *The Three Ladies of London* (1584) offers another example of a Jew who receives sympathetic treatment in a text which should capitalize on stereotypes of deceit and savagery. The vigorously favorable portrayal of Jewishness in William Heminge's *The Jewes Tragedy* provides a most exceptional case of compassion and understanding. Scholars such as Joanna Weinberg have observed that "many writers gloated at Josephus's vivid description of divine vengeance on the wicked Jews," a readerly response that was a driving factor in the immense popularity of Josephus's texts in the period, in England and elsewhere.⁴³ Heminge's decision to portray the Jews' loss as pitiable contrasts considerably from this precedent, and it is conspicuous when Roman conqueror Titus announces, "I joy not in so sad a spectacle" (5.8.89). Coupled with the play's extensive approbation of Jewish action as well as the manifold comparisons with contemporary English life, Heminge's drama offers an example of Jewish stage representation that is rife with contradictions.

And yet, even plays like *The Jew of Malta*, which feature stereotypical Jewish villainy in the form of criminal vagabond Barabas, also incorporate blatant contradictions, particularly in the evil Jew's ability to breed Christian children. Indeed, Abigail is so beautiful that Lodowick and Mathias pursue her aggressively as suitors for her hand in marriage, and the nunnery she infiltrates is happy to welcome her on two separate occasions. How can Jewishness be so vile and so acceptable at the same time? How can one family accommodate such different models of Jewish behavior and render those disparate models on the same stage?

⁴³ Joanna Weinberg, "Early Modern Jewish Readers of Josephus," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 23, no. 3 (2016): 289.

This difference between a progenitor and his offspring is an expression of the convoluted logic that explains how Christianity is derived from Judaism but is significantly divergent from it. After all, central to early modern English historical and religious studies was an increasing interest in Hebraica—including texts ranging from Josephus and Philo to the Targums, the Midrash, the Mishnah, and the Talmud⁴⁴—as part of the English pursuit of appropriating Chosenness. English Protestant claims to the title of Chosen People meant displacing their forebears while recognizing that they came from the same point of origin. This knotty rationale of superiority was a major contradiction concerning English perspectives on Jewishness. Always lurking alongside this paradox was the fact that the Jews had been the Chosen People and that Jesus himself was Jewish, such that Christian identity owes its start and its savior to Jews and Judaic history.⁴⁵

Characters in plays like Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* provide evidence of this complex navigation of Chosenness, as the protagonist of the drama is depicted with influence, beauty, and honesty in reflection of the Jews' blessed Old Testament presentation. The pre-Christian setting helps set the tone for this favorable portrayal, as does the fact that it was written as a closet drama, meant to be read rather than performed. And yet, the Christ-like qualities of commendation in *Mariam* also plainly recall Christianity as an outgrowth of Judaism, evoking the inextricable ties between the two groups in a gesture of recognizing their shared history.

Contemporary dramatic convention in both textual and staged formats thus challenged attitudes like those belonging to Hughes, who described the Jews in his

⁴⁴ Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 34.

⁴⁵ Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 9.

treatise “as great enemies to Christ and Christians.”⁴⁶ The grossly unflattering representations of characters like Barabas provide evidence of this perspective, but the fact that Cary’s Mariam emerges from this same period of English history shows just how inconsistent such opinions really were. While in some cases, Jewish stage figures personified the blessings of God, in others, they encapsulated the sinister deeds of a devil-figure. Accordingly, drama posed questions about Jewish difference even if it did not provide answers, exploiting and interrogating contradictions of Jewishness years before Ben Israel elucidated many of them for English authorities. The theater reveals a spectrum of tolerance, fascination, and affinity alongside traditional values of exclusion and hostility. This complicates the general view of enmity believed to characterize English attitudes and Jewish representation practices at the time.

Scholars are keen to identify points of difference that distorted Jewishness in early modern English drama, ardently locating corporeal disgust, fervently emphasizing acquisitive stereotypes, and pursuing every discernible morsel of discord. Many of these pejorative elements participate in the characterization of contemporary stage Jews, as do a diverse set of other conspicuously racist features. However, these only represent a partial account of Jewish performance practices. Drama’s chronicle also integrates approbation, attraction, resemblance, and parody. There are beautiful Jewish women who are courted by Christian men and embraced by Christian institutions, as well as valiant warriors who defend their people and land with honor; there are decent commoners who inspire compassion and sympathy from audiences; and there are a variety of humorous elements that make the Jew comical rather than fearsome or repellant. The multivalent

⁴⁶ Hughes, *Anglo-Judæus*, 49.

portrayal of Jewishness in the period, rich in contradiction as it was, has been sanitized by the explicating approach of erudition.⁴⁷ For, even in the cases of scholars who acknowledge multiple signifiers of Jewishness in early modern dramatic texts, a hierarchical logic is often applied in order to communicate which of those signifiers discomfited English audiences the most and reflected an anti-Jewish climate the best. The result is a modern perspective which has lost the variegated, sometimes indeterminate, and often contradictory portraiture of Jewishness that contemporary audiences actually knew. These paradoxes and variances are quintessential to the period's representation of stage Jews and offer significant opportunity for analysis and interpretation.

As a fundamental site of cultural production, the stage reflected contemporary attitudes at the same time that it offered new ways of thinking about people, places, objects, and ideas, mapping a new geography when England itself was evolving as a result of unprecedented commercial expansion. Jewishness participated in that cultural nexus of expression. In many ways, it clashed with contemporary travel accounts and political treatises like those of Thomas Coryate and William Hughes in its favorableness of Jewish characterization. After all, Heminge's "brave" Judeans and Cary's "matchless Mariam" are completely incompatible with the "antipathy in English hearts against these Jews" emphasized by Hughes.⁴⁸ The spectrum of Jewish dramatic representation is far more nuanced than the academic archive has acknowledged, and reflects a broader culture that was confronting enduring beliefs about Jews and Others. The breadth in

⁴⁷ Coodin's exploration of the Jews' antique pedigree and knowledge of Hebraic texts and language offers a rare departure from the generally pejorative scholarship concerning the Anglo-Jewish narrative. For more, see *Is Shylock Jewish?*.

⁴⁸ Hughes, *Anglo-Judæus*, 47.

theatrical presentation—from the individual to the collective, the embodied to the intangible, the local to the global, and the fabricated to the factual—invites further consideration and a recognition that a single answer to early modern Anglo-Jewish questions cannot exist.

CHAPTER 1
POLYVOCALITY AND THE POPULOUS JEWISH PRESENCE IN
THE JEWES TRAGEDY

Proud *Roman*, tel thy Master, *Joseph* scorns
To parley with a meaner then himself;
Tell proud *Vespasian*, that *Judea* stands
In equal terms of honour with his Lord.

JOSEPHUS, William Heminge, *The Jewes Tragedy* (c. 1628)¹

The representation of Jewish characters in William Heminge's *The Jewes Tragedy* is remarkably dignified. Josephus makes this favorable rendering explicit when he equates Jewry with the Romans in ACT 2. Lacking a bargaining position, he confidently maintains "that Judea stands in equal terms of honour" with general-turned-emperor Vespasian in a synecdochal assertion that deviates drastically from the depictions of Jews in contemporary English plays. This portrayal even differs from Heminge's own source text. Indeed, these lines are particularly notable because ancient historian Josephus was the author of that original chronicle, *The Jewish War* (c. 75 AD), which had increased in popularity during the early modern period due to Christian moralism perceived in the account. The character Josephus in *The Jewes Tragedy* tells a contrasting story.

Heminge makes numerous interpolations in his adaptation of Josephus's work, including pronounced Shakespearean references. Having grown up in the shadow of Shakespeare, William Heminge formed "a boyish attachment for the 'gentle' playwright," as Joseph Quincy Adams Jr. notes in his study on the relationship between

¹ William Heminge, *The Jewes Tragedy*, in *The Plays and Poems of William Heminge*, ed. Carol A. Morley (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 2.4.12–15.

the two writers.² So conspicuously does Heminge incorporate elements from Shakespeare's texts that Adams accuses the younger William of "extensive plagiarism."³ Carol A. Morley,⁴ the editor of the most recent edition of Heminge's collected works, surveys the crossover between *The Jewes Tragedy* and Shakespeare's canon and concludes that the play was "conceived entirely within Shakespearean precedents"; she finds, for example, fifteen "verbal parallels" with *Hamlet* (c. 1601) alone.⁵

Heminge's approach to authoring *The Jewes Tragedy* can also be regarded as imitative in its vernacular politics. The voices of crowds and diverse social groups—from rhetorically minded high priests and generals to incoherent mechanicals and bumbling sentries—are echoes of the broad range of voices in Shakespearean works. Scholars like Chris Fitter,⁶ David Rollison,⁷ and John Walter⁸ have observed that Shakespeare portrayed the commonalty, or the commonwealth, as having a critical role in the health

² Heminge's father John is perhaps best known for co-editing, with Henry Condell, Shakespeare's First Folio, though John played a "conspicuous role," as Adams calls it, in virtually all of Shakespeare's plays. Adams suggests that Heminge developed a "personal liking" for Shakespeare, and that Heminge's father John might even have named his son after the Bard as a way to honor their bond. He notes that the young Heminge might have participated in Shakespearean performances as a child. For more, see Joseph Quincy Adams, Jr., "William Heminge and Shakespeare," *Modern Philology* 12, no. 1 (May 1914): 51–64.

³ Ibid., 62.

⁴ Carol A. Morley, "Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*," in *The Plays and Poems of William Heminge*, ed. Carol A. Morley (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 33–102.

⁵ Morley, "Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*," 86.

⁶ Chris Fitter, *Radical Shakespeare: Politics and Stagecraft in the Early Career* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁷ David Rollison, "Shakespeare's Commonwealth," in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Commoners: Digesting the New Social History*, ed. Chris Fitter (Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–25.

⁸ John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Oxford Manchester University Press 2014), 1–13.

and wellness of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and that he rendered the power of the public in his texts through the incorporation of crowds. “Crowd actions can best be understood as claims to exercise political agency in the context of a popular political culture,” Walter explains. The presence of the Commons in Heminge’s text signals a similar political investment, especially when their shouts and votes determine the outcomes of judicial hearings in ACT 1.

The Jewes Tragedy directly engages with English stage history in these overt references to Shakespeare, but the text broadens the definition of the public in its ample inclusion of Jewish characters; this is a significant distinction between Heminge’s drama and those of his contemporaries, who regularly depicted Jewishness in diasporic settings. Works like *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and *A Christian Turned Turk* (c. 1610) feature a couple of isolated Jewish stage figures, secluded from other Jews as well from the communities in which they are living. *The Jewes Tragedy*, in contrast, is set in Judea, richly populated with Jewish people and homes. The various parent-child pairings—Ananias and Eliezer, Gorion and Josephus, Miriam and her son—make clear that generations of Jews are settled in Heminge’s story. This is in keeping with the Josephus source text, explicitly recalled in the play’s full title: *The Jewes tragedy, or, Their fatal and final overthrow by Vespasian and Titus, his son : agreeable to the authentick and famous history of Josephus*. *The Jewes Tragedy* makes a declaration of historical interest in this reference to the original version even if it does not seek to reproduce the narrative with fidelity.

Scholars like Freyja Cox Jensen,⁹ Martin Goodman,¹⁰ and Joanna Weinberg¹¹ have all explored the widespread marketability of Josephus's oeuvre during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the latter two even attesting that Josephus was "the most popular of the ancient historians."¹² As famous as his writings were on the Continent, Josephus "enjoy[ed] a particularly favorable reception in Elizabethan England,"¹³ where his work had achieved colloquial translations in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ These were the texts that Heminge had at his disposal when composing *The Jewes Tragedy*.¹⁵ His decision to recognize Josephus in the play's title and to incorporate him within the plot was, like the addition of Shakespearean elements, an effort to gain favor from spectators as he sought to fashion his own authorial identity.

Heminge's awareness of marketability and linguistic potency result in a text that unabashedly deals with issues of language and communication. Characters regularly betray a self-consciousness about their diction, confessing to fears of being misunderstood, or otherwise disclosing an intentionality about word choice to achieve certain aims. The majority of characters who express these anxieties are Jewish, and these

⁹ Freyja Cox Jensen, "What Was Thomas Lodge's Josephus in Early Modern England?," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 3–24.

¹⁰ Martin Goodman and Joanna Weinberg, "The Reception of Josephus in the Early Modern Period," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 23, no. 3 (Oct. 2016): 167–171.

¹¹ Joanna Weinberg, "Early Modern Jewish Readers of Josephus," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 23, no. 3 (Oct. 2016): 275–289.

¹² Goodman and Weinberg, "Reception of Josephus," 167.

¹³ Jensen, "Thomas Lodge's Josephus," 4.

¹⁴ Peter Morwyng (or Morwen) first translated Josephus's works in 1558; it went through ten editions by 1615. Thomas Lodge's Josephus translations were published first in 1602 and then in 1609. For more, see Morley, "Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*," 44–45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

figures serve as a fitting case study for the dramatic treatment of language because of the manifold ways that Jews were actually misunderstood in Heminge's lifetime. Having been expelled from England in 1290, the Jews became the stuff of myth from the thirteenth century onwards, though rumors of their customs and behaviors circulated well before their departure. By the time Heminge wrote *The Jewes Tragedy*, the real-life traditions, beliefs, and actions of the Jews had become vastly distorted, and inaccurate and intensely damaging reports slandered them in consequential ways.

Geraldine Heng has shown that gross generalizations about Jews contributed to their racialization in English history and culture: "It is a politics of race that transforms a few individuals who are visible and conspicuous into symbolic icons that represent, and stand for, an entire abominated population."¹⁶ This was certainly the case for the Jews, beginning in the English imagination with medieval tales of "ritualized iterations of homicidal fables."¹⁷ Extant literary works like Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400) canonized medieval rumors of child murder and blood-drinking, along with a variety of other heinous accusations. Indeed, modern scholar Kathy Lavezzo accuses Chaucer of being an anti-Semite, anachronistic as the term may be in this context, for his attributions of violent crime to the entirety of the Jewish community.¹⁸ A variety of other myths connected to detestable Jewish behaviors and bodies abounded, explored at length in chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁶ Geraldine Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 47.

¹⁷ Heng, *England and the Jews*, 20.

¹⁸ Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 23.

Heminge wrote *The Jewes Tragedy* at a time when the Jews were still formally expelled from English soil, but the play's compassionate rendering of this frequently maligned population defies the mythologies that had flourished there for centuries. The sheer number of Jewish characters in the text is a major deviation from even Shakespeare's depiction of Jews in *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598), which features only three such figures: Shylock, Jessica, and Tubal.¹⁹ As much as Heminge relied on Shakespearean precedent then, his choices in rendering the Jews of his drama were distinct. Heminge also depicted a mixture of social groups and political factions in his characterization, further distinguishing the idea of homogeneous Jewish identity that had dominated the English cultural imagination. The political discord in Judea among competing captains Eliezer, Jehochanan, and Skimeon demonstrates a range of ideology not normally associated with Jews. And their conflict with priests Ananias and Gorion presents an even more complex representation of religion and politics.

Above all, however, *The Jewes Tragedy* employs an array of linguistic variation to diversify Jewishness. The serious priestly speech patterns of Ananias contrast considerably with the humorous malapropisms of the mechanics. And the furtive asides of Zareck the manipulator are in direct opposition to the forthright pronouncements of the heroic Josephus. This incorporation of assorted speech, variegated socio-political groups, and the play's historical narrative result in a drama that depicts Jewishness as more civilized than any other in the period. Far from the suggestion of monstrous bodily

¹⁹ It should be noted that Tubal is barely developed as a character, appearing in a single scene (3.1), performing a mere messenger role, and mentioned only twice in the course of the play. Another Jewish character named Chus is also mentioned but not included in the *dramatis personae*.

function or barbaric impulses, *The Jewes Tragedy* paints a flattering portrait of Jewish culture, all set amidst a community not unlike England's own Commonwealth.

Scholars like Lara Bovilsky claim that the contemporary stage language of Jews was characterized by references to the Old Testament, demonstrative of the Jews' rejection of Christ and the New Testament that tells his story.²⁰ Saskia Zinsser-Krys has argued that the Jews of the early modern theater relied on repetition and babbling in linguistic performance.²¹ Peter Berek contends that Jewish stage figures were intentionally comedic in appearance and affect, offering another interpretation of Jewish messaging, both verbal and nonverbal.²² And Ian Smith has traced contemporary assumptions of a "barbarous" nature as a result of rhetorical profiling.²³ This chapter will offer an alternative view of early modern Jewish dramatic representation, focusing on the linguistic variety of populous Judea in *The Jewes Tragedy*, which renders Jewishness as heterogeneous, sophisticated, and relatable. Far from the generalized and largely pejorative portrait of the Jews depicted in other early modern plays, including one by his favorite playwriting forebear, Heminge draws an astounding number of interconnections with Englishness.

Of particular concern to the chapter's analysis is this investment in similitude between Englishness and Jewishness. *The Jewes Tragedy* should have felt foreign, both

²⁰ Lara Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 67–102.

²¹ Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017).

²² Peter Berek, "Looking Jewish on the Early Modern Stage," in *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England: The Performance of Religion on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 55–70.

²³ Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

temporally and geographically. As its setting was pre-Christian and situated far from England's shores, its social, political, and religious dynamics should have felt alien or at least somewhat unfamiliar to audiences. That the cultures had starkly oppositional philosophies regarding the Jews—one upholding an official policy to keep them out while the other was entirely populated and governed by them—should have made these differences even more severe and incompatible. And yet, the Judea of Heminge's imagination is suffused in English analogy. Even the text's structural elements, such as the prologue, draw resemblances between the two, as when the play's opening lines address "*Judicious* friends" (prologue.1; emphasis added). The diction makes a subtle reference to the word "Jew," playfully identifying the English audience as Jewish and quashing the idea of incongruity at the same time that the play itself blurs those lines. This chapter will track such parallelisms, which include political, rhetorical, and historical likenesses.

Vox Populi

Heminge's drama features an abundance of Jewish characters, as the *dramatis personae* lists no less than ten in addition to unnamed figures, including the Watch, the Mechanicks, and many more. It is, in fact, impossible to quantify the number of Jews that Heminge writes into the play; because it was only performed once in obscure

circumstances,²⁴ or possibly never staged at all,²⁵ there is no way to be certain exactly how many Jewish bodies Heminge envisioned in its performance. The Watch, for example, is not enumerated, and neither are the crowds of Commons that roam around with the quarrelling Judean captains.

Heminge's vast number of character types is in keeping with the Shakespearean precedent of representational politics. The incorporation of so many figures, including commoners, reflects contemporary English enfranchisement as well as an acknowledgement of the public's shifting power. Scholars like Oliver Arnold have shown that England's Parliament was a source of great pride for the sixteenth-century masses who elected MPs, as he says: "Many Elizabethans thought that England was special because of its House of Commons, an institution whose members were popularly elected and openly attributed their power and authority to the consent of the people."²⁶ The representation might have been more theoretical than actual, he notes, since the "'people themselves' did not consent directly to the laws that bound them" even if they felt empowered by empowering others.²⁷ He sees this complex representational activity at play in English history dramas like *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3*, which include scenes set in Parliament, as well in works like *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Titus Andronicus*, set

²⁴ There is disagreement on this particular point. Morley notes that EEBO cites a performance between the year 1622 and 1642, while Auger posits that "the play was probably composed between about 1626 and 1630, [and] was *possibly* performed at Heminge's college Christ Church at that time." See Morley, "Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*," 41; Auger, "Playing Josephus," 330.

²⁵ Vanita Neelakanta, "Reading Providence out of History: The Destruction of Jerusalem in William Heminge's 'The Jewes Tragedy'," *Studies in Philology* 111, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 85.

²⁶ Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare's Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 30–31.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3–7.

in republican Rome. “Shakespeare’s representations of the Lancastrian Parliament and the Roman tribunate recast the popular politics of the past in an early modern mode,” he observes.²⁸ For Arnold, it seems, the presence of politics in Shakespearean drama is inextricably linked with contemporary governmental proceedings, questions of representation, and the agency of the Commons.

A similar approach to politics is discernible in *The Jewes Tragedy*. The vast amount of cast members signals an investment in the kind of representational work that Arnold observes in Shakespeare, though the straightforward incorporation of judicial and legislative proceedings in 1.4 of Heminge’s text offers additional, perhaps more overt, evidence. In this scene, the High Priest Ananias announces that Skimeon and Jehochanan have acted against Rome without the authority from higher political figures:

High Priest.

We gave thee no Commission to revile
Nor hadst thou power to kill, nor yet to save
Those *Roman* Legates: What by thee was done
Without our leave was flat Rebellion.
Nor is this all we do object against ye.
Read the Petition.

One reads.

*An humble Petition from the grieved Commons for the execution of justice
upon the two seditious Captains, Jehochanan and Skimeon.*

(1.4.78–85)

In his rebuke of the defiant captains, the High Priest is clear that the two men acted without license, unilaterally determining political courses of action. “Without our leave was flat Rebellion,” the Priest chides. At another point, he charges them: “Jehochanan and Skimeon, we do accuse ye both of treason against the state of Jewry” (1.4.26–27).

²⁸ Ibid., 14.

Lacking the authority of a Judean representative, the captains' crime is seen as transgressive towards the *entire* state, an expression of the early modern representational politics associated with the House of Commons and the simultaneous empowerment of the people and their appointed leaders.

In keeping with the conspicuous politics at play in this scene, the speaker—who expresses a recommendation for sentencing—reads a petition on behalf of the entire “grieved Commons.” This appointment of one individual who advocates for the collective party is a metaphorical arrangement of early modern parliamentary dynamics, where a Speaker provided updates to the monarch:

By the mid-sixteenth century it was customary that at the opening of Parliament newly chosen Speakers would request confirmation of the ‘ancient liberties’ of the Commons, namely freedom of speech and ‘privilege’ from arrest during sessions. From the beginning of her reign Elizabeth qualified the former as ‘liberty of speech for the well debating of matters propounded’, thereby reserving to herself control over what the Commons may, and may not, discuss.²⁹

The procedural custom is recalled in the High Priest's direct address to the speaker—“Read the petition”—and in the content of the document, which avers representation on behalf of the Judean Commons. Heminge's use of contemporary legal jargon even extends to the paper itself, which recalls the petitions and bills issued in Parliament from the early fourteenth century onwards.³⁰

²⁹ Rosemary Sgroi, “Freedom of Speech in Elizabethan Parliaments,” *The History of Parliament: British Political, Social, and Local History*, accessed December 18, 2020, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/periods/tudors/freedom-speech-elizabethan-parliaments>.

³⁰ *Britannica Academic*, s.v. “Parliament,” accessed December 17, 2020, <https://academic-eb-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Parliament/58522>.

It is noteworthy, however, that the two captains on trial cry out in response to the petition, Skimeon asking, “The common bawling Curs? O heaven! Must we be weigh’d with them?” (1.4.86–87). This outcry rejects the authority of the commonalty, offering evidence for Rollison’s argument that the word “common” in early modern parlance still carried with it the taint of “those born into the state and condition of commonness.”³¹ Thus, even with the rise of the vernacular use of “commonwealth” instead of “common weal” or even “public weal,” the simultaneous discomfort with the association of “commonness” made some resistant to the term and the collective power implied through its usage.³²

Despite the defendants’ seeming rejection of the Commons’ say in their juridical process, they consent to the court’s adjudication. “I must, I do obey,” Skimeon states after the High Priest banishes him, while Jehochanan confirms submission in perpetuity, saying, “My humble thanks unto your sacred power” (1.4.104; 1.4.109). Thus, while the “the griev’d Commons [called] for the execution of justice upon the two seditious Captains,” the ultimate course of determination—the final judgment in legalese—comes from the arbitrator with “sacred power.” The high priest, after all, is seen as a figure appointed and anointed by a higher authority, someone who liaises between God and the people, just like the English monarch. The difference between his verdict and the Commons’ proposal is clear, as the defendants immediately accept his ruling without contest. The ultimate sovereignty of the monarch in contemporary England is an analogy

³¹ Rollison, “Shakespeare’s Commonwealth,” 4.

³² Ibid.

to this outcome, and the subjects' reception of absolute—"sacred"—power is similarly homologous.

Identifying Jewishness with Englishness, this moment recalls early modern systems of statecraft and judiciary proceedings, elements that are, in fact, peppered throughout *The Jewes Tragedy*. Besides the Commons' petition, for example, a reference to a documented material appears in 3.6, when Eliezer and Zareck prepare a formal announcement to recruit supporters. After the two men craft the statement together, Eliezer says, "Let our Proclamation be publisht" (3.6.115). The discourse of legality emerges in their personal enterprise, and their undertaking to enlist followers evokes the representational work of election practices.

Even before the staging of the captains' court proceedings does *The Jewes Tragedy* signal the establishment of a robust legal system in Judea. "It was, and is the custom 'mongst the Jews," says Jehochanan, "That the Delinquent, how e're guilty, yet / He fairly should enjoy the privilege / Of his Accusers opposition" (1.3.35–38). The High Priest responds with confirmation that Jehochanan and Skimeon will indeed get fair proceedings and represent their sides equitably. "We grant thee both," he says (1.3.50). This reference to Jewish tradition and its subsequent staging tempers the strangeness of Jewish custom, which is elsewhere in theatrical contexts represented as mystifying at best, and savage at worst. The misunderstanding surrounding Jewish rituals like circumcision offers a perfect example of the obfuscation generally linked to the Jews' mores.³³ That Heminge incorporates exposition for procedural structure in this scene

³³ The confusion surrounding Jewish custom and convention persisted even when travel diaries sought to illuminate foreign practices, a topic explored further in chapter 4.

reveals a unique approach to Jewish portraiture, as does the analogy to English judicial activities. When, for example, Josephus refers to “our sacred Law” and Ananias to “Jewries’ law,” they convey high regard for Jewish culture and practice, placing the Jews within a venerated institutional system that evokes the one in early modern England (2.7.199; 3.5.18).

Of note about Heminge’s politics in *The Jewes Tragedy* is his multifaceted approach to depicting public voice and opinion. For, in addition to the court scene’s overt parliamentary ornamentation, the crowds that throng the seditious captains in ACT 1 and elsewhere convey the power of Judea’s commonalty and depict contemporary English political action. Scholars like John Walter have observed that crowds were important political signifiers and that their incorporation in drama should be recognized as such:

Crowd actions were necessarily political and need to be understood in the context of a popular political culture. Crowds claimed an agency to police the world in which they lived and to interrogate the exercise of power. Not only did they represent an attempt to negotiate the exercise of power over their lives locally, but the terms by which they did so, drawing on public transcripts for their legitimation, reflected a larger political awareness.³⁴

Fixed in these observations of crowds and political activity is a message of agency.

Whether by virtue of elected appointment, documentation, or assembly, English crowds come to symbolize the political potential of the burgeoning populace. Indeed, Ian Munro sees the enormous population growth of London’s residents from 100,000 to 200,000 at the very end of the sixteenth century as a critical precipitating event in the power of the crowd, which involved “the visible and tangible presence of more and more *bodies*.”³⁵

³⁴ Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, 11.

³⁵ Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: The City and Its Double* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 4.

This expression of popular English political engagement is clearly at work in Heminge's text by virtue of the incorporation of so many stage figures. When, for example, civil unrest develops in ACT 3, authorities appeal to the assembled throng and attempt to gain their aggregate support. Gorion, a priest and representative of the Judean establishment, calls out to his "dear Countrey-men" (3.5.51). Jehochanan, the rabble-rousing captain who swore to submit to the priestly authority in ACT 1 and then defies Judean rule, follows Gorion's example, saying, "Dear friends, wise Citizens, and valiant country men!" (3.5.67). He goes on to lobby for the crowd's backing in an extended address, overtly entreating them to grant him power in place of the priests:

Jehochanan.

What heavy yokes I say have been impos'd
Upon this injur'd Nation.
What loads of Sorrows have been laid upon
Our weary loins, and yet (O heavens)—

Mechanicks.

O Heavens!

Jehochanan.

—to see
With what strange patience and humility
We have endur'd it.
Are not your Kings depos'd, your freedoms lost,
Your Laws transacted, and your goods despoil'd,
Your Wives abus'd, your children massacred,
Your Rulers banisht, and your selves become
A scorn to all posterity?
Will you be asses still, and bear this heavy load?
Will ye be slaves for ever?

(3.5.107–119)

The stirring speech Jehochanan makes here deliberately addresses the populace with aggressive reference to their collective suffering. Positioning himself as a part of this crowd—as when he says, "What loads of Sorrows have been laid upon / Our weary

loins,” and also, “We have endur’d it”—he establishes himself as one of the common people. When he itemizes the laws, goods, wives, and children that have been adversely affected by political conflict, he switches to the second person pronoun and communicates his understanding of their individual hardships. Jehochanan makes a rallying cry for change in this scene, imploring the crowds to shift their support for new representation. The mob’s affirmative endorsement demonstrates the power of crowd action and closely resembles political protests familiar even in modern contexts. That the group is comprised of Jewish people communicates a level of influence that is rarely bestowed upon Jewish stage figures in the period, though it is in keeping with this play’s investment in analogizing the Jews with the English populace.

The repetitious cries of the assembled stage figures that follow—and their diction in identifying as liberated through the repetition of the words “a Free-man, a Free-man, a Freeman”—reveal the crowd’s awareness of their influence in the political milieu (3.5.134). As Walter says, “Crowd actions can best be understood as claims to exercise political agency in the context of a popular political culture that was drawn from a dialogue with the discourses of state, Church and commonwealth.”³⁶ Heminge calls for precisely this kind of interplay in *The Jewes Tragedy*.

In yet another analogy between early modern London and the pre-Christian Judea of Heminge’s imagination, the authority figures become concerned about the enormous numbers of people. A Roman status report participates in this enumerative project when summarizing the carnage of martial action:

[Nicanor reads.]
A Catalogue of the Massacre of the Captive Jews,

³⁶ Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics*, 11.

who fled to us for mercy.
Under *Valerio's* Squadron, four hundred.
Under *Nicanor's*, five hundred.
Murdered out of the camp and ript for their Jewels
Which they had swallowed for fear of rifling, eleven hundred;
The whole number amounting to two thousand.
(5.1.112–118)

The tally functions to show the savage cruelty of the Romans, a detail which reflects Josephus's historical record,³⁷ and recalls the vast enumeration of casualties in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (c. 1599).³⁸ The recording of numbers also registers the plurality of Jews in the world of the play, as does the repetition of words connected to counting, such as "catalogue," "number," and "amounting." This tally is not meant to operate as a census but does reflect contemporary interest in population figures. And, despite the dire image of merciless slaughter, the quantities offer an impression of superabundant Jewishness, a kind of representation that is entirely non-existent elsewhere in the period's drama.

The manifest analogies between early modern England and the world of Heminge's play are not mere duplicative efforts in the style of Shakespeare. The Jews were, after all, variously connected with sin and offense in early modern England, and Shakespeare's Jews recall those associations. James Shapiro has shown that "the word *Jew* had entered into the English vocabulary in the thirteenth century as a catchall term of abuse."³⁹ This English vernacular variously proposed antipathy, artificiality, opportunism, lust for material goods, and wickedness, and was still used in these ways

³⁷ Noted by Morley in her gloss of the lines, *The Jewes Tragedy*, 197.

³⁸ King Henry reads out a list of the French losses, concluding his count with an acknowledgement of God's "arm" as the explanation for the overwhelming victory. Notable about Heminge's version is that the Romans omit a paean to any higher power.

³⁹ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press), 24.

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Examples of its application can be observed in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (c. 1598) when Benedick says, "If I do / not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not / love her, I am a Jew" or in *Merchant* when Lancelet says, "For I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer" (2.3.219–220; 2.2.111–112). The implication in the first case is clear, as it parallels the words "villain" and Jew": if Benedick does not admit his love for Beatrice, then he is hard-hearted, monstrous, and a liar. And in the second case, Lancelet suggests that he is degrading himself by his close proximity to Shylock. For both men, being a Jew is painted as a worst-case scenario, a sinister consequence of wretched conduct, deceitful language, or even physical nearness. As Shapiro puts it, "The Jew as irredeemable alien and the Jew as bogeyman into whom the Englishmen could be mysteriously 'turned' coexisted at deep linguistic and psychological levels."⁴⁰ Like the intensely felt dread directed at the Jews' body,⁴¹ anxieties about Jewishness extended to the very idea of the Jew as encapsulated in the word itself.

Despite this colloquial usage, the word Jew in *The Jewes Tragedy* carries no pejorative implications. In fact, the play enthusiastically attaches favorable attributes to it, particularly through modifying expressions such as "bold," "stout," and "strong." The Roman emperor Nero is the first to apply such language to the context of the Jews when he says, "Now by the Gods I swear, That sturdy Nation shall repent their pride" (1.1.18–19). Soon after, Vespatian says that "the Jews are stout and lofty" and that he'll "make this sturdy Nation's greatness stoop" (2.1.13; 2.1.25). When Roman captain Valerio

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ This is expressed in many contemporary dramatic works and explored in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

describes the impending battle with Judea, he says “the sturdy Citizens intend this night to bid you battel,” and then addresses Josephus, a messenger at this point in the plot, as a “bold Jew” (2.5.15; 2.5.34). Soon after, Valerio describes Josephus’s actions, saying that he “bravely made his way” (2.6.15). As opponents across military lines from Judea, the Romans would be the most likely characters in *The Jewes Tragedy* to participate in the insult culture routinely applied to Jews in early modern English literature. On the contrary, the Romans consistently refer to Jewry in positive terms. As the drama opens with their point of view, communicating Nero’s and Vespasian’s plans to overtake Judea, they set the tone for the descriptive language connected to Jewishness for the rest of the play. And, as a rule, the Jews continue to be described in this favorable manner:

Skimeon.
 ... be sudden, strong, and bold.
 (3.1.11)

Gorion.
 Wee’l take the temple for our sanctuary,
 Thither the Citizens will boldly come.
 (3.3.7–8)

Titus.
 Now my brave Lords of Jewry, which of you
 Stands chief Commander in this bold Rebellion!
 (4.4.11–12)

Titus.
 Now by mine Honor *Joseph*, I am glad
 To see such valour in thy Countrey-men:
 The charge was hot, and bravely seconded.
 (4.7.4–6)

The pattern of describing Jews as bold and brave in *The Jewes Tragedy* is not only a far cry from the insulting implications of Shapiro’s “catchall term of abuse,” but is also significantly different from the contemporary performative representations of Jews as

physically deficient. When Ferneze describes the threat of Turkish invasion in *The Jew of Malta*, for example, Barabas quickly claims that “We are no soldiers,” which Ferneze affirms: “Tut, Jew, we know thou art no soldier” (1.2.51–52). Similarly, a fight in 1.6 of *A Christian Turned Turk* notes in the stage directions that “Benwash hides himself [under a table]” (1.6.SD). The fearful, weak disposition of the stage Jew makes him unfit for battle or even for a casual skirmish.⁴² And yet, in Heminge’s rendition, the Jews are “brave,” “strong,” and “bold.”

Deploying such complimentary language divests the Judeans of their unflattering, alien status and makes the similitude between the Jews and the English more palatable to audiences. Correspondingly, Heminge’s Jews speak to each other in an excessively amicable manner, underscoring the benignity of the characters as well as their sense of belonging. The use of the word “countrymen” emphasizes this communal relationship, as do the words “friends,” “neighbors,” and “citizens.” Josephus demonstrates when speaking to the Jewish captains as his “dearest Countrymen” (5.4.10). Eliezer does something similar when addressing Jehochanan and Skimeon: “Welcome my noble friends...Ah my worthy friends, Dissension is amongst us” (4.2.35–38). Even on opposing sides, the Jews of Heminge’s play maintain civility in communication.⁴³ This companionable comportment and communication style is most evident in 3.2, when the word “neighbor” is repeated 17 times in a 227-line scene featuring an unnamed group of

⁴² This physical subordination of Jews in performance is examined more fully in chapter 4.

⁴³ Titus similarly refers to Josephus’s Jewish peers as “Countrey-men,” indicating a uniquely respectful national identity for the Jews (4.7.5).

Jewish Watchmen. One begins with, “Come *neighbor*, come,” and a lighthearted exchange follows suit:

Second Watchmen.
Ay *neighbour*, wee’l stand to our tacklings
I warrant ye.

First.
What was that that went by, *neighbour*?

Second.
Where, where, *neighbour*, where?

...

First.
...But as I was saying,
neighbour; ‘tis we must stand too’t, because we be not book-
learn’d, as they say, they count us but unlittered fellows, but let
um say what they will, we are the very legs of the Commonwealth;
for when we be drunk, the City reels fort I’m sure.

Second.
Mas *neighbour*, and ye say true.

(3.2.132–144; emphasis added)

The vigorous emphasis on the word “neighbor” functions effectively in showcasing the sense of community the soldiers share within the world of the play. Their informal conversation style reveals their plebeian status, and their connection to the greater commonalty is evident in the insistence on their neighborly standing. After all, not unlike the collective nature of the griev'd Commons in 1.4, the language of neighborliness bespeaks shared interests. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word neighbor as “a person who lives near or next to another.”⁴⁴ This element of proximity is consistent with the depiction of Jewishness in *The Jewes Tragedy*, which is set in the Jews’

⁴⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “neighbour (n.),” accessed July 31, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/125923.

homeland of ancient Judea. It is an accurate reflection of the established nation of Jews prior to the Temple's destruction, with Jewish people living side by side in a land of their own.

The application of the word "neighbor" can be seen as yet another force in the extensive analogy between English and Jewish people, since it held a special resonance in the context of Protestant thought. As Naomi Tadmor has shown, "'Neighborhood' was a key concept in early modern England," and, from inscriptions on church walls to recitations in catechisms, the language of neighborliness was "a crucial norm."⁴⁵ The Watchmen use this word emphatically, drawing parallels between themselves and the audience, who would recognize "the language of amity and friendship" that Tadmor regards as mainstream at the time that Heminge was writing.⁴⁶ The result is a mitigated sense of Jewish foreignness.

The notable congeniality of voice in the Watchmen's dialogue is complemented by the content of their discussion, which engages with contemporary politics. "We are the very legs of the Commonwealth," the First says. Despite being "unlittered"—a meta-demonstration of the speaker's poor education by way of malapropism—he observes that he is still a participant in Judean public affairs. The two go on to deliberate over their status in the socio-political ladder, comparing themselves to the "Justice a Peace" and "chief officers. "I tell ye *neighbours*, the depth of our place is very high," one comments with unintentional humor (3.2.160–161; emphasis added). Despite their obvious trouble

⁴⁵ Naomi Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23–25.

⁴⁶ Tadmor, *The Social Universe of the English Bible*, 25.

with language, the men share personal opinions without concern or penalty. Like the Commons' participation in the court scene and the crowd actions of ACT 3, these watchmen similarly engage in the political discourse of the play. The First Watchman's use of the word "commonwealth" is a direct signal of this involvement, as is his belief in his crucial role in the protection of the nation and its people. Rollison explains that the idea of the commonwealth was, for contemporary audiences, symbolic of the totality of Englishness:

The term for a collectivity embracing high and low, rulers and subjects: all England, all Christians, humanity, all of nature. It embraced what we call social relations, culture, economy, language, art, politics, religion: it meant a 'people' occupying a 'country', interconnected by traffic of one kind or another.⁴⁷

The Watchmen's conversation shows this aggregate understanding of the commonwealth, and their occupations as sentrymen echo their roles in administering to the public good.

Jews Without Christians

The Jewes Tragedy generally excludes negative early modern attitudes towards Jewishness. There are no references, for example, to usury or financial manipulation in the play, a variance that distinguishes it from canonical works like Shakespeare's and Marlowe's. Also of note is that there are no connections drawn between the Jews of Judea and the devil, which scholars like Lara Bovilsky have shown were common in the portrayal of Jewishness during the English Renaissance.⁴⁸ Likewise, cognate ideas such as greed and theft find no application in Heminge's work. *The Jewes Tragedy*

⁴⁷ Rollison, "Shakespeare's Commonwealth," 2.

⁴⁸ Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play*, 72.

distinguishes itself further through the complete omission of Christian ideology. Morley observes this exclusion as follows:

Except for the habit of low-life characters of using generic Christian oaths, which survive as a ‘Shakespearean’ echo, there is no ‘Christian’ presence in the play. There is no attempt to complicate the play’s racial and religious oppositions further than the oppositions of pagan to Jewish and moderate to extremist characters, where the latter in turn are portrayed as symptomatic of the generation gap in the politics of Jerusalem.⁴⁹

As Morley notes, the plebeian characters like the watchmen and the mechanicks utter colloquial expletives such as “Marry,” “Kads nails,” “Souns,” and “S’fut,” all consistent with contemporary English speech (1.4.3; 3.6.102; 4.6.3; 4.12.110). The anachronistic nature of this language is worth acknowledging in a plot that predates Jesus, whose wounds and crucified body are referenced in this Christ-centric profanity. Their incorporation, however, should be read as English vernacular rather than as expressions meant to reflect historical accuracy.

The absence of references to Christianity or to a Judeo-Christian God is a remarkable gambit in a drama about Jews. The oppositional nature of the two religions is in constant play for Heminge’s contemporaries, and it is conspicuously perceptible in other texts that incorporate Jewish characters. Shakespeare, for example, writes this antagonistic logic into Shylock’s vindictive motivations in *The Merchant of Venice*. “I hate him for he is a Christian,” he remarks summarily in his opening lines (1.3.42). The discourse of Jew versus Christian underpins the entire conflict of the Shakespearean comedy, with characters from each party denouncing the others’ religious perspective. Solanio calling Shylock “the dog Jew” offers evidence of the derogatory rhetorical links

⁴⁹ Morley, “Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*,” 61.

to Jewishness, and exhibits the enduring supersessionist rationale that was foundational to the irreconcilable differences between the two. The comparison of Jew to Christian is also the subject of Shylock's famous "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech:

Shylock.

If a Jew wrong a Christian,
what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong
a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian
example? Why, revenge!

(3.1.67–70)

Shylock's catalog of comparisons culminates in this language of reprisal, predicated on the inherent likenesses between Christian and Jew. While his famed speech has been argued as empathetic towards Jewishness in its erasure of widely held myth, it still participates in the logic of supersessionist thought. After all, the measuring of parity and disparity is the genesis of anti-Jewish feeling, especially in its application of syllogistic reasoning to prove preconceived opinion. The conclusion that animus is rooted in logic engages similar thinking. In other words, Shylock's compare/contrast exercise may seek to prove similitude but it does so in the problematic configuration of Christian versus Jew.

The omission of a Christian presence in *The Jewes Tragedy* divests the drama of this comparative logic, curbing the audience's impulse to seek out difference and moving the play's interests away from the preconceived contrasts between Christian and Jew. Lacking this foundational conflict, Heminge's text deviates remarkably from the *The Merchant of Venice*, significant considering young William's fidelity to the Shakespearean paradigm. As Adams observes, "He thoroughly saturated himself with the dramas of Shakespeare; and then, drawing wholly on his memory, adorned his own writing with innumerable quotations and reminiscences of the earlier playwright's

work.”⁵⁰ The unquantifiable measure of Shakespearean proportion in Heminge’s writing reaches its limits, however, on the subject of Jewishness, which is depicted in *The Jewes Tragedy* without interference from Christian superiority or supersessionist ideology. The combinatory impact of this gesture and the exclusion of anti-Jewish rhetoric and associated tenets revises the popular contemporary profile associated with Jews and Jewishness in theater.

This depiction is also notable given Heminge’s source text, Josephus’s *The Jewish War*. Joanna Weinberg has observed that “Many writers gloated at Josephus’s vivid description of divine vengeance on the wicked Jews.”⁵¹ Vanita Neelakanta argues that the contemporary interest in Jerusalem’s destruction was *the* driving factor in Josephus’s popularity.⁵² Evidence for the language of Jewish defeat set amidst the rousing tale of cunning and conflict can be observed plainly in the ancient historian’s narrative:

And from King David, who was the first of the Jews who reigned therein, to this destruction under Titus, were one thousand, one hundred, and seventy nine years. But from its first building, till this last destruction, were two thousand, one hundred, seventy seven years. Yet hath not its great antiquity; nor its vast riches; nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth; nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed.⁵³

⁵⁰ Adams, “William Heminge and Shakespeare,” 51.

⁵¹ Weinberg, “Early Modern Readers of Josephus,” 289.

⁵² Neelakanta, “Reading Providence out of History,” 95.

⁵³ Josephus, “The Jewish War,” in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus the Jewish Historian. Translated from the Original Greek, according to Havercamp’s accurate Edition. Containing Twenty Books of the Jewish Antiquities, with the Appendix or Life of Josephus, written by himself: Seven Books of the Jewish War: and Two Books against Apion. Illustrated With new Plans and Descriptions of the Tabernacle of Moses; and of the Temples of Solomon, Zorobabel, Herod, and Ezekiel; and with correct Maps of Judea and Jerusalem. Together with Proper Notes, Observations, Contents, Parallel Texts of Scripture, five compleat Indexes, and the true Chronology of the several Histories adjusted in the Margin*, ed. William Whiston (London: University of Cambridge, 1737), 6.10.1.

The ineluctability of Jerusalem's destruction—a city that embodied Jewishness itself—is communicated by way of Josephus's diction, which first lists significant factors that might have ensured the capital's protection, then concludes by saying that none of these would have “been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed.” The demise of Jewish civilization is thus depicted as inexorable, an outcome that is compatible with supersessionism. The simultaneous rise of a great empire as successor is, perhaps, unsurprisingly agreeable to early modern London audiences. Contemporary providentialist historiography regularly regarded enemies' ruination as inextricably linked with England's ultimate ascension, and English audiences would have savored Josephus's account, in particular, because of the nation's historical connections to the Romans by way of Brutus.⁵⁴

In addition, the chronicle of the Jews' downfall was meaningful in the narrative of the English as the new Chosen People,⁵⁵ though some scholars, like Peter Augur, have posited that “Josephus's works were an ideal source for seventeenth-century English tragedy...[as] Jacobean playwrights sought foreign settings for political drama at a time when censorship was heightened and national chronicle history had been exhausted of potential subject matter.”⁵⁶ Theories about the marketability of Josephus's writing certainly abound. However, it must be noted that there is an inherent irony to the Jewish

⁵⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth's canonical *History of the Kings of Britain* (c. 1136) marks the beginning of England's historical timeline with the settlement of Brutus, a descendant of Aeneas. That the English could trace their heritage to ancient Rome and all its majesty was a source of great pride and privilege for England's people and its project of nation-building.

⁵⁵ The rationale of appropriating Chosenness is examined in chapter 2 in the context of Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, which is saturated with issues connected to Chosenness, status, and the enduring interconnections between Jews and Christians.

⁵⁶ Augur, “Playing Josephus,” 326.

historian's popularity, for even if he saturates his text in the language of Jewish destruction, his identity safeguards the subsistence of the Jewish people. That is, his survival and refusal to convert make Josephus a contradictory figure, one who seems to revel in the destruction of the Jews at the same time that he personifies their survival.

Heminge casts Josephus as a character in the plot of *The Jewes Tragedy*, converting the venerated historian to a hero in the stage adaptation of the ancient event. But while he incorporates the source of the historical narrative into the action of the drama, he excludes references to the Christian morality lesson regularly implicated in the contemporary reading of *The Jewish War*. Neelakanta summarizes his choices aptly: "*The Jewes Tragedy* eschews the conventional Christian moral and its accompanying providentialist rhetoric.... Heminge's Jews are not Christ-killing troglodytes, and conspicuously absent is any mention of heavenly punishment for contravening the covenant."⁵⁷ The play's conclusion offers evidence for Neelakanta's observation, as it features a vanquishing Titus state, "How I grieve to see / The ruines of the fair Jerusalem" (5.8.9–10).

Heminge is not seeking to reanimate Josephus's text for the theater, and his omission of Christianity and its supremacy are conspicuous when compared with the robust Christian aura of Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, a contemporary play that takes Josephus as its source.⁵⁸ Whereas, for instance, Cary's text embellishes the tale with aggressive biblical allusions, Heminge omits these references entirely, in keeping with

⁵⁷ Neelakanta, "Reading Providence out of History," 85–86.

⁵⁸ *Mariam*'s approach to Jewish representation is uniquely dependent on Judeo-Christian origins and on the inextricability of Jews and Christians. Cary has a vision of the two religions as harmonious rather than incongruous, explored further in chapter 2.

his stratagem of skipping elements that remind audience members of the Jews' rejection of Christ, whose stories and teachings the New Testament records. Cary's insertion of Old Testament allusions matches the contemporary trend of early modern English playwrights who feature Jewish characters in their texts, including Daborne, Marlowe, and Shakespeare:

Agar.

Swear it by Abraham's dust, the ashes of our forefathers.

Rabshake.

Dust and ashes—it's but a frail oath.

(*A Christian Turned Turk*, 12.40–41)

Barabas.

Thus trolls our fortune in by land and sea,

And thus are we on every side enriched.

These are the blessings promised to the Jews,

And herein was old Abram's happiness:

(*The Jew of Malta*, 1.1.101–104)

Shylock.

When Jacob grazed his Uncle Laban's sheep—

This Jacob from our holy Abram was...

(*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.3.79–80)

Alexandra.

David's soul, within the bosom placed

Of our forefather Abram, was ashamed:

To see his seat with such a toad disgraced,

That seat that hath by Judah's race been famed.

(*The Tragedy of Mariam*, 1.2.87–90)

Early modern English playwrights find ways of weaving Pentateuch references into the language of their Jewish characters as reminders of the Jews' stubborn repudiation of the New Testament. These linguistic signals are variously applied, though they often involve the patriarch Abraham. Rabshake swears by him, Barabas makes a reference to his blessings, Shylock tells a parable that mentions him, and Alexandra, mother to Mariam,

emphasizes their family's direct lineage to him. According to the Hebrew Bible, Abraham is the first Jew, but he is also considered the father of Christianity and Islam. Despite being a marker of Jewishness when he is the progenitor of all of these religious groups, Abrahamic citations function to remind audiences that the Jews maintained an outdated form of belief with an exclusionary attachment to Old Testament theology and figures.

Abraham also becomes an apt exemplar of Jewishness in his association with peripatetic living, given his famous pilgrimage towards Canaan in pursuit of a land promised to him by God. His wanderings bring to mind the notorious travels of the Jews in the early modern world, lacking a homeland of their own and experiencing expulsions from countries across the European continent.⁵⁹ David Ruderman has argued that the Jews' successful early modern commercial networks depended on their "wanderings,"⁶⁰ though it is likely that English associations of Jewish travel were equated far more with vagrancy than with commercial contribution. The widespread familiarity of the Wandering Jew myth likewise contributed to beliefs linking Jews with itinerant, if not menacing, behaviors (a theme explored more thoroughly in chapter 3). While Abraham does not display threatening conduct, his connection to roving makes him a suitable reference for Jewish expression, and one that English playwrights employed with regularity.

⁵⁹ After England expelled the Jews in 1290, France followed in 1306, then Austria in 1421, Spain in 1492, Lithuania in 1495, and Portugal in 1496. See Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 13–16.

⁶⁰ David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 34.

Hannibal Hamlin has shown that the early modern English stage routinely incorporated biblical allusions, which, he writes, “were obviously there to be recognized and interpreted, and presumably they were.”⁶¹ He explains that audiences’ familiarity with biblical sound bytes came from attending church and from listening to the highly performative sermons that had grown in popularity even in public spaces. It is noteworthy then that the various Jewish characters of the early modern stage never quote the Bible explicitly, merely making references to it, almost elegiacally. This selective nature of Jewish characterization can be explained by the shared value of the Hebrew Bible. That is, even if Jews believed in and subscribed to the traditions of the Old Testament, Christians increasingly laid claim to it, especially as contemporary thought held that the Jews severed their connection to God by virtue of rejecting Jesus. Christian Hebraists at places like Oxford and Cambridge capitalized on this appropriative logic through the organized field of studying Judaic texts.⁶² Scholars have shown that these studies “extended beyond an interest in the Hebrew of the Bible to include the writings of Jewish scholars of the ancient and medieval past.”⁶³ Christians thus asserted ownership over the Bible, its language, and even its commentaries, leaving the Jews with hollow allusions whenever the Old Testament is conjured. Rabshake, Barabas, Shylock, and Alexandra offer evidence of this censorship in their cursory references to people and events in biblical contexts, and in their omission of actual scripture.

⁶¹ Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁶² Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 111–120.

⁶³ Jeffrey S. Shoulson, “‘Proprietie in This Hebrew Poesy’: George Wither, Judaism, and the Formation of English National Identity,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 98, no. 3 (July 1999): 355.

In contrast—though in keeping with the exceptionalism of Heminge’s version of Jewish representation—*The Jewes Tragedy* dispenses with this possessive perspective. It makes no reference to biblical figures at all and divorces Jewishness from the troublesome history of rejecting Jesus and the sins associated with his crucifixion. Indeed, as Morley has shown, the few Christian oaths in Heminge’s play are “the habit of low-life characters of using generic” swearing conventions.⁶⁴ Otherwise, there are no biblical traces in the tragedy at all, a fascinating choice given the temporal and physical proximity of the drama’s ancient events to those recorded in the Bible. Once again, Heminge’s portrayal of Jewishness deviates from the norm, rendering Jewish figures without the usual accompaniment of theological signals of difference that would recall fundamentally oppositional positions.

Linguistic Adaptability

The exclusion of anti-Jewish rhetoric and stage elements in *The Jewes Tragedy* finds an exception in the example of a character named Zareck, who slips from one scene to the next in a self-directed way, strictly seeking opportunities that serve his own agenda. When he claims, “I can be any thing,” he recalls in a straightforward manner the dangerous and devious nature commonly associated with the Jews (2.2.98). The Marranos, who intentionally created outward-facing identities that contrasted with their true selves, are one contemporary association of this tricky self-determination. Peter Berek has shown that suspicion of this Jewish conduct was prevalent around the time that Heminge was writing. The “‘Marrano’ condition was the most important quality of

⁶⁴ Morley, “Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*,” 61.

Jewishness in Elizabethan England,” he explains. “A ‘Jew’ was likely to be a stranger, a merchant, or a physician, a person who advanced in the world by his own ingenuity.”⁶⁵ Zareck captures this self-serving profile perfectly in his claim to “be *any* thing” (emphasis added). Of course, Berek has observed that a Jew’s ability “to treat selfhood and social roles as a matter of choice” also enabled him to become “a paradigmatic ‘Renaissance Man’” and an exemplar of social innovation and mobility.⁶⁶ Other scholars such as Stephen Greenblatt have argued that “self-fashioning” was an essential convention of contemporary social dynamics.⁶⁷ Thus, if Jews participated in these activities of self-advancement, they were performing an English, rather than a Jewish, practice.

General opinions about Jews and their abilities to become something else, were not, however, consistent with Renaissance self-fashioning or man’s capacity for social advancement.⁶⁸ Instead, a Jew who refashioned his image was perceived as duplicitous, misleading others and perpetrating villainy as a matter of choice on top of the vile Jewishness that was tied to heredity. The manipulation of language was considered a part of this deceitful presentation, which Zareck illustrates by exploiting rhetoric in order to benefit himself. When he encounters a disorderly group of Commons in 3.4, for example,

⁶⁵ Peter Berek, “The Jew as Renaissance Man,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1998): 135.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 128–129.

⁶⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁶⁸ The restrictions concerning upward mobility in the period extended beyond the Jews, as Patricia Akhimie illustrates in her study of access granted and denied to those with somatic differences. For more, see Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference: Race and Conduct in the Early Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

he knowingly acts with conceit and self-interest, using asides to inform the audience of his calculated and self-serving aims:

Captain.
Silence, I say, ye shallow-brain'd simplicians,
For we are pleas'd to hear his embassie.

I Mechanick.
Silence, silence, and listen to the emphasis:

Zareck.
Apart. Unless I speak in some unheard of stile
Tis sure impossible to get fairly off:
Most indefatigable Commander, and cabalistical Captain
of this most enormous equipage.

Captain.
The stile is most profound and enigmatical,
(3.4.35–42)

Zareck recognizes immediately that this group of people speaks differently from him. Their regular use of the wrong words makes their language stand out, and he determines that he must adjust his own style “to get fairly off.” Following his aside to the audience, which elucidates his awareness of rhetorical choice and possible outcomes of linguistic decision-making, he attempts to appeal to the group with performative language. He uses multisyllabic words, alliteration, assonance, and flattery—captured well by word pairings like “cabalistical Captain” and “enormous equipage”—to achieve desirable results. The efforts seem to pay off, as the captain of the Commons announces, “The stile is most profound and enigmatical.”

Zareck demonstrates an ability to adapt his linguistic style, successfully parlaying with foreign interlocutors while hiding his actual intentions. The fact that the Commons refer to his language as “enigmatical” confirms this, and reflects a contemporary belief about Jews and their verbal abilities. As Ruderman has shown, Jews were, in the early

modern period, multilingual as a result of the broad commercial networks that they established and maintained. Coupled with the diasporic lifestyle of the Jews at that time, spread out across the Continent in enclaves both hidden and in sight, their prowess with languages was rooted in fact and well-known among the nations where they settled:

Ashkenazic Jews spoke and wrote Yiddish in Venice and Amsterdam, as well as Poland and Lithuania, despite its strangeness among the majority of people living in these places. Sephardim spoke Ladino and published extensively in that language in a Turkic linguistic field while conversos in Amsterdam assembled regularly in their newly adopted city for readings in Spanish and Portuguese and used these languages, rather than Dutch, for communal business and literary composition.⁶⁹

Jews necessarily cultivated linguistic adaptability, speaking Yiddish, Ladino, Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Hebrew. That this medley included Jewish patois in addition to secular national tongues further distinguished their linguistic capacities as unique. These private ways of communicating bolstered anti-Jewish attitudes of distrust, since they suggested subversive dealings, especially as they also supplied the Jews with the upperhand in almost all mercantile, inter-cultural transactions.

Early modern plays where Jews make appearances consciously reflect linguistic pliancy. In Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Barabas demonstrates an ability to glide in and out of languages almost unconsciously when he says, for example, "*Corpo di Dio!* stay: you shall have half (1.2.91–92; emphasis added). The use of both Italian and English in a single line captures Barabas's multilingual aptitude, though the same fusion of disparate languages can be found throughout the play. At one point, he says, "*Bueno para todos mi ganado no era*" and at another, "*Pardonnez-moi, monsieur*" (2.1.39; 4.4.71). Even alone onstage, Barabas engages alternate tongues, as when he states, "*Ego mihimet sum semper*

⁶⁹ Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 55.

proximus”⁷⁰ and shows the extensive nature of his concealed motivations (1.1.187).

Zareck follows a similar model, switching between rhetorical styles to achieve his objectives. While he does not swap English for Spanish or French as Marlowe’s Jew does, he does display an inherent faculty with language. That he is seen to alter his speech in a conscious way in order to fit his personal aims draws an even straighter line from the Marlovian precedent, as does his habit of capitalizing on linguistic dexterity for self-preservation.

Key to the contemporary rendering of Jewishness on the stage is this element of voice, which is not only expressed through the choice of words but by the manner of their delivery. Barabas’s monologues in *The Jew of Malta* offer good dramatic exhibition of the Machiavellian Jew’s scheming, but they also remind the audience that he is acting alone, his voice as solitary as his physical position in a diasporic setting. The use of asides operates similarly, another expression of the Jew’s solitary condition. Zareck’s aside in 3.4 is comparable to this usage, and the fact that he discloses a need to speak with intention offers additional evidence of the self-serving speeches of Jews found elsewhere in English dramatic convention.

To be sure, asides are not exclusively elements of Jewish stage characterization even if they are regular rhetorical devices in a playwright’s arsenal of representing Jewishness. In the case of *The Merchant of Venice*, which shows Shylock speaking in an aside in his very introductory lines, several other stage characters follow suit. The text

⁷⁰ Meaning “I am always closest to myself,” the statement is a telling pronouncement of Barabas’s nature. On the one hand, it means that he strictly serves his own interests. On the other, it means that no one understands him and that he must be self-reliant. Speaking alone in a foreign language strengthens this meaning.

features over a dozen asides, including those spoken by Antonio, Lancelet Gobbo, Portia, and Nerissa. In the context of Jewishness, however, asides achieve the goal of placing the Jew “out of the hearing of other characters.”⁷¹ Located beyond the auditory range of those around him, he is thus externalized from the community in which he is located as well as fundamentally misunderstood.

It is this experience of isolation, captured by the use of aside, which places Zareck outside the community of Jewishness in *The Jewes Tragedy*. Even his name recalls the foreign concoction of sounds that are regularly ascribed as monikers for the isolated, conniving Jews in contemporary literature. Zadok, from Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), closely resembles Zareck’s own name, as does Shylock from *Merchant* and Zariph from *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (c. 1607). The sibilant start of these names—with an “s” or “z”—stirs up the vocal stylings of a hissing snake, while the plosive “k” and “ph” recall the act of spitting. The combination of these particular consonantal sounds is not meant to be pleasing and, correspondingly, a character with a name that fuses them is not intended to be heard with any amount of pleasure or trust. Like the use of asides, Zareck’s own name thus expresses a kind of remote and antisocial essence.

Zareck’s embodiment of traditional—and unfavorable—stage representations of early modern Jewishness make him an idiosyncratic figure in a play that otherwise depicts Jewishness within a context of civility and community. That is, rather than a reference point for audiences groomed to expect such a schemer, Zareck’s incarnation of

⁷¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “aside (n.),” accessed July 27, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/11484.

familiar elements of Jewish stage figuration convert the evil stage Jew from expectation to exception by making his duplicitous and self-serving nature defy the conventions of Judea. After all, in a place where the commonwealth's security is a concern for the plebeian watchmen just as it is for the patrician high priest, Zareck's avoidance of crowds and commoners shows just how little he subscribes to the Jews' communal interests. As a result, his version of Jewishness becomes the anomaly, making the majority of Jews in Heminge's drama more favorable and relatable in comparison.

Jewish Polyvocality

Heminge's community of Jewish characters is unambiguously reflected in a diversity of vocal stylings: from the Commons' collective expression to the voices of individual figures, the drama embroiders polyvocality into the representational fabric of Jewishness. Just as the *dramatis personae* first introduces the vast number of Jewish roles, their scale of rhetorical variations also conveys plurality. These characters speak from a spectrum of ages, occupations, political affinities, and even spaces. On one end, the script features the formal language of the high priest, made eminently clear in the drama's court proceedings:

High Priest.

And for you *Jehochanan*, upon submission of your self to us,
we do release thee: But we charge thee, as thou lovest thy life
and liberty, thou give us not henceforward any cause of just
proceedings: So we dismissee thee.

(1.4.105–108)

The priest's formal style is perceptible both in his use of judicial jargon—with words like “submission,” “release,” and “proceedings”—as well as in his meticulous syntax: he speaks in the first-person plural and in clipped phrases; his expression betrays no

semblance of emotion and concludes with a ceremonial gesture of dismissal following his legal pardon. The high priest's authority is expressed through this formal language and distinguished from the comedic and casual communications of the Jewish mechanics, whose style is on the opposite end of the verbal representation spectrum:

Oliver.

The zay the Captains shall be rain'd to day.

Timothy.

Ay, neighbor Oliver! but how do they rain um? can ye tell?

Oliver.

Marry Neighbor I will tell ye; and for your better destruction,
And more plain and pernicious understanding in the matter,
I will deride my speech into sixteen several Sects.

(1.4.1–5)

This exchange offers a strong variance between the language of the Jewish working class and that of the priestly class. Differentiated from the formality of the latter, this demotic linguistic style is a slangy and simple manner of expression befitting a more casual setting. The most striking characteristic of their dialogue is the vigorous application of malapropism, or “the ludicrous misuse of words, esp. in mistaking a word for another resembling it.”⁷² When Oliver says that “the Captains shall be rain'd,” he means “arraigned,” a reference to the court proceedings to come. When Timothy repeats the verbal error, he shows a similar level of misunderstanding the word's meaning. And, of course, Oliver continues to use the wrong words when he confuses “destruction” for “instruction,” “pernicious” for “perspicacious,” and “deride” for “divide.” These comic errors function on multiple levels, including as entertainment for an audience that would

⁷² *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “malapropism (n.),” accessed July 27, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/112760.

recognize the misemployment of verbiage. As Morley explains, “Like the ‘rude mechanicals’ of Shakespeare’s Athens, the Watch of Messina, the clientele of Falstaff’s Eastcheap headquarters, and the plebs of *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, they are contemporary comic inventions, not merely English, but eccentrically so.”⁷³ The familiarity of characters like Timothy and Oliver negates the assumed foreignness of Judea and the people who live there. Far from the linguistically adaptive or monologue- and aside-dependent speakers of other Jewish stage portraiture, these Judean mechanics, whose Anglicized names mark them as less alien, also resemble Englishmen in this conventional stage speech. Additionally, malapropisms make their language distinctively lighthearted and even more dissimilar from the priest’s formal elocution.

The mere insertion of dialogue among Jews is a notable deviation from other plays, in which Jewish characters frequently lack fellow conversation partners. This isolated experience of Jewishness situates Shylock, for example, in the language of externalized interiority. This phenomenon is captured variously in *The Merchant of Venice*, which shows Shylock struggling to communicate clearly with other people, but is demonstrated best by a bizarre speech in which he imagines contributions and interventions from other interlocutors:

Shylock.

You come to me and say
 “Shylock, we would have your moneys”—you say so,
 You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
 Over your threshold. Moneys is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say
 “Hath a dog money? Is it possible
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?” Or
 Shall I bend low, and in a bondsman’s key,

⁷³ Morley, “Critical Introduction to *The Jewes Tragedy*,” 86.

With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness,
Say this: "Fair sir, you spet on me on Wednesday
last;
You spurned me such a day; another time
You called me 'dog'; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

(The Merchant of Venice, 1.3.125–139)

Slipping back and forth between his own voice and that of Antonio, Shylock reveals a crafty linguistic prowess. It is not a matter of recounting past statements, but rather a clever pre-enactment of a conversation that has not yet happened. In this way, his monologue also functions as a dialogue, making frequent first-person references as one speaker in the scenario, while also inhabiting the role of the second person on the receiving end of direct address. The speech features a multiplication of Shylock's solitary voice, as he speaks for himself *and* for Antonio, and illustrates the companionless experience of the early modern stage Jew. That is, without another fully realized Jewish character in the plot of the play,⁷⁴ Shylock is an outcast lacking a community. His ability to carry out a dialogue as a single person reflects this isolated existence, one that is not duplicated in Heminge's version of Jews in drama.

Also of note about Shylock's words is their transactional nature. Within the context of a loan negotiation, his speech not only references "moneys" and "ducats," but also the tit-for-tat outlook that defines Shylock's life. He challenges the assumption that Antonio's spiteful treatment should even permit a financial arrangement when he posits his words within the framework of "should I not" and "shall I," and he concludes with phraseology that conspicuously communicates the language of bargaining: "and for these

⁷⁴ His daughter Jessica is arguably Christian from the comedy's start, an observation that scholars like M. Lindsay Kaplan and others have compellingly made (see chapter 2).

courtesies / I'll lend you thus much moneys." Abraham Oz has argued that "the major trait of Shylock's character may be epitomized as the commodification of any concept, value, or moral tenet."⁷⁵ This attribute can be readily observed within these lines, which show Shylock's deal-brokering terms as dependent on the manner in which he himself has been dealt. In other words, his commercial exchanges are conditional upon his social ones, and his language reflects that rationale.

In stark contrast, commercial transactions are absent in *The Jewes Tragedy*, leaving Jewish language without this commodifying pretext. Ducats, gold, gems, and their transfer from one hand to another find no reference, rendering the language of Jewishness without the suggestion of money. Instead, the play features Jews exchanging political views and information and even a philosophical monologue:

Zareck.

To be a piece of walking clay, a thing
Whose highest happines hath ever been
To keep it self alive, and that life too
Not for it selfe preserv'd, but others; is
To be worse then a Beast; for they
(However miserable in effect)
Yet live contented, void of Reasons eye;
They cannot see nor feel their misery.

(2.2.1–8)

Such meditative musings recall Hamlet's ruminations rather than an early modern stage Jew's, whose interior thoughts are never given voice in contemporary drama unless within the context of acquisitive lust or an inexhaustible desire to harm Christians. If a Jewish character ever broaches a philosophical question, it is ultimately couched within

⁷⁵ Abraham Oz, "Early Mimics: Shylock, Machiavelli, and the Commodification of Nationhood," in *Religious Diversity and Early Modern English Texts: Catholic, Judaic, Feminist, and Secular Dimensions*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goldblatt (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 109.

the framework of this generalized Jewish experience, as when *The Jew of Malta* shows its protagonist philosophizing about man's place in the world:

Barabas.

What more may heaven do for earthly man
Than thus to pour out plenty in their laps,
Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
Making the seas their servant, and the winds
To drive their substance with successful blasts?
Who hateth me but for my happiness?
Or who is honoured now but for his wealth?
Rather had I, a Jew, be hated thus,
Than pitied in a Christian poverty...

(*The Jew of Malta*, 1.1.105–113)

Barabas sees successful living as rooted in materialistic pursuits, citing “substance” as a benefit that his Jewish way of life supplies and one that “Christian poverty” would withhold. Ultimately, he reasons, it is best to be Jewish because being so enables him to luxuriate in this materialism. Zareck's thoughts lack this interest in physical things, probing instead what it means to be human. He emphasizes the value of reason and is invested in the difference between man and beast rather than between Christian and Jew. Accordingly, his language deals with secular thought and elevates Jewish analysis from basic ambitions of acquisition to philosophical meditation consistent with intellectuality.

Zareck's reflections convey an educated approach to analytical inquiry, just as they also match contemporary early modern philosophical thought. Erica Fudge has shown that reason is a crucial element in the period's belief systems concerning the difference between man and animal, *the* point of polarity between the two, as she observes:

The sensitive soul is possessed by animals and humans alone...and is the source of perception and movement. The rational soul houses the faculties that make up reason—including will, intellect, and intellective memory—

and is only found in humans. It is these faculties of the rational soul that are used to define the distinctive and superior nature of the human.⁷⁶

Man's capacity to reason and to control his passions elevates him above other living creatures, Fudge explains, endowing humanity with a "superior nature." Heminge's integration of these issues into Zareck's language thus aligns Jewishness with the superiority of all humankind, having both a sensitive soul and a rational one, to use Fudge's Aristotelian terminology. Ultimately, this gesture elevates the representation of Jewishness from the subhuman standard normally portrayed in early modern English drama by negating the acquisitive logics of *The Jew of Malta* and the bestial analogies of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Similar philosophical issues of man versus animal arise when a small group of Judean soldiers find themselves trapped by the Romans after a battle. Without provisions, they worry that they will "dye like dogs," and so develop a plan to fall on their swords in order that they may instead "dye like men" (2.7.52–53). Similar to Zareck, the soldiers seek to distinguish the way they live—or more specifically, the way their lives end—from the way that beasts live and die. And just as Zareck sees reason as the defining characteristic between the two, the soldiers likewise determine that their minds separate them from dogs who lack will and determination. Josephus is among this group and convinces all present that a game of lots should determine the order of their deaths, as he says: "Our number in the cave is forty just, We will unite ourselves by two and two, Then cast by lots which couple shall dye first; Which of them two shall kill his fellow, then He that remaineth shall make choice of one of the next lot to take his life away. This done,

⁷⁶ Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 2006), 8.

each may in order fairly dye, Without the guilt of wilful butchery” (2.7.108–114). This mathematical approach to mass suicide is not only intended to remove the element of guilty conscience from the soldiers who will have to stab each other, but also turns out to be Josephus’s crafty approach to survival. He is, after all, one of the remaining few still living when the Roman soldiers happen upon them soon after this scene ends. He joins the Romans willingly, beginning his story as an expat Jew living in Flavian Rome.

The scene—which begins with Judean captains seeking to control their destinies through suicide and then shows those same men relying on a game of lots to direct their methodology—plays with the idea of determinism. On the one hand, that is, the soldiers wish to steer their lives’ course by defining when and how they should die. On the other, they forego autonomy when letting lots determine the order of execution. Their worry about the interference of guilt in the context of suicide recalls Hamlet’s remarks that “conscience does make cowards of us all” (3.1.84); their decision, however, that “each may in order *fairly* dye” (emphasis added) seems to prevail over the concerns of a guilty conscience. The philosophical complexity of this scene significantly upgrades Jewish theatrical representation. Far from the depiction of the unprincipled Jew, the soldiers of Judea seek honor rather than self-interest, and achieve it by way of a system of fairness that they devise using familiar rational thought.

Additionally, the scene alludes to the original account by Josephus, who dedicates an entire chapter of Book 7 to an episode concerning mass suicide: “How the people that were in the fortress were prevailed on by the words of Eleazar, two women and five children only excepted; and all submitted to be killed by one another.” In his description of men sleighing wives and children after first tenderly kissing them, he notes, “because

the reasoning they went upon appeared to them to be very just, even with regard to those that were dearest to them.”⁷⁷ The logic and justness of self-sacrifice is crucial to the story that Josephus tells, even as it relays, as scholars like Steven Weitzman have observed, “a mixed message.”⁷⁸ After all, if the circumstances of such events call for the suicide of everyone present, why does Josephus not participate? In *The Jewes Tragedy*, the answer to this question comes from Josephus himself. “The circumstances of the others loss / We will refer until some fitter time” (2.7.208–209). In other words, he survives so that he can tell the story of those who did not.

Josephus’s fitness as the narrator of Jewish storytelling is predicated on his identity as a Jew. In early modern England, however, the representation and chronicling of Jewishness was at the discretion of those who often misinterpreted or otherwise willfully refused to portray Jewish people and customs with understanding or accuracy. In the representation of Jewish language, in particular, Saskia Zinsser-Krys has argued that contemporary playwrights contrived Jewish linguistic patterns to be repetitive in keeping with observations recorded in travel narratives. “English travellers, when giving accounts on the Jews they encountered, sometimes criticized their repetitive words heard in prayer,” she writes.⁷⁹ She finds evidence of this in Shylock’s speeches, as when he says, “Why, there, there, there, there!” and “I thank God, I thank God! Is’t true, is’t

⁷⁷ Josephus, “The Jewish War,” 7.9.1.

⁷⁸ Weitzman sees censure of suicide in Josephus’s writing as well as a celebration of it; the former, he argues, is a result of Flavian sensitivity to personal protest, and the latter is a reflection of Jewish honor and the observance of martyrdom. See Steven Weitzman, “Josephus on How to Survive Martyrdom,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 55, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 233–236.

⁷⁹ Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew*, 377.

true?” (3.1.83; 3.1.101). Zinsser-Krys sees these moments reflecting accounts like those of Thomas Coryate,⁸⁰ who observed “tedious babbling” in a Jewish synagogue service.⁸¹

There is, of course, a major difference between babbling, which implies incomprehensible sounds,⁸² and repetition, which is an act of repeating something already expressed. And yet, there is evidence of both in *Merchant*. Solanio’s recounted narrative of Shylock calling for his daughter and ducats, haphazardly repeating each word in a frantic expression of distress, offers better evidence of Coryate’s observed babbling in action; this is clear in his nonsensical utterance of words in no particular order. As Solanio quotes him as saying, “My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter! / Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!” (2.8.15–16). If there is a reenactment of the babble-like pronouncements from Coryate’s travel notes in Shylock’s characterization, it is to be found here, amidst the Jew’s emotional outburst.⁸³ And yet, there is little evidence elsewhere of the repetitive or nonsensical in the representation of Jewish speech on the early modern stage. Marlowe’s version of Jewish language offers semantic adroitness as

⁸⁰ Thomas Coryate, *Coryats crudities : hastily gobled vp in five moneths trauels in France, Sauoy, Italy, Rhetia co[m]monly called the Grisons country, Heluetia aliàs Switzerland, some parts of high Germany, and the Netherlands; newly digested in the hungry aire of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, & now dispersed to the nourishment of the traueilling members of this kingdome* (London: Printed by W[illiam] S[tansby for the author], 1611).

⁸¹ Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew*, 377.

⁸² The *OED* defines this word as, “To utter inarticulate or indistinct sounds; to mumble, mutter...to make rudimentary attempts at speech.” See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “babble (v.),” accessed July 29, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/14199.

⁸³ It is worth noting that Shylock himself is never shown to babble. Rather, Solanio tells of Shylock’s verbal paroxysm by way of narration and performance. As he says, “I never heard a passion so confused, So strange, outrageous, and so variable As the dog Jew did utter in the streets,” before (apparently) quoting Shylock’s words (2.8.12–14).

a chief characteristic of his Jew of Malta. And Heminge's Judeans have no single vocal style meant to be broadly representative of Jewishness.

If there is any babbling to be detected in *The Jewes Tragedy*, it is in the mouths of the Romans. Titus agonizes over "a most inhumane murder—on the Jews—the Captive Jews that fled to us for mercy," and his captain Valerio notes that, as a result, Titus "looks distracted, and his words [are] compos'd With strange disturbance" (5.1.83–84; 5.1.4–5). Nonsensical conversation soon follows, demonstrating the Roman general's state of mind:

Nicanor.
My gracious Lord—

Titus.
Comma.

Nicanor.
I am—

Titus.
Comma.

Nicanor.
Altogether—

Titus.
Colon.

Nicanor.
Ignorant—

Titus.
Period. Troth I believe thee.

(5.1.93–97)

Titus's language resembles nonsensical babbling, providing evidence of his captains' belief that his words are "compos'd with strange disturbance." There is a repetitive and meaningless ilk to his constant interruptions of Nicanor's address. Upon closer glance,

however, the general is deconstructing oration, opting to verbalize punctuation marks—which, even in their native format on the page, would function silently—instead of using words. In a written configuration, these symbols would emphasize or clarify meaning, but are in verbal form functioning in precisely the opposite way. Titus saying “comma” and “colon” confounds those who speak with him and does not organize thoughts or elucidate points.

In a way, Titus is also making an allusion to Hebrew, which most heavily relies on marks on the page to guide the sounds of the words they adorn. In one entry, the *OED* defines the word “vocalize” as “To provide (text, word, or writing system) with vowels or signs representing vowels; *esp.* to write or supply (Hebrew, Arabic, etc.) with vowel points.”⁸⁴ Given this strong link with Hebrew writing, Titus’s vocalization of punctuation marks recalls the language of “the captive Jews that fled to us for mercy.” He underscores the empathy he feels for those who suffered “a most inhumane murder” with words that echo their language.

Such a plain affinity with Jewish people deviates significantly from the source text, which tells of Titus’s extravagant celebration of his army’s vanquishing deeds:

Titus ordered those, whose business it was, to read the list of all that had performed great exploits in this war. Whom he called to him by their names, and commended them before the company; and rejoiced in them in the same manner as a man would have rejoiced in his own exploits. He also put on their heads crowns of gold, and golden ornaments about their necks, and gave them long spears of gold, and ensigns that were made of silver, and removed every one of them to an higher rank.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “vocalize (v.),” accessed December 26, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/224283.

⁸⁵ Josephus, “The Jewish War,” 7.1.3.

In the ancient version of events, Titus gave public commendations, gifts of great value, and promotions to the soldiers who defeated Judea. Rather than empathizing with the suffering of Jewish natives, he celebrated his soldiers' work "as a man would have rejoiced in his own exploits," and memorialized the Roman triumph over the Jewish enemy through spectacle and sacrificial offerings of thanks to the Roman gods. This is the story that early modern English readers would have known, making Heminge's Titus remarkably dissimilar. After all, in his final appearance in *The Jewes Tragedy*, Titus confirms his empathy and feeling of fellowship towards the Jews. To one survivor, he says, "I joy not in so sad a spectacle" (5.8.89). To all the Jews who live, he announces, "let not *Jewrys* fall dismay your princely hearts: *Romes* General Will find a way to raise your ruin'd State" (5.8.194–195). This promise of Jewry's rise and the international, inter-cultural support for such an endeavor reveal a striking contrast from the Titus in the original narrative.

Unquestionably, the presentation of Jewishness takes a unique form in Heminge's drama. The language of non-Jewish stage figures variously proposes sympathy rather than antipathy. Likewise, the speech of the Jews is represented with significant humanizing emphasis. A singing chorus in 4.1 captures this compassionate rendering well. The stage directions at the start of the scene note that "*a noise of still musick*" begins, and "*an Alter and Tapers*" are set with High Priest Ananias leading a crowd of attendants who sing melancholically:

[*Quiresters.*]
See those buildings where once thy glorie liv'd in
With heavenly essence:
See how it droopeth, and how nakedly it looketh
Without thy presence:
Hark how thy captive people mourn

*With heavy moaning,
And grievous groaning,
For thy being absent,
And for the heathens scorn:
Because thy people are by thee forlorn.*

*See those tapers, which once enflam'd those vapours
Of our sweet peace.
See those places, where we once injoy'd those graces,
Which now do cease.
O see the Altar whereas we
Enjoy'd those blisses,
With heavenly kisses
From thy free love,
And from thy Clemency:
Whilst we did sing to thee melodiously:*

(4.10.1–20)

The lyrics recall a former glory in Judea, complete with buildings filled with God's "heavenly essence," "tapers which once emflam'd those vapours of...sweet peace," and an altar which "enjoy'd those blisses." The downturn is evident in the references to the physical dilapidation of the buildings' drooping facades, the auditory moaning and groaning of the Jewish people, and the spiritual cessation of grace due to God's absence. With their prayers, the quoristers relate the state of Judea's decline and offer a strong parallel to the Christian singers of contemporary London through the choice of a song derived from Psalm 137 in the King James Bible, an observation Morley notes in her gloss at the scene's start.⁸⁶ The effect makes the Jewish quoristers more familiar, like the recognizable malapropisms of Timothy and Oliver and also like the parliamentary proceedings of the play's early court scene.

A chorus appears one more time without the accompanying music or priest-led procession, decrying the situation in Judea. "Horror, confusion, hunger, plague and Death

⁸⁶ Noted by Morley, *The Jewes Tragedy*, 182.

Have seiz'd our Sacred streets; my fainting breath Fails me to give the sad relation," it begins. Ten lines later, the chorus ends with a similar combination of sorrow and solemnity: "To tell ye more my aking heart would break, / The sad Catastrophe let action speak" (4.11.1–4; 4.11.13–14). This chorus does not function as a traditional Senecan narrator watching a play's progression, instead speaking as the voice of a citizen in Jerusalem.⁸⁷ The calamitous situation it describes, with a list of events including plague—something that English audiences would recognize as familiar and formidable—is complemented by emotional characteristics, including an "aking heart." Such a blend of woeful rhetoric implores the audience to feel sorrow for the Jews, with language that echoes the sentiment of the play's title and emphasizes the tragic nature of the Jewish tale. In addition, the inability of the chorus to narrate fully "the sad catastrophe" succeeds in communicating the insufficiency of one voice to tell the story of an entire nation. The very idea of a chorus conflates voice as singular when it is really a collection of people speaking or singing synchronously. Heminge's version of this challenges the traditional convention by featuring a solitary voice, altered even further through that mouthpiece's admitted inadequacy to describe the scope of the devastation. In this way, the chorus encapsulates precisely the complexity of Jewishness in *The Jewes Tragedy*. For, just as it relates to the action of the play while standing apart from it, so too does the English audience, who is invited to recognize commonality in the politics, social dynamics, and colloquialisms of the Jews in antiquity from a vantage point in early modern England.

⁸⁷ The editor observes "the use of personal pronouns" as an indicator that the chorus is "a citizen of Jerusalem, not detached from the narrative." Noted by Morley in her gloss of the lines in *The Jewes Tragedy*, 184.

And just as the chorus confesses a worry in misrepresenting the tragedy of the Jews, so too does the play suggest that Jews themselves have been misunderstood.

Conclusion

Heminge represents Jewishness far more favorably than contemporary theatrical work typically does. In addition to abstaining from anti-Jewish linguistic stereotypes, he diversifies the language of the Jews, showing the plurality of class, education, and manner among a people often depicted by way of a single stage figure's voice. And, indeed, the rejection of one character's ability to convey the experience of the Jews repudiates the entire model of contemporary Jewish stage characterization. In addition, he incorporates the articulate language of reason into the voices of Jewish characters like Zareck, Ananias, and Josephus, rejecting the idea of the Jew as irrational and subhuman. He even jettisons the inherently oppositional nature of Jewishness to Christianity by virtue of omitting any Christian presence in the play. Likewise, he excludes a host of pejorative stereotypes that scholars have observed as intrinsic to contemporary beliefs about Jews, and he resists recalling other texts that feature Jewish characters, a habit of his contemporaries.⁸⁸ For a playwright so enamored of Shakespeare's work, it is noteworthy that Heminge does not allude to *The Merchant of Venice* at all.

In his rendering of populous Judea, inhabited by a Commons who proudly participate in the representational politics of the play, Heminge makes a significant gesture of analogizing Jewishness with Englishness. It is this analogy which especially distinguishes *The Jewes Tragedy* from other early modern dramas featuring Jewish

⁸⁸ Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play*, 70.

characters, for it makes an unequivocal signal of empathy by inviting the audience to see itself within the foreign context of Judea. Correspondingly, the tragedy applies language of compassion towards the Jews, rejecting the original narrative's tale of vengeance for a more humane version of events. The suggestion of renewal in Titus's closing lines proposes a provocative vision of Jewish recovery, which considerably contrasts with the Christian determination to supersede the Jews. Perhaps this uninhibited rendering of understanding Jewish nationhood was the reason that the play was not performed at the time that it was authored, but released instead in the 1650s, when the Jews returned to English soil. Indeed, that is precisely what Auger suspects, in his generous assertion that the publication was "timed for the proclamation officially welcoming Jews back to England."⁸⁹

The Jewes Tragedy offers a consummately unique depiction of Jewishness in English drama. In its manifold distinctions from contemporary convention as well as from antique precedent, it communicates an uncommon call for empathy. And even if the play did not reach the fame or esteem of the luminaries whose success he sought to emulate, it is this unique approach to representing Jewishness in early modern theater that ultimately distinguishes Heminge's work and earns him an eminent status among the playwrights of his time.

⁸⁹ Auger, "Playing Josephus," 330.

CHAPTER 2
“MATCHLESS MARIAM”: THE EXCEPTIONALISM OF THE JEWISH WOMAN

Oh, when you think of Herod as your king,
And owner of the pride of Palestine,
This act to your remembrance likewise bring:
‘Tis I have overthrown your royal line.
Within her purer veins the blood did run,
That from her grandam Sara she derived,
Whose beldame age the love of kings hath won;
Oh, that her issue had as long been lived.
But can her eye be made by death obscure?
I cannot think but it must sparkle still:
Foul sacrilege to rob those lights so pure,
From out a temple made by heav’nly skill.

HEROD, Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)¹

In his outpouring of contrition over Mariam’s death at the end of Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, King Herod grieves for the loss of his wife, whose execution he ordered and whose innocence he belatedly affirms. As Mariam’s death takes place offstage, the audience learns about its completion by way of a messenger, at the same time that Herod himself receives confirmation that his orders have been carried out. While nothing this messenger shares bears any consequence regarding the allegations of adultery and treason directed at Mariam, it is in this exchange that Herod pronounces his queen’s blamelessness. The Judean king seems almost to reach a spiritual realization regarding Mariam’s innocence, speaking of “her glory” in his intermittent interruptions of the messenger’s narrative (5.1.45). “I hold her chaste ev’n in my inmost soul,” Herod says, drawing religious reasoning into his emotional judgment of her alleged actions (5.1.76). And in the penultimate words of a lengthy monologue that

¹ Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, ed. Barry Weller and Margaret W. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 5.1.175–186.

concludes the tragedy, Herod draws a connection between his deceased wife and Sara, the matriarch of Judeo-Christian tradition. This meaningful link is the most effective form of Mariam's exoneration, for it declares an internalized and infallible purity—"Within her purer veins the blood did run"—at the same time that it attests to her rightful status as belonging to a supreme lineage, descending from the very first Chosen People.

The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry references the Old Testament repeatedly, drawing a clear connection with the historical past of the Jews in a play that deals with Jewishness head-on. As the title makes clear, the play is set in Jewry's home, Judea—or, as early modern English audiences would have known it, Palestine. This non-English setting allows for a sustained inquiry of Jewish people and questions from a safe distance. It also enables Cary to construct a positive portrayal of the Jews, since she situates them in an epoch that is pre-Christian and therefore pre-sin. After all, in the minds of Cary's contemporaries, Jesus's arrival necessarily shifted Jews from the Chosen People to the oppositional figures who rejected Christ and continue to do so. The reputations of the Jews grew from that first transgression to include a whole spectrum of wrongdoing in Judea and elsewhere. As William Hughes illustrates in *Anglo-Judæus* (1656), a seventeenth-century text summarizing the history of the Jews on English soil: "Here in England, they first begun to crucifie children and oppress the people..they spoiled the coin in Henry the second his days...kill[ed] a convert...and conspire[d] against City and people."² Certainly, the English literary record follows a similar chronicle of

² William Hughes, *Anglo-Judæus, or The history of the Jews, whilst here in England: Relating their manners, carriage, and usage, from their admission by William the Conqueror, to their banishment. Occasioned by a book, written to His Highness, the Lord Protector (with a declaration to the Commonwealth of England) for their re-admission,*

negativity, recorded in such works as Croxton's *Play of the Sacrament* (c. 1491) and Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* (c. 1387–1400). Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598) have a kindred preoccupation with Jewish iniquity, even as their characters deviate from the ignorant and malevolent savages of earlier Jewish characterization. (See chapter 4 for more on the history of Jewish literary figures in English culture and the early modern stage's participation in these tropes.) Again and again, English renderings of Jewishness convey pejorative messages. Cary circumvents these obstructions to favorable Jewish representation through this pre-Christian temporal frame and quasi-biblical setting.

The decision to focus the play on Mariam, a Jewish woman, is another way that Cary deviates from her literary and historical predecessors as well as from her own contemporaries. Of Shakespeare's canon, not a single play takes as its focal point a female character on her own. If her name appears in a title, it is coupled with a male partner's, as in the case of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Antony and Cleopatra*. The rare early modern English play text that centers on a woman is more likely to leave out her name entirely—as in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*—than to identify her in the title. It is almost anomalous for a contemporary playwright to draw such focused attention to a female character using an eponym.³ Cary, as a woman, takes exception to this common course, adding to her aberrant rendering of the play's female protagonist a Jewish identity and a slew of positive attributes, including chasteness, sincerity, and beauty.

by Rabbi Menasses Ben Israel. To which is also subjoyned a particular answer, by W.H. (London: Printed by T.N. for T. Heath, 1656), 46.

³ Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queene of Carthage* offers an exception in his eulogizing portrayal of one woman from the classical tradition.

The Tragedy of Mariam is a remarkable departure from the preceding works that incorporated the representations of Jews, but Cary's text most overtly differs from others in its future-oriented vision of Jewishness, embedded in the gendered representation of Mariam as an idealized Jewish figure. This is showcased in such moments as Herod's comparison of Mariam to Sara, an analogy that is repeated several times in the play. Since Abraham's wife is famously the materfamilias of Judeo-Christian heredity and tradition—begetting Isaac, who begets Jacob and Esau, and so on—equating her with Mariam in an early modern work not only invites the possibility that Jews from extra-biblical contexts can be positive, but also that their offspring may eventually become integrable in Christian culture if not full Christians themselves. After all, Christians, too, are descended from Sara. In this way, *The Tragedy of Mariam* makes the case for Christians to embrace their Judaic roots.

This chapter identifies the ways that the Jewish woman, as represented in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, is a kind of herald, projecting a future-oriented vision of Englishness through her supportable integration in non-Jewish culture. A similar event takes place in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*—both of which are included in this analysis—but Cary's work fully explores this presentation in its undivided focus on the subject of the Jewish woman; it is therefore the main concern of this dissertation chapter. In the prominent analogies of the protagonist to the Judeo-Christian matriarch Sara and even to Jesus himself, *The Tragedy of Mariam* is further distinguished from other plays in the period. Such an uber-flattering depiction, set within the context of a closet drama that solicits readers to participate in a visionary enterprise, makes *Mariam* a promising text for studying the contradictions of contemporary Jewish

dramatic renderings. Cary's identity as a Catholic woman contributes even more to the play's profile as a valuable case. Altogether, these elements result in a work that remediates Jewish repute and reveals a commendatory, if complex, contemporary characterization of the Jews.

Analysis of Jews and Jewishness in the literary record has recently evolved to include more attention on the presentation of the Jewess. Scholars like Cristina León Alfar,⁴ Lara Dodds,⁵ Michelle Dowd,⁶ and David Glimp⁷ have shown that Cary's rendering, in particular, has a feminist agenda and deploys Jewish women to communicate progressive messages. Other literary critics—such as Dympna Callaghan,⁸ Harley Erdman,⁹ and James Shapiro¹⁰—have identified considerable and consequential variations between the portrayals of Jewish women and men in theatrical contexts.¹¹

⁴ Cristina León Alfar, "Elizabeth Cary's Female Trinity: Breaking Custom with Mosaic Law in 'The Tragedy of Mariam'," *Early Modern Women* 3 (2008): 61–103.

⁵ Lara Dodds, "Passionate Time in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*," in *Temporality, Genre and Experience in the Age of Shakespeare: Forms of Time*, ed. Lauren Shohet (New York: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018), 189–204.

⁶ Michelle Dowd, "Dramaturgy and the Politics of Space in *The Tragedy of Mariam*," *Renaissance Drama* 44, no. 1 (2016): 101–122.

⁷ David Glimp, "Extreme Cary," in *This Distracted Globe: Worldmaking in Early Modern Literature*, ed. Marcie Frank, Jonathan Goldberg, and Karen Newman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 45–63.

⁸ Dympna Callaghan, "Re-Reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*," in *Women, "Race" and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), 163–177.

⁹ Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860–1920* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Erdman has shown that the beautiful Jewess ("belle juive") has a literary legacy that extends well into the twentieth century. For more, see Erdman, *Staging the Jew*, 40–41.

Particularly significant to this study is the work of Mary Janell Metzger¹² and Kim Hall,¹³ who have contemplated the integrable properties of the Jewish woman in early modern English drama. My reading of the Jewish woman is in agreement with their research, as the Jewess is indeed consistently beautiful, virtuous, and sincere in stark contrast with the gendered demonization of Jewishness encapsulated by male characters like Barabas and Shylock, who are ugly, devious, and derisible. I also concur with Metzger and Hall on the subject of the Jewish woman's integrable nature. In contrast with this erudition, I regard the Jewish woman, as encapsulated by Mariam, as a unique future-oriented figure who promotes Jewishness as acceptable not just in the case of one single person but more broadly.

The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queen of Jewry argues for a rich and socially diverse future featuring Jews and Christians living together, even as married couples. Additionally, the work's matriarchal analogy proposes the vision of a new, bounteous nation in the manner of the Chosen People that Sara generated. Similar to the contemporary work being done by Christian Hebraists, *Mariam* thus suggests that Englishness and Jewishness need not be incongruous, and that integration between the two could yield productive results. This strategic integration of Jews into Christian culture endows the Jewish woman with powerful potential as an agent of change, uniquely engaging favorable qualities from a pre-sinning past at the same time that she makes the case for an egalitarian future.

¹² Mary Janell Metzger, "'Now by My Hood, a Gentle and No Jew': Jessica, *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Discourse of Early Modern English Identity," *PMLA* 113, no. 1 (Jan. 1998): 52–63.

¹³ Kim Hall, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Renaissance Drama* NS 23 (1992): 87–111.

Integrable Jewishness

The Tragedy of Mariam is invested in questions of integrating distinguishable peoples through the arrangement of numerous interracial or otherwise exogamous relationships. Mariam and Herod offer, of course, the main example of such a pairing, being a Jew and a Christianized stage figure united in marriage.¹⁴ Correspondingly, Mariam's status as the protagonist of the play highlights the work's attention on her blended nuptial arrangement. But Salome, Herod's sister, and Silleus, the prince of Arabia, are another twosome who illustrate the unification of distinct peoples by way of romantic connection. Alongside the main action of the play, which Salome drives in her efforts to convince her brother of Mariam's infidelity, Herod's sister simultaneously appeals for a divorce from her own husband Sohemus so that she can marry a foreigner instead. In addition, Herod's brother Pheroras marries a servant girl named Graphina instead of the infant to whom he was betrothed. These couples all feature romantic interaction among distinct social groups, ranging from religion to nationality to class position. And notably, the three Romans pursue an exogamous consort instead of an already present—and acceptable—partner: Herod opts for Jewish Mariam despite having been married first to Doris, a Roman woman; Salome prefers an Arabian prince to her husband Sohemus; and Pheroras selects the servant Graphina instead of the royal niece he was commanded to wed.

¹⁴ While Herod is not actually Christian since he predates Christ, his connection to Rome—a place that holds significant meaning for Catholics like Cary—makes him a stand-in for a Christian man. His authority as monarch also parallels Christian sovereignty.

Marriage is thus a chief concern in Cary's text, not only in its focus on exogamy but also in its attention to expectations of marital responsibility. The depiction of Doris's resentment at Herod for being replaced is one such illustration of the play's matrimonial investment. So too is Salome's pursuit of divorce. In fact, León Alfar sees "wifely duty" as a key ideological issue in the play, and draws parallels between Mariam's world and early modern England.¹⁵ The relatable concerns between Herod and Mariam—conjugal problems that include sexual intercourse, mourning duration, and infidelity—contribute to this resemblance. But the handful of exogamous partnerships in *Mariam* are ones which would likely *not* be relevant to English audiences and are, in their sheer number, striking in a play that is already dealing with a racial category generally perceived to be objectionable.

In the case of the protagonist herself, Mariam's acceptableness as a wife to King Herod, who is not Jewish, is made possible by virtue of her exceptionalism. In fact, the title intimates that she is the most beautiful woman in the nation. Since the contemporary meaning of the word "Jewry" referred both to the Jewish people and also to the area where they dwelled,¹⁶ Mariam's designation as "the fair Queen of Jewry" offers an equivocal epithet. She is the most beautiful woman in the play, of all the Jews, *and* of all the other women in the land. Herod supplies a straightforward example of this belief when he talks to his sister, Salome:

Herod.
 Yourself are held a goodly creature here,
 Yet so unlike my Mariam in your shape
 That when to her you have approachèd near,

¹⁵ León Alfar, "Female Trinity," 61.

¹⁶ Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 168.

Myself hath often ta'en you for an ape.
(4.7.456–459)

The King's insult to Salome functions to elevate Mariam's praise, emphasizing her light complexion as compared with Salome's darker one; it also conveys the Queen's moral excellence. As Evelyn Gajowski states, "For him, Mariam's 'whiteness' thereby signifies not only her aesthetic and her racial superiority to Salome, but also her innocence of crime."¹⁷ Indeed, the text conflates Mariam's inner and outer goodness numerous times within the play, often expressed in the confluence of definitions that the word "fair" suggests.¹⁸ Of the nearly 50 times that it appears in the script, "fair" increasingly comes to signify Mariam's simultaneous moral and physical superiority:

Mariam.
If fair she be, she is as chaste as fair...
(4.8.581)

Herod.
The King of Jewry's fair and spotless wife.
(5.1.198)

Herod.
But now I see that Heav'n in her did link
A spirit and a person to excel.
(5.1.245–246)

Among the basic complimentary uses—such as "fair Mariam" (3.3.147)—the play thus incorporates several overt references to the synchronous nature of Mariam's inner and outer eminence. When Mariam pronounces that "she is as chaste as fair," she is declaring

¹⁷ Evelyn Gajowski, "Intersecting Discourses of Race and Gender in Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 27 (2017): 12.

¹⁸ The *OED* variously defines the word "fair," and all of its meanings are applicable in Cary's text. These include: "beautiful to the eye; of attractive appearance; good-looking," "free from moral imperfections; exemplary, unblemished," and "of hair or complexion: light as opposed to dark in colour." See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "fair (*adj.*)," accessed February 29, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/67704.

that her beauty is a reflection of her inner goodness. Characters like Herod and Sohemus similarly remark on her balance of being authentically fair within and without.

This external reflection of internal virtue is as exceptional as Mariam's physical attractiveness. In the period, these two attributes were often assumed to be inconsistent or uncertain, the suspicion being that a woman may appear one way but actually be another.¹⁹ In Mariam's case, and at issue for Herod for some of the play, is whether Mariam may seem to be a chaste wife on the one hand, but be an unfaithful one in reality. "Oh, thine eye / Is pure as Heaven, but impure thy mind," Herod censures her before the execution, adding soon after, "Hell itself lies hid / Beneath thy heavenly show. Yet never wert thou chaste" (4.4.189–190; 4.4.202–203). Her apparent otherworldly beauty seemed, to Herod, a cover for the exact opposite within.

Valerie Traub shows how a similar conflict arises in *Othello* (c. 1604), in which the protagonist struggles to negotiate this very matter. "That a woman may 'seem' to be one thing and yet 'be' another comes to signify, in the masculine mind of Othello, woman's very existence," she writes.²⁰ The gender-centric concerns of *The Tragedy of Mariam* weave in perspectives not unlike these. "Whereas usually women are presumed to be either virgins or whores, in *Othello* the split within each woman between 'seeming' and 'being' suggests women are simultaneously 'seeming' to be virgins and 'being' actual whores."²¹ The complicated misogynistic rationale can be observed across many

¹⁹ Concerns about concealment, especially in the context of Jewish characterization, also recall English anxieties about Marranism, which some scholars believe to have been prominent at the time.

²⁰ Valerie Traub, "Jewels, Statues, and Corpses: Containment of Female Erotic Power in Shakespeare's Plays" in *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*, ed. Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamp (New York: Verso, 1995), 126.

²¹ Traub, "Jewels, Statues, and Corpses," 126.

contemporary dramatic works, and Herod's consternation about Mariam's balance of inner and outer merits reflects precisely that logic. Ultimately, however, he exculpates his wife, saying, "Her eyes like stars, her forehead like the sky, / She is like Heaven, and must be heavenly true" (4.7.450–451). The ability to overcome the gendered stigma, even posthumously, illustrates Mariam's exceptionalism on yet another level.

Generally speaking, superiority typifies the representation of Jewish women in English renaissance drama. Similar superlative acclamations of being the most beautiful or the most fair are awarded to Abigail in *The Jew of Malta*. Upon her introduction, she is immediately identified as attractive. Barabas greets her as "my beauteous Abigail" (1.2.225), and soon after, Mathias passes similar judgement:

Mathias.

Who's this? Fair Abigail, the rich Jew's daughter,
Become a nun? Her father's sudden fall
Has humbled her and brought her down to this.
Tut, she were fitter for a tale of love,
Than to be tired out with orisons;
And better would she far become a bed,
Embracèd in a friendly lover's arms,
Than rise at midnight to a solemn mass.

(*The Jew of Malta*, 1.2.367–374)

Recognizing Abigail by her beauty just as Barabas did, Mathias feels regret that she is becoming a nun, since, he says, she is "fitter for a tale of love." His judgment is a direct response to Abigail's physical allure, made further evident in his explicitly imagined fantasy of her "embraced in a friendly lover's arms." It is worth noting that he regards Abigail as "the rich Jew's daughter" rather than as a Jew herself, and sees no apparent impediments to pursuing her. So taken with Abigail is Mathias that he tells his friend Lodowick about her beauty; this short exchange is enough for Lodowick to seek out the

Jew's daughter himself so that he "may have a *sight* of Abigail" (2.3.34; emphasis added).

The attention to the visual presentation of the Jew's daughter gives prominence to the matter of her physical appearance. And just as the text underscores her exceptional allure for modern readers, so too would the staging of such a scene call attention to her unique beauty in performance.²² That exceptionalism is compounded by her virtuous nature, since "fair Abigail" eventually becomes a nun and leaves behind her malevolent father (1.2.367). Like Mariam, she is characterized by a simultaneous inner and outer value.

There is a similar characterization of a beautiful Jewess in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Shylock's daughter is described as "fair Jessica"; indeed, after Gratiano first refers to her in those words, Lorenzo repeats them as if to confirm their veracity (2.4.32; 2.4.43). Another resemblance between Abigail and Jessica is that Shakespeare's daughter also makes a commendatory decision in departing from her father's house to become Christian. In ACT 2, she speaks with Shylock for the last time and then sneaks out dressed as a boy to be with Lorenzo in Belmont. Like Mariam and Abigail, Jessica's unique beauty prevails over potential pejoratives and makes her a better fit for a Christian setting than a Jewish one.

Quite remarkable in the stage Jewess' ability to exceed expectations is her capacity to evade the widespread stock associations of negativity linked with Jewishness.

²² Performative elements of Jewish stage representation, including physical embodiment, are examined at length in chapter 4. In keeping with the abundant distinctions between Abigail and Barabas, it is likely that the Jew's daughter did not incorporate Jewishness physically in the same way that her father did.

For, of course, the greed and iniquity that had become connected to Jews from the time of Jesus still tenaciously clung to the literary and dramatic representation of the Jews well through the seventeenth century.²³ Chapter 4 of this dissertation explores the discourse of perfidy encapsulated by Barabas's analogy to Judas, just one example of these enduring defamatory anti-Jewish themes. His extensive autobiographical list of malicious acts in 2.3 of *The Jew of Malta* offers evidence of the kinds of devilry still linked with Jewish behavior in the early modern period, itemizing attributions of criminality that had been lobbed onto the Jews' profile over many centuries. These acts include: poisoning wells, digging up graves, killing friends and enemies indiscriminately, "extorting, cozening, forfeiting, / And tricks belonging unto brokery," as well as tormenting and generally "plaguing" people (2.3.175–201). While his list is extreme in nature, the references are conspicuous stereotypes of Jewish behavior in English accounts. Accusations of poisoning recall Roderigo Lopez, Queen Elizabeth's physician (a Jew), who was tried and executed in June 1594 for an alleged attempt to assassinate the queen with poison. And the extortion and trickery Barabas mentions allude to the coin-clipping long affiliated with Jewish commercial activity in England. Geraldine Heng explains:

Since coinage in precious metals lost its value over time through weight erosion in the course of handling, the deliberate reduction of coin weight through practices such as coin-clipping was an accusation that might readily be laid at the door of constituencies through whose hands metal money regularly passed. That Jews were overwhelmingly singled out and tagged as a population of counterfeiters and coin-clippers in medieval

²³ In truth, these narratives and their modern iterations remain just as persistent and potent today. Some scholars even see the Enlightenment period as a crucial moment in the transference of premodern anti-Jewish feeling to twentieth- and twenty-first-century antisemitism. For more, see Michele Battini, *Socialism of Fools: Capitalism and Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

England...is far in excess, however, of naturalizing explanations of the pragmatic dangers of handling money.²⁴

In other words, Jews commonly occupied the roles of usurers and merchants, and thus stoked a pejorative affiliation with financial exchange. Any subpar transactions or economic downturns inevitably pointed an accusing finger at the Jews, a group already hated and primed for incrimination. Even the natural corrosion of metals and the fact that the unlawful act of coin-clipping existed were enough to cast aspersion on this group that had become inextricably linked with commerce and exchange. Very often, if a Jewish man is cast in an early modern dramatic role, he is fulfilling a mercantile or fiduciary function and shown to be vicious, sly, or troublesome in its fulfillment. Shylock offers an excellent illustration of this casting as a Jewish usurer painted as mercenary in his attempt to uphold a deal after a failed venture.

Extant chronicles from medieval London document nearly 300 executions of Jewish people for coin-clipping in the year 1278 alone.²⁵ In early modern England, memories of those crimes and others remained strong. *Anglo-Judæus* shows that people like William Hughes still held Jews accountable for such allegations from centuries prior, and believed that seventeenth-century Jews were just as likely to repeat the crimes of their forebears if they were readmitted.²⁶ “Though it be now more than 365 years since their expulsion, yet not at all doth it seem to moderate, or be abated.... We have no grounds but to think them as conceited and stubborn in their Traditions, as great enemies

²⁴ Geraldine Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 39.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The Jews were ultimately readmitted in the same year that Hughes wrote his treatise (1656), with the help of Oliver Cromwell, who saw financial benefit to the Jews' return.

to Christ and Christians as their Ancestors,” he writes.²⁷ The longstanding interconnection between Jews and malignity was robust in Hughes’s England, and it was certainly the same in Marlowe’s. As such, Barabas and his outlandish claims in ACT 2 of *The Jew of Malta* should be regarded as familiar associations of Jewishness for contemporary audiences. And yet, this indefatigable feature of contemporary Jewish staging finds no relevance in the case of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, not only because it excludes issues of profit and material but also because it focuses on a Jewish woman.

Mariam’s exclusion from the injurious fictions embedded in English culture and tradition²⁸ reveal a contradictory nature to the perception of Jewishness. After all, James Shapiro has shown how even “the word Jew had entered into the English vocabulary in the thirteenth century as a catchall term of abuse.”²⁹ This English jargon insinuated a host of disparaging qualities, which are explored more fully in chapter 1. And yet, the encompassing nature of these negative traits seems to find its limit with gender, for even as characters like Barabas and Shylock encapsulate expected fiscal obsessions and schemes, those of Abigail and Jessica and Mariam do not.

Jewish women of the early modern English stage evade unflattering anti-Jewish attributes. Even more, they transcend basic Christian standards and are desired and pursued for their exceptionalism. In the case of *Mariam*, a Jewish woman is cast as queen, fulfilling a function that should far exceed the social position of a degenerate figure as the Jew often is in contemporary works. Nevertheless, she holds the highest

²⁷ Hughes, *Anglo-Judæus*, 49.

²⁸ These include: the blood libel myth and cognate tales of bloodlust; unnatural male menstruation; the innate impulse to wander; an insatiable appetite for money; and other unfavorable claims. Many of these are examined more fully in chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹ Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 24.

possible female status in the text and one which, in Cary's lifetime, had meant a great deal in real-life political contexts.³⁰ In addition, notably absent from her portrayal and from the play in general, are financial concerns; the few references to commerce in Cary's text come in the form of comparison to Mariam herself—"I had but one inestimable jewel," Herod cries out after Mariam's execution—or in her demurral of material things—"I neither have of power nor riches want, / I have enough, nor do I wish for more" (5.1.119; 4.3.109–110).³¹ There are no pecuniary transactions in Cary's closet drama at all, nor mentions of coinage. Mariam has no interest in monetary subjects, and her characterization is completely devoid of this stereotypical element which, in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, for example, is critically significant. Aside from the loan and repayment which drive a considerable share of that plot, Shakespeare's text heavily emphasizes "ducats," the word appearing no less than 31 times. Cary's play does not use the word once.

Like Mariam, Abigail and Jessica are similarly disinterested in money, both staged in their respective dramas as throwing cash from windows to outstretched hands of other people below. Abigail's decision to join the nunnery suggests a complete surrender of material interest and claims, and Jessica's transference of ducats to Lorenzo during her escape functions merely to fulfill the tradition of dowry in the absence of one given by Shylock. The Jewish female characters of early modern English drama are indifferent to

³⁰ Queen Elizabeth I had ruled for the first eighteen years of Cary's life. There is no doubt that the position of queen connoted remarkable authority in the playwright's mind. *Mariam's* opening scene, which features an absent Herod, reflects the independence of the female monarch Cary had once known, and makes a direct correspondence between the English sovereign and the Jewess.

³¹ This line echoes Othello's exclamation at the end of Shakespeare's tragedy, when he cries that he, "Like the base Indian threw a pearl away..." (5.2.346).

capital and to material acquisition, and so they are substantially distinguished from their male peers.

Mariam's exceptionalism, which elevates her suitability as Herod's wife, is further evident in lacking an element most common in Jewish male characterization: deceit. The dissembling of figures like Barabas, who disguises himself as a French musician in *The Jew of Malta* to poison people, is inapplicable within *The Tragedy of Mariam*. Even Jessica dresses up like a boy in *The Merchant of Venice* in order to escape her father's house in 2.6. Mariam, in contrast, is portrayed as sincere in action and in appearance. She confesses at one point that she is incapable of dissimulation when saying, "I cannot frame disguise, nor never taught / My face a look to dissenting from my thought" (4.3.144–145). The fact that she does not wear make-up supports this supposition, an observation that Kimberly Woosley Poitevin observes to be significant. "Female characters in the play often contrast the 'naturalness' of Mariam's complexion with the cosmetically enhanced complexions of other women," she writes.³² Constabarus illustrates this phenomenon when, referring to Salome, he states, "she merely is a painted sepulchre" (2.4.325).

Contemporary attitudes regarding cosmetics were negative, and tracts warning women of the dangers of make-up were widespread. Those dangers included legitimate cautionary messages as a result of the fact that early modern cosmetics were composed of poisonous substances, as well as moral admonitions since the application of make-up was

³² Kimberly Woosley Poitevin, "'Counterfeit Colour': Making Up Race in Elizabeth Cary's 'The Tragedy of Mariam'," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 22.

associated with foreign custom, miscegenation, and plain dissimulation.³³ Simply put, enhancing and reducing natural facial features seemed to have a fiendish motivation.³⁴ That Mariam does not use such substances is significant in a play which already draws parallels to early modern England. By virtue of her avoidance of cosmetics and foreign habit, Mariam appears almost English, and thus more integrable even though she is a Jew. Her disinterest in modifying her appearance, coupled with her inability to hide her feelings on her face, emphasize Mariam's sincerity and trustworthiness. That her face is naturally fair only adds to her value.

In the growing list of deviations between the representation of the Jewish woman and the Jewish man in early modern drama as encapsulated in the example of Mariam is the very quality of distinction. In medieval contexts, Jews were stereotyped collectively. For instance, Jewish men *and* women were found guilty of coin-clipping and both were executed for it,³⁵ suggesting that the Jews of centuries prior were generally regarded as equal and mutually accountable. The same cannot be said in early modern England, when the arrival of the exceptional Jewess emerges to contradict extant generalizations recorded in literary, historical, and religious texts. There is no "fair queen of Jewry" in the medieval record, owing to the fact that Jews could not be perceived as acceptable at that time. Mariam's characterization—as well as Abigail's and Jessica's—show us that the word "Jew" in the early modern period was evolving to reflect a broader range of

³³ Woosley Poitevin explains that contemporary travelogues and tractates worked concomitantly to pass moral judgment and delineate racial difference. See Woosley Poitevin, "Counterfeit Colour," 22–27.

³⁴ See also Kimberly Woosley Poitevin, "Inventing Whiteness: Cosmetics, Race, and Women in Early Modern England," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 59–89.

³⁵ Heng, *England and the Jews*, 39.

meaning. On one end of the spectrum was the demonized portrayal of the Jewish man, and on the other, the virtuous representation of the Jewish woman. There were growing gradations within that range, though the advent of the exceptional Jewess on the period's stage reveals a significant contradiction about the contemporary tolerance of and interest in Jews.

Nowhere can the demonizing association of Jewishness between men and women be contrasted better than in the context of circumcision. This physical point of difference was regarded as a kind of mutilation, an ungodly signifier of un-Christian belief indelibly applied to the body of the Jewish man. A whole array of anxieties stem from this one point, scholars have argued, noting that this was the distinguishing factor between the body of the Jew and the Christian in early modern England.³⁶ Presumptions involving blood and unnatural sexual cravings derived from attitudes surrounding circumcision, including the outlandish belief that Jewish men menstruated.³⁷ Thomas Calvert's 1648 text "Diatriba of the Jews' Estate" confirms this contemporary opinion, reasoning that the freakish bodily function serves as retribution for the Jews' sins against Christ. As he explains it succinctly, "Jews, men as well as females, are punished *curso menstruo sanguinis*."³⁸ Thomas Coryate's *Crudities* (1611) also helpfully includes an illustration of a menacing Jew pursuing a Christian, an image that captures the fantasy of Jewish bloodlust as a direct consequence of circumcision (a rationale explored fully in chapter

³⁶ Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 132.

³⁷ Shapiro traces the belief in Jewish male menstruation back to the thirteenth century, to an account by Thomas de Cantimpré. In both medieval and early modern cases, Shapiro argues that the allegation is tied not only to a desire to emasculate Jewish men—a type of supersessionism not unlike the practice of comparing Jews to animals—but also to offer a biological rationale for the enduring blood libel myths.

³⁸ Calvert, quoted in Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 37.

4). For Coryate, it is not just that the Jews are cursed with bloodied genitals but that they wish to impose the same on good Christian men. Extant images of Edmund Kean as Shylock from the nineteenth century, as captured in figures 1 and 2, vividly recall Coryate's perspective, especially in their incorporation of an oversized blade poised in the tight grasp of the Jew's hand.



Figure 1. An engraving that shows Shylock with a sizable knife and scales, material accessories meant to communicate his desire for butchery [London: J. Roach, 1814]. “Mr. Kean as Shylock in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*; Shy.: Is that the law?” Cambridge, Harvard Theatre Collection.



Figure 2. A lithograph from the Victorian period that shows Shylock with a sharp blade [London: 1827]. “Mr. Kean as Shylock in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*.” Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.

Of course, the element of flesh-cutting in *The Merchant of Venice* is itself an allusion to the practice of circumcision, the Jews' predilection for enacting that violence on Christian men, and their general lust for blood. The illustrations of Shylock holding a knife demonstrate how terrifying that conglomeration of concepts was to English audiences, even centuries after Shakespeare first introduced the usurer and his pound-of-flesh pursuit.

The indelible point of difference on the Jewish man's body is not on the Jewish woman's, making her less problematic physically, but also less troubling in general. The Jewish woman lacks a mutilated body and therefore lacks its associated concerns, so while the Jewish man might have an irregular, repulsive need to replace the blood lost through unnatural menstruation, the Jewish woman does not. And where he might be driven to hide his peculiar bodily processes, she has nothing to conceal. Mariam's representation in Cary's play precisely demonstrates this division in its dearth of elements regularly connected to Jewish demonization; these are simply irrelevant in the context of Cary's play, where Jewishness is gendered as female and rendered as favorable.

Scholars like Lara Bovilsky and Mary Janell Metzger have observed that Jewish women are not just integrable in the contexts of early modern drama but are imminently Christian. "Representations of Jessica, unlike those of other characters in the play, turn on alternating characterizations of her as a latent Christian and as a racialized and thus integrable Jew," observes Metzger in the context of *The Merchant of Venice*.³⁹ Indeed, Shakespeare shows Jessica's conversion to Christianity as almost inevitable, her integrable nature making her virtually Christian from the moment she is introduced.

³⁹ Metzger, "A Gentle and No Jew," 52.

Claiming that her “house is hell” and referring to Tubal and Chus as her father’s “countrymen” illustrate her apparent dislocation in being connected to Shylock (2.3.2; 3.2.297). Jessica takes every opportunity she can get to establish herself as belonging to a different social group than her father. Bovilsky sees this as evidence of Jessica appearing to be “in religious transition, desiring to convert and marry out of her faith.”⁴⁰ A similar phenomenon takes place in *The Jew of Malta*, as Abigail is pursued aggressively by Lodowick and Mathias. She eventually takes matters into her own hands by becoming a nun, though this official transition to Christianity is presaged by her home’s conversion to a nunnery and by her impersonation of a would-be convert earlier in the play.

Once again, Mariam’s exceptionalism makes the case for a more progressive form of integrable Jewishness. Whereas in the case of Jessica and Abigail, integrability means leaving one’s identity behind through physical relocation to a new space as well as terminating relationships with family members, Mariam needs to go nowhere and warrants no disconnections with family. Indeed, the play begins with her already being married to a Christian figure, managing to stay in her native Judea, and regularly interacting with her mother Alexandra. Her intermarriage is not the culminating chapter of her story, but the beginning of it, suggesting that Jewishness need not disappear to make way for Christianity, as supersessionist thinking normally submits. Mariam may intermarry, but she does not appear to convert, communicating an alternative vision of Jewish integration. The fact that she has a son with Herod likewise communicates a productive, future-oriented vision of Jewish life that coexists with a Christian one. *The*

⁴⁰ Lara Bovilsky, “‘A Gentle and No Jew’: Jessica, Portia, and Jewish Identity,” *Renaissance Drama* NS 38 (2010): 52.

Tragedy of Mariam makes a strong case for the integrability of the Jewish woman, insisting on her exceptionalism both physically and morally, differentiating her from the vast demonized representation of the Jewish man, and bestowing upon her the ability to maintain a distinctive identity despite being partnered via intermarriage.

The Jewish Woman as an Agent of Change

One of the most extraordinary elements of Jewish characterization in *The Tragedy of Mariam* is the rendering of the Jewish woman as an agent of change, particularly in the form of her analogy to a martyred figure of Christian tradition. Mariam achieves this analogy not only in the basic fact of her undeserved suffering and execution, but in the portrayal of her death, the way that she accepts its inexorability, and the narrative manner with which the characters on the stage chronicle it. Cary's work advocates for Jewish women with a kind of compassion and reverence that is unmatched in contemporary contexts, and portrays the protagonist with admiration and an agency that calls for further examination.

In one of her final lines, Mariam maintains her innocence at the same time that she benignly accepts her plight. "My soul is free from adversary's power," she states, alluding to her sinless conscience as she accedes to her circumstances (4.8.569).⁴¹ She makes an impression of compliance even as Herod's first wife Doris tries to goad her into distress with curses and threats. The Queen of Jewry deflects Doris's abuse and

⁴¹ The Hebrew word for "adversary" is often translated as "Satan." Mariam's assertion of sinlessness before death is thus a reiteration of her marital fidelity as well as an avowal of broader moral decency. And, as a result, the common association of Jewishness with diabolical intentions becomes yet another stereotype evaded in *The Tragedy of Mariam's* version of the Jew.

welcomes her death in the final words of the scene, saying, “Now, earth, farewell, though I be yet but young, / Yet I, methinks, have known thee too too long” (4.8.626–627).

Mariam does not appear again in the play, marking this final moment with her willingness to suffer undeservedly and to resist fighting with accusers. Her portrayal strongly contrasts with the rendering of Jewish emotion elsewhere in the early modern literary tradition. Marlowe’s representation of Barabas, for example, presents the Jew as a recalcitrant hotspur, quick-tempered and offensive when presented with undesirable scenarios. *The Jew of Malta*’s sanctions, which demand Jewish economic support to pay off a debt to the Turks, lead Barabas to refuse and to cry out in an agitated outburst, calling Ferneze, his knights, and officers “earth-mettled villains, and no Hebrews born!” (1.2.79). The insult attempts to reduce the Maltese officials to a baser existence, as though they were formed from the mud of the earth, and as though Barabas and his Hebrew nation were born in a superior, spiritual space; it also functions as a reminder that the differences between Jews and non-Jews were believed to be sweeping and innate.

In contrast with Barabas’s tempestuous fit, Mariam is serene. Her concluding lines convey a readiness to accept the state-sanctioned decisions without quarrel or resistance, evident in her diction of departure—“farewell”—and in her reference to the time—“now”—as well as in leaving out claims of irreconcilable difference between Jews and non-Jews. She has the final word in the scene, and is presumed to be executed immediately after. Since this execution is carried out offstage, her actual final moments are conveyed by way of a messenger in the concluding scene of the play, when we learn that Mariam’s mother Alexandra had railed at her daughter for the alleged wrongdoing against Herod. In reply, Mariam “made no answer,” the messenger narrates, then adds,

“And after she some silent prayer had said, / She died as if to die she were content, / And thus to Heav’n her heav’nly soul is fled” (5.1.50; 5.1.84–86). This acquiescent rendering of Jewishness, deferential to the nation and docile in an unjust, highly charged emotional scenario is a remarkably different portrayal than elsewhere in the early modern theatrical record.

Mariam is as accommodating of her unwarranted death as a martyred figure, showing zero resistance in her uncommonly tacit acceptance of unfair judgment and penalty. The analogy between Mariam and martyr is further fueled by the messenger’s narrative, a first-person commentary of the suffering of another. His apparent supernatural knowledge of her soul’s ascent to Heaven—“And thus to Heav’n her heav’nly soul is fled”—communicates a gospel-like delivery of the account of Mariam’s death, and his poetic license similarly conveys a canonizing effort:

Nuntio.

I went amongst the curious gazing troop,
To see the last of her that was the best:
To see if death had heart to make her stoop,
To see the sun-admiring phoenix’ nest.
When there I came, upon the way I saw
The stately Mariam not debased by fear:
Her look did seem to keep the world in awe,
Yet mildly did her face this fortune bear.

(5.1.21–28)

The messenger employs an ABAB rhyme scheme and a healthy dose of rhetorical devices, including repetition, litotes, and parallelism. His poetic license and delivery amplify the drama of his narrative and emphasize Mariam’s innocence and temperance against the unjustness of her circumstances. The result is very moving, and Herod’s intermittent interruptions show how the messenger’s words exert influence on him. “Tell all, omit no letter,” Herod commands, even though he is the obvious cause of disruption

to the report, adding soon after, “But forward in thy tale” (5.1.66; 5.1.83). Herod’s interferences put punctuation marks on each new piece of information that the messenger shares, augmenting the sense of awe at Mariam’s comportment and the noble way she met her undeserved end.

Strengthening the analogy of Mariam to a martyred figure, the messenger culminates his narrative with a detail that directly recalls the story of Jesus’s crucifixion:

Nuntio.

As I came by,
From Mariam’s death, I saw upon a tree
A man that to his neck a cord did tie:
Which cord he had designed his end to be.
When me he once discerned, he downwards bowed,
And thus with fearful voice he cried aloud,
“Go tell the King he trusted ere he tried,
I am the cause that Mariam causeless died.”

(5.1.103–110)

This story element is an obvious allusion to Judas’s death, which the Gospel of Matthew reports involved suicide by hanging.⁴² Just as the man in *Mariam* hangs himself from a tree out of guilt for the betrayal he enacted against Queen Mariam, so too did Judas after betraying Jesus. This biblical precedent finds regular reference in the context of Jewishness and serves as the calculus behind the perception of the Jews’ deep-seated treachery. In *The Jew of Malta*, Ithamore refers to Barabas’s hat as the one that “Judas left under the elder when he hanged himself,” showing the enduring nature of the link between Judas and the Jews (4.4.66–67).⁴³

⁴² “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself...and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:3–5).

⁴³ This literary motif is explored at length in chapter 4, especially in terms of the signals inherent in Ithamore’s reference to headwear.

As such, the incorporation of a Judas reference in a text featuring Jewish characters is not surprising. It is, however, a striking reversal of circumstances to draw a parallel between *Jesus* and the Jewish figure rather than *Judas* and the Jewish figure. Upending the familiar version of the story, Cary's rendering is made even more exceptional in its analogy between Jesus with a Jewish woman. Mariam is not analogized with any martyr but with Jesus himself in this incorporation of a Judas-like figure performing suicide after having betrayed the Queen of Jewry. Mariam's exceptionalism reaches a conspicuous zenith in this correlation, arguing for a markedly new vision of Jewishness than the literary record was wont to communicate.

Scholars have noted that contemporary sentiment increasingly indicted Jewish men for the death of Jesus rather than Jewish women.⁴⁴ That attitude may be reflected in the aggressive negativity directed at figures like Shylock rather than Jessica, and Barabas rather than Abigail. Yet in the world of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, the Jewish woman's innocence is not just distinguished from Jewish men's malice, but rather likened to the sinlessness of Jesus himself. The suggestive nature of this analogy demonstrates a pronounced shift in thinking about Jewishness in the period: rather than reiterating universal assumptions regarding Jewish behavior and condemnation, the play invites audiences to consider the possibility that Jews are unfairly castigated. Through the example of Mariam, the play projects a vision of Jewishness that is entirely free from the sin commonly attributed to Jewish people. To be sure, Mariam shows nothing of the "malicious opposition against the truth, and furious despite against Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world," which people like William Hughes insisted characterized the

⁴⁴ Callaghan, "Re-Reading," 171.

Jews.⁴⁵ The play's setting in a pre-Christian Judea contributes to this sinlessness, but Mariam's particular compliance with Herod's execution order, calm response to slanderous accusations, and posthumous pardoning advance this vision, as does the extraordinary and explicit analogy of her death to Jesus's. Mariam represents a refreshed model of Jewishness, uniquely distinguished from the widely acknowledged pejorative representation of the Jew in the early modern English theater.

Despite the fact that she is the most exceptional of the bunch, Mariam is not the only Jewish character in Cary's play text who deviates from expected norms. Indeed, in the ever-growing list of notable distinctions in the representation of Jewishness in Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* is the basic inclusion of more than one or two characters of this type. It is a general rule for the plays featuring Jewish stage figures to incorporate only a minor number of such roles, a testament to Jews not belonging in the space of the English theater as they did not on English soil. Barabas calls attention to this fact in *The Jew of Malta* when he laments, "Alas, our number's few" (1.1.128). The isolating impact of this staging technique effectively evokes a whole range of contemporary associations of Jewishness, including the sequestered lifestyle of ghettoization in Venice (and elsewhere) as well as the lonesome rambling of the Wandering Jew.⁴⁶

The solitariness of the Jew onstage also makes him less threatening to audiences familiar with blood libel stories involving menacing crowds of Jewish bodies. As

⁴⁵ Hughes, *Anglo-Judaeus*, 8.

⁴⁶ Like the Judas-centered treachery that derives from the time of Jesus's crucifixion, the Wandering Jew is also firmly affiliated with that era. The legend itself seems to have originated in the medieval period, however, and is more thoroughly addressed in chapter 3 of this dissertation. In addition, chapter 3 deals with the broader theme of Jewish movement in performance, including sequestration, traversing boundaries, and more.

Geraldine Heng explains through her examination of the thirteenth-century literary account of the death of Hugh of Lincoln: “Not only are the Jews of Lincoln the focal point of interest, but the ballad remembers to convocate the richest Jews from *all over England*...to share collectively in the blood guilt of the boy’s torture and killing.”⁴⁷ The entirety of the Jewish population is seen to participate in this act of cruelty against an innocent Christian boy. The portrayal reflects a much broader trend in the English literary canon of painting a generalized picture of Jewishness, composed of a uniform populace, hoard-like in thinking and action.

Chaucer’s recreation of the Lincoln account in *The Prioress’s Tale* helped to solidify this story’s place in the English imagination and to incriminate the Jewish presence for the long term. Travel narratives like Coryate’s *Crudities* and Henry Blount’s *A Voyage into the Levant* further intensified the dissimilitude between Jewish populations and familiar, Christian ones. At one point in his text, Blount refers to “the worst part” of a city as containing the “refuse people,” notably including Jews among that set.⁴⁸ The consistent incorporation of just one or a few Jewish stage figures in early modern drama is thus a method of mitigating Jewish fearsomeness for the audience. The absence of Jewish crowds palliates the Jewish element on the stage.

⁴⁷ Heng, *England and the Jews*, 76.

⁴⁸ Henry Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant: A breife relation of a iourney, lately performed by Master Henry Blunt Gentleman. from England by the way of Venice, into Dalmatia, Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, unto Gran Cairo: with particular observations concerning the moderne condition of the Turkes, and other people under that Empire* (London: Printed by I[ohn] L[egat] for Andrew Crooke, and are to bee sold at the signe of the Beare in Paules Church-yard, 1638), 42.

And yet, this is not the situation represented in Cary's closet drama. Mariam's mother and sons make numerous appearances in the text, acknowledging family ties in both directions as a reference to the establishment of Jewish life in the world of the play. Concurrently, the title and setting of the work construct an environment that unabashedly situates Jews and Jewishness in a liberated space. A similar backdrop enables William Heminge to portray his Judean population favorably in *The Jewes Tragedy* (c. 1628), a subject explored at length in chapter 1 of this dissertation. In *Mariam*, hazards normally associated with large collections of Jews are out of place, not only because of the nativist representation of Jews in a pre-Christian world, but also because they are represented by a favorable figurehead: Mariam. The Queen of Jewry's elevated status buoys up the rest of the population, advancing a positive portrayal of Jewishness generally. Herod even marvels at the absence of rioting in response to Mariam's unjust execution, when he asks:

Herod.
 Judea, how canst thou the wretches brook,
 That robbed from thee the fairest of the crew?
 You dwellers in the now deprived land,
 Wherein the matchless Mariam was bred:
 Why grasp not each of you a sword in hand,
 To aim at me your cruel sovereign's head?
 (5.1.169–174)

Having wrongfully put Mariam to death, Herod anticipates a merited act of revolt from the population. Given the literary precedent of the Jews behaving as an uncouth hoard, the English audience, too, might expect bloody turmoil to follow Mariam's execution. On the contrary, the Jews of Judea "brook." Instead of taking to arms "to aim at...[their] cruel sovereign's head," they remain peaceful and benign.

Itself a striking moment at a time that regularly prohibited the idea of a big Jewish populace, Herod's direct address to Judea communicates a recognition that Mariam

represented an entire nation. And since no response is written to Herod's monologue, the Jews are seen to quietly accept the fact of Mariam's execution just as Mariam herself does. The Jewish public's temperate response mimics Mariam's, making the Queen of Jewry a model for Jewish behavior, capable of inspiring social transformation. In other words, Mariam becomes an agent of change, not only in the embodiment of Jewish sinlessness but in the way that she models appropriate behavior for the Jews. After all, Judea is under Herod's Roman rule and thus a kind of Christian power. Mariam demonstrates how Jews should act in a nation governed by Christian authority, exhibiting deference, loyalty, and total compliance with monarchic rule. If *The Tragedy of Mariam* makes the case for the readmittance of the Jews in Cary's England, it does so with caution, contending that certain behavioral modifications may be obligatory before adjustments to reputation can follow.

Whether Cary's text does, in fact, make the case for a future featuring the cohabitation of Jews and Christian is itself debatable, though her progressive treatment of several socio-political issues argues in favor of this cause. Notable is *The Tragedy of Mariam*'s strong feminist agenda, which early modern scholarship has increasingly come to recognize in the play's emphasis on women's lives and its evaluation of the unjust patriarchal system that represses them. Cristina León Alfar sees *Mariam* privileging what she calls "feminine anxieties," including male violence against women and the vast complications of patrilineal authority.⁴⁹ David Glimp observes "egalitarian desires" in the play, represented through female agency in figures as minor as Graphina.⁵⁰ And Salome's

⁴⁹ León Alfar, "Female Trinity," 62–65.

⁵⁰ Glimp, "Extreme Cary," 46.

scrutinization of male-determined divorce proceedings has been regarded by both Dympna Callaghan and Evelyn Gajowski as advancing a form of women's liberation. The latter identifies Salome's characterization as "feminist, or proto-feminist" in presentation.⁵¹

Following from *The Tragedy of Mariam*'s sensitivity to women's issues and the basic fact of the play having been authored by a woman, some scholars have concluded that the story is "veiled autobiography."⁵² Jesse Swan even notes that "exactly who and what kind of person Elizabeth Tanfield Cary, Viscountess Falkland, could be or should be has been and continues to be the most characteristic feature of the contemplations of Cary, from the time of her life to the present."⁵³ Cary's identity as a Catholic living in post-Reformation England does suggest a certain likeness to Mariam's own position as an atypical woman living in a semi-pluralistic religious space. And yet, even if the link between personal experience and literary production drove the penning and publication of work in the early modern world as it does now, Cary's text should not be reduced to a creative journalistic exercise. Neither should parallels between author and protagonist be overemphasized, especially as Mariam's story comes from Josephus's historical source text rather than Cary's imagination. Indeed, the format alone demonstrates profound attention to the nature and implications of her product, which far exceed her personal circumstances.

⁵¹ Gajowski, "Intersecting Discourses," 16.

⁵² Callaghan, "Re-Reading," 167.

⁵³ Jesse Swan, "Elizabeth Cary," Oxford Bibliographies, Oxford University Press, June 2015, doi: 10.1093/OBO/9780195399301-0292.

As a closet drama, *The Tragedy of Mariam* is highly stylized, incorporating a chorus and the unity of place, time, and action that had long been associated with the Senecan tradition. Lengthy speeches and the absence of stage components, such as directions or references to props, also contribute to the established arrangement of the text. During Cary's lifetime, the format was considered to be politicized, especially as a result of the closet drama's popularity among aristocratic families.⁵⁴ Michelle Dowd explains that "Cary's choice of genre...heightens the cultural weight of the genealogical and familial claims presented in her tragedy."⁵⁵ To be sure, the ambiguity surrounding Herod's death at the start of *Mariam* launches an immediate investigation into family affairs, with the matters of succession, familicide, and patrilineal descent at issue from 1.1; these are evident in the scene's extensive biblical references to Jacob meriting Esau's birthright and in Mariam's claim that her son should succeed Herod on the throne instead of the children he bore with his first wife, Doris.

Many scholars are in agreement that Cary's play is self-aware of its format,⁵⁶ and that the decision to make the tragedy a closet drama was thus a socio-political gesture. It is precisely because *The Tragedy of Mariam* is a closet drama that it can be acknowledged as making the case for change, petitioning for a progressive vision that permits female agency. The strong sense of injustice directed at Mariam attests to the investment in this social issue. At the same time, Mariam's status as a Jew cannot be

⁵⁴ Dowd, "Dramaturgy," 105.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lara Dodds sees the play as being conscious of the closet drama's stylization. She recognizes time as one of the most overt expressions of the text's awareness of generic convention, as the Chorus itself comments on the fact that the play can be read within a twelve-hour period. See Dodds, "Passionate Time," 189–191.

disregarded in favor of her status as a woman. That is, if Cary contends that women should have the ability to divorce their husbands, as men do their wives—which is Salome’s underlying concern—and if she avers that patriarchal authority is tyrannical—which is illustrated through Mariam’s undeserved execution—then she also advances a defense of the Jews. The tragedy weaves Mariam’s comprehensively virtuous presentation with injurious slander and the groundless judgment of capital punishment, making her death entirely indefensible. Mariam embodies sinlessness, especially in her analogy to Jesus, and thus attests to a need to re-interrogate what was believed about Jewishness. For, in representing Jewry, *Mariam* endows the Jewish woman with the capacity to inspire new ways of thinking about Jews.

Accordingly, Mariam is represented as an agent of change, capable of inspiring reform in the behavior of her own people, and of influencing the king himself to overturn (or wish he could overturn) his order of execution. This rendering, while it is set amidst the geographically and temporally distant Judea, ventures to reconstruct the definition of Jewishness in the English cultural imagination and to make the case for reevaluating the Jews’ readmittance to England. After all, Herod’s desire to revoke his executive decision offers a strong analogy to the monarch’s ultimate authority in reversing prior mandates. That Mariam is the mediator of such a complex issue speaks volumes of Cary’s efforts in her characterization. The aforementioned analogy to Jesus relays one significant indicator of the power imbued in this particular Jewish stage figure, but the text’s parallelism

between Mariam and Sara,⁵⁷ Abraham's wife and the mother of Judeo-Christian tradition, offers another.

A Future-Oriented Vision of Jewishness

Through explicit comparisons, *The Tragedy of Mariam* connects the play's protagonist with the Old Testament figure of Sara, a signal of Cary's investment in portraying Jewishness as distinct from crucifixion- and medieval-era sinning. At the same time that this choice analogizes Mariam with a bygone image from the Hebrew Bible, it also emphasizes the potential for a future-oriented vision of Jews in England and elsewhere. After all, Sara is a mother archetype, and comparing Mariam to her advances a prospective rationale. In other words, a matriarchal analogy connotes eventuality—meaning events or outcomes yet to happen—especially at the cradle of Judeo-Christian heredity. Even if she is tethered to an origin story, Sara's foundational role is also bound up in the narrative of her descendants' futures. Mariam's comparison to Sara is a reminder that the Jews are a part of this Christian history, as well as a permanent fixture in its future advancement.

Sara gave birth to Isaac, whose son was Jacob, whose sons became the twelve tribes of Israel, from which Jesus eventually emerged. She is thus regarded as key to the generation of Christianity even as she is also considered essential in the establishment and proliferation of Judaism. As such, all Jews and Christians are believed to descend directly from her union with Abraham. Mariam's mother Alexandra illustrates this belief

⁵⁷ Cary consistently spells this name as Sara, without an "h," even though many texts write the name as "Sarah" as a reference to the name change that God makes in Gen. 17.

when she references “our forefather Abram,” initiating a play-long practice of Old Testament allusions (1.1.88). Mariam, too, regularly recalls biblical figures, calling Salome “part-Edomite,”⁵⁸ for example, in response to accusations of her own sullied reputation (1.3.235). At another point in the play, Mariam speaks to her bond with Sara when envisioning her fast-approaching afterlife. “In Heav’n shall Mariam sit in Sara’s lap,” she says (4.8.572–573). Bringing to mind a kind of celestial family reunion, Mariam conjures up a soothing portrait of life after death, where she will be comforted in the cushion of Sara’s maternal embrace. This image brings to mind a vision not unlike Michelangelo’s famous *Pietà* sculpture, which situates a serene Mary supporting the body of her crucified son. Mariam’s hope for such an afterlife is a kind of salve for the cruelty of her impending execution by order of her own husband. Conceiving of her ancestral mother as a welcoming figure is a testament to the continuity of her heredity. It is also a striking image of past and future converging: Mariam’s progenitor greeting her in a time still to come. This overlapping presentation of parentage and progeny supports the seemingly contradictory handling of Jewishness in *Mariam*, which unites the bygone rendering of Jews with a favorable and supportable presentation of their future.

It is significant that the vision of matriarchal compassion in the world of *Mariam* is represented in the form of Sara rather than of Mary. Mariam, as a Jew, would of course find comfort in the arms of the woman associated with Judaism rather than with Christianity, but the decision to imbue Sara with Mary’s sweeping and consoling energy

⁵⁸ In the Hebrew Bible, Edomites are the descendants of Esau, who sold his birthright to Jacob for food in Gen. 25. The insult connotes a lack of moral understanding and emotional intelligence, and also carries a connection to the negative coloration of Jews, as explored in further detail in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

reminds English audiences that the Jews have a parallel figure in their belief system whose value is mutually meaningful in the Christian tradition. Cary's decision to draw this analogy between Mariam and Sara is, among other acts within the play text, a gesture at unification.

Some scholars have noted that Mariam and Mary are themselves analogized in Cary's tragedy. Dympna Callaghan says that "Like Mary, Mariam represents the mercy of Christianity which...tempers the patriarchal rigor of the Old Testament."⁵⁹ Callaghan's supposition is founded in the gracious representation of Mariam juxtaposed with the unpardonable tyranny of Herod. It may also be supported by the aforementioned rhetoric of martyrdom scattered throughout the text. There may additionally be support for this argument in the proximity between the names Mariam and Mary. Nonetheless, Cary never mentions the name Mary explicitly, while she does draw outright parallels between Mariam and Sara. This emphasis on the similitude between the Queen of Jewry and the Judeo-Christian matriarch speaks to the forward-looking presentation of Mariam. After all, Sara is the source of an entire nation, her offspring favored by God himself. As the Old Testament records:

I will make of you a great nation,
And I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you
And curse him that curses you;
And all the families of the earth
Shall bless themselves by you.

(Gen. 12:2–3)

⁵⁹ Callaghan, "Re-Reading," 171.

The promise of these favors, along with the need to comply with God's commands, are the reasons that Abraham and Sara depart from their settled place in Haran in pursuit of an auspicious future, including fame, "a great nation," and an assortment of blessings. In Canaan, the Lord would provide various rewards, such as wealth, esteem, offspring, and an enduring legacy. These prospective outcomes underscore the future-oriented nature of the Abrahamic (and "Saraic") narrative.

Sara's role in this chronicle becomes obvious when she gives birth to Isaac at the age of 91, a miracle promised by God which first inspired disbelief for her and for Abraham.⁶⁰ And while childbirth is perhaps Sara's best-known contribution to the biblical account, it is not the only one she makes. Whenever she and Abraham travel to foreign places, Sara is instrumental in maintaining peaceful cross-cultural interaction. One example of this can be observed when she and Abraham venture to Egypt to seek respite from a famine:

As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sara, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. If the Egyptians see you, and think, 'she is his wife,' they will kill me and let you live. Please say that you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may remain alive thanks to you"...and because of her, it went well with Abraham.
(Gen. 12:11–16)

Sara's ability to mediate with foreign nations is tied to her physicality, as Abraham articulates in his reasoning for their safety strategy—"I know what a beautiful woman you are. If the Egyptians see you..." he rationalizes. The attention to her exceptional corporeal presentation offers another kind of resemblance with Mariam, whose beauty is

⁶⁰ The name Isaac literally means "he will laugh," a direct reference to Gen. 17, when Abraham laughed after hearing that he and Sara would have a child. Sara later laughs at the prophecy, too.

repeatedly emphasized in Cary's play and whose physical features are regarded as extraordinarily noticeable.

Sara's beauty is the basis of her power in this biblical manifestation of intercultural activity. Abraham's request to her for help, perceptible in his utterance of the word "please," also indicates that Sara is in the position of influence and control. This is not the familiar patriarchal representation of womanhood associated with the Pentateuch, but rather a rendering of female agency tied directly to female corporeality. Despite the promise of God's blessings and attention, Abraham depends on Sara to provide the safety that becomes uncertain in the face of potential confrontation. The text testifies to the couple's success in Egypt being a result of the matriarch's intervention rather than of God's. "Because of *her*, it went well," it says explicitly.

An event like this recurs in Gen. 20, when Abraham tells the king of Gerar, a different foreign nation, that Sara is his sister. As before, the ploy should be unnecessary, not only because of the repeated promises from God for a long and productive future, but because of God's explicit words: "Fear not Abraham, I am a shield to you" (Gen. 15:1). Nevertheless, Sara becomes the instrument of security for Abraham again. Sara's presence is necessary for safe, functional encounters during each of these intercultural exchanges, her beauty becoming the currency for safe passage and the lingua franca of peaceful international cooperation.

Mariam plays a similar role in Cary's text, situated between King Herod and the Jewish population of Judea. She mediates peace between the groups just as Sara does, helping to maintain tranquil socio-cultural relations even in the potentially contentious aftermath of her unjust execution. Mariam models calm endurance at her impending

death, and Judea follows suit. It is because of Mariam that Herod's actions are endured, and because of her that Jews do not "grasp...a sword in hand" and impose any physical threat to the king (5.1.173–174).

Mariam and Sara resemble each other in numerous ways, and their parallel roles in cross-cultural mediation show a critical component in Cary's case for the reevaluation of Jewishness. That is, just as Sara serves as a go-between for Abraham and the Egyptians, so too does Mariam serve as a go-between for Jewry and Herod.⁶¹ And, by extension, so too does Mariam serve as a go-between for Jews and English audiences. Whether bridging Jewry with the Romans or with the readers of *The Tragedy of Mariam*, Cary's protagonist mediates between opposing cultures in a safe and accommodating manner. Her positive representation curbs the actions of the Jews in Judea *and* the pejorative associations of Jewishness in the English imagination. Occupying this complex site of cultural interaction is key to the agency that Cary imbues in her Jewish principal. The liaising potential of the Jewish woman is also apparent in Marlovian and Shakespearean contexts, which prominently demonstrate access granted to Abigail and Jessica and their easy inclusion in various cultural settings. But it is in *The Tragedy of Mariam* that the Jewish woman's potential as an effective communicating force is more fully explored and boldly deployed.

To be sure, the analogy between Mariam and Sara is artfully applied in Cary's closet drama, not only in the comparable cross-cultural competence that both exercise but

⁶¹ Stephen Greenblatt explores the figure of Doña Marina as the ultimate go-between, mediating between Europe and the New World while serving as a possession of the latter for the benefit of the former. For more, see *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 142–145.

also in the direct links drawn between the two within the play text. As Alexandra and Mariam do before him, Herod also connects his wife with Sara in explicit terms. He first refers to her “royal line” as he addresses the population of Judea in 5.1, with diction that has the simultaneous effect of communicating Mariam’s exceptionalism while recalling the link with her Abrahamic lineage. His rhetoric generally oscillates between mourning the personal loss of a faithful wife and remorse at having mislaid his “one inestimable jewel”—language that denotes her value as a beautiful material possession (5.1.119)—yet Herod also incorporates into his 104-line eulogy a reference to the passing of an important member of a Jewish lineage:

Herod.

Oh, when you think of Herod as your king,
And owner of the pride of Palestine,
This act to your remembrance likewise bring:
'Tis I have overthrown your royal line.
Within her purer veins the blood did run,
That from her grandam Sara she derived,
Whose beldame age the love of kings hath won...
(5.1.175–181)

The extended reference to the Judeo-Christian matriarch is immediately apparent in Herod’s diction, citing Mariam’s “royal line,” “her purer veins,” and “her grandam Sara.” There is no mistaking the interconnection between Mariam and the materfamilias of the Old Testament here. Herod’s approbation of this Jewish ancestry is notable, as is his high estimation of Judaic history.

Also of note is Herod’s recognition that Mariam and Sara shared behavioral attributes in addition to a direct bloodline. The Queen of Jewry’s capacity to win over Herod is likened to Sara’s ability to win “the love of kings” in Egypt and Gerar, as told in the Book of Genesis. The familiar association of heritable physical and behavioral

Jewishness finds a positive application in the case of Mariam; her ancestor was royal and beloved, and so is she. The cross-cultural benefit of this lovable forebear proposes that all Jews can win the love of kings or that they too might have inherited favorable traits instead of the prevailing assumptions of congenital greed, criminality, or malice.

An acceptable kind of heredity is another feature in the list of similarities between Mariam and Sara. By virtue of being connected to Abrahamic parentage, Mariam is deemed a descendant of royalty; this ancestry makes her a fitting match for a king even though she is Jewish. Similarly, Sara's suitability as a marital partner is described in the Genesis story, as the couple's claims of a fraternal bond are ultimately revealed to be rooted in fact when Abraham verifies their pre-existing familial connection. "She is in truth my sister, my father's daughter though not my mother's; and she became my wife."⁶² Sara's proximity to Abraham's blood amplifies her acceptability as a partner for the father of Judaism. Their pairing was strategic, orchestrated to bolster the Abrahamic bloodline to its greatest advantage.

This tactical approach to marriage—strategic exogamy—is at play throughout the biblical narrative and is a familiar policy in English historical and political relations as well. The union between Spain's Catherine of Aragon and England's Henry Tudor would have been one famous recent example well known to Cary and her contemporary audiences. Indeed, calculated marital pairings would also have been extremely common among the general population of early modern England even if individual preference

⁶² Gen. 20:12.

increasingly defined courtship and marriage behaviors.⁶³ But the pairing of a Jew and a non-Jew would not have been tolerable, even in this shifting landscape. Heng explains that a sexual liaison between the two had been forbidden in the medieval period, one of a diverse list of prohibitions concerning Jews in England's historical record.⁶⁴

Unquestionably, laws across Europe also prohibited the socialization of Jews and non-Jews, part of the selective application of tolerance, prejudice, and rights consistent with Christian canon and thinking.⁶⁵ These endeavors sought to keep Jewishness—including Jewish religion, culture, and physicality—away from the Christian element, most often by insisting on the Jews' subjugated status.⁶⁶

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the marriage of Lorenzo and Jessica establishes a novel precedent by uniting a Jew with a Christian, though the play's "endless permutations," as Mary Janell Metzger calls them, are required to sustain this presentation.⁶⁷ For example, Jessica must willfully disobey her father's authority to be with Lorenzo, which earns the approval of audiences, but also their disapproval. "Patriarchal authority was divinely ordained.... Jessica's disregard for that authority thus

⁶³ Karen Lyon, "Wooing and Wedding: Courtship and Marriage in Early Modern England," *Folger Magazine* (Spring 2018), <https://www.folger.edu/folger-story/wooing-and-wedding-courtship-and-marriage-in-early-modern-england>.

⁶⁴ This list also includes laws concerning the "auditory volume of Jewish worship, dues payable to parishes, Christian wetnurses of male Jewish infants," and much more. See Heng, *England and the Jews*, 35.

⁶⁵ These exclusionary tactics, as they applied to Jews, were supported by such segregating efforts as the Jewish badge, among other examples of imposed and compulsory difference-making.

⁶⁶ Supersessionist logic participated in the subordinating narrative about Jewish corporeality; it also contributed significantly to anti-Jewish legislation across the Continent. See chapter 4 for a fuller look at the stage's reflection of these contemporary concerns.

⁶⁷ Metzger, "A Gentle and No Jew," 56.

creates the first obstacle to a Christian audience's expectations of her as a Christian."⁶⁸ Therefore, even if Shakespeare's rendering supports Jessica's egress in escaping her father's Jewish household, it also undermines that support by depicting her as insubordinate. This contradictory portrayal is not duplicated in *The Tragedy of Mariam*, which opens with the Jewish female protagonist already married to a (proto-)Christian man. The absence of clandestine meetings, escapes, and disapproving Jewish fathers in the closet drama points to an implicitly approved union, set in a space that is famous for diversity and cohabitation of different people and belief systems. As Dympna Callaghan puts it, "Palestine provided an unusually suitable site for... a protagonist who embodies an unstable mixture of antithetical elements..."⁶⁹ It also provides a fitting backdrop for the portrayal of heterogeneous cohabitation, diverse religious tolerance, and favorably depicted Jewishness.

Above all, *Mariam* exhibits an acceptance of the mixed union between a Jew and non-Jew by incorporating children into the plot. Though they never make an appearance, their existence is variously referenced within the text. The first scene introduces Mariam's offspring by way of discussing their right to Herod's throne after his death:

Mariam.
 My children only for his own he deemed,
 These boys that did descend from royal line
 These did he style his heirs to David's throne;
 My Alexander, if he live, shall sit
 In the majestic seat of Solomon;
 To will it so, did Herod think it fit.
 (1.1.137–142)

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Callaghan, "Re-Reading," 169.

There is no question of the children's parentage in Mariam's diction. Her use of the first-person possessive pronoun "my" and the demonstrative pronoun "these" emphasize the direct relationship between Mariam and her Jewish children. As such, while the question of patriarchal authority was circumvented in the exclusion of Jewish fathers within Cary's play, Jewish motherhood is not censored. This is, in fact, a direct contrast with *The Merchant of Venice*, which refers to Jessica's mother twice in extraordinarily brief bursts. The first is when Shylock laments the loss of a ring that Jessica took with her to Belmont and says, "It was my turquoise! I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys" (3.1.119–122). The second is when Jessica worries about the heritable traits of Jewishness and wonders whether "the sins of my mother should be visited upon me" (3.5.13). Though the absence of mothers may be common in Shakespearean tradition, the notable omission of a Jewish mother in *The Merchant of Venice*—both in Leah's long-presumed death and in the conclusion of the play before Jessica bears children—conveys an avoidance of issues like acceptable Jewish parentage, even in terms of matrilineal descent.

The Tragedy of Mariam does not shy away from these matters, in keeping with the progressive nature of the closet drama. The insistence on "my children" and "these boys" demonstrates as much. Likewise, this language emphasizes the Queen of Jewry's status as a progenitor of future kings, an issue that would have felt remarkably relevant to Cary's readers, who had recently lived through the death of Elizabeth I and the ascension of James I. *Mariam* itself was penned between 1602 and 1604,⁷⁰ the time span during

⁷⁰ "Elizabeth Cary, *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613)," in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Routledge, 1996), 47.

which that political transference took place. But 1613, the year that the quarto edition records *Mariam*'s printing, was not long after the event, and thus dynasty and monarchic inheritance would have remained top of mind for Cary's audiences. Even the play's suggestion of a Jewish body on a throne is therefore a remarkable signal for contemporary readers to accept the possibility of a favorable and even empowered Jewishness in England.

To be clear, *Mariam* does not argue for Jews to ascend the English throne or to be in any politically powerful positions. In fact, Doris's threat offers an uninhibited rejection of that possibility when she says, "I do hope this boy of mine / Shall one day come to be the death of thine," in direct response to the suggestion of *Mariam*'s son succeeding Herod as king (4.8.622–623). Doris jettisons this conceptualization, and declares that her son's ascendancy is right, while *Mariam*'s son's authority would be despicable. The play is not making a revolutionary declaration about the Jews' right to dominance or advocating for a regime change in English authority. It does, however, make an argument for Jewish emancipation from the supersession which long tyrannized it by supporting the vision of an English setting which accommodates Jewish bodies living alongside Christian ones, and even by portraying intermarriage as admissible. After all, *Mariam* maintains her Jewishness despite being married to a Christian figure, in defiance of Christian ecclesiastical and legal authority which would have her incorporated into her husband's identity.⁷¹ Instead, she maintains her Jewish personhood at the same time that she does her non-Jewish nuptial connection.

⁷¹ Metzger, "A Gentle and No Jew," 57.

“Art thou not Jewry’s queen, *and* Herod’s too?” Herod asks Mariam at one point (4.3.97; emphasis added). Mariam’s ability to straddle both roles attests to the tragedy’s representation of Mariam as an agent of change, capable of being more than just a Jew *or* a Christian’s wife. She is concurrently a Jewish woman and a wife to a non-Jew. Enabling this fused identity is Mariam’s strategic pairing with a figure in a position of influence. Like the exceptional beauty which validates Herod’s desire to be with a Jew, Mariam’s union with an authority figure allows her to be the exception to a rule concerning gendered religious identity.

Conclusion

The Tragedy of Mariam produces Jewishness without the sins commonly attributed to Jews in early modern drama. Instead of rendering her Jewish characters as greedy usurers or malicious merchants, Cary depicts her Jewish protagonist as free from acquisitive thought and omits all references to pecuniary affairs in the text. Instead of manifesting preoccupations of indelibly mutilated and physically abhorrent bodies, Cary paints Mariam as exceptionally beautiful, internally and externally. Instead of portraying Jewish figures as uniformly untrustworthy and duplicitous, Cary sketches a portrait of an authentic and morally upright person. Mariam is entirely excellent, and her positive characterization is palpable in the way her peers refer to her. Herod calls her “matchless Mariam” (5.1.172). Sohemus likewise refers to her as Herod’s “matchless wife” (3.3.192). So adulatory is Cary’s portrayal of the Jewess that Mariam is likened to Jesus, with the play unambiguously inviting audiences to recognize that she had been unjustly charged, judged, and executed. This analogy also applies a favorable Christian patina to

her presentation, rendering Mariam as an accessible agent of change, capable of altering the opinions of kings and audiences.

The play's format as a closet drama supports this novel complimentary depiction of Jews, and even though the action is set amidst the geographically and temporally distant Judea, *Mariam* ventures to reconstruct the definition of Jewishness in the English cultural imagination and make the case for readmitting Jews to England. The play is teeming with Jewish potential, particularly in the analogy between Mariam and the Judeo-Christian matriarch Sara, whose forward-looking prospects are an intrinsic part of her foundational role in the Abrahamic narrative. Her particular skill set in cross-cultural interaction supports the progressive presentation of the Jew, and her many likenesses with Mariam testify to the Jewish woman's capacity to inspire new ways of thinking and living.

In its advanced presentation of Jews and the generative power implied through Mariam's comparison to Sara, Cary's drama situates the Jewish woman as a wellspring of a new conception of Jewishness. The text solicits readers to participate in a visionary enterprise and to conceive of a Jewish body as exceedingly attractive, socially superior, and integrable. The visionary figure that results is free from the restrictions regularly associated with Jewish stage characterization and the stagecraft which would normally reinforce them. The imaginative nature of the play allows Mariam to inspire religious, social, and intellectual transformations in her world and in the world of Cary's readers. *Mariam* thus suggests that Englishness and Jewishness are not in opposition, that the English should embrace their Judaic roots, and that integration between the Jews and the English could yield mutually beneficial—and blessed—outcomes.

CHAPTER 3
DISPLACING THE EARLY MODERN STAGE JEW

Hear you me, Jessica:
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces,
But stop my house's ears, (I mean my casements).
Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter
My sober house.
SHYLOCK, William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598)¹

Shylock's instructions to keep his house secure are strikingly explicit, involving doors and casements in order to keep out a variety of sights and sounds. He expresses all of this in a repetitious direct-address style, listing for his daughter Jessica one directive after another: "Hear you me"; "Lock up"; "Clamber not you up"; "Nor thrust your head"; "Stop my house's ears"; and "Let not the sound...enter." Shylock's aggressive insistence on keeping the house "sober" communicates an anxiety about his property, which is distressingly vulnerable to non-Jewish influences. His language imparts this concern through the conspicuous emphasis on sealing outward-facing borders which are themselves articulated as permeable, not unlike human ears. It is a fascinating moment in *The Merchant of Venice*, as it not only invites audiences into the home of a Jew² but also into the psyche of one. Staging a Jewish character who worries about the infiltrating

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002), 2.5.29–37.

² The stage directions do not specify the setting, offering instead the vague introductory note beginning, "Enter Shylock..." On an imaginative level, however, the scene is clearly taking place within Shylock's house since he is preparing to leave and directing Jessica to lock up after he has departed.

potential of Christian indecency, the scene reverses the widespread contemporary fear of Jewish depravity creeping into Christian spaces. It also negates associations of clandestine, depraved Jewish behavior made popular in medieval records of ritual murder—as chronicled in Chaucer’s *The Prioress’s Tale* (c. 1387–1400) and in “The Christian Child Slain by Jews” (c. 1390), one of nine extant Marian miracle tales out of forty-one originally collected in the Vernon codex³—and of host desecration, colorfully recorded in works like Croxton’s *Play of the Sacrament* (c. 1491), and elsewhere. Instead, Shylock frets that his sedate, “sober” Jewish home is at risk of invasion by the disquieting Christian elements outside.

This scene also reveals how staging and performance engage representational elements that closet dramas do not, placing the physicality of Jewish figures and the spaces they occupy at the fore. It is the materiality of live theater that advances a greater awareness of spatial concerns and invites audiences to confront issues connected to Jewish corporeality, mobility, and accommodation. Like Shylock, spectators become concerned with this house’s porousness as well as what may be on either side of the locked thresholds. Synchronously, the conditions of the stage establish space as a locus of anxiety both for Jewish characters as well as for the theatergoers watching their bodies move across the stage.

Lacking a nation of their own, Jews were a diasporic people and considered permanent foreigners no matter where they settled. As Jewish displacement had been established in England since the 1290 Edict of Expulsion, the problematization of Jews

³ Geraldine Heng, “England’s Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews,” *MLN* 127, no. 5 (2012): S54–S85.

and the spaces they inhabited became a significant legal matter.⁴ Rather than mere discomfort, the staging of a Jew's residence, even in the foreign setting of Venice, would have been a complex proposition for Shakespearean audiences. The incorporation of this Jewish freehold in theatrical form was thus a provocative gesture and one which necessitated remediation by reminding Shylock (and spectators) of the Jew's alien status. *The Merchant of Venice* does this repeatedly in order to enforce difference between Shylock and the Christian majority that surrounds him. This alterity is most formally administered in ACT 4 with a division of the Jew's property and with a promise of his coerced conversion. During this trial scene's deliberations and among his final lines, Shylock expresses concern, once again, for his home and "the prop that doth sustain [his] house" (4.1.391–392; emphasis added). As in the start of the play, when he tells Jessica to "look to [his] house," Shylock vigorously concentrates on his domestic security (2.5.17). This thematic language stresses the condition of contemporary Jewishness as unwelcome and impermanent by calling attention to the insecurity and imminent forfeiture of the Jewish home.

The Merchant of Venice is one of a scant number of early modern English dramas featuring Jewish characters. But it is one of a much smaller number of works that include a Jewish house, and one of an even slighter extant cluster that stages a Jewish domestic space in a contemporary context. Along with Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (c. 1610), Shakespeare's

⁴ In 1275, Edward I issued the Statue of Jewry, which imposed numerous limitations on Jews living in England. In 1290, he officially expelled the Jews, making England the first European nation to do so. It was not until 1656 that the Jewish people were formally readmitted, by way of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate.

Merchant incorporates a Jewish dwelling space in a setting that resembles late sixteenth-/early seventeenth-century London life. All three of these play texts broach a range of concerns about the early modern Jew in familiar environs from a more extensive perspective than the plays which lack Jewish living spaces. This is because the physical area that the Jew occupied was as much an issue to Christians as the Jews themselves. These works actively participate in that contemporary thinking by staging Jewish property and emphasizing matters such as physicality and accommodation. The Jew's professional status, his domestic authority, and his rights and responsibilities as a non-native denizen are also under scrutiny in these dramas.

One need only consider the commonality of early modern nations expelling Jews to confirm the fact that the Jew's body and the space it takes up were inextricably tied. It was not only that European Christians rejected the idea of Jewishness, but rather that they did not want Jewish people sharing their physical spaces, sometimes even the entire space of their nation. Indeed, England's expulsion in 1290 captures this policy of rejection well, and the domino effect that took place across the European continent after this precedent offers further evidence of the comprehensive anti-Jewish approach to spatial purification. After England, the Jews were expelled from France (1306), Austria (1421), Spain (1492), Lithuania (1495), Portugal (1496), Naples and Prague (1541), Hamburg (1648–1649), and Vienna (1670).⁵ Threats and attempts at expulsions preceding and postdating the early modern period additionally attest to the fact that Jewish bodies *and* the spaces they

⁵ Dean Phillip Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 13–16.

occupied were mutually problematic. Expulsion was a fallback method of ensuring that Christian land would not be sullied by the presence of Jewish people.

The ghetto offers another early modern example of a Christian attempt to deal with the Jewish occupation of space, particularly in Venice. While the *Oxford English Dictionary* records that the word can now refer to “a quarter in a city, esp. a thickly populated slum area, inhabited by a minority group or groups,” it notes that its original usage was in reference to “the quarter in a city, chiefly in Italy, to which the Jews were restricted.”⁶ In fact, the *OED* documents the first usage of the word to be Thomas Coryate’s 1611 text *Crudities*, in which he describes “The place where the whole fraternity of the Iews dwelleth together, which is called the Ghetto.”⁷

Established in 1516, the Venetian Ghetto evolved from an isolated section of an urban capital to a complex neighborhood comprised of two distinct parts: the Ghetto Vecchio and the Ghetto Nuovo. Scholars like Cecil Roth,⁸ Julia Reinhard Lupton,⁹ and Dana Katz,¹⁰ among others, have conducted thorough studies of this physical area reserved for Jews and the ways that the space came to be subdivided. The Potentines (Spanish and Portuguese refugees) and Levantines (Jews from Turkey and the Near East) occupied the former, while the Tedesci (German Jews) lived in the latter.¹¹ Katz shows

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “ghetto (*n.*),” accessed January 2, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/78056.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Cecil Roth, “The Background of Shylock,” *Review of English Studies* 9, no. 34 (1933): 148–156.

⁹ Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Shakespeare’s Other Europe: Jews, Venice, and Civil Society,” *Social Identities* 7, no. 4 (2001): 479–491.

¹⁰ Dana E. Katz, “‘Clamber not you up to the casements’: On ghetto views and viewing,” *Jewish History* 24, no. 2 (2010): 127–153.

¹¹ Roth, “Background of Shylock,” 152.

how the ghetto, at its inception in the sixteenth century, distinguished between different types of Jews based on their mercantile contributions to Venice; the physical space reflected those economic calculations. She has also shown how these marginal sections of the city contrasted with the more communal, even “republican” atmosphere of Venice more broadly.¹² But what she and Reinhard Lupton both underscore is the restricted nature of the ghetto. Rather than just being an exclusive area to house Venice’s Jewish population, the ghetto was not far off from an internment camp. Guards on the ground, boat patrolmen, boarded windows, and other similar measures were taken to enforce Venetian law and to mitigate Jewish access to the rest of the city. As Reinhard Lupton explains:

The Venetian Ghettos, part residential quarter (guaranteeing a certain permanence of residence in a civic history marked by repeated expulsions) and part prison (with a curfew, guards, boarded windows, restricted exit and entry, and so on), became a model for Christian communities across Europe concerned to sequester the Jewish element, as well as havens for Jews in search of relative safety and prosperity.¹³

Not merely an area set aside for the explicit occupation of Jewish people, the Ghetto Vecchio and Ghetto Nuovo were bound by surveillance and various state-sanctioned constraints. Notable among them was the need to board up windows and restrict entry. These requirements directly recall Shylock’s instructions to “lock up my doors” and “stop...my casements” (2.5.30–35). Shylock’s lines in *Merchant* are reflective of the lived reality of Venetian ghettoization and the simultaneity of the ghetto’s role as both detention center and safe haven.

¹² Katz, “Clamber not you up to the casements’,” 134–136.

¹³ Reinhard Lupton, “Shakespeare’s Other Europe,” 483.

Concerns about Jewish bodies occupying physical spaces were clearly dominant in the early modern world. The contemporary use of the word “Jewry” to refer both to the Jewish people and also to the area where they dwelled substantiates this fact.¹⁴ Nations endeavored to control the movement and settlement of the Jews through formal strategies such as sequestration, dispossession, and expulsion, matching the ideological segregation that established distance between Jews and Christians from the time of the crucifixion. And yet, early modern literary scholarship has been vigorously focused on the Jew’s body rather than the physical spaces that the Jewish body occupied. In particular, there seems to be a massive amount of criticism on the detestation of Jewish men’s corporeality and to circumcision more specifically, as chapter 4 communicates through its exploration of staging the Jew. Sander Gilman,¹⁵ M. Lindsay Kaplan,¹⁶ and James Shapiro¹⁷ have all published compelling work on the subject of the Jewish physical form. From animal comparisons¹⁸ to the language of eating,¹⁹ scholarship has made impressive advances in the study of theatrical engagement with Jewish corporeal issues. In contrast, there is relatively little attention on the literary representation of physical space that the

¹⁴ Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 168.

¹⁵ Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁶ M. Lindsay Kaplan, “Constructing the Inferior Body: Medieval Theology in The Merchant of Venice,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁷ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ M. Lindsay Kaplan observes that *Merchant’s* Christians insist on Jewish bodily distortion each time they compare Shylock’s body to bestial imagery. See “Constructing the Inferior Body,” 1.

¹⁹ Kim Hall, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Renaissance Drama* NS 23 (1992): 87–111.

Jewish body occupied and, in particular, the ways that early modern English drama took up such matters.

This chapter seeks to investigate the methods that contemporary theater used to stage Jewish spaces, deal with Jewish physicality in Christian spaces, and negotiate between the Jews' simultaneous status as captives and transients. In its attention to physical issues in performance, the chapter also examines the dramatic reinvention of wandering and boundary enforcement as they pertain to Jews and the stark differences in access granted to some Jewish stage figures and denied to others. For example, how does the Jewess achieve emancipation from the limitations imposed on Jews in the period, while her male counterpart is met with insuperable resistance? And, more broadly, how does the stage make space for Jewish concerns in a context which officially rejected Judaic culture? These are the animating questions of the chapter.

Kathy Lavezzo offers an exceptional entry point for this examination in her focus on how space both fosters and troubles antisemitism in contemporary drama.²⁰ Scholarship on the structure of playhouses and the staging of performances—including work by Andrew Gurr,²¹ Tiffany Stern,²² and Evelyn Tribble²³—provides further support for the study of the Jew's physical environment in the theater. Recognizing that substantial research has been completed on Jewish corporeality, this study seeks to

²⁰ Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

²¹ Andrew Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage, 1574–1642* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²² Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

²³ Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

expand on such work by taking as its focus the places where Jewish bodies moved or were prevented from moving, the factors that thwarted or enabled such motion, and the signification of these elements in early modern drama. Ultimately, this chapter uncovers English conventions of Jewish mobility in the theater, including a spectrum of issues that include displacement, isolation, and control, as well as access, permeability, and traversal, in reflection of the contradictory representation of Jewishness in the period.

Jewish Domains and the Permeability of Borders

The *OED* recognizes multiple meanings of the word “house,” ranging from “a building for human habitation, typically and historically one that is the ordinary place of residence of a family” to “a place of worship,” to “a building, or part of a building, used for or associated with a specified occupation, activity, or purpose.”²⁴ Shylock’s aforementioned repetition of the word could refer to any of these definitions, being the place where he lives, where he performs some amount of Jewish ritual practice, and where he conducts meetings and brokers deals. Yet Shylock is not the only character in *The Merchant of Venice* who shows concern with his place of residence. After all, in the course of the play, the word “house” comes up 22 times, 14 of which are in direct reference to the Jew’s property, as in the following:

Shylock.

And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave...

(The Merchant of Venice, 1.3.186–188)

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “house (*n.*),” accessed January 3, 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/88886.

Lancelet.

Turn up on your right hand at the next

...

but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

(The Merchant of Venice, 2.2.39–42)

Portia.

Inquire the Jew's house out.

(The Merchant of Venice, 4.2.1)

Nerissa, [as Clerk].

Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?

(The Merchant of Venice, 4.2.23)

The persistent attention on Shylock's home points to the fact that it is a site of concern for Christians as well as for Jews, as Lancelet, Portia, and Nerissa all show. It is worth noting that each of these three Christian characters is either giving or seeking directions to the residence, communicating a lack of familiarity with Jewish lodgings and literalizing the innate sense of distance between Christian and Jew. Without knowledge of this Jewish location, Portia and Nerissa, in particular, exhibit the drama's fidelity to Venice's segregated cityscape. And Lancelet, in his labyrinthine-seeming description, also adds to the feeling of Jewish remoteness and inscrutability. Also of note is that Shylock's house intersects both private and public matters, as a meeting place for business transactions as well as a place of refuge for the Jew. Concomitantly, the home's interior and exterior become settings; the former is the backdrop of three scenes and the latter of two.

Immediately after he directs Jessica to secure the building's thresholds in 2.5, Shylock departs from home and leaves the property in the care of his daughter. She, in turn, disregards her father's security measures and general counsel in favor of Christian guidance. "Look out at window for all this. / There will come a Christian by, / Will be

worth a Jewess' eye," Lancelet says (2.5.42–44). And, of course, Jessica not only looks out but goes out when she elopes with Lorenzo soon after. Only a matter of lines separate her from obedient daughter to family traitor, and furthermore, from protector of property to outright thief, as she takes a substantial amount of money with her upon leaving Shylock's residence. Indeed, her reference to the word "casket" when handing off household possessions to Lorenzo at the window suggests that she makes a significant theft (2.6.34).²⁵

Jessica's departure seems to begin with spurning her father's guidelines. Instead of stopping the house's ears—and her own, with respect to the conflation of property that Shylock's home and daughter would have represented—Jessica turns a deaf ear to the Jew's words. And in an act which finalizes her desertion, she only secures the thresholds upon exiting. "I will make fast the doors and gild myself / With some more ducats, and be with you straight," she tells her new husband before the leave-taking scene ends (2.6.51–52). This gesture of locking up a space that has been robbed and abandoned demonstrates just how thoroughly Jessica ignored her father and his wishes to keep the house protected.

Her departure also violates the Venetian government's mandates, which "sought literally to bar Jews entry into Christian spaces" through blocking window views and incorporating iron grates on balconies facing Christian-populated land.²⁶ Varying levels of window and door obstruction functioned to control the social interactions of Venice's

²⁵ The use of this word also recalls the scenes taking place in Belmont, where Portia is courted by suitors who must solve a riddle involving a casket. Jessica's reference to this same object draws a parallel with Portia's marriage-seeking process even as her own casket contains Jewish property.

²⁶ Katz, "Clamber not you up to the casements'," 139.

population even on the level of the gaze. As Dana Katz argues, “The divisions of society inscribed in Venice’s urban fabric took architectonic form to define spatially the city’s common belief in Christianity.”²⁷ In other words, Venice’s physical world reinforced its social one, with neighborhoods and buildings working to maintain divisions among classes, religions, and nations in service of protecting the Christian community. Jessica’s traversal of the house’s thresholds therefore not only breaches her father’s instructions but also Venetian ordinances and proper civic conduct. In this way, *The Merchant of Venice* uses the figure of Jessica to show how windows and doors can function as complex areas that both thwart and enable Jewish transgression.

Walls, too, have been connected to the problematization of Jewish space in historical and literary records. Whether in Venetian buildings from the early modern period or the English structures from medieval times, walls have been shown to operate as boundaries that inhibit the movement of Jewish bodies even as they demarcate privacy and afford dedicated spaces for Jewish activities. Scholars like Cecil Roth and Kathy Lavezzo have shown that even the material composition of the walls surrounding Jews has drawn scrutiny:

An ongoing myth about Jews in medieval English cities is that they had a special association with stone houses. Cecil Roth writes that ‘Jews were pioneers in the art of domestic architecture’ and ‘were apparently among the first to introduce the use of stone houses for ordinary occupation into England’... Even if, as Roth and others suggest, Jews played an important role in establishing stone architecture on the island, there was nothing ‘Jewish’ about those structures...²⁸

²⁷ Ibid., 142.

²⁸ Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 16–17.

It seems that the substance of the Jewish home is just as contentious as the space those materials occupied. Certainly, John Stow's overview of Ludgate in *The Survey of London* (1598) provides evidence of some connection between Jews and stone houses in English history, though he does not indicate this construction material to be an exclusively Jewish one.²⁹ As such, like the Jews themselves, walls, windows, doors, and the substances that constitute them have become complicated in both the scholarly and historical record.

The boundaries of Jewish space were meant to block contravention. Jessica's act of crossing over and through such blocked portals is therefore transgressive on numerous levels. For, just as she oversteps limits by looking out and passing over thresholds, so too does she ultimately experience a physical breach of her own. By eloping with Lorenzo, she casts off her status as a virgin and becomes a Christian bride, inviting sexual penetration and instigating yet another type of border crossing that echoes the one she performed on the space of the stage. Tantamount to the way that Shylock's house does not remain closed off or intact from Christian infiltration, neither does his daughter's body.

Analogizing the penetration of the female body and the breach of a father's physical property is not limited to this play or to Jewish contexts. A similar event takes place in *Othello* (c. 1604) when Desdemona sneaks out of Brabantio's home to marry the tragedy's titular hero. And Juliet's creative departure in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1595) likewise employs an abrupt domestic exit in order to facilitate an unapproved romantic

²⁹ Stow tells of Ludgate's repair in 1586, when Hebrew characters were found inscribed on a stone in the gate's structure. The engraving revealed that a Jew named Rabbi Moyses had once dwelled there, likely before the expulsion. For more, see John Stow, *The Survey of London*, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (Project Gutenberg, 2013), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42959/42959-h/42959-h.htm>.

liaison. The popularity of this trope indicates something about contemporary anxieties and the threat of willful daughters making off with unsuitable partners. It also reveals an awareness of the increasing access to foreigners or people meant to serve political and economic functions but never social ones. What makes Jessica's story unique is the way that she points to her hatred of the residence as a contributing factor in her decision to leave. "Our house is Hell," she tells Lancelet (2.3.2). Her egress is therefore a method to escape from her Jewish home. In sharp contrast then from Desdemona and Juliet, Jessica divorces herself from the physical surroundings of her upbringing with intention. She is not departing from her father's residence for the sake of love—or at least, not only for love's sake—but in order to break free from Shylock and the confinement he and Venice seek to enforce.

The transgressive potential of the Jew in the context of a building's thresholds is also manifest in *The Jew of Malta* when Abigail is able to smuggle Barabas's riches out of a house through the use of an open window. Notably, she must find his fortune hidden "close underneath the plank" (1.2.297). Such a detail subtly recalls the boarded-up nature of Jewish dwellings in Venice. In addition, it evokes the historical record of Jewry in Malta, which upheld a policy of expulsion not unlike England's and thus barred the Jews entry from its spaces.³⁰ After Abigail first uncovers the hiding place, she overcomes the limits of the building and ultimately moves the material goods and herself across the thresholds that should have forestalled them both. Of course, there is more than one major difference separating this case of space traversal and the prior one. Whereas in *The Merchant of Venice*, Jessica leaves a Jewish site, in *The Jew of Malta*, Abigail enters a

³⁰ Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 174.

Christian one and then re-exits. In addition, she only does so at the direction of her father. As Lavezzo puts it, “Barabas displays a spatial know-how and undermines notions of stable and coherent Christian locations.”³¹ Evidence of this can be found across Marlowe’s drama, and this incident is just one example of his masterful space-related orchestrations.

There is more evidence of the complicated association between Jews and thresholds in *A Christian Turned Turk*, when the windows of Benwash’s house become the access point for Gallop to enter and to conduct an affair with Agar, Benwash’s wife. The sexual nature of this threshold-crossing is reminiscent of Jessica’s in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the inclusion of sailors who sneak in through the same window “to steal from a rich Jew” likewise echoes Shakespearean precedent in the theft of Jewish household goods (10.44). Benwash’s case of home insecurity differs from Shylock’s by virtue of being a break-in rather than a break-out, though the theme of traversal draws a clear parallel between the two.

In all of these dramas, there are issues with borders meant to contain Jews or thwart their access to specific spaces. While the pattern of failed boundary enforcements could be read as an anxiety about the efficacy of such measures and suggest a futility in implementing them, the selective nature of who passes through these thresholds indicates a more particular meaning. After all, Jessica’s ability to traverse Venetian portals and Abigail’s capacity to gain entry to a Maltese nunnery both reveal a selective acceptance of Jewishness in Christian environs. This corresponds to the exceptionalism of Jewish women explored at length in chapter 2 and the rationing of tolerance afforded to Jewish

³¹ Ibid., 176.

female characters even as it is withheld from their male counterparts. These acceptable stage figures contradict the general policy of rejection, and communicate much about the imaginative potential of theatrical spaces and the representation of Jewish bodies as sometimes admissible.

These moments of transgressive behavior are also remarkably helpful in imagining how drama staged Jewish houses and drew attention to the margins and thresholds of these spaces. Clues embedded in stage directions and in characters' language in *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, give the impression of height. At one point, Gratiano describes Shylock's home as a "pent-house," implying that the residence is positioned on a hill or other high spot, possibly on the topmost position of a structure serving other people or purposes. This would be in keeping with Cecil Roth's assessment of the Ghetto Nuovo as "a broad square, with ramshackle houses seeking vertically the expansion which they were unable to obtain laterally."³² Since buildings in the ghetto needed to accommodate the population forced to live there—a population which increased as Jews immigrated on account of expulsions across Europe—the construction of the ghetto buildings grew upwards. Whereas the majority of Venetian structures averaged about three or four floors only, ghetto architecture reached nine flights.³³ Illustrations from the seventeenth century, as in figure 3, show the elevation and segregated nature that typified that reality. Predating elevators and other electronic methods of escalation, such height in buildings might have offered excellent vistas of Venice but also necessitated physical exertion to climb upwards. In addition, such

³² Roth, "Background of Shylock," 153.

³³ Katz, "'Clamber not you up to the casements'," 137–138.

structures were meant to accommodate many bodies; it should be noted that Jews living in these spaces would have been sharing them. And as a moneylender, an occupation restricted to the German Jews, Shylock would technically have occupied the Ghetto Nuovo with the rest of the Tedeschi peoples.³⁴ Might he have had possession of the entire building, the place he insistently calls *his*, despite the known apportioned nature of that nonfictional living situation?



Figure 3. A Giovanni Merlo map detail that illustrates the ghetto's segregation from the rest of Venice, as well as the height and crowding of the buildings in that Jewish enclave [Venice: 1676]. "Vero e real disegno della inclita cita di Venetia." Chicago, Newberry Digital Collections.

³⁴ Roth, "Background of Shylock," 150–151.

If the lived reality of the Jews in Venice involved high structures, it was mere coincidence that *Merchant's* production duplicated that aspect of contemporary experience. Certainly, Shakespeare's work was not attempting to represent authentic Jewish Venetian life, a fact that is made apparent by the absence of the word "ghetto," its cognates, or indeed any mention of the term "foundry"—the site on which the Ghetto Nuovo was built.³⁵ There is also a noteworthy absence of the word "Jewry" in the text, which could have referred to the physical location where a collection of Jews lived.³⁶ In addition, the lack of a Jewish community in the play intimates that Shylock was one of the very few Jews in *Merchant's* world. Tubal, another moneylender, makes an appearance at one point in 3.1, and Jessica refers to a Jew named Chus later on, though he never appears on the stage. This arrangement is far from the established and crowded Venetian ghetto described by Brian Pullan as an "estate of outcasts."³⁷ In many ways, the setting of Shakespeare's play is far more fictional than the comedy's full title³⁸ would have its audiences believe.

Given the fabricated nature of Shakespeare's Venice, the staging of Shylock's house could have been imagined in the platform's pit in keeping with Jessica's insistence

³⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, "ghetto."

³⁶ In fact, Shakespeare does make use of the word "Jewry" in his works, though never in *The Merchant of Venice*. Instead he employs it in four other plays, none of which features Jewish characters: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Henry V*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Richard II*.

³⁷ Brian Pullan, *The Jews of Europe and the Inquisition of Venice, 1550–1670* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1983).

³⁸ According to quarto editions, the play's full title was, "The most excellent Historie of the *Merchant of Venice* With the extreame crueltie of *Shylocke* the Iewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of fleshe and the obtayning of *Portia* by the choyce of three chests."

on the hellish quality of the Jew's residence and as an expression of the Jew's inferior status. Speculation for the usage of this space could be supported by other moments in the text, such as Lancelet calling Shylock "a kind of devil...the very devil incarnation," and Solanio saying the "devil...comes in the likeness of a Jew" (2.2.23–27; 3.1.19–21). In response to a biblical story Shylock tells, Antonio retorts, "the devil can cite Scripture," and at the pivotal trial scene, Bassanio calls the usurer "this devil" (1.3.107; 4.1.299). Similar invectives against Jews were commonplace in early modern England and elsewhere in Europe. Joshua Trachtenberg finds that such comparisons were typical from at least the medieval period and ultimately paved the way for modern antisemitism.³⁹ The New Testament could even be argued as the source of this connection, as the Gospel of John records:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.⁴⁰

Identifying the devil as the father of the Jews, Jesus's accusation is present in every subsequent claim of the inherent malevolence of the Jewish people. The qualities of deceit and the foreign, multilingual nature of having a "native language" further substantiate these associations.⁴¹ Often, these claims of devilish affiliation extend to allegations of physical lowness as expressions of netherworld proximity. Testimony from the same chapter in the Gospel of John exacerbates these links: "You are from below,"

³⁹ Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983).

⁴⁰ John 8:44.

⁴¹ For more on the language of Jews and its representation on the period's stage, see chapter 1.

Jesus says, forever situating the Jews not only as subaltern in social rank but as hell-born and thus perpetually sinful.

Creative opportunities for staging these associations were available through the use of the trap-door. Tiffany Stern has shown that this space of the stage was considered the “entrance to hell” and that it “presumably came to represent evil.”⁴² Such a place would have been used for entrances and exits of ghosts, as in *Hamlet* or in *Macbeth*, and it would not be out of the realm of possibility to imagine its employment for Shylock’s domain. After all, the Jew is another kind of vagrant, less spectral perhaps, but similarly displaced, unwanted, and fearsome as a ghost or devil. And yet, despite the fact that contemporary productions possessed this available mechanism to draw the underworld comparison representationally, and despite the enabling nature that such a closable apparatus would have offered in illustrating Shylock’s concerns about restricted access, textual evidence does not suggest its use.

On the contrary, the Jew’s house in the English Renaissance theater was staged at a high elevation. Supporting evidence includes Gratiano’s “pent-house” reference and stage directions situating Jessica as being high up. The text states, “*Enter JESSICA, above, in boy’s clothes*” (2.6.SD). She charges Lorenzo to catch money that she throws downwards, and Lorenzo tellingly calls out in return, “*Descend*, for you must be my torchbearer” (2.6.41; emphasis added). There is little doubt that the staging of the house of Shakespeare’s Jew is set above. The same was true for *The Jew of Malta*. The verticality of Barabas’s home is also implied in the stage directions when Abigail

⁴² Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 25–26.

recovers her father's riches in 2.1. After explicitly positioning her as appearing from above, the directions note her downward motion in handing over the bags of money:

Abigail.

Here. [*Throws down bags*] Hast thou't?

There's more, and more, and more.

(*The Jew of Malta*, 2.1.46–47)

The early modern English theater opts to put the Jew in a superior position rather than a substandard one, whether it is set in Venice or in Malta. This staging demonstrates a remarkable contradiction about the representation of Jews and the spaces they occupied and traversed in contemporary drama. Despite inherited doctrine and built-in staging techniques to fulfill supersessionist ideology and a host of subordinating logic, plays arranged Jewish houses in lofty postures.

Displacement on the Stage

Deferential as the elevated positions of Jewish houses may seem in the context of figures who are otherwise considered to be base and problematic, such staging does not mean that the theater was seeking to project a dignified living arrangement onto the Jewish characters it portrayed. Rather, these depictions first embellished the Jews' status as unduly high in order to justify their later depositioning. In all cases where a Jewish home is rendered in the English Renaissance theater, the plots eventually enforce the need for displacement and dispossession; this is a principal element of representing Jewishness, repeatedly expressed in the confiscation or destruction of Jewish property and the unavoidable or deserving nature of that consequence.

A consummate example of this can be observed in *The Jew of Malta* when Turkish emissaries arrive and demand the settlement of a debt owed by the Maltese

government, “the ten years’ tribute that remains unpaid” (1.2.7). Ferneze, the governor of Malta, demurs, declares the cost too high, and then acquiesces under Turkish pressure. After negotiating a month’s time to raise the funds, he announces his expectation of Jewish pecuniary support to meet the urgent need for cash. “We may have time to make collection / Amongst the inhabitants of Malta for’t,” he says (1.2.20–21). Soon after, he declares, “Go, one, and call those Jews of Malta hither” (1.2.34). It is worth noting that the Jews of Malta are referred to as “inhabitants,” as they occupy space in the nation but are not full citizens of it. This careful diction presages the familiar discriminatory policy that will soon be enforced even if the instigating circumstances with the Turks is itself a fictional scenario.⁴³

Barabas and three Jews enter, an unrealistically small number meant to represent the entirety of the Jewish population. Ferneze gives a quick account of the situation and states his expectation that the Jews should cover the debt. Barabas balks at the prospect, while Ferneze doubles down. Eventually, he orders an officer to read a decree concerning the Jews’ payment on behalf of the nation:

Officer (reads).

‘First, the tribute money of the Turks shall all be levied amongst the Jews, and each of them to pay one half of his estate.’

...

‘Secondly, he that denies to pay shall straight become a Christian.’

...

‘Lastly, he that denies to pay shall absolutely lose all he has.’

(The Jew of Malta, 1.2.68–77)

⁴³ Lavezzo notes that Malta was never actually taken by the Turks, though there had been a siege in 1565. In fact, she shows that Malta was considered impregnable by military standards and came to stand for “the construction of a firm and solid defense against the ‘infidel’.” For more, see Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 175–178.

The Jews are duty-bound to cover entirely the demands of the debt owed by Malta. Such a reallocation of Jewish assets in support of Christian need prefaces the dispossession of Barabas's home. After repeated attempts to dispute his financial obligation, Barabas ultimately loses "all he has" in keeping with the last line of the officer's decree. And when a knight suggests seizing the Jew's property and converting it into a nunnery, Ferneze immediately confirms: "It shall be so" (1.2.131).

The solution of reclaiming and redistributing Jewish property in service of a Christian cause would have made perfect sense in a contemporary context. Saskia Zinsser-Krys has shown that the Jew's function had been, for centuries, to provide economic aid to the nations where they were permitted to reside. "The Anglo-Jewish community served as the 'royal milch-cow' with a ready source of revenue," she writes of the longstanding monetary function expected of Jews in medieval England.⁴⁴ Abraham Oz likewise asserts that Jews were so consistently associated with all things financial that their representation on the stage mimicked the intrinsic interconnection between the Jew and the material object, as evidenced by "Shylock's character [being] epitomized as the commodification of any concept, value, or moral tenet."⁴⁵ In Marlowe's text, the Jew also represents materiality, and the Maltese government seems to find expansive uses for his money and property. First his wealth is funneled to resolve the Turkish debt, then his house is requisitioned by the Church, and eventually his daughter is forfeited to the nunnery.

⁴⁴ Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew*, 52–53.

⁴⁵ Abraham Oz, "Early Mimics: Shylock, Machiavelli, and the Commodification of Nationhood," in *Religious Diversity and Early Modern English Texts: Catholic, Judaic, Feminist, and Secular Dimensions*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Chanita Goldblatt (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 109.

Barabas's disbelief at even the initial losses is captured soon after his confrontation with Ferneze, when he tells Abigail of the fortune he has hidden away in their home:

Abigail.
Where, father?

Barabas.
In my house, my girl.

Abigail.
Then shall they ne'er be seen of Barabas,
For they have seized upon thy house and wares.

Barabas.
But they will give me leave once more, I trow,
To go into my house.

Abigail.
That may they not,
For there I left the governor placing nuns,
Displacing me; and of thy house they mean
To make a nunnery, where none but their own sect
Must enter in; men generally barred.

(The Jew of Malta, 1.2.249–258)

Their exchange is a strange one. It is not only that Barabas does not seem to know about the seizure of his house—having only moments earlier learned that he would be forced to give up his fortune to save Malta and his physical property to accommodate nuns—but that he cannot imagine the possibility of being forbidden entry, even just one more time. To him, the space is permanently his, as he insists that he will go “in *my house*...” and “into *my house*,” language which Abigail echoes. As in Shakespeare's work, such repetition of the word “house” reveals an anxiety about Jewish residences. In this Marlovian context, it also discloses how Jewish possession is a matter of authority. Barabas may live in Malta, but he will never be a citizen. He may be an inhabitant, but he

will never belong. His place of residence is the property of the nation just as his finances are, and his powerlessness to access either one after they've been claimed by the government discloses the bounds of Jewish security. The hollow meaning of Barabas's repeated use of the word "my" reinforces that limitation.

The confiscation and reallocation of Jewish property exhibited in the case of Barabas and Abigail in *The Jew of Malta* offers a particularly ripe illustration of Jewish displacement. For one thing, it reduces the Jew's status from elevated to subordinate in the forfeiture of a "goodly house" (1.2.319). For another, it exhibits a sacrifice to benefit Christian favor. It is this act of supersessionism which often defines the characteristic displacement of the Jewish domain in English Renaissance theater, entailing the dismantling of Jewish foundations to build up Christian institutions and ensure their longevity. This is a literal interpretation of Pauline ideology which purports that the New Testament replaced Mosaic Law and that Christians took from the Jews the status of the Chosen People.

Supersessionism can take numerous forms in literary representation, all meant to situate the Jew in an inferior position while reinforcing Christian superiority. One application of supersessionism can be seen in the claims of the Jew's corporeal difference. M. Lindsay Kaplan has observed such evidence in *Merchant*, when Shylock's stage peers insist on his bodily distortion. She writes, "The play's characters describe the Jew's body as inanimate, bestial, dark, and demonic in an attempt to construct a physical inferiority that will return him to his rightful place of subjection."⁴⁶ The lesser status of the Jew, as it is on the spiritual level in the replacement of Judaic theology for a superior

⁴⁶ Kaplan, "Constructing the Inferior Body," 1.

Christian doctrine, is thus communicated on the physical level as well. The repetitious nature of these insults, persistently reducing the Jew's anatomy to the body of an animal or devil, demonstrates a diligence in the supersessionist project, one which chapter 4 explores further in the embodiment of Jewishness on the stage.

Another manifestation of Christian supersessionism is evident in the removal of Jewish characters to make way for Christian ones, as is the case in *The Jew of Malta*. Abigail's words call attention to this literal example of displacement when she reports, "For there I left the governor *placing* nuns, / *Displacing* me" (1.2.255–256; emphasis added). Such language emphasizes the physicality of the event by engaging the diction of enforced movement. It also brings up historical policies of Jewish-Christian conduct⁴⁷ as well as the contemporary concerns of Jewish bodies not belonging in the same physical locations as Christian ones. "Where none but their own sect / Must enter in," Abigail elucidates, expounding on the exclusionary rationale of ghettoization and expulsion measures. The arrival of Christians in *The Jew of Malta* necessarily means the departure of the Jews, even if that exit is imposed by government officials and not spiritual ones.

A similar event occurs in *The Merchant of Venice*, when Jessica departs from her Jewish home to be with Lorenzo in his Christian world. The house's emptiness after her abandonment communicates a loss of habitation and family in the same way that Barabas's dispossession does. In both cases, there is a simultaneous surrender of property

⁴⁷ Geraldine Heng has argued that a "panopticon" was established to superintend Jewish-Christian relations, administer segregating policies, and enforce difference at all levels of English life. For more, see Geraldine Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

and futurity. Whether through the disunion of family, deprivation of place, or the impediment to settlement, these spatial applications of supersessionism reflect familiar anti-Jewish policy.

Lisa Lampert-Weissig has shown that supersessionism was often employed in medieval stories to promote Pauline thinking and that “the movement of supersession or of conversion [was] seen as a movement from disorder to order, from fragmentation to wholeness.”⁴⁸ The logic of this supposition makes sense in the context of tales such as Croxton’s *Play of the Sacrament*, in which Jonathas, Jason, Jasdon, Malchus, and Masphat (all Jews) perform vile acts on a consecrated host, repent, and convert by the story’s conclusion. This finale is meant to be read as a happy ending, with the miraculous healing of Jonathas’s arm, the restoration of the host, and the successful conversion of five Jews. The simultaneous reconstruction of corporeal and religious objects celebrates the comprehensive nature of Christian wholeness, and yokes the right to a complete life with Christian observance.

The same straightforward reading does not apply in the case of Marlowe’s play. Certainly, there is justification for Ferneze’s claim to the Jew’s home, and its donation to the cause of the Church is also fairly uncomplicated. But the aforementioned scene in which Barabas and Abigail are shown to be struggling while interpreting their new reality indicates a more nuanced presentation of supersessionism. Instead of an unambiguous display of Christian ascendancy, the father-daughter dialogue stages a complex moment that provokes compassion in the zoomed-in perspective of Jewish familial issues, and

⁴⁸ Lisa Lampert-Weissig, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 104.

invites audiences to reconsider the merit of evacuation policies. Even more, the confiscation of Barabas's home operates as a catalyst for the various harms he later inflicts; this provides a narrative of warranted revenge. Rather than depicting the Jew with the basic impulse of bloodlust and an innate need to destroy Christian institutions, *The Jew of Malta* supplies Barabas with grounds for anger. This presentation, like the elevated nature of the Jews' homes onstage, does not necessarily connote a deferential treatment, but it does weave contradictory elements into the theatrical representation of Jewishness.

According to Lavezzo, the high volatility surrounding Jewish houses is rooted in the fact that space is a natural extension of the material (carnal) obsession associated with Jews.⁴⁹ This consternation was felt on both sides: for the Christians whose spaces were being invaded by foreign Jewish bodies, and for the Jews whose interior lives were under constant scrutiny, whose bodies were problematized, and whose security was never assured. In English Renaissance drama, conjuring Jewish spaces necessarily meant staging both points of view. Audiences encountered alterity in Jewish characters, incorporated by various means (and explored further in chapter 4). These differences certainly facilitated the dramatic action and the anti-Jewish sentiment scholars have noted at length. But audiences were also confronted with intimate perspectives of the Jewish experience and were even invited to share in moments of Jewish anxieties, including those related to displacement and dispossession. This is certainly the case in *A Christian Turned Turk* when Benwash's home is in peril:

Rabshake.
Fire, fire!

⁴⁹ Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 8.

Benwash.

An ocean overwhelm thee! Where is the fire, slave?

Rabshake.

At the Jew's house! Benwash his house—your house, sir!

(A Christian Turned Turk, 11.1–3)

The familiar repetition of the word “house,” reminiscent of Marlowe’s play and Shakespeare’s, once again belabors the anxiety connected to the Jew’s home security. Benwash later mimics this agitation when he says, “It’s mine own house,” and adds his own brand of spatial language redundancy: “Room, room, room! I have it, I have it! Room, room, room!” (11.11; 11.15–16). Of course, word repetition is reflective of the emotional response to discovering such a crisis—and certainly, the actor performing the role would have used such cues to inspire the level of passion necessary for the scene⁵⁰—but the particular focus on the word “room” recalls the stage’s other frantic linguistic moments which correlate Jews and insecurity with physical spaces. Rabshake’s inability to articulate where the fire is occurring similarly highlights this incertitude, with the transference of “the Jew’s house” to “Benwash his house” and finally to “your house” conferring stock angst about Jewish housing.

Early modern England had upheld anti-Jewish policies for centuries and still did at the time of this play’s creation. Given the supposed apathy or antipathy towards Jews and their misfortunes, the scene’s intense concerns with Benwash’s property are puzzling. Is the audience meant to share in his anxieties and in Rabshake’s too? The very suggestion disputes historical and scholarly views on English attitudes towards Jewry.

⁵⁰ See Tiffany Stern’s study of word repetition in drama as a kind of acting cue for performance in *Making Shakespeare*, 132.

And yet, staging such tension linked with Jewish insecurity broaches a level of compassion that cannot be ignored. Like the humiliating intimacy of Barabas's dialogue with Abigail after the loss of their home, this threat to Benwash's residence similarly invites spectators to experience the Jewish point of view and to consider the interior world of the Jews.

Benwash's residence is saved when the fire migrates to ships in the harbor instead of destroying his property. As such, the threat to his Jewish home comes to represent danger for all of Tunis and the mercantile trade in which it participates. Even as the incident recalls massacres of Jews and the historical destruction of Jewish property in this moment of violence and mayhem,⁵¹ it simultaneously undermines the rightness of that procedure. In Daborne's text, Christian dominance as represented by physical displacement, does not demonstrate the supersessionist logic of disorder to order that Lampert-Weissig discerns in the medieval record. Instead, Benwash's house-fire, which spreads to the shipyard, reveals a complex interdependence of Jews and the communities in which they lived. For the economic functions they often served, Jews earned some amount of fixedness, and disrupting that security, in *A Christian Turned Turk*, translates to peril for the broader public.

Despite this acknowledged fiduciary support to the community, Jewish characters set in contemporary contexts are not usually presented as part of an expansive group. Furthermore, there are often no communal gathering places for the Jews in any of the

⁵¹ Bell traces these destructive historical events in premodern European chronicles, which include the massacre of Jews in Prague (1389), attacks on the Jewish Quarter in Fez (1465) and on New Christians—many of whom converted from Judaism—in Lisbon (1506), as well as the burning of Marranos in Ancona (1556). For more, see Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World*, 13–16.

contemporary settings where Jewish characters are cast, reinforcing the theme of Jewish isolation and dislocation. Reports by travel ethnographers like Henry Blount made English locals aware of synagogues as at least one Jewish institution that would have functioned as a site for Jewish assembly and religious practice.⁵² Fynes Moryson also described the Jews abroad, observing their domestic situations in various European contexts.⁵³ “...Myself passed a village that was only inhabited by Jews,” he says at one point of his time in Poland, surprise evident in his insistence on having witnessed a place entirely populated by Jewish people.⁵⁴ Of Italy, he writes:

Thus at Venice they haue a Court yearde closed with gates and capable of great Nombres, wherin they dwell. At Rome they haue whole streetes allowed for their habitation, and live there in great number, paying their tribute to the Pope at Shrotyde, when they are allowed to shewe publike games.⁵⁵

Like Coryate’s observations of the Venetian Ghetto, Moryson’s record indicates awareness of defined Jewish spaces abroad and “great Nombres” of Jews in those areas. He also observes the range of privileges afforded to the enclaves of Jews settled across

⁵² Henry Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant: A breife relation of a iourney, lately performed by Master Henry Blunt Gentleman. from England by the way of Venice, into Dalmatia, Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, unto Gran Cairo: with particular observations concerning the moderne condition of the Turkes, and other people under that Empire* (London: Printed by I[ohn] L[egat] for Andrew Crooke, and are to bee sold at the signe of the Beare in Paules Church-yard, 1638).

⁵³ Fynes Moryson, *Shakespeare’s Europe: a survey of the condition of Europe at the end of the 16th century, being unpublished chapters of Fynes Moryson’s Itinerary (1617) With an introd. and an account of Fynes Moryson’s career by Charles Hughes*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: B. Blom, 1967).

⁵⁴ Moryson remarks that Jews in Poland are permitted to gather, trade, work, and live more freely than elsewhere. “Generally in Poland they live in equall right with Christians,” he writes, citing the Polish King’s Jewish concubine as the reason for that egalitarian lifestyle. For more, see Moryson, *Shakespeare’s Europe*, 488.

⁵⁵ Moryson, *Shakespeare’s Europe*, 488.

Europe. In Rome, for example, he notes their ability to “shewe publike games,” among other dispensations that “allow for their habitation.”

The lack of such specialized margins and the populace to fill them in the works of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Daborne—who venture to create private dwellings for their contemporary stage Jews—proposes that such types of spatial rationing were off-limits in English theater as they were on English soil. These playwrights cemented the concept of the displaced Jew by only partially accommodating his lifestyle: staging his home, then directing its forfeiture; positioning him as an important community member, but depriving his sense of community; setting him in environments with apparent Jewish enclaves, but divesting him of institutional connections. In these ways, English Renaissance drama actively incorporated contradiction into the spatial concerns of Jewish stage representation.

The Wandering Jews of the English Imagination

The space of the early modern English theater was not seeking to faithfully recreate the locales it used as settings, or to reproduce the lived experience of the people who dwelled there. Rather, the stage creatively exported the English imagination and its considerations to faraway places. Audiences were invited to project their interests, fears, hopes, and questions onto these unfamiliar spaces and the foreign characters that did not actually exist outside of the playhouse. This exploratory phenomenon is one that Daniel Vitkus,⁵⁶ among others, have related to the *mappaemundi*, or the mapping of the world:

⁵⁶ Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

English playwrights and players...were mapping out an imaginary geography that was culture-bound, partial, and selective—as all maps and representations are. Many of the plays set in the Mediterranean merely deploy the foreign setting as an exotic framework in which to depict English concerns and English behavior...⁵⁷

In fact, the speculative nature of the theater fostered these depictions, incorporating characters who could not technically set foot on English soil and controlling their actions and words through the generative fancy of pen and performer. The Jewish stage figure set in the Mediterranean is an excellent example, particularly since the Jews were officially forbidden from crossing English borders but were encountered commonly in foreign contexts. Written by a Christian Englishman and performed by one too, the contemporary stage Jew generally reflected English associations and significance rather than Jewish ones.

One such association of English spectatorship was the Wandering Jew, a myth deriving from at least the medieval period, the earliest version of his story tracing back to the sixth century.⁵⁸ While the legend varies somewhat, the immortal figure is said to have roamed since the time of Jesus's crucifixion. Punished for taunting the son of God at the time of his death, this Jewish wanderer is bound to meander until Christ's return, destined in the interim to share his personal history with anyone he crosses in his travels.

Vagrancy was thus a longstanding association of Jewishness across Europe, including in England where this myth extended.⁵⁹ In fact, some of the most famous versions of his

⁵⁷ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 29.

⁵⁸ Lisa Lampert-Weissig, "The Transnational Wandering Jew and the Medieval English Nation," *Literature Compass* 13, no. 12 (2016): 772.

⁵⁹ Sources disagree on the actual genesis of this Wandering Jew, and various cultures have claimed it as their own. The consistency of the tales concerning its existence and general state of homelessness mean that the figure was a fairly recognizable one.

story are those written by Roger of Wendover, author of *Flores* (1228), and Matthew Paris, author of *Chronica Majora* (1259). In both cases, as in many others which tell the immortal Jew's tale, the figure "carries with him the trace—or taint—of realms from beyond."⁶⁰ This often takes a linguistic shape, such that he speaks a foreign language or maintains vestiges of a foreign accent. These various elements are firmly embedded in the representation of Jews in the early modern theater, as the legend remained quite relevant to the English imagination at the time. A German pamphlet cataloging the tale, called *Kurtze Beschreibung und Erzählung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus* ("Short Description and Tale of a Jew with the Name Ahasuerus"), was translated to English in 1609, illustrating the endurance of the narrative some thousand years after its initial emergence. Echoes of it can be observed quite plainly in the example of Barabas, who narrates an autobiography in a vividly detailed speech in ACT 2 of *The Jew of Malta* and also exhibits facility with languages, including Latin, French, and Italian.⁶¹ In truth, this negotiation of myth and reality plays out in all contemporary Jewish stage characterizations. The diasporic nature of Jewish living situations, the Jews' intrinsic strangeness or difference, and their inexorable movement all recall the mythos of wandering.

As such, mobility became a primary quality of Jewishness. Despite the fabulous essence of the Wandering Jew, which fed the appetite of this fantasy, awareness of the real-life condition of Jewish placelessness blurred the line between fiction and realism. That is, the Jews of contemporary Europe were actually migratory, traveling as a result of

⁶⁰ Lampert-Weissig, "Transnational Wandering Jew," 771.

⁶¹ See chapter 1 for more on contemporary beliefs concerning Jewish linguistic prowess.

religious persecution and, in the process, establishing broad networks of mercantile trade. They became well known for their expansive commercial reach, and so the Jew of the Renaissance stage became a complex hybrid reflective of imaginative energy *and* factuality.

David Ruderman has examined the economic benefit of early modern Jewry being part of a diasporic nation and has found that the Jews' economic success was wholly intertwined with their migratory nature.⁶² He observes:

In their wanderings they fulfilled a highly distinctive function in the commercial and colonial expansion of Europe well into the eighteenth century. They created Jewish commercial networks following maritime rather than overland routes, importing non-European products over long distances, becoming a vital link between east and west, between northern and southern Europe, and stretching from Amsterdam and Hamburg to Recife and Curacao, to Izmir and Aleppo, and even to the far east.⁶³

In actuality as in the imagination, therefore, the Jews were travelers, in constant motion. Ruderman's word choice in identifying their movement as "wanderings" clearly links this idea of Jewish mercantile activity to the mythical drifting of the Wandering Jew. A similar kind of conflation is evident in the English Renaissance stage figure. At the same time that Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Daborne imaginatively penned Jews for dramatic performance, they registered actual emigrant matters onto those characters through setting, plot, and thematic issues like transience and misunderstanding.

It should be noted that the idea of traveling was not itself considered a negative venture in the early modern period, particularly in England, where texts focused on travel developed into a multifaceted genre unto itself. Inspired by such works as Coryate's

⁶² David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 34.

Crudities—the travelogue which first recorded the use of the word “ghetto”— and William Bourne’s *A booke called the Treasure for Traueilers* (1583), wealthy Englishmen voyaged across the Continent on Grand Tours, picking up new languages and skills and also building networks with other affluent Christian travelers on similar trips, as Elizabeth Williamson and others have noted.⁶⁴ “By the late sixteenth century, sending and copying ‘heads’ of information detailing what to gather to best please one’s contacts or sponsors was a secure epistolary genre, with well-known letters circulating in manuscript,” Williamson observes.⁶⁵ Letter-writing was complemented by travel reports and published personal diaries from time spent abroad, all popular among those who could not afford such grand expeditions. For example, the publication record shows that Richard Hakluyt’s *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principle Navigations Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) was so well-received that it went through two different editions within Hakluyt’s lifetime.⁶⁶ Other famous works from the burgeoning contemporary travel genre included *A geographical historie of Africa* (1600) by John Leo Africanus; *The Navigations, Peregrinations, and Voyages Made into Turkey* (1585) by Nicolas de Nicolay; and *A Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1747) by Thomas Osborne, to name a few. In many of these texts, the travelers are regarded as heroic, escaping threatening circumstances involving pirates, thieves, and myriad other

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Williamson, “‘Fishing after News’ and the Ars Apodemica: The Intelligencing Role of the Educational Traveller in the Late Sixteenth Century” in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joan Raymond and Noah Moxham (Boston: Brill, 2016).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 546.

⁶⁶ Jack Beeching, “Introduction” in *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principle Navigations Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, by Richard Hakluyt (Harmondsworth, England: Baltimore Penguin Books, 1982), 9.

non-Christian menaces. In one of the tales in Hakluyt's book, for example, there is an entry titled "A Voyage Made into Barbary" dated 1583; the account describes the capture of an English ship called the *Jesus*, which Turks and "Christian caitiffs" loot, then steal the clothes off the backs of the Englishmen aboard, and even purloin their English Bibles.⁶⁷ The confluence of physical and religious peril is overt in such stories, which often register the endangerment of Christian decency upon facing hostile Muslims or Jews in foreign settings. The entertainment value of these treacherous tales also contributed to their popularity.

A similar mode appears in the literary adaptations of travel writing, including in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). On his continental journey, protagonist Jack Wilton encounters innumerable dangers, including one vicious Jew named Zadok with festering leg sores and palpable self-hatred, a figure explored further in chapter 4 of this dissertation. The story represents travel as a valiant act and features movement as an intrinsic—and entertaining—part of its hero's growth. In Nashe's text, as was the case in Blount's, the traveler is not the menacing character, but he does encounter perilous people in the course of his travels. And once again, Jews are among that latter set. In this way, the selective application of discrimination regards travel for recreation or nation-building as acceptable, but travel for necessity as indecent.

The pursuit and dissemination of knowledge represented another reasonable motivation for travel, as Henry Blount elucidates in his chronicle *A Voyage into the Levant* (1638). He writes:

Intellectual complexions have no desire so strong, as that of *knowledge*; nor is any knowledge unto man so certaine, and pertinent, as that of

⁶⁷ Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries*, 246.

humane affaires: This *experience* advances best, in observing of people, whose *institutions* much differ from ours; for customes comformable to our owne, or to such wherewith we are already acquainted, doe but repeat our old observations, with little acquist of new.⁶⁸

According to Blount, travel was instructive, promoting knowledge of “human affairs” through the direct observation of people in their native spaces. Since foreigners were subject to “natural dispositions, which are originally inspired and composed by the Climate whose ayre, and influence they receive,” Blount’s conclusion was that visiting those climates would provide him with robust educational opportunities.

The first-person nature of *A Voyage into the Levant* positions the itinerant Blount as a valuable and valorous agent of English exploration. Since his journey *and* report offer important benefit to the nation, traveling, in his case, is portrayed as exceptionally positive. Similar to the intrepid service of the sailors who confront Turkish pirates or to the educational trials of adventurers on Grand Tours, the theme of travel is rendered as a constructive and gallant pastime. The same cannot be said in the case of the Jew, whose associations with travel are regarded as wholly problematic. Rather than an explorer, the Jew is a drifter; rather than a tourist, he is a truant. His impetus for travel is not the noble pursuit of knowledge for himself or for others, but rather the reactive consequence of being himself undesirable and necessarily displaced. The Jew migrates on account of affliction. He is doomed to wander as a result of the vile acts he performed at the time of Christ’s death; or he is expelled from a place for the objectionable quality of being Jewish; or he is a fugitive on the run from the authorities for performing wicked deeds in

⁶⁸ Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 1.

keeping with his malicious nature; or his acquisitive appetite urges him to keep moving around in order to expand his insatiable mercantile reach.

The incipient evil of the traveling Jew narrative is staged most overtly in a long speech in *The Jew of Malta*:

Barabas.

As for myself, I walk abroad o' nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls:
Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
I am content to lose some of my crowns,
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'em go pinion'd along by my door.
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practice first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in ure
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells:
And, after that, was I an engineer,
And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,
Under pretence of helping Charles the Fifth,
Slew friend and enemy with my stratagems:
Then, after that, was I an usurer,
And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
And tricks belonging unto brokery,
I fill'd the gaols with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals;
And every moon made some or other mad,
And now and then one hang himself for grief,
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll
How I with interest tormented him.
But mark how I am blest for plaguing them;—
I have as much coin as will buy the town.

(*The Jew of Malta*, 2.3.175–201)

This personal narrative of heinous acts of violence conjures up images of aimless Jewish vagrants perpetrating evil for its own sake. Barabas's assertion of enriching priests with burials also offers a vague reference to blood libel stories, including now canonical tales like that of Little Hugh of Lincoln, whose death was not only attributed to Jews but

whose bodily disposal was inextricably linked with their iniquity. According to the historical record, summarized deftly by Geraldine Heng in her survey of the history of the Jews in England,⁶⁹ the local Jewish population had found the body of the nine-year-old boy and moved it away from the area of discovery so as not to be blamed for the child's death. Its eventual uncovering not only provoked accusations of murder but also of funerary irreverence. "The panicked behavior of the Jews who were gathered in Lincoln...vocalizes for us—an audience distanced by time and space—the sense of danger and fragility that characterized the quotidian existence of a minority community used to periodic violence from the majority population within which the minority lived, and by which it was surrounded," Heng observes.⁷⁰ The indictment Jews feared was not assumed based on the circumstantial proximity alone, but rather on a regularity of being blamed for criminal activity, especially in its connection to the violation of Christian innocence. A similar accusation arose in Trent, after the discovery of a corpse belonging to a boy named Simon. The reputation of Jewish menace, linked with Christian suffering, became convention through the repetition of such stories and contributed to the mythos of perpetual treachery and ill fit, which the Wandering Jew lore also advanced.

Barabas's disturbing claims evoke many of these associations of Jewish misdeeds. In his reference to "studying physic," for example, he offers just enough information to recall Roderigo (Ruy) Lopez, the Jewish physician sentenced to death for an alleged attempt on the life of Queen Elizabeth I. Marlowe makes another reference to this infamous Jew in *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1588) when the horse-courser exclaims, "Doctor

⁶⁹ Geraldine Heng, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁷⁰ Heng, *England and the Jews*, 2.

Lopus was never such a doctor” (4.1.132–133). Given the playwright’s familiarity with the Jewish medical man, it is likely that he also had Lopez in mind when composing Barabas’s words. Of course, Marlowe’s Jew additionally makes blatant declarations of perverse usury, including “extorting, cozening, forfeiting, and tricks belonging unto brokery.” This blend of fiscal misconduct conjures up the worst Western stereotypes of Jewish financial practice and would have been familiar to an early modern English audience, just as the other malicious qualities espoused in Barabas’s speech would have been.

Marlowe actively reinforces the lived and fictional conglomerations of Jewishness in the English imagination. The emphasis on Barabas’s traveling in order to commit these wicked deeds is key to this representation. In the space of the 28 lines of the outrageous speech, Barabas emphasizes that he needed to “walk,” “go about,” and travel to numerous countries, including Italy, France, and Germany in order to perpetrate his crimes. This attention to transnational movement affirms the well-known connection to the vagrant lifestyle of the mythical wanderer of biblical origin and to the “vagabond nation” of which he is a member.⁷¹ This is clearly not the same kind of travel associated with Jack Wilton or Henry Blount. Far from the motivating promise of adventure or culture-seeking knowledge, the Jew’s movement is provoked by disturbing inclinations and societal rejection.

Ultimately, the early modern stage Jew embodies the Wandering Jew in every character it depicts through inherent foreignness and inexorable migration. The

⁷¹ James Shapiro uses the term “vagabond nation” to refer to the collective, itinerant nature of early modern English Jewry. For more, see Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 174–176.

simultaneous awareness of Jewry's far-reaching mercantile responsibilities and diasporic lifestyles amplified these associations of Jewish itinerancy. The stage's negotiation of these mobility-related issues is invoked when characters like Barabas express a desire to "walk abroad o' nights," or when those like Shylock are robbed of their possessions, or when the link between Jewish housedness and the economy are literalized, as in Benwash's case. Drama incorporates a rich variety of issues connected to Jewish movement, also reflecting English history's interest in controlling the Jews. In the medieval period, Jews needed permission and licenses to establish a residence or move about. As Geraldine Heng notes, "By 1275, the *Statutum de Judeismo* (Statute of Jewry) dictated that [Jews] could not live in any city without a registry by which they could be scrutinized, and they could not have Christians living in their midst—a thirteenth century experiment in *de facto* segregation."⁷² The early modern stage participates in the Christian management of Jewish movement by seeking to segregate Jews from Christians and from other Jews, by enforcing elements of displacement and dispossession, and by reiterating Christian superiority and Jewish subjection.

At the same time, the theater makes exceptions to these rules, as for Jewish women like Jessica and Abigail, who traverse boundaries into Christian spaces. Similarly, the prospect of peril in eliminating Benwash from Tunis undermines expulsion thinking. Supplementing these contradictory moments are questions of what remains after Jews depart. Barabas's property conveys this provocative message literally through the hidden treasures beneath the floorboards of the house-turned-nunnery. A historical parallel to this episode exists in the context of contemporary London, which maintained a

⁷² Heng, *England and the Jews*, 8.

neighborhood known as Jury. John Stow explains that it was given its name “because of old time many Jews inhabited thereabout.”⁷³ As such, the reality of Jewish history on English soil subverts even the assumed alienness of the Jew, whose presence was a part of everyday London life through the enduring nomenclature of the capital’s streets.

Contemporary performance was clearly mediating between myth and fact as they pertained to Jewish movement, erasure, and fixity. *A Christian Turned Turk* confronts these linked concerns after Benwash’s death, when the governor mentions “the same place the Jew doth lie unburied” (16.237–238). The uninterred state of his body is rich in contradiction. On the one hand, the Jew is eliminated and removed from the area of the stage in fulfillment of supersessionist logic. On the other, his body remains nearby, occupying physical space even in its isolated, indecorous site. The Jew’s body also clearly occupies space in the governor’s mind. Like Stow’s Jury reference as well as Barabas’s hidden treasure, Benwash’s corpse demonstrates anxiety about spaces that Jewish bodies *used to* occupy and the physical consequences of the Jews’ departure. The question of whether a place can be void of Jews remains ambiguous in this moment and in many others where Jews and spatial concerns are evoked in theater. It is this “spectral” nature of Jewishness that contributes even more to the profile of the Jew as a puzzling product of reality and invention.⁷⁴

⁷³ Stow, *The Survey of London*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42959/42959-h/42959-h.htm>.

⁷⁴ Stephen Kruger traces the interconnections among body, sexuality, and Jewishness in medieval texts to show how anxieties about Jewish corporeality contributed to Christian thought about Jews. He applies the term “spectral Jew” within this context of the omnipresent Jewish physical presence. For more, see Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Conclusion

The Jew's physical conveyance in English Renaissance drama was contradictory, sometimes exhibiting the proactive itinerance of a character like Barabas, whose extreme personal narrative conveys wandering for the sake of enacting violence on Christians. At other times, the stage Jew operates responsively, being thrust from his house by governmental decree or natural disaster. In either case, the concept of physical space is problematized by the presence of the Jew. One of the ways that contemporary works made that presence more palatable to audiences was in isolating Jewish figures, only incorporating a small number of them if there was more than one at all. *The Jew of Malta* features five, including Barabas, Abigail, and three nameless Jews who appear only at the play's start. *The Merchant of Venice* lists three in the *dramatis personae*—Shylock, Jessica, and Tubal—but mentions another named Chus within the play text. *A Christian Turned Turk* includes two: Benwash and his servant, Ruben Rabshake. *The Travels of the Three English Brothers* (c. 1607) consists of just Zariph the evil usurer, while *The Three Ladies of London* (1584) has Gerontius the uniquely principled usurer. Ultimately, a prevailing convention of the contemporary Jew in early modern theater is isolation, a quality consistent with, and complementary to, displacement and dispossession.

Being separated from a broader community, the Jewish character remains a stranger even from his own culture. He often lacks a real family, or at least a reliable one, and he rarely has a home. If his home exists, it is situated within a Christian neighborhood, irreflective of the lived reality of robust Jewish communities in places like Venice. Barabas, for example, is a widower, has no close friends until the arrival of Ithamore (who is himself not Jewish and who soon deserts the Jew), has one daughter

who abandons him, and is most often seen as an independent actor, operating based on selfish motivation alone. His speech frequently uses first-person pronouns—the autobiographical narrative in ACT 2 does this an impressive sixteen times—cloaking the Jew's isolation in the language of self-determination. The combination of these factors contributes to his dislocation, a taste of the real-life condition of early modern Jewishness, which was characterized by a lack of autonomy and belonging. Ferneze articulates the truth of this position when he calls Barabas a “private man,” separate from the “multitude” of Malta even as he is called on to serve its public (1.2.98–100).

As with his reliance on first-person pronouns, Barabas consistently refers to himself as “*the Jew*,” rather than “*a Jew*,” further segregating himself from any kind of communal attachment. This same attribution is echoed by other characters in the play. Lodowick says, “Yond’ walks the Jew” (2.3.38); Mathias asks, “What makes the Jew and Lodowick so private?” (2.3.140); his mother Katherine follows up, “Tell me, Mathias, is not that the Jew?” (2.3.154); Friar Barbardine says he must “exclaim against the Jew” (3.6.46); Friar Jacomo worries what will intercept his “going to the Jew” (4.1.170); Pilia-Borza and Ithamore both refer to Barabas’s wealth in saying summarily, “the Jew has gold,” and then they refer to his home as “the Jew’s counting-house,” which holds “the Jew’s crowns” (3.1.14; 3.1.18; 3.1.27–28). In all of these cases, the characters reinforce the fiction that Barabas is the *only* Jew in Malta. They generally do not pluralize “Jew,” keeping to the singular version and adding to it the particularizing article “the” as a marker of Barabas’s solitude. It is a bizarre construction, given that Malta is not an

imaginary world. In a play which incorporates semi-realistic action, situations, and concerns, the text stubbornly avers that Barabas is the only one of his kind.⁷⁵

Similar isolation is evident in *A Christian Turned Turk*, not only in the spare number of Jewish characters, but also in their attritional nature. Benwash pretends to convert, leaving Rabshake the only Jew left in the play. Then Rabshake dies at Benwash's hands, leaving no Jews left, at least until Benwash's own death, when he reconfirms his Jewishness before himself expiring. "Bear witness, though I lived a Turk, I die a Jew," he says (16.213). Again and again, isolation factors as a crucial method of Jewish displacement, and in spite of widespread knowledge of large collectives of Jews, as in the Venetian ghetto, no theatrical portrayal of contemporary Jewry incorporates such communal positioning. Shylock's house is fixed amid Christian territory, with an immediate view of Christian fopp'ry and "fools with varnished faces"; a nunnery is made of Barabas's "goodly house," communicating a fitting location for a Christian presence rather than a Jewish one; and Benwash's house seems to be far from any other dwelling space at all, since the fire that threatened his home moves to the ships in the harbor rather than another building. The positions of these residential settings reinforce Jewish placelessness in the works where they appear.

Furthermore, without *de facto* neighborhoods, stage Jews also lack communal meeting spaces. Though Barabas makes a reference to a synagogue at one point, he does so only in communicating his ill fit, since he abstains from giving anything to the

⁷⁵ Lavezzo's study reveals that Malta had enforced a policy of expulsion, and that it had "shared with England the dubious state of a site devoid of Jews." In this way, Barabas's isolation could be read as a reflection of the minimal or Jew-less "reality." For more, see Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew*, 174.

offering-basin. As he claims, “Even for charity I may spit into’t” (2.3.29).⁷⁶ Likewise, Shylock tells Tubal to meet him at “our synagogue,” though the property itself is never staged (3.1.128). The non-communal nature of contemporary Jewish representation strengthens the narrative of rejection. After all, in staging Jews but not their religious spaces, these plays refuse to sanction Judaism even if its practitioners may be selectively or temporarily tolerable.

Depictions of Jewish domesticity are especially rare in English Renaissance drama. Indeed, Jewish characters far more regularly wander in and out of plots in keeping with longstanding associations of the English imagination and the marginal status ascribed to Jewish people. Wherever the question of the Jews’ occupation of space is introduced in contemporary settings, particularly in texts that stage Jewish houses, remarkably complex questions emerge. These involve containment and permeability, permanence and transience, belonging and rejection, possession and requisition, and community and isolation. Characters who traverse fixed boundaries complicate these treatments, as do the intimate perspectives afforded by staging domestic scenes. The theater provides a fitting imaginative space to examine these contradictory moments, inviting audiences to confront Jewish corporeality, mobility, and fit in contexts which heighten awareness of these spatial issues.

⁷⁶ This reference to a giving plate making its way around a synagogue is proof of the author’s lack of familiarity with Jewish rituals. Because of *halakhic* rules governing religious services, the practice of financial giving is not a part of Jewish prayer. This is especially true on holy days, including *Shabbat* and the *Shalosh Regalim*.

CHAPTER 4
“EXCELLENTLY WELL HABITED”: ACTING JEWISH ON THE STAGE

I come not, I,
To read a lecture here in Britain,
But to present the tragedy of a Jew,
Who smiles to see how full his bags are cramm'd;
Which money was not got without my means.
PROLOGUE, Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta* (ca. 1589)¹

The Jew of Malta begins with the Prologue boastfully identifying himself as one whose “name is odious” (Prologue.5). Such a vainglorious introduction sets the tone for the entire play. Indeed, with this prologue, the drama establishes egotism, greed, and antipathy as fundamental features from its very first lines.² The actor goes on to announce with equal parts arrogance and glee “that I am Machiavel,” linking identity with a host of pejorative attitudes in the same breath (Prologue.7). And within a matter of lines, he presents Marlowe’s protagonist as “a Jew Who smiles to see how full his bags are cramm’d; Which money was not got without my means.” This is the audience’s introduction to the money-obsessed and morally bankrupt non-Christian on whom Marlowe’s work is based. In contrast to the Prologue, however, the Jew remains nameless in this preamble as well as in his own subsequent 363-word monologue at the start of ACT 1. In fact, despite the assertive use of singular pronouns—including “I,” “me,” “methinks,” “my,” and “our”—a notable seven times in his inaugural speech, the Jew

¹ Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Prologue.

² Prologues in the period operated as “persons, performances, and texts,” as Douglas Bruster and Robert Weimann have demonstrated in their thorough study. For more, see *Prologues to Shakespeare’s Theater: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

never clarifies who *he* actually is (1.1.1–47). All that the audience can determine is that this is indeed the Jewish figure that Machiavel introduced, staged appropriately in his “counting-house, with heaps of gold before him” (1.1.SD).

The text does not officially confirm this figure to be the protagonistic Jew until many lines into the first scene, when Barabas says, “Go tell ‘em the Jew of Malta sent thee, man” (1.1.65). An echo of the Prologue’s “I am Machiavel” rings in these words as the play finally validates the character’s identity. Why does Marlowe rapidly introduce the figure of the unscrupulous Jew in the prologue and then immediately retreat from identifying him when he actually appears, waiting some 80 lines to affirm his characterization and also withholding his name until that point? Even more, in stark contrast to the previous speaker’s bold personal pronouncements, this speaker is anonymous in his monologue; he is both nameless and nationless, and makes zero reference even to religious matters in these initial lines. What is it then in this opening arrangement, aside from the financial backdrop and focus that Machiavel foretold, which communicates Barabas’s Jewishness? In what ways did the staging corroborate the figure’s status as a Jew even when his lines did not? Was costume the signifier, or possibly the way the actor moved? Was there a combination of qualities that English Renaissance audiences would have recognized in his embodiment? These are the underlying concerns of this chapter, which aims to identify specific physical features associated with the performance of Jewishness in the period’s theater.

James Shapiro has noted that “Jews, like actors, were skilled at exploiting representation itself” in early modern England.³ For Marranos and Conversos who feigned Christian adherence in public and observed Jewish customs in private, this was especially true. It is, as Jeffrey Shoulson points out, a major contributing factor to the “fictions of conversion” that circulated in English culture.⁴ The Jews’ divided lifestyle meant close attention to the way that they presented themselves outside the home, employing costume, accent, posture, and other requisite tools that their precarious situations necessitated. In this way, many early modern Jews were not unlike English actors who used similar devices to signify nationality, age, station, gender, religion, and more across theatrical productions.

It is likely that the dramatic renderings of Jews registered this complexity, seeking to expose the inherent role-playing qualities associated with the lived reality of Jewish people at the time. Scholarship has made significant contributions applying such readings of contemporary culture and perspectives. David S. Katz,⁵ Janet Adelman,⁶ Jacob Lopes

³ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 20.

⁴ Shoulson reveals how the Jews were at the nexus of change and permanence, and makes a compelling case for the anxieties such conglomerations invoked in English culture, particularly in the Reformation period. For more, see Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵ David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England, 1485–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶ Janet Adelman, “Her Father’s Blood: Race, Conversion, and Nation in *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Representation* 81 (Winter 2003): 4–30.

Cardozo,⁷ Michelle Ephraim,⁸ and Eva Johanna Holmberg⁹ have all applied historical modes as a frame of reference for understanding Jewish stage figures. Sara Coodin succinctly describes such work as the “historian’s impulse to reconstruct a detailed and accurate past” even in the context of fiction.¹⁰ The relatively recent movement in critical race studies has kindled a new interest in Jews of English theater, with scholars such as Ania Loomba,¹¹ Kim Hall,¹² and Patricia Akhimie,¹³ among others, publishing fascinating studies of Barabas and his stage-peers as models of early modern race-making. Research has thus considered historical, cultural, racial, and religious issues as they relate to Jews in theater.

And yet, there has been comparatively less written about how the stage Jew physically appeared. Peter Berek has contributed a finding on the “funny nose,” and how humor was an inherent part of Jewish portraiture.¹⁴ Saskia Zinsser-Krys has offered a close look at the influence of travel documents on staging foreign elements of

⁷ Jacob Lopes Cardozo, *The Contemporary Jew in the Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968).

⁸ Michelle Ephraim, *Reading the Jewish Woman on the Elizabethan Stage* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008).

⁹ Eva Johanna Holmberg, *Jews in the Early Modern English Imagination: A Scattered Nation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁰ Sara Coodin, *Is Shylock Jewish?: Citing Scripture and the Moral Agency of Shakespeare’s Jews* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 2.

¹¹ Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹² Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹³ Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference: Race and Conduct in the Early Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁴ Peter Berek, “Looking Jewish on the Early Modern Stage,” in *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England: The Performance of Religion on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Jane Hwang Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 55–70.

Jewishness.¹⁵ And Emma Smith has explored the performance history of Shylock with red hair.¹⁶ This chapter will build on their work by examining stage directions, corporeally focused textual clues, and prop inventory lists to better access contemporary practices of Jewish embodiment in the period's theater. Ultimately, the study will reveal how material signifiers of Jewishness in *The Jew of Malta*, *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598), *A Christian Turned Turk* (c. 1610), and *The Devil's Law-Case* (c. 1619) both reinforced and undermined beliefs about Jewish difference. After all, costuming and other physical media plainly fabricated alterity even as they sought to convey it, espousing speciousness as an inherent part of Jewish performativity, and demonstrating that the embodiment of Jewishness was at least partial invention.

Costume as a Signifier of Jewishness

John Webster's *The Devil's Law-Case* features a character named Romelio who parallels Barabas in numerous ways. Like the Marlovian Jew of Malta, Romelio is conceited, wealthy, and fixated on increasing his capital. He also brags about his financial successes in the very first scene of the play, saying, "They call me on the Exchange / The Fortunate Young Man, and make great suit / To venture with me" (1.1.12–14). The line directly recalls Barabas's ACT 1 language: "Thus trolls our fortune in by land and sea, / And thus we are on every side enriched" (1.1.101–102). The conviction that their prosperity is assured by providential favor reveals the extent of their vanity as well as the

¹⁵ Saskia Zinsser-Krys, *The Early Modern Stage-Jew: Heritage, Inspiration, and Concepts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017).

¹⁶ Emma Smith, "Was Shylock Jewish?" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2013): 188–219.

entitlement that facilitates their later actions, which include unconscionable killing as well as manipulation. Indeed, just as Abigail is a pawn in Barabas's scheming, so too is Jolenta in Romelio's.

And yet, a significant distinction separates the two mischievous merchants: Barabas is a Jew, and Romelio is a Christian. This variance should set the characters apart and limit their likenesses, but Romelio unambiguously recalls the Jewish stage figure in ACT 3, when he plots the killing of his sister's suitor to ensure his own financial gain. After learning that Contarino is near death and that Jolenta is set to inherit all of his wealth, Romelio decides to take matters into his own hands. He devises a plot to dress up as a Jew and convince the attending surgeons to give him access to the sickly suitor. This scene begins with stage directions saying, "Enter Romelio in the habit of a Jew," indicating on a textual level that established costuming existed to communicate Jewishness (3.2.SD). Romelio's ensuing monologue does not clarify what elements make up this costume, though it does speak to the clothing's power:

Romelio.

Excellently well habited! Why, methinks
That I could play with mine own shadow now,
And be a rare Italianated Jew;
To have as many several change of faces
As I have seen carv'd upon one cherry stone;
To wind about a man like rotten ivy,
Eat into him like quicksilver, poison a friend
With pulling but a loose hair from's beard, or give a drench,
He should linger of't nine years, and ne'er complain
But in the spring and fall, and so the cause
Imputed the disease natural; for slight villainies
As to coin money, corrupt ladies' honors,
Betray a town to th' Turk, or make a bonfire
O'the' Christian navy, I could settle to't,
As if I had eat a politician
And digested him to nothing but pure blood.

(The Devil's Law-Case, 3.2.1–16)

A close reading of this speech is warranted, as it relates how the Jewish costume enables Romelio to become a different person, not only by helping him look like someone else but also by inspiring him to behave like someone else. Indeed, he states that the clothing provokes a variety of dark interior impulses when, upon putting it on, he utters a particularly fascinating turn of phrase: “Why, methinks that I could play with my own shadow now.” Underscoring the murky, furtive associations with Jewishness, the word “shadow” also emphasizes the performativity of Anglo-Jewish life. The same word was used in the context of acting, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes that it was “applied rhetorically to an actor or a play in contrast with the reality represented.”¹⁷ Undoubtedly, its coupling with the word “play” in Romelio’s speech evokes the representational exploitation that Shapiro, Shoulson, and others have noted about the Jews. So while adopting a Jewish habit may not actually turn Romelio into “a rare Italianated Jew,” it certainly succeeds in conjuring Jewish associations.

In fact, the garb stirs up a variety of Jewish myths, which Romelio lists plainly in his monologue. These include the stereotype of duplicitousness—brought to mind when he says he could “have...many several change of faces”—poisoning and contamination—as when he says that he feels able “To wind about a man like rotten ivy, Eat into him like quicksilver, poison a friend...”¹⁸ He even overtly alludes to *The Jew of Malta* when he mentions “Betray[ing] a town to th’ Turk, or mak[ing] a bonfire O’the’ Christian navy.”

¹⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “shadow (*n.*),” accessed November 30, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/177212.

¹⁸ Across Europe, Christians alleged Jews to be the cause of rampant plague, claiming that they poisoned wells to sicken communities in keeping with their general antipathy directed at Christians. Such allegations make their way into *The Jew of Malta*, Robert Greene’s *Selimus* (1594), and beyond.

Barabas plots in exactly these ways in Marlowe's text, helping the Turks besiege Malta and threatening Christian welfare with fire and plunder. Romelio presents a catalog of pejorative Jewish behaviors in these lines, cross-referencing other plays that feature Jews to reinforce his own imitation of a stage Jew. The allusion to coins and cannibalism likewise contribute to this monologue's emphasis on the link between Jewish costume and behavior.¹⁹ Romelio's adoption of the Jewish habit is powerful enough to effect a transformation, for even if *The Devil's Law-Case* may not officially include Jewish characters, it does feature one in this scene.

This Jewish apparel resurfaces later in the play when one of the surgeons bamboozled in Romelio's deception resurrects it. "I have a suit Romelio left i'th' house, / The habit of a Jew, that I'll put on," he announces (5.2.26–27). As before, the nature of this costume is not specific, though it may be possible to draw inferences from the fact that the surgeon uses the word "suit" in his lines. Could the outfit incorporate multiple components, in keeping with the composite implication of this word?²⁰ Alternatively, could it have been a single loose-fitting garment that could accommodate both Romelio and the surgeon convincingly? Perhaps the clothing completely lacked pants, being more akin to a gown, skirt, or overcoat. Contemporary illustrations of Jews in foreign countries would confirm such a possibility, as figures 4 and 5 show and as play texts likewise suggest. In *A Christian Turned Turk*, for example, one scene involves the discovery of a

¹⁹ Geraldine Heng explores the history of coin-clipping accusations and blood-drinking, among other types of condemnation in her excellent book, *England and the Jews: How Religion and Violence Created the First Racial State in the West* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

²⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "suit (n.)," accessed October 31, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/193718.

pair of pants. “These are none of the Jew’s trouses,” the sailor who finds them says (1.10.69). The line is short and unclear, though it solicits some scrutiny into how they know that the attire does not belong to Benwash. Unfortunately, Daborne offers no additional details, leaving Jewish costuming ambiguous in his play even as it dismisses trousers as a material object that could belong to the Jew.



Figure 4. A rendering of a “Merchant Jew” from de Nicolay’s *Navigations, Peregrinations, and Voyages* [London: [At the cost of John Stell] by Thomas Dawson, 1585].



Figure 5. A “Physician Jew,” also from de Nicolay’s *Navigations, Peregrinations, and Voyages* [London: [At the cost of John Stell] by Thomas Dawson, 1585].

Most notable about Webster's references to Jewish costuming is their repeated application of the word "habit." Romelio exclaims, "Excellently well habited" after putting on the outfit, and the surgeon brings up the "suit Romelio left i'th'house, The habit of a Jew." The stage directions use the same terminology, indicating a uniformity to the reliance on specialized apparel to signify Jewishness. Like the word "shadow," the definition of the word "habit" is multivalent and significant in this context. In the more obvious manner, it bears the meaning of "bodily apparel or attire; clothing, raiment, dress," but the word can also mean, "The dress or attire characteristic of a particular rank, degree, profession, or function; *esp.* the dress of a religious order."²¹ In this way, the clothing could be envisioned as something distinctively religious-looking, not unlike the habit of a monk or a nun. The period's fear of secret Catholic ritual performance, which is itself not so different from the fear of secret Jewish ritual performance, makes this secondary meaning noteworthy. The setting of Webster's play in Italy reinforces this subtle Catholic allusion and conveys fraudulent religious customs at the same time that it recalls undesirable non-Protestant observance. As such, Jewish costuming raises a multitude of contemporary anxieties about religious performance, social adherence, and what it means to look Christian, or not.

A close look at these scenes from *The Devil's Law-Case* also captures a crucial fact about Jewish stage representation in the early modern period in that all Jewish characters were played by Christian men wearing costumes. These material pieces had implicit significance in communicating difference, and should serve as a reminder that

²¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "habit (n.)," accessed December 1, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/82978.

acting Jewish in the period necessarily involved tangible elements. Romelio's enumeration of Jewish myths illustrates the strength of the apparel and offers a glimpse of the inherent meaning of the "Jewish habit" in theatrical contexts. *The Devil's Law-Case* thus conspicuously broaches questions of Jewishness with Romelio's exploitation of costuming and its overt interconnections with Jewish dramatic representation at large.

The Merchant of Venice also provides information about contemporary Jewish staging practices when Shylock makes a direct reference to his clothing:

Shylock.
 (For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe).
 You call me misbeliever, cutthroat dog,
 And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine...
(*The Merchant of Venice*, 1.3.120–122)

This gaberdine supplies further evidence of specific Jewish costuming, not only because it is a piece of clothing worn by a stage Jew, but because of the way that Shylock refers to it as an object that is Jewish in nature. Might this have been the Jews' ritualistic shawl, the *tallit* which Henry Blount describes as a "linen cape" in *A Voyage into the Levant* (1638; to be explored in further detail later in the chapter)?²² Much later portrayals of Shylock, as from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, incorporate this linen-cape detail quite evocatively. A garment with fringes at the end, almost like tassels, the *tallit* stands out in both Henry Irving's photogravure, figure 6, and in Charles Kean's scrapbook, figure 7. In both cases, this be-tasseled cloth is tied around the Jew's torso in

²² Henry Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant: A breife relation of a iourney, lately performed by Master Henry Blunt Gentleman. from England by the way of Venice, into Dalmatia, Sclavonia, Bosnah, Hungary, Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace, Rhodes and Egypt, unto Gran Cairo: with particular observations concerning the moderne condition of the Turkes, and other people under that Empire* (London: Printed by I[ohn] L[egat] for Andrew Crooke, and are to bee sold at the signe of the Beare in Paules Church-yard, 1638).

the manner of a cummerbund. Its fringes, frayed and haphazardly laid against the trunk of Irving's body in the former, and hanging vertically from the sash-esque version in Kean's scrapbook, seem too narrow to be the target of someone's expectionation and too minor to demarcate Jewish bodies on the stage. Far from the cape style of Blount's Mediterranean report (and indeed, the style of an actual *tallit*) then, these later stagings use the strangeness of the fringed cloth as an extra but subtle accessory to communicate Jewishness instead of any authentic duplication of the garment's use or overt mark of costumed Jewish difference.



Figure 6. Photogravure of Henry Irving as Shylock [London: J. S. Virtue & Co., 1888]. "Henry Irving (Shylock) [graphic]." Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.



Figure 7. Colored illustrations of costuming for Shylock, Tubal, and Chus in Kean's scrapbook [London: Charles John Kean, 19th century]. "Charles Kean's scrap book [including costumes, scenes, and scenery from nine Shakespearian plays, and portraits of contemporary actors and actresses] [graphic]." Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.

Saskia Zinsser-Krys is one of the few twenty-first century scholars who has ventured into the realm of how early modern English stage Jews actually looked, relying on travel diaries as a primary resource in her research. She has proposed that the article of clothing Shylock references is a type of coat. His “Jewish gaberdine could have been one of the long garments worn in the Ottoman Empire, depicted by George Sandys or Nicolas de Nicolay,” she observes.²³ To be sure, illustrations like the Merchant and Physician Jews supply support for her theory: in both black-and-white etchings, the Jewish men wear ankle-length coats with high collars and full-length sleeves, somewhat ruffled in the forearm areas. The billowy bodies of these coats convey a similarly loose fit; this would certainly be in keeping with the shareable nature of the habit in *The Devil’s Law-Case*. While little else is discernible from the de Nicolay illustrations, it is clear that the garments are not elaborate. They are not festooned with jewels or feathers, for example, and neither are they decorated with embroidery. In fact, very similar garments appear elsewhere in de Nicolay’s text, on both non-Jewish men and even on non-Jewish women.

Etymologically, the word “gaberdine” was first used to refer to a Jewish garment piece in the year 1600, the *OED* citing as its source this exact line from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. It records: “A long, loose cloak or gown, or (later) an overcoat, supposed to be worn by Jewish men.”²⁴ Most likely, then, if the “gaberdine” Shylock mentions is indeed a coat, its incorporation as a prop in the English Renaissance theater functioned simultaneously as a signifier of foreignness and of Jewishness. Shylock’s identity as a Venetian moneylender is a significant component of the Shakespearean stage

²³ Zinsser-Krys, *Early Modern Stage-Jew*, 394.

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “gabardine (n.),” accessed October 30, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/75918.

Jew's identity. His costume thus fundamentally communicates difference in nationality in addition to the variety of Jewish myths that Romelio's habit immediately recalls.

It is worth noting the rarity of the word "gaberline" in the Shakespearean canon; its only other use is in *The Tempest* (c. 1610), when Trinculo refers to a garment worn by Caliban, announcing that he must "creep under his gaberline" to find safety (2.2.39). Soon after, he tells Stephano, "I hid me / under the dead moon-calf's gaberline for fear of / the storm" (2.2.116). *The Tempest's* stage directions helpfully clarify that this garment is a "cloak" and describe Stephano pulling Trinculo "out from under Caliban's cloak at one point." Soon after, Caliban himself "crawl[s] out from under his cloak" (2.2.108; 2.2.122). While this piece of clothing is not described as Jewish, its assumed rough, unfashionable, and dirty qualities suggest a lot about the word's signification in the period.

Caliban's "malignant" nature, as Robert Sanford-Brustein describes it, links the malice of the Jew with the hostility of the island native through this material object.²⁵ Indeed, there are numerous links between Caliban and Shylock. Scholars like Dympna Callaghan have shown how *The Tempest* is concerned with many of the same questions about identity, nationality, race, and language that are at issue in *Merchant*.²⁶ And while we cannot be certain that the gaberline in *Merchant* was identical to the one in *The Tempest*, we can be confident that they shared characteristics. Based on these references

²⁵ Robert Sanford-Brustein, *The Tainted Muse: Prejudice and Presumption in Shakespeare and his Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 196.

²⁶ Racial ambiguity, native language, and alienated status are some of the issues Callaghan traces in the context of *The Tempest*, many of which draw direct connections with *Merchant's* concerns. For more, see Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Race and Gender on the Renaissance Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

and those in *The Devil's Law-Case* and in de Nicolay's illustrated travel account, we can determine that the Jewish costume included a long, loose-fitting cloak, plain in fabric and design and possibly dirty-looking.

An additional and very likely application to the top of the coat would have marked the difference between Shylock's *Jewish* gaberdine and Caliban's more general one: a badge. This would have been a reflection of England's own history of clothing laws, following Canon 68 of the Fourth Lateran Council.²⁷ This same enforced badge-wearing practice was later adopted by other nations as requisite markers of Jewish difference—and social and class distinction as well.²⁸ Cecil Roth provides an excellent overview of this evolving off-stage costuming device as it appeared in Venice:

...the Jewish badge had its own history and its own tradition. At the beginning it had indeed been in the universal form of a circle of yellow cloth the size of a small loaf, which had to be sewn on the breast of the outer garment. This, however, was not considered sufficiently prominent. Hence, at a later period, every Jew had to wear a yellow bonnet, or one covered with material of that colour. But ultimately, at the close of the sixteenth century, the statutory hue was changed to red...For the Levantine merchants, indeed, who were under a different control, the distinctive badge remained as before, and they could be distinguished by the yellow turbans which they wore.²⁹ Shylock, however, was a *Tedesco* by nation... By Shakespeare's time the change of hue had already come about, as far as they were concerned. A traveller of the following century describes the 'badge' as a hat covered with crimson cloth, lined and edged with black; while the poor used a waxed material instead.³⁰

²⁷ The records read: "We decree that such persons of either sex, in every Christian province and at all times, are to be distinguished in public from other people by the character of their dress." For the Council's full injunction, see Norman Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990). <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015021846079>.

²⁸ Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 5.

²⁹ It is possible that the turbans depicted in de Nicolay's volume are these same yellow head coverings described by Roth.

³⁰ Cecil Roth, "The Background of Shylock," *Review of English Studies* 9, no. 34 (1933): 153–154.

Roth's keen interest in the color and texture of the materials helps modern scholars visualize these marks of difference applied to the bodies of the Venetian Jews. From a yellow circle of cloth pinned to the breast to the more overt yellow bonnet or turban on the head to the later black-rimmed red turban or waxed head covering, Roth's detailing of object, color, and material shows the many ways that Christians worked to make Jewish difference as visible as possible.

Flora Cassen's research on the evolution of the Jewish badge provides another helpful resource on the ways that European nations worked to demarcate Jewish bodies.³¹ She investigates how Pope Innocent III's decree regarding distinctive Jewish clothing invited a variety of badge design choices; England, Spain, Hungary, France, Germany, and Italy each determined for themselves what color, size, shape, and material these badges should be.³² For example, extant portraits of a Jewish couple in Germany offers a visual aid, shown in figure 8 below, of the round, doughnut-like shape colored bright yellow on the left breast of the figures' bodies. The goal was to make these forms recognizably Jewish, and the effect is quite successful.

³¹ Flora Cassen, "The Jewish Badge in Early Modern Italy: A Social and Political Study of Anti-Jewish Discrimination" (PhD diss., New York University, 2008).

³² Ibid., 215.



Figure 8. An illustration of a Jewish man and woman wearing requisite badges to delineate their identity as Jews visually [Worms: 16th century]. “A Jewish couple from Worms, Germany, with the obligatory yellow badge on their clothes. The man holds a moneybag and bulbs of garlic, both often used in the portrayal of Jews” via *Medievalists.net*.

In England, Henry III (1207–1272) “decreed that the Jews should wear the two tablets of the Law made of white linen or parchment on the front of their upper garment.”³³ The material was later specified to be wool, at least four inches high. One early iteration of it is still available to us by way of a thirteenth-century caricatured illustration, figure 9 below. Though not entirely realistic, the image helpfully includes the white “tablets of the Law” on the Jew’s body; their placement appears to be lower than was technically decreed, but the rendering still offers helpful visualization of the way that enforced marks of difference actually looked. Another illustration comes from figure 10, a thirteenth-century manuscript. In addition to featuring colorful bodies with more life-like qualities, the image seems to show violence against several Jews, distinguished in the picture by the same white “tablets of the Law...on the front of their upper garment.” While the scale may be unrealistic, it is worth noting that the size of these badges appears

³³ Ibid., 217.

to be about the same as the Jews' heads. These were not meant to be subtle marks of difference.



Figure 9. A caricature of a Jew from a thirteenth-century English text [Essex: 1277]. “Aaron, Son of the Devil,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* [1901].



Figure 10. An image depicting the persecution of Jews, who are identifiable based on the white tablet badges affixed to their clothing [England: 13th century]. “Why Were the Jews Expelled from England in 1290?” via Faculty of History, University of Oxford Online.

During the reign of Louis IX in France, Jews had to wear a wheel-shaped badge on both the front *and* the back of their coats; these markers were as large as the palm of a

hand and sewn directly onto the garment (as opposed to pinned).³⁴ It is likely that this version looked like the badge in the German illustration. Regardless of the shape, material, or color, however, the point was that the Jews needed to look different from everyone else, and the simplest way to carry out that requirement was to enforce a certain dress code. The association of some kind of distinctive badge attached to Jewish garments was thus a familiar trope from the thirteenth century onwards, in England and elsewhere.

Might the Elizabethan stage, centuries after these regulations began, have incorporated the badge in the costume of its Jewish characters? Was this one of the unspoken signifiers in Barabas's apparel that identified the Jew of Malta before he does so verbally? This addition would also offer a simple explanation for the contrast between a cloak like Caliban's and Shylock's—a gaberdine versus a *Jewish* gaberdine—and would align with Shylock's own reference to the "badge of all our tribe." It would also support the reading of Romelio's "habit" not only in its overt Jewish appearance but also in its association with Catholicism. After all, the Jewish badge stems from a decree by papal authority. The simultaneous reference to monks, nuns, and Jews in this word choice of *The Devil's Law-Case* alludes to that interconnected history. Furthermore, such a supplement would have been easy and affordable for contemporary stagecraft to employ. And, as the badges did on the streets of the real world, they would have had the benefit of quickly demarcating the Jewish characters in the theater from their Christian stage peers.

As a signifier of Jewishness and of difference, the marked cloak was an important part of representing the stage Jew. Gesturing to the historical realities of Jewish life, the

³⁴ Ibid., 217–222.

mythical attributes of the Jews in the English literary chronicles, and the foreign, out-of-place nature of the demarcated body, this piece of costuming acted as a multivalent cue for audiences. And, at the same time, the impermanent nature of the costuming—being an item that could be donned and removed with ease—perpetuated Christian anxieties about recognizing Jewish difference. If the characters in the theater could adopt these costuming elements and look Jewish, then remove them and look Christian again, the same was true for actual Jews who could wear conventionally English attire and hide their Jewishness. In this way, contemporary costuming participated in obfuscating Jewish alterity even as it reinforced it.

Wigs, Hats, and Other Jewish Props

In addition to the cloak and badge as immediate signifiers of Jewishness in contemporary theatrical costuming, there is substantial evidence which points to the use of a red wig and prosthetic nose as ancillary accessories. The logic of using these props proposes that Jews were believed to be distinguishable not as a result of clothing laws but of biologically determined factors, including coloration and corporeal distortion. Whether or not drama incorporated such elements in Jewish stage representation has itself been a contentious topic in recent scholarship. Emma Smith, for example, has examined the stage history of Shakespeare's Shylock and found that these assumptions actually derive from the early twentieth century, when Elmer Edgar Stoll wrote an essay on the subject and established speculation as fact.³⁵ Stoll had written that Shakespeare intended for his

³⁵ Emma Smith, "Was Shylock Jewish?," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2013): 188–219.

stage Jew to be a “rude caricature and boisterous burlesque,” with both wig and nose in tow.³⁶ His article was passed down without contest until Smith’s investigation, wherein she determined that the true origin of that staging practice stems from Henry Irving’s Victorian-era production of *Merchant*. It was only after his portrayal that red hair and the nose became customary theatrical accessories, she writes.³⁷ In fact, Smith disputes any racist modeling in the original character at all and argues that supposed *a priori* associations between Jews and usury or villainy have all been superimposed retroactively. As she puts it, “The critical reiteration of Shylock’s caricatured appearance are belated but purposeful interventions, actively shaping the evidence to produce their desired historical narrative.”³⁸

Sara Coodin concurs with Smith’s assessment,³⁹ but many scholars are not in agreement with her point of view about the scholarly impulse to superimpose anti-Jewish rationale onto Shakespearean contexts. While Smith states, for example, that “Jewishness and usury are, and should be recognized as, separate categories,” other scholars plainly differ.⁴⁰ Abraham Oz notes that “being a Jew [in the period]...is a synonym for being a

³⁶ Elmer Edgar Stoll, “Shylock,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 10, no. 2 (1911): 249.

³⁷ Smith does not dispute the use of the red wig and prop nose to convey Jewishness in the performance history of *The Merchant of Venice*, but does contest that use in Shakespeare’s original stagings. This distinction is important in accessing more accurately the contemporary practices of representing Jews in English Renaissance theater.

³⁸ Smith, “Was Shylock Jewish?,” 199.

³⁹ Of Smith’s essay, Coodin has written, “She has convincingly argued that Victorian critics actively shaped the English past to suit an ideal of Englishness predicated on excluding Jews.” For more, see Coodin, *Is Shylock Jewish?*, 3.

⁴⁰ Smith, “Was Shylock Jewish?,” 200.

usurer.” Similarly, Peter Berek,⁴¹ Aaron Kitch,⁴² and Julia Reinhard Lupton⁴³ have all observed interconnections between Jews and usury in the imaginations of early modern audiences. Daniel Vitkus has shown how the word usury was not limited to money lending, but rather to “a whole range of supposedly un-Christian and immoral ways of doing business.”⁴⁴ As the Jews’ bonds with iniquitous acts, particularly financial ones, are well-established from the medieval period onwards, it does seem unlikely that pejorative racial overtones are not inherent in Barabas’s villainous characterization and that Shylock isn’t an obvious descendant of the wicked Maltese tycoon. James Shapiro’s thorough investigation of the insult culture connected to Jewishness also opposes Smith’s argument.⁴⁵ If contemporary attitudes were indeed racist, as seems straightforward within the context of the plays themselves, then anti-Jewish feeling, associated with usury or not, was a fact of early modern England.

The question of whether red hair was an element of Jewish characterization prior to Irving’s portrayal has, like Smith’s writing about usury, stirred contradictory responses and challenged historical *and* artistic chronicles. After all, artists had been portraying one of the most famous Jews of literary record with red hair for centuries, well before

⁴¹ Peter Berek, “The Jew as Renaissance Man,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1998): 128–162.

⁴² Aaron Kitch, “Shylock’s Sacred Nation,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2008) 131–155.

⁴³ Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Shakespeare’s Other Europe: Jews, Venice, and Civil Society,” *Social Identities* 7, no. 4 (2001): 479–491.

⁴⁴ Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 169.

⁴⁵ Shapiro says that “the word Jew had entered into the English vocabulary in the thirteenth century as a catchall term of abuse.” Used as an insult against Christians and Jews alike, variations on calling someone a Jew or Jew-dog are prevalent in English Renaissance drama. See *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 24.

Shylock was born. Judas Iscariot, the apostle that betrayed Jesus, appears in many depictions—from as early as the fourteenth century—with prominent red hair. Pietro Lorenzetti's 1310 painting of Judas's suicide is one such example, as shown in figure 11. In it, the pale apostle hangs by a thin thread of rope, his bent neck tilting his head down towards the ground as though he is too ashamed to face the viewer. His expression appears almost sorrowful in an artistic gesture to the regret he must have felt at betraying Jesus, a regret that drove him to suicide. And atop his head, light orange hair hangs down as limply as his body. The colors of the painting are generally muted, but the hair stands out in notable variance.



Figure 11. Pietro Lorenzetti's painting of Judas's suicide is located in the Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi, Italy [1310]. "Suicide of Judas." Wikimedia Commons.

In the sixteenth century, Belgian artist Pieter Pourbus painted "The Last Supper" with Judas in the foreground center. Whereas his depiction, reproduced in figure 12, features a living version of the famed betrayer, the similarities with the earlier Judas

remain. Here, he can be identified quickly by his bright-orange hair, a color no other man in the scene has. It seems to encircle his entire face, as it involves the hair atop his head as well as a substantial beard beneath it. His ruddy complexion likewise distinguishes him from the rest of the crowd, and, of course, his posture communicates the betrayal that he is in the process of enacting upon Jesus in his penultimate moments. He has literally turned his back on the son of God, and even worse, appears to be casually waving goodbye with one hand while clutching a sack of money in the other. His outfit is also, notably, much darker than the garments worn by the other men in the painting. While there are numerous elements of note in Pourbus's work, Judas literally stands out from the rest because of his position and coloring.



Figure 12. In Pourbus's painting, Judas is pictured in the center, with red hair, a casual posture, and a departing wave [1548]. "The Last Supper." Source: Musea Brugge, www.artinflanders.be, photograph, Hugo Maertens.

Red seems to assert itself again and again in the artistic representation of the duplicitous apostle Judas. From fourteenth- or fifteenth-century art to Edward Okuń's Polish art nouveau rendering in 1901 (figure 13), Judas is pictured with red hair. And

whether these representations capture the moment of his betrayal or whether they reproduce the regret of his treachery or his act of suicide, there is a consistent use of red hair to demarcate Judas from others.



Figure 13. Edward Okuń's painting, which depicts Judas with messy red locks and blurred facial features, also includes a bright red cloak [1901]. "Judas." Wikimedia Commons.

This connection between Judas and red hair extended from the artistic to the dramatic, as Crosman refers to a Judas beard in scene 6 of *A Christian Turned Turk*. Shakespeare also makes a reference to red coiffure in the dialogue of *As You Like It* (c. 1599), when Rosalind describes Orlando's hair as having "the dissembling color" (3.4.7). Celia confirms this as a reference to the double-crossing apostle when she responds that it is "something browner than Judas's" (3.4.8). That is, she disagrees about Orlando's hair being red even as she corroborates the association of Judas with a specific hair color and with deceitful behavior.

Modern critics have observed that in the Elizabethan period, to describe something as "Judas-colored" was to refer specifically to red hair. Paull Franklin Baum concluded that the expression derives from that time frame despite the long-standing correspondence between Judas and red hair in fine art. "The phrase Judas color and the

adjective Judas-colored seem to have been current chiefly among the Elizabethan dramatists and their imitators,” he observes.⁴⁶ Given the fact that this terminology was embedded in English Renaissance culture as a direct connection to Jewishness, it is a fair conclusion to imagine contemporary theater keen on incorporating red hair onto the bodies of the actors playing the parts of Jews. This would have been especially fitting when those portrayals were meant to depict deception, egomania, or abomination.

In tracing the expressions’ literary uses from Shakespeare’s period through Tennyson’s, Baum uncovers potential reasons for red’s association with evil. They are numerous and varied, ranging from treachery and hot-headedness to the natural color of fire and even to the alleged color of the devil’s skin.⁴⁷ Robert Nares’s early nineteenth-century *Glossary* also investigates the connection between red coiffure and evil, determining that Judas’s hair was supposed to be red “probably for no better reason than that the color was thought ugly, and the dislike of it was of course much increased by this opinion.”⁴⁸ This reasoning is sound; applying undesirable qualities to Jewish stage characterization is as likely a method of communicating the detestability of Jewishness as any other.⁴⁹ While a single origin of the red-headed link to Judas remains uncertain, the application of his coloring and references to it were clearly meant to be negative.

⁴⁶ Paull Franklin Baum, “Judas’s Red Hair,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 21, no. 3 (1922): 520–529.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 522–524.

⁴⁸ Robert Nares, *A glossary: or, Collection of words, phrases, names, and allusions to customs, proverbs, etc., which have been thought to require illustration, in the words of English authors, particularly Shakespeare, and his contemporaries* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1905), 473.

⁴⁹ It should be noted that even if red was a component of the Jewish costume, the hair color was not necessarily considered an unattractive trait in England, regardless of the claim in Nares’s *Glossary*. Despite describing it as “the dissembling color” in *As You Like It*, for example, Rosalind still seems to find Orlando appealing, as she pursues the

Rebekka Voss has also researched the affinity between red-headed representation and the Jews and found it to be relevant across Europe. She contends that the phenomenon may be traced to the famed “Red Jews” of premodern apocalyptic lore (in Yiddish: *di royte yidelekh*), and shows that “the sinister symbolism of the color red was even ingrained in speech: in Middle High German, red acquired the secondary meaning of ‘false’ and ‘cunning’.”⁵⁰ She explores the possibility that the “Red Jews” might have earned their name on account of wearing scarlet robes, having ruddy skin or bloodied hands, or by being bloodthirsty.⁵¹ While Voss’s study focuses on a particular tribe of Jews, many of the themes she uncovers resonate with early modern English associations of Jewishness, including villainy and bloodlust. Likewise, M. Lindsay Kaplan has shown that Jewish complexions and hair were often colored expressively in medieval psalters to register distinction between Jews and Christians on the page in reflection of the spiritual and moral distinctions perceived in real life.⁵² Tracing the trend through the early modern period, Kaplan discerns that white, black, and red were all features of coloration in works that sought to represent Jewishness, repugnance, and alterity. Applying color to the body of the Jew was thus a regular feature of artistic and literary practice.

Portraying the Jews as one stock-type was also a common trope of medieval and early modern anti-Jewishness, one which Shakespeare’s usurer recalls directly when he describes his people as “the stock of Barrabas” (4.1.309). The language not only

youngest de Boys in earnest and ultimately marries him. And, of course, Queen Elizabeth I herself had red plaits, as did her famous Tudor father, Henry VIII.

⁵⁰ Rebekka Voss, “Entangled Stories: The Red Jews in Premodern Yiddish and German Apocalyptic Lore,” *AJS Review* 36, no. 1 (2012): 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵² M. Lindsay Kaplan, “The Jewish Body in Black and White in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Philological Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 41–65.

intimates a direct descent from Marlowe's stage Jew or perhaps the criminal of the same name who was present at the time of Jesus's execution, but also asserts that the Jewish people are of one "stock," one single hoard, as an animal breed.⁵³ Whether as mythical Red Jews or real-life Judas-colored usurers, the point is that early modern attitudes about Jews relied on the population sharing specific qualities, which manifested both behaviorally and corporeally. The affiliation of the color red with *all* Jews is the plausible extension of duplicitous behavior believed to characterize the Jews known to Christians. And while Judas was considered the ultimate betrayer of Christianity, the crowd of Jews at Jesus's execution—and indeed the contemporary Jews of the early modern period—also denied Christ as their Savior, thus confirming the shared behaviors of Jews across time and space. If the early modern imagination expressed red hair as an outward sign of Judas's sinfulness, then it also expressed it as a sign of Jewishness more broadly and of the racialized logic that the color of blood promoted.⁵⁴

As is the case for a demarcated cloak with some type of Jewish badge, incorporating red hair as a stage element of Jewish characterization would have carried with it the implicit quality of differentiation. In worlds where circumcision was *the* crucial mark of difference that set Jewish bodies apart from Christians,⁵⁵ an external signifier of pejorative (and bloody) distinction would have been practical as well as

⁵³ The *OED* identifies "stock" as also meaning a "trunk or a stem," further communicating the interconnected nature of all Jews. For more, see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "stock (*n.*)," accessed December 6, 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/190595.

⁵⁴ Jean Feerick's study of an early modern system of "race-as-blood" persuasively illuminates the contemporary associations of racialized thinking with blood, the body, and the Other. For more, see Jean Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in Renaissance Literature* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

⁵⁵ Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 132.

expected. Evidence of such a prop appears in *The Jew of Malta* when Ithamore says, “The hat he wears, Judas left under the elder when he hanged himself” (4.4.66–67). Was the “hat” referenced in this quote actually a red wig or some other red accessory?

Muniments like Philip Henslowe’s diary offer little in the way of clarification on what prop devices *were* used in the performances under his supervision. In one note, dated May 1601, he says that he “Lent vnto Robart shawe...to bye divers thingf for the Jewe of malta,” and then, “lent mor to the littell tayller the same daye for more thingf for the Jewe of malta.”⁵⁶ His famous prop inventory lists “one cauderm for the Jew,” which is, of course, a fairly explicit reference to the crucial cauldron in the final scene in Marlowe’s work.⁵⁷ But the diary’s citation of “diverse things” and “more things” implies an ample investment in stage props specifically for use within that work. Perhaps this included an orange bonnet, an item which Francis Bacon says is one of the overt signs of a usurer (or a Jew).⁵⁸

Later productions would be sure to incorporate distinctive hats in stagings of *The Merchant of Venice*. The 1888 photogravure of Henry Irving features a squarish cap atop the actor’s head, hair exposed at the front and sides of the hat’s limits and in a beard that hangs from his chin. As the image is in black-and-white, it is not possible to discern the “dissembling color,” though the work done by Stoll and Smith would suggest that we can assume it to have been red. In the previously pictured eighteenth-century scrapbook by Charles Kean, which includes dozens of elaborate drawings of costumes, characters, and

⁵⁶ Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe’s Diary*, ed. R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 170.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵⁸ Francis Bacon, “Of Usury,” in *Essays: or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2014), 132–135.

scenery from Shakespearian plays, as well as portraits of contemporary actors and actresses, Shylock, Tubal, and Chus are all pictured with round hats. The consistency with which a Jewish head covering appears remains noteworthy.

Whereas these depictions derive from the eighteenth century onwards, there is textual evidence of hats in the Elizabethan period's stage portrayal of Jews. Barabas definitely wore a unique headpiece atop his skull, for, aside from the connection to Judas, Ithamore's comment about "the hat he wears" helpfully calls attention to the fact that there was a head covering in the representation of this early modern Jewish character. As Barabas is modeled on the Mediterranean merchants observed in travel narratives, his costuming could have mimicked the engraved illustrations that proliferated with texts like de Nicolay's. Many of these drawings lack the helpful quality of pigment which might have supported or dismissed the coloration question that Emma Smith challenged, but they do incorporate "figures, naturally set forth...according to the diuersitie of nations, their port, intreatie, apparrell, lawes, religion and maner of liuing."⁵⁹ The authenticity with which de Nicolay seems to undertake the report results in remarkable costume specificity. The hat of the Jewish merchant in figure 4, for example, appears globular and almost turban-like, as though the Jews donned the same attire as other non-Christians.

⁵⁹ Nicolas de Nicolay, "Frontispiece," in *The nauigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie by Nicholas Nicholay Daulphinois, Lord of Arfeuile, chamberlaine and geographer ordinarie to the King of Fraunce : conteining sundry singularities which the author hath there seene and obserued: deuided into foure bookes, with threescore figures, naturally set forth as well of men as women, according to the diuersitie of nations, their port, intreatie, apparrell, lawes, religion and maner of liuing, aswel in time of warre as peace: with diuers faire and memorable histories, happened in our time. Translated out of the French by T. Washington the younger* (Imprinted at London : [At the cost of John Stell] by Thomas Dawson, 1585).

If de Nicolay believed that the Jews and Muslims resembled each other, he was not alone. Pope Paul IV (1476–1559) referred to the two collectively as “that breed of Moors and Jews, those dregs of earth.”⁶⁰ The ecumenical laws about badges also conflated the two non-Christian groups when it stated concerns about the mixing of “Jews or Saracens with Christian women.”⁶¹ Daniel Vitkus observes the verbal “conglomeration” of these terms in his study, finding that Moors, Turks, and Jews were part of “a generalized Islamic identity.”⁶² In fact, he finds that the precedent of hybridizing Islamicness and Jewishness began as far back as the eleventh century, and writes that:

The Christian perception of a Muslim-Jewish alliance may be traced back to the era of the Crusades, and for centuries Western European writers confused the two religious systems... This misrepresentation of Muslim and Jewish belief systems was then mapped from this older tradition onto a new set of texts that placed Jewish merchants and Turkish officials or janissaries side-by-side in the early modern Mediterranean.⁶³

To contemporary Christians, Jews and Muslims were commingled, and evidence of this can be observed in various plays when Jews are seen to be calling out to Mahomet or fraternizing with other non-Christians. Kimberly Woosley Poitevin helpfully adds that “travel narratives, sermons, and other discourses of the time made every effort to distinguish Jews and Jewishness from both Englishness and Christianity. This often occurred through an alignment of Jews with Muslim peoples.”⁶⁴ Similar connections are

⁶⁰ Sanford-Brustein, *The Tainted Muse*, 174.

⁶¹ Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015021846079>.

⁶² Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 91.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁶⁴ Kimberly Woosley Poitevin, “‘Counterfeit Colour’: Making Up Race in Elizabeth Cary’s ‘The Tragedy of Mariam’,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 24, no. 1 (2005): 17.

drawn between the two because of the circumcision ritual, as Julia Reinhard Lupton elucidates, saying, “It was above all the rite of circumcision in its Pauline articulation that emblemized the affiliation between the Jew and the Muslim in Christian typological thought.”⁶⁵

Such interchangeability of the Jew with the Muslim was highly relevant in an early modern dramatic context, and the theater incorporated costuming elements to reflect such conglomerative thinking. Whether the Jewish headgear was consistent with figure 4 or 5 from de Nicolay’s text, or more akin to Bacon’s orange bonnet or Judas’s red hair, the essential signification of that prop would have been non-Christian difference.

Raphael Straus has analyzed the social history of the “Jewish hat” as a part of the few unifying features of Jewish fashion across Europe over time.⁶⁶ He finds that a horned headpiece became associated with the Jews and, even when the fashion went out of style, remained associated with them.⁶⁷ The same distinctive article of headwear eventually became linked with a caricatured comic figure known as the court jester.⁶⁸ The early modern association between this enduring Jewish headgear and the court buffoon suggests fascinating applications for the presentation of English Renaissance stage Jews. Indeed, the hat we know Barabas wore could have actually functioned as a comedic prop,

⁶⁵ Julia Reinhard Lupton, “Othello Circumcised: Shakespeare and the Pauline Discourse of Nations,” *Representations* 57 (Winter 1997): 82.

⁶⁶ Raphael Straus, “The ‘Jewish Hat’ as an Aspect of Social History,” *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (1942): 59–72.

⁶⁷ Straus traces the evolution of this Italian garment called a *cucullus*, consisting of a cape with a pointed hood, from the late Roman period through the later Middle Ages. He shows its spread from Italy to Germany to France to Poland, as well as its shift from pointed to horned (*pileus cornutus*) to rounded, with elements of folded or variously formed shapes. For more, see Straus, “The ‘Jewish Hat’,” 60–64.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

a signifier of the Jew's ridiculousness. It would certainly undermine the threat Barabas represents to Malta and offer a comic edge to the disturbed speeches, actions, and plot development of Marlowe's play. And if Shylock wore one as well (though no stage directions directly indicate a headpiece), it would confirm his role in Shakespeare's comedy as a clown figure.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Jewish suit in the *The Devil's Law-Case* is meant to invoke comedic response; the surgeon who announces his plans to put it on expresses its humorous potential directly when he says it will result in a "comical event" (5.2.31).

In fact, there is scholarly precedent for the idea that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jewish stage figure was a humorous one. Peter Berek sees the idea of "looking Jewish" as an inherent source of comic effect. "That the nose was funny seems to have been more important to audiences and acting companies than that the nose was a marker for Jewishness. Making characters 'look Jewish' was a way of making them funny," he writes.⁷⁰ Given Berek's theory, it would not be out of place to imagine other signifiers of Jewishness generally spurring comic associations. Like a prosthetic nose, the Jewish hat—regardless of color—could also have been a material signifier of contemporary Jewishness *and* of amusement.

Of course, Ithamore's observation of Barabas's hat could be a misunderstood interpretation of a religious precedent. The *kippah* (literally, "dome" in Hebrew) has been

⁶⁹ Hollywood's adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy still struggles to deal with the portrayal of this character. In one recent film trade publication, for example, a reporter writes that "Shylock is, after all, the classic embodiment of the Jew as caricature: money-grubbing, venal, and vindictive." For more, see, Simi Horwitz, "Tackling a potential caricature: the many faces of Shylock," *Back Stage* 45, no. 50 (December 2004), 7.

⁷⁰ Berek, "Looking Jewish," 69.

worn by Jewish men since at least the time of the Talmud.⁷¹ While medieval *halakhic* (Jewish legal) authorities have disputed how often it was meant to be worn, the skullcap-like *kippah* was a noticeable and consistent part of Jewish dress practices in Amsterdam, Aleppo, Venice, or anywhere else the Jews were observed.⁷² Its style varied according to local practice, as it still does, but this religious head covering would have been an instantly recognizable costume device for staging Jewishness and seems to have been employed regularly in Victorian performances of *Merchant*, as figures 14 and 15 show.



Figure 14. A watercolor of Shylock in profile view [London: 1863]. “[Shylock, from *Merchant of Venice*] [graphic] / E.G. Lewis, 1863.” Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.

⁷¹ The practice is still very common, though more often within the context of ritual observance.

⁷² Some commentators say that the *kippah* brings a Jew slightly closer to God; others see it as a sign of reverence; still others see it as a basic tool to distinguish the Jews.



Figure 15. A black-and-white drawing of Shylock with skull cap, furrowed brow, and clutched money bag [London: John Hamilton Mortimer, 18th century]. “[Merchant of Venice, portrait of Shylock] [graphic].” Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.

Because of an influx of travel reports like Henry Blount’s *A Voyage into the Levant*, contemporary audiences were likely aware of these more observable types of Jewish practices. Blount’s work offers some entertaining detail of his time spent in a synagogue and the unfamiliar procedures he witnessed while there. “The Synagogue is hunground with Glafle lamps burning : eyery man at his entrance puts on a linnen Cope, firft kissing it...They fuffer no women to enter the Synagogue, but appoint them a Gallery without...they told me it was bccaufe women have not fo divine a fouleas men, and arc of a lower creation, madconly for the propagation, and pleafure of man...”⁷³ Blount’s observations are not without judgment, but they do report a fairly accurate picture of traditional Jewish ritualistic practice. The cape he describes is the *tallit*, the fringed linen garment worn by Jewish men during prayer—the same kind that appears to

⁷³ Blount, *A Voyage into the Levant*, 160.

be tied around the waist of Henry Irving in figure 6. Traditionally, the fringes are at the corners of the rectangular garment; these are kissed before the *tallit* is swung over the shoulders in the manner of a cape. Blount's observation about women being separated from men is also accurate. The *mechitza* (literally, "division" in Hebrew) is a partition which separates the sexes. Women were (and still are in modern Orthodox circles) believed to be a distraction to men and so are separated from them during services.⁷⁴

Very little has been made of the hat detail in English Renaissance scholarship, especially when compared to the focus on the application of the wig or the coloration of Jewish hair. It is, however, highly likely that the consistent prop affixed to the head of characters like Barabas and Shylock was a distinctive hat; whether this took the form of artificial hair, a comically unfashionable *pileus cornutus*, an enforced colorful bonnet, a Muslim-affiliated turban, or a ritual *kippah*, this head covering was a regular part of early modern Jewish stage characterization.

Like Shylock's gaberline and Romelio's habit, Barabas's hat is valuable in understanding how the early modern theater would have used costumes to communicate the difference of Jewishness.⁷⁵ The search for Jewish accessorization, however, does not end with these props. As moneybags are of constant concern to Jewish characters, they would have been incorporated on the stage. The same is true of coins, which are

⁷⁴ As a patriarchal religion, traditional attitudes concerning female inferiority are tied to this practice and many others. Blount's summation, that "women have not so fine a soul as men," is in keeping with such orthodox beliefs.

⁷⁵ Furthermore, the potential for objects to be shared in different plays—and to be earning a collective character in the process—might have enabled costumes and props to provide symbolic subtext in reinforcing Jewishness. For more on the sharing of props in contemporary theater, see Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 102–103.

explicitly emphasized in the opening of *The Jew of Malta* as well as in numerous instances within the play. Indeed, ducats seem to make an appearance almost every time a Jew does in dramas set in contemporary contexts, in logical connection to the financial positions that Jews filled at the time. Whether as a banker, a commercial agent, or a financial advisor,⁷⁶ the economic functions served by early modern Jews were translated theatrically with props that signalled pecuniary concerns.

Likewise, the threat of cutting, which hangs over Antonio's head for much of *The Merchant of Venice*, was supported by the presence of a prop in the form of a blade. Henslowe's list includes lances, hatchets, forks, bows, and spears. A whole inventory of weapons was available in the Rose Theater, and a similar supply of menacing metal ornaments would have been available at the Globe. This fact is upheld by the text of *Merchant*, which explicitly calls for a weapon, noting that "Shylock sharpens his knife on the sole of his shoe" (4.1.SD). Bassanio accentuates the prop's presence immediately after: "Why does thou whet thy knife so earnestly?" (4.1.123).

The many acts of violence that Jews perpetrate in early modern drama call for a whole host of props. In the case of Marlowe's work, these included: a rope belt, a key, a letter, poison, money, a pot, a nosegay, and a knife. But while these many objects were a part of the Jewish stage presence and critical to the success of the plot, they were not *the* markers of difference, working to communicate Jewishness in the embodiment of the actors. Rather, they were adornment, devices to propel the narrative forward. A Jewish gaberdine and headpiece, however, functioned on discursive levels, externalizing the conglomerated associations of the bodies they covered. These established material

⁷⁶ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 180.

elements fabricated Jewish physicality for performers tasked with incorporating Jewishness with both explicit and implicit means.

Physical Embodiment

In her study of early modern theater practices, Evelyn Tribble explains how “accent and action” worked together as crucial elements of successful performance.⁷⁷ While lines and their delivery were central, specific ways of moving the body were also of primary import:

Gesture is not simply decoration, nor is it an outmoded formal system superimposed upon and perhaps competing with speech. Rather, research on its deep links with speech, the hand-through-language system—all of these elements lead us to see that the art of gesture is a vital part of the distributed cognitive toolkit of the early modern actor.⁷⁸

Far from mere forms of gesticulation as a result of personal style or even thespian flair, the movement that Tribble calls “gesture” was an indispensable performative element. Indeed, she observes that these movements were themselves a complex “hand-through-language system.”⁷⁹ If speech expresses thoughts and feelings through the use of words, then movement meaningfully supplements those messages through gesture. And, as “a vital part of the distributed cognitive toolkit,” gestures of Jewish stage representation warrant further consideration.

Dramatic emphasis on the hand movements of Jewish characters provides an obvious entry point for this study. Whether through coin counting or exchanging material

⁷⁷ Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

goods, the regular integration of hand-centered gestures is a conspicuous method of manifesting concerns about Jewish corporeality. In the case of *The Jew of Malta*, Marlowe weaves many references to Barabas's hands directly into the stage directions:

[Hugs his bags.] (2.1.56)
[He blows her a kiss.] (2.1.59)
[He snaps his fingers.] (2.3.246)
[Giving a letter.] (2.3.371)
[Barabas joins their hands.] (2.3.345)
[Putting in poison.] (3.4.91)
[He stirs the pot as he pronounces a curse.] (3.4.96)
[They put the Friar's rope belt around his neck.] (4.1.145)
[They strangle him.] (4.1.153)
[He gives money.] (4.4.50)
[He presents his nosegay, from which they all inhale.] (4.4.37)
[Barabas gives Ferneze a knife.] (5.5.36)

Despite the relatively simple nature of these directions, they reveal actions that demand the use of the Jew's hands, a hyperfocus that reflects the dread of Jewish bodies and the "symbolics of corporeality" that governed those ideas in the period.⁸⁰ Even in the most benign-seeming stage directions, such as "giving nosegay," the threat of malevolence creeps through on account of the nosegay being poisoned. In fact, all of the hand-centered gestures betray malignant meaning. In "blowing a kiss," for example, Barabas is reaching "towards Abigail on tiptoe and nearly touch[ing] her outstretched fingertips as in some productions of *Romeo and Juliet*," or so David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen contend.⁸¹ This semi-erotic reference is disturbing in the context of a father-daughter scene. When more aggressive diction emerges—as with snapping and strangling—the Jew's hands

⁸⁰ The internalized and externalized perceptions of alterity, Feerick argues, worked concomitantly to construct systems of difference that racial thinking sought to impose. For more, see Feerick, *Strangers in Blood*, 7.

⁸¹ "Notes to Pages 271–273," in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 458.

overtly conjure the dangerous potential of the Jewish form. Barabas's own reference to his hands amplifies this peril, when he states, "Here is my hand that I'll set Malta free" (5.2.95).⁸²

Marlowe's drama attests that Jewish hands, as extremities of the Jew's body, are not to be trusted, and contemporary non-literary texts do the same. An etching from Thomas Coryate's *Crudities*, captured in figure 16 below, illustrates a Jew holding one hand aloft as he grasps a knife threateningly. His other hand is outstretched in an effort to grab the fleeing Christian in front of him. Notably, the Jew's hands seem almost to outsize his head, intensifying the sense of danger connected to the Jewish body. The blade, similarly disproportionate, is understood to be the (rather unwieldy) tool of circumcision, what James Shapiro has argued was *the* physical mark that translated to the distrust and detestation of Jewish men and corporeality in the English Renaissance.⁸³



Figure 16. A Jewish figure with a sharp knife pursuing a fleeing Christian in Coryate's *Crudities* [1611].

⁸² This line also recalls a biblical precedent in Pontius Pilate's handwashing pronouncement. As the text states, "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person'." For more, see Matt. 27:24.

⁸³ Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, 132.

Of course, the threat of Jewish cutting extended beyond genital mutilation. Stories of murderous acts committed by Jews were rampant and had been since the medieval period, when texts like Chaucer's *The Prioress's Tale* (c. 1387–1400) canonized ritual murder libels.⁸⁴ Written some 200 years later, *A Christian Turned Turk* still recalls the throat-slicing of the Chaucerian tale when Benwash announces, "I sware as I was a Turk, and I will cut your throat as I am a Jew" (1.16.75). Coryate's illustration is a prime encapsulation of the dangers associated with Jewish hands and a host of related gestural expressions, including reaching, grasping, and cutting.

This same focus on Jewish hands and their movement is evident in *The Merchant of Venice* when Shakespeare's Jew insists upon being repaid for the bond he is owed:

Shylock.

Let *him* look to his bond. *He* was
wont to call *me* usurer; let *him* look to *his* bond. *He*
was wont to lend money for a Christian cur'sy; let
him look to *his* bond.

(*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1.46–49; emphases added)

The pronoun repetition and switching confuses the differences between characters. Who precisely is "he" in this scene? Is it Antonio, Bassanio, Salarino, or Solanio? The lack of clarity seems to beg for finger pointing. It is a logical conclusion to surmise that Shylock would have used gesture in this moment to clarify. This is especially likely given the passionate nature of the language. Tribble's study demonstrates that the art of gesture "involves training the body both to experience and to regulate the passions."⁸⁵ Thoughtful

⁸⁴ Geraldine Heng has traced this thematic historical narrative across the medieval period and found the libel stores to be crucial in Anglo-Jewish relations well into the early modern era. For more, see Geraldine Heng, "England's Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews," *MLN* 127, no. 5 (December 2012): S54–S85.

⁸⁵ Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe*, 90.

gesturing in such movements would have signified Shylock's passionate expression just as much as his speech. Both words and actions worked concomitantly to convey the Jew's concerns about not getting paid.

In addition to gesture as a crucial component of embodiment on the stage, generalized anxiety linked to Jewish physicality emerges with regularity. *A Christian Turned Turk* provides evidence of this early modern culture of anti-Jewish corporeal thought when Rabshake asks:

What's the reason else that the Turk and Jew is troubled (for the most part) with gouty legs and fiery nose? To express their heart-burning. Whereas the puritan is a man of upright calf and clean nostril.

(*A Christian Turned Turk*, 1.6.10–12)

These lines reveal a fascinating perspective on contemporary beliefs about Jewishness and its congenital manifestations. Such assumptions are not unlike the red hair or big-nose generalizations explored earlier, differing, however, on the level of severity. That is, Rabshake's language indicates that Jewish corporeal stereotypes were not just a matter of appearance but of health. Gouty legs, fiery nose, and heart-burn are the "reason[s] that the...Jew is troubled," he says. Connecting Jews to disability in this way opens the door for significant staging potential. In particular, if Jews lacked the "upright" quality of Christian bodies, then how would their forms be arranged in the theater?

English Renaissance drama did not shy away from disability in its stage productions, as is made quite clear in the Shakespearean canon alone. In *Richard III* (c. 1592), the protagonist was famously hunchbacked and thus "not shaped for sportive tricks" (1.1.14-15). In *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1590), Lavinia was mutilated onstage and made mute and physically handicapped when her tongue and hands were cut off. And in *King Lear* (c. 1605), Gloucester's eyes were gouged out by Cornwall. Corporeal

distortion and manipulation were thus regular features of theatrical production. It is not, therefore, inconceivable to imagine the contemporary stage Jew to have incorporated disability into his performance. Rabshake's contrasting language of the "upright" Christian versus the "troubled" Jew certainly entails staging those physical differences live.

In addition to Rabshake's commentary, there is evidence of constitutional Jewish infirmity in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594). On his adventures, protagonist Jack Wilton encounters Zadok the Jew, who talks about a physical rottenness that threatens even from underneath his skin, saying, "I have a leg with an issue, shall I cut it off and from his count of corruption extract a venom worse than any serpents's?"⁸⁶ His moral corruption is externalized through this corporeal moldering.⁸⁷ The troubling nature of Jewishness thus includes internal and external bodily expression. And while Nashe's text was not written for performance, it discloses important contemporary perspectives on the Jew's body and English feelings towards it.

Additional evidence of the Jew's physical decrepitude can be found in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a contemporary work detailing diverse afflictions and their causes.⁸⁸ Among his many wide-ranging observations, Burton notes that "voice, pace, gesture, and looks [are] likewise derived with all the rest of [the Jews']

⁸⁶ Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 295.

⁸⁷ Zadok, in Hebrew, translates to "righteous." As a character whose villainy is both subcutaneous and unconcealed, this character captures a comprehensively anti-Jewish presentation.

⁸⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What It Is, With All the Kinds, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes and Severall Cures Of It*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

conditions and infirmities.”⁸⁹ The comment is useful not only in better accessing contemporary attitudes about Jewish bodies and their differences but also in visualizing those distinctions with “pace, gesture, and looks.”⁹⁰ Furthermore, Burton applies the terms “conditions and infirmities” to the Jews’ physicality, corroborating the perspective on Jewish debility.

Artistic depictions of Jews, including of Judas, suggest physical impairment as well, often featuring a hunched posture like the one evident in Pourbus’s painting. Even if this position communicates guilt or devious behavior, it simultaneously expresses an unattractive physicality. In the twentieth century, Edward Okuń still portrays the betraying apostle with hunched shoulders and a ducked head. Similar attributes appear through the Victorian period in illustrations of Shylock: extending his head forward so that it seems to be in front of his body rather than on top of it; leering mischievously to the side while his rounded shoulders help him protect the moneybag he grasps in his hand; or hauling a sack of goods on his back while leaning forward on an umbrella-cane to balance the outrageous load of material possessions he apparently wants for himself (figures 14, 15, and 17, respectively). In all of these images, the Jew’s body is a distinctive form, twisted or pushed down, and generally impaired.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 211–212.

⁹⁰ This detail supports Tribble’s claims about gesture as a crucial embodied characteristic in the period.



Figure 17. Shylock is drawn with an enormous sack of possessions, hunched over from its weight, and scowling [London: Arthur Rackham, 1898]. “Ingoldsby legends. Merchant of Venice/““Old Clo’!” [graphic] / AR.” Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library.

Whether a result of devious intent or inherited infirmity, the effect of these depictions is that the Jew appears to be physically inferior. This would be in keeping with enduring anti-Jewish narratives of corporeal subordination, a physical and spiritual phenomenon that was understood to derive from the biblical period. Some considered the Jews’ eternal malignancy to be the result of an incident in the book of Genesis involving Noah and his son Ham.⁹¹ Others saw Jewish sinfulness deriving from the time of the crucifixion. One need only refer to John Donne’s sonnet that begins, “Spit in my face, yee Jewes, and pierce my side” for proof of this contemporary attitude.⁹² “They kill’d

⁹¹ According to Augustine’s Pauline account, Ham—who had told his brothers that their father had been drunk and nude while he slept—received a punishment that would disenfranchise his children in perpetuity. Scholarly analysis of this episode has varied over time, with some racist interpretations asserting that black skin was a component of that punishment; others, as Augustine did, argued that it encapsulated an inferior social position. See M. Lindsay Kaplan and David Nirenberg for more.

⁹² John Donne, “Holy Sonnet 7,” in *The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 9.

once an inglorious man,” he writes, and connects the “Jewes impiety” directly to their participation in the Lord’s brutal suffering.⁹³ Whether the roots of inherited immorality did indeed stem from stories in the Pentateuch or the New Testament, the belief in the Jews’ inner and outer corruption was widespread in the early modern Christian imagination. Hunched shoulders were a simple way for an actor to embody that subordinate physicality.

Critics like Lisa Lampert-Weissig have argued that disparaging corporeal claims concerning Jews functioned to diminish any power earned through financial or intellectual prowess and reinforced Christian supersessionism.⁹⁴ Essentially, with the insistence on Jewish bodily difference, the English were protecting themselves from the potential of Jewish ascendancy and also from Christian decline. Theatrical adaptation of supersessionism can take numerous forms, from embodiment to rhetoric. Indeed, M. Lindsay Kaplan has shown that *The Merchant of Venice* reinforces all of these attitudes whenever “the play’s characters describe [Shylock’s] body as inanimate, bestial, dark, and demonic in an attempt to construct a physical inferiority that will return him to his rightful place of subjection.”⁹⁵ Repeated references to his dog-like nature—“since I am a dog” and “A cur can lend three thousand ducats?”—do succeed in curtailing his humanity (3.3.8; 1.3.132). Shylock participates in this dehumanizing name-calling as well, parroting the racial epithets that follow him around the streets of Venice and thus

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Lisa Lampert-Weissig, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁹⁵ M. Lindsay Kaplan, “Constructing the Inferior Body: Medieval Theology in *The Merchant of Venice*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks Online, 2016), 1.

reinforcing Christian beliefs in his brutish qualities. His bestial language, as well as the play's general attention to his physicality—"Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation" and "the Jew my master, who (God bless the mark) is a kind of devil"—constantly remind the audience of Jewish corporeal lowness (2.2.26–27; 2.2.22–24). A similar inhuman name-calling occurs in *A Christian Turned Turk*, as when Benwash refuses to keep an enslaved family together. "Creature," Raymond addresses him; and then again, "Inhuman dog" (1.6.234; 1.6.262). It is likely that the staging would have worked to echo these spoken sentiments through a subordinate physical presentation.

This equivalence between physical inferiority and visual performance supports Elizabeth Bearden's study of disabled representation in early modern England and of contemporary attitudes linking disability with monstrosity.⁹⁶ Though her research does not treat Jewish bodies, her study of eunuchs offers interesting applications for analyzing attitudes towards Jewish male corporeality. Bearden writes, "The word 'monster' was and still is used to indicate extraordinary capacity as well as perceived incapacity."⁹⁷ She shows, for example, that English visitors to Ottoman contexts were envious of eunuchs' special access to the sultans and to the powerful women of the Turkish court. At the same time, she reveals that the English feared and were even repulsed by those same bodies and their disfigurement.⁹⁸ A similar combination of fascination and repulsion existed in Anglo-Jewish relations, and the misperception of circumcision as a kind of castration analogizes the Jew with the eunuch even further. The Jewish body on stage registered the

⁹⁶ Elizabeth B. Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 143–152.

simultaneous nature of interest and disgust that Bearden uncovers, as well as the desire to look and turn away.

Aside from casting a diminutive person for the part, the possibilities for communicating Jewish infirmity on the stage likely involved a performative physical inferiority. And if Shylock and Benwash are direct descendants of Barabas, then the original early modern stage Jew would have had to transmit similar subordinate energy or a lowly physical shape. But since we have clear records that dynamo Edward Alleyn played Barabas from the time that *The Jew of Malta* opened in the 1590s until his death in 1626, our understanding of the stage Jew must be markedly different.⁹⁹ He could not have been a sheepish, low-ranking, or subordinate figure. Edward Alleyn was a large person with a booming voice and a well-known stage history. Having played the indomitable warrior Tamburlaine in Marlowe's tragic two-part series, he would have been recognizable as the robust, imposing, and intimidating physical presence that slew kings and sacrificed virgins. This is not the type of inferior physical specimen perceived in supersessionist readings, nor is it the nonthreatening financial functionary lucky enough to receive a military dispensation in the medieval record. And yet, the text adamantly maintains this stereotype, as does *A Christian Turned Turk*, when staging a fight between Sares, Dansiker, Francisco, Gallop, and Ward in 1.6. The scene's stage directions note that "Benwash hides himself [under a table]." A similar jocular tone is struck in *The Jew of Malta* when Ferneze first explains the threat of the Turkish invasion. Barabas responds with a confession of being unfit for battle. "We are no soldiers," he

⁹⁹ Lois Potter, "Marlowe in Theater and Film," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 262.

says, grouping himself in with the other Jews assembled in front of the Maltese authorities. “Tut, Jew, we know thou art no soldier,” Ferneze volleys back.

Such an exchange must have been comical to original audiences. Alleyn was “the scourge of God,” a hero in Marlowe’s action-packed tragedy in which he repeatedly delivers intrepid militaristic lines such as, “Keep all your standings, and not stir a foot: / Myself will bide the danger of the brunt” (1.2.150–151). It is a major deviation for Alleyn to be the bold, lionhearted Scythian conqueror in *Tamburlaine* as well as the subordinate wimp in *The Jew of Malta*, especially when the actor’s size was a factor. As a soldier, he would indeed have been convincing, but as the inferior body type that scholars like Kaplan describe, his build was not so persuasive.

If Alleyn were to have relayed physical inferiority at all in order to achieve the lowly Jewish body type, he would have had to incorporate significant postural and gestural components into his performance. Creeping about the stage, hunching his shoulders, and curling over his gems and ledgers would have been important methods of simulating the corporeality associated with acting Jewish. So too would physically lowering himself to signify the stunted position of the Jew, “duck[ing] as low as any bare-foot friar” (2.3.25). Any of these performances would have communicated inferiority, for the proud language of his lines—“Go tell ‘em the Jew of Malta sent thee, man: / Tush, who amongst ‘em knows not Barabas?”—does not indicate subordination (1.1.65–66). Neither do his monologues, which itemize his accomplishments and wealth like bullet points on a résumé. In one, he even dismisses any assumptions of corporeal inferiority, saying that he is not “a senseless lump of clay” but rather “fram’d of finer mould than common men” (1.2.217–220).

The text of *The Merchant of Venice* submits additional evidence of theatrical approaches to embodying Jewishness onstage:

Solanio.

I never heard a passion so confused,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets.
“My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter,
A sealèd bag, two sealèd bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stol’n from me by my daughter,
And jewels—two stones, two rich and precious
stones—
Stol’n by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl!
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats.”

Salarino.

Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying “His stones, his daughter, and his ducats.”

(*The Merchant of Venice*, 2.8.12–25)

The dialogue between Solanio and Salarino candidly speaks to Shylock’s comportment and reinforces the performativity of Jewish behavior—and indeed, provides more evidence of the comedic role of the Jew within the context of early modern theater.¹⁰⁰ While the imitation emphasizes the ramblings of a distraught Shylock who had just learned of Jessica’s elopement, the scene also sets up a play-within-the-play: Solanio is performing the role of Shylock in his recital. Salarino’s reply emphasizes the common impulse to imitate the Jew when he refers to those that “follow him.” This diction illustrates not only how the boys in Venice trailed behind Shylock through his public humiliation, but also how they followed his example, acting like him.

¹⁰⁰ Scholars have noted that Shylock’s pronouncement of having been robbed of his ducats is actually an emasculating claim regarding a loss of his testicles, a sexual innuendo which would have been amusing to spectators.

It is important to note that the scene being described has taken place offstage. Any impression of Shylock's acting has been translated numerous times: Solanio imitates the Jew, who is embodied by a Christian actor, who is performing the part written by another Christian, who may or may not have had any interactions with Jews in real life. This presentation fits perfectly within the nexus of myth, rumor, and reality that typified Jewish stage representation. There is another scene in *The Merchant of Venice* that presents a conspicuously complicated display of Jewish performativity:

Shylock.

Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness,
Say this...

(The Merchant of Venice, 1.3.133–135)

Could these lines have functioned as stage directions for the actor, so that he performed the very actions he was describing? Even if this phrasing contains a hint of sarcasm, Shakespeare's comedy, as in other dramas that feature Jews in contemporary contexts, insists on subordinating Jewish corporeality and would certainly have called for Shylock to "bend low" in this moment and throughout *Merchant*. This type of embodiment was as intrinsic to the representation of Shylock's Jewishness as his gaberdine. There is a similar emphasis on physicality in the presentation of Barabas, Benwash, Rabshake, and others. All of these roles variously incorporated gesture, movement, bodily distortion, and physical lowness to produce the Jew.

Conclusion

Manifesting Jewishness in a three-dimensional way demanded that spectators confront an assortment of ideas and concerns about Jewish corporeality. At the same

time, the theater engineered remoteness from these Jews by staging English actors with fabricated forms of difference, including material signifiers as well as essentializing gestures and movements. This intrinsically performative quality of Jewish stage representation meant that audiences saw these figures as a construction, a simulacrum, an imitation. The contemporary stage Jew, while reflecting historical realities, mythical narratives, Christian logics, and a spectrum of interest and disgust, was never meant to resemble the Jew with accuracy. Rather, this combination of costuming, props, and physical maneuvers expressed the embodied nature of staging conventions.

To the extent that drama sought to render the Jews of the early modern world, it did so with selectivity and contradiction. Undoubtedly, discrimination and racist attitudes influenced these choices, but the fact that the theater fashioned Jewishness at all means that a certain amount of Jewish consideration was presented even as the figures themselves were often rejected in the contexts of their narratives. In addition, these performances depicted Jews with a degree of authenticity even as it incorporated fiction outright; it broached beliefs about Jewish bodies even as it exposed the fraudulent nature of those embodied performances; and it proffered anti-Jewish feeling through implicit and explicit means at the same time that it made those differences removable and thus less problematic.

CODA
RAISE THEIR RUIN'D STATE

Every Jew, by order of the magistrate,
That knew about the murder had to die
A shameful death by torture on the spot.
Such wickedness he would not tolerate.
'For evil must have evil's just desert.'
Therefore he had them by wild horses torn,
To be hanged later, as the laws ordain.

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress's Tale* (c. 1387–1400)¹

In its attention to contradictory constructions of Jewishness in the English Renaissance theater, this dissertation has sought to reveal a fuller view of contemporary attitudes towards the Jews. While scholarship has evolved to make space for Jewish questions and concerns in the period's works, it has overwhelmingly done so by privileging pejorative perspectives. This emphasis has undoubtedly been abetted by the scarcity of texts featuring Jewish characters, and by the unflattering representations of Jewishness in certain canonical works; namely, *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589) and *The Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598). Even so, the depictions of Jewish characters in these famous plays are far more nuanced and evolved than their literary predecessors from the medieval period. *The Prioress's Tale* offers a glimpse of the extinction fantasy that Chaucerian record proposed, particularly in the swift and comprehensive nature of the magistrate's judgment. The "on the spot" execution shows a trial-less verdict, and the suggestion of the collective in the use of the word pair "every Jew" expresses the

¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress's Prologue and Tale*, in *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. David Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 358.

thoroughness of retributive desires.² The absence of such severe vengeance against the Jewish collective in Marlovian and Shakespearean reinvention signals a shift in thinking. The exceptionally favorable representations of Jewishness in *The Tragedy of Mariam* (1613) and *The Jewes Tragedy* (1628) offer a profile of Jewish characterization that is both consummately different from the contemporary versions of stage Jews made famous by Barabas and Shylock, and entirely at odds with the blood libel account in *The Canterbury Tales* and elsewhere. This variation is an essential component of Jewish representation in English Renaissance theater and bears consequences for the scholarly narrative that has presumed a ubiquitous anti-Jewish impression across the period's drama.

The diversified depiction of Jewishness—encompassing the villainous poisoner, the mercenary usurer, the volatile vagrant, the misunderstood foreigner, the effective go-between, the virtuous woman, the young lover, the relatable commoner, the acquiescent subject, and more—makes the Jew a versatile stage figure rather than a stock stereotype noted by previous erudition. Jews do not materialize in theatrical contexts as props, but rather as complex characters suited to advance the imaginative, adaptive, and interpretive work of the theater. A more inclusive portrayal of contemporary Jewishness offers valuable opportunities for revisiting play texts incorporating Hebraic and Judaic

² Geraldine Heng has shown the widespread nature of the blood libel narrative. Hugh of Lincoln's death, she illustrates, was retold in numerous forms during the thirteenth century—reproduced in ballads, shrines, miracle tales, and more—lodging the story in the English imagination and indelibly staining the Jews' profile for centuries to come. For more, see Geraldine Heng, "England's Dead Boys: Telling Tales of Christian-Jewish Relations Before and After the First European Expulsion of the Jews," *MLN* 127, no. 5 (December 2012): S54–S85.

elements, not only with the goal of remediating the representations that have been oversimplified, but also with the objective of accessing more accurately the contemporary attitudes embedded in these dramatic representations.

Certainly, anti-Jewish feeling dominated much of the English literary and historical chronicle, but it would be inaccurate to claim that there were no alternative positions. Sara Coodin has shown that English perspectives on the Jews included admiration, particularly for the Jews' resilience in resisting acculturation, but also for the intellectual work that supported the burgeoning field of Christian Hebraism.³ My project seeks to augment the recognition that feelings towards Jews were varied and multidimensional, even as prevailing narratives of antipathy persisted.

The conclusions of this dissertation bear significance not only for our understanding of the early modern period, but also for our world today. Racial logic exercises control over so many aspects of the twenty-first century that the parallels between the discriminating perspectives in *The Jew of Malta*, for example, and the Jews of the American imagination are not difficult to trace. Conspiracy theories about the ways that Jews control money are stunningly familiar; stereotypes about Jewish appearance reflect bygone corporeal judgments; rumors about Jewish craftiness and artifice continue to circulate; and hatred directed at Jews, with intentions of elimination or expulsion, endure. It is therefore critical to amplify inclusive gestures, affirmative depictions, and

³ Coodin's work on the Christian Hebraists offers an especially compelling case for favorable contemporary English attitudes towards Jewish people. Her argument about England's efforts to define itself as a nation—including establishing religious authority separate from Rome's Catholic supremacy—proposes a dependence on Jews in the formation of England's national identity. See Sara Coodin, *Is Shylock Jewish?: Citing Scripture and the Moral Agency of Shakespeare's Jews* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

progressive visions. Titus's direct address to the Judeans in *The Jewes Tragedy*, announcing that he will "raise [their] ruin'd State," offers one such example of a signal of advocacy deserving of further consideration (5.8.195). Lifting up people that have been subjugated is not only an imperative relevant within the context of Heminge's play or in early modern England, but rather an essential enterprise to rectify the continued suffering that results from white Christian advancement. Recognizing the spectrum of racialized representational work within English Renaissance theater is one small step in that direction.

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