'Come to my house': The Architecture of Conversion and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*

This article highlights the importance of the architecture of conversion for Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. Placing emphasis on the word 'house' and its affiliate term 'threshold', the drama is situated within the context of Reformation adaptations, including the founding of playhouses and stranger churches within ex-monastic buildings. Foregrounding the play's fascination with the mercurial and protean energies of architectural conversion, rather than charting more familiar processes of ruination, nostalgia, and loss, the article emphasises the religious polyvalency of Barabas's house and connects its thresholds to the performance of conversion in different contexts. *The Jew of Malta*, I argue, makes imaginative use of the complex dilemmas posed by converted structures, making visible the uncomfortable and inconvenient instabilities that they manifest.

This article highlights the importance of the architecture of conversion for Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (first performed c.1592), arguing that the play engages directly with the legacy of Dissolution adaptation and the history of converted playing spaces.[1] The conversion of Barabas's house into a nunnery kick-starts the tragedy's plot and provides the impetus for his violent acts of retribution. Its thresholds are central to the drama's fixation upon conversion, prompting often performative changes in religious identity as well as exposing characters to mortal risk. Excavating the various layers of Barabas's house I focus on its polyvalency, arguing that the play makes imaginative use of the complex dilemmas posed by converted structures, making visible the uncomfortable and inconvenient instabilities that they manifest. Informed by Jonathan Gil Harris's theory of 'palimpsested time', specifically the 'temporalilty of explosion' whereby 'the untimely irruption of a past that disputes the present' has 'explosive consequences', I argue that the house's disorderly religious symbolism allows the Jewish and Catholic past to repeatedly push into the present moment.[2] The structure thus questions a supersessionary reading of the stability of converted identities and aligns religious change with a violent

performativity. Overdetermined, mercurial, and threateningly transformative, Barabas's house and its thresholds represent both the promise and peril of change.

Of significance for the analysis that follows is the experience that where one dwells both shapes and projects a sense of self: an interdependence which means that religious identity can be readily connected to structural signs and the thresholds which demarcate their boundaries. It was not uncommon for Christians to understand religious identity as a form of architectural making. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 the archetypal convert St. Paul compares himself to a 'master-builder' who lays the foundation of Jesus, becoming a holy house in which God dwells: 'According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereupon […] Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, he shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are'. The biblical language of architectural making therefore helps to shape the early modern understanding of the saved or converted soul. When the theological metaphor collides with the Reformation's inauguration of 'a glorification of the individual household', a process by which the weakening of the structures of the authoritarian Catholic Church newly designated the household as 'the primary unit of social control', the house becomes a potent symbol of identity and selfhood.[3] If the house and the self are thus read as interconnected sites of meaning, then converted properties disturb the psyche as well as the stones of the monastic past.[4] Foregrounding the play's fascination with the mercurial and protean energies of architectural conversion, rather than charting more familiar processes of ruination, nostalgia, and loss, this article argues that *The Jew of Malta* exemplifies the potential for adapted buildings to act as a powerful metaphor for the structural instability of the early modern convert as well as

referencing a wider scepticism about the permanence and fixity of the Reformation project.[5]

The conversion of Barabas's home is mooted early in the drama and along with the confiscation of his wealth serves as his punishment for refusing to give up half his money to fund Malta's tribute to the Turks. A Maltese knight directs the governor of Malta, Ferneze, to 'list not to his exclaims. / Convert his mansion to a nunnery; / His house will harbour many holy nuns'.[6] This is described as an alternative to forcing him to convert to Christianity. The conversion of Barabas's house is therefore designed as a substitute for a religious conversion: a material proxy for the unconverted soul. The transposition fails to enact an actual conversion, however. Barabas's statement that he will be 'no convertite' (I, ii, 83) holds true, and the conversion of his house instead prompts a number of performances of religious change on the part of characters in the play, including the pretended conversion of his daughter Abigail so that she can enter the nunnery and recover her father's jewels, and Barabas's false claims that he will convert in order to deflect attention from his quest for revenge. These performances are physically and semantically connected to the action of crossing a threshold, an action that typically brings death rather than fulfilling the promise of religious transformation. If architecture proves false in the play then this recalls the stereotype of the Jew who infiltrates households to steal children and pollute water sources.[7] It is notable, however, that while he wields poison and refers to a past history polluting wells (II, iii, 178), Barabas's revenge is envisaged in structural terms. He will bring the Turkish ruler Selim-Calymath's men into the city via the sewers, and he curses Malta by claiming that he will 'fire the churches, pull their houses down' (V, i, 63). Barabas imagines that the apt retribution for the conversion of his home is conspicuously the ruination of the secular and

religious houses of the Maltese. The all-pervasive threat posed by the converted house and its thresholds culminates in the demise of Selim-Calymath's soldiers after they are lured to a monastery with the promise of a feast and Barabas engineers an explosion which 'batter[s] all the stones about their ears' (V, v, 30). Referencing the ruination of Catholic spaces which were broken up rather than converted to Protestant use following the Reformation, it may mark a satisfying denouement to the various echoes of Barabas's house which pervade the play as in this instance a Catholic house is obliterated (albeit offstage). The conversion of Barabas's house therefore has a marked effect upon the revenge plot and the performance of religious identity in the play. Not only a proxy for Barabas's soul, but a space burdened with overlapping and seemingly arbitrary religious signs, its polyvalency draws our attention to the shape shifting and convertible nature of stage architecture, as well as the converted nature of some playing spaces. A powerfully metatheatrical structure, Barabas's house asks questions about the stability and permanence of conversion in a variety of circumstances.

The detailed examination of Barabas's house that follows initially situates the play within the context of post-Reformation architectural conversions, assessing the foundations on which Marlowe's structure is built. The article then excavates the various religious associations generated by the property, establishing that the converted house references the founding of playhouses and stranger churches within ex-monastic buildings as well as alluding to the open promiscuity of the bawdy house and the fraught legacy of Jewish property ownership. Further readings will explore the power of thresholds to inspire conversion, analyse the repeated use of the phrase 'come to my house', and assess the significance of the convertible qualities of stage architecture in the play. Throughout, I will be attentive to how processes of adaptation

and recycling were central to both playing culture and religious identity formation after the Reformation. Marlowe's drama serves as a powerful example of how writers grappled with the legacy of the Reformation as a process of both re-formation and reform, the effects of which continued to reverberate discursively throughout the landscape and culture of the late sixteenth century.

Foundations

The foundation for Barabas's house is the fraught legacy of the English Reformation and its influence on playing culture in the capital. Much writing on the impact of the Dissolution on the English landscape has focused on ruination and harnessed the language of violence and nostalgia. [8] The extent to which ruination was the intended or actual outcome of dissolution is still contested, however, particularly as the Henrician authorities actively discouraged the extensive plunder of monastic land by local communities.[9] Some scholars now argue that approximately half of dissolved land and property was put to new uses via processes of adaptation.[10] In the dismantling and reassembly of monastic properties Maurice Howard sees 'a picture of renewal as opposed to destruction' and John Schofield has argued for the potentially 'liberating processes' released by the Dissolution as acts of repurposing reflected the needs of particular communities.[11] Part of a wider culture of recycling and reuse, people were often inclined to save and repurpose materials and structures, especially those with intrinsic value, and a level of pragmatism, as well as an impulse towards iconoclasm, helped shape attitudes to the material remains of the pre-Reformation past.[12] Such acts of creative reuse included the repurposing of bishop's houses as courtiers' residences; the use of large monastic buildings for the purposes of trade, commerce, and craft; the establishment of new churches, including parish churches

and stranger churches for immigrant communities of Dutch and French Protestants; the founding of hospitals, orphanages and prisons; the storing of livestock and commodities; and the establishment of civic buildings and schools.[13] Whether properties were subject to conversion or ruination seems to have been driven by local needs and the nature of the landscape. For example, a large number of monastic precincts in Hertfordshire were converted into houses for the gentry, likely due to the county's proximity to London, while conversion was rare in Norfolk, where the land was often waterlogged.[14] Given the relatively high value of property in London and the pressures of a growing population, it is likely that the capital saw some of the highest concentrations of post-Dissolution conversion.

Converted structures also made visible the potential for the salvaging of the remnants of the Catholic past in anticipation of an eventual return to Rome. Alexandra Walsham notes that after the Reformation Catholics retained strong emotional links to parish churches, believing that Protestants only 'had temporary custody'.[15] During periods of Catholic resurgence, the previous history of such buildings could be advertised in different ways. During the reign of Mary Tudor the printer Robert Caly drew attention to the location of his press by including the following on the title page of an edition of a Paul's Cross sermon by James Brooks, master of Balliol College, Oxford: 'Imprinted at London: Within the late dissolued house, of the Graie friers'.[16] This pointed reminder of a converted building's prior religious identity is a textual reclamation equivalent to the recovery of movable church furniture which was returned to parish churches during the Marian restoration.[17] In tandem, recusants often encrypted their religious affiliation into the structures of their homes in a manner which corresponded to the Counter-Reformation focus upon space and place as a crucial component of meditative practice.[18] Such an

attention to the legibility of buildings as encoding visible signs of religious community meant that converted structures and objects could be read in oppositional ways, either as a proclamation of Protestantism's dominance or as potent relics whose desacralization prompted feelings of loss and nostalgia, but nonetheless communicated the possibility, however remote, of a Catholic return.[19] Converted buildings can thus make the Reformation tangible by creating multi-layered composites and hybrids, structures that exemplify Harris's 'untimely matter' of the English Renaissance.[20]

The conversion of monastic property and the transfer of vast tracts of land held by Catholic ecclesiastical powers into secular and Protestant hands had an important impact on the development of London's theatre culture. Spurred on by an influx of people to the capital, playhouses were often built on ex-monastic land or, in the case of the indoor theatres, carved out of monastic properties.[21] James Burbage founded the Theatre in 1576 in the Liberty of Holywell, north London, on a site that lay south of the cloisters of the priory, utilising the foundations of the dissolved property. The adjacent theatre, the Curtain, which opened in 1577, was also built on priory land. The indoor theatre at Blackfriars was carved out of a former Dominican friary used for state business during the reign of Henry VIII. Sir Thomas Cawarden, Master of the Revels, stowed tents and pavilions and stabled horses in the parish church of St Anne's before the children's company the Children of the Chapel Royal used the site for performances.[22] James Burbage purchased part of the friary property in 1596, although famously the King's Men were not able to take up residence until 1608. As part of her study of the interactive relationship between repertory and theatre space, Sarah Dustagheer has explored Reformation memories at Blackfriars, arguing that 'it is probable that much of the exterior medieval building work was

recycled rather than destroyed' and that playwrights connected to the Children of the Queen's Revels and the King's Men used the site as a 'discursive space to think through the Reformation and its implications'.[23] While the founding of Blackfriars postdates *The Jew of Malta*, it nonetheless exemplifies the potential for converted buildings to act as a bridge to the past, a capacity explored by dramatists, and recalled by audiences.[24] As Tiffany Stern observes, this was a site 'that constantly brought its past to mind' and which had a 'haunted atmosphere'.[25]

The playhouse of greatest importance for the performance history of *The Jew of Malta* is Philip Henslowe's Rose Theatre, the first purpose built theatre on Bankside.[26] Animal baiting rings appear on Bankside in the 1540s with a Bear Garden built on land 'agaynste the tenemente called the rose' demised to William Payne by the Bishop of Winchester.[27] The Rose Theatre was built on this tenement, land which was apparently a former rose garden within the parish of St. Margaret's, later St. Saviour's.[28] To the east lay Winchester Palace and the priory of St. Mary Overy, whose church became the parish church of St. Saviour and later Southwark Cathedral.[29] John Stow notes that the church of St. Mary Overy was on the site of an early 'house of sisters' founded by a woman called Mary and later included a chapel dedicated to the penitent prostitute St Mary Magdalen, observations which may be pertinent to the conversion of Barabas's house into a nunnery in *The Jew of Malta*, particularly because the nunnery becomes conflated with a bawdy house.[30] To the immediate west was land formerly owned by the prioress of Stratford-at-Bow. The Rose was therefore constructed on land bounded by religious property, whether current or dissolved. This was by no means unusual as ex-religious holdings made up a considerable proportion of available land for lease and purchase in the period, but it

may be significant that the Rose was surrounded, however nebulously, by the memory of the Dissolution.

The impact of the Reformation on the building of the playhouses was accompanied by a transitory and mutable understanding of the resulting structures.[31] Playing spaces were subject to numerous processes of rebuilding, refurbishment and adaptation, famously epitomised by the carpenter Peter Streete's repurposing of the timbers of the Theatre to build the Globe on Bankside, and evidenced by the transformation of city inns into inn-yard theatres and the remodelling of the Rose which took place five years after its initial construction.[32] In his study of bowling alleys as a model for the commercial theatre, Callan Davies emphasises the multi-purpose and short-lived nature of many recreational spaces in the city. Observing that alleys and playhouses alike were constructed within ex-ecclesiastical property, including at Blackfriars, he points out that 'conversion' is an invaluable 'critical paradigm for understanding playhouse construction'.[33] An acceptance of the fluctuating and transient nature of playing spaces in early modern London means that the repurposing of dissolved property was only one of many acts of recycling which defined the flexible architectural parameters of playing culture in the capital. The history of early modern theatre is thus deeply involved with the material legacy of Reformation adaptation, the broader context, in which playing spaces are themselves subject to ongoing acts of conversion, deepens this association still further.[34] It is this theatrical culture of conversion which is potentially reflected in the use of converted buildings within specific plays, including *The Jew of Malta*.[35] Their presence is testament to the stage's enduring fascination with religious conversion, particularly the conversion of non-Christians, but such structures also raise pertinent questions

about drama's relationship to the tangible after-effects of the Dissolution in the capital.[36]

Despite a number of connections with the history of early modern drama, the importance of the architecture of conversion for the English literary imagination is overshadowed by the dominance of the ruin, the significance of which is rightly well attested.[37] Many critics have highlighted the multifaceted nature of the ruin, with Andrew Hui arguing that Renaissance writers engaging with the poetics of the ruin create work which 'absorbs the past and is in turn open to future appropriation and mutation', producing 'fluid' multiplicities rather than monuments.[38] While not a dominant literary motif on the same scale, the converted house's complex relationship with both Reformation reuse and theatre history nonetheless mean that, like the ruin, it is a symbolically resonant structure, multifaceted, and allusive. One of the contentions of this article is that the architecture of conversion shares a similar capacity for temporal complexity to that evidenced by the ruin, but that the continued use of converted properties makes much more obvious the uneasy compromises, ambiguities, and risks, which lie at the heart of England's conversion to Protestantism.

Excavation

This complicated history provides the foundation for Barabas's converted house in *The Jew of Malta*. This is a house which overlays Jew, Catholic, and Protestant, creating a disorderly mixture that highlights the performativity of confessional identities and references the often arbitrary and contingent nature of conversion. One example of the overlaying of divergent religious elements in the converted house occurs when, after the confiscation of his wealth, it emerges that Barabas has hidden

'Ten thousand portagues, besides great pearls, / Rich, costly jewels, and stones infinite' (I, ii, 245-246) in his home. As well as recalling the myth of the Jewish hoarder, miserly accumulating ill-gotten gains, these riches could be equated with the monastic treasure confiscated for Henry VIII by Thomas Cromwell and his agents.[39] This potentially allies the stereotype of Jewish greed with Popish 'trash', the term by which Barabas himself describes the material returns of his trade in the opening scene when bemoaning how difficult it is to count his 'silverlings' (I, i, 6). The possible connection to monastic wealth is reinforced when Barabas tells Abigail where he has hidden his pearls and jewels. Whispering to her as he pretends to rail against her decision to convert, Barabas overlays Jewish space with Christian signification by making the sign of the cross to indicate which board hides his treasure: 'The board is markèd thus [*making the sign of the cross*] that covers it' (I, ii, 351-352). The stage direction, produced in modern editions of the play, is not in the 1633 quarto, which includes the direction 'Whispers to her' (D1r) rather than information pertaining to gesture. Five lines later, however, the gesture is indicated by a typographical symbol (see fig. 1) so that the text incorporates the sign described by Barabas into the visual field of the page. Importantly, this is clearly a crucifix rather than a generic cross and the printer working for Nicholas Vavasour, I. B., has gone to some trouble to ensure that its Christian nature is made typographically explicit. Modern editors have plausibly inferred from the symbol that Barabas twice parodies the gestural symbolism of the Catholic priest and worshipper. This has a prophetic tenor as his prior marking of a cross upon the fabric of the building ensures that his house already bears the mark of Christianity prior to its conversion into a nunnery. The cross covers treasure that is symbolic of Barabas's Jewishness (as accords with anti-Semitic stereotypes), but the accompanying gesture conflates him with the indulgence-selling

priest. Emptied of its meaning as a ritual act of blessing, the gesture becomes mere performance (and typographical sign) but a performance which is nonetheless freighted with religious significance. Barabas's gesture may even recall the removal of crosses from churches by reformers, most prominently the removal of rood screens, as well as the continued Protestant controversy surrounding the making of the sign at baptism. A Jew performing a Catholic gesture in order to direct his daughter to hidden treasure in a formerly Jewish property which now houses nuns is thus far from innocuous. It signals the play's satirical and often absurd puncturing of religious piety and emphasises the importance of Barabas's converted house as a locus of complex religious meaning and symbolism. When read through the lens of Catholic survivals, particularly the hiding of devotional objects within Catholic households, the recovery of Barabas's 'trash' takes on a number of further associations which speak to the persistence of a building's religious history, despite attempts to erase its previous meaning and use. The result is a palimpsest-like understanding of structural and religious alteration which may imply that the Protestant conversion of Catholic buildings, and attempts to displace their contents, fails to secure anything more than cosmetic alteration and only temporarily hides, rather than erases, the Catholic past.

Barabas's making of the sign of the cross thus foregrounds the overdetermined nature of his converted home and literally gestures towards an overlaying of religious identities; the spectre of a Jew pantomiming a Catholic blessing serving to connect the two religions in a manner which draws attention to the powerful multiplicities conveyed by the converted house rather than foregrounding wholesale erasure. Arguably this reading is made possible because of Barabas's Jewishness. A capacity for equivocation recalls Jewish-Iberian *marranos* or *conversos*, converts to Catholicism who displayed a malleability in relation to identity which resulted in

composite and dynamic national and religious affiliations.[40] There was a fluctuating *marrano* community in Tudor London and in the 1590s a number were suspected of involvement in Catholic plots against Elizabeth.[41] Peter Berek speculates that this community may have informed Marlowe's characterisation of Barabas.[42] Barabas's equivocal nature is highlighted by his declaration of kinship with the Muslim slave Ithimore: '[…] we are villaines both. / Both circumcisèd, we hate Christians both' (II, iii, 215-216) and his later claims that he will convert to Christianity.[43] Barabas's status as a Jew thus enables a reading of him as an overburdened foil, a character that despite his failure to convert is capable of assuming a variety of religious identities through performance.[44] While this is not a new observation and much has been made of Barabas's capacity to represent different faiths, it has not been emphasised that this capaciousness is reflected in his converted home.[45]

Significantly, Judaism was synonymous with locational instability, providing a further gloss on Barabas's and his house's ability to accommodate divergent religious associations. Jews were frequently barred from inheriting property, which could be arbitrarily escheated to Christians, resulting in communities being subjected to dispersal. Prior to the expulsion in 1290, domestic dwellings in London were seized and a number of synagogues forcibly converted into churches.[46] Forever barred from a permanent homeland (as Barabas states at I, i, 119: 'They say we are a scattered nation'), the Jew was understood as pathologically dangerous, and therefore in need of containment within ghettos, but paradoxically, and cruelly, subject to constant acts of destabilisation by Christian cultures who denied them the right to bequeath property and thereby the ability to settle permanently in one location.[47] Alongside the stereotype of the Jewish poisoner who infiltrates Christian households, and the suspicion that chameleon-like *marranos* outwardly conformed (or performed) while

continuing to practice their old religion at home, this meant that Jewish structures had a particularly powerful hold on the early modern English imagination.[48] The longer history of Jewish architectural conversion thus haunts Barabas's house. These hauntings add to the overdetermined and accretive nature of the building, signalling its instability and its role as a site for performance.

The house's religious polyvalency is illuminated further by a curious link between the play and the Dutch Church libel of 1593.[49] Affixed to the walls of the Dutch stranger church, itself a converted property as the building was formerly part of the Catholic Austin Friars, the libel attacked displaced co-religionists who were now spiritually housed in a converted property, drawing on anti-Semitic language to articulate fears about the effects of migration on trade and housing in the capital. The libel is famously signed with the name 'Tamburlaine' (53) and threatens a 'Paris massacre' (40), referencing two of Marlowe's dramas. *The Massacre at Paris* had premiered at the Rose in late January 1593 and the libel appeared roughly three months later, on the fifth of May.[50] The Privy Council ordered that the libellers be discovered and the hunt for 'Tamburlaine' resulted in the arrest of Marlowe's associate and fellow playwright, Thomas Kyd, on the eleventh of May. This was followed on the eighteenth of May by a warrant being issued for Marlowe's arrest, after Kyd, likely under torture, claimed Marlowe had given him a heretical text found in his lodging. Thematic connections have been made between the libel and *The Jew of Malta*, not least because of its claim that 'like the Jewes, you eat us up as bread' (8) as well as references to 'Machiavellian Merchants' (5), 'vsury' (6), 'temples' (39) and 'counterfeitinge religion' (42).[51] What has not been hitherto acknowledged, however, is the extent to which Barabas's converted house and the housing of stranger churches in converted buildings, such as Austin Friars, may provide one of the most striking

affinities between this anti-alien document and Marlowe's play. This affinity is reflected by the libel's claims that strangers are forcing up rents in the capital and driving Londoners into homelessness, a common charge against stranger communities: 'In Chambers, twenty in one house will lurke, / Raysing of rents, was never knowne before / […] And our poor soules, are cleane thrust out of dore / And to the warres are sent abroade to rome' (29-33).[52] The libel's claim that immigrant communities of Protestants are displacing Londoners, even if many of the capital's inhabitants were themselves internal migrants from elsewhere in Britain, is understood and articulated in terms that foreground anti-Semitism and religious equivocation, recalling Marlowe's characterisation of Barabas.[53] The libel seems to indicate that pressure on housing means Londoners are in danger of becoming like the wandering Jew, (although there is a likely pun in 'to rome' which raises the spectre of Catholic conversion), at the same time as strangers are conflated with the myth of Jewish rapaciousness. Protestant refugees, including Marian exiles from England in the 1550s, often connected their experiences to the Jewish exiles of the Old Testament so the libel is drawing on a longer history of association between exiled Protestants and Jews, albeit with a negative twist.[54] Affixed to the Dutch Church a year after the first recorded performance of *The Jew of Malta* in 1592, the libel's references to Marlowe may indicate that 'Tamburlaine' had partly taken inspiration from the play's interest in converted properties, including stranger churches. The conversion of Barabas's house does not threaten the housing of the Maltese, instead they profit from its confiscation, and so the connection to the founding of stranger churches is oblique. Nonetheless, this intriguing documentary link between *The Jew of Malta* and an actual converted building indicates that the play's engagement with the architecture of

conversion and the controversial legacy of dissolution belongs to a wider culture in which converted property served as a locus for anxieties about religious community.

Barabas's converted house prompts the overlaying of different religious identities in the play, the hiding of his jewels within its structure, and their proposed recovery, recalling stereotypes of Jewish greed but also the dispersal of monastic wealth and the survival of Catholic devotional objects. His adoption of the gestural rhetoric of the priest as a locational marker further allies Jew to Catholic, referencing the longer history of Jewish architectural conversions and the equivocal performances of *marranos*, as well as indicating the endurance of religious signs after a property's conversion. The play's connections with the Dutch Church libel's anti-immigrant sentiment, and the libel's positioning in the environs of another converted property, the stranger church housed in the formerly Catholic Austin Friars, testifies to contemporary interest in how such converted houses referenced the controversial adaptations and messy compromises on which the Reformation was built, including the uneasy absorption of displaced co-religionists into London.

The house's discursive religious associations are complicated further by the fact that the new nunnery contained in Barabas's house is a site of sexual hypocrisy. This serves to connect its capaciousness with the gendered looseness of the female body, circling us back to the relationship between converted houses and playhouses as contemporary critics of the stage claimed theatres were sites for solicitation and synonymous with brothels.[55] Friar Barnardin and friar Jacomo's initial response to Abigail's feigned conversion famously evidences the nunnery's far from holy character:

> JACOMO [*to Barnardine*] No doubt, brother, but this proceedeth of
>   the spirit.
> BARNADINE [*to Jacomo*] Ay, and of a moving spirit too, brother.
>   But come,

The insinuation that Abigail is desirable, and therefore 'moves' the spirit, alongside

the friars' wish that she be 'entertained', alludes to their sexual hypocrisy in a manner

which becomes more blatant when Barnardine responds to Abigail's dying plea:

'Convert my father that he may be saved, /And witness that I die a Christian' (III, vi,

39-40). Rather than providing her with the last rites or assuring her that he will fight

for Barabas's soul, the friar laments her chastity: 'Ay, and a virgin too; that grieves

me most' (41). Early in the play, Barabas insinuates that the nunnery is far from

chaste when he associates the prayers of the nuns with a sexualised reading of

women's work and pregnancy: 'seeing they are not idle, but still doing, / 'Tis likely

they in time may reap some fruit - / I mean in fullness of perfection' (II, iii, 83-85).

This is a common anti-Catholic insult, famously utilised by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*

when Hamlet slights Ophelia by telling her to 'get thee to a nunnery'. [56] It is notable,

however, that in *The Jew of Malta* the stereotype of Catholic hypocrisy is firmly

connected to the accessible nature of the nunnery, with the result that this converted

building potentially references a feminised and sexualised perversion or desecration

of the concept of sacred architecture. Mathias and Lodowick's relaxed assertion in

Act I that they will visit Abigail in the nunnery, not knowing that her conversion is

feigned, so that Lodowick can assess her beauty, indicates that the building is

understood by the men of Malta to be far from truly enclosed (I, ii, 389-392). The

actor who played the courtesan Bellamira likely also played the Abbess or the nun in

the play's second scene, making the correlation between nunnery and bawdy house

explicit.[57] It is made clear that Bellamira entertains clients at home, and after

lamenting her lack of customers following the siege, she states that only the thief

Pilia-Borza is 'seldom from my house' (III, i, 10). These intriguing overlaps between Abbess and Courtesan reinforce the slippage between their two houses. Not only does the house conflate Jewish greed with Catholic hypocrisy in order to critique or undermine processes of conversion, but religious change and adaptation potentially evoke a dangerous promiscuity. As we will see, this reading of Barabas's house possibly informs the repeated use of the phrase 'come to my house' in the play; the gesture of hospitality proffered when Christians try to persuade Barabas to convert echoing the language of sexual solicitation.

Despite the seemingly effortless transformation of Barabas's house by the Maltese, described by Abigail as a seamless action of displacement ('I left the governor placing nuns, / Displacing me' (I, ii, 255-256)), excavating its symbolism does not reveal a structure neatly stratified into successive religious identities. In reality, the conflation of Jewish greed and Catholic trash, nunnery and bawdy house, converted property and stranger church, produces a more complicated picture, one in which the identity of the house is always contingent and the past is always in danger of indiscriminately erupting into the present. To borrow once again from Harris, this is an instance of a writer harnessing the 'temporality of explosion' in order to draw attention to the polychronic and multitemporal nature of the architecture of conversion.[58] The house thus provides a disorderly riposte to any Protestant claims for a supersessionary reading of converted property.

Thresholds

In *The Jew of Malta*, the uneasy coexistence of different religious markers within Barabas's house is accompanied by a focus on conversion as performance. The catalyst for a performance of conversion is frequently the converted house itself and

the structure informs the play's lexical field as characters repeatedly invite potential converts and enemies to 'come to my house'. This is the case with the play's two central conversion plots: Barabas's claims that he will convert in order to misdirect attention and Abigail's initial feigning of conversion in order to hunt for her father's hidden jewels in the nunnery. Both of these performances of conversion allude to the transformative power of crossing a threshold. When the two friars Jacomo and Barnardine try to persuade Barabas to join their respective orders when they hear of his wealth, they repeat the refrain 'come to our house!' (IV, i, 80). The phrase is later echoed by Barabas himself as he lures the friars to his home, and their eventual deaths, but appears in a number of different guises throughout the play.

> BARABAS
> > Cellers of Wine and sollers full of wheat,
> > Warehouses stuffed with spices and with drugs,
> > Whole chests of gold, in bullion and in coin,
> > Besides I know not how much weight in pearl
> > Orient and round, have I within **my house**;
> > At Alexandria, merchandise unsold.
> > But yesterday two ships went from this town;
> > Their voyage will be worth ten thousand crowns.
> > In Florence, Venice, Antwerp, London, Seville,
> > Frankfurt, Lubeck, Moscow, and where not,
> > Have I debts owing; and in most of these,
> > Great sums of money lying in banco.
> > All this I'll give to some **religious house**
> > So I may be baptized and live therein.
> FRIAR JACOMO
> > Oh good Barabas, **come to our house.**
> FRIAR BARNARDINE
> > Oh no, good Barabas, **come to our house**.
> > And Barabas, you know -
> BARABAS [*To Friar Barnardine*]
> > I know that I have highly sinned.
> > You shall convert me; you shall have all my wealth.
> > […]
> BARABAS [*To Friar Jacomo*]
> > **Come to my house** at one o'clock this night.
> > > IV, i, 66-94 [*emphasis mine*]

Barabas emphasises that his home is filled with 'gold' and 'spices' and pretends that he is willing to give all this up, and more, in order to be baptised and enter a monastery. The friars, squabbling over his valuable soul, equate his entrance into their respective houses with his conversion and subsequent transfer of his wealth. The scene echoes the opening of the play when Barabas is depicted in his counting house (in the home that has since been converted to a nunnery) as here his spatial environment is laden with the trappings of his mercantile prosperity. The push and pull of competing demands to enter 'our' or 'my' house powerfully demonstrates how conversion can be prompted by covetousness but also signals that religious identity could nominally be transformed via entrance into a religious space.

This episode recalls two earlier exchanges in the play. First, shortly after the directive to convert his home is mooted in Act I there follows a conversation between Barabas and his daughter Abigail in which the word 'house', often accompanied by the possessive 'my', occurs four times. Barabas initially consoles Abigail by revealing that he has hidden some of his wealth 'In my house, my girl' (I, ii, 250). His use of the possessive is immediately challenged, however, when Abigail tells her father that he is now barred from their former home, (the possessive 'my girl' will be contested later in the play when Abigail converts and Barabas disowns and murders his daughter). Abigail's news that the house has already been seized is couched in the language of displacement and substitution: 'I left the governor placing nuns, / Displacing me' (I, ii, 255-256). Like the later emptying out of Barabas's possessive 'my girl', this lexical choice foreshadows Abigail's return to her father's house as a nun as she first performs and then actualises the displacement of her Jewish identity with that of a Catholic religious. The immediate collapse in Barabas's ownership of his house, indicated by the undermining of the possessives 'my house' and the

foreshadowing of the loss of 'my daughter', ricochets through this early scene. Both

Barabas's wealth and his child are thus displaced in ways which prefigure the role

played by the architecture of conversion in destabilising religious identities in the

play.

Second, the phrase 'come to my house' is employed when Barabas entices

both Lodowick and Mathias to his new home, 'a house / As great and fair as is the

governor's' (II, iii, 13-14). Initially entreating Lodowick to 'come to my house' (II, ii,

66-67) so that he can see Abigail, whom the two men obliquely discuss as Barabas's

'diamond' (57), Barabas again uses the phrase when directing Mathias to escort his

mother, Katherine, home before coming to his house. Barabas intends Mathias to spy

on Lodowick courting Abigail and he thus engineers a quarrel between the two men

which results in their duel to the death. It is this act of spying into the interior of the

Jewish home which ultimately seals their fate.[59] Crossing or peering through the

threshold of the house promises not only the possibility of conversion, but also the

risk of death. Barabas seems to understand that an entreaty to enter a house freighted

with religious associations, whether Catholic or Jewish, while ostensibly a gesture of

hospitality, in reality represents an invitation to either perform or to watch, and that

both of these behaviours entail risk. As watching and performing are of course the

primary actions of the playhouse, this may provide a further gloss on the converted

house's mercurial performativity and its correlation with the stage.

On the one hand, the repeated use of the refrain 'come to my house' by a

number of different characters in the play emphasises the drama's interest in

associating conversion with an individual's entrance into a particular house,

resurrecting the Catholic model of conversion as entrance into a religious order. On

the other hand, it highlights the arbitrary nature of the religious character of the house

in question, and the ways in which its power to transform is shaped by ideas of performance. Importantly, the importuning of characters to move over resonant thresholds is couched in the language of potentially sexualised verbal solicitation, hinting at the gendered openness of converted or converting spaces. It is notable, for example, that the courtesan Bellamira entertains clients at home, her letter to Ithimore stating that he 'should come to her house' (IV, ii, 30-31).[60] I wonder if in the repeated entreaty to 'come to my house' we might also hear an echo of cries designed to bring audiences into the playhouse itself?

For all of Barabas's chameleon-like performances he nonetheless resists the friars' attempts to bring him into their house and technically remains constant in religion. In contrast, his daughter Abigail apparently successfully converts to Christianity. She initially pretends to do so in order to recover Barabas's hidden wealth, but she later goes through what appears to be a genuine conversion and returns to the nunnery after discovering that her father is responsible for the deaths of her lover Mathias and the son of the Maltese governor, Lodowick. Even if it is prompted by her father's villainy, rather than any obvious spiritual change, we are led to believe that Abigail's conversion is lasting, her initial performance of conversion revealed to be a rehearsal for the real thing. She tells Friar Jacomo that her soul 'hath paced too long / The fatal labyrinth of misbelief' (III, iii, 63-64), a lesson she claims to have learnt from the 'abbess of the house' (67); an intriguingly spatial description of spiritual wandering prior to conversion which foregrounds the importance of the religious house as a locus for an eventual homecoming.

Throughout the play, Abigail's conversions (both real and performed) are connected to her physical proximity to, and enclosure within, the nunnery: a reading of conversion that again recalls the earlier understanding of the term as the moment

when an individual enters a monastic community. When her initial, and false, conversion has allowed her to retrieve her father's jewels (her request to the Abbess is that she be able to 'lodge where I was wont to lie' I, ii, 335), Barabas indicates that her return 'home', in this case the new house that Barabas has purchased, is synonymous with her reacquisition of her Jewish identity: 'They hoped my daughter would ha' been a nun, / But she's at home' (II, iii, 12-13). Barabas later describes Abigail's second conversion spatially, exclaiming 'Art thou again got to the nunnery?' (III, iv, 4). He then disinherits her and vows that she will never again 'come within my gates' (III, iv, 31). Notably, Barabas's first gift to Ithimore upon adopting him as his surrogate son is a set of 'keys' (III, iv, 46) to his house so that Ithimore's displacement of Abigail is reinforced by his freedom to enter a home from which she is now barred. With echoes of the prodigal son, Abigail initially leaves one house for another only to return again to her father's home, her location thereby shown to be representative of her faith. Her second entrance into the nunnery, after which her father bars her from returning to his house, results in her death as Barabas poisons the inhabitants with a pot of rice sent in as alms. Her death, as Lieke Stelling has recently argued, is an expedient way of 'alleviating anxiety over the changeability of converts' but it also reinforces the sense that she is a convert whose spiritual character is understood by virtue of her location within a particular house.[61] Abigail is therefore a powerful example of how the play depicts the architecture of conversion as having the potential to catalyse both performances of conversion and instances of actual religious transformation. The fact that a locational reading of spiritual character means that a real conversion cannot be easily be distinguished from a fake one (both after all simply require the crossing of a threshold), further emphasises the

performative nature of conversion in the play, offering a fundamentally sceptical reading of one of the ways that early moderns attempted to pinpoint religious identity.

Crossing over the threshold of a resonant religious space is understood by the friars Jacomo and Barnardine to potentially secure a spiritual metamorphosis, or at least access to a convert's wealth, which is why they wield the fateful phrase 'come to my house'. This is the trajectory followed by Abigail, first as performance and then as a genuine conversion (an indication that a performance of religious identity could easily become the real thing). For Barabas, however, his new house represents a deceitful performance space and the effect of crossing its threshold, more often than not, is death. In this way, his new home powerfully enables his revenge at having his former home converted against his will. For example, after spying on Abigail and Lodowick in Barabas's house, Mathias challenges Lodowick to the duel in which they both die. Later in the play, following their competitive exchange, the friars Barnardine and Jacomo are lured to Barabas's home in the hope that he will join their respective religious houses. Barabas then kills Barnardine and frames Jacomo for his death, resulting in his execution. The association between entrance into a house and death is further compounded when, as I've already noted, the inhabitants of the nunnery, including Abigail, are poisoned after Barabas schemes to have a pot of contaminated rice carried inside as alms. Barabas thus secures the deaths of Abigail, Mathias, Lodowick, Barnardine and Jacomo by exploiting the violent possibilities afforded by the crossing of thresholds.

The denouement of the revenge plot is similarly predicated on the repeated traversal of liminal boundaries between inside and outside. When Ferneze mistakenly believes that Barabas has died, he orders his body to be thrown over the city walls 'To be a prey for vultures and wild beasts' (V, i, 57), an action which J. L. Simmons has

speculated may have involved launching the actor playing Barabas into the yard of the playhouse.[62] It is this ejection which allows Barabas to guide Calymath and his soldiers inside through the sewers. As Jonathan Gill Harris has powerfully demonstrated, this is an architectural space related to Barabas's Jewishness, drawing as it does on European associations of Jews with anality, poison and waste.[63] The role of an invitation to cross a threshold in securing violent revenge is of course further emphasised by the death of Selim-Calymath's soldiers who have been invited by Barabas to a feast in a monastery only for him to engineer a fatal explosion, and by Barabas's plot to murder Selim-Calymath using a false floor after asking him to dine at his home. Hospitality becomes equated with hypocrisy and conversion becomes synonymous with mortal risk as thresholds vibrate with the possibility that once crossed the house will 'batter all the stones about their ears' (V, v, 30).

The converted house with which Marlowe's story begins provides a pattern for a number of powerful thresholds in the play, helping to shape their association with religious identity, performance and violent revenge. Barabas's house is initially the locus for his daughter's abandonment of their shared faith, her displacement, accompanying disinheritance, and finally her death, but it travels well beyond its original location, activating the violent potential of thresholds in a variety of different contexts.

Conclusion: convertible staging

As well as repeatedly returning to architectural motifs, *The Jew of Malta* frequently foregrounds the convertible and deceptive nature of stage architecture. This connects Barabas's house to the literal transformation of the playing space. The potential use of

a curtained discovery space to reveal the body of Barnadine (IV, i), the false floor on

the gallery to capture Selim-Calymath, and the trap door through which Barabas falls

to his death into the cauldron, ensure that attention is frequently drawn to the shape

shifting and unstable nature of the stage itself.[64] The doors to the backstage may have

indicated the entrances and exits from various houses, doorways with a peculiar

resonance given the play's emphasis on the transformative effect of crossing

thresholds. Barabas's insistence that Abigail 'Open the door' (II, iii, 222) to allow

him and Lodowick entrance to his new home provides evidence for their use in this

regard. The presence of carpenters on stage in Act V, Scene v, who create a false floor

in order for Barabas to capture Selim-Calymath, further highlights the adaptability of

the playing space and may remind the audience that actors and theatre owners often

had building skills (James Burbage for example was a talented joiner).[65] Emphasising

his stage-managing of the scene, Barabas enters with a hammer and questions a

carpenter about the construction of his 'dainty gallery' (33), asking 'How stand the

cords? How hang these hinges, fast? / Are all the cranes and pulleys sure?' (V, v, 1-

2). Similarly, when arranging the deaths of Selim-Calymath's soldiers Barabas

describes how he has placed 'field-pieces', 'Bombards', 'whole barrels full of

gunpowder' (V, v, 27-28) underneath the monastery. In both instances, Barabas's

retrofitting of architectural space serves to weaponise buildings with religious

associations, whether Jewish or Catholic, but his additions are also important stage

technologies: a cannon, a windlass and gunpowder.[66]

Fixated upon entrances and exits, false floors, and traps, the play repeatedly

stresses the convertible nature of stage architecture and the threat that its mutability

can pose, a phenomenon catalysed by the powerful converted house at its heart. This

is one of the ways in which the metatheatrical function of Barabas's house is made

obvious as the shape shifting stage powerfully literalises the play's thematic emphasis upon the house's ability to prompt both conversion and death. We are drawn back, once again, to the role of the architecture of conversion in shaping performance spaces in early modern London and the centrality of forms of adaptation and recycling for the wider playing culture of the capital. Dangerously promiscuous and worryingly volatile, Barabas's converted house thus speaks to a number of contemporary fears about the destabilising legacy of the Reformation but it references similar instabilities which are at work in the production of theatrical performance.

Converted properties, despite their ostensible transformation, retain a capacity for the past to erupt into the present moment in unsettling ways. This is because the architecture of conversion relies upon, and amplifies, architecture's capacity for change, resulting in a diverse, and often divergent, understanding of a structure's history and use. This facility intersects meaningfully with the mercurial instabilities of early modern performance spaces, the convertible nature of stage technology and even more profoundly, in some instances, with the past life of theatres as ecclesiastical buildings. Recycling and repurposing can be actions of creation and invention as well as loss; in this way the architecture of conversion finds easy fellowship with theatre's habitual reimagining of material and spatial properties.

By focusing my reading of *The Jew of Malta* on the architecture of conversion, I have sought to highlight how the drama engages with the legacy of the Reformation as a process of re-formation rather than ruination. I have excavated the polyvalent layers of Barabas's house in order to identify its disorderly concatenation of differing religions, emphasising how its volatile thresholds reverberate throughout the play, setting its revenge plot in motion and prompting the performance of conversion but also affecting the drama in more elusive ways. At once a counting

house, a nunnery, a bawdy house, and a church, the house contains multiplicities and as the drama unfolds this overdetermined structure brings all the characters within its perilous ambit, prompting both the performance of religious change and terrible acts of violence. Fuelled by anti-Semitic stereotypes and the legacy of Jewish property conversion, the house operates as a powerful extension of Barabas's equivocal and performative character and reminds us of the many ways that dwellings could be read as proxies for individual believers and their communities. What is clear is that the legibility of such structures is brought into doubt by the process of conversion and any resulting misreadings can have potentially deadly effects. Inconveniently highlighting the ambivalent nature of many aspects of English religious culture, *The Jew of Malta* thus makes imaginative use of the architecture of conversion and the complex dilemmas that it represents, in order to produce a profoundly sceptical picture of the Reformation which foregrounds the uneasy role of performance in shaping religious identity.[67]

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[1] The precise dating of *The Jew of Malta* is uncertain. Philip Henslowe records a performance at the Rose theatre on 26th February 1592 but this may not have been the first performance of the play. See Roma Gill, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe, Volume IV: The Jew of Malta*, ed. Roma Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), xvi.

[2] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 91.

[3] Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1; 3. See also Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 7.

[4] Mimi Yiu argues that the great rebuilding after the Reformation saw a number of radical changes in architecture which had a corresponding impact upon psychic space so that 'the meeting of theatre and architecture helped to construct an early modern sense of interiority': Mimi Yiu, *Architectural Involutions: Writing, Staging, and Building Space, c. 1435-1650* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2015), 9.

[5] The theatre of the 1590s, as Harriet Phillips has recently shown, was actively constructing a market-driven fantasy of the pre-Dissolution past as a merry world of mirth or plainspoken simplicity. *The Jew of Malta* does not correspond to this form of nostalgia and one way in which we can read Barabas's house is as a rebuttal to this emerging trend: Harriet Philips, *Nostalgia in Print and Performance, 1510-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 3.

[6] Christopher Marlowe, "The Jew of Malta" in *Christopher Marlowe: Doctor Faustus and other Plays*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), I, ii, 129-131, p. 261. This version of the play is based on Thomas Heywood's publication from 1633. All further quotations are from this edition.

[7] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80.

[8] Margaret Aston likens the Reformation dispersal of monastic goods and properties to the French Revolution and describes the Dissolution as 'the royal guillotining of the monastic past': Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 314. See also Margaret Aston, "English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973): 232. Eamon Duffy, using the 'bare ruin'd choirs' of Shakespeare's sonnet 73 as a lens, conjures an image of ecclesiastical ruins in which the walls 'cried out against the cultural revolution which had shaped the Elizabethan settlement': Eamon Duffy, "Bare Ruined Choirs: Remembering Catholicism in

Shakespeare's England," in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, eds. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 41.

[9] Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 79-89; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 2012), 91-92. See also Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 176-7 for a discussion of the plundering of the Abbey of Hailes in Gloucestershire which notably had to be undertaken at night. Aston further notes that wholesale demolition was expensive, and expediency often meant that buildings were creatively fitted to new uses rather than violently broken up: Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, 321-324.

[10] Maurice Howard, "Recycling the Monastic Fabric: Beyond the Act of Dissolution," in *The Archaeology of the Reformation, 1480-1580*, eds. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), 221. See also Maurice Howard, "Afterword: Art Re-formed: Spiritual Revolution, Spatial Re-location," in *Art Re-formed: Re-assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts*, eds. Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 268-9. On the overstating of the effects and comprehensiveness of iconoclasm see Sarah Tarlow, "Reformation and Transformation: What Happened to Catholic Things in a Protestant World," in *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480-1580*, eds. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), 110-113. Alexandra Walsham points out that while some monasteries were subject to ruination, others were converted: Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 114-115.

[11] Howard, "Recycling the Monastic Fabric," 221. John Schofield, "Some Aspects of the Reformation of Religious Space in London, 1540-1660," in *The Archaeology of the Reformation, 1480-1580*, eds. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), 322. The energetic breaking up of monastic property by both reformers and conservatives alike has also proved an inconvenient truth for revisionist historians who have prioritised charting continuities with late-Medieval 'traditional' religion: Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, 163, note 6.

[12] Howard, "Afterword: Art Re-formed," 269; Alexandra Walsham, "Recycling the Sacred," *Church History* 86 (2017): 1121-1154 (1146).

[13] Schofield, "Some Aspects of the Reformation of Religious Space in London," 313; John Schofield, "The Topography and Buildings of London, ca. 1600," in *Material London, ca. 1600*, ed. Lena Cowen Orlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 305-308; Howard, "Recycling the Monastic Fabric," 228-229; on Edward VI's conversion of monastic property for the purposes of poor relief see Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans: Prostitution, Literature, and Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate: 2012), 31; Iain Soden, "The Conversion of Former Monastic Buildings to Secular Use: The Case of Coventry," in *The Archaeology of the Reformation, 1480-1580*, eds. David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), 282.

[14] Nicholas Doggett, *Patterns of Re-Use: The Transformation of Former Monastic Buildings in Post-Dissolution Hertfordshire 1540-1600* (Oxford: Archeopress, 2002), 7. On Norfolk, see Nicola Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2009), 47-8. The relative isolation of some monastic properties, such as those in Yorkshire, discouraged the conversion of buildings and the repurposing of materials from these sites. See Emily Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things we have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go* (London: Profile Books, 2020), 256-7.

[15] Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 175.

[16] James Brooks, *A Sermon Very Notable, Fruictefull and Godlie made at Paules Crosse* (London: Roberte Caly, 1553), title page.

[17] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 162-3.

[18] Peter Davidson, "Recusant Catholic Spaces in Early Modern England," in *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England*, eds. Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highlet and Arthur F. Marotti (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 20-21.

[19] Alexandra Walsham argues that the mass sale of Catholic property and land after the Reformation ironically helped to preserve sacred places, such as small shrines or wells, as they now lay outside the purview of the Protestant authorities: Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, 111-112.

[20] Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 3.

[21] On London's rising population and its effect on theatre culture see Jean E. Howard, *Theatre of a City: The Places of London Comedy 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

2007), 15. Much of this land lay near London Wall, happily marrying availability for purchase or lease with freedom from the jurisdiction of the City fathers: Schofield, "The Topography and Buildings of London," 298. See also Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 22 and Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), 95.

[22] Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (London: Faber & Faber, 2nd ed. 2014), 423.

[23] Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 140-2.

[24] Tiffany Stern cites two examples of spectators referring to Blackfriars' past life as a monastery: Tiffany Stern, "'A ruinous monastery': The Second Blackfriars Playhouse as a Place of Nostalgia," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse*, ed. Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 102-3.

[25] Stern, "'A ruinous monastery'", 98-99.

[26] Julian Bowsher, *The Rose Theatre: An Archaeological Discovery* (London: Museum of London, 1998), 17-18.

[27] William Westmorland Braines, *The Site of the Globe Playhouse, Southwark* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2nd ed. 1924), 90.

[28] E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage: Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed. 2009), 405.

[29] Martha Carlin, *Medieval Southwark* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 67-74.

[30] John Stow, *A Survey of London Reprinted from the Text of 1603: Volume II*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed. 1971), 56-7. See also, Salkeld, *Shakespeare and London*, 48.

[31] S. P. Cerasano, "The Transitory Playhouse: Theatre, Rose, and Globe," in *The Text, the Play, and the Globe: Essays on Literary Influence in Shakespeare's World and His Work in Honor of Charles R. Forker*, ed. Joseph Candido (Lanham: Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), 95-120.

[32] Cerasano, "The Transitory Playhouse," 111; 105.

[33] Callan Davies, "Bowling Alleys and Playhouses in London, 1560-90," *Early Theatre* 22 (2019): 59 and 41. See also Andy Kesson, "Playhouses, Plays, and Theatre History: Rethinking the 1580s," Forum, ed. Andy Kesson, *Shakespeare Studies* 45 (2017), 20; 31.

[34] Theatre's long history of overlap with devotional drama and the more theatrical qualities of worship is well-established: See Mary C. Erler, ed., *Records of Early English Drama: Ecclesiastical London* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008); Paul Whitfield White, *Drama and Religion in English Provincial Society, 1485-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9; John M. Wasson, "The English Church as Theatrical Space," in *A New History of Early English Drama,* eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 25; 31-32; Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130. On architectural similarities between theatres and churches see Jean Wilson, *The Archaeology of Shakespeare*, 103; 81-95 and Schofield, "Some Aspects of the Reformation of Religious Space in London," 316. On the recycling of vestments and devotional objects on the stage see Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, LA: University of California Press, 1988), 113; Peter Stallybrass, "Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 306. There were significant overlaps between religious and secular performance cultures after the Reformation: See Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10-11; Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000), 4.

[35] A further example of a drama invested in the creative possibilities of converted property is *Arden of Faversham* (1592).

[36] On drama's interest in conversion see Lieke Stelling, *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) and Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[37] See for example Rebeca Helfer, *Spenser's Ruins and The Art of Recollection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), xi and Stewart Mottram, *Ruin and Reformation in Spenser, Shakespeare, and*

Marvell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 7; 5. Mottram's study is unusual in focusing exclusively on monastic rather than classical ruins in literary culture.

[38] Andrew Hui, *The Poetics of Ruins in Renaissance Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 3. Philip Schwyzer, when exploring writers who focus on the effects of the Dissolution, has identified 'an experience of instability, in which fixed images of the Reformation dissolve into their opposites': Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 75. Stewart Mottram has recently argued that poetry concerned with monastic ruins not only looks to the past, but articulates fears of religious violence in the present: Mottram, *Ruin and Reformation in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Marvell*, 5.

[39] Christopher Riggs links Barabas's wealth, and its confiscation, to the twenty-six cartloads of jewellery removed from the shrine of Thomas Becket, an episode which Marlowe may have remembered from his Canterbury childhood. Riggs further points out that the transformation of Barabas's house 'recalls and reverses' the conversion of St Sepulchre's nunnery at Canterbury into a private house: Christopher Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), 15.

[40] Eric C. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 105-112.

[41] David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England 1485-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 3-13 and 49-106.

[42] Peter Berek, "The Jew as Renaissance Man," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 131.

[43] Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 182-3. See also Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 139 and Gillian Woods, "Marlowe and Religion" in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, eds. Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 223.

[44] On Barabas's performativity see Emily C. Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 100 and Stephen Greenblatt, "The Will to Absolute Play: *The Jew of Malta* (1589)," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), 117. Michelle Ephraim argues that Abigail is the play's 'primary

performer' from whom even Barabas takes his cues: Michelle Ephraim, *Reading the Jewish Woman on the Elizabethan Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 117; 126; 120.

[45] Vitkus argues that Barabas's status as an immoral trader is an indictment of venal capitalism in a new era of international trade, which reflects as much on Machiavellian English merchants as it does on actual Jewish traders: Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 178; 187. Chloe Preedy sees in the play's devastated households an echo of the religious persecution experienced by English recusants: Chloe Preedy, "Bringing the House Down: Religion and the Household in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*," *Renaissance Studies* (2012): 167. Jeffrey S. Shoulson argues that the early modern fear of the Jew was linked to the fraught history of Reformation conversion as religious upheaval led to an urge to project the threat of instability onto an alien identity: Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 2-3.

[46] Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, 108. See also Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3rd ed. 1964), 114; 43.

[47] Vitkus notes that Jews were described as 'parasitical vagabonds, both outcast and invasive': Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 164.

[48] Janet Adelman ponders whether the suspicion that *marranos* maintained Jewish worship at home fuels both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's desire to take us inside the house of the Jew: Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 6-7. In London, a *Domus Conversorum*, founded for the purpose of housing Jewish converts in 1232, was still in use into the seventeenth century. On London's *Domus Conversorum* see Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, 43; 133-134 and David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1-2. The Venetian equivalent was the *Casa dei Catecumeni*: Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*, 107 and E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 122-162. On the history of Jewish enclosure as part of a wider system of containment in the period see Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 89-91.

[49] The libel is reproduced in Arthur Freeman, "Marlowe', Kyd, and the Dutch Church Libel," *English Literary Renaissance* 3 (1973): 50-51.

[50] It has been argued that Marlowe likely had first-hand experience of religious refugees in Canterbury and Cambridge and his 1593 play *Massacre at Paris* deals directly with the events of the St Bartholomew's Day massacre which precipitated the large scale movement of Protestant Huguenots: Scott Oldenburg, *Alien Albion: Literature and Immigration in Early Modern England* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), 62-63.

[51] James R. Siemon, "Appendix: 'The Dutch Church Libel'," in *The Jew of Malta*, ed. James R. Siemon (London: Bloomsbury, 3rd ed. 2009), 133-136. All quotations are from this edition of the libel. On the thematic links between the libel and *The Jew of Malta* see Siemon "Appendix," 133 and Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Vintage, 2nd ed. 2002), 49-53.

[52] Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 283-4.

[53] Jews themselves were frequently described as strangers, as is evidenced by the travel writers Thomas Coryat and Samuel Purchase who both use the language of the stranger and alien when portraying Jewish communities: Berek, "The Jew as Renaissance Man," 141; 143.

[54] Oldenburg, *Alien Albion*, 49.

[55] Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans*, 15. It may be noteworthy that a number of former 'stews' on Bankside had been converted to private dwellings following their closure by Henry VIII in 1547. Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn are known to have resided by one former stew known as 'The Bell': Salkeld, *Shakespeare and London*, 52.

[56] William Shakespeare, "Hamlet," in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3rd ed. 1998), III, i, 123.

[57] Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans*, 108. Of interest is the association made between the dissolved priory of black nuns at Clerkenwell and the bawdy 'Night service' offered by Lucy Negro, 'Abbess *de Clerkenwell*' and her prostitutes in the collection of Gray's Inn Christmas jests, the *Gesta Grayorum* (1594 – published 1688): Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans*, 130-132.

[58] Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 91.

[59] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 92.

[60] Anti-Catholic rhetoric not only depicted priests as sexual hypocrites but as seducing vulnerable women to the faith: Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and Anti-Catholic Discourses in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 37; 39.

[61] Stelling, *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama*, 140.

[62] J. L. Simmons, "Elizabethan Stage Practice and Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*", *Renaissance Drama* (1971): 96.

[63] Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic*, 80.

[64] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4th ed. 2013), 151.

[65] Bartels connects the construction of this gallery to Barabas's repeated construction of false identities which have no substance beneath them: Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness*, 107.

[66] In the Arden edition of *The Jew of Malta*, the editors William H. Sherman and Chloe Preedy observe that a number of early modern playhouses, including after 1592, the Rose, had windlasses for raising and lowering properties, *The Jew of Malta*, ed. William H. Sherman and Chloe Preedy (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 259, n. 5.5. See also Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 233.

[67] Chloe Preedy argues that Marlowe is a writer 'predisposed to religious scepticism': Chloe Kathleen Preedy, *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism: Politic Religion and Post-Reformation Polemic* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2012), 65.

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And let me lodge where I was wont to lye,
I doe not doubt by your divine precepts
And mine owne induſtry, but to profit much.
  Bar. As much I hope as all I hid is worth.   *aſide.*
  Abb. Come daughter, follow vs.
  Bar. Why how now *Abigall*, what mak'ſt thou
Amongſt theſe hateful Chriſtians?
  1 *Fry.* Hinder her not, thou man of little faith,
For ſhe has mortified her ſelfe.
  Bar. How, mortified!
  1 *Fry.* And is admitted to the Siſter-hood.
  Bar. Child of perdition, and thy fathers ſhame,
What wilt thou doe among theſe hatefull fiends?
I charge thee on my bleſſing that thou leaue
Theſe diuels, and their damned hereſie.
  Abig. Father giue me——
  Bar. Nay backe, *Abigall*,
And thinke vpon the Iewels and the gold,   { *Whiſpers*
The boord is marked thus that couers it.   { *to her.*
Away accurſed from thy fathers ſight.
  1 *Fry. Barabas*, although thou art in miſ-beleefe,
And wilt not ſee thine owne afflictions,
Yet let thy daughter be no longer blinde.
  Bar. Blind, Fryer, I wrecke not thy perſwaſions.
The boord is marked thus † *that couers it*,
For I had rather dye, then ſee how thus.
Wilt thou forſake mee too in my diſtreſſe,   *aſide to her.*
Seduced Daughter, *Goe forget net.*
Becomes it Iewes to be ſo credulous,   *aſide to her.*
To morrow early l'e be at the doore.
No come not at me, If thou wilt be damn'd,
Forget me, ſee me not, and ſo be gone.   *aſide.*
Farewell, Remember to morrow morning.
Out, out thou wretch.
                Enter Mathias.
  Math. Whoſe this? Faire *Abigall* the rich Iewes daugh-
Become a Nun, her fathers ſudden fall   (ter
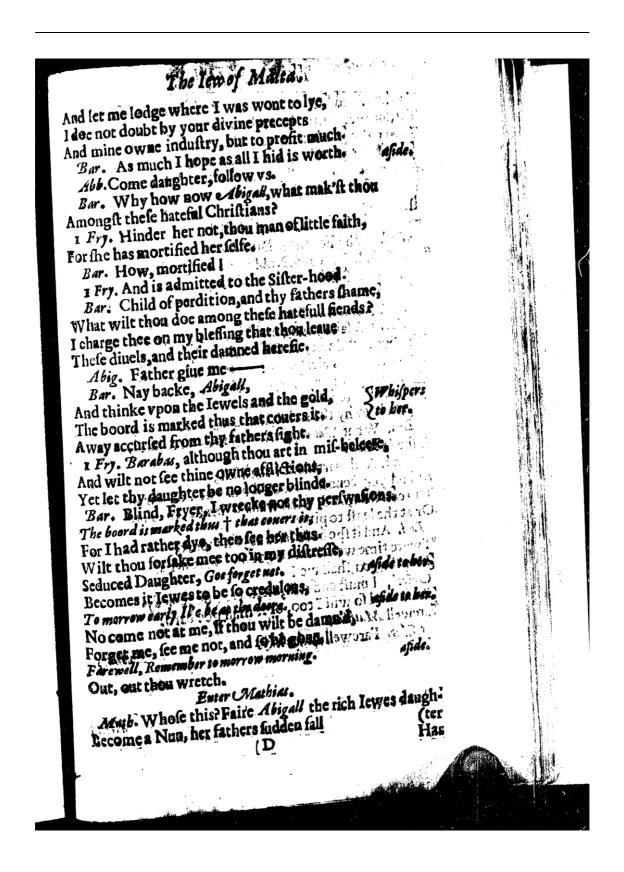   (D   Has

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Fig. 1, *The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta* (London: I. B for Nicholas Vavasour, 1633), D1r.