



**This electronic thesis or dissertation has been
downloaded from Explore Bristol Research,
<http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk>**

Author:

Muskett, Katherine S

Title:

Visions of Cyprus on the early Modern English Stage, 1570-1630

General rights

Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>. This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

Take down policy

Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

- Your contact details
- Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
- An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

Visions of Cyprus on the Early Modern English Stage 1570-1630

Submitted by Katherine Muskett

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts.

January 2023

Word Count: 77,581

Abstract

Although it was geographically remote, references to Cyprus were surprisingly prevalent in early modern English culture. The island featured in a remarkably diverse range of texts, including historiography, travel writing, popular romance, classical mythology, Protestant theology and topical news pamphlets; this list is by no means exhaustive. The island's cultural prominence stems largely from its liminal position on the border between the Latin Christian west and the Islamic east. The island was at various points in its history a crusader kingdom, the last Christian staging post on the main pilgrimage route from Western Europe to the Holy Land and an important mercantile centre through which much east-west trade flowed. For a brief period, its main port, Famagusta, was one of the richest cities in Christendom. Memories of its historical significance were often preserved in popular literature, leading to the emergence of a number of themes, tropes and motifs associated with the island and its people, to which further affiliations were added when classical texts were translated into English in the second half of the sixteenth century. Cyprus was brought sensationally further into focus when the island was invaded by the Ottomans in 1571, culminating in an act of spectacular and grotesque violence that resonated in the English imaginary for decades to come.

It is this annexation of Cyprus that has been granted most attention in recent New Historicist criticism concerning the island's representation on the early modern English stage. Exploring the ways in which the island was envisaged across four dramatic works, this thesis aims to demonstrate that the events of 1571, although influential, did not erase the other tropes and motifs associated with the island, instead adding to the complex range of associations available to dramatists. Through attention to each of these works' intertextual negotiations, I aim to uncover a far more complex picture of what Cyprus 'meant' in both the texts discussed here and in the wider English imaginary, offering readings of these dramas that are responsive to the literary as well as the historical influences shaping the island's cultural representation.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was only completed thanks to the support and help of many people, at the University of Bristol and beyond. I would like to thank the South-West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership for their funding, without which I could not have undertaken this project. I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr Laurence Publicover and Dr Mark Hutchings, for their advice, support and guidance throughout. Particular gratitude is due to Laurence who encouraged me to think about returning to the University of Bristol to undertake this project, and convinced me it was worth my while to apply for funding. Sincere thanks are also due to Dr Tamsin Badcoe who, as my annual reviewer, provided such excellent and constructive advice as the thesis unfolded. I also want to acknowledge the support I have received from the academic and support staff at Bristol and other institutions. Finally I want to thank my husband, Alex, and our children Georgia and Benedict, for their patience, encouragement and support from the moment I started my first short course with the Open University; this really is the end, I promise! Well, maybe ...

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Katherine Muskett DATE: 3 January 2023

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: Visions of Cyprus on the Early Modern English Stage	1
CHAPTER 1: Cyprus in the English Imaginary: from the Third Crusade to 1570	15
- Cypriot History: from the Third Crusade to the Venetians	16
- Cyprus and Pilgrimage	21
- Cypriot Prosperity	23
- Decline and Invasion	25
- Cyprus and Chivalric Romance	28
- Hellenistic Romance and Cyprus	37
- Cyprus and Classical Mythology	44
- Cyprus in English Literature at the End of the Sixteenth Century	49
CHAPTER 2: George Gascoigne's <i>A Devise of a Maske</i>	51
- The Ottoman Conquest of Cyprus	52
- Siege of Famagusta and Lepanto: English Responses	58
- George Gascoigne's <i>A Devise of a Maske</i>	61
- <i>A Devise of a Maske</i> : Sources	71
- England and Venice in <i>A Devise of a Maske</i>	85
CHAPTER 3: Thomas Dekker's <i>The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus</i>	94
- <i>Old Fortunatus</i> : History and Chief Source	95
- <i>Old Fortunatus</i> : Plot Summary	100
- Cyprus in <i>Old Fortunatus</i>	113
- Fortunatus Narratives and Early Modern Trade	118
- Medieval Famagusta and Early Modern London	121
- Social Mobility in <i>Old Fortunatus</i>	130
- Ghosted by History: the Siege of Famagusta	136
CHAPTER 4: William Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i>	139
- <i>Othello</i> 's Historicity and Sources	140
- Cyprus and Desdemona	150
- Othello and the Turks	164
- Othello as Romance Protagonist	174
- Cyprus: Othello's Island	184
CHAPTER 5: John Ford's <i>The Lover's Melancholy</i>	185
- History and Summary	189
- <i>The Lover's Melancholy</i> : Sources	193
- Venus's Island	202

- Famagusta in <i>The Lover's Melancholy</i>	211
- <i>Othello</i> and <i>The Lover's Melancholy</i>	214
CONCLUSION	220
BIBLIOGRAPHY	224

Introduction

English representations of the Mediterranean world in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century playhouses have attracted significant critical interest over the last three decades, with the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe as the principal focus of scholarly attention. Nabil Matar, Daniel Vitkus, Matthew Dimmock and others have created a substantial and important body of work exploring English attitudes to the Islamic world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with academic interest further stimulated by twenty-first century geopolitical conflicts and a desire to explore and expose the historical antecedents of current anxieties about a putative Islamic threat to 'western values'. Matar's *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (1999), Vitkus's *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570 – 1630* (2003) and Dimmock's *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (2005) in particular have each made valuable contributions to the study of English relations with the Islamic world in the early modern period. The contribution made by Samuel Chew's magisterial *The Crescent and the Rose* (1937), which could legitimately be described as the first work of modern scholarship in this field, should also be acknowledged. Literary scholars researching the early modern English relationship with the Mediterranean world have been greatly preoccupied with what they argue were significant English anxieties about the Ottoman Empire and the existential threat that Islam was believed to pose to Christendom, concerns that were lent greater urgency as England began to expand its mercantile operations in the region, trading with Islamic regimes in the region in a bid to mitigate the effects of English exclusion from the markets of Catholic Europe.¹

Within this critical context, Cyprus has been interpreted primarily as the site of one of sixteenth-century Europe's most traumatic defeats at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. As I describe in Chapter 2, the island – at that stage a Venetian overseas territory – was invaded by the Ottoman Turks in 1570. After a long and bloody campaign, its last stronghold, Famagusta, surrendered and a massacre of its Venetian defenders followed. Writing about

¹ For the development of English Mediterranean maritime activity in this period, see Kenneth Andrews's *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Jerry Brotton's *This Orient Isle* (London: Penguin, 2016), although written for a popular readership, also provides a thorough and very readable account of this period.

Shakespeare's *Othello*, by some margin the most famous English drama concerned with Cyprus, Dimmock argues that the play is set 'against a well known background of Christian defeat and destruction', in which 'Cyprus becomes Aleppo [and] Christianity is "undone"'.² In a similar vein, Vitkus claims that 'English audiences watching a play set in Cyprus under Venetian rule would have interpreted this setting as a vulnerable outpost that was destined to be swallowed up by the Turks and converted to Islamic rule'.³ While not disputing either of these interpretations – memories of the 1571 Siege of Famagusta and its violent outcome do indeed inform the play's tragic narrative – to consider *Othello*, or any other work set on the island, solely through the prism of that event is, I want to demonstrate, reductive and limiting. Very little attention has been paid to the other ways in which Cyprus figured in the early modern English imaginary, or consideration granted to how alternative significations might shape English responses to the Siege of Famagusta.

This thesis, then, seeks to recover ways of thinking about Cyprus that have been overlooked by those critics whose primary interest has been Anglo-Islamic relations. The entire Eastern Mediterranean region, it argues, was powerfully multivalent in the English imagination, and no part of it more so than Cyprus. To be sure, much of its significance derived from its liminal position on the contested boundary between two religious cultures, but this was a significance that reached much further back in time than the sixteenth century on which critics have tended to focus. The island's complex identity as a crusader kingdom, cosmopolitan entrepôt and, after 1291, the most easterly outpost of Latin Christianity, made it highly visible in Western Europe, the frequency of its representation across a range of English texts testament to its emotional and symbolic significance, as well as its geopolitical importance. Its position on the fluctuating border between Christian west and Islamic east made Cyprus particularly suited to the purposes and strategies of romance, animating visions of the island that continued to circulate long after the world which inspired them ceased to exist. The Eastern Mediterranean in general and – in a few texts – Cyprus specifically featured in a number of chivalric romances in which Christians crossed the Mediterranean to confront an Islamic foe, before reclaiming the Holy Land for Christendom. Other forms of popular

² Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2005), p. 205.

³ Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke, 2003), p. 95.

romance presented a less antagonistic vision of the Eastern Mediterranean's ethnic and religious complexities. These tales, in which the island often featured prominently, showed English readers the Mediterranean world as a place where Christians and Muslims might be trading partners, friends, allies and even lovers. Furthermore, just at the moment the island was lost to Christendom, and tales of Turkish atrocities were circulating throughout Europe, classical visions of the island were emerging into the popular imaginary. Over the following chapters I want to consider the ways in which these competing and, at times, contradictory visions of Cyprus were reflected in the ways the island was staged.

Although preoccupied largely with what he characterises as intense English anxiety about Ottoman power, Vitkus acknowledges that the Mediterranean

was a wildly overdetermined site in the imaginary geography of early modern England. It contained many meanings, many contexts: biblical history, the cultural achievements of ancient Greece and Rome, Hellenistic romance, the medieval and early modern romance traditions, the rise of Islam, the crusades, the Ottoman conquests and more.⁴

The Eastern Mediterranean, including – especially – Cyprus, although geographically far-removed, was intensely imaginatively present in early modern England. Yet Vitkus's account of the island in his discussion of *Othello* makes little concession to the possibility that playgoers might find other meanings or resonances beyond those concerning the contemporary Ottoman threat. It would, of course, be naïve to suggest that early modern English men and women were uninterested in (or unconcerned about) the rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire – the number of English texts written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries referring to 'the Turk' clearly indicates otherwise – but this was, this thesis hopes to demonstrate, only one vision of the Eastern Mediterranean world among many available to English readers, dramatists and playgoers. English literary accounts of Cyprus and the Mediterranean world were multiplex, with the region often signifying differently in different literary genres.

⁴ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 32-3.

As Bertrand Westphal has observed, ‘if few human spaces are left untouched by literature, no Mediterranean place is so’; and within this already overdetermined imaginative space, Cyprus occupied a mutable and powerfully multivalent position in the English imaginary.⁵ The island was alluded to in drama, poetry, popular romance, classical mythology, the Bible, religious polemic, historiography, cosmography and medieval and early modern travel writing. However, its long history of representation in English letters has, for the most part, been overlooked by literary scholars. Lisa Hopkins is an honourable exception here; although her scholarship generally focuses on late sixteenth-century textual influences, she has written persuasively about what she argues are important Cypriot resonances in several of the plays considered by this thesis. My aim here is to situate, where I find her analysis persuasive, Hopkins’s observations within my own more longitudinal approach, in which I demonstrate the ways in which earlier visions of the island repeatedly surface – sometimes directly, at other times implicitly – in these plays, to create a more holistic sense of what Cyprus might have meant in early modern drama.

Rather than offering a survey of every single reference to Cyprus in early modern English drama, this thesis will focus on the ways in which Cyprus was represented in four dramatic works that I am calling ‘Cyprus dramas’ because, in various ways, they offer especially rich and compelling visions of the island. The four are George Gascoigne’s *A Devis of a Maske for the Montague Wedding* (perf. 1572, publ. 1573), Thomas Dekker’s *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus* (perf. 1599, publ. 1600), William Shakespeare’s *Othello* (perf. 1604, publ. 1622) and John Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* (perf. 1628, publ. 1629). William Spates, in a book chapter primarily concerned with Gascoigne’s masque, refers to the three later works, which are united by their setting in Cyprus’s main port and most famous city, as ‘Famagusta plays’.⁶ I have elected instead to call them ‘Cyprus dramas’ in order to highlight what I will argue is a wider range of Cypriot allusions, not all of them centred on Famagusta. Furthermore, I hesitate to call Gascoigne’s work a play, although it is certainly a dramatic production.

⁵ Bertrand Westphal quoted in Antoine Eche, ‘The Shores of Aphrodite’s Island’ in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 91-106 (p. 91).

⁶ William H. Spates, ‘George Gascoigne’s Device for a Maske: An Anglicized “True Report” of the Siege of Famagusta’ in *City of Empires: Ottoman and British Famagusta*, ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 26-43 (p. 28).

Although formally and generically disparate, what these works have in common is that each of them draws on some aspect of Cyprus's historic (whether real or fictive) identity. While the four dramatists concerned may not have seen themselves as writing their plays within a 'Cyprus tradition', the following chapters will demonstrate that they each draw from a common store of ideas, tropes and motifs associated with the island.

These four are by no means the only early modern plays which allude to Cyprus or Cypriots. Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, for example, opens with the celebration of the wedding of the Prince of Cyprus to a Rhodian princess. The unfolding drama, in which the Turks invade the Christian island of Rhodes (which, historically, they did in 1522 – a fact specifically alluded to in Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske*), may have reminded some playgoers of the Siege of Famagusta, but the resonances are not sufficiently powerful to suggest that Kyd intended audiences to understand that Rhodes 'stood in' for Cyprus. Another Ford play, *The Laws of Candy* (perf. ?1620, publ. 1647), also features a Prince of Cyprus, whose role in the drama seems to point towards the island's association, as the centre of the cult of Venus, with romantic love and sexual desire. George Chapman's comedy *The Widow's Tears* (perf. ?1605, publ. 1612) is set in Paphos, the Cypriot city that was, in antiquity, the site of the Temple of Venus. However, other than two passing references to Paphos, the play makes no substantive effort to engage with its setting, or any other obviously Cypriot allusions. In selecting my four dramas, I have chosen to focus on works in which some aspect of the island's identity itself is thematically or dramatically important. Nevertheless, where it is relevant, I will draw on evidence from these and other Mediterranean plays in order to illuminate the arguments that I am making. While Cyprus is my primary focus, as Laurence Publicover has demonstrated, Eastern Mediterranean locations were often used almost interchangeably in the English playhouses, and the ways in which other Mediterranean islands were dramatised might sometimes shed light on aspects of these four Cyprus dramas' preoccupations.⁷

⁷ Laurence Publicover, *Dramatic Geography: Romance, Intertheatricality and Cultural Encounter in Early Modern Mediterranean Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

As a consequence of the aforementioned critical preoccupation with Anglo-Islamic relations, the majority of contemporary criticism that discusses the role of Cyprus in these dramas has, until now, focused on the way the island's late sixteenth-century situation contributes to the work's synchronic significance. New Historicist critics who have written about how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century anxieties about Islam underpinned the island's representation in *Othello*, for example, rarely recognise the mythological resonances that, I argue in Chapter 4, structure some of the play's emotional energies.⁸ I want to demonstrate that Cyprus in each of these dramas is a powerfully multivalent space, with the dynamic between different resonances not only varying from play to play, but also *within* plays, so that one facet of Cyprus's complex range of significations is prominent at one moment, another at another. By attempting to tie down the island's 'meaning' in any one play to what the New Historicists claim are its local or contemporary social or political concerns, critics often overlook other resonating cultural associations. When thinking about early modern drama, we should be more sensitive to other resonances, ones that may not in any obvious sense speak directly to the work's specific historic moment, or apparent agenda. We should also be attentive to those lurking in the wider cultural background, including tropes, motifs and plots that have survived, sometimes shorn of their original context, in popular literature, often in the process becoming 'untimely', and stretching the temporal resonances of plays in a number of interesting ways. This thesis aims to take a diachronic perspective, looking at the ways in which earlier visions of the island still circulating in the English imaginary operated alongside other, more contemporaneous associations, and how this dynamic was exploited by each of the four dramatists. In doing so, I hope to offer readings that – while acknowledging their value – enrich and complicate New Historicist criticism of these four dramas.

In adopting this approach, this thesis draws on the work of Douglas Bruster and the critical perspective he sets out in the introduction to his curiously under-recognised *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (2000). Bruster argues that New

⁸ As I explore in Chapter 4, several critics *do* recognise the play's mythological resonances, but none appears to think about how this might relate to the island's political history, represented by the lurking Turkish threat.

Historicism, with its focus on the social, cultural and political context of a text's moment of production, has often overlooked the fact that literature itself has a history. A text, Bruster claims, speaks 'with others' words, talks back to them, and manifests authors' own histories of reading and writing'.⁹ Literary writing (and, perhaps, all writing?) is inherently allusive, containing within it multiple traces of earlier texts. No text can ever be entirely of its own historical moment. To have a proper understanding of literature, Bruster posits, we need to look beyond a text's moment of production, and 'consider instead how literature exists in and over time', so that we can 'better appreciate the historicity of works, including the historical changes they may signal'.¹⁰ He argues that 'New Historicism's dependence on historical conjuncture – a synchronic or "sideways" alignment of objects [...] effectively excludes earlier and later texts related to the work in question'.¹¹ New Historicism, he continues, with 'its penchant for the synchronic, for the "next-to-in-time"' has, by overlooking literary history, 'occluded the process and implications of literary composition'.¹² Bruster is not, of course, the only critic (or even the first) to recognise this tendency: as early as 1986, Jean E. Howard observed that New Historicist practice was sometimes 'arbitrary in the extreme and inimical to seeing the full intertextual network in which a literary work exists', often resulting in an 'inevitable "flattening" of the literary work'.¹³ Scholarship surrounding the representation of the Mediterranean world in the English playhouses has, perhaps, been especially prone to this kind of New Historicist treatment, whether in terms of finding associations with contemporary attitudes towards the Ottomans, or in treating Mediterranean settings as spatial allegories designed to explore English domestic politics, with little recognition of the continuing influence of earlier textual representations on the ways in which these plays make meaning.

Early modern drama was a deeply intertextual literary form; Bruster describes how dramatists drew on other material 'with remarkable frequency, weaving their plays from many other

⁹ Douglas Bruster, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p. 3.

¹⁰ Bruster, p. 4.

¹¹ Bruster, p. 3-4.

¹² Bruster, p. 29.

¹³ Jean E. Howard, 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', *English Literary Renaissance* 16.1 (1986), 13 – 43 (24). The reservations about New Historicism expressed in this article are particularly interesting, coming as they do from a practitioner.

“texts””.¹⁴ The same thought appears to have occurred to at least one early modern commentator. Writing when public theatre was still in its infancy, anti-theatricalist and former playwright Stephen Gosson proclaimed ‘I may boldly say it, because I have seen it, that the Palace of pleasure, the Golden Ass, the Æthiopian history, Amadis of Fraunce, the Round Table, bawdy Comedies in Latin, French, Italian, and Spanish, have been throughly ransacked, to furnish the Play houses in London’.¹⁵ His polemical agenda notwithstanding, Gosson highlights an important feature of early modern drama here: its indebtedness to earlier literary forms. Even plays not obviously drawn from an existing literary source were often charged with the values, themes and motifs of popular romance, even if, in some cases, they treat them subversively. The influence of popular romance is, to varying degrees, detectable in each of the Cyprus dramas discussed in this thesis. Even Gascoigne’s *A Deuise of a Maske*, which of the four is most clearly concerned with contemporary events, leans heavily on the tropes and ideological commitments of medieval chivalric romance.

Invoking the concept of *bricolage* – the assembly of new works from materials already circulating in a culture – Bruster describes early modern plays as ‘mosaiclike’ and ‘thick with history, culture, and the political’.¹⁶ All writers and all texts, he writes, are indebted ‘to texts and writers who came before them’.¹⁷ And, for Bruster, texts are not only literary artefacts, or even material objects; he suggests that the ‘texts’ that influenced early modern dramatists ‘were not always printed, for these playwrights quoted a wide variety of materials, *events and persons*’.¹⁸ Each earlier text, motif, event or person – I include in this category both fictional and historical figures – incorporated into the new work brings with it its own set of resonances and associations. The term Bruster uses to describe this multi-layered quality, the accretion of resonances and associations over time, is ‘thickness’. It is the ‘thickness’ of these dramas – examined through the lens of their representation of Cyprus – that this thesis seeks to uncover. It will present a diachronic reading of each of the four dramas that, while remaining

¹⁴ Bruster, p. 25.

¹⁵ Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in fiue actions prouing that they are not to be suffred in a christian common weale, by the waye both the cauils of thomas lodge, and the play of playes, written in their defence, and other obiections of players frendes, are truely set downe and directlye aunswared* (London, 1582), sig. D5^v.

¹⁶ Bruster, p. 50. The term is drawn from Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *The Savage Mind* (1962, trans. 1966), describing a culture’s tendency to re-use available materials in new contexts.

¹⁷ Bruster, p. 14.

¹⁸ Bruster, p. 25. My emphasis.

alert to their synchronic connections and interests, identifies the ways in which Cyprus's historic and literary resonances contribute to each.

When thinking about the concept of the text as *bricolage* or mosaic, I also draw on Helen Cooper's concept of the 'meme'. In her highly influential *The English Romance in Time* (2004), Cooper defines a meme as 'a unit within the literature that proves so useful, so infectious that it begins to take on a life of its own', replicated in different settings across time and place, while still retaining its core identity.¹⁹ A meme, she continues, behaves 'like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures'.²⁰ Romance memes surface repeatedly in the dramas discussed by this thesis — for example, the 'meme' of the unsteerable boat that transports the protagonists in Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Masque* from the Mediterranean back to England. Where relevant, I will comment on them. However, what I am particularly interested in is Cypriot 'memes': the tropes, motifs and beliefs associated with the island that were in circulation in wider late medieval and early modern England, and in identifying such memes I will look not just at popular romance, but at the way the island signified more broadly in the English imaginary. In line with Bruster's more expansive definition of what constitutes a 'text', I include places, people, events and even particular historic eras in my definition of the meme, thinking of it as a unit of meaning or information that may be factual or historic, as well as literary.

Although wishing to set out a clear methodological and critical framework for this thesis, I do not want to set up critical strawmen simply for the sake of presenting a provocative counter-argument. Much of the New Historicist criticism I have engaged with in the course of my research makes a valuable and persuasive contribution to literary understanding. In reality, few leading scholars adopt a rigidly New Historicist approach; the majority recognise, at least to some extent, the influence of older texts on early modern drama. However, while researching the chapters that follow, I repeatedly observed the limited historic perspective of many critics. None, for example, seemed aware of the historic English claim to Cyprus, even

¹⁹ Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.

²⁰ Cooper, p. 3.

though this claim – as I will demonstrate – was well-known (and even enjoyed something of a revival) in sixteenth-century England; at least one early modern play (admittedly not one covered by this thesis) alluded to the idea.²¹ Nor have other critics seemed particularly interested in popular romance's role in shaping English understanding of the Eastern Mediterranean world and its history. This may in part be a consequence of the increasing periodisation of literary studies; few early modern scholars have a thorough knowledge of earlier literary culture and thus are often unable to recognise its traces in early modern texts when they encounter them. This thesis aims, in a small way, to rectify that tendency.

There are encouraging signs that this rigid periodisation of literary studies is in decline. In *Islam and Early Modern English Literature* (2007), an exploration of English representations of Islam, Benedict Robinson analyses 'the multiple relationships between a text, its immediate historical moment, and a literary and cultural history that extends all the way from the crusades to the first phases of [English] colonization'.²² Writing about the influence of romance on the early modern English stage, Cyrus Mulready's *Romance on the Early Modern Stage* (2013) claims to disrupt 'the charged temporal division between early modernity and the Middle Ages, showing that instead of a sharp break between the two, genre and geography yields continuity as well as difference across these centuries'.²³ Mulready argues that 'stage romance [...] was a thriving genre from the earliest days of the commercial theater in London' that emerged from a popular literary culture that had its 'roots in medieval narrative'.²⁴ In *Dramatic Geography* (2017), Laurence Publicover seeks 'to illustrate how playwrights shaped their Mediterranean worlds through literary and theatrical precursors' and explore 'the ways in which dramatic geography is shaped by playwrights' engagement with particular modes of writing'.²⁵ Taking the broader critical perspectives that these works represent, I aim to apply them to a single defined but complex space – Cyprus – and in doing so, produce readings of the four Cyprus dramas that are as attentive to each work's diachronic influences as they are to their synchronic connections.

²¹ The play in question is Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London*. I discuss its reference to Cypriot history – and critics' failure to recognise it – in Chapter 1.

²² Benedict S. Robinson, *Islam and Early Modern English Literature: The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2.

²³ Cyrus Mulready, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), p. 27.

²⁴ Mulready, p. 2.

²⁵ Publicover, p. 9, p. 3.

The chapters that follow are not simply a literary survey, in which I point out all the possible Cypriot allusions in a particular play. The purpose of this study is to identify how 'Cyprus' signifies more broadly within each drama, and what its Cypriot resonances contribute to the work's thematic preoccupations. I am not attempting to identify a single coherent 'meaning' for Cyprus in any of these works, but to show that the island occupied a complex and hard to define position in the English imaginary, with different resonances coming to the fore in different works, and even at different points in the same work. My approach is twofold. Firstly, I ascertain how the island signified within wider English culture (including literary culture) over time; and then, by thinking about the specific play-worlds in which it features, where it may develop specific meanings and resonances, I examine how specifically Cypriot memes or units of meaning contribute to each work's thematic preoccupations and synchronic resonances. Using this methodology, I show that the two approaches – synchronic and diachronic – are complementary, and that by being attentive to the way that Cyprus was represented in earlier 'texts' (in the wider Brusterian sense here) we also achieve a far better understanding of its synchronic resonances.

Chapter Summaries

It is a central contention of this thesis that the four Cyprus dramas each drew their visions of the island from a diverse and complex range of ideas and associations. Chapter 1 seeks to identify the historic events and literary tropes and motifs that, I will argue, shape later dramatic representations of the island. The chapter opens with an overview of Cyprus's history, from the Third Crusade to the eve of the Ottoman invasion of the island in 1570. Reflecting the preoccupations that repeatedly surface in English accounts of the island (both fictive and factual), this summary focuses on its dual identity as both crusader kingdom and mercantile gateway through which, for a time, much of the traffic between Christian Europe and the Islamic world (and beyond) was channelled. I draw attention to the critically under-remarked role played by an English king in the island's history and suggest that, although not alluded to in any of the plays under consideration here, it may explain the island's surprising prominence in the English imaginary. The second half of the chapter explores the ways in which this complex history was reflected in popular literature, identifying two main strands

of influence that, I argue, both shaped and reflected English perceptions of the island. In chivalric romance, the island (where it is mentioned) is usually defined by its proximity to both the Holy Land and the Islamic east; it is a liminal and threatened outpost. These works, I demonstrate, often struggle to accommodate the idea of Cyprus as a space with its own unique identity and, in order to fit it to the genre's ideological binaries, the island and its population were either dehumanised as non-Christian 'others', or simply erased altogether. A second form of popular romance, which I call 'Hellenistic romance', presented English readers with a very different vision of the Mediterranean world.²⁶ These stories created a more nuanced picture of the Eastern Mediterranean, in which the region's Christian and Muslim populations encountered one another in far less antagonistic ways, often forming affective bonds across the confessional divide. Explicitly recalling its mercantile heyday, Cyprus often figured as a gateway to the east in these tales. These Hellenistic romances – many of which were Italian in origin and were not translated into English until the second half of the sixteenth century – perpetuated memories of Cyprus's medieval prosperity long after its economic decline. Consequently, the wealthy Cypriot merchant remained a resonant figure in the English consciousness. Finally, the chapter introduces a third set of Cypriot associations. The translation of classical (primarily Roman) texts into English in the second half of the sixteenth century, I demonstrate, led to increasing numbers of literary allusions to Cyprus's mythological association with Venus, the classical goddess of love. I will show how Cyprus and Venus became almost synonymous in some English literary writing.

In Chapter 2, I analyse the only English drama to engage directly with the Siege of Famagusta, George Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske*, written on behalf of a leading Catholic nobleman for performance at a family wedding. The chapter begins with an account of sixteenth-century Eastern Mediterranean geopolitics, and the ways in which the Reformation complicated English responses to the Siege of Famagusta and the Battle of Lepanto (both of which feature prominently in the masque), two of the era's most famous confrontations with the Ottomans. This overview is followed by a detailed analysis of how the masque engages with those events through the complicated perspective of its English Catholic protagonists. I explore the ways

²⁶ The term is borrowed from Laurence Publicover's *Dramatic Geography*. I explain its origins and my use of it in Chapter 1.

in which Gascoigne draws on contemporary reports of the Venetian defeat at the Siege of Famagusta and the victory of the Holy League over the Ottoman navy at the Battle of Lepanto (in the process identifying a hitherto unrecognised source) to create what one critic calls a ‘topical adventure play’, albeit one articulated in language that frequently recalls chivalric romance.²⁷ In doing so, I argue, the masque attempts to present these recent Eastern Mediterranean events as a clash of civilisations between the Christian west (rather than exclusively Catholic affairs, as they in reality were) and the Islamic east. By doing so, Gascoigne uses cross-confessional responses to the Siege of Famagusta and the Battle of Lepanto to legitimise his Catholic audience’s interest in Eastern Mediterranean politics and, more specifically, to introduce a proposal that English Catholics like Viscount Montague and his sons might productively serve their country by acting as a bridge between England and Venice, a ‘moderate’ Catholic state with which Elizabeth’s regime sought diplomatic relations.

Chapter 3 is concerned with Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus*, a play based on a German *Volksbuch* (chapbook) that relates the picaresque adventures of the Cypriot Fortunatus and his sons, Anelocia and Ampedo, who become fabulously wealthy after Fortune presents Fortunatus with a never-emptying purse. After a summary of the play’s history and plot, the chapter focuses on the implications of the play’s Cypriot resonances. Notably, this play is remarkably free of the Islamophobia or anxieties about the threat posed to Cyprus by the Muslim world; in this respect the play is perhaps influenced (albeit at a distance) by Hellenistic romance, in which Cypriot merchants frequently acted as a conduit between Europe and the Islamic east. I argue that, through the central motif of Fortunatus’s magic purse, the play recalls the island’s (specifically, Famagusta’s) fourteenth-century economic heyday, using it to comment on contemporary London, and the social and moral consequences of the wealth derived from England’s increasing participation in international trade. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the extent to which playgoers’ awareness of medieval Cyprus’s fate – first annexed by the Venetians and then invaded by the Ottomans – informs *Old Fortunatus*’s moral commentary.

²⁷ Spates, ‘Gascoigne’s Device’, p. 28.

Shakespeare's *Othello*, the subject of Chapter 4, focuses on a much later period in Cypriot history. Examining its relationship with its sources – in particular Richard Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603) – I conclude that the play is set on the eve of the Ottoman invasion. However, rather than understanding it simply as a species of 'Turk' play, the chapter explores the extent to which its protagonists' tragic fates are shaped by the island's association with Venus, the classical goddess of love, and the myth of her adulterous relationship with Mars, the god of war. Engaging with contemporary criticism that presents Othello as irremediably 'other' in white, Christian Venice, I argue that he is in fact a far more hybrid and 'Mediterranean' figure than has previously been recognised. The chapter also explores the extent to which his character recalls figures from other Mediterranean romance. Othello's complex identity – Turk, Roman, noble Moor – is, I argue, intensely geographically resonant. Rather than seeing Desdemona as representing Cyprus, Othello himself might be seen as embodying the island and its eventual fate.

The fifth and final chapter looks at the only work considered by this thesis set wholly on Cyprus (specifically, Famagusta). Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*, composed nearly sixty years after the siege of Famagusta, turns away from Cyprus's turbulent history and towards more mythological and literary resonances. Lacking the emotion and spectacular violence of Ford's later plays (particularly *The Broken Heart* and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*), the work has received little scholarly attention. What little it has received has tended to focus on its relationship with Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and, to a lesser extent, Shakespeare; both of those influences are considered by the chapter. Few critics (with the exception of Lisa Hopkins, with whose work I engage where pertinent) have considered in any detail how Cyprus signifies in the play. I argue that the play is a sophisticated allegory, which works through the island's particular association with Venus, although the goddess herself is barely mentioned. Within this allegorical framework, Ford's setting the action in Famagusta rather than (as might be expected) Paphos – the Cypriot location most particularly associated with Venus – is a curious choice. By specifying that the action was set in Famagusta, I suggest, Ford introduces historical resonances that add a note of dramatic jeopardy that is otherwise absent from the play's (metaphorically and literally) bloodless allegory. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ways in which *The Lover's Melancholy* might also be seen to be in dialogue, mediated through their shared Famagustan setting, with *Othello*.

Cyprus in the English Imaginary: from the Third Crusade to 1570

Centuries of only limited direct contact between England and Cyprus notwithstanding, a complex and multi-layered range of ideas about the island and its inhabitants were in circulation in early modern England. As I noted in my introduction, the island featured in an extraordinarily diverse range of texts. Not every textual reference, of course, constituted a well-known fact or commonly held vision of Cyprus. Although late sixteenth-century sermons and religious polemic are littered with references to the fourth century CE Church father Epiphanius of Cyprus's views on idolatry, for example, there is little evidence that these allusions found their way into popular literature or, later, drama, or that they articulated more enduring ideas about the island more generally.¹ Nevertheless, I hope to demonstrate over the course of this thesis that the visions of Cyprus dramatised on the early modern stage drew on a diverse, multi-layered and even contradictory range of Cypriot tropes and motifs. It is a central contention of this thesis that English responses to the 1570 Ottoman invasion, although undoubtedly influential, did not erase earlier visions of the island, but became another element – another meme, to draw on Helen Cooper's term – in an already complex network of associations. This chapter seeks to identify how the island signified before that event, with the intention of demonstrating the continuity and influence of some of these earlier ideas. I will begin by providing an overview of Cypriot history, highlighting those features that made the island particularly prominent in the English imaginary, before moving on to a discussion about representations of the island in popular literature. My chief purpose here is to identify key aspects of the island's identity – both historical and literary – that were sufficiently well-known to constitute quotable tropes, motifs or memes in their own right. Such units of meaning might be factual or imaginary; the boundary between the two was often blurred, with tropes and motifs from popular romance frequently revealed, on closer examination, to be related to some aspect of the island's history. Using the term as defined by Douglas Bruster (as discussed in my introduction), I will also be treating Cypriot history as a quotable 'text' in its own right at various points.

¹ Epiphanius was Bishop of Salamis from around 365 CE until his death in 403. His views on idolatry were often quoted by Protestant divines. Salamis was an ancient Cypriot city, around 4 miles north of modern Famagusta.

Cypriot History: From the Third Crusade to the Venetians

In a manner that may initially appear paradoxical, Cyprus's position at the easternmost edge of western Christendom made it an important and highly visible place in medieval and early modern Europe. It served initially as a staging post for pilgrims and crusaders on their way to the Holy Land, and later as an important trading hub on east-west trade routes. Although the majority of its population was Orthodox Greek, from 1192 the island was a Latin Christian kingdom, ruled over by Frankish crusader nobility, the Lusignans. Guy, the island's first Lusignan ruler, was also the titular king of Jerusalem, although this claim was largely symbolic; the city of Jerusalem was recaptured from the crusaders by the Ayyubid general Salah ad-Din (known in Europe as Saladin) in 1187, after which it was never retaken by Christian forces, although crusader regimes retained control of some Holy Land territory until the end of the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, Lusignan kings of Cyprus continued to proclaim themselves kings of Jerusalem.² The Lusignans ruled Cyprus for almost three centuries until 1489, after which it was ceded to the Venetians.

The island's political, cultural and economic influence peaked in the half-century after the fall of the last mainland crusader stronghold, Acre, in 1291, at which point the island became the most easterly outpost of Latin Christendom, a position it was to retain until 1570.³ The Lusignans were Roman Catholics, while the majority of the island's population was either Greek Orthodox or belonged to other branches of eastern Christianity, although this distinction is not explicitly acknowledged in any of the plays discussed in this thesis. Given that dramatists (and playgoers) were hardly unaware of doctrinal differences, this suggests that some aspects of Cyprus's history were of more interest than others, with the island

² The Lusignan claim to Jerusalem was contested for some decades by various factions amongst the leading crusader families, but eventually settled on the Lusignans in the early thirteenth century. See Peter Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191 – 1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 23-38 for a detailed discussion of the issue.

³ Established after the First Crusade, in 1098, the crusader states or *Outremer* ('overseas'), at their greatest extent in the first half of the twelfth century, controlled territory that covered the coastal areas of modern Syria, Lebanon and southern Turkey, as well as what is now Israel and Palestine. Muslim regimes gradually regained the territory, with Saladin taking control of the city of Jerusalem in 1187, although elements of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem remained under Christian control until 1291, when the Mamlūks finally took control of Acre. Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) provides a comprehensive account of the rise and fall of the various crusader kingdoms.

increasingly figuring as a non-specified 'Christian' space in the English imagination, rather than being associated with any particular creed (although, as I will discuss below, this sort of confessional difference was sometimes registered in medieval sources).

Perhaps more surprising is English dramatists' lack of interest in an important moment in Cypriot history in which the English were directly involved. The Lusignans owed their Cypriot kingdom to the intervention of an English king in the island's affairs. In 1191, on his way to the Holy Land to join the Third Crusade, Richard I seized the island after its Byzantine ruler, Isaac Komnenos, attempted to capture Richard's fiancée, Berengaria of Navarre (the couple were eventually wed on the island, and Berengaria crowned Queen of England in Limassol) and his sister, Joan of Sicily, when the fleet with which they were travelling was shipwrecked on the island.⁴ Following a short military campaign, Isaac was imprisoned and then deposed, and Richard seized what Edbury describes as 'an immense quantity of plundered valuables', using them to subsidise his crusading activities.⁵ Initially intending to use the island as a base from which to support and provision his campaign, Richard later changed his policy and instead decided to treat Cyprus as 'a marketable asset', selling it first to the Knights Templar – who returned it to Richard, after apparently finding the island's Greek population ungovernable – and then to Guy de Lusignan in 1192.⁶

Richard's intervention in Cypriot history, although brief, was recalled throughout Europe for the following four hundred years, memories kept alive (at least in part) by a popular English verse romance, *Richard Coeur de Lion*; I will return to this work's Cypriot dimension below. The English king's seizure of the island was often referred to by western pilgrims – Cyprus was the last European staging post on the main route from western Europe to the Holy Land – suggesting it was remembered throughout western Europe. More than three centuries after Richard's conquest, the anonymous author (probably Sir Richard's personal chaplain) of Sir Richard Guildford's 1506 pilgrimage narrative wrote that

⁴ Edbury, pp. 1-12 provides a comprehensive account of Richard's activities on Cyprus.

⁵ Edbury, p. 8.

⁶ See Sir David Hunt, 'The Frankish Period' in *Footprints in Cyprus: An Illustrated History*, ed. by Sir David Hunt (London: Trigraph, 1990), p. 178. Hunt suggests that the Templars were brutal and heavy-handed in their treatment of the Greek Cypriots.

[t]he chyef Cytyes and townes of this yle of Cyprys were destroyed by a king of Englonde in revengynge the ravyshinge of his Suster vyolently done by ye prynce of the same yle, whiche dede and also the sayde Revengynge with all the Circumstaunce of the same is yet in memorye and in Rype Remembraunce comenly with every man and woman of the same yle.⁷

Another English traveller, John Locke, travelling to Jerusalem via Cyprus in 1553, describes how old Famagusta

hathe been ruined and overthrown by Richard the first of that name, king of England, which he did in revenge of his sisters ravishment coming to Jerusalem, the which inforcement was done to her by the king of Famagusta.⁸

In fact, Richard did not lay waste to Cyprus; Edbury argues that Richard's policy was not to destroy the island and its institutions, but to preserve and exploit them. The English crusader army invasion caused very little destruction of the island's infrastructure. Nor were either his sister or his fiancée captured or assaulted by Isaac Komnenos; although the Cypriot ruler attempted to lure them both onto the island, they remained safely anchored off Limassol throughout.⁹ The ruins referred to by Locke and the Guildford author may have been caused by a series of earthquakes that took place in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Famagusta also suffered significant damage arising from conflict with the Genoese in the 1370s, and the Egyptian Mamlūks in the 1420s. Nevertheless, the city's ruins seem to have provided a highly visible, albeit erroneous, monument to the English king's role in the island's history.

⁷ *This is the begynnyng, and contynuaunce of the pylgrymage of Sir Richarde Guylforde Knyght [and] controulour unto our late soverayne lord kynge Henry the vii. And howe he went with his servauntz and company towards Jherusalem* (London, 1511), sig. B4^r. Sir Richard Guildford (1450-1506) was a courtier who held several important positions in the court of Henry VI. He undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1506 and died there. His chaplain prepared this account of his journey, which was published in London in 1511.

⁸ *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus*, ed. and trans. by C.D. Cobham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), p. 71. Claude Delaval Cobham (1842-1915) was a British Colonial official in Cyprus from 1878 to 1908. Cobham's *Excerpta Cypria* is an invaluable collection of accounts of Cyprus from the first century CE to the mid-nineteenth century, written mostly by western European writers. Cobham translated them into English and, where it was available, attached biographical information about the author and their journey to Cyprus.

⁹ Edbury (p. 8-9) suggests that Richard's invasion in fact caused very little destruction of the island's infrastructure.

Following Richard's intervention in Cypriot history, a number of later English texts claimed that Cyprus was in some way still subject to English over-lordship. Roger of Howden, who accompanied Richard on the Third Crusade, claimed that 'Richard gave Cyprus to Guy to be held for life', implying that it was to revert to the English crown after his death, and this claim was repeated in the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman chronicle *The Crusade and Death of Richard I*.¹⁰ Thomas Burton, compiler of the fourteenth-century Meaux Chronicle, claimed that the Lusignans held Cyprus as an English dependency.¹¹ The belief was surprisingly persistent, surfacing repeatedly in English and other European sources over the centuries that followed. Consequently, later English monarchs sometimes took a somewhat proprietorial interest in the kingdom of Cyprus. The Lusignan arms were included in English armorials – books or treatises on heraldry – during Edward I's reign (1272-1307).¹² When Peter I of Cyprus visited England in 1363, as part of a Europe-wide tour to muster support for a new crusade, Edward III held a tournament in his honour at Smithfield and the mayor of London, Henry Picard, threw a lavish banquet for him.¹³ According to Andrekos Varnava, Edward permitted some of his best knights to participate, 'demand[ing] Cyprus if Peter took Jerusalem'.¹⁴ Peter did not capture Jerusalem, although he did (very briefly) seize Alexandria from its Muslim ruler, a triumph that earned him a mention in 'The Monk's Tale' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁵ Edward's attempt to assert the English claim to the island, Varnava argues, 'shows the continuity of Cyprus in the English imperial imagination'.¹⁶ Later, Edward IV incorporated the Lusignan arms of Cyprus into the shield of his wife, Elizabeth Woodville.¹⁷ Even after the island had passed from the Lusignans to the Venetians and then into the hands of the

¹⁰ Quoted in Edbury, p. 11.

¹¹ See Edbury, p. 11-2.

¹² See Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878-1916: The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 61.

¹³ Other notable guests included Edward III, Jean I of France, Waldemar of Denmark and David of Scotland, and was known as 'The Feast of the Five Kings'.

¹⁴ Varnava, p. 48.

¹⁵ The Monk's Tale focuses on '[t]he sufferings of those who once stood high, / Who fell from eminence' (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. by David Wright, ed. by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 377). The monk describes how 'noble Peter, King of Cyprus, who / Won Alexandria by great generalship' was eventually killed by his own nobles (p. 391).

¹⁶ Varnava, p. 48.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Woodville's shield can be viewed on the Queens' College Cambridge website (Elizabeth being one of the two Queens involved in the college's foundation) < <https://www.queens.cam.ac.uk/visiting-the-college/history/college-facts/foundresses-and-patronesses/elizabeth-woodville> > [accessed 9 September 2021]

Ottomans, a belief in a legitimate claim to the island appears to have persisted (although how seriously it was entertained is doubtful); the monument to Elizabeth I erected by James I in Westminster Abbey included the arms of Cyprus in the shield, alongside those of England, France and six other kingdoms.

Richard's sale of the island to Guy, the erstwhile King of Jerusalem, also gave rise to rumours of another arrangement. In the fifteenth century, stories began to circulate that Richard had given the island to Guy in return for the crown of Jerusalem. An anonymous English mid-sixteenth-century historiography, *A breuiat cronicle contaynyng all the kinges from brute to this daye* (1552), claimed that Richard gave Cyprus to Guy in return for 'the kingdom of Hierusalem wherefore the kinge of Englande of a longe time after was called king of Hierusalem'.¹⁸ The claim was repeated by the Dutch scholar Johann van Kootwyck, a Doctor of Civil and Canon law at the University of Utrecht, suggesting it was also given some credence elsewhere in Europe. Describing the island's history in his account of his 1598-9 pilgrimage to the Holy Land, van Kootwyck wrote that Richard

sold the island to Guy de Lusignan, king of Jerusalem, who had been expelled by the Saracens, and assumed in exchange the royal title of Jerusalem, which he handed down to his successors on the English throne.¹⁹

The attractive fiction of an English claim to Cyprus and/or Jerusalem found its way into the public playhouses. Thomas Heywood's *The Four Prentices of London* (ca. 1592) claimed the island for England by rewriting the Frankish Lusignans as Englishmen. Guy – the name is not coincidental – a young nobleman reduced to the status of a London apprentice by his father's loss of fortune, takes the cross and, after leading a miraculous victory over Saracen forces, is crowned King of Jerusalem. At this point in the play, he is for the first time – and entirely without explanation – addressed as 'Guy of Lessingham' (6.65); later, after more successful crusading activity, his brother Charles is awarded 'the throne of Cyprus' (17.79).²⁰ *A breuiat*

¹⁸ *A breuiat cronicle contaynyng all the kinges from brute to this daye, and manye notable actes gathered oute of diuers cronicles fro[m] Willyam Conquerour vnto the yere of christ a. M.v.c.lii.* (Canterbury, 1552), sig. B4^v.

¹⁹ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 194.

²⁰ Thomas Heywood, *The Four Prentices of London in Three Romances of Eastern Conquest*, ed. by Ladan Niayesh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 201- 289.

cronicle, the sixteenth-century historiography referred to previously, identifies the first Lusignan ruler as ‘Guye of Lesingham’; other sixteenth-century texts offer similar variants, suggesting that it was a common anglicisation of Lusignan.²¹ Although she does not appear to associate it with the belief in an English claim to Cyprus or Jerusalem (in fact, it is not clear from her comments that she is even aware of it), Ladan Niayesh notes the play’s anglicising agenda, observing that

[t]he change from ‘Guy de Lusignan’ (crusader King of Jerusalem 1186–92) to ‘Guy of Lessingham’ (from a village in Norfolk) contributes to familiarising the character and his background, in the same way as the change from ‘Godfrey of Bouillon’ (one of the leaders of the First Crusade and the first to rule in Jerusalem) to ‘Godfrey of Boulogne’ brings the character of Guy’s brother closer to home for English audiences.²²

If the English were unable assert their claim to the island politically, they could do so figuratively, by transforming Cyprus’s first Frankish king into an imaginary Englishman.

A passing allusion to Cypriots owing tribute to Elizabeth in the Court Prologue to Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (1599) may gesture towards the fantasy of the English monarch as the island’s legitimate overlord, but other than this single (and uncertain) instance – discussed further in Chapter 3 – none of the dramas discussed in this thesis show any significant interest in it. Nevertheless, the historic relationship between Cyprus and England perhaps helps to explain the island’s more general prominence in the English imaginary. Considering the absence of this available narrative regarding Cyprus can, perhaps, help us identify the aspects of the island’s history that *did* interest them. And where it featured most prominently in the English consciousness was through its more local resonances.

Cyprus and Pilgrimage

Direct contact between England and Cyprus was limited until English ships and merchants began to trade with the Ottomans in the late sixteenth century, and even then the island was

²¹ *A breviat cronicle*, sig. B4^r.

²² 6.0.2n. Although little is known about Thomas Heywood’s early life, he was born and brought up in Lincolnshire, where there is a village named ‘Leasingham’, which may be a more likely source for Lessingham. He has, so far as I can tell, no known connection with Norfolk.

relatively unvisited compared to other Mediterranean ports.²³ After the Third Crusade, the few English men and (even fewer) women who visited the island were usually pilgrims. The island was an important staging post for travellers to the Holy Land. Pilgrims from northern and western Europe usually travelled over land to Venice or Genoa, where they then caught a dedicated pilgrim ship, which took them to the Holy Land via a series of Adriatic and Eastern Mediterranean ports and islands. The fourteenth-century *Sir John Mandeville's Book of Marvels and Travels* provides an accurate summary of what was, for English and other northern European travellers, a long and arduous journey. English pilgrims – those lucky enough to survive the trip (pilgrimage narratives almost invariably refer to fellow travellers who did not) – could expect to be absent from their homes for up to a year. A pilgrim travelling from the west, the Mandeville author wrote,

goes through France, Burgundy, Lombardy, and so on to Venice or Genoa or some other port, and one embarks on a ship there and goes to the island of Corfu, and this disembarks in Greece at Port Myroch or Vlorë or Durrës or at another port, and rests there for a while. One then puts to sea and lands at Cyprus, leaving aside the island of Rhodes, and disembarks at Famagusta, which is the best harbour in Cyprus (or else at Limassol). Then one puts to sea again (passing by the port of Tyre) and does not disembark until one reaches the port of Jaffa, the nearest harbour to Jerusalem (as it is only twenty-seven miles between them).²⁴

Much of what the Mandeville author (there being little evidence that Sir John Mandeville himself ever actually existed) wrote ranges from the highly exaggerated to the utterly fantastical, but this itinerary at least is accurate. Cyprus's position as the furthest outpost of Western European Christendom made it psychologically as well as geographically important.²⁵ Lisa Hopkins describes Cyprus as 'an island defined not only as what it is but by where it leads to', a place where Christian travellers prepared themselves, both physically and

²³ William Spates suggests that the harbour at Famagusta, the island's main port, was unsuitable for many English ships, noting that '[w]hile the condition of the port of Famagusta in the late 16th century, both before and after the Ottoman conquest, is debatable, it is likely that the larger ships developed in the 15th-century Atlantic, such as the square-rigged caravel and the galleon, would not have found sufficient space in Famagusta's limited harbor'. See William Spates, 'Power, Peril and Maritime Trade Wish Fulfillment in Thomas Dekker's *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus*' in *Famagusta Maritima*, ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 200-217 (p. 207).

²⁴ Sir John Mandeville, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, trans. by Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 59.

²⁵ Pilgrim narratives written by travellers from across Western Europe form the bulk of the material collected in the *Excerpta Cypria* from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

spiritually, to enter Islamic territory, and to give thanks for their safe return.²⁶ Writing a century and a half after *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, the Guildford author describes the Venetian pilgrim ship on which he was travelling stopping at Cyprus as it returned from the Holy Land. One of the party's first actions was to go 'on Lande to Masse'.²⁷

Cypriot Prosperity

Cyprus's proximity to the Islamic Levant was advantageous for other reasons. For nearly a century, the island was an influential mercantile centre. By the early fourteenth century, Famagusta in particular dominated the European end of the lucrative eastern trade routes. Until the late thirteenth century, Sharon Kinoshita argues, Cyprus had been

a convenient but secondary way-station to mainland ports such as Acre, the true center of trade where maritime routes from Latin Europe met the land routes coming from Central Asia, the Indian Ocean, and beyond.²⁸

The island's rise to economic prominence followed the loss to western Christendom of the mainland port at Acre to Mamlūk forces in 1291, after which Pope Nicholas IV announced a ten-year ban, which was subsequently extended into the mid-fourteenth century, on all trade with the lands of the Mamlūk sultanate.²⁹ It proved extremely profitable for the Catholic Lusignans to turn a blind eye to Cypriot merchants – many of whom were (conveniently) either Greek Orthodox or members of other eastern Christian sects, who did not presumably consider themselves bound by the papal embargo – trading in Alexandria and other Muslim-controlled ports, while enforcing the ban on western European merchants by patrolling the waters between Cyprus and Syria.³⁰ By curtailing the access of other European ships to the major Mamlūk ports, the Lusignan kings created the conditions for Famagusta to become for a time the dominant Eastern Mediterranean entrepôt. Cypriot merchants purchased spices,

²⁶ Lisa Hopkins, 'Love and War on Venus' Island: *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy*, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 25.1 (2016), 51-64 (59) < <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/670667> > [accessed 23 May 2018]

²⁷ Guildford, sig. B4^r.

²⁸ Sharon Kinoshita, "'Noi siamo mercatanti cipriani': How to Do Things in the Medieval Mediterranean" in *Philippe de Mézières and His Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 41-60 (p. 49).

²⁹ The Mamlūks ruled Egypt and Syria between 1250 and 1517, after which time they were superseded by the Ottomans as the dominant Islamic power in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Levant.

³⁰ See Edbury, p. 133.

silks and other highly desirable eastern merchandise from the Mamlūk-controlled markets in the Levant, returning to Cyprus to sell it on to Venetian, Genoese and other merchants, who in turn transported it to eager consumers across Europe.

Controlling the point at which eastern imports entered European markets proved enormously lucrative for Cyprus. Fourteenth-century visitors to the island marvelled at the wealth and extravagance of some of its inhabitants. Ludolf von Suchen, a German priest who travelled to the island at some point between 1336 and 1341, described in almost breathless detail the wealth of Cypriot merchants and noblemen, observing that it was

not to be wondered at, for Cyprus is the furthest of Christian lands, so that all ships and all wares, be they what they may, and come they from what part of the sea they will, must first come to Cyprus, and in no wise can they pass it by, and pilgrims from every country journeying to the lands over sea must touch at Cyprus.³¹

According to Ludolf, a Famagusta merchant ‘once betrothed his daughter, and the jewels of her head-dress were valued by the French knights who came with us as more precious than all the ornaments of the Queen of France’, while another ‘sold to the Sultan a royal orb of gold, and thereon for precious stones, a ruby, an emerald, a sapphire and a pearl, for sixty thousand florins’.³² Ludolf refers here to the Mamlūk sultan, a figure who later appeared in popular romance and drama as the ‘soldan’ or the ‘soldan of Babylon’. The wealth of the island’s merchants became almost legendary, and was recalled across Europe (including England) long after it had dissipated in reality. Its brevity notwithstanding – it lasted less than a century – the island’s period of prosperity left a deep impression in European popular literature, in which the wealthy Cypriot (usually a merchant) became almost a stock figure. Kinoshita argues, for example, that ‘the recurring figure of the Cypriot merchant [in *The Decameron*] anecdotally attests the island’s central role in fourteenth-century Mediterranean commerce’.³³ The fact that Thomas Dekker was able to use medieval Famagusta to talk about the moral and social consequences of late sixteenth-century English commerce is evidence of the enduring power of the trope of Cypriot wealth. I will argue later in this chapter that the

³¹ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 20.

³² *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 19.

³³ Kinoshita, p. 49.

Cypriot merchant came to embody not only the island's dominance over east-west trade but also testifies to the way the island came to be viewed as a symbolic gateway for all sorts of traffic – material, cultural and even affective – between the Islamic world and the Christian.

Decline and Invasion

Following the lapse of the papal embargo in the second half of the fourteenth century, the island's dominance over east-west trade gradually subsided. Its decline was further hastened by conflicts with Genoa and the Mamlūk Sultanate.³⁴ Cyprus remained an important staging post on the journey to and from the Holy Land, but references in pilgrim narratives to the wealth of the island's merchants and the extravagance of its aristocracy declined after this point. Felix Faber, a Dominican friar from Ulm, writing in the late-fifteenth century, is notably less dazzled by Cypriot wealth than his predecessor Ludolf, who visited the island a century and a half earlier.³⁵ Describing late Lusignan Famagusta, Felix writes that 'ruin threatens the city and all that is in it', its past glory and wealth vanishing 'day by day'.³⁶ Nevertheless, parts of Cyprus retained some of the glamour and romance of its economic zenith. Merchants from 'every part of the world, Christians and infidels' still came to Nicosia, where there were 'stores, great and precious, for the aromatic herbs of the East are brought here raw and are prepared by the perfumer's art'.³⁷ The island itself, he claims, 'abounds in dyes and perfumes, so that the stores of Nicosia are a source from which such drugs flow over the world'.³⁸ Weakened by internal and external conflict, however, the island eventually fell victim to what Edbury describes as 'Venetian colonial expansionism'.³⁹ By the time James II, the last Lusignan king of Cyprus, married the daughter of a Venetian nobleman, Caterina Cornaro, Cyprus was something of a commercial backwater, with most European merchant ships going directly to the mainland Mamlūk and Ottoman ports. James died shortly after his 1472 marriage to Caterina and their son, James III of Cyprus, died in infancy, leaving Caterina as the island's

³⁴ See Edbury, pp. 197-211 for a more detailed analysis of Cyprus's economic and political decline.

³⁵ Felix Faber (1441-1502), a Dominican theologian is more generally known as 'Felix Fabri', best known for the account of his journeys around the Holy Land and the Near East in the 1480s, *Fabri Evagatorium in Terræ Sanctæ, Arabiæ et Egypti peregrinationem*.

³⁶ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 45.

³⁷ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 41-2.

³⁸ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 42.

³⁹ Edbury, p. 211.

ruler. In 1489, the Venetian Signiory persuaded her to cede her rights to Venice, and the island became a Venetian overseas possession.

Venetian rule did little to halt the island's economic decline. Visitors commented increasingly on its visible decay. A Tyrolese pilgrim, Martin von Baumgarten, wrote in 1508 that 'neither its cities nor villages are much frequented, but as if it was barren and a desert place it is inhabited only by a few people that live in cottages'.⁴⁰ Denis Possot, a French priest returning from the Holy Land in 1532, observed that Limassol 'has several fine churches which were ruined long ago' and 'one sees in the neighbourhood several fine buildings as though they had been before their ruin the palaces of princes'.⁴¹ Its Venetian rulers subjected the island to what amounted to asset-stripping. Although Cyprus produced significant quantities of salt, cotton and sugar, profits did not remain on the increasingly impoverished island. Von Baumgarten describes the local population as 'slaves to the Venetians', claiming that they were

obliged to pay to the [Venetian] state a third part of all their increase or income, whether the product of their ground, or corn, wine, oil, or of their cattle, or any other thing. Besides every man of them is bound to work for the state two days of the week wherever they shall please to appoint them: and if any shall fail, by reason of some business of their own, or for indisposition of body, then they are made to pay a fine for as many days as they are absent from their work. And which is more, there is yearly some tax or other imposed on them, with which the poor common people are so flayed and pillaged, that they hardly have wherewithal to keep body and soul together.⁴²

It is not, perhaps, surprising that Cyprus's Greek population remained largely neutral when the Ottomans invaded in 1570, although that fact was rarely acknowledged in western accounts of the invasion, or in any of the dramas discussed in subsequent chapters.

The Ottoman assault on Cyprus was long anticipated by the Venetians. Strenuous efforts were made to upgrade the defences of Nicosia, the island's capital, and Famagusta, its chief port, in the decades leading up to the invasion; elements of Venetian fortifications of both cities

⁴⁰ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 55.

⁴¹ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 66.

⁴² *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 55.

remain visible today. When Selim II succeeded his father Suleiman ('the Magnificent') in 1566, according to David Hunt 'it was generally believed that he would try to make his name by a new conquest, which would also redeem his father's failure to capture Malta in 1565'.⁴³ The new Ottoman Emperor sent a formal demand to Venice, demanding in insulting terms – designed to prevent acceptance, Hunt suggests – the immediate surrender of Cyprus.⁴⁴ The Venetians unsurprisingly refused and an Ottoman invasion force landed on the island on 2 July 1570. Turkish forces first besieged Nicosia, which surrendered on 9 September 1570, before turning their attention to Famagusta, which held out until 1 August 1571, by which point the rest of the island was entirely under Turkish control. A detailed account of the invasion, which features prominently in Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske*, and of English responses to it, will be offered in the following chapter.

In return for the restoration of their trading privileges in Ottoman-controlled territories, the Venetians formally ceded Cyprus to the Turks in 1573, after which the island rapidly became an imperial backwater, the Turks being primarily concerned with preventing Venetian or other Christian powers using it to threaten Ottoman shipping and territory, rather than exploiting it themselves. Wealthier Greek Cypriots fled to Crete and Italy, and large numbers of Turkish settlers arrived. According to Hunt, '[g]rants of land and houses were made to Turks from the victorious army, and other Turks from Anatolia were persuaded, in some cases compelled, to immigrate'.⁴⁵ Around twenty thousand Turkish settlers joined a Christian (predominantly, although not exclusively, Greek Orthodox) population of about eighty-five thousand. Although hopes of a Christian recovery of the island were given a temporary boost by victory over the Ottoman navy at the Battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571, Cyprus was to remain under Turkish rule for another three centuries.

⁴³ Hunt, 'The Frankish Period', p. 216-7.

⁴⁴ Hunt, 'The Frankish Period', p. 217.

⁴⁵ Hunt, 'The Turkish Period' in *Footprints in Cyprus: An Illustrated History*, ed. by Sir David Hunt (London: Trigraph, 1990), pp. 226 -54 (p. 227).

Cyprus and Chivalric Romance

To what extent early modern English dramatists and their audiences were aware of Cyprus's history is uncertain. As noted above, accounts of these events (or some version of them) were alluded to in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historiographies, but these were unlikely to have been widely read by the majority of playgoers. There was, however, an alternative source of ideas about the island available, one that responded to but was not constrained by its history: popular literature. The Eastern Mediterranean world – including Cyprus – featured prominently in verse and prose romance, as well as other literary genres throughout the medieval and early modern periods, and figured in multiple ways. Broadly speaking, literary references to Cyprus fall into three main categories: chivalric romance, what I am calling Hellenistic romance, and classical mythology. In some stories it was a space where western European protagonists confronted (and usually triumphed over) the enemies of Christendom, often unleashing appalling violence on them in the process. Other tales told of a place where east and west met in far more productive and collaborative ways, where Christians and Muslims might be friends, allies, and even lovers. Mythological allusions were later added into the mix, as English translations of classical literature became increasingly accessible to English readers. The remainder of this chapter will address these categories in turn, identifying the chief characteristics of each and the way in which Cyprus signifies in each.

Chivalric romance, in one form or another, was the dominant form of secular literature for nearly five hundred years in England. Mary Hamel defines the genre as stories in which 'a Christian military power, because it is Christian, is called upon to confront and overcome in battle a non-Christian invader or usurper in another country – because it is not Christian'.⁴⁶ Although there are chivalric romances which do not centre the confrontation between Christianity and Islam (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. late 14th C) and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), for example, although the latter includes an anachronistic war against the Saracens), many of the most popular English and European romances feature some sort of crusading activity in which protagonists battle an Islamic foe. These

⁴⁶ Mary Hamel, 'The Siege of Jerusalem as a crusading poem' in *Journeys toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, ed. by B.N. Sargent-Baur (Chicago: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 177-84 (p. 177).

confrontations often took place in the Holy Land, but not always; one popular chivalric romance, *King Horn*, recounts the eponymous hero battling 'Saracens' on the Isle of Man; others tell of Christian knights repelling Saracen invaders from France, Rome or Greece. However, a significant number featured some sort of journey to the Holy Land, where pilgrimage and devotional activities often merged with more militaristic endeavours and holy wars.

The genre flourished long after the crusading activities it responded to and fictionalised had been abandoned by Western Christendom, with the rise of the Ottoman Empire and its incursions into the Mediterranean lending many of these stories renewed relevance, especially after the 1453 fall of Constantinople. They acquired, Cooper argues, 'a new and vibrant popularity' in the sixteenth century, when printed versions of Middle English romances became 'the pulp fiction of the Tudor age', with many of them later finding their way into the public playhouses.⁴⁷ Benedict Robinson argues that popular chivalric romances constituted

a response to the failure of the crusades, acts of collective cultural fantasy that seek to take imaginative possession of the long and fluctuating border between Latin Christendom and Islam.⁴⁸

While, as Laurence Publicover observes, it is questionable whether the relationship between romance and the crusades was quite so linear, the genre's preoccupation with the confrontation with Islam meant that the Eastern Mediterranean world occupied an important but often ambiguous position on the edge of Christendom in many of these tales, unsettling the clear-cut boundaries between Christianity and Islam or civilisation and barbarity that the genre strives to re-inscribe.⁴⁹ Critical accounts of chivalric romance's literary geography have, for the most part, focused on the highly charged relationship between Christian West and Islamic East played out in these texts, with little attention paid to its representative strategies for the spaces between the two. Leila K. Norako describes the entire Eastern Mediterranean,

⁴⁷ Cooper, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Robinson, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁹ Publicover, p. 56.

usually referred to in these works as the 'Greekish Sea', as a liminal or transitional space that constituted 'a troubled and symbolic borderland' between Christian and Islamic worlds.⁵⁰

Chivalric romance, a genre particularly preoccupied with religious and ethnic binaries, often appears to struggle to accommodate the reality of places like Cyprus, a location almost defined by its complex hybridity and state of 'in-betweenness'. Cyprus is mentioned explicitly in only a handful of chivalric romances, and even those few allusions are, for the most part, fleeting rather than sustained.⁵¹ There was, however, one extremely well-known verse romance that engaged specifically with the island's crusader history. The fourteenth-century Middle English verse romance *Richard Coeur de Lion* is a lurid mix of fantasy and history, concerned largely with Richard's activities on the Third Crusade (1189-92). The poem survives in seven distinct manuscripts, dating from the 1330s to the late 1400s and in two print editions published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1509 and 1528. Katherine Terrell argues that the poem must have been 'very popular, as none of the manuscripts seem to have been a source for any of the others', suggesting that 'there must have been many copies in circulation'.⁵² De Worde's printing of it indicates it was still being read in the first half of the sixteenth century. The work's popularity and longevity may, in part, have perpetuated the idea of the English claim to the island and explained the willingness of western visitors to Cyprus to attribute any sign of destruction and damage to the English king.

Set within a much longer narrative – the entire work is around seven thousand lines long – over four hundred lines are dedicated to Richard's conquest of Cyprus, with the story loosely following medieval chronicles. Elements of Richard's fleet, sailing from Sicily to the Holy Land, are caught in a great storm and were so damaged that they 'were in poynt to synke a downe / As they came ayenst the lymosowne [Limassol]'.⁵³ Spotting the damaged ships the Cypriots,

⁵⁰ Leila K. Norako, *Sir Isumbras and the Fantasy of Crusade*, *The Chaucer Review*, 48.2 (2013), 166-89 (180) < muse.jhu.edu/article/522480 > [accessed 5 May 2019]. Harriet Hudson (ed), *Sir Isumbras in Four Middle English Romances*, (Western Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 7 - 44.

⁵¹ The early fifteenth-century English verse romance *Sir Degrevant*, for example, features an English character named 'Sir Sere of Cypris', but the connection is never explained.

⁵² Katherine H. Terrell (ed), 'Introduction' to *Richard Coeur de Lion* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2019) pp. 13-30 (p. 29). Terrell posits the existence of a lost Anglo-Norman original written not long after the events it described, citing several references to a French source, although these claims of an earlier version may simply be an attempt to confer authority and history on the English text.

⁵³ *Kynge Rycharde cuer du lyon* (London, 1509), sig. F2^v & sig. F3^r.

armed with axes and swords, '[g]rete slaughter of our Englysshe maked'.⁵⁴ Sixteen hundred English crusaders are murdered on the orders of the Cypriot emperor, and five hundred more imprisoned. The ships, which were carrying 'cofers many folde, / Full of sylver and of golde' and many other 'ryche thinges', are looted by the Cypriot authorities.⁵⁵ When the emperor rejects Richard's demands that he free the English prisoners and return what he has looted, the English king attacks the island. Facing defeat, the Cypriot emperor agrees to '[h]omage by yere I will him gyve and yelde / And all my londe of hym helde'.⁵⁶ However, treacherously, he soon reneges on his promise, at which point he is rejected by his own nobles, who then acknowledge Richard as 'theyr kynde lorde'.⁵⁷ The poem places particular emphasis on the moral legitimacy of Richard's conquest, reiterating that his sovereignty was recognised and even welcomed by the Cypriots. A Cypriot nobleman berates the emperor, telling him that he has committed a grave sin by attacking one who is 'crossed and a pylgrym'.⁵⁸ Somewhat surprisingly, after the poem's account of the wanton slaughter of tens of thousands of Cypriots, another describes the English king as the 'best under the sonne shyninge'.⁵⁹ After subduing Cyprus, Richard leaves the island under the control of the Earl of Leicester, who is appointed to 'kepe his realme to his honde'.⁶⁰ Tellingly, there is no explicit reference to Guy de Lusignan anywhere in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and no reference to the island's eventual sale to him.⁶¹

⁵⁴ *RCL*, sig. F3^r.

⁵⁵ *RCL*, sig. F3^r.

⁵⁶ *RCL*, sig. G3^v.

⁵⁷ *RCL*, sig. G5^r.

⁵⁸ *RCL*, sig. F4^r.

⁵⁹ *RCL*, sig. G5^v.

⁶⁰ *RCL*, sig. G6^r.

⁶¹ Although no reference is made to Guy de Lusignan as ruler of Cyprus, there is a description of 'the duke Myllon' who 'of surrey [Syria] londe [...] Was lorde'; this figure, who was 'Kynge bawdewyns sone', may have been loosely based on Guy (see *RCL*, sig. D2^v and sig. D3^r). In a text that borrows so heavily from the historical record and names accurately many of the Third Crusade's other key participants, this appears to be a deliberate act of erasure. Myllon is described as leaving the Holy Land after the disastrous Battle of Hattin in 1187 (where the historical Guy led the defeated crusader forces) and disappearing altogether. Guy de Lusignan was married to Sibylla, the sister of Baldwin IV of Jerusalem. There is a French counternarrative to *Richard Coeur de Lion* which instead writes Richard and the English out of Cypriot history. Jean d'Arras wrote the prose romance *Le Roman de Melusine; ou, L'histoire des Lusignan* in 1393 and a decade later a second French version emerged, written in octosyllabic rhyme but differing little in narrative content, attributed to an unknown poet 'Coudrette'. The tale describes how two Lusignan knights rescued Cyprus from Saracen invasion. One of the Lusignans married the King of Cyprus's daughter, establishing the dynasty that, at the time of the story's composition, still ruled Cyprus. An anonymous Middle English translation of the Coudrette version, titled *The Romans of Parthenay, or of Lusignan*, appeared in the late fifteenth century and a

What is of interest so far as this thesis is concerned, however, is not the work's (possible) role in the transmission of the belief in an English claim to the island; as noted previously, this idea does not figure in any of the plays under consideration here, although it may have contributed to more general English interest in Cyprus. While there is no evidence of any direct influence on any of the dramas discussed in the following chapters, the way in which Cyprus is represented by the poem highlights some of the complicated ways the island figured in the English imaginary – complexities that can sometimes be glimpsed, often only as palimpsests, at different moments in each of these plays. What is particularly interesting is the way in which *Richard Coeur de Lion* positions the island and its inhabitants within the east-west binary that structures many chivalric romances. Although grudgingly recognised as fellow Christians, Greeks (whether from Cyprus, or elsewhere in the Mediterranean) were often treated with disdain and even hostility by western writers. The Orthodox Greeks were, many commentators proclaimed, a degraded race, long fallen from the glories of their classical past. In his *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, Augustinian prior and crusader Richard de Templo's eyewitness account of Richard's activities on the Third Crusade, the author describes the Sicilian and Cypriot Greeks as a 'perfidious people' and a 'wicked and altogether degenerate generation', attributing their corruption to proximity to the Islamic world.⁶² The Greeks – whether from Sicily, Constantinople or Cyprus – had been 'polluted through interaction with the Muslims' and 'Greek and Saracen blood [had] been intermingled to damaging effect' in the Mediterranean world.⁶³ They had, Stefan Vander Elst suggests, 'fallen from their erstwhile greatness through cultural and physical contact with their Muslim neighbours'.⁶⁴ In fact, de Templo writes, the Greek ruler of Cyprus eventually deposed by Richard, was also contaminated in a more literal sense:

manuscript translation of d'Arras's prose romance was in available in England around 1500. Wynkyn de Worde published a print version around 1510, of which only fragments remain.

⁶² Helen J. Nicholson, *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), p. 57. De Templo accompanied Richard I on his campaigns in Cyprus and the Holy Land, writing his account at some point in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Katherine Terrell cites the *Itinerarium* as a possible source for *Richard Coeur de Lion*. See Katherine H. Terrell (ed), *Richard Coeur de Lion* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2019), p. 16.

⁶³ Stefan Vander Elst "'The holiness of that forsaken place": The Purpose of Sin in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*', *Studies in Philology* 116.2 (2019), 195-208 (199) <

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2217856091?accountid=9730> > [accessed 21 August 2019]

⁶⁴ Vander Elst, p. 200.

This man was named Cursac [Isaac Ducas Comnenus], and was the most wicked of all bad men. ... He was said to be friendly with Saladin, and that they had drunk each others' blood as a sign and witness that they were allies, as if by the external mingling of their blood they really became related by blood. Later on there were clear indications that they in fact had done this.⁶⁵

The Cypriots, de Templo seems to be suggesting, were not really fellow Christians, but another variety of eastern other.

Chivalric romance often emphasised the strangeness and 'otherness' of people and cultures encountered on Christendom's borders. Publicover notes that throughout the medieval period the east in particular 'was generally regarded as a site of marvels and monstrosity and (at least until the fourteenth century) a site whose strangeness developed along a sliding scale the further east one travelled'.⁶⁶ This idea originated in the Ancient Greek belief – adopted and amplified, via the Romans, by medieval writers – in a world of increasing strangeness and monstrosity the further one journeyed from the homeland. Mandeville's *Book of Marvels and Travels* is not chivalric romance but it shares with the genre this model of increasing geographical strangeness. The Mandeville author describes an island he calls 'Lango' (modern Cos) where a woman transformed by the goddess Diana into a dragon, waited for a knight to come who was brave enough to approach her and 'kiss her on the mouth', after which she would be turned back into human form.⁶⁷ A 'hardy and valiant' knight from Rhodes approached her, but on seeing how 'hideous' she was, he attempted to flee and the enraged (perhaps understandably, in the circumstances) dragon threw him 'into the sea'.⁶⁸ Although one must voyage a long way east to see the *truly* marvellous such as the cynocephali and sciapods that feature later in the book, Mandeville's account suggests strange and alien people might well be encountered on islands that straddled the boundary between western Christendom and the Islamic east.

⁶⁵ Qtd in Nicholson, p. 179. Edbury (p. 8) comments that several medieval chroniclers allege that the historical Cypriot emperor, Isaac Komnenos, motivated by hatred of Latin Christians, was in alliance with Saladin, although there is, he notes, no evidence to support this claim.

⁶⁶ Publicover, p. 54.

⁶⁷ Mandeville, p. 15.

⁶⁸ Mandeville, p. 15.

This process of geographic ‘othering’ is most explicit, however, in chivalric romance’s treatment of its Muslim protagonists. Referring to a description of the Saracens (a somewhat derogatory term in itself) as ‘hethene houndes’ in the fourteenth-century English verse romance *Sir Isumbras*, Publicover writes that ‘[w]hile there is no suggestion that Isumbras’s antagonists are actually dog-headed, this appellation nonetheless constitutes an ethnographic stranging’.⁶⁹ It appears to have been a popular insult: Richard’s Islamic foes are often described as ‘heathen hounds’ in *Richard Coeur de Lion*.⁷⁰ Othello’s moment of agonised self-identification with ‘the circumcised dog’ (5.2.359) of Aleppo in *Othello*’s closing scene perhaps also recalls the phrase.⁷¹ The Eastern Mediterranean’s Greek populations were sometimes subjected to a similar ‘othering’. De Templo describes the Cypriots as ‘a wicked bunch, commonly known as Griffons’ and the descriptor was also used in *Richard Coeur de Lion*.⁷² The term, according to Terrell, is ‘based on the gryphon, or griffin, a mythical beast with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion’, a mythological creature particularly noted for its greed and rapacity.⁷³ The descriptions of Cypriots looting the wrecked ships in *Richard Coeur de Lion* after slaughtering or imprisoning survivors may be a nod in this direction.⁷⁴ To paraphrase Publicover, although there is no suggestion that the Cypriots are actual griffons, this representation nonetheless constitutes an ethnographic stranging, rhetorically comparable with *Isumbras*’s ‘hethene hounds’.

Greek Cypriots, *Richard Coeur de Lion* suggests, were treacherous, vicious and acquisitive, and while they are not subject to *quite* the same level of extreme violence as the Saracens (notoriously, Richard even cannibalises several Saracen prisoners at one point), the work nevertheless presents them as another variety of eastern ‘other’, rather than fellow Christians. The poem even calls attention to its rhetorical alignment of Cypriots with Saracens, when the narrator describes how, before he left England, Richard had an axe made

To breke therwith y^e sarasyns bones
The heed was wrought ryght wele

⁶⁹ Publicover, p. 57.

⁷⁰ See Terrell, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, l. 5232, l. 6840, l. 7028, for example.

⁷¹ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E.A.J Honigmann (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

⁷² Nicholson, p. 155.

⁷³ Terrell, l. 1669n

⁷⁴ *RCL*, sig. F4^r.

Therin was twenty pounde of stele
And whan he came in to Cyprys londe
The axe toke in his honde
All that he hytte he all to frapped
The gryffons away faste rapped
Nevertheles many one he claved.⁷⁵

While other texts did not quite advocate these levels of religiously-motivated violence, other writers nevertheless viewed the island's Greek inhabitants with disquiet. Traces of these attitudes are perhaps detectable in Felix Faber's plea (in an account written in the late fifteenth century) for Roman Catholic bishops 'of ripe age and strong character' to be sent to Cyprus to encourage its 'Greeks, Armenians, and other Eastern heretics and schismatics to love the Roman Church' and 'provoke the Saracens and Turks to admire their striking virtues'.⁷⁶ Cyprus, he observes, 'is encompassed on all sides by these *monstrous* races'.⁷⁷

Although no other work goes to quite such lengths to denigrate them, *Richard Coeur de Lion* is not the only romance in which Cyprus and its inhabitants are more closely aligned with the Islamic east than the Christian west. The *Morte Arthur* verse romances – sources for Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (c. 1470) – also feature references to Cyprus in ways that appear to locate the island both geographically and culturally outside Christendom's borders, even though the island had at this stage been under Lusignan control for several centuries. When Arthur goes to war against the Emperor of Rome, the Roman leader summons support from across Europe and the Near East. One of his vassals is 'the King of Cyprus' (l. 595), who waits 'on the [Greekes] Se' to join forces with 'the Sowdan' (l. 595) of Syria, before sailing towards Rome.⁷⁸ The Syrians and Cypriots are joined by 'all the reales [royals] of Rhodes' (l. 596). Later in the work, one of Arthur's knights, Sir Florent, challenges and slays one 'Sir Feraunt', an enemy knight who has been 'fostered in Famacoste' (l. 2761) and whose father was the 'fend [fiend]' (l. 2761). These allusions are fleeting, and Cyprus is only one of many

⁷⁵ RCL, sig. G1^v.

⁷⁶ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 46.

⁷⁷ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 46. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁸ *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthure and the Alliterative Morte Arthur*, Larry Benson and Edward E. Foster (eds), (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute publications, 1994) <

<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/benson-and-foster-king-arthurs-death-alliterative-morte-arthur-part-i>
> [accessed 11 April 2020]

locations mentioned in association with the storyline. Nevertheless, its alignment of Cyprus and Rhodes with the Sultan of Syria, ranged *against* Arthur, the embodiment of Christian virtue, is suggestive of deep English ambivalence about the Eastern Mediterranean and its proximity to the Islamic world.

Not all romances were quite so hostile to the Greeks, although Mediterranean liminality remained a source of unease. A moment in the popular fourteenth-century Middle English verse romance *Octavian* exemplifies the region's ambiguous position in the imaginary geography of chivalric romance. After she has been calumniated and rejected by her husband, the wife of the Emperor of Rome seeks sanctuary in the Holy Land, travelling over 'the Grekkes se' (l. 407) on a ship with 'pylgremes for to fare' (ll. 413-4).⁷⁹ A number of fantastical elements notwithstanding, the tale is aware of the realities of Eastern Mediterranean pilgrimage, recounting how the empress's ship

come sayland by an ile syde,
The mayster badd that thay sold byde
"For fresche water have we none" [.] (ll. 424-6)

Neither Cyprus nor any other Eastern Mediterranean island is mentioned by name in *Octavian*, but the lines nevertheless indicate some knowledge of the logistics and geography of Mediterranean travel; chivalric romance frequently combines the real with the imaginary and the symbolic in this way. However, rather than the bustling Eastern Mediterranean ports described by Mandeville, the Guildford author and others, this island is little more than a rocky outcrop somewhere between Christian Europe and the Holy Land. In another verse romance, the fourteenth-century *Sir Eglamour of Artois*, the eponymous Eglamour's lover (Cristabelle) is cast away by her father on 'the Grekus see' (l. 894) with her infant son.⁸⁰ Before eventually coming ashore in Egypt (l. 867), Christabelle's boat lands on 'a roche' (l. 809). She hopes to find help there, but the island is inhabited only by 'see fowles that wylde were' (l. 815).

⁷⁹ Harriet Hudson (ed), *Octavian* in *Four Middle English Romances* (Western Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 45 – 96.

⁸⁰ Harriet Hudson (ed), *Sir Eglamour of Artois* in *Four Middle English Romances* (Western Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 97 – 144.

Intriguingly, the Mediterranean islands in both *Octavian* and *Sir Eglamour* are occupied by mythological creatures that resonate with representations of some of the region's human inhabitants. The empress in *Octavian* is reunited with her lost son after a 'gryffone' (*Octavian*, l. 353) transports him to the Eastern Mediterranean island to which her pilgrim ship sailed. In a similar vein, Cristabelle's child is snatched by a 'grype' (*Sir Eglamour*, l. 816) and taken from that tale's uninhabited Mediterranean island to 'the lond of Israell' (l. 823), where he is raised by the (apparently Christian) king of Israel. Hostile griffons – whether human or mythological – appear to be an occupational hazard in the chivalric Eastern Mediterranean. The mythological griffons' reputation for savagery and greed – their tendency to snatch unguarded human infants perhaps another aspect of this – seems to have merged with western antipathy towards the Mediterranean Greeks in ways that brought the mythological creature into geographical alignment with them.

Chivalric romance struggled to accommodate the religious and ethnic complexity of the Eastern Mediterranean. While none of the four Cyprus dramas discussed in subsequent chapters feature anything so far-fetched as a griffon or, indeed, any other mythological creature, each of them (to some degree) seems acutely aware of the island's liminality and its proximity to the Islamic east in ways that echo, albeit in attenuated form, the chivalric perspective. Even *The Lover's Melancholy*, ostensibly set in an unspecified time in classical antiquity, alludes at one point to an anachronistic threat from Syria. Significantly, none of them acknowledge the island's ethnographic complexities. Only *Othello*'s brief allusion to the 'noble swelling spirits' (2.3.52) of Cyprus seems to recognise (and only then in the vaguest terms) the difference between Cypriots and Venetians. Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske* – the most consciously chivalric of the four dramas – effaces the island's Greek population altogether, presenting the Siege of Famagusta in wholly binary terms.

Hellenistic Romance and Cyprus

There was an alternative romance tradition, which I am calling 'Hellenistic' (I will discuss my use of this term in the following paragraph), in which places like Cyprus existed at the centre of a rich Mediterranean culture of collaboration and productive cooperation. Whereas English

chivalric romance was a vernacular literature, its preoccupations (even when featuring locations far beyond England's shores) often rooted in local concerns, these tales generally appear to have originated in the Mediterranean world they represented. Many were introduced into English culture only in the second half of the sixteenth century, translated from Italian *novelle*; consequently, by the time these texts were available to English readers, the societies that had inspired them had often evolved or even vanished.⁸¹ The publication of these stories in English ensured that ideas about Cyprus's role as a gateway between east and west continued to circulate long after it ceased to be accurate in any meaningful sense. Publicover describes the Mediterranean in these stories as 'a site of productive interaction between overlapping cultures', in which differences between people and cultures were acknowledged but their importance minimised.⁸² Protagonists in these stories forged affective bonds across religious and ethnic divides. Christians and Muslims might be allies, trading partners, friends and even lovers. This sort of non-chivalric Mediterranean romance is marked by its interest in love, travel and adventure and the absence or near-absence of religious or ethnic struggle. This does not mean that these stories are without violence or villainy, but conflict is rarely triggered by confessional differences; neither Muslims nor non-Latin Christians are dehumanised the way they are by chivalric romance. In contrast with the explicit 'othering' strategies described above, this form of romance works to negate or minimise differences between peoples and cultures. Its protagonists are often resourceful and generous, rather than brave or martial, and are as likely to be merchants as nobles. Shipwrecks and pirates are common plot devices, mythological beasts less so.

Publicover describes this sort of romance as 'Hellenistic', arguing that its representation of a Mediterranean world in which linguistic and confessional differences are minimised recalls the Hellenistic culture of the Eastern Mediterranean in late antiquity.⁸³ He cites the anonymous *Apollonius of Tyre*, probably best remembered now as a source for Shakespeare's *Pericles* (1608), as the narrative that links the original Hellenistic romances with these later

⁸¹ While not all translated Italian *novelle* were 'Hellenistic', many of the 'Hellenistic' romances in circulation in late sixteenth century England were translated from earlier Italian *novelle* and published either as individual texts in collections like Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*.

⁸² Publicover, p. 12.

⁸³ See Publicover, pp. 45-53 for a fuller explanation of his use of the term.

medieval versions. The original *Apollonius* was probably written in Greek in the late third century CE, but the earliest surviving variant is an abbreviated Latin version, written in the late fifth or early sixth century. Whereas other original Hellenistic romances were lost to European literature until the Renaissance, surviving only in the Byzantine world, *Apollonius* was, according to Elizabeth Archibald, 'read and referred to throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance'.⁸⁴ Versions of it 'exist in almost every European language', she continues, although often 'much altered from the Latin original'.⁸⁵ Significantly, the locations that *Apollonius* visits are all real, known places. Archibald points out that 'there are no fantastic episodes or travels beyond the known world' in the tale.⁸⁶ This is typical of Hellenistic romance. There is a sense of a shared culture linking each of the locations the story visits. As Publicover observes, *Apollonius*'s coastal locations are 'remarkable for their similarity'.⁸⁷ Protagonists have no difficulty in adapting to the communities in which they find themselves. The original *Apollonius of Tyre* was written at a time when the places mentioned were connected through trade and culture, with Koine Greek providing a *lingua franca* for peoples across the region. The seventh- and eighth-century Islamic conquests of North Africa and the Levant created a more marked religious and linguistic divide between the communities living in and around the Eastern Mediterranean but, Publicover argues, 'Hellenistic romance's literary geography – its way of thinking about the Mediterranean – continued to inform writing of this later period'.⁸⁸

'Hellenistic' sensibilities (for want of a better term) are on display in a range of texts, even those that appear initially to endorse the ethnic and religious binaries that structure much chivalric romance. Discussing the fourteenth-century verse romance *Floris and Blancheflour* (an English version of the twelfth-century Old French *Floire et Blancheflor*), Publicover observes that, the tale's religious polarities notwithstanding, 'there is very little sense that the Muslim and Christian characters are fundamentally different from one another'.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Archibald, 'Ancient Romance' in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), pp. 10-25 (p. 23).

⁸⁵ Archibald, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Archibald, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Publicover, p. 45.

⁸⁸ Publicover, p. 45.

⁸⁹ Publicover, p. 49.

Although not all of the work's individual tales are strictly speaking 'Hellenistic' (in that they do not feature the wider Mediterranean world), one of the most sustained representations of a 'Hellenistic' Mediterranean is to be found in *The Decameron*. David Wallace observes what he calls a 'remarkable imaginative openness to the greater Mediterranean (Greek and Arab) world' in the work, which he attributes to Boccaccio's adolescence spent among the Florentine merchant community in Naples, a location deeply enmeshed in Mediterranean trade and politics.⁹⁰ Sharon Kinoshita and Jason Jacobs argue that while critics 'tend to minimize Boccaccio's engagement with [the] larger Mediterranean world', characterising his work as largely preoccupied with the politics and culture of fourteenth-century Tuscany and Florence, the wider Mediterranean world is an important presence in a significant number of the tales.⁹¹

Cyprus and Cypriots feature in a number of *The Decameron's* Mediterranean tales. One concerns a Gascon lady who upbraids the King of Cyprus for his lack of authority after she has been raped on the island as she returns from a pilgrimage.⁹² Another tells of a merchant from Amalfi who, having failed to sell his merchandise at a suitable profit, loses his fortune on Cyprus and turns to piracy in the seas around the island to recoup his losses, before eventually returning home in triumph.⁹³ A third, which appears to be set in the Hellenistic era of late Antiquity, features the unpromising son of a Cypriot nobleman who is inspired by love to swash-buckle his way around the Eastern Mediterranean, before carrying off and marrying the woman of his dreams; this story was eventually translated into English and published, shorn of *The Decameron's* narrative framework, as *A pleasant and delightfull history of Galesus Cymon and Iphigenia* (1565).⁹⁴ However, none of these tales reveal anything particularly interesting about the island itself and any of them could be relocated to an alternative set of Mediterranean coordinates without any significant alteration in meaning –

⁹⁰ David Wallace, *Boccaccio: Decameron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 7.

⁹¹ Sharon Kinoshita and Jason Jacobs, 'Ports of Call: Boccaccio's Alatiel in the Medieval Mediterranean', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37.1 (2007), 163-95 (166) < <https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-2006-014> > [accessed 21 Dec 2020]

⁹² Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by Guido Waldman, ed. by Jonathan Usher, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 57-8.

⁹³ *Decameron*, p. 83-6.

⁹⁴ *Decameron*, p. 318-28. The action moves from Cyprus, to Rhodes and on to Crete, before the happy couple return to Cyprus to live happily ever after. One Greek island seems very much like another in the story.

although this is in itself perhaps evidence of a pan-Mediterranean ‘Hellenistic’ perspective shaping these narratives. When thinking about the way Cyprus signifies within these works – and the plays discussed in subsequent chapters – we should not forget that as well as possessing its own unique characteristics, the island was also the Mediterranean location *par excellence* and sometimes stands in, metonymically, for the region as a whole.

There are, however, two stories in *The Decameron* in which Cyprus signifies in a more specific and focused fashion. The tale of Alatiel, told by Pamphilo on the second day, relates the bawdy adventures of the irresistibly beautiful daughter of the Sultan of Babylon. As she sails west along the Mediterranean on her way to be married to ‘the King of Africa’, Alatiel’s ship is ship-wrecked on the island of Majorca, where she is taken in by a local nobleman. The language barrier means that she is unable to explain who she is to her rescuers and arrange her passage home. She and the nobleman eventually become lovers. Over the following four years, she is seduced or kidnapped by one man after another, with her lovers often murdering their predecessor to gain possession of her. Throughout her adventures, Alatiel’s plight is compounded by her inability to communicate with any of the people she encounters. Her luck only changes when she falls in with Antioco, the elderly retainer of a Turkish lover, who speaks her language – presumably Arabic. We learn little about Antioco, but his name suggests he is Greek (in other medieval Italian texts, the Greek name Antiochus is usually Italianised as Antioco). When the Turkish lover is killed in battle by the King of Cappadocia, the pair flee to Rhodes, where they (predictably) become lovers. However, Antioco is an elderly man, and as he is dying he entrusts her to his friend, an unnamed Cypriot merchant, apparently another Arabic speaker. Forced to share a bunk while sailing from Rhodes to Cyprus after Antioco’s death, the pair inevitably become lovers. After living for several months in Paphos with her Cypriot lover, Alatiel spots a face she recognises – Antigono (Italianised ‘Antigonos’), a Famagustan gentleman whom she recalls had once ‘held a position of no mean authority’ at her father’s court in Alexandria – and wonders if he might help her to finally return home.⁹⁵ She manages to attract his attention and recounts her adventures to him. After listening sympathetically to her story, the resourceful Antigono swiftly constructs a cover story for Alatiel to explain her prolonged absence, before taking her to the court of the King of Cyprus.

⁹⁵ *Decameron*, p. 127.

Under Antigono's guidance, Alatiel relates how, following the initial shipwreck, she was forced to shelter incognito in a French convent, telling the nuns that she was the daughter of a Cypriot nobleman shipwrecked on her way to be married to a Cretan man, until she could arrange a safe passage to Cyprus, in the hope of finding her way home. The King of Cyprus is delighted to be granted an opportunity to foster good relations with her father, the Sultan of Babylon, by helping Alatiel to return home. The sultan rewards Antigono generously for his role in restoring his daughter to him and Alatiel marries the King of Africa, with no suspicion, thanks to Antigono's ingenious cover story, that she is no longer a virgin.

Cyprus figures in several interesting ways in the tale of Alatiel. Firstly, the pivotal role played by Cypriot merchants in restoring the Egyptian princess to her father recalls both the island's mercantile history and the way in which its merchants were able to operate across geographic, cultural and confessional borders. Secondly, the fact that Alatiel claimed to have successfully passed herself off as a Cypriot noblewoman draws attention to the island's multicultural identity; this is something that seems to have interested Boccaccio – he uses a similar device in a second tale, discussed below. It was a place where peoples from across the Mediterranean world could meet and find each other mutually comprehensible. Describing what she calls Cypriot 'indeterminacy', Kinoshita observes that with its

Francophone kings, majoritarian Greek-speaking population, Italian merchant colonies, and Arabic-speaking Levantine Christian communities (not to mention visiting Provençal and Catalan merchants), Lusignan Cyprus was a multilingual, multiethnic, multiconfessional place.⁹⁶

An Egyptian princess might indeed plausibly claim to have passed herself off as the daughter of 'one of Cyprus's leading citizens' when the island was home to such a diverse range of peoples.⁹⁷ Finally, Cyprus's almost overdetermined role – the fact that not one, but two Cypriot merchants (one from Paphos, the other Famagusta), as well as the King of Cyprus are involved in facilitating Alatiel's return to the Islamic world – highlights the island's role as a symbolic gateway between the Islamic east and Christian west.

⁹⁶ Kinoshita, p. 50.

⁹⁷ *Decameron*, p. 130.

Cypriot indeterminacy features again in the tale of Torello and Saladin, told on the tenth day of *The Decameron*. The story relates how the Saracen emperor Saladin and a small group of retainers travel incognito through Christian lands to gather intelligence about a planned crusade. In the course of their travels, the party encounters Torello, a wealthy but non-noble gentleman from Pavia, who offers them generous hospitality. When asked where they are from, Saladin replies that the party were 'Cypriot merchants', who 'have come from Cyprus and our business takes us to Paris'.⁹⁸ Given the island's ethnic, cultural and religious diversity (not to mention its proximity to the Islamic Levant), Saladin's choice of disguise is entirely plausible.⁹⁹ As Kinoshita notes, '[t]he ploy itself is unremarkable: in medieval literature, "merchant" was a favorite disguise for noblemen wishing to travel incognito'.¹⁰⁰ Floris in *Floris and Blancheflour*, for example, disguises himself as a merchant when he goes in search of Blancheflour, who has been sold to an Islamic sultan, and Apollonius of Tyre spends many years disguised as a wandering merchant. In Boccaccio's tale, Torello seems instinctively to recognise that 'these were splendid men, and there was much more to them than he had first thought'.¹⁰¹ While he is unconvinced that they are merchants, saying 'you'll never persuade me that you are merchants', Torello never questions the Cypriot element of their disguise. Later, he joins the crusade and is captured by the Saracens, who employ him as Saladin's falconer. He is eventually spotted by his erstwhile guest, who reveals himself to have been the Cypriot merchant. Saladin rewards Torello lavishly, returning him to Pavia just in time to prevent his wife's remarriage. Although 'the crusades provide the pretext and are indispensable to the story's structure and development', Kinoshita observes, 'any history of military and political conflict between Christians and Muslims is displaced in favor of the heartfelt affection linking the northern Italian knight and the sultan of Babylon'.¹⁰² While none of the tale's action actually takes place on Cyprus, the island figures not only as a highly symbolic conduit between east and west, but also, perhaps, the geographic realisation of 'a

⁹⁸ *Decameron*, p. 654, p. 657.

⁹⁹ The tale does not specify the route Saladin takes to Pavia from the Islamic Levant, but it is certainly possible to imagine that he followed the pilgrim route described in the first part of this chapter, travelling from the Holy Land to Cyprus and then to Venice and on to Pavia and beyond.

¹⁰⁰ Kinoshita, p. 40.

¹⁰¹ *Decameron*, p. 654.

¹⁰² Kinoshita, p. 45.

common [Mediterranean] culture, centred around the values of courtesy, generosity, and hospitality'.¹⁰³

By the time the tale was published in English, though, the island's position was far more precarious than it had been when Boccaccio wrote his heart-warming tale of Mediterranean cross-confessional hospitality and respect. The 'Tale of M. Thorello and Saladine' was published in English in 1567, in William Painter's *Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure*, in which it was prefaced by a discussion of the obligations of hospitality, even to one's enemies. By the mid-sixteenth century, Cyprus was no longer a wealthy and influential kingdom at the nexus of important east-west trade routes, but a threatened Venetian outpost, and another Islamic sultan – the Ottoman Selim II – looked towards Cyprus as a potential target. Although the prefatory material to the tale does not *quite* suggest that Torello would have done better to murder Saladin, it does allude to a parallel case in which a Roman offered hospitality to Hannibal, noting that 'had he not more regarded the office of hospitalitie, than the safetie of his countrey, might full well by that murder, haue defended the same from the destruction, wherunto afterwards it fell'.¹⁰⁴ These misgivings notwithstanding, aspects of the Cyprus of Hellenistic romance – the multicultural gateway between east and west – are perhaps visible in both *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello*.

Cyprus and Classical Mythology

As the sixteenth century progressed, a further set of literary resonances were added to the visions of Cyprus described in popular romance. The translation of classical – primarily Latin – texts into English led to an increasing awareness of the island's mythological resonances. Most notably, the island was associated with Venus, the classical goddess of love and

¹⁰³ Kinoshita, p. 46, p. 43. This zone of mutual intelligibility is not merely a literary construct, Kinoshita argues, but a reflection of a real-world Mediterranean culture in which objects, ideas and practices flowed between the various cultures that met in the region.

¹⁰⁴ *The second tome of the palace of pleasure conteyning store of goodly histories, tragicall matters, and other morall argument, very requisite for delighe and profit. chosen and selected out of diuers good and commendable authors: By william painter, clerke of the ordinance and armarie. anno. 1567* (London, 1567), sig. KK1^r.

desire.¹⁰⁵ According to many classical myths, Venus was born from seafoam in the seas around Cyprus, with the goddess stepping ashore at Paphos, which subsequently became a centre for her worship. Classical historian Bettany Hughes describes Venus as ‘the female inhabiting spirit of the place’.¹⁰⁶ In fact, one of the goddess’s Greek names was ‘Kypris’.¹⁰⁷ Venus and Cyprus became almost synonymous in Renaissance love poetry. In Thomas Lodge’s epyllion *Scylla’s Metamorphosis* (1587), the goddess is addressed as the ‘Paphian Queene of Love’ (81.1) and ‘Lady of Cyprus’ (81.3).¹⁰⁸ In Edmund Spenser’s *Epithalamion* (1595), Venus is named ‘the Cyprian queene’ (l. 103).¹⁰⁹ Cyprus was increasingly designated by English poets as ‘Venus’ ile’ (l. 2).¹¹⁰

Figures and events of classical mythology were a relatively recent addition to the complex mix of tropes and motifs associated with the island in English popular culture. Few accounts of the island left by medieval pilgrims from across Europe referred to its connection with Venus; the handful that did talk about the goddess were written by priests or other pilgrims who had been educated in Latin, and thus had access to classical literature. Ludolf von Suchen, the German priest who visited Cyprus in the mid-fourteenth century, and referred to previously, wrote that ‘[n]ear Paphus once stood the castle of Venus, where they were wont to adore an idol of Venus’, but he was among the minority of medieval pilgrims aware of Venus’s connection with the island.¹¹¹ John Locke, the English merchant and pilgrim who visited the island in 1553, makes no reference to her. Although the literature of classical antiquity had never quite disappeared from English culture, the work of recovery and translation that was

¹⁰⁵ I will refer to the goddess and other classical deities by their Roman names throughout this thesis as this was how they were generally known in early modern England.

¹⁰⁶ Bettany Hughes, *Venus and Aphrodite: History of a Goddess* (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 2019), p. 43

¹⁰⁷ A.C. Cassio translates the name as simply ‘the one from Cyprus’. See A.C. Cassio, ‘Kypris, Kythereia and the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*’ in *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*, ed. by Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos and Christos C. Tsagalis (Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 413-26 (p. 418).

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Lodge, *Scylla’s Metamorphosis, interlaced with the unfortunate love of Glaucus* in *Sixteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Gordon Braden (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), pp. 408-429.

¹⁰⁹ Edmund Spenser, ‘Epithalamion’ in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume B*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt et al (London: W.W. Norton, 2012), pp. 990-9.

¹¹⁰ John Harington, ‘Of Cyprus’ in *Englands Parnassus: or the choyssest flowers of our moderne poets, with their poetickall comparisons Descriptions of bewties, personages, castles, pallaces, mountaines, groves, seas, springs, rivers, &c. Whereunto are annexed other various discourses, both pleasaunt and profitable*, ed. by Robert Allot, (London, 1600), sig. AA1^r.

¹¹¹ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 18.

first undertaken in the fourteenth century in Italy, only began in earnest in England in the second half of the sixteenth century. Stuart Gillespie observes that that ‘from the beginning of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, to 1600 [...] speaking quantitatively, classical translation moved fastest in Italy and France, with German, Spanish and English following some distance behind’.¹¹² Eventually, however, vernacular versions of the classical texts central to humanist culture and learning eventually became available, and the association between Venus and Cyprus became a commonplace in the English imaginary.

Arthur Golding’s 1567 translation of the Roman poet Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was particularly influential in establishing the link between Cyprus and the goddess in English popular culture.¹¹³ Golding not only translated the *Metamorphoses* but also anglicised the classical world in which it was set, making Ovid’s tales of transformation accessible to an English readership largely unfamiliar with the conventions of classical literature and culture; Madeleine Forey describes his translation as ‘robust and homely’ but ‘not without comic vitality’.¹¹⁴ It was enormously popular and was reprinted in 1575, 1584, 1587, 1593, 1603 and 1612. By the late 1580s, the titular Arden in the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (printed 1592) was able to exclaim to his wife ‘[s]weet love, thou know’st that we two, Ovid-like / Have often chid the morning when it ‘gan to peep’ (1. 60-1) and expect to be understood.¹¹⁵

Golding’s *Metamorphoses* relates several myths associated with Venus, many of which were also centred on Cyprus. The island is repeatedly described as belonging to her, and she refers to it as ‘my pleasant ground’ (Book X, l. 302).¹¹⁶ The work describes how, although married to the blacksmith god, Vulcan, she is caught in an adulterous liaison with Mars, the god of war, an incident – I will argue in Chapter 4 – that silently structures some of *Othello*’s emotional

¹¹² Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 6.

¹¹³ The first full English translation was made by printer William Caxton, who translated the work in 1480, but his version remained in manuscript only. There is no evidence that Golding was aware of Caxton’s version. Golding’s translation of the first four books was published in 1565, with the complete translation appearing two years later. OK, thanks for

¹¹⁴ Madeleine Forey, ‘Introduction’ in *Metamorphoses*, trans by Arthur Golding, (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), pp. xi-xxvi (p. xxiv).

¹¹⁵ *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham in A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, ed. by Martin Wiggins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-68.

¹¹⁶ All references from are from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding, ed. by Madeleine Forey (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).

energies. In an incident which inspired multiple poetic and artistic representations (as discussed further in Chapter 4), Book IV explains how ‘Venus with the warlike Mars advoutery [adultery] did commit’ (l. 208). They were spotted by Phoebus (another name for Apollo) and he informed her husband, Vulcan. Enraged, Vulcan ‘forged a net of wire so fine and slight / That neither knot nor noose herein apparent was to sight’ (ll. 213-4) and used it to snare the lovers and ‘snarl them both together fast in midst of all their play’ (l. 222). Having captured the adulterous pair *in flagrante*, Vulcan summoned the other gods to shame the pair. However, the scheme to humiliate them backfired as ‘a certain god’ (l. 225) – he is not named – ‘did wish that he himself were also shamèd in that sort’ (l. 226), if it meant he could enjoy Venus’s favours, and the rest of the assembled gods laughed. Vulcan turned himself into something of a laughing stock.

Venus in the *Metamorphoses* is, as this incident indicates, a transgressive and promiscuous figure. In his preface, Golding is censorious, describing the goddess as ‘dallying wantonly with every lusty mate’; she symbolised, he announces, all ‘such as of the flesh to filthy lust are bent’.¹¹⁷ Cyprus’s association with her led many early modern writers to link the island and its inhabitants with promiscuity and prostitution. The Italian geographer Lilio wrote in 1551 that ‘[t]he women [of the island] are very lustful’ and that Cypriot girls,

before they marry, are wont to lend themselves to the unholy pleasures of foreigners who touch there in ships, so our ancestors were not without reason saying that the island was sacred to Venus.¹¹⁸

A late sixteenth-century English writer noted that

[t]he inuention of the art of whooring, is attributed vnto Venus, who therefore was reckoned in the number of the Goddesses, and called the Goddesse of loue. For she being vnchast, and occupied in al excesse of carnal pleasures, taught the women of Cyprus, to please men with their bodie for monie.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Golding, p. 24, p. 25.

¹¹⁸ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 67.

¹¹⁹ Edward Worsop, *A Discoverie of Sundrie Errours and Faults Daily Committed by Lande-Meaters, Ignorant of Arithmetike and Geometrie* ... (London, 1582), sig. F1^r.

Similar sentiments were also expressed in more literary texts. John Harington's poem 'Of Cyprus', published in 1600, describes the island as a place devoted to sensual pleasure. Venus's isle was a place where the 'people [were] lustfull, (for dame *Venus* meete) / From tender yeeres to doating age' (ll. 5-6) and 'wanton damsels walked in each street, / Inviting men to pleasure and repast' (ll. 7-8). The association may have originated in an incident related in the *Metamorphoses*. According to Ovid, the Propoetides (the daughters of Propoetus, from the Cypriot city Amathus) declared that 'Dame Venus was no goddess' (Book X, l. 256). The goddess 'being wroth thereat' (l. 256) compelled them 'everych one' (l. 257) into prostitution and to 'make their bodies common' (l. 257). As punishment for denying Venus's authority, the Propoetides are condemned to repeatedly perform the act of love, but never to feel the emotion. Losing any sense of shame, they are turned first metaphorically, and then physically, to stone (l. 259).

Not every account of the goddess refers to her promiscuity, or links her to prostitution. Many works alluded to her relationship with Mars but suppressed its adulterous aspects. For some writers, the relationship represented the triumph of love over war, and Vulcan was conveniently forgotten. In this context, Venus is presented as a bringer of peace and an agent of cosmic harmony and fertility, under whose benign influence all nature is renewed. This aspect of her identity – sometimes referred to as 'Venus Genetrix' – is articulated most fully in 'Address to Venus' in the first century BCE Roman poet Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* ('On the Nature of Things'). The work – which sets out to explain Epicurean philosophy to Lucretius's Roman readers – opens with an address to the goddess as both the mother of Rome as well as a more general mother of all nature. In the poem, Lucretius proclaims that 'nothing new can spring / Without [her] warmth' (ll. 29-30) and she alone, by subduing Mars, can 'quiet to the weary World restore' (l. 58).¹²⁰ Vincenzo Cartari's *The fountaine of ancient fiction* (translated into English 1599) ascribes to the goddess 'that secret & hidden vertue by which all creatures whatsoever are drawne with association, effectuating thereby the art of

¹²⁰ Qtd from Dryden's translation of Lucretius. See *Lucretius his six books of epicurean philosophy and manilius his five books containing a system of the ancient astronomy and astrology together with the philosophy of the stoicks / both translated into english verse with notes by mr. tho. creech; to which is added the several parts of lucretius, english'd by mr. dryden* [Five books of M. Manilius.], (London, 1700), sig. B1^r- B2^r.

generation'.¹²¹ The most extended treatment of the theme in English literature is found in Book Three of *The Faerie Queene*, where the goddess resides in the 'Gardin of Adonis'.¹²² Venus's garden is a place of lush fecundity and 'all plentie', where 'each paramour his leman knowes' and life is continually renewed.¹²³ Although explicit references to Venus are curiously limited in both plays, I will argue in subsequent chapters that both *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy* show signs of responding to this facet of the goddess's identity.

While the association of Cyprus with Venus was a relatively late addition to the mix of tropes and motifs associated with the island, it was nevertheless influential. Three out of the four dramas analysed in this thesis invoke the connection, albeit with varying degrees of engagement. Only Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske* makes no reference to it whatsoever.

Cyprus in English Literature at the End of the Sixteenth-Century

By the second half of the sixteenth-century, Cyprus occupied a richly complicated place in the English imaginary, signifying radically differently at different times and in different texts and contexts. Perceptions of the island might be shaped by changes in literary culture – the English reading more Roman poetry or translated Italian romance – as it can by historical events. It is clear that many – although by no means all – of its significations had their origins in the island's medieval history, but were recalled primarily through its representation in popular romance. In some works, the island figured as a threatened Christian outpost, perilously close to the Islamic east. In others, it was at the heart of a cosmopolitan Mediterranean world, in which trade and shared cultural values overcame confessional differences. Sometimes the island's inhabitants were indistinguishable from other European Christians, at others they numbered among the non-Christian others pressing threateningly on Europe's borders. It was a space that, depending on a text's generic preoccupations, might be associated with lovers,

¹²¹ Vincenzo Cartari, *The fountaine of ancient fiction wherein is liuely depicted the images and statues of the gods of the ancients, with their proper and perticular expositions. done out of italian into english, by richard linche gent* (London, 1599), sig. CC2^v.

¹²² Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche Jr (London: Penguin Classics, 1987), 3.6.29.9. Spenser claims to be unsure where exactly the garden was, speculating that it may have been in Paphos, Cytheron or Gnidus – all shrines associated with Venus – but Venus was most strongly associated with Paphos in the English imagination.

¹²³ *Faerie Queene*, 3.6.41.4 & 3.6.41.7.

merchants, pilgrims or crusaders. Cyprus might signify in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways in a single work. Not all of the Cypriot tropes outlined here were 'quoted' (to use Bruster's term) explicitly in the four Cyprus dramas, although some were surprisingly persistent. Others can be glimpsed only in attenuated form. The racially and religiously motivated violence so gleefully described in *Richard Coeur de Lion*, for example, is largely absent from these four dramas, but none of them seems willing to fully recognise the island's ethnographic complexity. Cyprus's proximity to the Islamic east is a significant aspect of at least two of them, and is alluded to in the others. This is perhaps not surprising – the island *is* closer to the Islamic world than to mainland Europe and even in plays apparently unconcerned with the Islamic threat, awareness of it sometimes threatens to break through, even in works ostensibly concerned with other aspects of the island's identity. This does not mean, however, that these works are necessarily *about* Cyprus's troubled history; these resonances are often evoked to amplify other concerns and preoccupations. Over the course of the following chapters, I will show how the visions of Cyprus presented in each of these four dramas are all, to some degree, *bricolage*, assembled from the complex range of historical, literary and mythological materials available in early modern English culture.

Chapter 2: George Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske*

At the same time that English readers were enjoying stories about a fictional Eastern Mediterranean populated by crusaders, merchants, sultans and classical goddesses, Western Christendom watched anxiously as the Ottoman Turks seized one Christian territory after another. Constantinople fell to them in 1453, then Rhodes in 1522, and Chios in 1567; only the successful defence of Malta in 1565 and the 1571 Battle of Lepanto (discussed in further detail below) offered a brief respite to the litany of Christian losses. Christian resistance was frequently undermined by squabbling between European Mediterranean powers. Moreover, Samuel Chew observes,

[s]elfish commercial interests were often stronger than national pride and religious convictions, and to gain advantages for trade humiliating terms of peace were accepted and enormous tributes paid, disguised as free-will offerings of friendship.¹

Notwithstanding the geographical distance between England and the Eastern Mediterranean, events in the region were followed with interest by English men and women of all classes. The invasion of Cyprus and the Battle of Lepanto (the two events were closely linked, both politically and emotionally, in England and across Europe) generated a range of responses, many of them complicated by Protestant England's tense relationship with the leading Catholic powers involved in the fight against the Turks. Against this fraught political and religious backdrop George Gascoigne composed *A Devise of a Maske for the Right Honourable Viscount Mountacute* (perf. 1572, publ. 1573), the first and, so far as we are aware, the only dramatic work to engage directly with the Ottoman invasion of Cyprus and its gruesomely spectacular climax.²

Of the four Cyprus dramas considered in this thesis, *A Devise of a Maske* is perhaps the one for which a New Historicist approach, with its emphasis on contemporaneous connections, is most appropriate. William Spates describes the work as a 'topical adventure play', although

¹ Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965 [1937]), p. 103.

² George Gascoigne, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, ed. by G.W. Pigman III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1573]). All references to the masque are from this edition.

it is probably more accurate to describe it as a dramatic monologue or narrative than a play.³ The masque depicts (albeit in a highly fictionalised form) almost contemporaneous Eastern Mediterranean events, seen from the perspective of a fictional English boy. It is not, however, simply reportage. Although its chief sources (including one identified in this chapter which has not been previously recognised) are contemporary reports from the Eastern Mediterranean, this material is embedded in a framing narrative significantly indebted to the tropes, strategies and emotional investments of chivalric romance, to create a complex work that seeks to unite the shock of recent events with nostalgic visions of a united Christendom, in pursuit of what I will argue below is a very particular political agenda. Because *A Devis* draws both its narrative contours and its emotional energies from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the Battle of Lepanto, this chapter will begin with an overview of those events, and their place within sixteenth-century European and Mediterranean geopolitics. Although none of the other works discussed in this thesis engage directly with these events, awareness of them, I argue, surfaces in each, so it is worth providing a comprehensive account here.

The Ottoman Conquest of Cyprus

Ottoman territorial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean was an increasing cause for concern throughout Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Following the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Turks extended their influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and Asia Minor, taking territory from Venice, Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Balkans were almost entirely under Ottoman control. After a prolonged siege, the Order of St John (also known as the Knights Hospitaller) surrendered Rhodes to the Turks in 1522; Chios was taken from the Genoese in 1566. The Venetians also lost many of their key possessions in the Aegean and Adriatic in a series of wars (1463-79, 1499-1503, 1537-40) against the Ottomans in this period. The Turks attempted to seize Malta from the Knights of Malta (formerly the Order of St John) in 1565, but were repulsed after a three-month long siege, but this was a rare Christian victory in over

³ Spates, 'Gascoigne's *Devis* for a Masque', p. 28. Spates highlights the masque's extreme topicality, comparing it with John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins's *The Travels of Three English Brothers* (1607), which was 'written in the midst of the Shirley brothers' travels' (p. 30) and Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk* (1612), in its engagement with recent events.

a century of setbacks. What had been Cyprus's geographical advantages – its proximity to the Holy Land and to the ports and markets of the Near East – now made it increasingly vulnerable; by the mid-sixteenth century, the Ottomans controlled all the mainland territory closest to Cyprus and many of the Adriatic and Greek ports and islands historically used as staging posts between Venice and the island. Pietro Valderio, the Cypriot author of *La Guerra di Cipro* (1573) and one of the city's defenders in the Siege of Famagusta, described the island as being 'in bocca al lupo' – in the wolf's mouth – by 1570.⁴

An Ottoman attack on Cyprus had been long-anticipated and the Venetian authorities had made extensive improvements to the fortifications of both Famagusta and Nicosia, many of which can still be seen today. In fact, parts of the remaining fortifications in Famagusta are referred to in North Cypriot tourist material as 'Othello's Tower'.⁵ Englishman John Locke, who visited the island on his way to Jerusalem in 1553, described Famagusta's new defensive walls as 'faire and new, and strongly rampired [fortified with ramparts]' with 'four principall bulwarkes, and between them turrions [towers or keeps], responding one to another'.⁶ The expected Ottoman invasion began on 2 July 1570 when Turkish forces, under the command of Lala Mustafa Pasha, landed unopposed at Limassol, on Cyprus's south coast, before moving swiftly inland and laying siege to the island's historic capital, Nicosia. The city fell on 9 September 1570, and many of its inhabitants massacred or sold into slavery. The Venetian governor, Nicolò Dandolo, was decapitated and his head sent in a basin to the governor of Famagusta, Marcantonio Bragadino, accompanied by a demand for the port city's immediate capitulation. Other Venetian garrisons on the island rapidly surrendered or withdrew their forces to Famagusta.

Led by the capable Bragadino, Famagusta's defenders, although hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned, resisted the Turkish assault for eleven increasingly desperate months. By July

⁴ Qtd in Kenneth Meyer Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571 Volume IV The Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1984), p. 908. Pietro Valderio's account was never published, but survived in the form of a 1753 manuscript copied from the original. Setton describes *La Guerra di Cipro* as 'the best eye-witness account of the siege of Famagusta' (p. 908). Valderio appears to have been a Greek Cypriot merchant who had Italianised his name.

⁵ Although the city is never mentioned by name in the play, there is broad critical consensus that *Othello's* Cypriot scenes are set in Famagusta.

⁶ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 70. Locke's account of his journey was published in the 1599 edition of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*.

1571, it was clear that no relief was coming from Venice and the city could hold out no longer. Famagusta's defenders requested a ceasefire and the opportunity to negotiate terms with the Ottomans on 1 August 1571. By this stage the remaining inhabitants of the city were starving (according to Valderio's account, inhabitants were reduced to eating cats, dogs, horses, and even rats and mice) and supplies of ammunition were exhausted.⁷ Both sides had sustained heavy losses but although Turkish losses numbered in the tens of thousands, their casualties were easily replaced. The agreed terms of surrender included the safe passage of all Venetian citizens to the Venetian-controlled island of Crete. However, the agreement broke down on 5 August, leading to one of the most notorious incidents of the sixteenth-century wars between the Ottomans and European powers. Following the negotiated surrender, it was agreed that Bragadino would deliver the keys of the city to Lala Mustafa Pasha before sailing to Crete. The Venetian commander, accompanied by fifty soldiers and the majority of the surviving members of the Venetian nobility who had led the city's defence, entered the Turkish camp. After initially greeting Bragadino and his party with great courtesy, Lala Mustafa Pasha became increasingly angry. Bragadino's Venetian companions were summarily executed and he had his ears and possibly his nose cut off; five Greek Cypriots (including the above-mentioned Valderio) in the party were unharmed. No Turkish accounts of events following the fall of Famagusta have survived, so the reasons for Lala Mustafa Pasha's actions remain opaque.⁸ Western sources attributed it to Turkish barbarity and treacherousness.

Over the days that followed, Bragadino was ritually humiliated in a very public manner, forced to carry baskets of earth around the Turkish camp and kiss the earth whenever he passed Mustafa. Finally, when he was probably close to death from his infected wounds, he was led to the public square in Famagusta where he was bound to a stone pillar and flayed alive.⁹ Kelly DeVries observes that 'the very best flayers seem to have been able to remove the skin without ripping it or killing the victim, even after the entire skin was removed' but Bragadino's

⁷ Valderio quoted in Setton, p. 1030.

⁸ See Setton, p. 1040-42 for a fuller account and speculation about the Turkish general's motives.

⁹ Several scholars have referred to a Jewish hangman carrying out Bragadino's flaying, without providing any source for the detail. Contemporary accounts make no reference to a Jewish executioner, suggesting that the detail was added later. The earliest reference I can find is in Cotovicus's account of his visit to the island in 1598, in which he refers to Bragadino being 'brutally flayed by a Jewish hangman – a spectacle of hideous and unparalleled barbarity' (*Excerpta Cypria*, p. 196).

flayers (probably butchers travelling with the Ottoman army) were not so skilled.¹⁰ His skin was removed from his face and head, and then stripped from his arms and torso ‘all’ombelicolo’ – to the navel – before he died.¹¹ Eye-witnesses describe Bragadino’s exemplary Christian faith and endurance throughout his ordeal. According to Valderio, his final words were ‘in manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum’ – into your hands, O Lord, I commend my soul.¹² The Cypriot continued:

[t]ruly he may be canonized and put among the saints, and certainly if the legends of the saints are true, as they are, this honoured and blessed martyr deserves to be preferred to any other.¹³

Even in Protestant England, Bragadino was hailed as a Christian martyr. Writing three decades later (in a work that was to supply much of the historical backdrop for *Othello*), English historian Richard Knolles claimed that ‘in so great and horrible a torture he was not heard to let fall any word, not beseeming a faithfull Christian and the honour of his countrey: onely he called vpon God for mercie’.¹⁴ Bragadino’s death perhaps for many Christians recalled the martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew (one of the twelve apostles), who according to popular hagiographies, was flayed and then beheaded. A memorial later erected to him in Venice’s Basilica di San Giovanni e Paolo shows him with his arms outstretched in an explicitly Christ-like pose, surrounded by Turkish soldiers. In medieval representations of Bartholomew, the saint is often identified by holding a curved flaying knife, the tool used to remove his skin. Bragadino’s executioners are depicted on his monument in Venice holding a similar tool. His eyes are turned heavenward, the prominent cross in the image’s foreground emphasising his status as Christian martyr.¹⁵

After his death, the remainder of Bragadino’s skin was removed from his body and stuffed with straw. Several accounts claim that his stuffed skin was placed on the back of an ox and

¹⁰ Kelly DeVries, ‘A Tale of Venetian Skin: The Flaying of Marcantonio Bragadin’ in *Flaying in the Pre-Modern World: Practice and Representation*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 51-70 (p. 66).

¹¹ Valderio qtd in Setton, p. 1042.

¹² Qtd in Setton, p. 1042.

¹³ Qtd in DeVries, p. 66.

¹⁴ Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), p. 867.

¹⁵ The best image of the monument I can locate online is available via the Wikimedia Commons website, at < https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/64/Interior_of_Santi_Giovanni_e_Paolo_%28Venice%29_-_Monument_to_Marcantonio_Bragadin.jpg > [accessed 18 April 2019]

driven around the city before being hung from the bowsprit of a foist (a small galley) and sailed along the Cypriot coast, as a warning to the population.¹⁶ Why Lala Mustafa ordered this grotesque form of execution is not clear. Flaying was not a form of torture or execution typically practised by the Ottomans. As DeVries observes, '[f]laying was not a frequent punishment, and was never previously recorded in the many violent encounters between Turks and Europeans from the early fourteenth century to 1571'.¹⁷ However, she continues, '[s]everal medieval literary texts, like the Middle English *Sowdone of Babylone* and *The Siege of Jerusalem*, ascribe flaying to Muslim enemies as a means of Othering them, a form of anti-Muslim propaganda, but there is no evidence that they ever practised it other than in the Bragadin episode'.¹⁸ The Venetian commander's death inspired enduring revulsion and horror throughout Europe, where it confirmed deeply held Christian prejudices concerning Islamic barbarity and viciousness. In fact, other Ottomans appear to have been similarly appalled by the brutality of Bragadino's death. The Venetian emissary to Constantinople, Marcantonio Barbaro, in a letter dated 27 March 1573, told the Doge that the Ottoman Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha expressed his contempt for Lala Mustapha's savagery.¹⁹ Bragadino's skin was eventually taken to Constantinople, where it was presented to Selim, after which it was held as a trophy in one of the city's arsenals. However, the story does not end there. DeVries recounts how, in 1580, Girolamo Polidori, described variously as an adventurer or a veteran of Famagusta, discovered its location while visiting Constantinople and stole it, returning with it to Venice.²⁰ The story has one more fascinating post-script: in 1961, Bragadino's descendants gave permission for his tomb to be opened. When it was opened 'several pieces of skin were revealed – the skin of one who had been flayed alive'.²¹

The Battle of Lepanto

Less than two months after Famagusta's surrender, on 7 October 1571, the Holy League confronted the Ottoman fleet near Lepanto, in the Gulf of Patras in the western Ionian Sea.

¹⁶ Setton, p. 1042.

¹⁷ DeVries, p. 52.

¹⁸ DeVries, p. 52.

¹⁹ Setton, p. 1044.

²⁰ DeVries, p. 70

²¹ DeVries, p. 50

The Holy League, organised by Pope Pius V, was made up of the Catholic Mediterranean maritime states (with the exception of France, which was at this point preoccupied with its own internal religious conflicts) and was intended to relieve Famagusta and to challenge Ottoman dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean, but delays and disagreements between member states meant that Famagusta surrendered before it could be relieved. The Venetians formed the largest element of the Holy League, contributing over half the fleet's galleys and galleasses (larger and more heavily armed galleys). The alliance was commanded by Don Juan of Austria, illegitimate half-brother to Philip II of Spain. The League engaged the Ottoman fleet sailing westwards from their naval base at Naupactus (formerly known as Lepanto), in the Gulf of Patras. Although the Ottoman navy had a great number of ships, the Christian fleet was technologically superior and enjoyed greater firepower. The battle was joined around noon, with ships engaging so closely that they provided a platform for hand-to-hand fighting. By the evening, the battle was over. The Ottoman admiral, Müezzinzade Ali Pasha, had been killed, alongside twenty thousand members of the Ottoman forces. Over half the Turkish fleet was captured or destroyed, and twelve thousand Christian galley slaves were released. The Holy League lost thirteen ships and around ten thousand men.²² Lepanto was to be the last great sea battle fought with galleys, a form of naval warfare that had lasted for over two thousand years.

The Holy League's triumph was greeted with relief and jubilation throughout Europe, even in Protestant England. Ultimately, however, the victory did not significantly alter the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean and no Christian territory was recovered in the years that followed. The alliance broke up after the death of Pius V in 1572. By mid-1572, the Ottomans had built 150 new ships (albeit made of unseasoned timber and manned by inexperienced crews); Sokullu Mehmed Pasha told Marcantonio Barbaro that

[y]ou come to see how we bear our misfortune. But I would have you know the difference between your loss and ours. In wresting Cyprus from you, we deprived you of an arm; in defeating our fleet, you have only shaved our beard. An arm when cut

²² Setton provides an exhaustive account of the battle and its aftermath, as well as a detailed analysis of the internal political wrangling surrounding the Holy League's formation.

off cannot grow again; but a shorn beard will grow all the better for the razor [...] If necessary we shall make anchors of silver, rigging of silk, and sails of satin.²³

Nevertheless, victory at Lepanto, following the successful defence of Malta in 1565 showed that the hitherto apparently invincible Turks could be defeated, boosting Christian morale after more than a century of setbacks. The Mediterranean boundary between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe was to remain unchanged, however, until the mid-seventeenth century and Cyprus remained under Ottoman control until 1878. The consequences of the Ottoman invasion continue to be felt on the island to this day.

Siege Of Famagusta and Lepanto: English Responses

News of Ottoman advances was followed with interest by the English, although responses were complicated by England's fraught relationship with Europe's leading Catholic powers. When Malta was besieged by a large Turkish force in 1565, the Bishop of Salisbury ordered prayers to be said every Wednesday and Friday within his diocese 'to excite all godly people to pray unto God for the delivery of those Christians that are now invaded by the Turk'.²⁴ Following the lifting of the siege, the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered prayers of thanksgiving to be read on 'Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, for the space of six weeks'.²⁵ Similar prayers were ordered in 1566 when the Ottomans invaded Hungary.²⁶ However, complicated by internal religious and political anxieties, English responses to the invasion of Cyprus were muted. In what Peter Marshall describes as 'a belated and mistimed response' to the 1569 Northern Rebellion – the failed attempt by Catholic noblemen from the north of England to depose Elizabeth I and replace her with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots – Pope Pius V issued the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis* on 25 February 1570, declaring Elizabeth a heretic and absolving English Catholics of all duty to obey her. Although the Ottoman invasion of Cyprus and the activities of the Holy League were followed with interest and concern by the Privy Council, official prayers were never ordered for the island.

²³ Qtd in Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 34.

²⁴ William K. Clay (ed.), *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1847), p. 519.

²⁵ Clay, p. 524.

²⁶ See Clay, p. 527.

News of the Holy League's victory at Lepanto spread rapidly across Europe and soon arrived in England where, as elsewhere, it was greeted with relief and jubilation. It is not clear when the news of the fall of Famagusta first reached England, but detailed accounts were available by early 1572. It is likely that the English learned initially of the two events at the same time, in November 1571. Andrew Pettegree describes Lepanto as 'a rare news event which created, for a fleeting moment, a shared community of celebration that overrode all considerations of partisan advantage', representing 'a rare moment of unity in Europe's divided Christendom'.²⁷ Prayers of thanksgiving were ordered, church bells rung and bonfires lit to celebrate 'the great victory that the Christians have gotten of the Turk'.²⁸ According to an entry in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), 'M. William Foulkes of Cambridge' (probably the Protestant theologian William Fulke) preached a sermon of thanksgiving at Paul's Cross on 9 November; the lord mayor Sir William Allin and the aldermen of the city were present, and that evening

there were bonfiers made through the Citie, with banquetting and great reioycing, as goode cause there was, for a victorie of so greate importance, to the whole state of the Christian common wealth.²⁹

Churchwardens' accounts record payments to bell-ringers, with entries referring to 'the great victory that the Christians have gotten of the Turk' or 'the gevenge thanks unto god for the victorie had against the Turk'.³⁰ Elizabeth sent letters of congratulation to both the Venetian Signiory and Philip II of Spain, writing to the latter that she 'congratulated the King greatly upon the victory which God had given him against the common enemy of Christianity'.³¹ Although Marshall suggests that Elizabeth's responses to the victory may have been motivated in part by 'an element of politike calculation', the 'language of fulsome and unstinted celebration' and 'fairly unreserved declarations of solidarity' with fellow Christians

²⁷ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 144, 145.

²⁸ Qtd in Marshall, p. 140.

²⁹ Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande: Volume 4* (London, 1577), p. 1860 on *The Holinshed Project* < http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/texts.php?text1=1577_5332 > [accessed on 11 May 2020].

³⁰ Qtd in Marshall, p. 139.

³¹ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 7*, qtd in Marshall, p. 138.

suggest a genuine sense of relief that temporarily overcame confessional differences, a sentiment apparently shared by the majority of her subjects.³² Elizabeth's carefully worded letter is evidence of the complex and flexible role played by the Turks in sixteenth-century Protestant-Catholic relations. Victory over the Turks is interpreted here as a divinely ordained Christian victory; had the battle gone the other way, Protestant polemicists would no doubt have been quick to cast the Turks as God's scourge (as they had after previous defeats), punishing Christian moral failures. Thomas Drant, in a sermon published in 1572, pointed out that the Turk 'this last yeare hath wonne y^e fine & wealthy Iland of *Cyprus*' and was 'no dout [...] set on by God to go forward'.³³ Elizabeth's stance perhaps anticipates the position James I would later adopt rather more forcefully and consistently, in seeking to unite Christendom through the presentation of the Turks as a common enemy. Although motivated by a rather different set of calculations, a similar attitude is evident in *A Devise of Maske*, as we shall see below.

English public relief and jubilation notwithstanding, the Holy League's victory at Lepanto increased English concern about the threat posed by Spain. Philip II's preoccupation with the Holy League and Eastern Mediterranean geopolitics had been advantageous to Elizabeth. A letter written by an informant, John Lee, to Lord Burghley, penned two months after the Battle of Lepanto, spelled out the dangers posed by a Spanish navy no longer so heavily committed to fighting the Ottomans:

Mr Harvey has brought news from Spain that greatly pleases our contraries, that they shall have sufficient aid ere long, which may be the better granted from the overthrow given the Turk by Don John of Austria, who they trust will be King of England within a year: and that his next enterprise will be to subdue the English Turks.³⁴

³² Marshall, p. 139. It may also indicate that, thirteen years into Elizabeth's reign, many English men and women retained a residual sense of connection to the Catholic faith and the concept of 'Christendom'. See Peter Marshall, *Heretic and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017) and Eamon Duffy, *Stripping the Altars: Traditional Religion in England (1400-1580)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) for discussion of continuing adherence to Catholicism in Elizabethan England.

³³ Thomas Drant, *A fruitfull and necessary sermon, specially concernyng almes geuung, preached the twisday [sic] in easter weeke the yere of our lord. 1572. at S. maries spittle. by thomas drant, bachelor in diuinitie* (London, 1572), sig. D5^v.

³⁴ Qtd in Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 84. See Dimmock's chapter 'The "Turke" and "Turkishness" in England, 1529-1571' in *New Turkes* for a more thorough exploration of the way the term was used by both Catholics and Protestants. By the late sixteenth century, the term had becoming an increasingly clichéd method of demonising any group perceived as 'other'.

Lee's ironic and perhaps slightly world-weary reference to English Turks here demonstrates the way that the term was used (by both sides) post-Reformation to demonise the confessional 'other'. Although used only rhetorically in the early years of the Reformation, the conflation of Protestants and Turks as infidels was used increasingly, by the Spanish in particular, to legitimise military action in Northern Europe. Meanwhile, as the Spanish were describing English Protestants as 'Turks', the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe and others debated whether the Pope or the 'Turke', in the person of the Ottoman emperor, was the Antichrist. Against a backdrop of these anxieties, Adam N. McKeown argues, accounts of the Battle of Lepanto, 'a story that energized Catholic Europe', could 'not be retold in England unless its potential significances were circumscribed by assurances of the correct religious and political orientation or neutralized by appeals to practical or frivolous interests'.³⁵ No group, perhaps, felt this pressure more than English Catholics.

George Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske for Viscount Mountacute*

It is against this complicated religious and political background that Protestant writer and poet George Gascoigne composed *A Devise of a Maske for the Right Honourable Viscount Mountacute* for performance at the celebrations following a Catholic wedding. Gascoigne's patron, Anthony Browne, Viscount Montague (spelled Mountacute in *A Devise*), was a leading English Catholic nobleman who had managed to retain Elizabeth's favour. At some point in autumn 1572, Montague's son and heir Anthony married Mary, the daughter of Sir William Dormer, another prominent English Catholic, and his daughter Elizabeth married Robert Dormer, Sir William's son. The precise circumstances of Montague's patronage of Gascoigne and his involvement in the masque's composition are unclear. In early 1572, Gascoigne was elected Member of Parliament for Midhurst, a seat controlled by Viscount Montague, and the masque may have been written by Gascoigne to thank Montague. It is also possible that Montague rewarded Gascoigne with the seat for writing the masque but this is unlikely, as one of Gascoigne's chief sources was not available before early April 1572, after he was elected. However, Gascoigne failed to take his seat (probably because of unpaid debts),

³⁵ Adam N. McKeown, *English Mercuries: Soldier Poets in the Age of Shakespeare* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009), p. 69.

instead joining the Protestant expedition to defend Flushing in the Netherlands from French and Spanish forces in the summer of 1572, remaining there until November. A reference in the masque to the Battle of Lepanto taking place 'October last uppon the seventh daye' (l. 177) confirms that it was written and performed while memories of those events, and the emotional responses they engendered, were still fresh in the minds of those watching the performance.³⁶

When it was first published in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* in 1573, the text was preceded by a lengthy account of Gascoigne's involvement. Montague's kinsmen, he claimed, having bought silks and had them cut into Venetian-style garments, had run out of inspiration and had sought the author's help in framing a narrative simply to account for the costumes. He wrote the masque, he claims, only after being 'entreated [...] to devise some verses to bee uttered by an Actor wherein might be some discourse convenient to render a good cause of the Venetians presence'.³⁷ The Venetians, Gascoigne implies here, were entirely a Montague idea; he merely supplied 'some verses' to explain their manifestation.³⁸ Why the Montagues procured the Venetian silks and costumes in the first place is never explained. Gascoigne's tone is defensive. The fact that the work was omitted from the contents page of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* provides further evidence of its sensitivity. Spates argues that Gascoigne was also trying to protect Montague, claiming that by presenting his narrative 'almost as an accident', he was 'attempting to distance his patron from any potentially illicit interest' in the Siege of Famagusta and Battle of Lepanto.³⁹ Although Montague retained Elizabeth I's personal trust, he and other prominent English Catholics were under considerable pressure following the uncovering of the Ridolfi Plot in late 1571 and renewed English anxieties about

³⁶ A petition of complaint submitted by haberdasher Thomas Giles concerning the hire of costumes from the Revels stock further indicates that the masque's first and, presumably, only performance took place in September or early October 1572. See Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533-1642 A Catalogue: Volume II 1567-1589* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 79, 85 for details of Giles's complaint, which concerned the Revels hiring costumes out for this and other performances, undercutting his own costume hire business. In this case, Giles refers to a gold dress that is almost certainly the 'glittering gold gite [gown]' referred to in l. 11 of the masque. Giles's complaint also refers to the costumes being sent into the country, suggesting that wedding took place at Montague's country seat Cowdray House in Sussex rather than, as the masque apparently envisions, in London (see l. 312). Taking all of these facts into consideration, it seems likely that the masque was written in the spring of 1572 but not performed until September or early October of the same year.

³⁷ Gascoigne, p. 301.

³⁸ Gascoigne, p. 301.

³⁹ Spates, 'Gascoigne's Device', p. 37.

a Spanish invasion in the aftermath of Lepanto. As Spates comments, '[o]verly zealous Anglo-Catholic interest in the conflict [in the Eastern Mediterranean] would have been impolitic'.⁴⁰

A Devise of a Maske takes the form of an extended dramatic monologue, spoken by a boy actor. Gascoigne's preface to the masque states that he did 'devise to bring in a Boy of the age of twelve or xiiii yeres' to play the part, suggesting the boy was a professional actor.⁴¹ It is likely that the boy was drawn from one of the companies of boy actors working in and around the English court in the early 1570s.⁴² Although the boy's entire speech is described as 'the maske' (marginal comment to l. 346), only the final few moments of the performance actually resemble a traditional masque in which performers interact with members of the audience. George Pigman III describes the boy's dramatic monologue as 'an antimasque with a vengeance'; an antimasque (or antemasque) was usually some sort of dance or performance that preceded the masque itself.⁴³ Properly speaking, Gascoigne's masque only begins when the 'Venetians' arrive at around l. 345, after the boy has told his story. The boy is, in effect, what Enid Welsford calls a 'presenter, or trucheman' – the latter term designating a common figure in Elizabethan masques who generally appeared 'before the maskers and delivered an introductory speech' relevant to the masque's allegorical purpose.⁴⁴ There is nothing allegorical about Gascoigne's masque; however, as I shall argue below, Welsford's suggestion of the boy's likeness to a 'trucheman' may help us consider the masque's purpose.⁴⁵

The boy's 350-line dramatic monologue is written in poulter's measure – rhyming couplets of alternating twelve and fourteen syllable lines – a metre which had been pioneered by Thomas Wyatt and was popular with the generation of poets, including Gascoigne, that followed. The literary quality of the writing throughout the masque might best be described as uneven. As

⁴⁰ Spates, 'Gascoigne's *Devise*', p. 37.

⁴¹ Gascoigne, p. 301, 302.

⁴² Michael Shapiro notes that 'boy companies were the pre-eminent court entertainers during the first half of Elizabeth's reign. Between 1558 and 1576 boy companies appeared at court forty-six times, as against thirty-two appearances for the adult troupes'. See Michael Shapiro, 'Early (Pre-1590) Boy Companies and their Acting Venues' in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Richard Dutton, [n.p.] on *Oxford Hand Books Online* < <https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697861.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199697861-e-8?print=pdf> > [accessed 11 May 2020].

⁴³ Qtd in Gascoigne, p. 656. See Welsford, p. 183ff for the origins and history of the antimasque.

⁴⁴ Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1927), p. 151.

⁴⁵ Welsford, p. 151.

Chew drily notes, it 'does not reach the higher levels of poetic inspiration', although it 'drives forward in its jog-trot "poulter's measure" rather bravely'.⁴⁶ There are, as we will see, some powerful and affecting lines and passages, particularly in the boy's description of the Battle of Lepanto, which seems to have particularly captured Gascoigne's imagination. At many other points, however, the language is clumsy and repetitive. The overall impression is of a piece composed in a hurry.

The masque begins with the arrival, accompanied by four torchbearers, of a boy attired in a spectacular gold costume. Although he acknowledges his 'glittering golden gite [gown]' (l. 11) is 'outlandishe' (l. 16) (we later discover it is, apparently, Venetian), the boy quickly assures the audience that he is in fact one of them, 'an English boy in England borne and bred' (l. 20), the son of a (fictive) knight named 'Mount Hermer' (l. 21) and a mother who was 'of the Mountacutes a house of worthy fame' (l. 22). His relationship with the Montagues indicates to his audience that he, like them, is an English Catholic, although Gascoigne is careful to establish the fictional relationship on the less threatening female line.⁴⁷ The device was apparently suggested by the fact that Montagues, as Gascoigne notes in the prefatory material to the print edition, 'doth quarter the cote of an ancient english gentleman called Mounthermer, and hath the inheritance of the sayde house'.⁴⁸ The real Mounthermer family line was, by the time of the masque's composition, long extinct.

Having established his (fictive) familial credentials, the boy begins his narrative by describing his father's military career fighting the 'the Turke that prince of pride' (l. 28) in the Eastern Mediterranean. Given English anxieties about the threat posed by Catholics both at home and abroad, it was necessary for Gascoigne (and, more pertinently, his patron, the Catholic Viscount Montague) to tread carefully when glorifying the martial activities of an English Catholic. The Mounthermer knight's precise status is elided by the narrative. He seems to

⁴⁶ Chew, p. 129.

⁴⁷ Margaret, the daughter of Ralph de Monthermer, married Sir John de Montacute in the mid-fourteenth-century, bringing the Barony of Monthermer to the Montacute family. The Barons Montague (but not Viscount Montague) quartered the Monthermer arms in their escutcheon. Anthony Browne – the first Viscount Montague – chose the Montague name when he was made a viscount by Mary I because his grandmother, Lucy Neville, was a daughter of John, Marquis of Montagu and Earl of Northumberland, so the connection is actually rather tenuous.

⁴⁸ Gascoigne, p. 301.

have been some sort of professional soldier, ‘from his youth [...] trained up in field’ (l. 23). In successive lines (25 and 26), his son describes him as a ‘soldado’, the Spanish word for soldier.⁴⁹ In the light of English concerns about the Spanish at this time – articulated in Lee’s letter to Burghley, for example – this seems a curious choice. Vassiliki Markidou suggests that the term is intended to invest Mounthermer with what she calls ‘Mediterranean flair’ and to also highlight his ‘sympathies with the Spanish/Catholic cause’ – a rather risky (and, I would argue, improbable) strategy in the early 1570s.⁵⁰ Linda Bradley Salamon, in her analysis of Gascoigne’s *The Spoyle of Antwerpe* (1576), notes that the poet, while decrying their brutality, acknowledged that the Spaniards were ‘the best and most ordelye Souldiers in the world’, a view that was widely shared at the time.⁵¹ The label ‘soldado’ is probably simply intended to signal to the audience that the Mounthermer knight was a highly disciplined professional Catholic soldier.

A small number of real English Catholics fought alongside the Christian powers in the Mediterranean during this period. While some – such as Sir Oliver Starkey, a Knight of Malta from 1550 until his death in the early 1580s – confined their activities to fighting the Ottomans, others colluded openly with England’s Catholic enemies. Starkey was among the forces that successfully repelled the Ottoman invasion of Malta in 1565; there is no record of Starkey’s activities troubling the English authorities. Thomas Stukeley commanded three Spanish galleys at the Battle of Lepanto, before being killed at the Battle of Alcazar fighting for the King of Portugal in 1578. Stukeley repeatedly attempted to persuade the Spanish to support his plans for an invasion of Ireland. Gascoigne presumably wished to represent Mounthermer as a figure closer to the Starkey model than to Stukeley. Just as in George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (?1592), in which Stukeley’s rebellion against the English Crown is – to some degree – ameliorated by the play’s anti-Spanish sentiment, Gascoigne mediates Mounthermer’s worrying Catholic militarism through frequent expressions of anti-Turkish

⁴⁹ The *OED* identifies its first recorded use in English in *Holinshed’s Chronicles* (1577), four years after Gascoigne’s masque was published.

⁵⁰ Vassiliki Markidou, “‘I goe outlandishe lyke, yet being Englishe borne’: Catholic England, the Ottoman Empire, Venice and Fragile Identities in George Gascoigne’s *A Devis of a Maske for the Right Honorable Viscount Mountacute*’ in *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 37. 2 (2011), 79-95 (87) < https://brill-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/journals/erc/37/2/article-p79_6.xml > [accessed 11 April 2020].

⁵¹ Linda Bradley Salamon, ‘Gascoigne’s Globe: *The Spoyle of Antwerpe* and the Black Legend of Spain’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 14.1 (2008), 1-38 (11) < <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/14-1/article6.htm> > [accessed 24 May 2020].

rhetoric.⁵² The knight is thus defined largely not by whom he fights *for* – that is never actually revealed, although winning his spurs at the Siege of Rhodes may link him to the Order of St John – but by whom he fights against.

The Mounthermer knight appears to have had an extraordinarily long military career (perhaps further evidence that the masque was dashed off in something of a hurry), beginning at the 1522 Siege of Rhodes, ‘where he by many martiall feats his spurres of knighthood wan’ (l. 38), and continuing until he was eventually captured by Turks at Chios in 1566 (l. 41). He is obliged to buy ‘his libertie with [his] Landes and let his goodes ago’ (l. 44), mortgaging his English lands to the boy’s ‘mothers kinne’ (l. 54), the Montagues. The knight decides to repair his fortunes by returning to the Eastern Mediterranean as a ‘venturer’ (l. 59), rigging up ‘a proper Barke, called *Leffort Brittainne*’ (l. 58). The term ‘venturer’ is multivalent and Gascoigne’s use of it here strategically vague. The word might refer to piracy, or to mercantile activity; both definitions were in use in the late sixteenth century and either is plausible in this context. We might also recall here the romance trope of the nobleman wishing to travel incognito disguising himself as a merchant, discussed in the preceding chapter. Markidou argues that the ship’s name ‘attests to the father’s fusion of imperialistic aspirations with entrepreneurialism’.⁵³ However, the boy makes no allusion to cargo or trade and it is revealed later that the ship is armed with cannon and crewed with fighting men, suggesting a military vessel, although the prevalence of piracy in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean meant that most merchant ships put to sea manned and equipped to defend themselves. Gascoigne may be suggesting, without ever *quite* stating it, that the Mounthermer knight intended to recoup his losses by privateering, presumably by preying on Turkish ships. Whatever his intentions, his financial motives are partially concealed behind the suggestion of further quasi-patriotic chivalric questing, as the Mounthermer boy continues to describe his father as an English knight-errant and defender of Christendom, insisting he returned to the Eastern Mediterranean – with his young son in tow – with ‘his hauty harte [...] bent some great exployte to finde’ (l. 62), rather than as a common pirate, novice merchant or Catholic mercenary.

⁵² See Dimmock, *New Turkes*, pp. 113-134 for a discussion of George Peele’s *Battle of Alcazar* and its protagonist’s ambiguity.

⁵³ Markidou, 89.

It is at this point in the performance that Cyprus comes into focus. As *Leffort Brittainne* approaches the ‘fertile coastes of Cyprus soile’ (l. 72), the crew realise that the Turks ‘with siege had girt the walles / Of famous Famagosta’ (ll. 82-3) and attempt to flee. However, ‘the mighty hand of God’ (l. 92) sends a providential wind to blow the ship back towards the Turkish ships; it is, the masque seems to imply, the will of God that Mounthermer joins the fight at Famagusta. Mounthermer rallies his crew, exhorting them ‘to make [their] carkasses a wylling Sacrifice’ (l. 116), adding (in language strongly reminiscent of chivalric romance) that those ‘who with hardy hand most Turkish tikes can quell’ (l. 119) will ‘please his maker well’ (l. 120). As the crew of *Leffort Brittainne* prepares to do battle with the Turks, the masque rehearses some of medieval and early modern England’s most common Islamophobic tropes. Positioning the Ottomans as what Dimmock describes as Christendom’s ‘relentlessly “demonic other”’, the Mounthermer knight denounces the Turks as ‘hellishe fiendes’ (l. 107) who will subject ‘boyes in tender yeeres’ to ‘fowle abuse’ (l. 109) and ravish ‘maides’, while ‘Wives [and] Women’ are ‘forst by feare’ (l. 111).⁵⁴

The confrontation between *Leffort Brittainne* and Turkish naval forces, although conducted at sea, appears to mirror the conflict taking place on shore. The masque’s account of the sea battle reads very much like a land siege. The boy describes how ‘the Turkes enclosde us round about’ (l. 135) and ‘bent their force about our silly cage’ (l. 140). The English ship – like nearby Venetian Famagusta – is on ‘every side so thicke beset’ (l. 142), surrounded, outgunned and outnumbered. And like the forces defending Famagusta, although the English ‘power was slender’ (l. 137), the crew resist bravely, sending ‘them signes by Canon shot we ment not to render’ (l. 138). Like the defenders of Famagusta, the crew mount a brave defence, with each man straining to ‘send a Turke some two or three unto the hellishe trayne’ (l. 144) before he is overwhelmed. When it is clear that all is lost, the Mounthermer knight ‘[d]id thrust amid the thickest throng’ and ‘so with honour died’ (l. 146), a Christian hero and, the battle’s location seems to imply, an English Bragadino. In fact, the masque perhaps suggests,

⁵⁴ Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 3. Matar’s *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* provides a comprehensive exploration of English beliefs and preconceptions about Muslims in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Mounthermer may be even *more* heroic than Bragadino; whereas the latter eventually surrendered to the Turks, Mounthermer fought to the death.

The boy and surviving crew members are 'tane by Turkes' (l. 149) and held in the Ottoman camp outside 'the Gates of Famagosta' (l. 152), from where they witness the siege's horrific denouement. The Mounthermer boy considers a future in which he must 'with the Turkes a turkish life in Turkie [...] passe' (l. 150). The line may allude to the 'fowle abuse' (l. 109) allegedly endured by young boys captured by the Ottomans, with the boy's claim that he 'often cravde' that he had been 'done to death' (l. 151) hinting at unspoken atrocities. A 'Turkish' life might be a life of abuse. The line may also be a reference to forced conversion or to the *devşirme* or 'blood tax', whereby boys from Christian families in conquered territories (usually the Balkans) were forcibly removed from their families and taken to Constantinople, where they were converted to Islam, and educated and trained to become Ottoman soldiers and officials. Such individuals could reach the highest positions in the Ottoman hierarchy. The Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha (originally from Ottoman-occupied Bosnia), referred to above, for example, was one such individual. Spates calls *A Devise* 'the first dramatic representation of a (fictionalized) Englishman enslaved by Turks'.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the boy's captivity is not recounted in particularly detailed or dramatic fashion, the paucity of detail perhaps providing the first clue that, its pervasive Islamophobia notwithstanding, anti-Turkish propaganda is not in fact the masque's primary rhetorical purpose.

Following the surrender of Famagusta, the boy is taken into the city where he is forced to witness Bragadino's 'cruell tormentes' (l. 160). The description of the Venetian governor as 'noble' (l. 156) and 'a worthy souldior' (l. 160), qualities also attributed to the Mounthermer knight, hint once more at the connections the masque seems to be inviting its audience to make. The boy – the description drawn from an eye-witness account of the event (discussed below) – relates in some detail the Venetian governor's ordeal, describing how, before being 'fleyd quick' (l. 156), he was ritually humiliated, forced to carry 'two baskets laden full with earth' (l. 158) around the city, kissing the ground every time he passed 'Mustaffa' (l. 158).

⁵⁵ Spates, 'Gascoigne's *Devise*' p. 28.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the occasion of the performance, the flaying itself is swiftly passed over, with the masque focusing instead on Bragadino's humiliation before his death. Nevertheless, the boy's allusion to Turkish 'crueltie and spight' (l. 163) and witnesses' 'weping eies [that] did much abhorre the sight' (l. 164) keeps the horrific event in focus. Against the backdrop of the work as a whole, however, the boy's Cypriot experience forms a surprisingly short part of the masque. If we exclude the sea battle that precedes his capture, his time on the island is narrated in only fifteen lines, the majority of which are devoted to his description of Bragadino's ordeal. Its brevity notwithstanding, however, the masque's representation of this event is a crucial feature in its emotional landscape. Not only does the fictive Mounthermer boy's testimony give voice to feelings that English Catholics may have been unable to express openly but – via the sympathy and horror it arouses – it also perhaps legitimises the masque's subsequent interest in the Battle of Lepanto.

The Mounthermer boy tells his audience that he was enslaved by a Turkish general named 'Prelybassa' (l. 168), who (following Bragadino's death) takes him 'to Seas [sic] into the gulfes of Pant' (l. 169). The boy promises his audience 'the whole discourse' (l. 179) of 'this victorye' (l. 181). What follows is a dramatic and thrilling description of the battle, in which the boy switches suddenly from what has until this point been past tense narration in which the Christian forces 'came on' (l. 183) and 'met' (l. 187) the Turks, into a passage of dramatic present tense. The boy provides his audience with a vivid sense of the disorder and chaos of close combat; and although he is a passive witness rather than an active participant – another strategy, perhaps, to ward off accusations of dangerous sympathies – the masque provides its Catholic audience with the enjoyable fantasy of an English Montague contribution to the momentous victory. Barks 'are battered sore' (l. 189), the smoke from gun powder 'effects our eies' (l. 192), while 'wilde fire works are wrought and cast in foemens face' (l. 195) and 'halberts hewe on hed' (l. 197). It was, the boy acknowledges, a 'hellishe fighte' (l. 208). In the course of the battle, Prelybassa, the boy's captor, is killed and his head displayed on a pike which the Spanish general, Don Juan of Austria, 'helde in his triumphant hand' (l. 222). Proclaiming through the boy that 'Christ gave his flocke the victory' (l. 226), though, Gascoigne is careful to follow the official English line that the Holy League's victory was a Christian rather than a Catholic triumph.

In the battle's chaotic aftermath, the boy is saved by 'a noble wise Venetian' (l. 238). The Venetian nobleman is, it transpires, 'him selfe a Mountacute' (l. 259), 'bar[ing] the selfe same armes that [the boy] did quarter in his scute' (l. 260). After listening to his story, the Venetian takes the boy and other surviving members of the crew of *Leffort Brittainne* – the masque suddenly recalls them at this point, referring to them (apparently the masque's torchbearers) as 'these foure here whom you see' (l. 250) – to his own vessel, where they are introduced to more Venetian Montagues. Eschewing his father's martial profession, the boy decides to return with his newly-discovered Italian relations to Venice 'with them in Italie to dwell / And there by traine of youthfull yeeres in knowledge to excell' (ll. 285-6). Once again, however, fate in the form of more providential weather decrees otherwise. On its way to Venice, the Venetian ship is caught by a 'raging blast which from the Southeast did blowe' (l. 291). This miraculous wind blows the Venetian ship all the way along the length of the Mediterranean, through the Straits of Gibraltar, along the coasts of Spain and France until eventually the boy spies 'the Chalkie Clyves upon the Kentishe coast' (l. 293). Eventually, the Venetian ship docks in London.

Spates compares the miraculous voyage to the 'travails [...] of Odysseus's journey'.⁵⁶ While *The Odyssey* does indeed feature miraculous winds, the boy's journey perhaps more obviously recalls the providential wind 'meme' (to use Helen Cooper's term) from popular romances; such tales were undoubtedly influenced by works like *The Odyssey*, although at some distance. A similar incident is related in Chaucer's *The Man at Law's Tale* in which Constance, a calumniated queen (another romance 'meme'), is set adrift in Syria and eventually comes ashore in Northumberland.⁵⁷ Helen Cooper observes that the motif of the unsteerable boat taking its passengers on a miraculous journey before delivering them safely was remarkably stable across several centuries of romance, observing that 'the unlikelihood of navigating the Straits of Gibraltar is never an issue in the many stories that take these unsteerable boats from the Mediterranean to the English Channel'.⁵⁸ Spates's claim succinctly demonstrates the point I make in my introduction that the periodisation of literary studies

⁵⁶ Spates, 'Gascoigne's Device', p. 43.

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 94.

⁵⁸ Cooper, p. 115.

has left many early modern scholars apparently oblivious to the continuing influence of medieval popular romance on sixteenth-century writers.

The boy's return to England with his Venetian rescuers, the miraculous voyage seems to imply, was divinely sanctioned. At this point, the narrative converges with the site and date of its performance. The Mounthermer boy tells his audience that, after coming ashore, he has hurried immediately to the home of 'the chiefest Mountacute' (l. 317), arriving on the very day of the wedding to recount his adventures to the assembled Montagues and Dormers; the temporal discrepancy between the boy's rescue at Battle of Lepanto in October 1571 and his arrival at the wedding in September 1572 is not addressed. His dramatic monologue concludes with the entrance of the 'Venetian' Montagues. According to stage directions, at this point the boy actor 'tooke master Tho[mas] Bro[wne] [another of Viscount Montague's sons] by the hand from the audience and brought him to the Venetians' (s.d., l. 346), urging them accept him as their 'trouchman [...] herald and ambassadour' (l. 355-6). Thomas Montague, because 'their english is but weake' (l. 363), addresses the audience on behalf of his 'Venetian' kin. After paying a few conventionally Petrarchan compliments to the loveliness and virtue of the brides, he relays a request from the Venetians that, although they must soon depart, 'you will give them licence yet to come and see you soone' (l. 370).

A Devise of a Maske: Sources

Gascoigne interwove an extensive range of texts and sources to create the boy's dramatic narrative, blending original content with contemporary reportage, embedding these elements in a narrative framework studded with tropes and motifs drawn from chivalric romance. He leans particularly heavily on two recent news pamphlets for the masque's accounts of Famagusta and Lepanto; the masque's relationship with one of these has not been previously recognised.⁵⁹ The first of the two, Count Nestore Martinengo's *Relatione di*

⁵⁹ According to Henry Ettinghausen, over three hundred news pamphlets reporting and celebrating the victory over the Turks at Lepanto were published across Europe in 1571 and 1572. See Henry Ettinghausen, 'International Relations: Spanish, Italian, French, English and German Printed Single Event Newsletters Prior to Renaudot's Gazette, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 261-79 (p. 276). Commercial news culture appears to have developed slowly in England, beginning, according to Steven Wittek 'around the mid-sixteenth century, with the occasional publication of inexpensive pamphlets, then gaining 'momentum in the 1590s'. See Steven Wittek, *The Media*

tutto il successo di Famagosta (1572), an eyewitness account written by a Venetian nobleman who survived both the Siege of Famagusta and the massacre of Venetian nobles that followed, was translated by William Malim and published in London in the spring of 1572 as *The True Report of all the Successe of Famagosta* ('success' in this instance meaning the succession of events rather than a reference to the triumph of the Ottomans). A former headmaster of Eton (and subsequently head of St Paul's School), Malim had travelled in the Eastern Mediterranean in the mid-1560s and was, he claimed, personally acquainted with two Venetian noblemen, 'Sig. M. Lorenzo Tiepolo, & Sig. M. Giouanni Antonio Querini', who had died at Famagusta.⁶⁰ He translated Martinengo's *Relatione*, he states, because he was asked to do so 'by the right worshipfull Maister D. Wilson Maister of her Majesties Requests'.⁶¹ Wilson, recalling that Malim had visited Cyprus on his travels in the Eastern Mediterranean, had 'perswad[ed] him selfe, that somewhat therby [he] might benefite this our native countrey' by providing an English translation of Martinengo's account for 'divers of our Captaines and other countreyman', to warn them that Cyprus was now under Turkish control.⁶² Wilson was a judge, diplomat and, later, member of the Privy Council. Close to Burghley and the Earl of Leicester – Malim describes Wilson as the earl's 'trusty frend' – his approach seems to indicate some sort of official sanction for the project.⁶³ *The True Report* was dedicated to Leicester. In his dedicatory epistle, Malim suggests the Earl is already 'well acquainted with ye Italian copy', indicating that copies of the original pamphlet were already in circulation before Malim undertook his translation.⁶⁴ Tracey Sowerby describes the practice of English ambassadors including *avvisi* – handwritten and, occasionally, printed Italian newsletters – in their despatches to the Privy Council, noting that those '[u]nofficial pamphlets which conveyed military news featured prominently among the works brought to the Council's attention'.⁶⁵ Leicester may have received a copy of Martinengo's *Relatione* this way. As Sowerby notes, members of the Privy Council also maintained their own intelligence

Players: Shakespeare, Middleton, Jonson, and the Idea of News (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), p. 2.

⁶⁰ William Malim, *The true report of all the successe of Famagosta, of the antique writers called Tamassus, a citie in Cyprus* (London, 1572), sig. B1^v.

⁶¹ Malim, sig. A4^r.

⁶² Malim, sig. A4^r.

⁶³ Malim, sig. A4^r.

⁶⁴ Malim, sig. A4^r.

⁶⁵ Tracey A. Sowerby, 'Elizabethan Diplomatic Networks and the Spread of News' in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 305-27 (p. 321).

and news networks.⁶⁶ How Malim obtained his copy is unknown. *The True Report* appears to have sold well, as a second edition was published several months after the first.⁶⁷

The True Report recounts the experiences of Famagusta's defenders from mid-February 1571 until the end of the siege. Martinengo records in considerable detail the loss of personnel, territory and supplies, describing the heroic and increasingly desperate efforts of the city's defenders as they waited for relief from Venice or the Holy League. Although he occasionally refers to Famagusta's 'Greek' inhabitants, for the most part the Venetian and Greek defenders are described simply as 'Christians', a strategy which frames the conflict as a pan-Christian confrontation with the Turks. The majority of subsequent accounts of the siege (including Gascoigne's masque) adopt this framing, although, as discussed in the previous chapter, Greek Cypriots were historically viewed with considerable ambivalence and suspicion in much of the Latin Christian world. In fact, many Greek Cypriots appear to have even welcomed the Ottomans as less exploitative overlords than the Venetians.⁶⁸ Martinengo's account paints a moving picture of Famagusta's Greek and Venetian defenders (including many civilians) holding out against the overwhelming might of the Ottoman army, until their supplies of food and munitions were exhausted.

⁶⁶ Sowerby, p. 311.

⁶⁷ See Soko Tomita (ed), *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Italian Books Printed in England, 1558-1603* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2016), Appendix 5, entry 87 & 88.

⁶⁸ Although the accounts that later circulated around Europe referred to the island's defenders under the umbrella term 'Christians', much of the Greek Orthodox Cypriot population remained neutral throughout the siege. As noted in the previous chapter, Venetian rule was harsh and exploitative. In the years before the invasion, Venetians and Greek Cypriots seem to have lived in an atmosphere of mutual mistrust, with the Greeks accusing the Venetians of rapacity and the Venetians viewing the Greeks and their Orthodox religion with contempt. John Locke reports that the island was garrisoned by soldiers and mercenaries 'of all nations except Greeks', suggesting the local population was not trusted by the Venetian authorities (*Excerpta Cypria*, p. 70). An Italian-Jewish visitor to the island, Elias of Pesaro, wrote in 1563 that the Greek Cypriots 'hate their Italian fellow-Christians' (*Excerpta Cypria*, p. 75). Daniel Goffman suggests that, if not exactly welcomed with open arms by the Greek populations of Cyprus and Chios, the Ottomans were at least seen as fairer rulers than the Venetian and Genoese (See Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 153). The Venetian historiographer Paolo Paruta (writing at the end of the sixteenth century) describes how, following the Ottoman invasion, '[t]here came at once to find Mustafa and to swear obedience to him Scipione Caraffa, Paolo Singlitico, and other nobles, accompanied by many Greek priests and a great troop of peasants, so that throughout the kingdom all that remained faithful to the Signiory of Venice was the one city of Famagosta' (*Excerpta Cypria*, p. 108). Although the names Paruta lists here appear Italian, the individuals were probably Cypriots who had italianised their names after the island was annexed by the Venetians in 1489. However, eye-witness accounts from inside Famagusta confirm that the city's Greek residents took part in its defence alongside Venetian forces. They may have had closer economic and cultural ties with Venice than Orthodox Greeks from on the island, and perhaps had more to lose from regime change.

The most memorable and affecting part of *The True Report*, however, is its description of Bragadino's humiliation, torture and grotesque death and it is to this section of the pamphlet Gascoigne turned when composing the section of the masque set at the Siege of Famagusta; I have highlighted in bold specific words and phrases that Gascoigne appears to have used.⁶⁹ Malim describes the death of Bragadino thus:

The Friday following (being the Turkes sabboth day) thys **worthy** and pacient gentleman Bragadino was led still in the presence of that unfaythfull tyrant Mustafa, to the batteries made unto the Citie, whereas he being compelled to **carrye two baskets of earth**, the one uppon hys backe, the other in hys hand **slave like**, to every sundry battery, being **enforced also to kisse the ground as oft as he passed by him**, was afterward brought unto the Sea side, where he being placed in a chaire to leane and stay upon, was **winched up in that chaire**, and fastened unto **the Maineyarde of a Galley, and hoysted up with a Crane**, to **shew him** to all the Christian soldiers and slaves (which were in the haven already shipped) he being afterward let down, and brought to the market place, the **tormentors** tooke of hys clothes from hym, and tacked hym unto the Pillary, whereas he was most **cruelly fleyed quicke**: with so great constancie and faith on his part, that he never lost or abated any jotte of hys stedfast courage, being so farre from any fainting, that he at that present with most stoute hart reproched them, and spake much shame of hys most trayterous dealing in breaking of hys faythfull promise. At the last without any kinde of alteration of hys constancie, he recommending hys soule unto almighty God, gave up the goste. When he had thus ended hys life (thankes be to God) hys skinne being taken and filled with straw, was commaunded forthwith to be hanged upon y^e Bowsprit of a Foyste, and to be caryed alongst the coast of Syria by the sea side, that all the port townes might see, and understand who he was.⁷⁰

Rearranging these details slightly, the Mounthermer boy describes how

I sawe the noble Bragadine when he was **fleyd quicke**
 First **like a slave** enforst to beare to every breach
Two baskets laden full with earth Mustaffa dyd him teach
By whome he might not passe before he kyst the grounde
 These **cruell tormentes** yet with mo that **worthy** souldior found
His eares cut from his head they set him in a chayre
 And from a **maine yard hoisted him aloft into the ayre**
 That so he might be **shewed** with crueltie and spight
 Unto us all, whose weping eies did much abhorre the sight. (ll. 156 – 64)

⁶⁹ The relationship between the two texts was first noted by Robert Ralston Cawley in 1928. See 'George Gascoigne and the Siege of Famagusta', *Modern Language Notes*, 43.1 (1928), 296-300 < <https://www.istor.org/stable/2914136> > [accessed 24 November 2019].

⁷⁰ Malim, sig. F1^v - F2^r.

Other than the omission of the further indignities inflicted on Bragadino's corpse and skin (which he may have felt were too grotesque for a wedding), Gascoigne closely follows the details and even the phrasing found in Malim.⁷¹ There is, however, a subtle but significant shift in tone between the two passages. In Malim's pamphlet – which appears to be a verbatim translation of Martinengo's account – Bragadino is almost Christ-like in his suffering, but these details are absent from Gascoigne's retelling. By omitting the details of the Venetian's spiritual fortitude, the masque resists proclaiming him a Christian martyr. This may in part be in response to the delicate position families like the Montagues found themselves in at this time. Sympathy with suffering of a fellow Christian was permissible, but overt celebration of a Catholic martyr by a leading English Catholic family might have been politically inadvisable.

The True Report supplied the masque with more than the grisly details of Bragadino's death, however; it also appears to have suggested to Gascoigne the plot of *Leffort Brittainne's* disastrous voyage. Malim's claim, in the pamphlet's dedicatory epistle, that he was asked to translate Martinengo's *Relatione* to warn English mariners that Cyprus was now in hostile hands almost certainly inspired the ship's ill-fated journey towards 'the fertile coastes of Cyprus soile' (l. 72).⁷² Similarly, Malim's allusion in his prefatory material to Turkish territorial

⁷¹ Neither Malim's nor Gascoigne's accounts dwell on the physical realities of flaying, but there was another account of a flaying in circulation in this period that could supply the gruesome details. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* features a passage describing the flaying of Marsyas, a Phrygian satyr, who had challenged Apollo to a musical contest and after losing was condemned by the god to be flayed alive. Arthur Golding's translation (published in 1567) describes the process in graphic terms:

For all his crying, o'er his ears quite pullèd was his skin
Nought else he was than one whole wound. The grisly blood did spin
From every part; the sinews lay discovered to the eye;
The quivering veins without a skin lay beating nakedly.
The panting bowels in his bulk ye might have numbered well.
And in his breast the sheer small strings a man might easily tell. (Book VI, ll. 493-8)

Several critics have argued that the Venetian painter Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas* (?1572) was a veiled response to Bragadino's death and, potentially, a critique of the Holy League's inability or unwillingness to rescue Cyprus, although others dispute this. Eamonn Carrabine summarises the arguments for and against the proposition that the painting was inspired by Bragadino's death in 'Reading a "Titian": Visual Methods and the Limits of Interpretation', *Deviant Behavior*, 39.4 (2018), 525-538 (533-4) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2017.1407113>> [accessed 19 August 2022].

⁷² Malim, sig. A4^r.

gains in the Eastern Mediterranean appears to have suggested to Gascoigne the contours of the Mounthermer knight's military career. Malim notes

y^e losse of those 3 notable ilands, to the great discomfort of all Christendome, to those Hellishe Turkes, Horseleches of Christian bloud: namely **Rhodes** beséeged on S. John Baptist day, and taken on S. Johns day the Evangelist, being the 27 day of December 1522. Scio or **Chios** being lost since my being there, taken of Piali Bassà with 80 Gallies, the 17 of Aprill 1566. And now last of all not onely Famagosta the cheefe holde and fortresse in **Cyprus** to have been lost of the Venetians the 15 of August last past 1571.⁷³

The True Report's account of Martinengo's captivity and ransom may also have inspired the Mounthermer knight's capture by the Ottomans at Chios, after which he is ransomed for two thousand '[z]echynes of glistering golde' (l. 45). As Pigman drily observes, '[q]uite a price it was, too, since Count Nestore Martinengo paid 500 for his ransom after Famagusta'.⁷⁴ Gascoigne's borrowings from *The True Report* allow us to date the masque's composition with some precision: Malim dated his dedication to Leicester 23 March 1572, and Gascoigne travelled to the Spanish Netherlands in July of the same year, indicating that the masque was composed in the spring or early summer of 1572. Robert Ralston Cawley, who first identified the relationship between *A Devise of a Maske* and *The True Report* in 1928, claimed a number of other resonances between the two, arguing that the masque's description of the Battle of Lepanto was also influenced by descriptions of the Siege of Famagusta found in Malim's pamphlet. As I will demonstrate, Gascoigne in fact had other sources for the boy's account of Lepanto.

Although it occupies a significantly greater number of lines than the Siege of Famagusta in *A Devise*, the masque's account of the Battle of Lepanto has been under-examined by critics. As Markidou has noted, to date 'the majority of scholars [who have written about *A Devise*] have focused solely on the siege of Famagusta, and until 2003 no critical study had even mentioned the battle of Lepanto'.⁷⁵ Markidou is not quite correct. Chew referred to the masque as celebrating 'a double wedding and the great recent victory over the Turks'.⁷⁶ In an article

⁷³ Malim, sig. B1^{r-v}.

⁷⁴ Pigman, p. 658. Intriguingly, the 1575 version of *A Devise* features a note to this line, explaining a zechyne as a 'peece of golde like the Crusado' – a coin that is also mentioned in both *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello*.

⁷⁵ Markidou, 81.

⁷⁶ Chew, p. 128.

published in 1995, Suheyla Artemel also mentioned the masque's dramatisation of events at Lepanto in a footnote.⁷⁷ However, Markidou is right about the general critical neglect of the representation of Lepanto in *A Devis*. The first significant acknowledgement of Gascoigne's interest in Lepanto can be found in David Bergeron's article "'Are We Turned Turks?': English Pageants and the Stuart Court", published in 2010.⁷⁸ Consequently, little attention has been paid to Gascoigne's sources for his depiction of the battle. In an otherwise comprehensive critical commentary on the masque, Pigman states that 'Gascoigne must have had a source for the battle [of Lepanto] because some of the details he gives are close to those in contemporary accounts, but I have not been able to identify it'.⁷⁹ No other scholar has until now identified that source. Gascoigne's primary source for the battle was indeed, as Pigman suggests, a contemporary account. The details about the Battle of Lepanto are almost certainly drawn from a news pamphlet entitled *Letters Sent From Venice. Anno. 1571*, published in London by Henry Bynneman. Its title notwithstanding, the pamphlet is made up of translations of three separate French texts. *The Calendar of State Papers Foreign* records the receipt on 3 December 1571 of 'Advertisements from France', that included 'News of the Battle of Lepanto and the loss of Famagusta' and 'Captures and losses at Lepanto'.⁸⁰ The French originals may have been forwarded to London from Paris by the English ambassador, Francis Walsingham, in line with the practices described by Sowerby above. The first part is a detailed account of the battle, followed by a description of the rapturous reception the news received in Venice. The second is a letter written on behalf of the French king to the Bishop of Paris, repeating the details of the battle outlined in the first, and ordering acts of public thanksgiving; this letter refers to news of the battle being received from the French ambassador resident in Venice.⁸¹ The third part is an address to 'the Christian Reader',

⁷⁷ Suheyla Artemel, "'The Great Turk's Particular Inclination to Red Herring': The Popular Image of the Turk during the Renaissance in England", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 5.2 (1995), 188-208 (201, n. 6) < muse.jhu.edu/article/670136 > [accessed 20 March 2022]

⁷⁸ David M Bergeron, "'Are We Turned Turks?': English Pageants and the Stuart Court", *Comparative Drama*, 44.3 (2010), 255-275 (257) < <https://www.proquest.com/docview/765949743?accountid=9730> > [accessed 20 March 2022]

⁷⁹ Pigman in Gascoigne, p. 660.

⁸⁰ *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, 1558-1589*, ed. by Allan James Crosby (London: Longman & Co, 1874), p. 569 (SP 70/121 f.42).

⁸¹ *Letters sent from venice. anno. 1571 containing the certaine and true newes of the most noble victorie of the christians ouer the armie of the great turke: And the names of the lordes & gentlemen of the christians slaine in the same battell. translated out of the frenche copie printed at paris by guille[...]d niuerd, with the kings priuiledge* (London, 1571), sig. C3^v. Dimmock discusses the newsletter, but does not connect them with *A Devis*. See Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 83.

proclaiming the role of divine providence in the victory. Curiously, the pamphlet's unnamed English translator has left in a reference to Lepanto as victory over 'the enimies of ye holy Church', a category that almost certainly included Protestant England in the mind of its original author, highlighting the extent to which the victory (temporarily) papered over confessional divisions.⁸² Although presumably published individually in Paris, there is no evidence that they were available separately in English, so I will treat *Letters Sent from Venice* as a single text. The absence of any paratextual material means that it is uncertain under whose aegis the newsletter was printed, although Bynneman was known to have been under the patronage of Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury.⁸³

A Devise features several details otherwise found only in *Letters Sent from Venice*, indicating that Gascoigne referred to it when composing the masque. Both texts refer to the fleet of the Holy League waiting for the Turks in 'Argostelly', a location that appears exclusively in these two texts; Argostelly is almost certainly Argostoli, a port on the western coast of Kefalonia, close to the entrance to the Gulf of Patras, where the battle took place.⁸⁴ The Mounthermer boy names his Turkish captor 'Prelybassa' (l. 168). The only other English source for the name is again *Letters Sent from Venice*, which refers in passing to 'the Bassa which came [to Lepanto] in steade of Prely'; Prely may be a misspelling of 'Piali'.⁸⁵ Gascoigne's 'Prelybassa' appears to be a composite of two historic figures, Piali Ali Pasha (whom Malim names as the Turkish general who conquered Chios) and Müezzinzade Ali Pasha, the Ottoman commander at Lepanto, who did indeed die in the manner the boy describes. To what extent Gascoigne deliberately set out to create a fictional Turkish general is unclear. The masque features several references to other real individuals, so it may have been a mistake caused by Gascoigne's misreading of the reference to Prely in his source. *Letters Sent from Venice* describes how 'having cut off the bassaes head', Christian soldiers 'put it upon a pyke, which Don lean helde in his hande, as a trophee'.⁸⁶ This arresting visual image found its way into the

⁸² *Letters*, sig. C3^v.

⁸³ See Bynneman's entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁸⁴ *Letters*, sig. A2^r, Gascoigne, l. 174. A search for 'Argostelly' and variant spellings on the *Early English Books Online* database results only in *Letters Sent From Venice* and the two collections of Gascoigne's writing featuring *A Devise*, published in 1573 and 1575 respectively.

⁸⁵ *Letters*, sig. A3^v.

⁸⁶ *Letters*, sig. A3^r.

boy's narrative, as we have seen: he describes how his captor's 'head from shoulders cut vpon a Pyke did stand' (l. 221), which 'Don John of Austrye helde in his triumphant hand' (l. 222).

In fact, Gascoigne appears to have made extensive use of details from *Letters Sent from Venice*, and not just for his account of Lepanto. In *Letters Sent From Venice*, the Ottoman fleet is described as 'rather lyke a Forest than a navie' that 'came in great disorder'.⁸⁷ On first sighting the Turkish fleet near Cyprus, the Mounthermer boy claims that it was '[m]ore forrest like than orderly' (l. 86). Later, at the Battle of Lepanto, the boy describes the Ottoman fleet as '[d]isorderly' (l. 186); the propensity for disorder seems to hint at Turkish moral disorder.⁸⁸ Details of Turkish losses at Lepanto described in *A Devise* seem also to have been drawn directly from *Letters Sent From Venice*. According to the pamphlet, 'Clxxx. Galeys of the enimies' were taken, 'xxv. were burned, xv. soonke' and 'xx. thousande Turks' slain; 'xiiij. thousand Christians' – mostly galley slaves – were freed.⁸⁹ The Mounthermer boy is able to give his Montague audience a satisfyingly detailed reminder of Turkish losses (as above, the relevant details are highlighted):

And of the Turkishe traine were **eyght score Galleys tane**
Fifteene sunke[,] five and twenty burnt and brought unto their bane
Of Christians set at large were **foureteene thousand** soules
Turkes **twentie thousand** registred in Beelzebub his rolles[.] (ll. 227-30)

The vivid final line here, expressing a sentiment which would not have been out of place in chivalric romance, carefully ends the boy's description of the Battle of Lepanto in a way that puts the emphasis on the defeat of Christendom's (putative) enemy, rather than on the Holy League's triumph.

However, although *Letters Sent from Venice* provided Gascoigne with the all-important details of the victory at Lepanto, its descriptions of the battle reveal little about the experiences of combatants or other eye witnesses; unlike Martinengo's *Relatione*, the sources for *Letters Sent From Venice* are not obviously based on eye witness testimony.

⁸⁷ *Letters*, sig. C1^r.

⁸⁸ In reality, Ottoman forces were acknowledged in the west as models of military discipline. See Chew p. 107-9 for a discussion of this.

⁸⁹ *Letters*, sig. A3^{r-v}.

Furthermore, Gascoigne had no personal experience of combat on which to draw at this stage. To describe the battle itself, the poet sought inspiration from another famous sea battle in which western naval forces defeated a powerful eastern foe. In one of the masque's most compelling and exciting passages, worth quoting in full, the Mounthermer boy describes the chaos and confusion of battle:

The barks are battered sore the gallies gald with shot
The hulks are hit and every man must stand unto his lot
The powder sendes his smoke into the cruddy skies
The smoulder stops our nose with stench the fume offends our eies
The pots of lime vnsleakt from highest top are cast
The parched pease are not forgot to make them slip as fast
The wilde fire works are wrought and cast in foemens face
The grappling hooks are stretched foorth y pikes are pusht a pace
The halberts hewe on hed the browne billes bruse the bones
The harquebush doth spit his spight with prety perfining stones
The drummes crie dub a dub the braying trumpets blow
The whistling fifes are seldom herd these sounds do drowne them so
The voyce of warlike wights to comfort them that faynt
The pitious plaints of golden harts which were with feares attaint
The groning of such ghosts as gasped nowe for breath
The praiera of the better sort prepared unto death[.] (ll. 189-204)

In a relationship first identified by W. Todd Furniss in 1953, the passage appears to be inspired by Chaucer's description of the Battle of Actium, which had been republished in 1561 in London, in *The Legend of Good Women*:⁹⁰

Up goth the trompe, and for to shoute and shete,
And peynen hem to sette on with the sunne.
With grysely soun out goth the grete gonne,
And heterly they hurtelen al atones,
And from the top doun come the grete stones.
In goth the grapnel, so ful of crokes;
Among the ropes renne the sherynge-hokes.
In with the polax preseth he and he;
Byhynde the mast begynnyth he to fle,
And out ageyn, and dryveth hym overbord;
He styngeth hym upon his speres ord;

⁹⁰ See William Sayers, 'Chaucer's Description of the Battle of Actium in the *Legend of Cleopatra* and the Medieval Tradition of Vegetius's *De Re Militari*', *The Chaucer Review*, 42.1 (2007) < <https://muse-jhu-edu.bris.idm.oclc.org/article/217688> > [accessed 26 August 2020] for the sources Chaucer might have consulted when describing galley warfare.

He rent the seyl with hokes lyke a sithe;
 He bryngeth the cuppe, and biddeth hem be blythe;
 He poureth pesen upon the haches slidere;
 With pottes ful of lyme they gon togidere;
 And thus the longe day in fyght they spende,
 Tyl at the laste, as every thyng hath ende,
 Antony is schent and put hym to the flyghte,
 And al his folk to-go, that best go myghte[.]⁹¹ (ll. 635-54)

The meaning of Chaucer's 'pesen' has attracted much speculation, becoming something of a textual crux. Gascoigne's reference to 'parched pease' (l. 194) suggests that he understood it as dried peas, cast onto the deck to make it slippery underfoot.⁹² Like the references to lime, grappling hooks and stones, dried peas do not appear in any contemporary account of the Battle of Lepanto. However, although Chaucer's lines clearly supplied Gascoigne with a compelling description of galley warfare, there are significant tonal differences between the two. While Chaucer's account appears to centre the experience of the combatants, the 'he and he' (l. 642), this element is strangely absent from the boy's narrative. It is as though the weapons themselves are possessed of a sort of demonic agency, with the halberts, harquebushes (arquebuses were early firearms) and pots of lime leading the attacks of their own volition. Nevertheless, the lines suggest a disorienting sense of dissociation, as the boy – who, we should recall, is witnessing the battle from a Turkish galley – scans the scene, apparently unable quite to take in what is happening around him. It is not entirely clear why Gascoigne chose this strategy; while it is tempting to interpret it as the poet's commentary on the dehumanising aspects of warfare (which Gascoigne was to experience first-hand only a short time later), the masque's enthusiastic celebration of Turkish casualties elsewhere in the masque suggests otherwise. The lines are nevertheless curiously equivocal, perhaps registering Gascoigne's own ambivalence, as a Protestant poet, writing a masque that celebrated a famous Catholic victory, on behalf of a Catholic patron.

⁹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Legend of Good Women' in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 588-628 (p. 604).

⁹² See W. Todd Furniss, 'Gascoigne and Chaucer's Pesen', *Modern Language Notes*, 68.2 (1953) < <https://www-istor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/2909702> > [accessed 26 August 2020] for a discussion of how Gascoigne's use of the term illuminates Chaucer's meaning. No other scholar has pursued the connection.

Gascoigne was not the only writer to notice parallels between Lepanto and the Battle of Actium, a naval confrontation that took place in 31 BCE in the Ionian Sea, not far from the Gulf of Patras (the site of the Battle of Lepanto) between Octavian (later Augustus), and Mark Antony and Cleopatra. As Pigman comments, '[t]he comparison must have occurred to many'.⁹³ Venetian historiographer Gianpietro Contarini, who fought at Lepanto, wrote in 1572 that it was

the greatest and most famous naval battle which has ever taken place from the time of Caesar Augustus until now, and it has occurred in almost exactly the same place that he conquered Mark Antony [in 31 BC] for that was near the promontory of Actium[.]⁹⁴

Octavian's victory at Actium made him the sole ruler of the Roman Empire and, in due course, its first emperor. During his reign, Rome expanded its territories in the Near East to include Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus and Egypt, as well as conquering Hispania and subduing Gaul, ushering in a period of peace and prosperity for Rome that was to last for two centuries. He was also emperor at the time of Christ's birth. In the jubilation in Catholic Europe that followed victory at Lepanto, many commentators expressed hopes of turning the tide of Ottoman advances and establishing a new *Pax Romana* (or perhaps *Pax Christiana*) in the Eastern Mediterranean. The view from England may not have been quite so positive, for reasons hinted at in Lee's letter to Burghley. If Lepanto was the new Actium, the new Octavian was probably Philip II of Spain. Likening Lepanto to Actium, where Octavian triumphed over a foreign queen, might not have been an entirely happy comparison. Writing in haste, Gascoigne may have recalled Chaucer's passage as a stirring account of an earlier western victory over an eastern foe, without thinking through its local resonances. The lines perhaps highlight the potential for charged resonances to creep into the text in a manner beyond the author's control.

Although he borrows extensively from other texts, Gascoigne only acknowledges the masque's indebtedness to one textual source, and then only obliquely. In his preface to *A Devise*, he writes that he 'call[ed] to minde that there is a noble house of the Mountacutes in

⁹³ Pigman, l. 193-4n.

⁹⁴ Qtd in Setton, p. 1058. Contarini's account of Lepanto was translated and published in London in 1587 in the anonymous translation *The second part of the booke of battailes, fought in our age taken out of the best authors and writers in sundrie languages*.

Italie'.⁹⁵ The coincidence of his patron's name featuring in a recent popular Italian *novella* seems to have suggested the Venetian Montagues to Gascoigne. They appear to be inspired by Arthur Brooke's translated *novella*, *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Iuliet written first in Italian by Bandell, and now in Englishe by Ar. Br* (1562, repr. 1567). A version of the story was also published in William Painter's *The second tome of the palace of pleasure* (1567). In Brooke's version the warring families are called the Montagues and Capels; in Painter's they are Montesches and Capellets. Looking at the spelling of these names in *A Devise*, it seems most likely Gascoigne had Brooke's version in mind here. The Mounthermer boy describes how the Italian Montagues – silently relocated by Gascoigne from Verona to Venice – wore a token in their hats so that they might be 'knowne from Capels where they passe / For auncient grutch which long ago twene these two houses was' (ll. 263-4). No description of the token is given, although it is hinted that it was an emblem or device also found in the English Montague arms; the Venetian Montague shows the Mounthermer boy his hat in which he bore '[t]his token which the Mountacutes dyd beare alwaies' (l. 262). No other version of the story mentions a token; it appears to be Gascoigne's invention, perhaps introduced in order to facilitate the reference to the Capels, which in turn emphasises the Venetian Montagues' literary origins. It may also have made the Italian Montagues a little less martial and threatening. Other than the coincidence of the shared name, there is no obvious thematic link between the *novella* and the masque. It is perhaps a salutary reminder that these kinds of intertextual relationships are sometimes the result of hasty and opportunistic borrowings rather than part of a carefully thought out strategy.

There is also a group of texts, rather than a specific work, that shapes the masque's imaginary geography, one that has been largely overshadowed in critical discussions by the work's interest in contemporary events. The masque consciously represents the Mounthermer knight as a figure from chivalric romance, his history (as recounted by his son) repeatedly recalling popular stories in which Christian knights confronted Saracens across an imagined Eastern Mediterranean. His characterisation seems to deliberately recall the crusading knights who 'battle Saracens for the defense or expansion of Christendom with or without

⁹⁵ Gascoigne, Introduction to *A Devise of a Maske*, p. 301.

ecclesiastical approval'.⁹⁶ The entire region – Rhodes, Chios and Cyprus – is defined in such texts as a place in which Christian West (embodied here by the Mounthermer knight) confronted the Islamic East. Although later obliged to introduce both the Venetians and, briefly, the Spanish (in the person of Don John), the masque attempts to present the Eastern Mediterranean world in binary terms typical of the medieval chivalric romances discussed in Chapter 1, in which noble Christians battle treacherous, tyrannical and lustful Turks. Like his medieval antecedents, the knight presents his martial activities as divinely sanctioned, telling his crew that

... who with hardy hand most turkish tikes can quell
Let him accompt in conscience, to please his maker well. (ll. 119-20)

Typically, there is no place in the masque's romance-inflected view of the Mediterranean for the region's other populations. Gascoigne presents a Mediterranean world apparently devoid of Greeks. In doing so, he perpetuates the chivalric romance tradition (discussed in the previous chapter) of presenting the Eastern Mediterranean as the dividing line between Christian West and Islamic East, and erasing the local population altogether.

Acknowledging Cyprus's Greek population would also complicate what I will argue below is the work's particular interest in the Venetians. It would, moreover, draw attention to the other European confessional schism that the masque tries so hard not to mention. The masque repeatedly emphasises Mounthermer as a Christian knight, who has dedicated his life to protecting fellow Christians against 'the Christian enmie, the Turke that Prince of pride' (l. 28), his chivalric status underscored by the boy's claim regarding 'his spurres of knighthod wan' (l. 38). His journey towards Cyprus as a 'venturer' (l. 59) is imbued with a questing spirit, as he hopes 'some greate exployte to find' (l. 62). Moved by reports of 'Christian carkasses, in cruell peeces cut' (l. 32), the knight took part in 'the trade of all the Turkishe warres' (l. 35), but his is a struggle framed as a personal endeavour. Gascoigne presents Mounthermer as an individualistic Christian knight-errant, more closely resembling the protagonists of chivalric romance than the problematic English Catholics actually fighting the Turks in the Eastern

⁹⁶ Lee Manion, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 7.

Mediterranean. Knights-errant, Richard Kaeuper argues, were 'less likely to seek adventures on a panoramic battlefield strewn with slain pagans, or even in heroic defence of legitimate monarchy as guarantor of order, than in individual acts intended to prove worth and to right wrongs'.⁹⁷ Where Mounthermer differs from Kaeuper's knight-errant is that, whereas the identity of the latter's opponents are relatively unimportant, Gascoigne's protagonist defines himself by whom he fights against.

Mounthermer's chivalric credentials may be intended to disguise or neutralise any threat he poses to Protestant England, by both fictionalising and historicising him. Starting his military career at the 1522 Siege of Rhodes and confining his martial activity to the Eastern Mediterranean for the following half-century, the knight is rhetorically removed from the English Reformation and the religious and political convulsions that followed. In fact, the masque makes no acknowledgement whatsoever of the doctrinal schisms that divided Mounthermer's homeland and much of the rest of Europe, presenting instead an imaginary united 'Christendom'. In this respect, Gascoigne's masque looks back to a time in which Christendom was (theoretically) united against its Islamic foe. The Mounthermer knight, and the worldview he represents, is profoundly nostalgic, recalling a pre-Reformation world. However, as his eventual death at Cyprus seems to acknowledge, there was no place for a superannuated Catholic knight-errant in post-Reformation England. Mounthermer's son (and his real-life counterparts), the masque seems to suggest, must seek another way to serve Christendom.

England and Venice in *A Devise of a Maske*

The limited critical attention that *A Devise* has received has generally assumed that its primary purpose was to entertain the wedding guests, even though – as Pigman observes – 'the siege of Famagusta and the battle of Lepanto might strike one as an inappropriate subject for a wedding', although we might recall here that the proposed entertainments at Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* included the battle of the centaurs and

⁹⁷ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 253.

the dismemberment of Orpheus.⁹⁸ Few scholars are sensitive to its extra-diegetic purposes. Chew, who does not refer to Montague's Catholicism, suggests the masque celebrates 'at once a double wedding and the great recent victory over the Turks'.⁹⁹ Similarly, Bergeron does not make any reference to Montague's Catholicism, suggesting he was either unaware of it or considered it irrelevant.¹⁰⁰ Spates, while recognising the political implications of Montague's Catholicism, argues that the masque 'seeks to both educate and celebrate English Catholics by writing them into two of the great conflicts of the period', the Siege of Famagusta and the Battle of Lepanto.¹⁰¹ He *almost* seems to acknowledge a wider agenda when he comments 'Gascoigne's narrator bridges the world between Catholics faithful to a Protestant Monarch, and their Venetian counterparts, in an active alliance with a Spanish king who was intent on Elizabeth I's destruction', but the observation is not pursued.¹⁰² Instead he argues that Gascoigne invents the Venetian Montagues simply to provide, via an imaginary aristocratic kinship, 'legitimate grounds for interest [in Lepanto and Famagusta] outside of contentious religious and political conflict'.¹⁰³

None of these perspectives address the implications of the masque's closing sequence, in which the boy introduces Thomas Browne to the Venetians, requesting that he 'may your trunchman be / Your herald and your ambassadour' (ll. 355-6). The masquing truchman gives way at this point to a diplomatic truchman, or interpreter, bringing the work to what I want to argue is its rhetorical climax. A few lines later, Thomas requests on behalf of the 'Venetians' that 'you will give them licence yet to come and see you soone' (l. 370). These lines are the moment to which the whole drama – including its account of the death of Bragadino and the victory at Lepanto – has been leading. Rather than, as Spates claims, the fictive relationship between English and Venetian Montagues legitimising the masque's interest in Famagusta and Lepanto, those events (and the sympathy they engendered in England) are used to legitimise the work's interest in Venice.

⁹⁸ Pigman in Gascoigne, p. 656.

⁹⁹ Chew, p. 128.

¹⁰⁰ See Bergeron, 257.

¹⁰¹ Spates, 'Gascoigne's Device', p. 33.

¹⁰² Spates, 'Gascoigne's Device', p. 38.

¹⁰³ Spates, 'Gascoigne's Device', p. 43.

The masque's purpose lies in the complicated position in which English Catholics like Viscount Montague and Sir William Dormer found themselves in the early 1570s, loyal to their Protestant monarch but under increasing suspicion after the Northern Rebellion and the uncovering of the Ridolfi Plot in the summer of 1571. The English response to events at Famagusta and Lepanto offered a brief window of pan-Christian if not quite unity, sympathy, on which the masque sought to capitalise. Describing English responses to the victory at Lepanto, Marshall argues that those who 'warmed themselves with ale around the [celebratory] November bonfires, understood that Catholics were not always, and not necessarily, the enemy'.¹⁰⁴ English relief and jubilation was, he suggests, 'part of a broader pattern of anxious awareness of the Turkish advance in the Mediterranean'.¹⁰⁵ However, Lepanto – and, indeed, Famagusta – occurred at 'a critical and neuralgic moment for Protestant England's relationship with its Catholic "other"'.¹⁰⁶ Who, Marshall asks, was Protestant England's 'real enemy' at this time?¹⁰⁷ The Turks were a long way from England; Catholic Spain, with forces in the Netherlands, was a far more imminent threat.

A Devis of a Maske suggests to its audience a way in which loyal English Catholics, represented by the Mounthermer boy, might be permitted to serve their country's interests. English Catholics, the masque proposes, could act as a bridge between Protestant England and Catholic Venice. The fictive blood tie between the English and Venetian Montagues is a metaphor for their shared Catholicism. The description of Venetian-controlled Cyprus – *Leffort Brittaines*'s destination – as 'our frendes' (l. 80) signals the masque's presentation of Venice as a potential ally. Significantly, Gascoigne presents both the Siege of Famagusta and Lepanto as largely Venetian rather than Catholic affairs, using 'Venetian' and 'Christian' almost interchangeably when describing both events. In the case of Cyprus this is largely accurate, although it (typically) overlooks the Greek Cypriot experience. Given the Spanish and Papal involvement in the Holy League, Gascoigne needed to be more careful in his representation of Lepanto. Christian naval forces are described in the masque first as the 'Venetian fleete' (l. 173), then 'the force of Christian knightes' (l. 178) and the 'christian crew'

¹⁰⁴ Marshall, 142.

¹⁰⁵ Marshall 142-3.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Marshall, 136.

(l. 183). A reference to the 'christian crew' (l. 95) of *Leffort Brittainne* perhaps also suggests that the Mounthermer knight and crew's heroic resistance to the Ottomans represented a proleptic English contribution to the victory at Lepanto.

While not *quite* claiming the victory at Lepanto was a Venetian triumph, Gascoigne for the most part discreetly passes over the contribution of the Spanish and other Catholic forces. Only the participation of Don Juan of Austria is (by necessity) acknowledged, albeit in a somewhat equivocal fashion. Given the continuing threat that Spain represented in English eyes, and the masque's agenda, Gascoigne seems to have felt it necessary to differentiate between the allies. Where the unnamed Venetian general at Lepanto was described as 'good' (l. 214), and the unfortunate Bragadino was 'noble' (l. 156), the Holy League's commander is first referred to only as the 'generall of Spayne' (l. 211). He is mentioned one more time, as he holds 'triumphant' (l. 222) Prelybassa's severed head on a pike. Markidou argues that, although displaying the decapitated head of the enemy was common practice in sixteenth-century warfare, the incident 'nevertheless constituted a sign of extreme cruelty'.¹⁰⁸ She goes on to claim that the boy's reaction to the incident registers Gascoigne's awareness of 'the menace of moral contamination of war', suggesting that his description of the 'the joye [that] pierst [his] heart' (l. 118) on witnessing Prelybassa's death invited the audience's moral censure.¹⁰⁹ Markidou bases her claim on what she argues was Gascoigne's own experience of conflict. However his first experience of military action at Flushing post-dated his composition of *A Devise of a Maske*. More plausibly, Bradley Salamon argues that the moment 'suture[s]' Turk and Spaniard 'together in reciprocal violence'.¹¹⁰ The incident (which is described in *Letters Sent from Venice*) perhaps gestures towards a Spanish capacity for violence that differentiated them, at least in English eyes, from their Venetian co-religionists.

The masque does not seem particularly interested in the Venetian Montagues as individuals or even as a group; we learn little about them beyond their reported 'curtesy' (l. 307) and nobility. They are characterised by means of a series of 'Venetian' tropes and clichés. Sailing up the Thames in their 'gondolaes' (l. 310), wearing extravagant 'Venetian robes' (l. 340),

¹⁰⁸ Markidou, 85.

¹⁰⁹ Markidou, 85.

¹¹⁰ Bradley Salamon, 6.

the main function of these ‘magnificoes’ (l. 315) is to embody Venice itself. The masque dramatises what Markidou describes as ‘a quasi-Venetian embassy to a distinguished Catholic Englishman’s estate’.¹¹¹ ‘Gascoigne daringly represents’, she argues, the Catholic Viscount Montague ‘as a potential key figure in Elizabeth’s long-standing effort to obtain formal diplomatic relations with the Venetian republic’.¹¹² And, in case the meaning was not sufficiently clear, the performance ends with the request that ‘you’ – who ‘you’ might be specifically is explored below – ‘will give them licence yet, to come and see you soone’ (l. 370).

As a powerful, wealthy and independent state with a long tradition of resistance to the Spanish and the Papacy (and one with whom England had historically enjoyed strong commercial ties), Venice was an attractive but elusive potential ally for the English. As the city’s willingness to continue to do business with the Ottomans demonstrated (the Signiory officially ceded Cyprus to the Turks in 1573, in return for the restitution of trading rights, for example), confessional differences were no bar to alliances judged sufficiently advantageous by the Venetians. However, as John Watkins observes, ‘England had comparatively few commercial, and even fewer political contacts with Venice during Elizabeth’s reign’, the city’s place in the English imagination ‘exceed[ing] its actual place in Elizabethan foreign policy’.¹¹³ Venice kept her distance from Protestant England not because of any particular religious antipathy or animosity – France and the Holy Roman Empire each sent ambassadors to England throughout Elizabeth’s reign (and there was even a Spanish ambassador in London until the mid 1580s) – but to maintain her policy of neutrality and to avoid conflict with the Papacy.¹¹⁴ Watkins also suggests that Elizabeth’s reliance on advisors, such as William Cecil, of great ability but relatively humble origins, was a further obstacle to closer ties between the two nations; as he notes, references to the low birth of many of her most trusted advisors permeate Venetian accounts of the English Court.¹¹⁵ Elizabeth, from a Venetian perspective, ‘was too quick to disregard the kind of aristocratic prerogatives on which their own republic

¹¹¹ Markidou, 90.

¹¹² Markidou, 89-90.

¹¹³ John Watkins, ‘Elizabeth Through Venetian Eyes’, *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 30.1 (2004), 121-138 (121) at < <https://doi.org/10.1163/23526963-90000278> > [accessed 11 April 2020].

¹¹⁴ See Watkins, 129.

¹¹⁵ See Watkins, 126.

rested'.¹¹⁶ Indeed, one of the charges levelled against Elizabeth in *Regnans in Excelsis* was that she 'has removed the royal Council, composed of the nobility of England, and has filled it with obscure men, being heretics'.¹¹⁷ A member of the English Catholic nobility might succeed as intermediary, the masque seems to suggest, where previous English overtures had failed.

However, when examined closely, it is not at all apparent that the masque's daring proposal is directed towards Viscount Montague. Although the Mounthermer boy claims to have arrived at the Montague wedding to request that the Venetians might be made welcome by 'the chieftest Mountacute' (l. 317), it is the younger generation of Montagues in whom the masque seems more interested. The Mounthermer boy selects Thomas Browne, the Viscount's third son, to act as intermediary between the Venetians and the audience. After receiving the 'Venetians', Thomas speaks not to the viscount (who, as the most senior person present, would have been the expected recipient of the masque's tribute), but addresses instead his 'Brother' (l. 357) Anthony, followed by his 'sister' (l. 365) Elizabeth, and their spouses, before requesting 'you will give them licence yet, to come and see you soon' (l. 370). There are no textual clues to indicate to whom, specifically, the request is directed, but there is no indication that Thomas has turned to address his father at this point. Moreover, Viscount Montague is addressed directly at several points in the boy's dramatic recitation, but always as 'my Lord' (l. 317, l. 330, l. 345) or 'your Lordship' (l. 336), never simply 'you'. Neither term of address is used by Thomas here. Nor does he direct any remarks to his 'Father'. Rather than the masque representing Gascoigne's proposal to Viscount Montague, as Markidou suggests, it is more plausible that its intended audience was the younger Montagues (and, as a secondary audience, the younger Dormers and other assembled members of the English Catholic gentry and nobility).¹¹⁸ This is, at least, the direction in which the limited textual evidence points.

¹¹⁶ Watkins, 127.

¹¹⁷ *Regnans in Excelsis* available at *Papal Encyclicals Online* < <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius05/p5regnans.htm> > [accessed 11 May 2020].

¹¹⁸ Markidou interprets the masque as Gascoigne's, rather than Montague's, suggestion that 'the Elizabethan government should pursue diplomatic relations with Venice more actively, a role that Montague could play successfully (if informally) at the time', describing it as 'the policy that Gascoigne advocates', and the introduction of the Venetians as a 'daring political move on [the author's] behalf' (Markidou, 91, 90, 79). Given the matter's political sensitivity, this seems unlikely. While Markidou's claim that the masque constitutes a proposal that the Montagues act as go-betweens between the English government and the Venetians is

When examined through the lens of the masque's Anglo-Venetian proposal, it is possible to read Mounthermer *père et fils* as symbolising the choices facing the English Catholic nobility in Elizabeth's England, with the Mounthermer knight representing rebellion and military opposition (its threatening potential partially concealed by its Mediterranean setting), and his son advocating constructive collaboration. I argued above that the masque appears to present the Mounthermer knight as an English Bragadino. The corollary of that interpretation is that Bragadino might also be understood by the masque's Catholic audience as standing in, momentarily, for Mounthermer, his public flaying analogous to being hung, drawn and quartered – the prescribed punishment for traitors in sixteenth-century England. We might recall here that Catholic apologists frequently referred to English Protestants as 'Turks'. If such a warning is encoded in the masque, it is discreet and evanescent as, indeed, it would need to be. Whether or not Bragadino's death is actually ghosted by more local concerns in this way, the masque is equivocal about the Mounthermer knight's sacrifices, his activities leading him to lose first his estates (mortgaged to his wife's kin, the Montagues, to pay his ransom), and then his life, whilst his son risks lifelong imprisonment by the Turks.¹¹⁹ After his rescue at Lepanto, the boy pointedly seeks to 'reedifye the walles / Which my good father had decayde' (ll. 287-8) – 'my good father' perhaps beginning to sound a little ironic at this stage in the narrative – not by following in his father's martial footsteps, but by travelling with his Venetian kinfolk to Italy to 'trayne of youthfull yeares in knowledge to excell' (l. 286). However, the masque does not appear to advocate scholarly exile either. The providential wind which returns the Mounthermer boy to England, with his Venetian relatives in tow, indicates a third path for young English Catholics – non-military engagement in English politics, in a way that seeks to turn their Catholicism into an advantage rather than a drawback.

persuasive, she misreads it at key points. In particular, she appears to confuse Thomas Browne with his father, claiming at one point that the Mounthermer boy 'underlines the Viscount's triple role as "tronchman", "herald" and "ambassador" and requests the Venetian Montagues "let [the Viscount] play all for me"' (91). In fact, it is quite clear that the boy is referring to Thomas Browne, the Viscount's third son at this point; a few lines later Thomas addresses one of the bridegrooms as '[b]rother' (l. 367). The viscount himself pays no active part in the masque.

If this *was* the argument made by the masque, then it was not one that gained any traction with the authorities; there is no evidence that the suggestion of using English Catholics to act as intermediaries between England and Venice was ever seriously considered by Elizabeth or the Privy Council. In 1573 Venice suspended all mercantile shipping to England because of the threat posed by English privateers operating in the waters off France and Spain.¹²⁰ Although the 1570s were uncertain times for English Catholics, Viscount Montague personally weathered the political storms, and in 1586 was one of the peers appointed by Elizabeth to try Mary Queen of Scots. He confirmed his loyalty in 1588 by raising and leading a troop of horsemen, alongside his son and grandson, as part of the response to the Spanish Armada. Elizabeth sought the formal exchange of ambassadors with the Venetians throughout her reign, achieving it only at its close in 1603.¹²¹

Whatever more precise point about the role of Catholics in Elizabethan politics Gascoigne might be making, at the heart of the masque's deceptively multi-layered narrative is a vision of Cyprus as a place caught, perilously, between the Christian west and the Islamic east. The island features only in a relatively short section of *A Devis of a Maske*, but it resonates throughout the work, signifying on multiple levels. On the surface, the dramatic account of Bragadino's appalling fate legitimises, via the cross-confessional sympathies the event engendered, the masque's positive representation of English Catholics, bolstering the morale of an embattled community. Horror at the events at Famagusta (and, indeed, jubilation after Lepanto) also provided Gascoigne with an Eastern Mediterranean backdrop against which the masque could explore the complicated and dangerous position occupied by English Catholics in the early 1570s, with recent events at Famagusta perhaps acting, briefly, as an allegory for more local concerns. However, despite its evident contemporary preoccupations, *A Devis* is also a deeply nostalgic work, in which the emotional investments of medieval chivalric romance are mapped on the Siege of Famagusta and the Battle of Lepanto. Gascoigne evokes a world in which brave and noble Christian warriors, like the Mounthermer knight, travel across the 'Greekish Sea' to confront vicious and perfidious Muslims in the name of Christian

¹²⁰ At the same time as she was seeking formal relations with Venice, Elizabeth was also pursuing commercial and diplomatic ties with the Ottomans. William Harborne was first received by Murat III in Constantinople in 1578, and became Elizabeth's official ambassador in 1582.

¹²¹ Letters written by the first Venetian ambassador to Elizabeth's England, Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, have provided one of the best records available to historians of Elizabeth's final days.

piety. Through its conscious fictionalisation and historicisation of the Mounthermer knight, the masque recalls for its audience a world in which Christendom was undivided and one had to journey a long way from home to encounter the confessional 'other'.

Chapter 3: Thomas Dekker's *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus*

Perhaps surprisingly given the English interest in the loss of Famagusta described in the preceding chapter, Cyprus's new status as part of the Ottoman Empire was afforded relatively little literary or dramatic attention in the decades that followed the performance and subsequent publication of Gascoigne's *A Devis of a Maske*. Only a few literary texts explicitly recalled the events of 1571, and then only obliquely. James VI of Scotland's poem *Lepanto* (first published in Edinburgh in 1591, and reprinted in 1603 in London following James's accession to the English throne) mentions, almost in passing, the Turkish 'conquest [of] Cyprus ile' (l. 144), although the work's triumphant tone perhaps suggests – misleadingly – that the Holy League's victory at Lepanto had also restored Cyprus to Christendom.¹ In *Astrophil and Stella* (written in 1581, but published posthumously in 1591), the poet Philip Sidney also acknowledged the island's loss, declaring obliquely that

Love [Cupid], born in Greece, of late fled from his native place,
Forced by a tedious proof, that Turkish hardened heart
Is no fit mark to pierce with his fine pointed dart[.]² (Sonnet 8, ll. 1-3)

These sorts of allusions were, however, few and far between; Cyprus's new status as an Ottoman colony went largely unremarked in English literary culture.

A similar situation prevailed in the public playhouses. While so-called 'Turk plays' were a staple on the London stage, none was prepared to engage directly with the island's loss. Nevertheless, Cyprus haunts the margins of several 'Turk plays', without ever being brought fully onto the stage. Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1590) rewrote history altogether to show the Turks actually taking Malta (as discussed in the preceding chapter, the island's defenders successfully repelled the Turkish invasion force in 1565), while Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (ca. 1592/3) presented a highly fictionalised account of the loss of Rhodes. Both plays include references to Cyprus and Kyd's play actually features a Prince of Cyprus, who is killed in the Turkish attack, but neither allude directly to the island's loss. The

¹ James I/VI, *His Maiesties Lepanto, or Heroicall Song, being part of his Poeticall exercises at vacant houres* (London, 1603).

² Sir Philip Sidney, *The Major Works Including 'Astrophil and Stella'*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 155-6.

event looms menacingly over *Othello*, but no Turk ever appears on the stage; I will address that play's relationship with Cyprus's troubled history in the following chapter.

Old Fortunatus's Cypriot connection has been surprisingly little commented on. In an otherwise comprehensive introduction to the excellent 2020 Revels edition of the play, David McInnis makes no reference whatsoever to Cyprus, or what it might represent. Similarly, while Daniel Vitkus comments on the play's fantasy of limitless wealth and effortless travel, he does not (despite his interest in Mediterranean drama) ask how its Cypriot allusions might speak to those interests.³ William Sherman, who describes the play as an 'intensive literary exploration' of the place of gold in late Elizabethan society, similarly overlooks how Cyprus might resonate with those concerns.⁴ None of these critics appear to recognise how the play recalls a particular aspect of the island's history, or if they do, they do not appear to consider it important. These critics are right to sense that the play is unconcerned with contemporary Cyprus and instead focus on what it is trying to say about contemporary London; however, what I want to show in this chapter is that the latter concern is *dependent on* an engagement with Cyprus during a particular point in its history – its medieval economic heyday. Over the course of this chapter, I want to explore how Thomas Dekker adapted an early sixteenth-century German narrative centred on the island to comment on rather more local and contemporary concerns, to provide what I will argue is a searching critique of the social and moral values of contemporary London.⁵

Old Fortunatus: History and Chief Source

Thomas Dekker's *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus* was composed in the closing months of 1599, and published in quarto form in 1600. Along with *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (a play with which *Old Fortunatus* shares thematic interests in money, class and social

³ Daniel Vitkus, 'Labor and Travel on the Early Modern Stage: Representing the Travail of Travel in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and Shakespeare's *Pericles*' in *Working subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp.225-42.

⁴ William H. Sherman, "'Gold is the strength, the sinewes of the world": Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and England's Golden Age', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (January 1993), 85-102 (85) < https://www-jstor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/24321954?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents > [accessed 24 November 2020]

⁵ All references to the play are taken from Thomas Dekker, *The Revels Plays Old Fortunatus*, ed. by David McInnis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

mobility), also written in 1599, *Old Fortunatus* was one of Dekker's first solo authored plays. The play's exact history is uncertain. A lost play, written by an unknown dramatist, usually referred to as *1 Fortunatus* (it was listed as 'j p of fortewnatus' in theatrical impresario Philip Henslowe's account book), was performed six times by the Admiral's Men in the spring of 1596. It seems to have been an older play – none of the entries was marked 'ne', Henslowe's usual identifier for a new drama. Starting on 9 November 1599, Henslowe recorded the first of a series of payments to 'Thomas Decker in earnest of a booke cald the hole hystory of ffortunatus'.⁶ Dekker was paid £6 initially – the 'going rate' for a new play at this time – for writing *Old Fortunatus*.⁷ Many critics have argued – without, it must be said, producing much in the way of concrete evidence – that Dekker's play was either a reworking of the older play, or else a continuation of it. Other scholars argue that the amount Henslowe paid Dekker for writing the play indicates it was a wholly new work. McInnis provides a succinct summary of the evidence for both arguments in his introduction to the 2020 Revels edition of the play before concluding, on balance, that *Old Fortunatus* was probably an entirely new work, an assessment with which I am inclined to agree.⁸ This conclusion does not, however, substantially inform the arguments that follow. The payments recorded in Henslowe's account book show that Dekker first composed *Old Fortunatus* for public performance in The Rose theatre, before making significant alterations to the play to make it more suitable for performance at court over the Christmas period. He was paid an additional 20 shillings on 30 November 'for the altrenge of the boocke of the wholl history of fortewnatus'.⁹ A final payment of 40 shillings was made on the 12 December for 'the eande of fortewnatus for the corte', a change that I will argue below significantly altered some of the play's moral resonances.¹⁰ A court prologue and an epilogue were added, and the play's ending adapted to incorporate a tribute to Elizabeth. Several scenes were expanded to adapt the play to courtly tastes (I will highlight where I believe this to be the case); others were reduced to choric summary to accommodate these enhanced scenes.

⁶ *Henslowe's Diary: Second Edition*, ed. by R.A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 127

⁷ *Henslowe*, p. 127.

⁸ See McInnis, 'Introduction' to *The Revels Old Fortunatus*, ed. by David McInnis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 1-78 (pp. 2-6) for discussion of the relationship between the 1596 and 1599 plays, as well as the possibility of a *2 Fortunatus*, which McInnis convincingly dismisses.

⁹ *Henslowe*, p. 127.

¹⁰ *Henslowe*, p. 127.

The play was performed before Elizabeth and the English court at Richmond Palace on 27 December 1599. It seems to have been a period of professional triumph for Dekker: *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (perf. 1599, publ. 1610), was also performed there on 1 January 1600. The play was entered in the Stationers' Register as 'a comédie called *Old Fortunatus in his new lyverie*' in February 1600, before being published in quarto form later the same year.¹¹ The playbook's early publication need not imply that *Old Fortunatus* was not a commercial success; Roslyn Lander Knutson suggests that by January 1600, the Admiral's Men knew that they were soon to have a new venue, the Fortune, and that 'business men in the company [may have] decided to generate interest in that new playhouse by getting plays into print that advertised the company and its repertory'; *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and another Admiral's Men play, *Look About You*, were published around the same time.¹² As McInnis notes, if *Old Fortunatus* were staged in the spring of 1600, 'its title would by then have had the serendipitous effect of advertising the company's new venue, the contract for which had been signed on 8 January that year'.¹³ Print publication would, presumably, have added to the publicity.

The play is based on a popular German *Volksbuch* or chapbook, titled *Ausgabe des Fortunatus*, first published in Augsburg in Southern Germany in 1509.¹⁴ Rambling and episodic in

¹¹ In what McInnis describes as 'a rare lapse of judgement', E.K. Chambers cites the Stationers' Register as evidence that Dekker's play was a revision of the earlier play, rather than an entirely new work. Fredson Bowers agreed with Chambers, suggesting that '[t]he "new livery" referred to was provided by Dekker during November, 1599'. However, as McInnis observes, '[i]f this were the meaning of the Stationers' Register entry, it would be the only example of "lyverie" being used in such a context'. There is another explanation for the title, that responds to an identifiable moment in the play itself. Having been 'meanly attired' (s.d., 1.0) in the opening scene, the titular Fortunatus enters in the following dressed very 'gallant' (s.d., 2.140). The transformation was, as McInnis observes, sufficiently important to warrant both stage directions and comment within the dialogue. The entry in the Stationers' Register suggests that Fortunatus's transformation may have been a particularly memorable feature of the play. See McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 5.

¹² Roslyn Lander Knutson, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 70.

¹³ See McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 31.

¹⁴ All references to the *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* are taken from Michael Haldane's translation, available on his personal website, the only full translation of the *editio princeps*. Haldane is a leading *Fortunatus* scholar. See *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* (Augsburg, 1509), trans. by Michael Haldane, < <https://www.michaelhaldane.com/FortunatusLink.htm> > [accessed 22 July 2019]. There are other, later German versions of the tale, but this was the original. See Alexis F. Lange, 'On the Relation of *Old Fortunatus* to the *Volksbuch*', *Modern Language Notes*, 18.5 (May 1903), 141-4 < <https://doi.org/10.2307/2917211> > [accessed 20 November 2020] for a discussion of the play's possible relationship with different German editions. They do not alter the argument this chapter makes.

structure, Debra Prager describes it as an ‘early prose novel’.¹⁵ The first half of the story recounts the often picaresque adventures of a young Cypriot burgher, Fortunatus; the second half is concerned with the activities of his son Andelocia.¹⁶ The young Fortunatus leaves his impoverished parents in Famagusta and travels around Europe in search of his fortune. After several years of adventures and misadventures, he finds himself lost, hungry and penniless in a wood in Brittany, where he encounters Lady Fortune. In folkloric style, she offers him one of six gifts – wisdom, riches, strength, health, beauty or long life. He chooses riches and she gives him a never-emptying purse that will provide him with ten gold coins in the local currency (a nice mix of folk-tale fantasy and commercial realism) every time he reaches into it. The purse’s power, Fortune tells him, will endure for the rest of his life and that of any sons he might have.

After several more years spent travelling around Europe and the Near East, Fortunatus returns to Cyprus, where he marries the daughter of an impoverished Cypriot nobleman and the pair live in a lavish palace in Famagusta. The couple have two sons, named Ampedo and Andelocia. The marriage is very happy, but after a few years, Fortunatus starts to feel restless and decides to go travelling again, this time in the east. Leaving his family provided with chests of gold, he takes the purse and travels across Asia as far as the lands of the mythological Prester John and the Indonesian spice islands. On his journey back to Cyprus, he is invited to a banquet in Alexandria, where he tricks the Sultan of Babylon out of a magical hat that transports the wearer wherever he or she wishes to go. Returning to Famagusta, he spends the rest of his life quietly enjoying the two magical items, revealing their existence to his sons only on his deathbed.

As soon as Fortunatus is buried, his younger son, Andelocia, takes the purse (leaving the wishing hat with Ampedo) and travels around Europe, before making his way to England, where he falls in love with the king’s beautiful daughter, Agrippine. The avaricious English princess soon tricks the besotted young Cypriot out of the purse, and he flees England in

¹⁵ Debra Prager, ‘*Fortunatus: “Auß dem Königreich Cipern” Mapping the World and the Self*’, *Daphnis*, 33.1 (May 2004), 123-160 (123) < <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/fortunatus-auß-dem-königreich-cipern-mapping/docview/195462499/se-2> > [accessed 15 August 2019].

¹⁶ The *Volksbuch* spells Andelocia’s name ‘Andolosia’. To avoid confusion, I will use the play’s spelling throughout this chapter when discussing either work.

embarrassment. He returns to Cyprus and steals the hat from his brother. His plan to recover the purse initially backfires, and he is stranded on an island off the coast of Hibernia without either purse or hat, where he discovers two types of magical apples growing. The first makes the eater grow horns. The second makes them disappear. He returns to England where, disguised as an apple seller he tricks Agrippine into eating the apples which make the eater grow horns; she grows a fine pair. Then disguising himself as a doctor, he presents himself at the court, claiming he can cure her. Once in her chamber, he recovers the purse and wishing hat, using the latter to kidnap her, depositing her (still wearing her horns) in an Irish convent. Andelocia returns to Cyprus with the hat and purse, where he discovers that the King of Cyprus wishes his son to marry Agrippine, so he retrieves her from the convent (removing her horns with the second sort of magic apples) and she marries the Cypriot prince. However, Andelocia's wealth and his prowess at the tournament held to celebrate the marriage arouse the jealousy of two noblemen (an English count, and one from Limassol in Cyprus). The pair kidnap and then murder him to obtain the purse. Ampedo, his brother, dies of grief, at which point the purse's power ceases and the two counts fall to fighting over it, each believing the other has tricked him out of the true purse. When their role in Andelocia's death is uncovered, the pair are executed. Agrippine (who appears to have undergone something of a character transformation during her time in the Irish convent) and the Prince of Cyprus move into Andelocia and Ampedo's palace in Famagusta, apparently living happily ever after.

Ausgabe des Fortunatus was enormously popular throughout early modern Europe. At least twenty German editions were printed over the course of the sixteenth century alone; by the mid-seventeenth century, the story had also been translated into Low German (the story was first published in High German), Dutch, Yiddish, Danish, Swedish, French and Italian, as well as English. The first known translation is a Polish version, printed at some point between 1565 and 1573. The earliest extant English prose translation dates from around 1640, but an earlier (now lost) version, *The Historye of Fortunatus*, was recorded in the Stationers' Register on 22 June 1615.¹⁷ Because no concrete evidence exists of an English translation before 1615, critics

¹⁷ The earliest extant English *Fortunatus* narrative is *The right pleasant and variable tragicall historie of fortunatus. whereby a yong man may learne how to behaue himselfe in all worldly affaires, and casuall chances. / first penned in the dutch tongue. therehence abstracted, and now first of all published in english*, by T.G. (London, 1640).

have tended to assume that Dekker was reliant either on a German text or the earlier *Fortunatus* play for his plot. McInnis, noting Dekker's evident familiarity with Dutch in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* posits that he may have also been able to read German.¹⁸ This does not, however, explain how the story came to the attention of the first *Fortunatus* dramatist. There is, however, credible circumstantial evidence to suggest there *was* an English prose version available in the late sixteenth century. In the dedicatory epistle to a 1577 religious historiography, *The auncient ecclesiasticall histories of the first six hundred yeares after Christ*, Welsh clergyman Meredith Hanmer complained that English readers would rather read 'the stories of Kinge Arthur: The monstrous fables of Garagantua: Reinard the Fox: Beuis of Hampton: the hundred mery tales: skoggan: Fortunatus: with many other infortunate treatises and amorous toies wrytten in Englishe, Latine, Frenche, Italian [and] Spanishe' than more improving works, including (readers might infer) Hanmer's own rather heavy-going tome.¹⁹ His reference here to 'Fortunatus' alongside other well-known works of popular fiction indicates that some version of the tale was widely available in English by the mid-1570s.²⁰ A *Fortunatus* narrative is later mentioned, in similarly pejorative terms, in Henry Crosse's 1602 *Vertues Common Wealth, or the Highway to Honour*. Complaining about the 'sweete songs and wanton tales', that 'rauish and set on fire the young vntempered affections', Crosse lists 'the Court of Venus, the Pallace of Pleasure, Guy or Warwicke, Libbius and Arthur, Beuis of Hampton, the wise men of Goatem, Scoggins leasts, Fortunatus' as particularly pernicious influences.²¹ While Crosse's comment post-dates Dekker's play by three years, the reference to 'Fortunatus' alongside other popular works of fiction again implies that it had been available for quite some time.

Old Fortunatus: Plot Summary

Before focusing specifically on *Old Fortunatus*'s Cypriot resonances, I want to provide an overview of Dekker's adaptation of the *Fortunatus* story, with a particular emphasis on those

¹⁸ McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 24.

¹⁹ Meredith Hanmer, *The auncient ecclesiasticall histories of the first six hundred yeares after Christ, wrytten in the Greeke tongue by three learned historiographers, Eusebius, Socrates, and Euagrius* (London, 1577), [n.p.]

²⁰ David Blamires draws attention to a number of other possible references to a sixteenth-century *Fortunatus* translation, but the two mentioned here are the most convincing. See David Blamires, *Fortunatus in his Many English Guises* (Lampeter: The Edward Mellen Press, 1996), pp. 22-29.

²¹ Henry Crosse, *Vertues Common-wealth: or The High-way to Honour* (London, 1603), sig. O1^v.

parts of dramatic narrative that structure the arguments that follow. This summary is based on the only extant version of the play, the text that claims to be as it was performed at Richmond Palace on 27 December 1599. No version of the play as it was performed in the public playhouses survives. The extent of Henslowe's payments to Dekker for adaptations for the court performance indicate that the two plays were, in places, significantly different. So far as is possible, I will identify where those changes were made. The court prologue and epilogue are obvious additions, and the final scene, with the tribute to Elizabeth, would have been significantly longer when played at court. The two Vice-Virtue scenes (Scene 3 and the second half of Scene 7) are lengthy and elaborate additions, necessitating significant pruning elsewhere. McInnis suggests that the two choruses (Chorus 1 and Chorus 2) – featuring respectively Fortunatus's travels before his arrival at the court of the Sultan of Babylon, and Andelocia's return to Cyprus to steal first the wishing hat from his brother and then the Genoese merchants' jewels – were probably acted in full on the public stage.²² Where relevant, I will indicate how probable differences between the two versions of the play might shape the arguments I make below.

There is an alternative text that offers limited but intriguing evidence as to how the play was performed before a public audience in the Rose theatre. June Schlueter, noting that *Old Fortunatus* 'appears to have been a staple of the English actors' repertory' on the Continent in the early seventeenth century, argues persuasively that a German Fortunatus play titled *Comoedia von Fortunato und seinem Seckel und Wünschhütlein, darinnen erstlich drei verstorbenen Seelen als Geister, darnach die Tugend und Schande eingeführet werden*, is largely based on *The Whole History of Fortunatus*, the play as it was composed by Dekker before it was adapted for performance at court.²³ The German Fortunatus play is included in a book titled *Englische Comedien und Tragedien*, a volume of German plays derived from English originals published in 1620, probably in Leipzig.²⁴ Structurally, the German play broadly follows a similar narrative trajectory to Dekker's play. Crucially, it features a number

²² See McInnis's note Chorus 1, l. 17 and notes to Chorus 2, l. 16-20, l.22 – 6.

²³ June Schlueter, 'New Light on Dekker's "Fortunati"', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 26 (2013), 120-135 (121) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24322743> > [accessed 11 January 2021]. The play's German title is translated as *Comedy of Fortunatus and his Purse and Wishing-Hat, in which first three dead Souls and Spirits, and afterwards Virtue and Shame are introduced*.

²⁴ The book was compiled by Frederick Menius (1593-1659) and contains eight other English plays, including *Titus Andronicus*. See McInnis, p. 1.

of scenes and events that are found only in *Old Fortunatus* and no other narrative sources.²⁵ *Comoedia von Fortunato*, Schlueter suggests, might provide clues as to how *The Whole History of Fortunatus* was performed on the public stage. Such evidence must be treated with caution; *Von Fortunato* is a radically simplified version of the English play that lacks the poetry and complexity of the original, and is unlikely to be a direct translation of the original version of Dekker's play. David Blamires suggests it may be 'the reconstruction of a performance from memory', supplemented with details derived from a German edition of the *Volksbuch*.²⁶ With those caveats in mind, it nevertheless provides useful insights into how the play might have been staged at The Rose.

Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* opens with a prologue written specifically for its performance at court. Its primary objective appears to be to deliver a series of conventional compliments to Elizabeth, who is presented as an ever-youthful goddess, even though she was 66 at the time of the performance. She is addressed variously as Gloriana (l. 2), Cynthia (l. 2) and Belpheobe (l. 3), and, in a punning allusion to the classical 'Elysium', the goddess of 'Elizium' (l. 10). Unusually, the prologue is delivered by two players, one of whom claims to be a Cypriot; the other speaker is an Englishman. In a reversal of the medieval pilgrimage route, the Cypriot has come to the English court as a 'pilgrim' (Court Prologue, l. 50) with 'other Cypriots (my poor countrymen) / To pay a whole year's tribute' (Court Prologue, l. 53-4); McInnis appears to attribute the reference to an annual tribute to the Admiral's Men's previous performance at court, exactly one year earlier on 27 December 1598.²⁷

The court prologue is followed by a general prologue (which presumably did feature in public performances) in which the chorus introduces the play itself, beginning with an acknowledgement of both *Old Fortunatus*'s geographical range and the challenges it might pose for both players and playgoers. The Chorus announces that

²⁵ The *Comoedia von Fortunato* also includes a number of features that have no trace in *Old Fortunatus*, such as the *Pickelherring* clown character, which were probably introduced to appeal to a German audience. See McInnis, p. 11-8 for a detailed discussion of the relationship between *Old Fortunatus* and the German play.

²⁶ Blamires, p. 52.

²⁷ Court Prologue, l. 19n. Curiously, McInnis links the reference to Cypriots to Elizabeth's iconographical identity 'Venus. Lady of Cyprus' (l. 53n) rather than play's Cypriot connection.

... this small circumference must stand,
For the imagined surface of much land,
Of many kingdoms; and since many a mile,
Should here be measured out, our muse intreats,
Your thoughts to help poor art, and to allow,
That I may serve as Chorus to her scenes. (Prologue, ll. 15-20)

The prologue seems to have been inspired by Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599), written only a few months earlier, in which playgoers were exhorted to use their 'imaginary forces' (*Henry V*, Prologue, l. 18) to recreate the 'vast fields of France' (*Henry V*, Prologue, l. 12) within 'the girdle of these walls' (*Henry V*, Prologue, l. 19).²⁸ The reference to 'this small circumference' (l. 15) confirms that *Old Fortunatus* was originally written for performance at The Rose, a circular theatre considerably smaller than The Globe.

Although *Old Fortunatus* broadly follows the *Volksbuch*'s narrative arc – Fortunatus and sons' journey from rags to riches to eventual catastrophe – the play compresses the period of the narrative into a far shorter timeframe. Fortunatus is already an old man in the play's opening scene when, similarly penniless, lost and hungry, he encounters Fortune in an unnamed wood. It is never explained how he fell on such hard times, but the play later hints at a history of profligacy. In fact, Dekker's Fortunatus recalls Fortunatus's father in the *Volksbuch*, whose squandering of the family fortune led his son to seek his fortunes abroad, further (circumstantial) evidence that Dekker had access to some version of the original narrative, although it is also possible that this featured in the earlier Fortunatus play.²⁹ With her globe and wheel (s.d., 1.68), the play's Fortune resembles the figure represented in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, from which the majority of sixteenth-century literary and artistic representations of Fortune were often drawn, rather than the benevolent fairy godmother figure encountered in the *Volksbuch*.³⁰ In early modern and medieval iconography, Fortune was frequently represented alongside a wheel, which she turns, showing individuals variously rising, sitting atop the wheel and then, as she turns it further, being cast down. She was also often shown standing on a globe, to signify her unsteadiness and capriciousness. Writing about Fortune in Shakespeare's plays, Clayton Mackenzie observes that 'the significances

²⁸ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by A.R. Humphreys (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

²⁹ *Ausgabe*, p. 1-2.

³⁰ See Hans Sebald Beham's engraving *Fortuna* (1541), for example, available at the Rijk's Museum in Amsterdam < <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-10.856> > [accessed 24 May 2022].

attached to Fortuna seem akin to received tradition, and were commonplace in Elizabethan theatre'.³¹ Fortune, he continues, is almost always represented in early modern drama as 'malicious, unfair, false [and] a strumpet'.³² Dekker's Fortune is no exception to this characterisation. The introduction of these motifs of her fickleness onto the stage alerts the audience to the active – and destructive – role she will play in the drama that follows.

There is an interesting intertheatrical vignette interpolated into *Fortunatus*'s first encounter with Fortune. Unlike the *Volksbuch* Fortune, who appears alone, Fortune is accompanied on stage by four fallen kings and emperors, and four crowned commoners.³³ One of the kings – the one who is given the most prominent role in the scene – is identified as the Turkish emperor Bajazeth, from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. In what Samuel Chew describes as 'a brief paraphrase [of] the essential episodes in the Sultan's downfall as presented in Marlowe's tragedy', Fortune addresses '[p]oor Bajazeth, old Turkish Emperor / Once the greatest monarch of the East' (1.192-3), intoning:

Fortune herself is sad to view thy fall
And grieves to see thee glad to lick up crumbs
At the proud feet of that great Scythian swain,
Fortune's best minion, warlike Tamburlaine.
Yet must thou in a cage of iron be drawn
In triumph at his heels, and there in grief
Dash out thy brains. (1.195-200)

As Chew observes, '[a]mong poets Thomas Dekker stands quite alone in his sense of pathos of [Bajazeth's] hapless situation'.³⁴ The Turkish emperor appears to figure here less as the enemy of all Christendom, and more as one more victim of the vicissitudes of fortune.³⁵ There

³¹ Clayton G. MacKenzie, 'Fortuna in Shakespeare's Plays', *Orbis Litterarum*, 56 (2001), 355-366 (357). < <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.0105-7510.2001.oli560503.x> > [accessed 1 January 2021].

³² MacKenzie, 'Fortuna', 357.

³³ The other kings and commoners are all historic figures, although none have Bajazeth's dramatic resonances. It seems unlikely that any of them would have featured in the play's public performances.

³⁴ Chew, p. 470.

³⁵ Much has been made by some critics of *Old Fortunatus*'s Marlovian resonances (including this scene). Citing the two plays' shared morality play influence, and interest in magical transportation as evidence of the influence of Marlowe's play on *Old Fortunatus*, Herford included the play in what he called a 'Faustus Cycle' of English dramas (See Charles E. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1966), pp. 165-241). McInnis is less convinced, arguing that once the changes made for the performance at court are stripped out, Marlovian influences are less obvious.

is no certainty that playgoers would have shared Chew's perspective; there were, no doubt, many who would have relished seeing a 'Turk' thus humiliated. It is not clear if Bajazeth appeared in public performances of the play. The Turk's brief cameo may have been simply moment of crowd-pleasing – or crown-pleasing? – inter-theatricality. The parallel scene in the *Comoedia Von Fortunato* has Fortune accompanied by three spirits condemned to wander the in chains until the end of the world. While Bajazeth's appearance does not relate directly to the play's representation of Cyprus and Cypriots (although it may have reminded some playgoers of the events of 1571), it perhaps indicates that Dekker was prepared to think about the Eastern Mediterranean world in surprising and interesting ways. In a later scene, another Muslim is treated, if not quite with sympathy, without the demonisation that usually accompanied such characters in the English playhouses.

As in the *Ausgabe des Fortunatus*, Fortunatus is offered the choice of six gifts by Fortune – wisdom, riches, strength, health, beauty or long life; after some deliberation, he chooses the purse. Once he has made his choice (which she tells him he will soon regret), Fortune directs him out of the wood, telling him '[t]his path leads thee to Cyprus' (1.312). As McInnis notes, '[i]f taken literally, Dekker is guilty of a geographical error akin to Shakespeare's coast of Bohemia: Cyprus is an island and cannot be reached by a path'.³⁶ Given Cyprus's historical and literary prominence, it seems unlikely that Dekker would make such an error. McInnis suggests that the wood where this encounter takes place 'seems to be located outside of time and place' and that Cyprus stands simply for 'civilisation' here.³⁷ If so, it is a peculiar device. It is more probable that the line is simply a slightly clumsy way of introducing the location of the following scene, in which Fortunatus's adult sons, Andelocia and Ampedo are introduced. Their father has been missing for some time and they do not know if he is even still alive. The pair are living in Famagusta with their servant Shadow (Dekker's invention – no such character features in the *Volksbuch*) in a state of considerable impoverishment. Some of the play's

He comments that 'the specifically Marlovian influence has been somewhat overstated by critics too eager to find Marlowe's fingerprints everywhere they look' (McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 51).

³⁶ McInnis, 1.312n. The *Volksbuch* features a number of similar errors. At one point, the author describes how '[t]he lands beyond Hibernia being too wild to permit further travel in that direction, they rode back to Calais' (p. 52), so perhaps this is just a joke.

³⁷ McInnis, 1.312n.

better writing is to be found in this scene, perhaps informed by Dekker's own recent experience of poverty and the debtor's prison.³⁸ At one point Ampedo proclaims

I am not enamoured of this painted idol,
This strumpet world, for her most beauteous looks
Are poisoned baits hung upon golden hooks.
When fools do swim in wealth, her Cynthia beams
Will wantonly dance on the silver streams.
But when this squint-eyed age sees virtue poor,
And by a little spark sits shivering,
Begging at all, relieved at no man's door,
She smiles on her (as the sun shines on fire)
To kill that little heat, and with her frown
Is proud that she can tread poor virtue down. (2.51-61)

As the nineteenth-century critic Thomas Campbell notes, 'Dekker could rise a degree above the level of his ordinary genius in describing the blessings of Fortunatus's purse: he had probably felt but too keenly the force of what he expresses in the misanthropy of Ampedo'.³⁹ William Sherman goes so far as to suggest that his experience of debt 'was one of the reasons why Henslowe picked Dekker' to revise or rewrite the earlier *Fortunatus* play.⁴⁰

Although Fortunatus and son are poor, Famagusta in the play is a prosperous place, with luxuries available to those with the ready cash to buy. Its shops are crowded with 'silks and velvets' (2.108) and wealthy citizens wear 'three men's livings in the shape of a seal ring' (2.94). The source of its prosperity is never explicitly alluded to, but Andelocia's reference to 'gold, which riseth like the sun out of the East Indies' (2.79-80) seems intended to recall the island's mercantile connection with the eastern world. The play never *quite* makes its historic context explicit, but its representation of the island's wealth (and its references to a king) seems to imply that, like the *Volksbuch*, its vision of Cyprus looks back to the period of Cyprus's medieval prosperity, when the island dominated Eastern Mediterranean trade.

As his sons debate their situation, Fortunatus enters 'gallant' (s.d., 2.140). The play uses its Cypriot protagonists' dress throughout to chart their rising and falling fortunes. He has,

³⁸ See Dekker's entry in the *ODNB* for details of his seemingly perpetual financial problems.

³⁹ Qtd by McInnis, 2.51-60n.

⁴⁰ Sherman, 86.

Fortunatus informs his astonished sons, returned to Cyprus to bestow funds on them, urging them to 'be gallant [and] / Shine in the streets of Cyprus' (2.205-6) and '[b]rave it in Famagusta, or elsewhere' (2.209). Having done so, he announces an intention to travel (in a moment that perhaps recalls Cyprus historic position as the gateway to the east) to the courts of the Turkish emperor, Prester John, the 'great Cham of Tartary' (2.212) and the Sultan of Babylon, an itinerary as remarkable for its social as its spatial mobility. Such eastern travels seem to have interested Dekker; McInnis observes that he maps a virtually identical journey in the dedicatory epistle to *News from Grave's End* (1604).⁴¹

In the following scene, the play's two additional allegorical characters – Vice and Virtue – are introduced. The pair are Dekker's invention; no similar characters feature in the *Volksbuch*. Their names recall late medieval and early Tudor morality plays, in which allegorical representatives of good and evil compete for an individual human soul. Their appearance (accompanied by Fortune and a further entourage of assorted nymphs and devils) takes the form of a masque-like sequence in which, dressed in elaborate costumes highlighting their respective qualities, each plants an apple tree, followed by a debate about their influence on the world.⁴² The exchange initiates a contest between the two for the soul of 'some amorous fool' (3.91); Fortune 'shall judge who wins the sovereignty' (3.103). As James Conover observes, such 'masque-like scenes were more common in court drama than in plays for the public stage'; this scene was probably added as part of the alterations for the play's court performance.⁴³ However, McInnis notes that 'the presence of supernatural characters in *Von Fortunato* suggests that their role may have been amplified only as part of the revisions for court, rather than being completely new and superficial additions'.⁴⁴ The *Comoedia Von Fortunato* introduces Vice and Virtue only in the fourth act, when they plant their magical apple trees, but play no further part in the action. The lengthy debate about their relative powers is also considerably shorter in the German play; it was probably similarly abbreviated

⁴¹ See McInnis 2.210-13n.

⁴² Although Dekker does not identify the location where the apple trees are planted, there is some evidence that the scene may have originally been imagined as Ireland, as it was in the *Ausgabe* and changed for the court performance in recognition of particular local sensitivities. See Note 46.

⁴³ James H. Conover, *Thomas Dekker: An Analysis of Dramatic Structure* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 67.

⁴⁴ McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 17.

on the London stage, with the Vice and Virtue parts enhanced for court performance to suit elite tastes, and to facilitate the tribute to Elizabeth staged in the final scene.

Having set up its allegorical subplot, the play returns to Fortunatus's activities. The majority of his travels are relegated to choric summary; McInnis argues that his adventures at the 'Tartar's palace' (Chorus 1, l. 13), 'Aragon' (Chorus 1, l. 17) and 'the Turkish Court' (Chorus 1, l. 30) would have been staged in *The Rose* but were cut for the court performance, to make way for the morality play sub-plot initiated in the previous scene.⁴⁵ The scene begins with Fortunatus's arrival at the court of the Sultan of Babylon, where news of his wealth and extravagance has preceded him. Babylon is only minimally evoked in the text, by a brief reference to 'the glory of fair Babylon' (4.20), although costume and props may have helped create a more obviously 'eastern' mood in performance. In return for his promise to obtain for him another magic purse, the sultan reveals to Fortunatus his greatest treasure, 'a coarse felt hat' (4.71) which, when worn, will transport the wearer anywhere in the world 'only with a wish' (4.87). Like his *Volksbuch* counterpart, Fortunatus tricks the sultan into allowing him to place it on his head, wishing himself 'to Cyprus with [his] sons' (4.108) and vanishes, leaving the sultan distraught.⁴⁶ It is not entirely clear how the theft of the wishing hat figures in the play's moral landscape. Although Fortune (returning in the following scene) condemns Fortunatus's use of the purse, the hat is never mentioned. Dekker's relatively sympathetic representation of the play's two Muslims (the implications of which I will discuss below) notwithstanding, the sultan's Islamic otherness may have legitimised its theft in the eyes of some playgoers. This seems to have been the line taken in the *Volksbuch*, where Fortunatus tells the sultan's emissary, sent to retrieve the hat, that '[n]o heathen can hold a Christian dear, or grant him any favours; and if the hat were mine but in the Sultan's possession, then there is no way that he would send it back, and his councillors would advise him not to, just as I am advised'.⁴⁷

Back in Famagusta, Andelocia – in a foretaste of the extravagance that will eventually lead to his downfall – appears to have spent the funds left by Fortunatus on gambling and fashionable

⁴⁵ McInnis, Chorus 1, l. 17n.

⁴⁶ It is not clear how the play manages the sudden exits associated with the wishing hat. McInnis offers a number of suggestions, but reaches no firm conclusions. See 4.116n, 9.167n.

⁴⁷ *Ausgabe*, p. 99.

attire. The sons teeter once more on the brink of ruin, reduced to their last ‘crusado’ (5.64). Intriguingly, the crusado – a Portuguese coin so-called because of the cross on its reverse – is mentioned again in *Othello* (the only time Shakespeare mentions the coin), when Desdemona claims she ‘had rather have lost [her] purse / Full of crusadoes’ (*Othello*, 3.4.25-6) than the handkerchief, perhaps suggesting that Shakespeare’s Cypriot setting prompted this brief memory of Dekker’s play; I will discuss this and several other intriguing resonances between the two works in the following chapter. As Ampedo and Andelocia bicker about how to spend their last coin, Fortunatus reappears and, as he is describing his experiences in the courts of the east, Fortune enters accompanied (although probably only in the court performance) by the three Destinies. True to her reputation, she has come to topple him as he sits ‘at the top of pride’s meridian’ (5.249). She accuses him of having ‘abused [her] gifts / [...] played the ruffian, [and] wasted that in riots / Which as a blessing [she] bestowed on [him]’ (5.252-4). After swiftly bequeathing the purse and the hat to his sons, Fortunatus dies. Subsequent to their father’s death, the sons agree to separate the two magical items, with Andelocia taking the purse and Ampedo the wishing cap. Andelocia announces his intention to travel to England, where the Prince of Cyprus has gone to woo the King of England’s famously beautiful daughter, Agrippine. This concludes the final scene that takes place in Famagusta (at least in the version of *Old Fortunatus* played at court – the public play may have staged one further return to the island, discussed below). The remainder of the play – around two thirds of the stage time – is primarily concerned with Andelocia’s activities in England.

Having apparently learned nothing from his father’s fate, Andelocia spends lavishly to gain access to the English court. He offers his services to the English king, in the hope of winning Agrippine’s favours, observing cynically that ‘[w]ere she a saint, she may be won with gold’ (6.256). Quite what his ‘services’ might entail is never revealed; in the *Volksbuch*, he and his entourage fight alongside the English army in a war against the Scots, but Dekker’s Andelocia is more of a foppish gallant than a knight or warrior. Agrippine and her father agree that she will encourage Andelocia’s attentions in the hope of discovering the source of his incredible wealth. Later, the king (troublingly) also considers chaining Andelocia up in a tower and torturing him until he reveals the source of his wealth. Before this can happen, however, the princess persuades Andelocia to tell her the source of his riches and, after drugging him with a ‘soporiferous juice’ (6.387), steals the purse from him. Humiliated, he declares his intention

to 'steal from hence to Cyprus' (6.520), where he plans to purloin the wishing hat from his brother and use it to 'find Misery / And where she dwells [...] languish, and die' (6.529-30).

In a series of events related by the Chorus, Andelocia returns to Cyprus, where he steals the hat from his brother. However, rather than seeking penitential obscurity, as he originally claimed, he uses it to cheat Genoese jewel merchants of their wares, before returning to England. Disguising himself as a jewel merchant, he inveigles his way into Agrippine's presence and, using the hat once more, transports her to 'some wilderness' (Chorus 2, l. 31), where he intends to revenge himself upon her. His anger soon dissipates, however, and when she complains of thirst, he offers to climb one of the nearby apple trees – the trees planted by Vice and Virtue in the earlier scene – and pluck some refreshing fruit for her. As he climbs, he gives her the wishing hat to protect her face from the sun. Unaware of its properties, Agrippine wishes that she was back in England and promptly disappears, leaving Andelocia (having failed to retrieve the purse from her) without either magical item. And, after tasting one of Vice's apples, he discovers he has grown '[t]wo forkèd horns' (7.104). In despair, he lies down and goes to sleep under Vice's tree, his predicament now mirroring that of his father in the play's opening scene. Conover identifies a number of such parallels that act to 'give the work the appearance of an artistic whole by referring to earlier parts of the play'.⁴⁸

As he sleeps, Fortune enters, accompanied by Vice and Virtue and other attendants. The generalised contest between Vice and Virtue initiated in scene three is now particularised in the battle over Andelocia. After he has awakened, Virtue gives him one of her apples to eat, describing it as 'physic for [his] sick deformity' (7.205). Swearing glibly to her that if she 'smile on me [he] will still be [hers]' (7.203), Andelocia eats Virtue's apple and the horns fall off. In his relief he declares – somewhat unconvincingly – that 'had I now / My hat and purse again, how I would shine / And gild my soul with none but thoughts divine' (7.218-20). However, Fortune has already foretold that Fortunatus's sons shall suffer 'sudden and wretched' (5.269) deaths, and she tells him now that he will live to see '[w]orse torments (for thy follies)' (7.135). It seems doubtful that Andelocia can avoid his fate at this point, although it is never entirely clear if Fortune is merely predicting the future, or whether she is an active agent in

⁴⁸ See Conover, p. 75.

his (and, previously, his father's) downfall. She returns Andelocia to London, taking with him both Vice's and Virtue's apples, which he will use to recover the purse and hat.

In London, Andelocia and Shadow disguise themselves as Irish costermongers, hawking 'Tamasco [Damascus]' (8.29) apples that they claim will make those that eat them beautiful, strong or wise.⁴⁹ They are, in fact, Vice's apples. Agrippine and two noblemen, Montrose and Longueville, are persuaded to buy the apples, with all three re-appearing in the following scene wearing horns. The Prince of Cyprus, who had become betrothed to Agrippine in an earlier scene, is appalled by her 'deformity' (9.10) and rejects her, exiting and playing no further part in the play. Having orchestrated the need for a cure, Andelocia presents himself at the court, disguised as a French doctor. He gives pieces of Virtue's apple to the two noblemen, and their horns fall off. Spotting the discarded hat (Agrippine apparently not having realised its significance), he picks it up, seizes the English princess and wishes them both to 'my brother Ampedo' (9.166), who has followed Andelocia to London with the intention of putting an end to his excesses. After taking the purse from her, Andelocia gives Agrippine one of Virtue's apples and she exits. Having forgotten his vow to Virtue, Andelocia

⁴⁹ That this disguise was permitted in a play performed before Elizabeth is surprising. At the time that Dekker wrote *Old Fortunatus*, Ireland was the subject persistent concern in England. Starting in 1593, the Gaelic Catholic Irish nobility had begun a protracted campaign of resistance to the English crown's attempts to increase its control over Ireland. In 1599, Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Essex went to Ireland with 17,000 English soldiers, with the intention of ending the war and bringing the entire island fully under English rule. However, he was not successful. Essex then defied Elizabeth's orders and returned to London, bursting into her bedchamber at Nonsuch Palace on 28 September 1599. As *Old Fortunatus* was being prepared for its court performance, Essex was confined to York House in London. Given the sensitivity of the issue, it is perhaps surprising that Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels permitted the costermonger scene. McInnis suggests that it may have been permitted because 'Dekker here characterizes the Irish in general as illiterate peasants [...] untrustworthy, but not ultimately a serious threat' (McInnis, 8.61-3n). Robert Lublin, citing Andelocia's claim that he had worn out his 'naked legs and [his] foots and [his] toes' (8.69-70) running 'hither and didder' (8.70) – hither and thither – to Damascus for the apples, notes that '[u]nlike all other nationalities depicted on the English stage, Irish characters often appeared with bare lower legs and sometimes without shoes' (Robert I. Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 113). Originally linked to the need to walk among the bogs, appearing barefoot and bare-legged became a mark of the stage-Irishman and his 'incivility' (Lublin, p. 113). Although there is no explicit textual evidence that Andelocia and Shadow appeared bare-legged in this scene, it seems a distinct possibility. The subject of Essex's return from Ireland was to become so sensitive that it had a curious effect on the play's subsequent history. Many copies of the quarto of the play published in 1600 had a single leaf, sig. E2, excised (See McInnis, 'Introduction', p. 8-9 for a fuller account of these excisions). It is likely that the following passage, where *Fortunatus* describes the foreign courts he has visited, were the offending lines: In some courts shall you see Ambition / Sit piecing Daedalus' old waxen wings, / But being clapped on and they about to fly, / Even when their hopes are busied in the clouds, / They melt against the sun of majesty / And down they tumble to destruction. / For since the heavens' strong arms teach kings to stand, / Angels are placed about their glorious throne / To guard it from the strokes of trait'rous hands' (5.217-25). As Fredson Bowers observes, 'no other event between 1600 and 1603 parallels Dekker's lines so closely as the fall of Essex' (quoted in McInnis, p. 9).

declares his intention to return to his previous life of pleasure and excess, and exits to change into his 'richest attire' (10.46-7), for 'one fit of mirth more' (10.43) at the English court. Ampedo throws the wishing hat on the fire. As it burns, Montrose and Longueville enter and imprison him, before capturing and imprisoning Andelocia. Ampedo dies of grief and Andelocia is strangled by the pair. Once Fortunatus's sons are both dead, the purse's magic ceases. Each accusing the other of treachery, the two noblemen start to fight.

The main plot and the Vice-Virtue sub-plot converge fully with the appearance of the king, Agrippine and other members of the English court at one door, and Fortune and Vice at the other. The king – named for the first time as Athelstan in this scene – condemns the two noblemen to death, but they are reprieved by Vice, who proclaims herself victorious over Virtue.⁵⁰ The noblemen's reprieve is unique to *Old Fortunatus*; in both the *Volksbuch* and *Von Fortunato* they are executed, suggesting that this element was part of the amplified Vice-Virtue storyline. Fortune presents the English king with the revitalised purse, cautioning him to 'take heed how thou my gifts dost use' (10.265). England, she proclaims, shall ne'er be poor if England strive / Rather by virtue than by wealth to thrive' (10.266-7). The lines seem to encode both a tribute to Elizabeth, the embodiment of English virtue, and a warning against the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. There is something disquieting about Athelstan being presented with the purse so shortly after Fortune has denounced him as possessed by 'a greedy covetous fire' (10.228). At this point Virtue enters and announces – somewhat implausibly – that *she* is in fact the victor in the contest with Vice, because having seen the dreadful consequences of vice, the more '[t]he world will love me for my comeliness' (10.292). When Virtue invites Elizabeth to judge who is the greater, Vice flees, 'undone' (10.314) by the English queen's virtuous presence, and Fortune acknowledges Virtue's

⁵⁰ The historical Athelstan, grandson to Alfred the Great, was the King of England from 925 to 939 CE and was often considered the first King of England. Lisa Hopkins observes that Athelstan was in the early modern period 'a flexible, suggestive and culturally resonant figure who could be used to discuss a number of important issues, including succession, the status of the monarch, and the relationship of early modern identities to the histories which had produced them'. Quite which of these concerns – if any – he speaks to in *Old Fortunatus* is unclear. Like Elizabeth, he never married or produced a legitimate heir. However, given his less than admirable behaviour in the play, any direct association between the two monarchs would be less than flattering to Elizabeth. He seems to have been of particular interest to Dekker, who alluded to him in three plays: *Old Fortunatus*, *A play of the life and death of Guy of Warwicke* (1620) and *The Welsh Ambassador* (1623). See Lisa Hopkins, 'Athelstan, the Virgin King' in *From the Romans to the Normans on the English Renaissance Stage* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017), pp. 167-186 (p. 167).

victory. In *Von Fortunato*, Fortune returns to reclaim her purse only after the two murderers have been taken away for execution. The king and Agrippine kneel before her and request (and are granted) her blessing on their kingdom, but no further reference is made to the purse, which provides a more dramatically and morally satisfying resolution than the court performance's final scene. The court play concludes with a song and an epilogue featuring another tribute to Elizabeth.

Cyprus in *Old Fortunatus*

Cyprus resonates throughout *Old Fortunatus*, alluded to from the Prologue at Court to the final scene, when Vice bids Athelstan to '[e]mbalm the bodies of those Cypriots / And honour them with princely burial' (10.249-50). Indeed, the play's final Cypriot allusion seems to explicitly recall the *Volksbuch*, where the murdered Andelocia is

honourably borne to Famagusta in a flambeau-lit procession. There [his] body was laid to rest in the magnificent cathedral his father had founded and endowed; and a stately memorial service was held on the seventh and thirtieth days after his burial, with many masses sung for his soul, as though for a member of one of the highest and mightiest families in the Kingdom.⁵¹

The play's Cypriot connection is kept in view throughout. Although it was a later addition to the play, Dekker seems to have used the Prologue at Court to advertise and amplify the play's Cypriot dimension, indicating it was important to the action that followed. As described in the summary, the court performance opens with two old men, one of them a Cypriot, meeting on their way to 'the temple of Eliza' (Prologue at Court, l. 1). McInnis suggests that the reference to Cypriot pilgrims is intended to draw attention to 'another of Elizabeth's iconographical identities: Venus, Lady of Cyprus (her supposed birthplace)'.⁵² The association of the Virgin Queen with the classical goddess of love and beauty is not as contradictory as it might sound. In fact, Roy Strong describes what he calls the 'Elizabeth cult' as 'held together by such paradoxes'.⁵³ As we will see in the following chapter, where I show how aspects of

⁵¹ *Ausgabe*, p. 165.

⁵² McInnis, Prologue, l. 53n.

⁵³ See Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 47.

Venus's identity are superimposed on the unwitting Desdemona, Venus's iconography in the early modern imagination was complex and even contradictory. Elizabeth was often represented as a Venus-Virgo (Venus disguised as the virgin goddess Diana) by late sixteenth-century poets; Strong cites Raleigh's 1578 *April Eclogue* as an early example.⁵⁴ The definitive inspiration for this pairing is, according to Edgar Wind, Venus's appearance in the *Aeneid* disguised as a nymph of the Virgin goddess Diana.⁵⁵

The court prologue's allusions to pilgrimage may also recall the island's historic position on the route to the Holy Land, albeit a pilgrimage route with its polarities reversed in the play, an idea that prefigures some of the play's later resonances in significant ways. The Cypriots, described by the old man as '(my poor countrymen)' (Prologue at Court, l. 52) – could this be a veiled allusion to Cyprus's situation as an Ottoman territory? – have come to the English court to 'pay a whole year's tribute' (l. 54) to the queen. The 'Cypriot' party, he claims in a line that (daringly, given the rather censorious representation of another English court that follows) blurs the boundaries between the English court represented in the play, and the court before whom it is about to be performed, includes 'Old Fortunatus and his family' (l. 52). The notion that the Cypriot pilgrims might owe an English monarch tribute may (although this is by no means certain) also speak to a continuing belief in a legitimate, albeit unenforceable, English claim to the Cypriot throne discussed in Chapter 1; we might recall that the arms of the kingdom of Cyprus were included on Elizabeth's tomb. Spates notes that 'in the context of the play, Cyprus is a tributary of England', but he does not perceive any connection with the belief in an English claim to the island.⁵⁶ In the context of *Old Fortunatus's* broader thematic preoccupations this allusion (if, indeed, that is what is meant here) to an English claim to Cyprus is not in and of itself particularly important; it was almost certainly included here simply to flatter Elizabeth. Nevertheless, intentional or otherwise, the sheer range of potential allusions in this short scene highlights the complexity of the island's position in the English imaginary.

⁵⁴ Strong, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Qtd in Strong, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Spates, 'Power', p. 202. In fact, there is no evidence that Spates was even aware of this aspect of Cypriot history.

Later scenes feature more explicit allusions to Cyprus's connection with Venus (who is not actually mentioned in the Prologue; nevertheless the link between Cyprus and Venus was sufficiently well-known by this stage to activate the association in the minds of a courtly audience). This connection is articulated more explicitly later in the play, when Andelocia goes to the English court. He is described as a 'warlike amorato' (6.268), who has sworn 'by Venus' hand' (6.267) that he has left Cyprus for Agrippine's love. The description of Andelocia as warlike is not explained but may allude to an earlier reference to him arriving with war horses – 'fifty bar'd [armoured] horses' (6.226). The line may provide further evidence that Dekker had access to the *Volksbuch*; in *Ausgabe des Fortunatus*, Andelocia is a capable warrior, fighting bravely against the Scots on behalf of the English king.⁵⁷ It may also gesture towards Venus's mythological affair with Mars (a Cypriot connection I will explore in greater detail in the following chapter), the classical god of war, although the play's Andelocia is not notably martial.

The play's refined classical allusions soon give way to a more bawdy register, however, when Andelocia jokes, in a moment that acknowledges the islanders' reputation for promiscuity, 'tis the fashion of us Cypriots, both men and women, to yield at first assault, and we expect others should do the like' (6.285-7), to which the English princess responds that 'either your women are very black and are glad to be sped, or your men very fond and will take no denial' (6.288-90). Underpinning the exchange here is the belief that Cypriots – particularly Cypriot women – were particularly wanton. Some early modern writers claimed that Cypriots were promiscuous because of the island's association with Venus. Others suggested that it was the sexual incontinence of the island's inhabitants that gave rise to the myth of Venus.⁵⁸ However, rather than a concerted effort to portray Andelocia as especially lascivious – he later tells Agrippine that he is not 'given to the flesh' (7.36) – the exchange feels tokenistic, inserted to keep his Cypriot identity in view. In fact, none of the play's Cypriots (Fortunatus, Ampedo or Shadow, or the Prince of Cyprus) is notably libidinous.

⁵⁷ *Ausgabe*, p. 110.

⁵⁸ I explore these resonances in greater detail in the following chapter, where I argue that Cyprus's – and Venice's – association with Venus resonates through the play on multiple levels.

There is submerged in Agrippine and Andelocia's suggestive repartee in scene 6, however, a series of comments that might recall an entirely different set of Cypriot associations in the minds of some playgoers. The description of Andelocia as 'warlike' (6.268) anticipates the language of siege and warfare that peppers their flirtatious exchange. As well as the alleged Cypriot tendency to 'yield at first assault' (6.286), Agrippine speaks of Cypriot men being 'vent'rous at a breach' (6.292). Commenting on Andelocia's response, '[h]e that fights under these sweet colours and yet turns coward, let him be shot to death with the terrible arrows of fair ladies' eyes' (6.294-6), McInnis posits that 'Andelocia plays with the Petrarchan conceit of love as war, wooing as besieging, and with the idea that the eyes are vulnerable to love's advances'.⁵⁹ While this is the surface level meaning of the exchange, the clustering of terms associated with siege warfare also had the potential to activate, in the minds of some playgoers at least, memories of the Siege of Famagusta; I will discuss further below the extent to which knowledge of the island's eventual fate underwrites what I argue is the play's moral agenda.

None of these Cypriot allusions, however, constitute a concerted engagement with these aspects of the island's identity; as I noted above, they appear to be inserted simply to keep the play's Cyprus connection in view. However, there is one particular aspect of Cyprus's complex web of identities and associations that underpins all the Fortunatus narratives, including Dekker's play. There are few details in the play to anchor it conclusively in any specific historic era, but the tale of one Cypriot's sudden and miraculous wealth is, I suggest, intended to recall the island's fourteenth-century prosperity. Although its precise era is never explicitly defined, the play's medieval world view – brought into focus by its allusions to Prester John, the Sultan of Babylon and the King of Cyprus – indicates that it, like the *Volksbuch*, was imagined as taking place at some point during the island's Lusignan history.

As noted in Chapter 1, fourteenth-century Cyprus's wealth and its dominance of east-west trade routes were recalled across Europe long after the island's mercantile influence had declined. The *Volksbuch*, published in 1509, appears to be set during this period, with the world it describes strongly resembling accounts left by medieval German pilgrims. Renate

⁵⁹ McInnis, 6.294-6n.

Noll-Wiemann notes ‘the strong influence of [German] pilgrim literature’ on the text.⁶⁰ The tale’s descriptions of Famagusta and the extravagant lifestyles of wealthy and noble Cypriots resonates with eye-witness accounts of the island left by pilgrims like Ludolf von Süchen, discussed in Chapter 1. Cobham notes that an account of Ludolf’s pilgrimage, *De Terra Sancta et itinere Ihierosol*, was published in Strasbourg in 1468 and, while there is (so far as I have been able to discover) no evidence that Ludolf’s account was a specific source for *Ausgabe des Fortunatus*, similarities between descriptions of Cyprus in general, and Famagusta in particular, in the two texts suggest that the *Volksbuch* derived its vision of Cyprus from a similar source. The *Volksbuch*’s historicity is further indicated by its narrative geography. Prager observes that, although it was published in 1509, the *Volksbuch* ‘complies geographically with the medieval *oikoumene*’, ignoring Columbus’s ‘discovery’ of the Americas and Vasco da Gama’s 1497-9 voyage around the Cape of Good Hope (the sea route to India). Whether the *Volksbuch* was written before 1492, or the German author simply chose to maintain what Prager calls ‘familiar and stable geographical parameters’, the story is set at a time when the Eastern Mediterranean – with Cyprus at its heart – dominated international trade networks.⁶¹

It was a period in which, according to Ludolf, Famagusta was ‘the richest of all cities, and her citizens [...] the richest of all men’.⁶² A citizen of Famagusta, he writes, ‘once betrothed his daughter, and the jewels of her head-dress were valued by the French knights who came with us more precious than all the ornaments of the queen of France’ – an ostentatious display of wealth that might have come directly from the pages of the *Volksbuch*.⁶³ Ludolf – who appears to have been dazzled by the displays of wealth he witnessed on the island – reports that one Cypriot nobleman ‘had more than five hundred hounds, and every two dogs have their own servant to guard and bathe and anoint them’.⁶⁴ It would be, he concludes almost wearily, ‘a long task to set down the other wonderful riches of the island, or tell of its nobles’.⁶⁵ This is the world that the *Volksbuch* and, albeit in a more attenuated form, *Old Fortunatus* evoke. Cyprus’s historic wealth was still recalled in late sixteenth-century England, and written about

⁶⁰ Qtd in Spates, ‘Power’, p. 204.

⁶¹ Prager, 129.

⁶² *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 19.

⁶³ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 19.

⁶⁴ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 20.

⁶⁵ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 21.

almost as though such circumstances still prevailed, perpetuated (at least in part) by the popularity in early modern England of translated Italian *novelle*, in which (as discussed in Chapter 1) Cyprus and its merchants featured so prominently. Writing in his preface to *The True Report of all the Successe of Famagosta*, one of the chief sources for *A Devise of a Maske*, William Malim reminded his readers that the capital Nicosia ‘was wont, by the trafficke of Marchauntes, to be very wealthy’, and that the island as a whole ‘is thought to be very wealthy’.⁶⁶ Thomas Drant’s reference to ‘y^e fine & wealthy Iland of Cyprus’, mentioned in the previous chapter, gestures towards similar associations.⁶⁷

Fortunatus Narratives and Early Modern Trade

Historic resonances notwithstanding, I want to argue that neither Dekker’s play nor the *Volksbuch* is actually interested in Cypriot history, but rather with their own more local concerns. Spates argues that the *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* actually ‘addresses frictions caused by the rise of merchant-banking families’ in early sixteenth-century Augsburg.⁶⁸ The rise of a prosperous middle class and increasing urbanisation in many European states led to a shift of power away from the feudal nobility and towards bankers and merchants in many of Europe’s centres of government and trade. Prager sees particular parallels between the purse’s promise of limitless wealth and the rise from humble origins of several extraordinarily wealthy families in fifteenth-century Augsburg. The most notable of these, the Fuggers, were originally weavers whose wealth increased seventyfold over the course of the fifteenth century.⁶⁹ By the early sixteenth century, they were the bankers to the Holy Roman Emperors Maximilian I and Charles V. The Fuggers, and others like them, although humble in origin, became richer than Europe’s most powerful kings and emperors. And, as Prager observes, ‘[l]ike Fortune’s wheel, [trade and banking] raised middle class-families to unheard of wealth, and brought them down again with equal suddenness’.⁷⁰ Although it would be unwise to attempt to interpret the *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* as in any sense a *roman à clef* (it is far too generically complex and multifaceted a work to map easily onto any individuals or families in this way),

⁶⁶ Malim, sig. B2^r.

⁶⁷ Drant, sig. D5^v.

⁶⁸ Spates, ‘Power’, p. 214.

⁶⁹ See Mark Häberlein, *The Fuggers of Augsburg: Pursuing Wealth and Honor in Renaissance Germany* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012) for a comprehensive account of the Fuggers’ rise to influence.

⁷⁰ Prager, 127.

the *Volksbuch* nevertheless appears to comment on the disruptive potential of mercantile wealth, played out not in contemporary Augsburg, but on a Mediterranean island that had been a byword at one point in its history for the wealth of its non-noble citizens.

Although he is never explicitly identified as a merchant, the *Volksbuch* repeatedly aligns Fortunatus with the stock figure of the wealthy Cypriot merchant. Having decided to go travelling in the east – a decision ostensibly motivated by his desire to see the world – Fortunatus

wasted no time in having a sturdy galley constructed, and while it was on the stocks, he summoned merchants and sent them out to buy all kinds of merchandise that would serve him well in heathen lands.⁷¹

The *Volksbuch* author appears to have some knowledge of Eastern Mediterranean trade networks, referring to competition between the Cypriot Fortunatus and Venetian, Florentine, Genoese and Catalanian merchants.⁷² Once in Alexandria, Fortunatus initially thinks and acts more like a merchant than a traveller, making deals and bribing officials, before appointing

another merchant patron in his place, and ordered him to sail the galley with its load of merchants and wares [...] to Catalonia, Portugal, Spain, England and Flanders, where they were to buy and sell to increase their profit; which he expected them to do, for they carried a valuable cargo.⁷³

Later, the sultan's representative (a Venetian merchant) offers Fortunatus not gold to return the hat, but an argosy 'full of exotic spices'.⁷⁴ On a plot level, Fortunatus had no need to involve himself in any mercantile activity; while in possession of Fortune's purse, profits were irrelevant to him. These scenes seem to be a recognition of the way real fortunes were made in Famagusta, then Augsburg – and, later, London.

Perhaps surprisingly, given Cyprus's historic association with Eastern Mediterranean trade, neither Fortunatus nor his sons show any interest in mercantile activity in *Old Fortunatus*. While Spates claims that *Old Fortunatus* is a 'narrative on the pleasures and perils of long-

⁷¹ *Ausgabe*, p. 86.

⁷² *Ausgabe*, p. 87.

⁷³ *Ausgabe*, p. 87. My emphasis.

⁷⁴ *Ausgabe*, p. 96. The activities of the Sultan's Venetian emissary perhaps recall Antigonus in 'Alatiel's Tale', discussed in Chapter 1.

distance maritime trade', there is little evidence in the play itself of any particular interest in international trade, although playgoers familiar with the island's history may have made the connection for themselves.⁷⁵ The play's lack of overt interest in the Eastern Mediterranean trade is most obviously signalled in its representation of the court of the Sultan of Babylon, whom the *Volksbuch* Fortunatus encounters in Alexandria, Mamlūk Egypt's chief entrepôt for trade with the west; Dekker's Fortunatus visits him in 'Babylon' (Chorus 1, l. 35) – Cairo. Dekker's Babylon is a rather more fantastical place than the *Volksbuch*'s Alexandria, its chief 'eastern' characteristic appearing to be its fabulous wealth. The sultan boasts to Fortunatus of an armoury in which are housed 'corslets forged of beaten gold / To arm ten hundred thousand fighting men' (4.38-9). His Babylonian treasury, he claims, contains the 'ball of gold that set all Troy on fire' (4.44), 'the scarf of Cupid's mother / Snatched from the soft moist ivory of her arm, / To wrap about Adonis' wounded thigh' (4.45-7) and silver doves '[c]omposed by magic to divide the air, / Who as they fly, shall clap their silver wings / And give strange music to the elements' (4.51-3). Traces of mercantile exchange can be detected in the sultan's offer of the choice of these fabulous objects in return for a magic purse but the play, while perhaps aware of the moment's resonances, does not dwell on them. Dekker seems more interested in the profits, rather than the processes, of international trade.

Intriguingly, neither the play nor the *Volksbuch* seems particularly interested in perpetuating the virulent Islamophobia that permeated so many other medieval and early modern texts. For a text written around the turn of the sixteenth century, *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* is relatively free of racial or religious hostility. While the text acknowledges cultural and confessional tensions – Fortunatus's wife asks him 'why do you wish to expose yourself to the false heathens? Every day you hear about them showing Christians neither faith nor favour, for it is in their blood to take a Christian's life and possessions whenever they can' – Fortunatus encounters no more hostility in the east than in Europe.⁷⁶ The sultan in both versions more closely resembles the sultans of Hellenistic romance (discussed in Chapter 1), than the Turkish tyrants staged by many of Dekker's contemporaries. Writing about Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda*, for example, Publicover notes that the play's Turks are 'consistently treated as tantamount to inhuman: they are like monstrous beings operating at the margins

⁷⁵ Spates, 'Power', p. 201.

⁷⁶ *Ausgabe*, p. 86.

of the romance-world' but no such attitudes are on display in *Old Fortunatus*.⁷⁷ In fact, the play elides religious difference altogether, making no references whatsoever to the sultan's religion.

The Islamophobic tropes circulating in many other early modern dramas are notably absent from the play, as witnessed by Dekker's sympathetic treatment of Bajazeth, described above. The Sultan of Babylon receives similarly sympathetic treatment. He undoubtedly covets Fortunatus's purse, enquiring eagerly after 'that purse which threw abroad such treasure' (4.9), but no more so than the English king. McInnis notes that at the 2006 'Read Not Dead' reading of the play at the Globe, the actor 'paused here as Fortunatus decided to lie about the purse's whereabouts', continuing '[t]he character's decision may suggest that Fortunatus perceives a threat to his safety at this point', but there is nothing in the text itself to indicate any obvious threat.⁷⁸ There are, of course, non-textual elements that may have shaped playgoers' responses to Bajazeth and the sultan. Costume in particular may have been used to emphasise their Islamic otherness. Robert Lublin suggests that religious difference was usually signalled on the stage through headgear – specifically the turban, with ornate 'eastern' robes acting as a secondary signifier.⁷⁹ The play text offers no evidence one way or the other, but it would be interesting to discover whether or not either Bajazeth or the Sultan of Babylon appeared on the stage wearing a turban; if Dekker wished to downplay religious difference, they may not have.⁸⁰ More generally, the absence of any overt anti-Muslim sentiment in *Old Fortunatus* demonstrates that its rhetorical agenda actually lay outside the Eastern Mediterranean world.

Medieval Famagusta and Early Modern London

Although *Old Fortunatus*'s dramatic narrative is played out across the same medieval map as the *Volksbuch*, the island occupies a subtly different position in the two works. Noting that Fortunatus's travels always 'begin and end in Cyprus' (the same is true of Andelocia's

⁷⁷ Publicover, p. 149.

⁷⁸ See McInnis, 4.10n. In fact, the sultan behaves rather better than Athelstan, who threatens at one point to 'chain [Andelocia] in [his] tower' (6.371) and torture him to obtain his wealth.

⁷⁹ Lublin argues that the turban was the key identifier for Muslim characters on the English stage. See Lublin, pp. 142-158.

⁸⁰ The woodcuts used to illustrate the 1509 *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* (available on Haldane's website) show the sultan wearing a turban.

journeys), Prager argues that Cyprus acts as ‘a neutral point of departure’ in the *Volksbuch*.⁸¹ All journeys in the narrative lead (eventually) back to Cyprus, the fulcrum around which the entire tale turns. The symbolic importance of Cyprus to the *Ausgabe des Fortunatus* is perhaps signalled by the fact that its opening line refers to the island, rather than the eponymous Fortunatus:

The Kingdom of Cyprus is an island situated close to where the sun rises from the sea: a delightful, merry, fertile island, full of all kinds of fruits, and known to many who have landed and passed some time there on their journey to Jerusalem, in the Holy Land.⁸²

Prager argues that in the *Volksbuch* Cyprus represents a ‘pivotal space’ from which the narrator ‘maps Fortunatus’ development’ as he travels first around Europe and then – again starting from Cyprus – to the Islamic world and beyond.⁸³ The *Volksbuch* points to the island’s centrality when Fortunatus, in a comment that implicitly places Cyprus at the centre of the known world, tells his wife that ‘I have seen half the world, and now I want to see the other half’.⁸⁴ The tale eventually ends, as it begins, on the island, when the Prince of Cyprus moves into Andelocia and Ampedo’s luxurious palace in Famagusta, where he ‘held court [...] until his father’s death’.⁸⁵ However, although Prager describes Cyprus as ‘significant to the novel’s narrative architecture’, she does not discuss the island on anything other than a symbolic level, positioning it simply as a ‘neutral center’ between east and west.⁸⁶ Whether a space with Cyprus’s complicated mosaic of identities and associations could ever be regarded as truly ‘neutral’ is questionable. Prager’s analysis overlooks a wealth of local detail that suggests the author was deeply interested in Cyprus as a distinctive space in its own right; she also seems curiously uninterested in the island’s mercantile and economic history that surely inspired the *Volksbuch*’s author to make his chief protagonists Cypriot. Nevertheless, her arguments identify something important about the *Volksbuch*’s narrative and spatial

⁸¹ Prager, 123.

⁸² *Ausgabe*, p. 1. The reference to Jerusalem perhaps highlights the influence of pilgrim literature on the *Volksbuch* author.

⁸³ Prager, 123, 125. Prager’s analysis only takes into account Fortunatus’s journeys. She makes no reference to Andelocia’s travels, perhaps because his journeys are confined to the west.

⁸⁴ *Ausgabe*, p. 82.

⁸⁵ *Ausgabe*, p. 166. The 1509 edition also featured a moralising epilogue that Haldane suggests was ‘almost certainly not written by the author; it may have been added, with the foreword, by the printer, Johann Otmar’ (Footnote, p. 167)

⁸⁶ Prager, 132, 133.

strategies: Fortunatus's travels take him across the known world, from Europe's far western shores to the Indonesian Spice Islands, but he always returns to Cyprus.

In direct contrast, Dekker's play neither begins nor ends on the island, opening instead in an unspecified wilderness and ending somewhere in England a short ride from the English court. Cyprus in the play is also markedly less realised than it is in its chief source. Although, as argued above, *Old Fortunatus* keeps its Cypriot connection in view throughout, surprisingly little stage time is spent on the island itself. Notwithstanding the range of Cypriot tropes and motifs alluded to in the play, *Old Fortunatus* actually makes little effort to create any obvious sense of place for its Cypriot scenes, although it repeatedly alludes to their location. Scene 2, in which we are introduced to Fortunatus's sons, refers to its Cyprus or Famagusta setting on five separate occasions (2.89, 2.119, 2.162, 2.206, 2.209) in 120 lines. Whereas, for example, *Othello's* scenes at the citadel and the harbour seem to suggest some (admittedly limited) sense of engagement with Famagusta as a real place, Dekker's Famagusta is surprisingly underdetermined. Only two full Cyprus scenes are staged in the court version (Scene 2 and Scene 5). It is likely that a third scene, where Andelocia returns to Famagusta to steal the hat from Ampedo, was played on the public stage, but the scene (which features in the *Comoedia von Fortunato*) was probably brief. And while Fortunatus dies on the island in the play, his sons are murdered in England. In a trajectory perhaps anticipated by the Cypriot pilgrimage to the court of Elizabeth described in the Court prologue, Dekker moves the play's centre of gravity westwards, away from the Eastern Mediterranean and towards England.

What has been largely under-recognised until now is the way in which *Old Fortunatus* uses medieval Cyprus to stand in for late sixteenth-century London. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, its Cypriot resonances have received little critical consideration. Spates, one of the few scholars to have shown any interest in the way the play thinks about Cyprus, claims that Famagusta is 'fetishized' in the play 'firstly, as the once stupendously wealthy city linking East and West in the late medieval period, and secondly, as a totem of Venice's declining overseas power'.⁸⁷ The city, he claims, is 'a geographical equivalent of the [sic] Fortune's gifts', with the purse representing its wealth and the hat its historic dominance of international

⁸⁷ Spates, 'Power', p. 211.

trade.⁸⁸ The play, *Spates* appears to be arguing, dramatises the economic decline of not only Cyprus, but also – via memories of the loss of Famagusta to the Ottomans – of Venice itself, and the transfer of their mercantile influence to England. While I am not entirely persuaded that the play is as interested in Venice as *Spates* claims here, the play does seem to draw parallels between medieval Famagusta and contemporary London in interesting ways.

The play's relative lack of interest in the hat, other than as a convenient plot device to recover the purse from Agrippine, means that the purse remains its main rhetorical focus. In possession of Fortune's never-emptying purse, Fortunatus and, in turn, Andelocia are the embodiment of Famagusta's historic wealth. Like fifteenth-century Augsburg, the city that generated the original Fortunatus narrative, late sixteenth-century England was experiencing considerable social and economic upheavals. Notwithstanding failed harvests and the ongoing war in Ireland, some English merchants were amassing fortunes through their participation in global trade networks. Sherman, while scathing about the play's literary qualities (calling it 'a failure' by 'most critical measures' and 'a confused hodge-podge of incompatible elements and inconsistent characters') nevertheless describes Dekker as 'the Renaissance dramatist who most successfully combined fantastic entertainment with serious exploration of the socioeconomic dynamics of fin-de-siècle London'.⁸⁹

Dekker wrote *Old Fortunatus* against a backdrop of a London increasingly involved in (and profiting from) global trade. For centuries English merchants had generally traded with their nearest neighbours, sending ships to the Low Countries, the Baltic and France, with goods from further afield either being bought in places like Antwerp, or imported directly by Venetian or Genoese merchants. Fernand Braudel records a nascent English Mediterranean trade from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, but this petered out, probably as a result of a global recession in the period 1540-45, which led to a drop in demand for English goods.⁹⁰ English access to eastern goods was further disrupted by the sack of Antwerp by

⁸⁸ *Spates*, 'Power', p. 211.

⁸⁹ Sherman, 86, 85. Sherman's observations here have some merit but I would suggest that many of the inconsistencies he refers to here are a consequence of the adaptations made for performance at court. I suspect the play as it was performed in *The Rose* would have been a more coherent and less confusing affair.

⁹⁰ See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II: Volume 1*, trans by Siân Reynolds, (London: Fontana, 1975 [1949]), pp. 612-29 for an overview of English activities in the Mediterranean.

Spanish forces in 1576. In the closing decades of the sixteenth century, however, English ships began to return to the Mediterranean, selling woollen cloth, lead and tin (required for casting iron) and buying luxury fabrics, currents, wine and spices.⁹¹ During the same period, English merchants travelled to Russia, Persia and, eventually, India to establish direct trading relationships. The first English ships sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in 1591, when James Lancaster led three English ships as far as Penang on the Malay Peninsula, before returning to England via Ceylon.⁹²

At the start of the sixteenth century, London had been something of an economic backwater; but by the time Dekker sat down to write *Old Fortunatus*, the city was on the brink of becoming a serious player in international maritime trade. The East India Company was granted its charter by Elizabeth on 31 December 1600 and only a few years later, the Virginia Company was established. The most important and profitable trading company in the late sixteenth century, however, was the Levant Company, formed in 1592 from the Venice Company and the Turkey Company. Cutting out Venetian and Genoese middlemen from the Mediterranean trade meant that profits from a successful voyage could be enormous. Risks were also high; cargos could be lost at any stage of the journey to bad weather, shipwreck or piracy. The second English sea voyage to the East Indies in 1596, for example, ended in disaster when all three ships were lost at sea. These risks notwithstanding, though, by the end of the sixteenth century, London was an increasingly wealthy, important and confident port, at the centre of a new global network, one that participated not only in the 'old' Mediterranean trade, but also forged new routes to the East Indies and the Americas. London was vying to become the hub of a new international trade network, one that spanned both east and west. In other words, it aspired to be a new Venice – or Famagusta.

When examined closely, *Old Fortunatus*'s Famagusta seems to resemble London rather than the Eastern Mediterranean port city. After the Cypriot pilgrimage in the court prologue, the first intimation that Dekker wanted his audience to connect medieval Famagusta with

⁹¹ Brotton's *This Orient Isle* (2016) provides a very readable account of English mercantile and diplomatic activities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

⁹² Sir Francis Drake passed the Cape of Good Hope in the opposite direction, on the homeward leg of his circumnavigation in 1580.

contemporary London occurs in the play's opening scene, when Fortunatus alludes to 'the great bell of St Michael's in Cyprus that keeps rumbling when men would most sleep' (1.48-9). McInnis speculates that this may be a reference to a church in Cyprus, although he concedes that it is 'unclear' how it would have been known to Dekker or his audiences.⁹³ Other critics, however, argue that St Michael's was probably a London church. Edward H. Sugden suggests it may have been St Michael's in Cornhill, which he describes as having 'a fine peal of bells', and which he claims is also alluded to in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (perf. 1581, publ. 1584).⁹⁴ Paul Frazer identifies the church as St Michael's in East Peckham, citing English chronicler John Stow's description of it as 'a fayre and beautifull Parish Church' which was 'of late yeares greatlie blemished by the bulding of foure Tenementes on the North side'.⁹⁵ The proximity of tenements to the church, Frazer suggests, meant that the church bells disrupted domestic life for the inhabitants and it was this to which Fortunatus was alluding. Intriguingly, Lisa Hopkins suggests the line may have prefigured Othello's '[s]ilence that dreadful bell, it frights the isle!' (2.3.171); I will discuss this and other evidence of an inter-theatrical relationship between *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello* in the following chapter.⁹⁶ Whilst neither Sugden's nor Frazer's identification is conclusive, some sort of local reference, recognisable to playgoers, is more plausible than an allusion to an unknown Cypriot church.

St Michael's church is not the only London landmark relocated by Dekker to Famagusta. Rather than simply an opportunistic reference to a local issue (the noise of the bells), it seems to have been part of a deliberate strategy. *Old Fortunatus* also features a reference to 'the Dagger in Cyprus', where one might obtain 'sixpenny pies' (5.107-8). Dekker seems to have been rather partial to a dagger pie; in his play *Satiromastix* (1601), Tucca exclaims (in a line

⁹³ McInnis, 1.48n. McInnis also speculates, somewhat unconvincingly, that it might be a rather laboured allusion the likeness of the archangel Michael on the Elizabethan coin known as the angel or a reference to Michael and the day of Judgement (St Michael was believed to weigh souls on the day of Judgement), but the reference to a bell seems more specific than this.

⁹⁴ Edward H Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary To The Works Of Shakespeare And His Fellow Dramatists* (Manchester: The University Press, 1925), p. 343-4.

⁹⁵ Qtd by Paul Frazer, 'Performing Places in Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*' in *Philological Quarterly*, 89.4 (2010), 457-80 (462) < <https://www-proquest-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/docview/926958703?accountid=9730> > [accessed 5 September 2019]

⁹⁶ See Lisa Hopkins, 'Love and War on Venus' Island: *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy*', *The Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 25.1 (2016), 51-63 (52).

that indicates that the pies were cheap) that ‘ile not take thy word for a dagger Pye’ (*Satiromastix*, 1.2.304-5).⁹⁷ McInnis identifies two London taverns named The Dagger, one in Holborn, the other in Cheapside, noting that both were known for their ‘dagger-pies’.⁹⁸ Given the context of the discussion – Andelocia, Ampedo and Shadow are once again down to their last ‘crusado’ (5.64, 5.105) – the pies seem to have been cheap and filling, appealing to those – like, perhaps, the dramatist himself – with limited funds.

One of *Old Fortunatus*’s more curious relocations from London to Cyprus is Andelocia’s taunting comparison of Agrippine, sporting a pair of horns after eating Vice’s apple, with ‘the little Welshwoman in Cyprus that had but one horn in her head’ (10.19-20). McInnis glosses the allusion as ‘unexplained’, speculating that it might have constituted a glance at the sort of sideshow attraction imagined by Trinculo for Caliban in *The Tempest*.⁹⁹ He is partly right: a horned Welshwoman *was*, briefly, a public attraction in London in 1588. The line almost certainly refers to the Welsh widow, Mrs Margaret Owyn, who had a single ‘horn’ growing from her forehead, described in the pamphlet *A myraculous, and Monstrous, but yet most true, and certayne discourse, of a Woman (now to be seene in London) of the age of threescore yeares, or there abouts, in the midst of whose fore-head (by the wonderfull worke of God) there growth out a crooked Horne, of foure ynches long* (1588). The ‘horn’ in question was probably a benign bone tumour, described in the pamphlet as ‘much like a Sheepes horne’.¹⁰⁰ The pamphlet claims that, before his death, Margaret Owyn’s husband had accused her of ‘light behaviour’ and of ‘giv[ing] him the horne’ – making him a cuckold – to which she allegedly replied that if that were so, she ‘might have a horne growing out of her owne face and fore-head, to the wonder of the whole world’.¹⁰¹ James O. Wood characterises the pamphlet as ‘a pious and gross libel’ on the unfortunate Welshwoman.¹⁰² After describing Margaret Owyn’s horn and her attempts to remove it, the pamphlet devotes itself to a

⁹⁷ Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix* in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker Volume I*, ed. By Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 299-395.

⁹⁸ McInnis, 5.107-8n.

⁹⁹ McInnis, 10.19-20n.

¹⁰⁰ *A myraculous, and Monstrous, but yet most true, and certayne discourse, of a Woman (now to be seene in London) of the age of threescore yeares, or there abouts, in the midst of whose fore-head (by the wonderfull worke of God) there growth out a crooked Horne, of foure ynches long* (London, 1588), sig. A2^r.

¹⁰¹ *A myraculous, and Monstrous*, sig A2^v.

¹⁰² James O. Wood, ‘Woman With a Horn’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 29.3 (1966), 295-300 (298). < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3816773> > [accessed 12 Dec 20]

sermon admonishing the English for their sinfulness, citing the Welshwoman's horn as an example of the sort of punishment God might inflict on an erring individual – much, perhaps, as Agrippine's horn is a punishment for her greed and vanity. The unfortunate Margaret Owyn became known outside of Wales when local authorities sent her to London to be examined by 'the Lordes of the Queenes maiestie most honorable privie Councell'; there are no records of her appearing before the Privy Council, which, in the summer of 1588, was presumably rather more preoccupied with the Spanish Armada and its aftermath.¹⁰³

Andelocia's advice to Agrippine that she should '[s]igh not for your purse: money may be got by you as well as by the little Welshwoman' (10.18-19) suggests that Margaret Owyn (or someone associated with her), by setting herself up as a public spectacle, turned her time in London to profit. The pamphlet's parenthetical aside that she is 'now to be seene in London' supports this hypothesis.¹⁰⁴ The horned Welshwoman appears (unsurprisingly) to have been a subject of ongoing fascination, becoming for a time proverbial. Thomas Nashe, in *Have with You to Saffron Walden* (1596), claims that Gabriel Harvey had danced with a woman 'thrice more deformed than the woman with a horne in her head'.¹⁰⁵ In John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), the fool Passarello says that 'the horn of cuckold is as tender as his eye, or as that growing in the woman's forehead twelve years since, that could not endure to be touched' (1.8.18-20).¹⁰⁶ Playgoers would, these allusions suggest, have been well aware of 'the little Welshwoman in Cyprus[s]' (10.19) local resonances.

While any of these local allusions considered in isolation might be seen simply as playful in-jokes, taken collectively they work to link contemporary London with medieval Famagusta. The anatopic relocation of local people and places out of their 'correct' geographical or historical context was a device frequently employed by early modern dramatists. As Darryll Grantley observes, in the early modern playhouses, 'remote locations – in terms of

¹⁰³ *A myraculous, and Monstrous*, sig. A2^v.

¹⁰⁴ *A myraculous and Monstrous*, sig A2^r. Wood suggests that the pamphlet's publishers may have been involved in her exploitation. One hopes that the unfortunate Mrs Owyn received at least some of the profits. See Wood, 298.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Nashe, *Haue vvith you to saffron-vvalden. or, gabriell harueys hunt is vp containing a full answere to the eldest sonne of the halter-maker. or, nashe his confutation of the sinfull doctor. the mott or posie, in stead of omne tulit punctum: Pacis fiducia nunquam. as much to say, as I sayd I would speake with him* (London, 1596), sig. M3^v.

¹⁰⁶ John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. by George K. Hunter (London: The Revels Plays, 1975).

geography, period or myth – were readily understood to represent English society in general, and even specifically London so it was not strictly necessary to locate action there'.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, dramatists often inserted local references to make the connection clear. It was a technique that Dekker clearly found useful, turning to it again (more coherently) in his two-part play *The Honest Whore* (1604/1606). The play is, Grantley notes, 'nominally set in Milan', but the 'only clear geographical referents in the play are to known London locations transposed to the vaguer Italian context, Bedlam and Bridewell, with a scene set in each'.¹⁰⁸ He argues that this sort of anatopic translation draws upon 'the audience's experiential knowledge of the relocated setting' to create meaning.¹⁰⁹ In other words, anatopic allusion depends on playgoers' recognition of the site's meaning in its local context. The level of awareness of 'dagger pies' (for example) among Dekker's court audience is, perhaps, debatable but the references to them in *Old Fortunatus* (and, later, *Satiromastix*) indicate that The Dagger would have been well-known to members of The Rose's audience as a place frequented by the down-at-heel and hungry. No doubt the allusion (like, perhaps, the little Welshwoman) created a pleasurable frisson of recognition, while subtly drawing attention to the connections the play is asking audience members to make.

The anatomic insertion of well-known local landmarks, people or events into ostensibly foreign settings is not, of course, unique to *Old Fortunatus*. Most famously, Shakespeare includes a reference to 'the Elephant' (*Twelfth Night*, 3.3.40/49) in Illyria. What is curious about Dekker's allusions, however, is the insistence that these places are 'in Cyprus'. By drawing attention to the references' incongruity in this way, Dekker almost emphasises the fact that they are, in fact, local, creating a layered geography that invites audiences to recognise the analogy between medieval Cyprus and contemporary London, albeit one that is complicated by the fact that the play also stages England directly.

¹⁰⁷ Darryll Grantley, *London in Early Modern English Drama: Representing the Built Environment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Grantley, p. 5. Act 5 Scene 2 of Part 1 of *The Honest Whore* is set in the Bethlehem Monastery, complete with 'lunatics'. Act 5 Scene 2 in Part 2 is set in the Bridewell Prison, beside the river.

¹⁰⁹ Grantley, p. 6.

Just as medieval Famagusta in the play stands in for contemporary London, the citizens of Famagusta appear to share many characteristics with contemporary Londoners as they were depicted by Dekker's contemporaries in the public playhouses. The fashionable gallants of Famagusta, who 'leap thrice a day into three orders of fashion' (2.126), are reminiscent of the social climber and aspiring courtier Fastidius Brisk in Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (perf. 1599, publ. 1600), whose frequent changes of outfit causes much anguish to Fungoso, his would-be imitator. Jonson's play satirises the pair's attempts to gain entrance to more elevated social circles by wearing fashionable and extravagant clothing. Expensive and fashionable dress is, similarly, one of *Old Fortunatus*'s chief signifiers of the family's new-found wealth and its social aspiration; but unlike in Jonson's play, it does not appear to be treated satirically. When Fortunatus first returns to Famagusta, he urges his sons to 'be gallant' (2.205) and '[s]hine in the streets of Cyprus' (2.206), adding (in a comment that Duckert notes 'smacks of class revenge') that it will 'make them bow their knees that once did spurn you' (2.207).¹¹⁰ The relationship between dress and social status appears to have interested Dekker. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, the other Dekker play performed at court over Christmas 1599, refers repeatedly to dress as a marker of position and rank. In the play, Mistress Eyre responds to her husband's elevation to the office of 'Master Sheriff' (*The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 10.5) by seeking out more expensive and modish items of dress, asking her husband's journeyman if he is 'acquainted with never a farthingale maker, nor a French-hood-maker?' (*The Shoemaker's Holiday*, 10.30-1).¹¹¹ *Old Fortunatus* seemed to require lavish costuming. In early December 1599, Henslowe gave the Admiral's Men £10 'ffor to by thinges for Fortunatus'.¹¹² There was, Richard Dutton comments, '[n]o expense [...] to be spared in making an impression with this play' at court.¹¹³ Whether or not any of that additional sum was spent on costume for Fortunatus or Andelocia is impossible to ascertain; but even if it

¹¹⁰ Qtd by McInnis, 2.206-8n.

¹¹¹ Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday in The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. by James Knowles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-65.

¹¹² See Henslowe, p. 128.

¹¹³ Richard Dutton, 'The Court, the Master of the Revels, and the Players', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Richard Dutton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 362-379 (p. 370).

were not, the inventory in Henslowe's account book contained a wide range of striking and luxury items that would fit the bill.

The connection between social aspiration and dress is made most forcefully by Andelocia, his costumes used to track the rise and fall of his fortunes. Sherman observes that 'overnight, Fortunatus' family acquires not only capital but cultural capital', at which point 'they can make a show of their wealth and ascend the civic hierarchy'.¹¹⁴ I am not entirely convinced that wealth confers *cultural* capital; social capital would probably be a better term for the access the purse buys Fortunatus and Andelocia to the courts of the world, their extravagant dress thus signifying not only their profligacy, but also their social aspirations. Before his father's return to Cyprus with Fortune's purse, Andelocia laments his exclusion from Famagusta's sartorial economy. The wealthy citizen of Famagusta, he notes bitterly, is 'lapped all in damask' (2.89-90) and 'Famagusta fools turn half a shop of wares into a suit of gay apparel' (2.2.119-20), while he, 'more than mad to see silks and velvets lie crowding together in mercers' shops' (2.108-9), is denied credit. Tellingly, before returning to Famagusta to relieve his sons' poverty, Fortunatus pauses somewhere *en route* to refresh his own shabby wardrobe, arriving in Famagusta 'gallant' (s.d., 2.140) and 'brave' (2.149, 2.150). As with his father, one of Andelocia's first purchases appears to be expensive new clothes; the second time we encounter him, he enters 'very gallant' (s.d., 5.1). On arrival at the English court, Andelocia is once again described as 'gallant' (6.223, 6.237), the repeated stage direction indicating a different 'gallant' costume. Even Shadow the servant, wearing Andelocia's livery, later makes a 'very gallant' (s.d., 6.406) entrance at one point. The costliness of Andelocia's attire is indicated by his claim that, following Agrippine's theft of the purse, he will 'sell this pride' (6.522) to fund his return to Cyprus. When he has finally retrieved both purse and hat from Agrippine, his first order to Shadow is to 'make ready my richest attire' (10.46-7). However, unlike that of the gallants and would-be gallants in Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Andelocia's extravagant dress is not obviously a source of comedy or derision. A similar sort of satire – although one in a gentler vein – is found in the exchange between the Clown and his father the Old Shepherd in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale* (1609), when the Clown demands of Autolycus '[s]ee you these clothes? Say you see them not and think

¹¹⁴ Sherman, 88.

me still no gentleman born' (*The Winter's Tale*, 5.2.128-9).¹¹⁵ There is no evidence in *Old Fortunatus* that Andelocia's dress is ridiculous (no other character mocks him for it), only that it was showy and obviously costly.

The complex relationship between dress and social status was a complicated issue in Elizabethan England. Robert Lublin argues that what he calls 'the centrality of social stratification to England's sense of itself' was 'reflected and reified in the visual culture of the period, particularly in one's choice of apparel' and that 'English society broadly maintained that one's clothes ought to accurately reflect one's rank'.¹¹⁶ Dress, he continues, 'was one of the preeminent forms by which individuals experienced and expressed their sense of social value'.¹¹⁷ But earlier certainties about rank and position were under threat from a number of social changes, including (Lublin argues) 'the increasing wealth of tradesmen'.¹¹⁸ Certain types of clothing were – at least theoretically – reserved for the upper echelons of society. According to the 1597 Sumptuary Proclamation, for example, only 'Earls and above that rank, and Knights of the Garter' were permitted to wear 'Cloth of gold, Sylver tissued, Sike of purple color'.¹¹⁹ However, repeated sumptuary proclamations (1559, 1562, 1566, 1571, 1574, 1580, 1588 and 1597) indicate that these laws were, as Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass have demonstrated, more often honoured in the breach than in the observance.¹²⁰ Increasing numbers of wealthy Londoners were able to dress 'above' their station. Pamphleteer and polemicist Phillip Stubbes denounced extravagant dress as 'an exemplarie of euill [that] induceth the whole man to wickednes and sinne'.¹²¹ However, his particular objection to the wearing of expensive and luxurious dress by the bourgeoisie was based on the blurring of social boundaries between the different classes that might ensue. It is, he complains,

very hard to knowe, who is noble, who is worshipfull, who is a gentleman, who is not: for you will haue those, which are neither of the nobylitie gentilitie nor yeomanry, no

¹¹⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by Ernest Schanzer (London: Penguin Books, 1969).

¹¹⁶ Lublin, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ Lublin, p. 43.

¹¹⁸ Lublin, p. 42.

¹¹⁹ See Lublin, Fig. 2.1, p. 46.

¹²⁰ Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 188.

¹²¹ Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses contayning a discouerie, or briefe summarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many christian countreyes of the worlde: But (especiallie) in a verie famous ilande called ailgna ...* (Part 1) (London, 1583), sig. B6^v.

nor yet anie Magistrat or Officer in the commonwealth, go daylie in silks, veluets, satens, damasks, taffeties and such like[.]¹²²

Commoners should not, he continued, wear 'silks, veluets, satens, damasks, gould, siluer', 'except they being in some kind of office in the common wealth [and] do use it for dignifying and innobling the same'.¹²³ The wearing of luxury fabrics by the middling sort, Stubbes suggests, constitutes a dangerous blurring of social boundaries.

Ironically, according to Lublin, the '[t]heatres proved to be the one place where the sumptuary laws largely succeeded in determining the apparel that people wore'.¹²⁴ It was essential that the clothes worn by an actor visually communicated his character's social standing. Yet in *Old Fortunatus*, extreme wealth allows Fortunatus and Andelocia to dress in a way that matches or even exceeds that of the play's noble characters. Early modern playgoers would have understood the socially disruptive symbolism of their extravagant dress. The purse that funded Fortunatus and Andelocia's 'gallant' clothing also buys them access to the courts of kings and emperors. Fortunatus uses the purse to enter 'the courts of all our Asian kings' (4.3), banqueting with eastern potentates and 'rid[ing] with them in triumph through their courts' (4.14). And his social climbing is not confined to the east; in the same passage he claims to have been made welcome among the elite of 'England, France, Spain, and wealthy Belgia' (4.16). His wealth has allowed him to scorn 'to crowd among the muddy throng / Of the rank multitude' (5.190-1) and 'boldly' (5.194) enter each nation's courts and palaces. His wealth, Fortunatus seems to be saying, makes him the equal of any king or emperor. His imagination fired by his father's adventures, Andelocia declares that he too, henceforth, will 'live with none but kings' (5.208). Gold, he declares, 'is an eagle that can fly to any place; and like Death, that dares enter all places' (5.419-20). It is a dangerously disruptive message, and one that the play only partially refutes. Once he is in possession of the purse, Andelocia declares:

To England shall our stars direct our course;
Thither the prince of Cyprus, our king's son
Is gone to see the lovely Agrippine,
Shadow, we'll gaze upon that English dame

¹²² Stubbes, sig. C2^v.

¹²³ Stubbes, sig. C2^v.

¹²⁴ Lublin, p. 43.

And try what virtue gold has to inflame. (6.445-449)

Beside the rather misogynistic assumption that even a princess's favour has its price (one that is not found in the *Volksbuch*, where Andelocia is rather bashful in his admiration for Agrippine), what stands out here is the implication that Andelocia intends to use his wealth to usurp the Prince's place in Agrippine's affections.

Old Fortunatus highlights the disruptive potential of an increasingly wealthy and assertive merchant class. Athelstan sees Andelocia's wealth a threat to his very authority. The Cypriot's reckless spending, according to the English king, represents a 'rebellious prodigality' (6.344) that has the potential to undermine traditional social and political structures. Conspicuously outspending nobles and monarchs constitutes a dangerous threat to the established order, the king suggests. In a similar vein, the Prince of Cyprus describes Andelocia's spending as 'striv[ing] with kings' (6.352). Although amplified in the play, these tensions are not Dekker's invention. In the *Volksbuch*, the Cypriot king seeks to reconcile the disjunction between wealth and social position, and bring Fortunatus's wealth into the control of existing hierarchies, by arranging his marriage to the daughter of an impoverished count, observing that 'I would rather see him with a wife of noble birth than with some peasant's daughter'.¹²⁵ After his marriage, Fortunatus buys the land and vassals of another impoverished Cypriot count, laying bare the process by which social hierarchies accommodate and absorb 'new' money, even if it is not ultimately enough to protect Andelocia from the two murderous counts' greed and jealousy. No such process is undertaken, however, in Dekker's play. Fortunatus and Andelocia's dismissive attitude to class boundaries is one key difference between the *Volksbuch* and Dekker's play. Whereas in the former, father and son remain largely respectful of existing social hierarchies, in *Old Fortunatus* the pair use their wealth to free themselves from social constraints, culminating in Andelocia's flippant declaration, shortly before his death, that 'I care not for any king in Christendom' (10.25). Against the backdrop of these concerns, Fortune's presentation of the revived purse to Athelstan in the final scene is essentially conservative, as the rebellious prodigality of 'new' money (and the socio-political threat it represents) is contained and brought under the control of existing power structures.

¹²⁵ *Ausgabe*, p. 70.

Notwithstanding *Old Fortunatus's* social commentary, critics have, in general, paid more attention to the final scene's economic symbolism. Highlighting not only Cyprus's decline, but also Venice's waning influence in the closing decades of the sixteenth-century, Spates argues that, via the transfer of wealth symbolised by Fortune's gift of the purse, in the final scene

England becomes the inheritor not only of Famagusta but also Venice, in a vast paradigm shift. Rather than an inward-facing world focusing on the Mediterranean, Fortune's reissuing of the cap and purse to England resituate that promise of easy wealth and power to this Western and formerly marginalized kingdom.¹²⁶

This is a rather literal reading of the play's Cypriot resonances (Spates makes no reference to its anatomic strategies) and I am not entirely convinced that the play is as interested in Venice as Spates (who appears to have his own critical investments in what he claims are the work's Anglo-Venetian dimensions) argues. Spates is rather too quick to reject Vitkus's argument that *Old Fortunatus* is a 'curiously grim statement about what the pursuit of riches (as opposed to virtue) might be doing to the English court', arguing that this does not 'adequately address Fortune's revitalization of Fortunatus' cap and purse and her subsequent bequest of these items to the English monarch'.¹²⁷ Spates's arguments – that the play almost *celebrates* increasing English participation in global trade networks – is weakened by his misreading of the play's ending, in which he claims that Fortune also presents the hat to Athelstan. The hat is in fact burned by Ampedo earlier in the scene and never reappears. Only the purse is presented to the English king (and then probably only during the court performance). Contrary to Spates's claim, there was probably no transfer of the two symbolic items from Famagusta to London in the public version of the play. In the *Comoedia Von Fortunato*, the English king asks for (and receives) Fortune's blessing, but she does not give him the purse. If, as I have suggested, the transfer of the purse to Athelstan was occasional, included only in the performance at court, the play as it was performed in The Rose concluded with the homiletic couplet 'England shall ne'er be poor if England strive / Rather by virtue than by wealth to thrive' (10.266-7), which would constitute a more morally coherent ending.

¹²⁶ Spates, 'Power', p. 214.

¹²⁷ Vitkus, 'Labor and Travel', p. 238 and Spates, 'Power', p. 210-1.

Dekker's precise vision of Cyprus is inexact and realised inconsistently throughout. At different points in the play, the island stands in for contemporary London, whereas at others its own complex (and distinct) identity comes to the fore. Although *Old Fortunatus* features a range of Cypriot tropes and motifs, some of these (the references to Venus, for example) appear tokenistic, inserted to keep the play's Cypriot connection in view, rather than representing a concerted engagement with the broader complexities of its place in the English imaginary. As far as *Old Fortunatus*'s thematic interests are concerned, the island's primary signification is its period of medieval prosperity, represented in the drama by Fortune's miraculous purse. Notwithstanding its tragic outcome, the play's vision of the Eastern Mediterranean is essentially 'Hellenistic' (in the sense discussed in Chapter 1) rather than chivalric, in that it presents a vision of Cyprus at the heart of a Mediterranean culture in which religious and cultural difference is elided or, at least, downplayed. It is not clear to what extent this is significant, driven by the play's implicit presentation of London as the 'new' Famagusta, happily profiting from trade with the Islamic east, or whether Dekker simply viewed the narrative's Islamic scenes as immaterial to the work's more local concerns. In the 1600 play *Lust's Dominion*, where the chief protagonist, a Spanish Moor, was presented in a more negative light, Dekker was to take a rather more Islamophobic stance, so it might be overly generous to suggest that his more sympathetic rendering of two Islamic potentates in *Fortunatus* derives from an attractively 'progressive' attitude. In *Old Fortunatus*, race and religion were probably simply irrelevant to the play's local interests.

I want to conclude this chapter with a consideration of what, if any, effect awareness of Cyprus's later history might have had on playgoers' response to the play. Although Venice's loss of the island was, for the most part, not acknowledged in English popular literature, knowledge of the island's eventual fate nevertheless formed a significant element of the Brusterian mosaic of 'texts' associated with the island. Fortune's warning as she presents Athelstan with the purse, with the bodies of its previous owners still onstage, sounds a cautionary note; even with the transfer of the purse, it takes some effort to interpret the moment as an unequivocal celebration of early modern English capitalist endeavour. Although largely unacknowledged by the play (except for, very fleetingly, during Andelocia's

exchange with Agrippine, discussed above), Cyprus's later history must surely have loomed large over the play's final scene. Not all critics agree. Spates argues that *Old Fortunatus* 'blithely ignores the Ottoman conquest' and that

Famagusta's legendary tropes of economic prosperity and its role as a locus of exchange drawn from historico-literary constructs from the 12th to 16th centuries are overlaid upon and stifle contemporary 16th-century accounts of Famagusta.¹²⁸

If *Old Fortunatus* deliberately recalls Famagusta's medieval wealth, I am not convinced the play presents it as something to which the English should aspire. Whether or not Dekker intended them to do so, it seems unlikely that at least some playgoers would not have interpreted Fortunatus and sons' rise and subsequent fall as an allegory for the fate of the island they embodied. As noted previously, Dekker worked to keep the brothers' Cypriot identity in view even in the closing scene, with Fortune exhorting Athelstan and the English court to '[l]ook on those Cypriots, Fortunatus' sons' (10.210) and recall '[t]hey and their father were my minions' (10.211). If the idea of London as the 'new' Famagusta, at the centre of a global trade network, was a tantalising prospect, the sight of the bodies of Fortunatus's dead sons – coupled with Fortune's warning – qualified the optimism.

Although the play never explicitly alludes to Cyprus's later history (although, as noted above, the cluster of terms associated with warfare and siege in Andelocia's exchange with Agrippine may hint at the events of 1570-1), it must have occurred to some playgoers that using medieval Cyprus to stand in for contemporary London had troubling implications when the island's eventual fate was considered. Although he invokes divine justice rather than Fortune, Thomas Drant, preaching nearly three decades earlier in the aftermath of the loss of Cyprus to the Ottomans, appears to link the island's loss with some kind of moral failure:

What is y^e Turke. One that hath most large and wyde Signiories, one that vseth seuere discipline and policie, One that wynneth much, and loseth litle: One y^t hath a good affectio[n] to llandes, and this last yeare hath wonne y^e fine & wealthy lland of *Cyprus*. And no dout is set on by God to go forward. The Turke they wil say is farre of. But God whistelleth to those that are farre of that they come lyke bees, to light where hee wil haue them. Thou laughest at me peradventure to see me so carefull. I morne for thee without peradue[n]ture to see thee so careles. Thou laughest at me,

¹²⁸ Spates, 'Power', p. 208, p. 211.

and God at thee. Thou carest not, but care, thou laughest but weepe. And do good whilest thou mayst thou ca[n]st not tell what *ill will betyde vpon the earth*.¹²⁹

The play's encomium to Elizabeth notwithstanding, its ending is as much a warning as a tribute, and one ghosted by Cyprus's later history. As both history and literature demonstrated, individuals and nations could fall as well as rise on Fortune's wheel, unsettling any neat reading of the play as endorsing the values and activities that made Cyprus so wealthy.

¹²⁹ Drant, sig. D5^v-D6^r.

Chapter 4: William Shakespeare's *Othello*

Although composed only three years after *Old Fortunatus*, *Othello* (1603) presented English playgoers with a radically different vision of Cyprus. Where *Old Fortunatus* recalled the island's period of medieval prosperity, Shakespeare's play invoked its Venetian history and, at least by implication, the events of 1570-1. My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that – its historic resonances notwithstanding – the play is in fact deeply invested in a far wider range of Cypriot allusions, several of which have been critically under-explored. As I noted in this thesis's introductory chapter, much twenty-first-century *Othello* criticism has tended to focus on the ways in which early-seventeenth-century English beliefs and anxieties about the Islamic world in general, and the Ottoman Empire in particular, are articulated by the play, rather than its relationship with the island's complex history and multiple significations. The play's racial politics have also attracted significant scholarly interest, with postcolonial criticism increasingly merging with interest in the history of western relations with the Islamic world after 9/11.¹ In the light of these preoccupations, Othello himself has been interpreted as both the embodiment of European anxieties about Ottoman territorial expansion and the tragic victim of the 'othering' he experiences (and internalises) as a black man in early modern Venice; although Othello's race is not a primary focus of this chapter, I will touch on its relationship to the work's imaginative geography.

Against the backdrop of this scholarly preoccupation with Othello's ethnic and confessional identity, Cyprus and its complex web of wider significations in the play have received comparatively little critical attention. Roger Christofides, in a thoughtful presentist exploration of the ways *Othello* might speak to Cyprus's twenty-first century political divisions, comments that much recent criticism about the play has 'a clear tendency to occlude Cyprus' altogether, usually subsuming it into arguments about the play's racial and religious dimensions.² When the island is mentioned by critics, it is often defined as a place that exists primarily in opposition to *Othello*'s other significant geographical site, Venice.

¹ See Emily Bartels's *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), for example. Jack d'Amico's *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991), although written before 9/11, addresses the religious and racial meanings of the term 'Moor'.

² R.M. Christofides, *Othello's Secret: The Cyprus Problem* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016), p. 15.

Marjorie Garber, for example, argues that it represents the antithesis of Venetian sophistication and urbanity, constituting a semi-lawless colonial outpost 'buffeted by unimaginable winds and storms, populated by an unstable people, an island on the very outer limits of civilization'.³ Andrew Hadfield concurs, adding:

Cyprus, where the main action of the plot develops, appears to have no real dramatic substance and functions as a contrast to the ordered city-state, an outpost where civilized order is always under threat.⁴

E.A.J. Honigmann goes further still, suggesting that Cyprus was of little significance to the play's tragic narrative, and claiming that

Shakespeare saw Venice as part of his own world, but not so Cyprus. At the far end of the Mediterranean, Cyprus had passed into Turkish rule and, unlike Venice, seems not to have interested Shakespeare as a place, for it might be almost any one of many islands fortified by the Venetians.⁵

Given the relative paucity of concrete details about the island in *Othello*, such assessments are understandable; whereas in Venice we hear about the Senate, Othello's lodgings in the Sagittary and Brabantio's house, the scenes set on Cyprus seem to have few of these kinds of specific local details. Nevertheless, I want to show over the course of this chapter that the play's Cypriot setting in fact resonates powerfully on multiple levels as the tragic narrative unfolds.

Othello's Historicity and Sources

In a ground-breaking article in terms of its attention to *Othello's* Turkish dimensions, Daniel Vitkus asserts that 'the choice of Cyprus as a setting for much of the play is Shakespeare's', before adding in parentheses 'Cinthio's text not referring to such a locale'.⁶ He is mistaken. Like *Othello*, Cinthio's *Un Capitano Moro* – the play's chief narrative source – was set almost

³ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2005), p. 590.

⁴ Andrew Hadfield, 'Introduction' to *Shakespeare and the Renaissance*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 1-19 (p.3).

⁵ E.A.J. Honigmann, 'Introduction' in *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. by E.A.J. Honigmann (London: Bloomsbury, 1997 [repr. 2014]), pp. 1-111 (p.11). All references to the play are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

⁶ Daniel J. Vitkus, 'Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.2 (1997), 145-76 (p. 165) < <https://www-istor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/2871278> > [accessed 15 November 2018]

entirely on Cyprus, and the island is explicitly referred to on four separate occasions in the narrative. Vitkus's error is perhaps indicative of the narrow critical vantage point from which he approached *Othello*; he may have been distracted by his own critical investments, presenting the play as what he calls a 'conversion drama', in which Othello rhetorically converts (or perhaps reconverts; Othello's precise history is left strategically opaque) to Islam, in some sense prefiguring the island's historic 'conversion' from Venetian to Ottoman territory, which had not yet taken place when Cinthio wrote his *novella*. Whatever the reason for the oversight, Vitkus's mistake is repeated in *Turning Turk* (2003), the influential monograph that developed the arguments first presented in his 1997 article.⁷

Vitkus is not alone in suggesting that the story's Cypriot setting was Shakespeare's invention. Matthew Dimmock similarly suggests that Shakespeare 'provocatively introduce[s] Cyprus and the threatening Ottoman frame' to the play.⁸ What both Vitkus and Dimmock seem to be suggesting is that Shakespeare, recollecting the island's history, added the play's Cypriot setting in order to amplify its Turkish resonances. Vitkus is also hazy about the island's history; at one point he states that '[t]wo years after Lepanto, the Turks took Cyprus' (in fact, the Battle of Lepanto took place on 7 October 1571, *after* the Siege of Famagusta) and that 'Cyprus was formally ceded by Venice to the Turks in 1573, after three years of futile resistance, including bloody sieges at Nicosia and Famagusta', while later claiming that 'it was conquered in 1570'.⁹ In fact, as outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the island was invaded by the Turks in 1570 and the last Venetian stronghold, Famagusta, surrendered in August 1571. The Venetians formally ceded control of the island in 1573, but the Ottomans were its *de facto* rulers by mid-1571. These inconsistencies are, in the wider scheme of Vitkus's critical contributions, minor errors, but they nevertheless highlight the way in which the play's Cypriot dimensions have been overlooked by critics, even by those who – like Vitkus – are in other respects so expertly invested in *Othello*'s broader historical resonances.

⁷ See Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 94.

⁸ Matthew Dimmock, 'Experimental *Othello*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, ed. by Ayanna Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 93-107 (p. 96).

⁹ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 80, p. 94-5, p. 180.

As I noted at the start of the preceding paragraph, the play's Cypriot setting originated in its chief source, *Un Capitano Moro*, the seventh *novella* in the third decade of Giovanni Battista Giraldi Cinthio's *Gli Hecatommithi*. It is worth pausing to explore Cinthio's tale here, if only to highlight the changes Shakespeare made to his source material, and the additional resonances and imaginative energies he brought to the narrative. The work was first published in Mondovì in Piedmont in 1565 and was frequently reprinted throughout Italy thereafter. A French version, translated by Gabriel Chappuys, was printed in 1583.¹⁰ The earliest extant English translation dates from 1753. It is unclear whether Shakespeare read the original Italian version, the French version or a now-lost English translation. Another story in *Gli Hecatommithi* was a source for *Measure for Measure* (1603), written around the same time as *Othello* and a version of 'The Tale of Epitia' – the story on which *Measure for Measure* is based – was adapted by George Whetstone in the closet drama *Promos and Cassandra* and published in 1578, so English versions of at least some of Cinthio's stories may have been available by the time Shakespeare wrote the *Othello*.

Whatever version of it he read – Italian, French or English – Shakespeare retained much of Cinthio's basic plot, including its geography. In the *novella*, an unnamed Moorish captain employed by the Venetian republic marries, against the wishes of her family, a Venetian lady named Disdemona. She is the only character actually named in the story, which describes her name (which, according to Honigmann, derives from the Greek word for 'unfortunate') as an 'unlucky augury'.¹¹ The marriage is initially happy and the pair live contentedly together in Venice for some time. Eventually, the Moor – as he is referred to throughout – is selected to be the commandant of the Venetian forces on Cyprus, a great honour for a non-Venetian. The Moor has been chosen because he is 'a very gallant man', who was 'personally valiant and had given proof in warfare'.¹² Disdemona is permitted to accompany her husband to Cyprus and they are joined there by an Ensign and his wife and daughter. The Ensign falls in love with Disdemona and attempts to woo her but she is devoted to her husband and is oblivious to his attentions. Angered by her lack of interest, he sets out to ruin her by persuading her husband

¹⁰ See Appendix 3 (p.368-9) to *The Arden Shakespeare Othello* for E.A.J. Honigmann's analysis of *Othello*'s possible borrowings from both Italian and French versions.

¹¹ Honigmann, Appendix 3, p. 386.

¹² Honigmann, Appendix 3, p. 371.

that she is having an affair with a Corporal. He contrives to have the Moor witness an animated conversation between the Ensign and the Corporal, and convinces him that the Corporal is confessing to the affair to him. The Ensign steals her handkerchief, a gift from the Moor, and plants it in the Corporal's room. The Moor is convinced of Disdemona's infidelity, and plots with the Ensign to have her and her supposed lover murdered. The Corporal survives the Ensign's attack, although he loses a leg. Disdemona is murdered by the Ensign in her bed-chamber, in the Moor's presence, and the pair collapse the ceiling to make her death look like an accident. The Moor, however, soon regrets his actions and spurns the Ensign but dares not reveal the plot. Eventually the murder is uncovered, but without conclusive proof, the Moor evades Venetian justice. Accused of another crime, the Ensign is tortured by the authorities and dies of his injuries. Disdemona's relatives later track down the Moor and kill him.

Although the narrative's main events unfold on Cyprus, there is little sense that the Cypriot setting is particularly important in Cinthio's *novella*. The Moor is sent to Cyprus because '[i]t happened that the Venetian lords made a change in the forces that they used to maintain in Cyprus; and they chose the Moor as Commandant'; his deployment to Cyprus is part of the Venetian republic's routine defensive arrangements, rather than a response to any specific or imminent threat.¹³ The chief dangers that Disdemona and the Moor expect to encounter are located in the long sea voyage, rather than on Cyprus itself, and even these fears prove to be unfounded: they travel to Cyprus on 'a sea of the utmost tranquillity'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the need for formal defensive arrangements indicates an awareness of some sort of threat to the island's security, which the tale's original readers would immediately have understood to be the Ottomans. However, the Turkish threat never surfaces in Cinthio's tale and the island appears to function largely as a place that is in some sense 'not-Venice', where Disdemona, separated from family and community, is vulnerable. What is notable, perhaps, is the tale's limited interest in the Moor's race and creed. Although Disdemona laments that she will become a warning to other Italian ladies 'not to tie themselves to a man whom Nature, Heaven, and manner of life separate from us', the tale does not appear overly concerned with the precise nature of the Moor's identity.

¹³ Honigmann, Appendix 3, p. 373.

¹⁴ Honigmann, Appendix 3, p. 373.

Written nearly forty years after the *novella*, during which period the Ottomans wrested control of Cyprus from Venice, *Othello* is built around the narrative framework of Cinthio's plot but with several important modifications. One of the most significant changes is the increased social status of several of the play's central protagonists. The gallant Moorish Captain is elevated to 'our noble and valiant general' (2.2.1-2) who, upon his arrival on Cyprus, is also made governor of the island. References to Othello's governorship may be intended to recall the island's most famous governor, Bragadino, discussed in Chapter 2; the governor of Cyprus does not feature at all in Cinthio's story. Desdemona, the virtuous but otherwise undistinguished Venetian lady, becomes Desdemona, the only daughter of a wealthy and powerful 'magnifico' (1.2.12), a member of Venice's ruling elite, while Cinthio's lowly Venetian Corporal is replaced by Michael Cassio, a Florentine gentleman, who has been recently promoted to Othello's 'lieutenant' (1.1.8), or deputy. Quite why Shakespeare made Cassio a Florentine is unclear; Honigmann speculates that it associates him with Machiavelli, although Cassio in the play is ineffectual and guileless rather than Machiavellian.¹⁵ Intriguingly, the play inflates both his rank and his personal inadequacies; although Cinthio's Corporal is punished for drawing his sword and wounding another soldier while on guard duty, there is no mention of being drunk on duty. Iago's bitterness about Othello's selection of the weak Cassio as his deputy is another aspect of the play that is Shakespeare's invention. Only Iago retains the station in life assigned to him in the play's chief source. Honigmann describes the rank of ensign as equivalent to colour-sergeant or perhaps Company Sergeant Major in the modern British army.¹⁶ The latter in particular retains significant influence with the officer cadre even in the twenty-first century military, perhaps explaining Iago's ability to sway Othello, a considerably more senior officer, in Shakespeare's rewriting of the story; few modern productions (even those that make use in performance of the play's resonances with more recent conflicts) seem sensitive to this aspect of the play's dynamics. The social elevation of all the main characters except Iago increases significantly what is at stake in the play, both for Cyprus and for Venice.

¹⁵ See 1.1.19n.

¹⁶ See 1.1.32n.

Cyprus figures far more prominently in *Othello* than in *Gli Hecatommithi*. Cinthio's tale might have been set in any of Venice's overseas possessions without any significant alteration to the narrative but the play's Cypriot setting is, I will argue, an integral aspect of its tragic resonances. The play, like Cinthio's *novella*, appears to be set somewhere in the period 1489–1570. However, the Turkish threat to the island, only a latent presence in the *novella*, is significantly amplified in *Othello*. Othello is deployed to Cyprus not as a part of a routine changeover of military manpower, but in response to a specific and imminent threat of invasion. He is summoned in the middle of the night by the Venetian duke and senators who, on receipt of alarming news of a 'Turkish fleet [...] bearing up to Cyprus' (1.3.9), wish to deploy him '[a]gainst the general enemy Ottoman' (1.3.50). Othello is particularly suited for the role because 'the fortitude of the place is best known to [him]' (1.3.234) and public opinion in Venice 'throws a more safer voice' (1.3.226) on him than the island's incumbent governor, a detail perhaps indicating that the Moorish general was well-established (and even admired) in Venice. The Turkish threat to the island appears to be part of an ongoing situation. Even before the emergence of the current crisis, Iago alludes to having previously fought alongside Othello 'at Cyprus' (1.3.28). At this stage in the action, playgoers – recalling the events of 1570-1 – would be forgiven for expecting the play to eventually stage some sort of military confrontation with the Turk.

Although the precise date of *Othello*'s action is left strategically vague, there are a number of hints that we should imagine it taking place shortly before the 1570 Turkish invasion. There are several lines in the first act to suggest that when writing the play Shakespeare had access to Richard Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turks* (1603), which includes an extended account of the invasion and the sieges of Nicosia and Famagusta.¹⁷ Knolles's description of an Ottoman general who 'departed from Constantinople the six and twentieth of May [1570]' and met up with the rest of the Turkish fleet at Rhodes, before heading for Cyprus, may have inspired the exchanges between the duke, the senators and messengers in Act 1 Scene 3, in

¹⁷ See Virginia Mason Vaughan, 'Supersubtle Venetians: Richard Knolles and the Geopolitics of Shakespeare's *Othello*' in *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 19-32 for a detailed analysis of the relationship between Knolles's book and *Othello*. Honigmann, in his introduction to the 1997 *The Arden Shakespeare Othello* argues that the play was written late 1601 or 1602, which precludes Shakespeare referring to Knolles's book. See 'Appendix 1', pp. 344 – 350 for Honigmann's arguments, which I do not find persuasive.

which news reaches the Venetian senate that the Ottoman fleet has put to sea.¹⁸ In this passage, the first messenger reports that the Turkish fleet is 'bearing up to Cyprus' (1.3.8), before a second claims that 'the Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes' (1.3.15). A third messenger arrives to inform the duke that the Turkish fleet has 'injoined with an after fleet' (1.3.36) near Rhodes before 'bearing with frank appearance / Their purpose toward Cyprus' (1.3.39-40). Knolles described the Turkish invasion fleet as consisting of 'two hundred gallies'; as Shakespeare's Venetian duke and senators discuss the emerging intelligence, the second senator claims to have received news of 'two hundred' (1.3.4) Turkish galleys sailing towards Cyprus.¹⁹ The Folio version of *Othello* also features a brief reference to a 'Signior Angelo' (1.3.17), whom Virginia Mason Vaughan identifies with Angelo Soriano, the commander of the Venetian navy and bearer of messages between the Turks and the Venetians in the period leading up to the island's invasion in 1570, although the detail is not included in the 1622 quarto edition.²⁰ Soriano is mentioned twice as 'Angelus Surianus' in *The Generall Historie*, so this is certainly plausible.²¹ The inclusion of these highly specific details, Mason Vaughan argues, demonstrates that Shakespeare 'deliberately situated his play in Venice during the period of its Cyprus wars' and that 'Shakespeare sets his tragedy during 1570-1'.²²

Other evidence, though, argues against such unequivocal assertions of the play's historicity. By 1570, Rhodes had been securely under Ottoman control for nearly half a century and (as *The Generall Historie* reports) was actually used as a rendezvous point for the Ottoman fleet prior to the invasion of Cyprus. In *Othello* the island is described as an alternative military target, apparently (and counter-historically) under Venetian control. Rhodes was never a Venetian possession; the Knights Hospitaller (also known as the Order of St John) captured Rhodes from the Byzantines in 1310 and the island became their base until 1522, when it was taken by the Ottomans. One of the senators reminds the duke that Cyprus is more likely to be the Ottoman's target than Rhodes because it is less well fortified (the citadel – the monumental walls of which still stand – at Rhodes was indeed almost impregnable; the Knights Hospitaller only surrendered because they were starving). Cyprus, he claims,

¹⁸ Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), p. 846.

¹⁹ Knolles, p. 846.

²⁰ Mason Vaughan, p. 21.

²¹ Knolles, p. 839, p. 891.

²² Mason Vaughan, p. 20.

more concerns the Turk than Rhodes
So may he with more facile question bear it,
For that it stands not in such warlike brace
But altogether lacks th'abilities
That Rhodes is dressed in. (1.3.23-7)

Rhodes is too well-defended to be an attractive target and the Ottomans too strategically astute to 'wake and wage a danger profitless' (1.3.31). Iago's reference to recent military experience at 'Rhodes [and] at Cyprus' (1.1.28), fighting alongside Othello, also implies (if we are to read the comment historically) that the play is set prior to Rhodes's capitulation to the Ottomans in 1522. This would set the play somewhere between 1489 and 1520. The play does not explain why a general employed in the service of the Venetian state was fighting at Rhodes, an island that was never a Venetian possession; I will explore an intriguing explanation later in the chapter. Whatever Shakespeare's rationale in bringing Rhodes into the play, by the time *Othello* was performed on the London stage, Lee Manion observes, 'Christian control of [Rhodes and Cyprus] was a distant memory, and the play's presentation of them as still Christian is either a piece of wishful fantasy or a possible foreboding of future disaster'.²³ Like Mason Vaughan, Manion appears to be interpreting *Othello* as an attempt to capture a precise historical situation. Unlike Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske*, it is not an attempt to capture an exact historical moment. In fact, its overt ahistoricity perhaps indicates that we should not try too hard to fit *Othello* to the contours of sixteenth-century geopolitics, and look at the play as a constellation of ideas about the Eastern Mediterranean, rather than the region at a precise moment in history.

The precise geography of the island, as well its temporality, is curiously difficult to establish. Although the exact location of the play's Cypriot scenes is never explicitly identified, it seems a reasonable assumption that those playgoers aware of the island's recent history would have associated the play's 'citadel' (2.1.94) with Famagusta (although we might ask why this is – if it was so well-known – never specified). References to the harbour (2.1.120, 2.1.21), 'battlements' (2.1.6), a 'citadel' (2.1.94, 2.1.208, 2.1.281, 5.1.126), 'fortification' (3.2.5) and defensive 'works' (3.2.3) must have suggested to playgoers with even a passing familiarity

²³ Manion, p. 201.

with the island's history that the play's Cypriot scenes were set in Famagusta. Cyprus in the play recalls the descriptions of Venetian Famagusta available in books like Richard Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*. William Malim's *True Report* (1572) (which was included in the 1599 edition of *Principall Navigations*) described Famagusta as 'the cheefest and strongest [of the island's forts], situated by the Sea side'.²⁴ An account written by the English traveller John Locke in 1553, described the city thus:

This is a very faire strong holde, and the strongest and greatest in the Iland. The walles are faire and new, and strongly rampired with foure principall bulwarkes, and betweene them turrions, responding one to another, these walles did the Uenetians make. They haue also on the hauen side of it a Castle, and the hauen is chained, the citie hath onely two gates, to say, one for the lande and another for the sea, they haue in the towne continually, be it peace or warres, 800 souldiers, and fortie and sixe gunners, besides Captaines, petie Captaines, Gouvernour and Generall. The lande gate hath alwayes fiftie souldiers, pikes and gunners with their harquebushes, watching there at night and day. At the sea gate fiue and twentie, vpon the walles euery night doe watch fifteene men in watch houses, for euery watch house fiue men, and in the market place 30 souldiers continually. There may no soldier serue there aboute 5. yeres, neither will they without friendship suffer them to depart afore 5. yeres be expired, and there may serue of all nations except Greekes.²⁵

Locke describes the world in which Cinthio's story is set. If we are to read *Othello* against the backdrop of the island's history, Locke also gives some idea of what the play imagines Othello's responsibilities to have been. His account (like Malim's *True Report*) was also published in the 1599 edition of *Principall Navigations* and while there is no obvious textual evidence that Shakespeare consulted Hakluyt's work when writing his Cyprus drama, it was certainly available to him.

As Lisa Hopkins points out, Shakespeare in fact had 'a number of existing representations of Cyprus to draw on' and 'does show signs of responding to some of them'.²⁶ There are, intriguingly, a number of potential verbal resonances between *Othello* and *Old Fortunatus* that may suggest Shakespeare had read Dekker's play. She suggests that Othello's peremptory '[s]ilence that frightful bell, it frights the isle' (2.3.171) recalls Fortunatus's allusion to 'the great bell of St Michael's in Cyprus that keeps most rumbling when men would

²⁴ Malim, sig. B2^r.

²⁵ *Excerpta Cypriot*, p. 70.

²⁶ Hopkins, 'Love and War', 52.

sleep' (*OF*, 1.48-9). She also speculates that Andelocia's comment 'I am glad to see thee thus mad' (*OF*, 2.129-30) provides the inspiration for what she calls Othello's 'otherwise baffling' line before he strikes Desdemona, 'I am glad ... to see you mad' (4.1.238). It is hard to see quite why Shakespeare should reprise that particular line: the two scenes have nothing obvious in common, other than their Cypriot setting – although this, of course, may be precisely Hopkins's point, although Honigmann observes that 'mad' might be corrupt.²⁷ There are several other moments in *Othello*, not commented on by Hopkins, that are also suggestive of some sort of inter-theatrical connection between the two plays. Both feature references to 'swag-bellies' (a phrase that Dekker also uses in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*). Dekker's play briefly alludes to 'swag-bellies, gluttons, and sweet-mouthed epicures' (5.59-60); in *Othello*, Iago compares (unfavourably) the drinking prowess of 'your swag-bellied Hollander' (2.3.74) with that of the English.²⁸ The phrase does not appear to have been widely used until later in the seventeenth century. A search of the *Early English Books Online* database records only Dekker's two plays using the phrase in print before the 1622 quarto edition of *Othello*. Again, it is difficult to see any obviously Cypriot dimension to the shared allusion. Nevertheless, it suggests Shakespeare had read the earlier Cyprus play when preparing to write *Othello*; it may simply have lodged in the dramatist's mind as a resonant expression.

There is, however, one more verbal echo that may have a more meaningful connection with the island. Both *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello* feature references to the *crusado*, a Portuguese coin so-called because of the cross on its reverse. McInnis describes it as 'the first coin struck from New World gold', adding it was 'valued at approximately 6s 8d'.²⁹ In *Old Fortunatus*, Andelocia complains of being reduced (by his own profligacy) to his last 'crusado' (*OF*, 5.63). On discovering that she has lost the handkerchief, Desdemona declares 'I had rather have lost my purse / Full of crusadoes' (3.4.25-6). Honigmann wonders if the reference was 'to remind us that Christian Venice was threatened by Muslim states', noting that '[a] *crusado* was also a crusader'.³⁰ Hopkins similarly interprets the line as an allusion to the island's crusader past,

²⁷ Honigmann in 4.2.238n.

²⁸ McInnis, commenting on Dekker's use of the term in *Old Fortunatus*, notes that in the 1600 quarto, the compositor perhaps misread the phrase and printed it as 'sway-bellied', which he calls an 'attractive *hapax legomenon*'. See *Old Fortunatus*, 5.59n.

²⁹ *Old Fortunatus*, 5.63n.

³⁰ 3.4.24-5n.

and the wealth it obtained from it. It is also possible that Desdemona's purse full of crusadoes recalled Fortunatus's miraculous purse, thus obliquely highlighting the value of the handkerchief. These were not the only plays to mention the coin; it is referred to (in passing) in both Jonson's *The Case is Altered* (1609) and Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), without any obvious Cypriot connection in either allusion. However, it is interesting that the crusado is first mentioned in *Old Fortunatus* only a few lines after the 'swag-bellies' (*OF*, 5.63, 5.59).

The accumulation of shared details suggests some sort of link between the two works, although they have little obvious in common other than their shared Cypriot setting. Whether or not Shakespeare intended playgoers to link the two works through this sort of inter-theatrical allusion is questionable. The resonances between the two works are insufficiently localised to represent any concerted effort at building a coherent sense of place. If Shakespeare consulted *Old Fortunatus* in the hope of finding details to supply his own account of pre-Ottoman Famagusta, he does not seem to have found anything particularly useful. Nevertheless, the verbal resonances between the two plays does create a sort of layered geography in *Othello* which, even as it anticipates Cyprus's sixteenth-century fate, also looks back to its medieval past as it is presented in *Old Fortunatus*. More significantly, perhaps, it suggests that Shakespeare was prepared to think beyond Turks and the Siege of Famagusta when writing about the island.

Cyprus and Desdemona

Connecting *Othello*'s central tragedy to the traumatic historical events that haunts its margins, several critics have sought to identify Desdemona with Cyprus, arguing that her death at the hands of Othello's 'turbanned Turk' (5.2.351) prefigures the Turkish invasion of the island. James Calderwood claims that the audience is

led to expect a battle, to look forward to experiencing some measure of the pomp and glory and the downright violence that Othello speaks of later. But then, inexplicably, the Turks vanish in an off-stage tempest, the battle comes to nought, and we must content ourselves with this weak piping time of peace.³¹

³¹ James Calderwood, *The Properties of Othello* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), p. 126.

As a result, he continues, 'the impulse to battle is displaced onto sex, issues of state divert into domestic channels and violence to others turns reflexive'.³² As the Turkish threat to Cyprus recedes, Calderwood argues, the play's martial energies are transferred from the battlefield to the bedroom, where

[t]he fatal bedding of Desdemona consummates the marriage and our aesthetic expectations at once. With Othello standing in for the Turk, and Desdemona for Cyprus, everyone rests content in the perfection of form.³³

Given the play's historic resonances, this is an understandable – and plausible – interpretation. However, I want to argue that Desdemona embodies the island on multiple levels, in ways that have rarely been fully explored.

Some of these resonances begin to come into focus as Desdemona arrives on the island. Cassio's order that the 'men of Cyprus' waiting for Othello at the harbour should 'let her have your knees!' (2.1.84) might simply be interpreted as a piece of ostentatious gallantry consistent with Cassio's character; it may also suggest that the general's young Venetian bride should be regarded as a figure to whom they, as Cypriots, owe homage beyond the respect due to the wife of the island's governor. Desdemona's arrival on Cyprus perhaps recalls that of another young Venetian noblewoman. As outlined in Chapter 1, Caterina Cornaro, the last Queen of Cyprus, was married to James II of Cyprus in 1472. Her husband died shortly after their marriage and their son did not survive infancy. Caterina ruled as Queen of Cyprus until she was persuaded by the Venetians to cede the island to the republic in 1489. The fact that the last queen of Cyprus was also a young Venetian noblewoman is rarely noted by critics, although many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English accounts refer to the fact. Malim considered it sufficiently relevant or interesting to be included in the preface to his translation of Martinengo's account of the Siege of Famagusta. He describes how the Venetians came to possess the island via Caterina:

[the future James II] became againe King of this Iland: who shortly after cleaving to the Venetians having made a league of frendship with them, married by their consent one Catherina the daughter of Marco Cornaro, which Catherine the Senate of Venice adopted unto them soone after as their daughter. [James II] not long after sickned, &

³² Calderwood, p. 127.

³³ Calderwood, p. 126-7.

died, leaving this his wife with child, who lived not long after his fathers death. By ye which meanes the Venetians making them selves the next heires to Catherina by the lawe of Adoption, tooke unto them the possession of this kingdome, and have kept, and enjoyed the same almost this 100 yeares.³⁴

Caterina's role in Cypriot history is also described in a number of other late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English texts, including Knolles's *Generall Historie*. Knolles describes how James 'tooke to wife Catharin Cornelia, the daughter of Marcus Cornelius, a Magnifico of Venice'; we might recall here that Brabantio is described by Iago as a 'magnifico' (1.2.12).³⁵ The failure of a Venetian noblewoman's marriage to secure the future of Cyprus as an independent kingdom, culminating in the ceding of the island to a foreign power, may – for playgoers able to make the connection – have sounded a note of warning.

There was also another set of resonances involving Desdemona triggered by the play's Cypriot setting, one more likely to be recognised by English playgoers. As I described in Chapter 1, although classical mythology was a relatively recent addition to English popular culture, by the closing decades of the sixteenth century, particularly in texts preoccupied with love or desire, Venus and Cyprus were almost synonymous. In such works, Venus was described as a Cypriot goddess or queen, and Cyprus was referred to as Venus's isle. The goddess appears frequently, usually at a distance, in a number of Shakespeare's plays, although the dramatist's most sustained engagement with her mythology takes place in the epyllion *Venus and Adonis* (1592-3), which recounts the goddess's passion for the beautiful mortal Adonis. The work makes little reference to Cyprus beyond the report in its closing lines of Venus returning, grief-stricken, to Paphos.³⁶ Nevertheless, Shakespeare's readers who knew their Ovid would have been aware that Adonis was the product of an incestuous liaison between Cinyras, the grandson of Pygmalion – and king of Cyprus – and his daughter, Myrrha; the tale of Venus and Adonis is a Cypriot love story.

³⁴ Malim, sig. B2^v. James II, the last Lusignan king of Cyprus, was the illegitimate son of King John of Cyprus. James had been made Bishop of Nicosia but, after his father's death, he seized the throne from his half-sister, Charlotta. Hopkins suggests that Iago's 'By Janus, I think no' (1.2.33) might be a reference to King Janus (1375 – 1432), the grandfather of James II and Charlotta (Lisa Hopkins, *Greeks and Trojans on the Early Modern English Stage* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020), p. 188). Janus, via his daughter Anne de Lusignan, was an ancestor of Mary Queen of Scots and James I of England.

³⁵ Knolles, p. 845.

³⁶ Virginia Mason Vaughan explores Shakespeare's representations of Venus (and other Roman gods) in *Shakespeare and the Gods* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2019) in a number of works, but does not – surprisingly given the play's Cypriot dimensions – mention *Othello*, except in passing.

In the light of Shakespeare's evident awareness of Cyprus's association with Venus, it is curious that, other than a single moment (and even that is at one remove, rather than direct) in which Othello asserts that he will not be distracted from his military duties by the 'light-winged toys / Of feathered Cupid' (1.3.269-70), there are no explicit references to the goddess in *Othello*. The lack of direct allusion notwithstanding, Hopkins argues that *Othello*'s Cypriot setting 'implicitly collocates Desdemona with Venus'.³⁷ She claims that '[f]ew abstractions were more potent than the association between Venus and love, and a Cypriot setting made an association with Venus inescapable'.³⁸ *Othello* does, indeed, feature a number of moments that seem to invite Desdemona's identification with the goddess. As Cassio – described by one critic as 'something of an Elizabethan sonneteer' – waits for Desdemona and Othello on the Cypriot harbourside, he eulogises 'the divine Desdemona' (2.1.73), proclaiming

Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,
The guttered rocks and congregated sands,
Traitors ensteeped to clog the guiltless keel,
As having sense of beauty, do omit
Their mortal natures, letting [her] go safely by[.]³⁹ (2.1.68-72)

Cassio's sentiments here are strongly reminiscent of Spenser's description of 'Great Venus, Queene of beautie and of grace', whose

smyling looke doest pacifie
The raging seas, and makst the stormes to flie;
Thee goddesse, thee the winds, the clouds doe feare,
And when thou spredst thy mantle forth on hie,
The waters play and pleasant lands appeare,
And heauen laugh, and al the world shews ioyous cheare.⁴⁰

I am not suggesting that Shakespeare is responding directly to Spenser's representation of Venus here (although it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the dramatist had these lines in mind when he penned Cassio's somewhat overblown speech), but rather that both

³⁷ Hopkins, 'Love and War', 53.

³⁸ Hopkins, *Greeks and Trojans*, p. 187.

³⁹ Wallace Graves, 'Plutarch's Life of Cato Utican as a Major Source of *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24.2 (1973), 181-7 (p. 185). < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2868856> > [accessed 21 Oct 2021].

⁴⁰ Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 4.10.44.

works draw on a particular set of tropes that circulated around Venus in early modern English literary culture. Taken in relation to Shakespeare's drawing of specific characters, Cassio's lines can be taken as a rhetorical pose – part, perhaps, of his own self-fashioning – but their additional effect may be to alert the audience to the ways in which Desdemona might begin to figure in the plot that follows.

As noted in Chapter 1, Spenser's primary source for his representation of Venus in Book 3 and Book 4 of *The Faerie Queene* is Lucretius's 'Address to Venus' from *De Rerum Natura*. In the poem, Lucretius proclaims that for her 'the land in fragrant Flow'rs is drest' (l. 9) and 'the Ocean smiles, and smooths her wavy breast' (l. 10).⁴¹ All nature is her gift (l. 20). Cassio's Spenserian – or perhaps Lucretian? – panegyric links Desdemona to the goddess's Venus Genetrix aspect – her guise as Rome's divine ancestress (the goddess was the mother of Aeneas, supposedly Rome's founder) and, more generally, as a sort of universal mother, symbol of procreation and fertility and agent of cosmic harmony. It was an identity, I will argue in the following chapter, that Ford – perhaps recognising the allusion in *Othello* – was to use to structure the dramatic narrative of *The Lover's Melancholy*. In that play, however, rather than having her harmonising potential tragically curtailed, the arrival of a beautiful young female character does indeed bring peace and security to Cyprus.

There are further parallels between Cassio's speech and Lucretius's poem that indicate Shakespeare may have had the Roman poem in mind when writing Cassio's speech, rather than *The Faerie Queene*. At first glance Cassio's allusion to Othello's making 'love's quick pants in Desdemona's arms' (2.1.80) is curiously prurient. Eric Partridge suggests the line refers to the 'quick breathing that accompanies and ensues upon the orgasm'.⁴² In fact, the line recalls Lucretius's reference to Venus's lover Mars (a relationship discussed further below), who 'panting on [the goddess's] breast, supinely lies' (l. 49). However, rather than debauched, Mars's 'pleasing death' (l. 52) – presumably a reference to his sexual climax – in Venus's arms is represented as restorative and harmonising, the means by which the goddess will 'quiet to the weary World restore' (l. 58). Like Lucretius, Cassio sees in Othello and Desdemona's union

⁴¹ I am quoting here from Dryden's translation of Lucretius's 'Address to Venus', referenced in Chapter 1.

⁴² Qtd by Honigmann, 2.1.80n.

a moment of renewal, albeit one rather more tailored to local rather than general circumstances, giving 'renewed fire to our extincted spirits / And bring[ing] all Cyprus comfort' (2.1.81-2). Without connecting the moment to Lucretius or to Venus more generally, Tom McAlindon describes Cassio's invocation as a prayer 'in which he defines the anticipated reunion of the lovers and consequent reanimation of the island in terms of the harmony of the elements' – entirely Lucretian sentiments – in the form of the pacified storm and the removal of the Turkish threat.⁴³ Nevertheless, Cassio's references to 'renewed fire' and an ongoing need for 'comfort' create an uneasy sense of foreboding that – the dispersal of the Ottoman fleet notwithstanding – Cyprus's problems may not yet be over.

As noted, Venus Genetrix's role as the agent of cosmic harmony is most clearly expressed by her disarmament of Mars, the god of war. Lucretius describes their congress as the antidote to 'the brutal business of war' ('Address to Venus', l. 45). Their union, however, figured on multiple levels in the western imaginary. As Venus was married to Vulcan, the lame blacksmith god, the relationship was adulterous. The lovers were seen embracing by Apollo, the sun god, who then informed Venus's husband. Enraged, Vulcan wove a bronze net so fine that it was almost weightless and invisible, which he then used to capture the lovers *in flagrante*, before displaying them before the other gods. The story, which was first recorded in *The Odyssey* (ca. 8th C BCE), is recounted in multiple classical sources, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the classical text to which Shakespeare turned most often for inspiration. The mythological love triangle seems to have particularly interested him; he alluded to it in several plays. In *The Tempest*, Venus is characterised as 'Mars's hot minion' (4.1.98) and in *Titus Andronicus*, a cuckold is said to have 'worn Vulcan's badge' (1.1.590).⁴⁴ Although never explicitly alluded to in the play, aspects of the myth also inform *Othello* in ways that have hitherto been under-acknowledged.

Venus disarming Mars was a popular subject for Renaissance artists. The Florentine Sandro Botticelli, painter of the celebrated *The Birth of Venus* (ca. 1485), also painted *Venus and Mars*

⁴³ Tom McAlindon, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Penguin Books, p. xxi – lxxiii (p. lxiii).

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Arden, 2011) & *Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Arden, 2006).

(ca. 1485), depicting Venus looking at her sleeping lover, while infant satyrs play with his helmet, armour and lance.⁴⁵ Paul Peter Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder's collaborative *The Return from War: Mars Disarmed by Venus* (1610-12?) shows Venus removing Mars's helmet, while putti cavort with his sword and shield. Othello's strangely pompous assertion that he will not permit the

light-winged toys
Of feathered Cupid seel with wanton dullness
My speculative and officed instrument (1.3.269-71)

conjures up, even as he attempts to dismiss it, the image of him reclining, his eyes closed (or even sewn up, as per the allusion to falconry) in post-coital slumber. He seems to suggest here that erotic love (even in the context of Christian marriage) is the enemy of the performance of masculine duty – and, by extension, masculinity itself. Although Mars being disarmed by Venus is usually interpreted as an allegory of peace (as it is in Lucretius's poem), the image of the disarmed lover also implies vulnerability and even emasculation. The Venus-Mars resonances in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), a play written only a few years after *Othello*, in which Cleopatra represents a seductive Venus-figure who 'disarms' and eventually unmans the martial Antony, have long been recognised.⁴⁶ As Joseph Campana observes,

epic and romance literature, from Homer to the Renaissance and beyond, takes up the trope of the discarding of arms primarily as an index of failure: the abdication of masculine fortitude in the face of erotic or emotional distraction. Achilles, Odysseus, Aeneas, Orlando, Rinaldo, and Tancred, among others, shamefully put off their arms or abandon their quests for love or for grief.⁴⁷

Othello's rejection of the 'disports' that might 'corrupt and taint' his martial 'business' (1.3.272) apparently speaks to the same concerns. Indeed, there is something strange about the way Othello talks about his marriage that hints further at these sorts of latent anxieties. Greeting Desdemona on the quayside in Cyprus, he declares

⁴⁵ The painting can be seen at The National Gallery in London. A comprehensive description of the meaning of its imagery and iconography is available on the gallery's website. See < <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/sandro-botticelli-venus-and-mars> > [accessed 18 October 2021].

⁴⁶ See Clayton G. MacKenzie, 'Antony and Cleopatra: A Mythological Perspective', *Orbis Litterarum* 45.2 (1990), 309-329 < <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0730.1990.tb01970.x> > [accessed 30 September 2022] for a discussion of Venus and Mars in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

⁴⁷ Joseph Campana, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), p. 16.

If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate. (2.1.187-91)

Before the marriage is even consummated, Othello can already imagine no greater happiness – a rather peculiar sentiment from a newlywed. In fact, it is far from clear that the marriage is ever consummated: every opportunity appears to be interrupted, on their wedding night in Venice by the Duke's summons, then on Cyprus by the disturbance caused by Cassio's drunkenness. The play seems to indicate that Desdemona's murder takes place the following night.⁴⁸ As Calderwood notes above, Desdemona's murder may well represent its only consummation.

Critical interest in Othello's race and confessional history has meant that his martial qualities have been largely overlooked. Othello is described as 'the warlike Moor' (2.1.27) and 'a full soldier' (2.1.36), approved by 'the valiant of this warlike isle [Cyprus]' (2.1.43). McAlindon argues that 'it is not far-fetched to suggest that "Moor" and "Mars" are silently equated here'.⁴⁹ In Shakespeare, he notes, "'warlike" is synonymous with "Mars" and "martial"'.⁵⁰ In the Prologue to *Henry V*, 'warlike Harry' (l. 5) has '[a]ssume[d] the port of Mars' (l. 6). Othello's greeting Desdemona as 'my fair warrior' (2.1.180) when he reaches Cyprus perhaps hints at his attempts to reconcile his love for her with his martial self-conception, as he attempts to recast his wife as a Britomart or Bradamante. McAlindon suggests that, at this moment, Desdemona 'is associated with *Venus armata*, armed Venus, signifying in iconographic tradition the triumph of love' but, in the light of his earlier disavowals of the pleasures of the marriage bed, the greeting sounds more like an attempt to draw her into his martial, masculine world rather than a surrender to love.⁵¹ Othello, whose status in Venetian society is entirely bound up in his military identity, appears to struggle to make space for the erotic or the domestic within his own heroic self-conception.

⁴⁸ Much ink has been spilt debating the play's time frame and whether there is any conceivable way that Othello *could* reasonably believe that Desdemona had been able to conduct an affair with Cassio in the limited time available. However, Othello is clearly not reasonable by the end of Act 3.

⁴⁹ McAlindon, p. lxii.

⁵⁰ McAlindon, p. lxii.

⁵¹ McAlindon, p. lxii-lxiii.

Scholarly recognition of *Othello's* Venus-Mars resonances has only occasionally acknowledged Vulcan, the third side of the mythological love triangle. Marjorie Garber, one of the few critics to touch on this structure, claims that *Othello* 'is a kind of dramatic reworking of this tale of Mars, Venus and Vulcan'.⁵² She identifies Iago as 'the Vulcan figure, a tortured looker-on [with] Othello himself as the war hero'.⁵³ Citing the play's multiple references to nets and snares (2.1.168, 2.3.356 and 5.2.299), Garber bases her identification of Iago with Vulcan on the argument that Iago 'contrives to expose and ridicule the relationship between Othello and Desdemona', as Vulcan exposed Venus and Mars to the mockery of the other gods.⁵⁴ Commenting on Garber's argument, Hopkins posits that 'it is equally possible and I think more suggestive to see the warrior Othello as Mars, the beautiful, desired Desdemona as Venus, and Cassio lamed as Venus's lover Vulcan'.⁵⁵ While intriguing, I do not find either of these interpretations entirely convincing. Although it is certainly possible to interpret Iago as a 'tortured looker-on', there is no real sense that he is motivated by Desdemona's relationship with Othello, but by Othello's promotion of Cassio. Iago does briefly suggest that he may be in love with Desdemona when he says 'I do love her too' (2.1.289), but the moment is fleeting and hardly feels like a convincing motivation for his subsequent actions. There is, as a number of critics and directors have recognised, the possibility of reading a homoerotic subtext into Iago's desire to destroy Othello.⁵⁶ It is certainly possible to see Iago's reaction to Othello's promotion of Cassio as comparable to the fury of a betrayed lover, although this interpretation does not map easily onto the Mars-Venus-Vulcan plot, excluding as it does Desdemona, the character most obviously associated with Venus. While the identification of Desdemona and Othello with Venus and Mars is a plausible interpretation (at least in the play's opening scenes), the lightweight Cassio does not make a compelling Vulcan figure. Although he has courted Desdemona on Othello's behalf (3.3.70-1, 3.3.100), there is no sense that he believes himself to be displaced or in any sense betrayed by their relationship. It is Othello who believes he has been cuckolded, with Cassio as his wife's (imagined) lover.

⁵² Garber, p. 589.

⁵³ Garber, p. 589.

⁵⁴ Garber, p. 589.

⁵⁵ Hopkins, *Greeks and Trojans*, p. 191.

⁵⁶ Janet Adelman, for example, argues for the homoerotic subtext of Iago's desire to destroy Othello. See Janet Adelman, 'Iago's Alter Ego: Race as Projection in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.2 (1997), pp. 125-44 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2871277>> [accessed 30 September 2022].

I am not arguing that Othello *is* in any sense a Vulcan-figure, but that – subject to Iago's psychological pressure – he believes himself to be so. Othello's acceptance of Iago's construction is signified by a speech in which his belief in Desdemona's faithlessness leads ineluctably to the resignation of his martial identity:

I had been happy if the general camp,
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
So I had nothing known. O now for ever
Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines whose rude throats
Th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit
Farewell: Othello's occupation's gone. (3.3.348-60)

Although the primary meaning of 'occupation' appears to be his military employment, Hilda Hulme suggests that the word 'must refer also to his loss of Desdemona'.⁵⁷ In Othello's mind, the two are linked. In losing Desdemona, Othello loses his martial identity and takes up instead the role of cuckold. He cannot be both Mars and Vulcan.

While the journey to Cyprus activates *Othello's* more general mythological associations, it is Iago who schemes to bring the Venus-Vulcan-Mars currents into focus. Over the course of the third scene of Act Three he steadily erodes Othello's faith in Desdemona's chastity, leading him towards the nightmarish image of Desdemona and Cassio in a sexual embrace. Asking him if he would 'grossly gape on? Behold her topped?' (3.3.398-9), Iago forces Othello to envisage Desdemona and Cassio's imaginary coupling, replaying Vulcan's discovery of Venus and Mars. Iago's later description of Cassio's dream recalls the image again:

In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves',
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,

⁵⁷ Qtd by Honigsmann in 3.3.360n.

Cry 'O sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard
As if he plucked up kisses by the roots
That grew upon my lips, lay his leg o'er my thigh,
And sigh, and kiss, and then cry 'Cursed fate
That gave thee to the Moor!' (3.3.421-8)

Listening to Iago's fabricated account of Cassio's dream, Othello is forced to picture Cassio wringing Desdemona's hand, kissing her lips and laying his leg over her thigh. Ensuring the terrible vision of the lovers entwined remains fresh in Othello's mind, Iago later asks him if Desdemona might not after all be 'naked with her friend in bed / An hour or more, not meaning any harm' (4.1.3-4). Iago is not interested in Othello's response; he is torturing him by making him picture again the two lovers entwined. By Act Five, Othello is convinced that Desdemona and Cassio have 'the act of shame / A thousand times committed' (5.2.209-10), because he has imagined them together a thousand times. Othello appears to have forgotten that he has not actually received the 'ocular proof' (3.3.363) he demanded but, goaded by Iago, he has tormented himself by imagining Cassio and Desdemona together until it feels as though, like Vulcan, he *has* caught them together.

Representations of Venus in Renaissance culture were multi-layered – we might recall here, for example, Venus-Virgo, discussed briefly in the preceding chapter – not all of the associations were positive. Although Marlowe, Shakespeare and other poets blazoned the goddess's beauty and desirability, for other early modern writers she emblematised transgressive lust and promiscuity. As noted in Chapter 1, the goddess's wanton reputation led to the characterisation of Cyprus as site of sensual indulgence and erotic excess, in which the island's association with Venus Genetrix's restorative fecundity is superseded by a more debauched atmosphere. The geographer Abraham Ortelius suggested that it was the natural concupiscence of the Cypriot people that gave rise to Venus's association with the island, writing that

[t]he people generally do give themselves to pleasures, sports and voluptuousnesse: the women are very wanton, and of light behaviour [...] and the lasciviousnesse of the nation such, that vulgarly it was supposed to have beene dedicated to *Venus* the Goddess of love.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum orbis terrarum Abrahami Ortelii Antwerp. geographi regii*, (London, 1606), p. 90.

This facet of Venus's iconography is sometimes referred to as 'Venus Vulgaris' or 'Venus Meretrix' (meretrix is the Latin word for prostitute), an aspect of the goddess's identity described by John Mulryan as embodying 'sexual congress divorced from love or human feeling'.⁵⁹ Iago's suggestive barrack room banter, when he describes Desdemona as 'sport for Jove' (2.3.17) and 'full of game' (2.3.19), begins the process of aligning her with these associations. Rather than an innocent young bride, he presents her as experienced and provocative, with an eye that 'sounds a parley to provocation' (2.3.21-2) and a voice that is 'an alarum to love' (2.3.24).

Cassio's encomium to Desdemona as a Venus Genetrix figure notwithstanding, the young Venetian noblewoman's reputation was already partially compromised before she even left Venice. The Venetians often sought to identify their city with Venus. Lorenzo Calvelli explains that, after their annexation of the island in 1489, the Venetians sought 'to emphasize the historicity of the realm of Cyprus: Venus a deified woman, had been the first queen of that island; Venice, the queen of the seas, was her legitimate and most obvious heir'.⁶⁰ On the election of a new doge in 1577, the poet Luigi Groto remarked that 'Venice and Venus, both celestial, both mothers and nurses of the most holy love, were sisters, born of the same womb of the sea, generated by the same semen of the sky'.⁶¹ Other contemporary commentators, however, invoked a less wholesome set of resonances between the republic and the Cypriot goddess. Like Cyprus, Venice had a reputation for licentiousness – and one that was probably far more greatly deserved. The city's courtesans were famed for their beauty and sophistication throughout early modern Europe. Honigmann notes that, as far as early seventeenth-century English audiences were concerned, 'Venice was the pleasure capital of Europe'.⁶² The English traveller and writer Thomas Coryate, who visited the city in 1608, wrote that 'the name of a Cortezan of Venice is famous ouer all Christendome'.⁶³ The Cypriot goddess, he claims, had 'made a late transmigration from Paphos' to Venice, which was now

⁵⁹ John Mulryan, 'The Three Images of Venus: Boccaccio's Theory of Love in "The Genealogy of the Gods" and his Aesthetic Vision of Love in the "Decameron"', *Romance Notes*, 19.3 (1979), 388-94 (393) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43801595> > [accessed 30 September 2022]

⁶⁰ Lorenzo Calvelli, 'Archaeology in the Service of the Dominante' in *Cyprus and the Renaissance (1450-1650)*, ed. by Benjamin Arbel, Evelien Chayes and Harald Hendrix, (Turnhout, Brepols: 2012), pp. 19-66 (p. 57).

⁶¹ Luigi Groto quoted in Calvelli, p. 57.

⁶² Honigmann, 'Introduction' p. 9.

⁶³ Thomas Coryate, *Coryat's Crudities* (London, 1611), p. 263.

‘a Paradise of Venus’, where extravagantly and provocatively dressed courtesans resembled ‘the Queene and Goddess of loue’.⁶⁴ There were, he claimed ‘at the least twenty thousand’ courtesans in Venice, who were ‘esteemed so loose, that they are said to open their quiuers to euery arrow’.⁶⁵

It was, as one sixteenth-century Venetian commentator admitted, sometimes difficult to distinguish courtesans from noblewomen on the basis of appearance alone.⁶⁶ Even respectable Venetian women, according to Coryate, dressed provocatively, by English standards:

Almost all the wiues, widowes and mayds do walke abroad with their breastes all naked, and many of them have their backs also naked even almost to the middle [...] a fashion me thinkes very vnciuill and vnseemely, especially if the beholder might plainly see them.⁶⁷

How was an outsider to tell which was the courtesan and which the noblewoman? In fact, Laura Tosi claims, the city’s high-class courtesans ‘were distinguishable from gentlewomen (with a few exceptions) because of their superior education and wit and their accomplishments in music, poetry and song’.⁶⁸

Such perceptions have tragic consequences in *Othello*. Iago, claiming to ‘know our country disposition well’ (3.3.204), insinuates that Othello, as a non-Venetian, was easily duped in a city where wives ‘do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands’ (3.3.205-6). Adultery, he implies, was a favourite pastime amongst Venetian women; Brabantio’s bitter warning to Othello – ‘[l]ook to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee’ (1.3.293-4) – seems to proleptically confirm Iago’s slander. Reminding Othello that she ‘did deceive her father, marrying [him]’ (3.3.209), Iago twists Desdemona’s brave defiance of her father into evidence of a typically Venetian (and Venusian?) capacity for deception. Iago’s success in identifying Desdemona with Venice’s famed courtesans (and,

⁶⁴ Coryate, p. 263.

⁶⁵ Coryate, p. 264.

⁶⁶ Cesare Vecellio qtd in Margaret Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 70.

⁶⁷ Coryate, p. 260.

⁶⁸ Laura Tosi, ‘Shakespeare, Jonson and Venice: Crossing Boundaries in the City’ in *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 143-65 (p. 159).

through them, Venus Meretrix) is finally brought fully into focus in Act 4 Scene 2, the so-called 'brothel scene', where Othello calls his wife a 'public commoner' (4.2.74), a 'strumpet' (4.2.82, 4.2.83), then 'whore' (4.2.88) and finally 'that cunning whore of Venice' (4.2.91).

The subtle identification of Desdemona with Venus (in her multiple guises) casts Othello, as her husband, into a role for which he does in fact have some qualifications, his martial qualities notwithstanding. The play perhaps hints at Othello's identification with the blacksmith god when he claims that he 'should make very forges of [his] cheeks' (4.2.75) if he were to describe Desdemona's crimes. Significantly, due to his work as the blacksmith to the gods, Vulcan was sometimes imagined as having a blackened skin. Shakespeare certainly seems to have imagined him as having darker skin; in *Twelfth Night*, Orsino, confronted with Antonio, recalls that last time the two met, Antonio's face 'was besmear'd / As black as Vulcan in the smoke of war' (5.1.50) and although this aspect remains latent, it may nevertheless strengthen the dark-skinned Othello's self-identification with the cuckolded blacksmith god.

This was not only way in which Othello seems to have resembled Vulcan. The god's exposure of Venus and Mars was a popular subject for early modern painters, and in the majority of paintings Vulcan was depicted as visibly older than both Venus and Mars. In both Jacopo Tintoretto's *Venus, Vulcan and Mars* (1551) and Johann Heiss's *Vulcan Surprising Venus and Mars in Bed Before an Assembly of the Gods* (1679), for example, Vulcan is represented as significantly older than his wife and her lover. As the older husband of a beautiful younger woman, Othello – like Vulcan – is in many ways a stereotypical cuckold. As Honigmann observes, May-September relationships were considered 'ridiculous and risky' in the early modern period.⁶⁹ The cuckold was usually the object of scorn and contempt. Othello's exclamation that a 'horned man's a monster, and a beast' (4.1.62) emphasises the shame and loss of masculinity associated with being a cuckold. Othello's own references to his advanced age suggest that he is significantly older than his bride, perhaps closer in age to Brabantio than Desdemona. Othello initially presents his maturity as an advantage to the Venetian senate, claiming that, as the 'young affects / [are] In me defunct' (1.3.264-5), he is no longer subject to the sexual passions of youth and, consequently, will not be distracted from his

⁶⁹ Honigmann, 'Introduction', p. 76.

military duties. However, as he begins to doubt Desdemona, latent anxieties emerge, and he wonders if the fact that he is 'declined / Into the vale of years' (3.3.269-70) might prompt her to stray. Intriguingly, it is Othello himself who makes this connection, Iago making no such suggestion.

If we follow through the connections that the play's mythological affiliations seem to be inviting audiences to make, Othello's belief that Cassio is Desdemona's lover casts the ineffectual Florentine in Mars's role, and in a way that brings the play's history back into focus. Although young and attractive – Iago describes him as a 'proper man' (1.3.391), whose good looks and suave manners are 'framed to make women false' (1.3.397) – he apparently lacks military experience. One of Iago's grievances (and perhaps his most plausible complaint) is that he has been passed over by Othello in favour of a 'great arithmetician' (1.1.18) who has 'never set a squadron in the field / Nor the division of a battle knows' (1.1.21-2).⁷⁰ Whereas Iago reminisces about fighting alongside Othello at 'Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds' (1.1.28), Cassio recalls no such experiences. Furthermore, he appears to lack authority and self-discipline, two vital characteristics in a military commander. When given command of the watch by Othello, he is easily persuaded by Iago to take a drink when, as he readily admits, he has 'very poor and unhappy brains for drinking' (2.3.30-1). Yet at the play's end, Cassio 'rules in Cyprus' (5.2.330). Hearing him addressed in the play's closing lines as 'lord governor' (5.2.365) only heightens the sense of unease that has haunted the play's margins since the Turkish threat to Cyprus was first mentioned. If we read *Othello* as taking place on the eve of the Ottoman invasion, the island left under Cassio's command is perilously under-defended. These historic resonances lead us to recognise the lack of martial prowess in the man who has been – unwittingly – cast as Mars.

Othello and the Turks

A further corollary of any identification of Desdemona with Cyprus is that Othello somehow represents the Turkish threat to the island. There is broad scholarly consensus that the

⁷⁰ There is also, I think, the possibility of an alternative triangle lurking alongside Venus-Mars-Vulcan triad that Othello is manipulated into 'seeing', in that Iago seems to respond to Othello's promotion of Cassio as a form of betrayal or cuckolding.

Moorish general occupies a complicated position in Venetian society, but his precise racial identity and what it means within the world of the play remain topics of considerable critical debate. The playtext itself offers no conclusive verbal evidence as to whether Othello was imagined by Shakespeare as a dark-skinned black African, similar to the figure depicted in the Peacham drawing of a scene from *Titus Andronicus* (1592), or if he more closely resembled the lighter-skinned Moroccan ambassador, whose visit to London in late 1600 is often cited as an inspiration for Othello.⁷¹ Nevertheless, for the first two hundred years of the play's history, Othello seems to have been primarily understood as a black (rather than 'tawny') individual, with later critical and theatrical preferences for a lighter-skinned Othello betraying contemporary prejudices rooted in colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade rather than anything that can be located in the play itself. Coleridge was the first critic to claim that 'Othello was not a negro, but a high and chivalrous Moorish chief', ushering in what is sometimes referred to as the 'Bronze Age of *Othello*', in which Othello was played as a lighter-skinned individual.⁷² Shakespeare's original vision of Othello's ethnicity would, of course, have been communicated to audiences via costume or cosmetics, making detailed verbal identifiers unnecessary. *The Merchant of Venice*'s Prince of Morocco, a 'tawnie Moore' (*MoV*, s.d., 2.1.1), is described by Portia, before she has even seen him, as having 'the complexion of a devil' (*MoV*, 1.2.87). Even a dark olive complexion might be rhetorically black. However, Roderigo's derogatory reference to Othello as 'the thicklips' (1.1.65) – a remark that alludes to physiognomy rather than skin colour – seems to suggest that Othello originated in sub-Saharan Africa. For the purposes of this chapter, Othello's precise ethnicity (even as it was imperfectly understood in early modern England) is less important than the fact that he would have been visibly non-European in the eyes of the play's original audiences.⁷³

⁷¹ See < https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peacham_Drawing.jpg#/media/File:Peacham_Drawing.jpg > and < <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/portrait-of-the-moorish-ambassador-to-queen-elizabeth-i> > [accessed 5 September 2020].

⁷² Qtd in Ian Smith, 'The Textile Black Body: Race and 'shadowed livery' in *The Merchant of Venice*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Race and Sexuality* ed. by Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 170-85 (p. 171).

⁷³ There have been several productions that have creatively challenged this aspect of *Othello*. In 1997, Jude Cook directed a 'photonegative' production in Washington DC, with Patrick Stewart playing a white Othello in an otherwise entirely African-American cast. Iqbal Khan's 2014 production for the RSC featured a black Iago, played by Lucian Msamati. In 1972, Charles Marowitz presented a deconstructed version of the play, *An Othello*, in which a black Iago despises Othello for collaborating with white society.

Critics have often assumed that Othello would have seemed alarmingly foreign to early modern playgoers, and would have been an outsider even in cosmopolitan and multicultural Venice. B.J. Sokol is a dissenting voice here, claiming (plausibly) that Othello was respected and admired in Venice and arguing (less persuasively) that Brabantio's objections to the marriage were social rather than racial, but his arguments run counter to the weight of critical opinion.⁷⁴ Scholars have, until comparatively recently, thought that early seventeenth-century Londoners would have had very limited contact with and knowledge of black – or, indeed, any non-European – people; an individual like Othello, they argued, would have seemed both fascinatingly exotic and utterly alien to early modern playgoers. A.C. Bradley wrote that 'Othello does not belong to our world' and G.K. Hunter claimed that the Moor properly belonged 'in that outer circuit of non-Christian lands where, in the *mappa mundi*, they appear with the other aberrations – "salvage" men, satyrs, apes [and] skiapods'.⁷⁵ More recent archival research – most notably Imtiaz Habib's *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500 – 1677* (2008) – has revealed that, at the time of *Othello*'s composition, there was a small but highly visible resident black population in London.⁷⁶ Nor were inter-racial relationships unknown; Habib uncovers evidence of multiple inter-racial marriages, as well other more transient relationships, in late Elizabethan England.⁷⁷ Early modern playgoers would certainly have been aware of, and perhaps even personally acquainted with, black people living in London and other English places. Matthew Steggle, noting this 'small but significant black presence in Shakespeare's England', speculates that there may even have been black playgoers present at early performances of the tragedy.⁷⁸ While black people were undoubtedly present only in very small numbers in early modern London, they were nevertheless a highly visible group who very much did belong in 'our world' and – by extension – the world of the play. The presence of a small African population in early modern London (Emily Bartels estimates that between one and three percent of the population of London by the mid-eighteenth century was black, although numbers would have been lower in the early seventeenth century) does not, of course, mean that its members were always wholly

⁷⁴ See B.J. Sokol, *Shakespeare and Tolerance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 130-2.

⁷⁵ Qtd in Matthew Steggle, 'Othello, the Moor of London', in *Othello: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Evans (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), pp. 103-24 (p. 104).

⁷⁶ See Imtiaz Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

⁷⁷ See Habib, pp. 95-100.

⁷⁸ Steggle, p. 104.

welcomed.⁷⁹ But, as both Bartels and Sokol have demonstrated, English attitudes were not monolithic.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Othello would not, perhaps, have been quite so alien – nor his marriage to Desdemona quite so alarming – as some critics have claimed.

Both sides of this debate have allowed contextual evidence to shape their understanding of the play and its chief protagonist. Looking at internal textual evidence indicates a similar diversity of views in *Othello's* Venice, with his precise status there never being wholly settled. The duke's observation that 'opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on [Othello]' (1.3.224-5) indicates that the Moorish general enjoys considerable popular esteem in Venice. His military prowess is clearly highly valued by both the Venetian senate and the wider population. He is also, apparently, a sought-after dinner guest. Brabantio, Othello tells the senate, 'loved me [and] oft invited me' (1.3.129) into his home. However, the clandestine marriage following Othello's covert courtship of Desdemona, using Cassio as a go-between (3.3.71, 3.3.100), implies a recognition that their relationship transgresses the boundaries of paternal tolerance. Brabantio's contemptuous references to 'this Moor' (1.3.72) and 'the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou' (1.2.70-1) make it clear that Othello's race is the primary basis of Brabantio's objection to the marriage. Desdemona's love for the Moor is, he claims, 'in spite of nature' (1.3.98) and her preference for him over the somewhat effete-sounding 'wealthy, curled darlings of our nation' (1.2.68) perverse. Brabantio sees their relationship as aberrant and unnatural. Although Othello accurately predicts that the 'services' which he has 'done the signiory, / Shall out tongue [Brabantio's] complaints' (1.2.18-9), he seems aware that his status there is contingent on his utility to the Venetian republic. The suspicion must remain that the duke's readiness to dismiss Brabantio's objection to the marriage is motivated by expedience in the face of the military crisis brewing in the opening scenes, rather than any real sympathy for the newlyweds. At a less fraught time, Brabantio might have received a rather more sympathetic hearing.

⁷⁹ Emily Bartels, 'Too Many Blackamoors: Deportation, Discrimination and Elizabeth I', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 46.2 (2006), 305-22 (307) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3844644> > [accessed 11 April 2021]

⁸⁰ See Sokol's *Shakespeare and Tolerance* for an extended discussion of race in Shakespeare's plays.

Othello's blackness has religious as well as racial implications that relate to the play's geopolitical resonances. Recent academic interest in Anglo-Islamic history has focused renewed attention on the confessional as well as the ethnic connotations of the identifier 'Moor'. Moors were generally understood in England to be Muslims unless, like Othello, they were known to be baptised. According to Boemus's *The Fardle of Façons*, published in English in 1555,

al the reste of the people of Libia westward, are worshippers of Mahomet, and live after same sorte in maner, that the Barbariens do in Egipte at this present, and are called Maures, or Moores[.]⁸¹

Iago's comment that Othello's love for Desdemona could make him 'renounce his baptism' (2.3.338) seems to gesture towards a conversion at some point in his history. How recent his conversion was remains another of the play's unresolved mysteries.⁸² Othello is (again, typically) never explicitly identified as a former Muslim in the play, but this seems a reasonable inference. Ambereen Dadabhoy argues that Islamic characters on the English stage were frequently black Moors, rather than Turks, 'because their skin could operate in drama's scopic economy and testify to the "truth" of their characters'.⁸³ In other words, Othello's blackness is evidence of his Islamic origins, and all that implies.

Moors and Turks were stock characters in English drama, where – in a continuation of the Islamophobia given voice in much medieval romance (discussed in Chapter 1) – representations were, in general, crudely negative, with longstanding prejudices renewed and 'updated' by contemporary anxieties about the Ottomans. According to Nabil Matar, Turks were usually represented by English writers as 'cruel and tyrannical, deviant, and deceiving', whereas Moors were portrayed as 'sexually overdriven [...] emotionally

⁸¹ Joannes Boemus, *The Fardle of Façons conteining the aunciente maners, customes, and lawes, of the peoples inhabiting the two partes of the earth, called Affrike and Asia*, trans by William Waterman, (London, 1555), sig. C7^v.

⁸² The 2017 Tobacco Company production of *Othello* (dir. Richard Twyman) explicitly showed Othello (played by Abraham Popoola) as a (secret) Muslim. The production featured a much younger actor playing the lead role (Popoola was 28 when cast in the role), perhaps altering the play's emotional resonances in important ways – the actor playing Iago (Mark Lockyer) was visibly older, making Othello's susceptibility to his manipulations more explicable.

⁸³ Ambereen Dadabhoy, 'Two Faced: The Problem of Othello's Visage' in *Othello: The State of Play*, ed. by Lena Cowen Orlin (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), pp. 121- 48 (p. 127).

uncontrollable [and] vengeful'.⁸⁴ Playhouse Muslims were usually an amalgamation of these two stereotypes. The treacherous and lustful Ottoman emperor in Thomas Kyd's *Soliman and Perseda* (?1592/3) is typical. Observing that terms like 'Moor' and 'Turk' often signified 'a generalized Islamic Other' rather than a precise identity in early modern writing, Vitkus argues that Othello should not be

identified with a specific, historically accurate racial category; rather he is a hybrid who might be associated, in the minds of Shakespeare's audience, with a whole set of related terms – *Moor, Turk, Ottomite, Saracen, Mahometan, Egyptian, Judean, Indian* – all constructed and positioned in opposition to Christian faith and virtue.⁸⁵

Whether or not playgoers would see Othello's identity as quite so antithetical to Christianity as Vitkus suggests here is debatable. Nevertheless, Iago's description of Othello as sexually mounting Desdemona like 'an old black ram' (1.1.87) or a 'Barbary horse' (1.1.110) gestures towards these sorts of negative connotations. The Moorish general is, Iago's obscene rhetoric implies, a bestial and polluting presence in the heart of Venice. His comparison of Othello's elopement with Desdemona to 'board[ing] a land carrack' (1.2.50), which '[i]f it prove lawful prize' would render him 'made forever' (1.2.51), characterises the marriage as an act of sexual piracy, with Othello a sort of Barbary pirate, a group associated in early modern England with 'whoredome, sodometrie, and all other most detestable vices'.⁸⁶ The French cosmographer, Nicolas de Nicolay, in a prime example of the lack of racial and religious differentiation described by Vitkus, calls the Barbary pirates 'Turkes of Alger'.⁸⁷ Iago's identification of Othello with 'a Barbary horse' (1.1.110) gestures in a similar (geographical) direction. Ironically, many of the pirates operating from the North African ports were actually renegade European Christians, highlighting the region's racial and religious complexity, and testifying to the way many Mediterranean places and societies (including Cyprus) resisted clear-cut binaries.

⁸⁴ Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 13.

⁸⁵ Vitkus, 'Turning Turk in *Othello*', p. 161, 159-60.

⁸⁶ Nicholas de Nicolay, *Navigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie*, trans. by T. Washington (London, 1585), sig. B4^r.

⁸⁷ De Nicolay, sig. B4^r.

The play's move to Cyprus – a journey towards the Islamic east and away from the security of Venice – seems to both foreshadow and precipitate Othello's conversion from urbane, self-possessed Venetian general to ranting, uxoricidal Turk. Othello's 'conversion' appears to be complete in the play's final scene when, in a moment of agonised self-recognition, he undertakes his final act of service to the Venetian republic, executing the 'malignant [...] turbanned Turk' (5.2.359) he believes he has become. Citing what he calls 'the traditional association of Islam with acts of violence, treachery, cruelty and wrath', Vitkus argues that playgoers would have understood Othello's behaviour and actions on Cyprus as stereotypically 'Islamic', claiming that

Shakespeare's portrayal of a powerful Moorish Lord and commander who kills the innocent white woman he loves in order to demonstrate his ability to master his passions is a scene from the seraglio. In particular, the murder of Desdemona by the Moor would have reminded audiences of the story of the Sultan and the Fair Greek, an exemplary tale of Islamic cruelty that features an Ottoman emperor (usually Amurath I or Mahomet II) who must choose between masculine, military 'honor' and his attachment to a Christian slave with whom he has fallen in love.⁸⁸

To what extent playgoers would have connected *Othello* with the story of the Sultan and the Fair Greek specifically, as Vitkus here claims, is difficult to judge; at least four different versions of the story were performed on the English stage in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁸⁹

Having already attempted to characterise Othello as a lustful, bestial Moor in the play's opening scene, it is Iago – rather than the play itself – who frames Othello's behaviour on Cyprus as a conversion. When Othello 'falls in a trance' (s.d., 4.1.33), Iago tells Cassio that '[m]y lord is fallen into an epilepsy' (4.1.50), a disease that was particularly associated with the Muslim prophet Muhammad (described by Vitkus as 'the ur-Moor') in the European imagination.⁹⁰ Dimmock notes that the myth of Muhammad's epilepsy 'is reproduced in different forms in countless texts, both before and after the advent of print'.⁹¹ According to

⁸⁸ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 99.

⁹⁰ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 85.

⁹¹ Qtd in Matthew Dimmock, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 31. The story, Dimmock observes, is particularly prominent in Mandeville's *Book of Marvels and Travels*.

Christian propaganda (Norman Daniel writes that the legend had ‘an extraordinary vitality among both Latin and Oriental Christians’), the Prophet invented the story of angelic revelation to disguise his epilepsy.⁹² Leo Africanus’s *Geographical Historie of Africa* reports that Mohammed claimed that he ‘conversed with the angell Gabriel, unto whose brightnes he ascribed the falling sicknes, which many times prostrated him upon the earth’.⁹³

We should, however, resist reading the play as what Vitkus calls a ‘drama of conversion’.⁹⁴ There are a number of moments in the play that actively resist any easy identification of Othello with ‘the circumcised dog’ (5.2.354) of Aleppo. When examined closely, Othello actually displays very few of the characteristics that Vitkus and others claim associate him with Islamic masculinity. Nor does the play seek to align him too closely with early modern English beliefs about Moors or Africans. Meredith Anne Skura observes that while ‘[t]here certainly was an extensive discourse about black people and Moors available to Shakespeare, much of it racist or proto-racist by today’s standards’, Shakespeare ‘ignores many of them, parodies others, omits racist sections of texts he used, and turns instead to a surprising number of other texts seldom or never mentioned in contemporary debates about race’.⁹⁵ Othello’s treatment of Desdemona is met with incomprehension and perplexity by the play’s Venetians. Witnessing his mistreatment of Desdemona, Lodovico is incredulous, asking

Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Call all in all sufficient? This the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce? (4.1.264-8)

Emilia might berate him as a ‘murderous coxcomb’ (5.2.231), but no one in the play – other than Othello himself in the suicide speech – actually accuses him of ‘turning Turk’. The play’s final scene features no obvious ‘I told you so’ comments. Commenting on the absence from

⁹² Qtd by Dimmock in *Mythologies*, p. 31.

⁹³ Leo Africanus, *Geographical Historie of Africa*, trans. by John Pory (London, 1600), p. 381.

⁹⁴ Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 78.

⁹⁵ Meredith Anne Skura, ‘Reading Othello’s skin: Contexts and pretexts’, *Philological Quarterly*, 87.3 (2008), 299-334 (300) < <https://bris.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/reading-othellos-skin-contexts-pretexts/docview/211143727/se-2> > [accessed 23 February 2021]

the play of many of the most popular features of the 'Turk play', Dimmock comments that '*Othello* was designed to disappoint' its original audience.⁹⁶ For playgoers who had

been weaned on a diet of drama full of fire and fury, who sought out plays in which vast armies ranged across distant landscapes, faiths clashed and bombastic heroes raged, Shakespeare's play repeatedly confounded expectations.⁹⁷

The opening act leads playgoers to expect some sort of confrontation with the Turks but Shakespeare, Dimmock argues, 'was trying to turn the conventional "Turk play" inside out'.⁹⁸

Rather than a typical bombastic, strutting, lascivious Turk or Moor, the play presents a more psychologically complex picture of the Moorish general. There are a number of moments in *Othello*, often overlooked by critics in search of its racial and religious resonances, that invoke a different set of affiliations. Alongside its 'Turkish' allusions, the play repeatedly hints at some sort of Roman connection. Commenting on Othello's rather strange '[d]o ye triumph, Roman, do you triumph?' (4.1.119) when witnessing what he believes to be Cassio's confession of his relationship with Desdemona, Samuel Johnson suggested that 'Othello calls [Cassio] *Roman* ironically. *Triumph*, which was a Roman ceremony brought Roman into his thoughts', but the play's Roman allusions appear rather more coherent than the passing allusion Johnson claims to identify here.⁹⁹ The play features a number of 'Roman' references, including references to 'toged consuls' (1.1.24) and Venetian 'consuls' (1.2.43), terms used elsewhere by Shakespeare only in plays with a Roman connection. In a similar vein, members of the Venetian Signiory are referred to as 'senators' in the play.¹⁰⁰

The play's multiple Roman references may point towards the influence of a surprising and critically under-examined source. Wallace Graves argues that Shakespeare looked to Plutarch's *Life of Cato Utican*, translated into English by Thomas North in 1579, for certain key aspects of *Othello*. Cato Utican (also known as Cato the Younger) was a Roman senator and general noted for his honesty in public office and his defence of the values of the Roman

⁹⁶ Dimmock, 'Experimental *Othello*', p. 93.

⁹⁷ Dimmock, 'Experimental *Othello*', p. 93.

⁹⁸ Dimmock, 'Experimental *Othello*', p. 102.

⁹⁹ Qtd by Honigmann, 4.1.119n.

¹⁰⁰ See Graves for a range of other 'Roman' allusions he claims – with various degrees of plausibility – to locate in the play.

Republic. There are a number of highly suggestive resonances between the two works. Plutarch's text may have provided Shakespeare with several elements of the plot not found in Cinthio.¹⁰¹ Of particular interest is a reference to both Rhodes and Cyprus that might explain the play's reference to Iago fighting alongside Othello at Rhodes, discussed above. In North's translation of Plutarch we learn that Cato was sent on a 'commission' via 'the Ile of Rhodes' into 'Cyprus, to make warre'.¹⁰² More significantly, the work may have suggested to Shakespeare the storyline of Iago's resentment of Cassio's promotion, an aspect of *Othello* not found in Cinthio. In Plutarch's account, Cato chose to take Canidius – 'held in regard by Cato more for his honesty with the books than his skill with the sword' – with him to Cyprus, where they hoped to secure for the Roman Republic vast quantities of treasure left there by the Egyptian king Ptolemy, rather than a more experienced soldier Munatius, who had fought alongside Cato on a number of earlier campaigns. The connection perhaps explains Iago's curious description of Cassio as a 'great arithmetician' (1.1.18), 'debitor and creditor' (1.1.30) and 'counter-caster' (1.1.30).

The play's use of the Cato-Canidius-Munatius story does not, however, entirely explain the other overt 'Roman' allusions in a play set in a (broadly) historically accurate sixteenth-century world. Shakespeare could have utilised the plot without referring to senators, consuls or togas. Although Graves does not comment on it in an otherwise comprehensive account of Shakespeare's possible borrowings from Plutarch in *Othello*, the Roman and Moorish generals are also linked by the manner of their deaths. Cato committed suicide in Utica (a Roman city in modern-day Tunisia), rather than surrender to Julius Caesar. According to Plutarch,

Cato taking his naked sword in his hand, thrust it into his breast: howbeit the swelling of his hande made the blowe so weake, that it killed him not presently, but drawing on to his latter ende, he fell downe vpon his bedde[.]¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Graves, 186.

¹⁰² Qtd in Graves, 184.

¹⁰³ Plutarch, *The lives of the noble grecians and romanes compared together by that graue learned philosopher and historiographer, plutarke of chæroneæ; translated out of greeke into french by iames amyot ... ; and out of french into englishe, by thomas north* (London, 1579), p. 847.

Cato's death was a more protracted affair than Othello's – Plutarch's account includes a grisly description of how the Roman general eventually tore at his own exposed intestines to hasten his end – but the shared site (the bed) of the two suicides is suggestive of Plutarch's influence. Cassio's comment after Othello's suicide that '[t]his I did fear [...] / For he was great of heart' (5.2.358-9) offers an alternative perspective on Othello's character, with his death positioned as a heroically noble and Roman act. To what extent playgoers are being asked to believe in Othello's tragic nobility is uncertain. Given Cassio's earlier poetic posturing, his judgement here might be called into question. However, the play's other Roman allusions perhaps indicate that we *should* take Othello seriously as a genuinely tragic protagonist whose downfall might be compared with that of Julius Caesar, Coriolanus or Mark Antony. Horatio's threat to take his own life 'like an antique Roman' (5.2.294) at the end of *Hamlet* (1600) perhaps provides further evidence, if any were needed, of the ways in which this pattern of thought might escape the Roman plays.¹⁰⁴

Othello as Romance Protagonist

The multiple strands of Othello's character – Christian/Muslim, Moor/Venetian, treacherous Turk/noble Roman, soldier/lover – make it impossible to allocate him a single, coherent identity. Like the island he is asked to defend, he is, perhaps, better understood as a composite or hybrid entity. In addition, I now wish to suggest, his complex identity is particularly fitted to the strategies of Romance. How and when he entered the service of the Venetian republic or converted to Christianity is never explained. His own account of his life seems to confirm Roderigo's characterisation of him, in one of the play's most evocative phrases, as 'an extravagant and wheeling stranger / Of here and everywhere' (1.1.134-5). Highly valued for his military prowess in Venice, he is not, apparently, *at home* there. Although he has 'some nine moons wasted' (1.3.85) in Venice, presumably awaiting further deployment by the Venetian senate, he does not appear to keep any permanent lodging there, and must take his bride to an inn, named 'the Sagittary' (1.1.156, 1.3.116), the name of his lodging foregrounding the contradictions inherent in his position as 'the Moor of Venice'

¹⁰⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare Hamlet*, ed. by G.R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

(as the play's subtitle identifies him). Prior to his employment by the Venetians, Othello has (he claims) lived a life of 'unhoused free condition' (1.2.26), moving from Africa to Venice, via Aleppo (5.2.350), Cyprus and Rhodes (1.1.28), travelling around and across the Mediterranean world. Even as he reveals his history, he mystifies and glamorises it. Waiting to face Brabantio and the Venetian authorities, to defend his marriage to Desdemona, Othello hints at royal antecedents:

'Tis yet to know –
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate – I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege[.] (1.2.19-22)

A.C. Bradley observes that the Moor of Venice is

by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes: and he is so partly from the strange life of war and adventure which he has lived from childhood. He does not belong to our world, and he seems to enter it we know not whence.¹⁰⁵

Bradley's brand of highly speculative character-based analysis fell out of critical favour many decades ago but he nevertheless identifies an important aspect of Othello's character here. As Skura observes, the Moor brings 'not just blackness but romance' to Venice.¹⁰⁶

Skura describes Othello 'as glamorous as the chivalric warriors in Mediterranean romance', noting that – like many romance protagonists – he emerges (or, more accurately, claims to emerge) from a 'courtly chivalric background'.¹⁰⁷ His claim to royal antecedents, as well as perhaps making him Brabantio's social equal, implies membership of an aristocratic warrior caste, bred to chivalric action, that transcends national and – to some degree – confessional borders. He proudly tells the senate that 'since these arms of mine hath seven years' pith' (1.3.84) he has seen 'dearest action in the tented field' (1.3.86) and 'broil and battle' (1.3.89). In this sense, Othello resembles Gascoigne's Mounthermer knight, who was similarly

from his youth [...] trained up in field

¹⁰⁵ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 139.

¹⁰⁶ Skura, 311. Although Skura presents interesting and, at certain points, plausible arguments about the way race and colour were understood in early modern England, her claim that until the nineteenth century 'the Moor was a tragic hero whose colour was irrelevant' (p. 299) is unconvincing. In fact, I would argue that his blackness – his exoticism – is an intrinsic part of his glamour, mystery and romance.

¹⁰⁷ Skura, 311.

And alwayes toke his chiefe delight in helmet speare and shielde
Soldado for his life and in his happie days. (*Devise of a Maske*, ll. 23-5)

Like Othello, Mounthermer endured the vicissitudes of fortune in the course of his military career. Of the latter we are told:

For well he knewe the trade of all the Turkishe warres,
And had amongst them shed his blood at many cruell iarres
In Rhodes his race begonne a slender tall yong man,
Where he by many martiall feats his spurres of knighthood wan.
Yea though the peece was lost yet won he honoure still[.] (*Devise of a Maske*, ll. 35-9)

The two protagonists are (in literary terms) brothers-in-arms. Skura, citing Othello's claim that he would not, but for his love of Desdemona, have put his 'unhoused free condition / Put into circumscription and confine / For the sea's worth' (1.2.26-8), argues that 'the impression we have [of Othello] is of a wanderer who is uncomfortable when confined to the settled order of Venice'.¹⁰⁸ Othello – like both the Mounthermer knight, and the chivalric romance protagonists that preceded them both – is a man in motion, moving from one violent confrontation with the Islamic enemy to the next. He describes his life as a series of dramatic episodes. He has fought in 'battles, sieges, fortunes' (1.3.131), suffered 'most disastrous chances [and] moving accidents by flood and field' (1.3.136), and made 'hair-breadth scapes i'th'imminent deadly breach' (1.3.137).¹⁰⁹ Capture by 'the insolent foe' (1.3.138) – another parallel with the Mounthermer knight – is followed by 'slavery' and then 'redemption' (1.3.139). There is no reason to think that Shakespeare had Gascoigne's Catholic knight in mind when he imagined his Moorish general, but both writers draw on a shared literary tradition of chivalric romance and knights errant, roving around and across the Eastern Mediterranean world in search of adventure and glory.

Othello's romance persona is most clearly articulated in the senate speech, in which he describes to the Duke and senators the stories with which he wooed Desdemona and entertained Brabantio. Following his description of his military escapades, he goes on to recount his

¹⁰⁸ Skura, 311.

¹⁰⁹ The allusions here to siege and breach (the opening up of gaps in fortifications) might remind those playgoers aware of Cyprus's history of the Siege of Famagusta.

travailous history;
 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
 Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven
 It was my hint to speak – such was my process –
 And the cannibals that each other eat,
 The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
 Do grow beneath their shoulders. (1.3.140-6)

Although he claims to deliver ‘a round unvarnished tale’ (1.3.91) of his courtship of Desdemona to the senate, his account of the stories with which he wooed her are clearly marked by the fantasies of classical geographers and their medieval (literary) progeny. The Anthropophagi and the men whose heads grew in their chests, known as Blemmyes, were originally drawn from Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis*, which was published in English as *The History of the World* (translated by Philemon Holland) in 1601. Similar wonders (and more besides) were also described in Mandeville’s *Book of Marvels and Travels*.

Critical responses to Othello’s senate speech have varied. Citing increasing early modern scepticism around travellers tales in general and Plinyesque tales of such human marvels in particular, Philip D. Collington suggests that they are evidence that Othello is little more than a ‘deceptive braggart’.¹¹⁰ Honigmann adopts a less sceptical stance, suggesting that Othello is ‘more than a stranger, he comes from a mysterious “other” world, a world hinted at rather than defined’.¹¹¹ He implicitly aligns Othello with the very wonders that he describes in this passage, making him an object of European scrutiny alongside the curiosities with which he has regaled Desdemona and then the Venetian senate. As noted in Chapter 1, the east ‘was generally regarded as a site of marvels and monstrosity and (at least until the fourteenth century) a site whose strangeness developed a long a sliding scale the further east one travelled’.¹¹² Dadabhoy argues that, by ventriloquising European writers like Pliny, Othello is describing the strangeness and monstrosity of the east from a European perspective. She suggests that the speech is part of Othello’s performance of ‘cultural whiteness’, part of the process of ‘colonial identification’ that allows him to become the ‘Moor of Venice’.¹¹³ Othello,

¹¹⁰ Philip D. Collington, ‘Othello the Traveller’, *Early Theatre*, 8.2 (2005), 73-100 (73) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43499259> > [accessed 9 July 2021].

¹¹¹ Honigmann, ‘Introduction’, p. 27.

¹¹² Publicover, p. 54.

¹¹³ Dadabhoy, p.122.

she claims, ‘articulates a “space of splitting”’, in which ‘the exotic beings he conjures for Desdemona and the senate’s consumption are different from him, and in his difference from these Others, he moves closer to becoming “the same” or Venetian’.¹¹⁴ By repeating European accounts of ‘otherness’ – adopting what she calls ‘imperial discourse’ and mimicking ‘the language of the empire’ – Dadabhoy argues, Othello implicitly distances himself from the exotica he describes and aligns himself with the perspective of his Venetian auditors. Presenting him as an inverted version of the Ottoman janissaries – Christian boys (usually from conquered Balkan territories) removed from their families, converted to Islam and raised to serve the Ottoman state – she identifies Othello as a ‘colonial subject’ who has suffered a ‘violent separation from his natural identity’ when he entered Venetian service. Dadabhoy claims (without citing specific textual evidence from the play) that ‘the Moorish general’s commitment to Venice’s imperial wars signals an obligation to the state that exceeds volunteer, or even paid, mercenary service’.¹¹⁵

The duke’s pragmatic endorsement of Othello’s marriage to Desdemona surely indicates that his relationship with the Venetian state was more mutual than Dadabhoy claims. The duke’s need to keep Othello’s services, even at the expense of offending Brabantio, one of the republic’s most powerful men – Iago notes that Brabantio ‘is much beloved / And hath in his effect a voice potential / As double as the duke’s’ (1.2.12-40) – suggests that the Moorish general was, professionally speaking, a free agent. Nevertheless, she identifies something important here: Othello does not address the Venetian senate as though he is simply a mercenary employed by the republic. However, rather than – as Dadabhoy claims – a colonised subject, he speaks, I want to suggest, as though he has stepped from the pages of a chivalric romance.

Both Collington’s and Dadabhoy’s responses assume that this passage references Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis* (or one of its translations). There is, however, an alternative source for the passage that adds an intriguing and geographically apposite dimension to Othello’s romance persona. Skura points out that the senate speech echoes a scene in another play in which a

¹¹⁴ Dadabhoy, p. 124.

¹¹⁵ Dadabhoy, p. 131.

protagonist crosses the Mediterranean to woo a woman from a different culture.¹¹⁶ Robert Greene's *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (perf. 1588-92?, publ. 1594), based (very loosely) on Ludovico Ariosto's verse romance *Orlando Furioso*, features a speech remarkably similar to Othello's senate speech.¹¹⁷ In Greene's play, princely suitors travel from around the world (including Cuba, Mexico and Egypt) to woo Angelica, the Emperor of Africa's daughter.¹¹⁸ The successful suitor will become the Emperor of Africa's heir. To the chagrin of her assorted royal suitors, Angelica chooses Orlando, a French paladin and nephew of Charlemagne. Presenting his credentials, in lines reminiscent of Othello's claim of royal ancestry, Orlando announces: 'I am no king, yet am I princely borne / Descended from the royall house of France'.¹¹⁹ He then describes the obstacles he has overcome to reach the African court:

The Seas by Neptune hoysed to the heauens,
Whose dangerous flaws might well have kept me backe;
The savage Mores & Anthropagei
Whose lands I past might well have kept me backe;
The doubt of entertainment in the Court
When I arriude might well haue kept me backe;
But so the fame of faire Angelica,
As neither Country, King, or Seas, or Cannibals,
Could by despairing keep Orlando back.¹²⁰

The similarities between this speech and Othello's senate speech, although not conclusive are highly suggestive. Orlando's savage Moors are – understandably – changed by Othello into men with heads in their chests. Neither Ariosto's original nor Sir John Harington's 1591 translation of *Orlando Furioso* feature any similar passages. There are further verbal echoes between Greene's and Shakespeare's scenes not noted by Skura. Having described the challenges he has faced to reach the African court, Orlando concludes with the request that 'Angelica her selfe shall speak for mee'.¹²¹ As Othello defends himself against Brabantio's accusations of witchcraft, he requests that Desdemona is summoned and asked to 'speak of

¹¹⁶ Skura, 312.

¹¹⁷ Robert Greene, *The Historie of Orlando Furioso One of the twelue Pieres of France* (London, 1592). The published playtext lacks scene or act divisions, so quotations will be referenced by page number.

¹¹⁸ Later in the play, Greene switches the setting from Africa to India (apparently by accident), but perhaps betraying the extent to which foreign locations and peoples were easily interchangeable exotic others in much early modern writing.

¹¹⁹ Greene, sig. B1^r.

¹²⁰ Greene, sig. B1^{r-v}.

¹²¹ Greene, sig. B1^v.

me before her father' (1.3.117). When Angelica rejects her royal suitors – models, perhaps, for the wealthy 'curled darlings' (1.2.68) of Venice (another detail absent from Cinthio) rejected by Desdemona – she 'nonsutes all your princely evidence'.¹²² In *Othello's* opening scene, Iago describes how Othello '[n]onsuits my mediators' (1.1.15), the only time that Shakespeare uses the word in any text. In both plays, the legal term is used to describe a rather more personal rejection. Like Othello, Orlando is tricked by a Machiavellian villain into believing that his love is unfaithful to him, and goes mad. In Greene's play, the deception is revealed before he can harm Angelica.¹²³ This evidence is, admittedly, tenuous; but taken together with the other similarities between the two plays, it might suggest that Shakespeare may have recalled Greene's play when writing his own scene of cross-cultural courtship.

Such cross-cultural courtship is in fact a common feature of romance and Othello's blackness does not pose any obstacle to his chivalric identity. The noble Moor or Saracen was, if not a stock character, certainly a recognisable 'type' in medieval and early modern romance. Othello is referred to specifically as a 'noble Moor' (2.3.134, 3.4.26, 4.1.264) on three separate occasions. The noble Moor of romance usually displays many of the characteristics supposedly associated with Christian knights – piety, trustworthiness, virtue and self-discipline. Othello may recall one noble Moor or Saracen in particular: Ruggiero in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, a dark-skinned Muslim knight who marries an aristocratic European woman. Ruggiero is a Saracen warrior who falls in love with Bradamante, a Christian female knight, and converts to Christianity. After the extensive trials, tribulations and separations typical of romance, the pair are married and found the aristocratic house, the d'Estes of Ferrara; the d'Estes were Ariosto's patrons. Othello's greeting 'O my fair warrior!' (2.1.180) might, as noted above, suggest that he is attempting to fashion her as a Bradamante to his Ruggiero.

There is an intriguing intertextual allusion that suggests Shakespeare recalled Ruggiero when writing his noble Moor. Othello's claim that the silk handkerchief he gave to Desdemona was sewed by an Egyptian sibyl 'in her prophetic fury' (3.4.74) appears to be an echo of Ariosto's

¹²² Greene, sig. B2^r.

¹²³ Shakespeare certainly appears to have been aware of Greene's play: another scene involves hanging love poetry onto trees, which is a recognised source for a similar scene in *As You Like It*, a play also featuring a protagonist named Orlando, albeit in a very different storyline.

‘furor profetico’, the phrase he used to describe the manner in which Cassandra (the Trojan princess from *The Iliad*, doomed to prophesy the future but not to be believed) wove a silken pavilion or canopy. The pavilion is brought to the wedding of Ruggiero and Bradamante.¹²⁴ It is embroidered with prophetic scenes that predict the formation of the house of d’Este. In Harington’s translation, the phrase ‘prophetic fury’ does not feature; Shakespeare may, then, have read the Italian original. Although there is no reference to an Egyptian sibyl in either Ariosto’s poem or Harington’s translation, the silk pavilion does have an Egyptian connection that may have suggested Othello’s sibyl to Shakespeare. After the fall of Troy, Menelaus seized the pavilion but, during the voyage home to Sparta, his ship was blown off course and he landed in Egypt, where it ‘passed from one Ptolemy to the next until it was bequeathed to Cleopatra’.¹²⁵ The pavilion is brought to Ruggiero and Bradamante’s nuptials by a Mantuan sorceress, Melissa. While in *Orlando* the prophecies are described in detail, playgoers never learn what the Egyptian sibyl predicts as she sews the handkerchief.¹²⁶ To what extent playgoers are required to believe Othello’s claims about the handkerchief’s provenance is unclear. It may be that his claims about its history are part of his own romance self-fashioning, and the sibyl’s ‘prophetic fury’ merely evidence that Othello has read *Orlando Furioso* as well as Pliny. Nevertheless, these echoes further evoke a romance-inflected provenance for Othello that complicate any argument that his allusions to his travailous history have the effect of othering him in Venice.

The play’s evocation of the Turkish threat (and his eventual self-identification with that threat) notwithstanding, Othello also resembles the protagonists of many of the ‘Hellenistic’ romances discussed in Chapter 1, belonging not to any specific and settled locale, but characterised instead – like the island he is deployed to defend – by a very Mediterranean sense of between-ness and indeterminacy. Like another Islamic protagonist, Alatiel in Boccaccio’s ‘Alatiel’s Tale’, he has whirled around the Mediterranean world, travelling from

¹²⁴ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 566.

¹²⁵ Ariosto, p. 566.

¹²⁶ I do not detect any particularly Cypriot or Mediterranean aspects to the ‘[s]potted with strawberries’ (3.3.438) design. Lynda Boose expertly argues that the handkerchief’s strawberry motif recalls both the Virgin Mary and the spotting of the wedding sheets after the marriage has been consummated. See Lynda Boose, ‘Othello’s Handkerchief: “The Recognizance and Pledge of Love”’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 5.3 (1975), 360–374 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446828> > [accessed 30 September 2022].

Barbary, to Venice, via Aleppo, Cyprus and Rhodes.¹²⁷ His career resembles that of Martuccio, in 'Gostanza's Tale', crossing the Mediterranean (albeit in the opposite direction) to enter the military service of a confessional 'other'.¹²⁸ It is also possible to see Cinthio's Moor as a continuation of the same romance tradition. Examined within this literary context, the Moor of Venice, rather than a dangerous outsider or exotic interloper, is an individual whose personal identity in many ways embodies the complex history of the early modern Eastern Mediterranean – and nowhere more so than Cyprus.

Cyprus: Othello's Island

Like its chief protagonist, Cyprus in *Othello* is, upon close examination, surprisingly hard to pin down. The relative paucity of concrete details has led some critics to assume that Shakespeare was not interested in the island, or that it was not significant to the play's outcome. Others have seen its obvious historic resonances as the defining lens through which the play's narrative arc – and its Cypriot setting – should be understood. As Dimmock suggests, the play's opening scenes lead playgoers to expect some sort of confrontation with the Turks, along the lines of the encounters staged in *Soliman and Perseda* or *The Jew of Malta*—and while playgoers may have been surprised that no Turk ever actually appears on the stage, the play's multiple references to Turks and 'Ottomites' (1.3.34, 1.3.235, 2.3.167) nevertheless ensure that the events of 1571 haunt the play's margins. Knowledge of the island's eventual fate can be seen to elevate its tragic outcome, raising it above the domestic tragedy of marital mistrust pivoting on a handkerchief and putting it on a par with Shakespeare's other so-called mature tragedies.

What has been less recognised is the ways in which the play's mythological resonances structure the play's central tragedy action. The absence of explicit references to Venus, Vulcan and Mars in *Othello* means that any attempt to assign concrete meaning to their place in the play's scheme is doomed to failure. Nevertheless, the cultural pervasiveness of Venus's association with Cyprus make these mythological figures, and the narratives they play out,

¹²⁷ *Decameron*, p. 112.

¹²⁸ *Decameron*, p. 328.

coordinates around which *Othello* orbits. Their resonances work in concert with the play's sense of its own historicity, expanding the tragedy's psychological and emotional complexity beyond the stereotypes of the English 'Turk play'. The characters, as I have demonstrated, move in and out of the Venus, Mars and Vulcan roles, without ever quite settling into any of them. By failing to explicitly attach any of the play's main characters to a specific identity, Shakespeare prevents the mythological storyline dominating his representation of events on Cyprus. Instead, we see the masculine, military, defended space of Venetian Famagusta ghosted by a different mythical reality that is never *quite* allowed to break through, but whose narrative meanings structure our responses at an almost subterranean level.

When viewed from this perspective, perhaps the reason the play's precise location is never named is because such naming would privilege one set of meanings over the other. Specifying *Othello's* Cyprus setting as Famagusta would inevitably bring to the fore a particular set of associations – the 1570 Ottoman invasion – and suppress others. The refusal to name the Cypriot location keeps other possibilities in play: perhaps most notably the meanings of Paphos, the site associated with Venus and whose association with life and generation (a topic explored further in the following chapter) hints at a comic ending that fails to materialise in Shakespeare's play. Rather than attempting to pin *Othello* down to a particular meaning or set of resonances it is, perhaps, more productive to approach it as a work that is structured around a series of overlapping dualities – love/war; East/West; Cyprus/Venice; Paphos/Famagusta; Tragedy/Erotic myth; masculine/feminine; Christian/Turk – that are intensely geographically resonant. These competing ideas map onto the play in uncertain and (for its characters) unsettling ways, their influence all the more powerful and pervasive for never being explicitly named. At the play's end, it is still not quite clear where the action is set. Is *Othello* a 'Turk play' or a domestic tragedy? Does the action take place in Famagusta or Paphos? And who exactly is Othello? Where does he belong? The play poses these questions but never answers them.

My principal aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate that a reading of *Othello* that is as sensitive to its literary history as to geopolitics contemporary to the play's first performances can shift our understanding of the play and, more specifically, its tragic protagonist. Critics who approach Othello solely through the lens of his blackness or 'Turkish' characteristics have

overlooked the ways in which he is a distinctly Mediterranean figure: one whose complex (and contested) identity in many ways mirrors Cyprus's own complicated status in both the international order and the literary imagination. Rather than seeing Othello as embodying or anticipating the Turkish threat to the island, his complex personal history and identity resonates with the history of Cyprus itself. There are some critics who attend to this possibility. Virginia Mason Vaughan, for example, argues that 'Cyprus's geographical and political position mirror Othello's psychic situation'.¹²⁹ Roger Christofides concurs, suggesting that it is thus Othello's death, rather than Desdemona's, that is 'a dramatic metaphor for the loss of Cyprus to the Ottomans'.¹³⁰ Commenting that the island is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside Europe, he asserts that '[l]ike Othello, Cyprus too can be seen as the victim of its otherness: it remains an island caught between definitions of East and West, Orient and Occident, Islam and Christianity'.¹³¹ Rather than seeing either Othello or Cyprus as irremediably 'other', however, I would argue that they are both profoundly liminal – neither entirely alien nor fully belonging to the European, Christian world. And this liminal status derives from literary history as well as political history.

¹²⁹ Mason Vaughan, p. 22.

¹³⁰ R.M. Christofides, 'Othello, Cyprus and the Greater Middle East: Past Present, Future', *Shakespeare* 16.3 (2020), 225-238 (227).

¹³¹ Christofides, *Othello's Secret*, p. 8-9.

Chapter 5: John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*

The final Cyprus drama to be considered by this thesis is John Ford's tragicomedy *The Lover's Melancholy* (perf. 1628, publ. 1629). Unlike the three works discussed in preceding chapters, the play is set entirely on the island, apparently in or around Famagusta, and all the protagonists are Cypriot. Compared with Ford's better known dramas, the play has been the focus of relatively little critical attention; what little it has received has tended to examine its relationship with its best-known source, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and, to lesser extent, a number of Shakespeare's plays. In general, the play's Cypriot resonances have been of little interest to scholars; only Lisa Hopkins appears to have given the matter any serious consideration. This lack of critical interest may be (at least in part) because *The Lover's Melancholy* does not appear to have anything to say about the paradigms that have tended to preoccupy scholars interested in early modern Mediterranean drama. Whereas *A Devise of a Maske*, *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello* all show obvious signs of interest in some aspect of the island's strategic significance as a gateway between the Christian west and Islamic east, *The Lover's Melancholy* – at least on first reading – appears largely unconcerned with Eastern Mediterranean history or geopolitics. This is perhaps understandable. By the time Ford wrote the play, the traumatic events of 1571 had begun to pass out of living memory, and while a number of English travellers visited the island and wrote accounts of their experiences there, the fact that Cyprus no longer represented either a bulwark against Islamic aggression or a symbolic mercantile conduit between east and west meant that these aspects of its identity may have seemed less important than they had a few decades earlier. Nevertheless, this chapter aims to demonstrate that the play is in fact interested in the island's history, albeit in ways that are subordinated to its psychological resonances.

The majority of critics writing about the island have acknowledged the mythological resonances that led Ford to set *The Lover's Melancholy* on Cyprus, but none has until now subjected them to a sustained analysis. Acknowledging the centrality of Venus in the island's mythology, I explore how the goddess signifies in the play. Against this backdrop, its Famagusta setting is surprising; given what I demonstrate are the play's mythological

affiliations and thematic preoccupations, Paphos, the centre of the cult of Venus, would perhaps have been a more obvious and appropriate locale. Its mythological allusions notwithstanding, *The Lover's Melancholy* does show signs of some awareness of the island's later history. Over the course of this chapter, I will offer a reading of the play that brings its hitherto under-examined mythological resonances into dialogue with those other influences that previous scholars have identified as shaping its emotional energies, before asking how the island's later history might temper responses to its comic ending.

Before focusing on Ford's play, I want to comment on the prolonged gap between the last two 'Cyprus dramas' considered by this thesis. It is tempting to assume that the long period between the first performances of *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy* is indicative of declining English interest in the island in that period. However, if we take a more expansive view of what constitutes 'Cyprus drama', and look for works in which some aspect of the island's history or identity features, even fleetingly, the picture changes and evidence of continuing dramatic interest in it emerges. This interest is in some respects surprising. There seemed little prospect of the Venetians – or any other Christian Mediterranean power – recovering the island, and, following the Ottoman conquest, the island was increasingly strategically and economically irrelevant. Under Turkish control, Cyprus was neither Western Christendom's eastern boundary nor an important stopping point on the way to the Holy Land or the ports of the Levant. William Spates observes that, although they ventured into the Eastern Mediterranean in increasing numbers in the early seventeenth century, English ships rarely visited Cyprus.¹ However, these factors notwithstanding, Cyprus and Cypriot themes and motifs, in various guises, remained present in the English imaginary. Visions of Cyprus continued to circulate in a range of popular texts and in the public playhouses, with literary motifs increasingly developing their own momentum, in ways that did not require historical events or significant English contact with the island to endure, providing further evidence (if any were needed) of the complex and evolving interplay between the literary and the historical that interests this thesis.

Although there is no extant play that demonstrates what might be convincingly described as a significant engagement with the island, Cyprus and Cypriots continued to feature regularly

¹ See Spates, 'Power', p. 208.

in English dramas in the intervening period. John Mason's revenge tragedy *The Turk* (perf. 1607, publ. 1610), for example, includes what may be the only explicit reference to the Siege of Famagusta in the English public playhouse.² Eunuchus, the titular Turk's servant, describes his experiences as 'a free borne Christians sonne in Cyprus' when 'Famagusta by the Turke was sackt', and recounts how, '[i]n the deuision of which Citty spoyles, / [His] fortunes fell to *Mulleasses* lot'; not only was he parted from his family by the Turks, but they 'wrongd nature' and made him 'an Eunuch, / Disabled of those masculine functions' due to his sex. Although Mason's play does not comment on it, the castration of Eunuchus – a young boy born on an island strongly associated with love and desire – seems particularly poignant. The allusion to the Siege of Famagusta is, admittedly, tokenistic and fleeting, and seems intended to comment on the wickedness of *Mulleasses* (the Turk), rather than representing a concerted engagement with Cypriot history; the play is set entirely in Italy. Nevertheless, the reference in a play written nearly forty years after the event indicates the hold the Siege of Famagusta and the Ottoman conquest of the island continued to have on the English popular consciousness, even if the precise details of its horrors were becoming increasingly vague.

Martin Wiggins raises the tantalising possibility of a lost English Cyprus play, which he provisionally titles *A King of Cyprus and a Duke of Venice* (before 1608), that dramatised another pivotal moment in the island's history.³ The evidence is – as he readily admits – highly circumstantial, based on a single reference in a letter from Archduchess Maria Magdalena to her brother Ferdinand, dated 20 February 1608, referring to a play titled *von ein Chünig von Chipern und von ein herzog von venedig*. As it was performed at the Habsburg court in Graz around the same time as two other English plays in early 1608, Wiggins suggests that the play might originally have been an English production. English theatre companies toured regularly in the German speaking world in the early seventeenth century; we might recall here the *Comoedia von Fortunato*, the German adaptation of Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* referred to in Chapter 3. The allusion to a Cypriot king and Venetian duke implies that the play was set in

² John Mason, *Mulleasses the Turke*, (London, 1610). All references are taken from Act 2, Scene 2. The edition lacks line numbers; the references are all located on sig. C2^r.

³ Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson (eds), *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue* (Vol. 5) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), entry number 1466 [n.p] at *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* < <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/display/10.1093/actrade/9780198719236.book.1/actrade-9780198719236-div2-88?rskey=IOuk8Z&result=1> > [accessed 5 Sep 2021].

Lusignan-era Cyprus and the play (whatever its origins) may dramatise the Venetian annexation of the island. If so, it would provide a fascinating counterpoint to both *Old Fortunatus* and *Othello*. Such a play, if it existed, would also be compelling evidence of continuing English interest in the island and its history.

Other Jacobean plays featuring the island looked towards a less historic and more literary set of Cypriot tropes and motifs, several of which are also found in *The Lover's Melancholy*, when representing the island. George Chapman's comedy *The Widow's Tears* (perf. ?1605, publ. 1612) is nominally set in Paphos, the Cypriot location most closely associated with the cult of Venus. The play's imaginary geography seems intended to signal its thematic interests of love and fidelity, but there is no evidence that Chapman was particularly interested in Cyprus as a place; other than two brief references to the city, the play makes no effort to engage with its locale, and nor does it feature any other obviously Cypriot allusions, so I have not classified it as a 'Cyprus drama'. Gervase Markham and Lewis Machin's *The Dumb Knight* (1607) features a King of Cyprus laying siege to Sicily because he is in love with its queen; none of the action is set on Cyprus, and other than a few references to Venus and Cupid, the play features no concerted efforts to invoke the island. Nevertheless, the king's nationality – as well as that of his nobleman, Philocles, the dumb knight of the title – seems thematically significant.⁴ These plays anticipate the way the island and its inhabitants were increasingly asked to signify in Jacobean and Caroline drama.

Giorgio Melchiori observes that 'Cyprus, the birthplace of Venus, is a favourite title of romantic heroes in Elizabethan plays'.⁵ Melchiori's remark is made in a footnote to the *Dramatis Personae* of William Barksted and Lewis Machin's *The Insatiate Countess* (1613), a play which features a 'Count of Cyprus' as the titular Countess's love interest.⁶ Although, again, little is made in the play of its Cypriot connection, the insertion of a love interest from

⁴ Gervase Markham and Lewis Machin, *The dumbe knight A historicall comedy, acted sundry times by the children of his maiesties reuels*. (London, 1608). Wiggins sees an allusion to *Othello* in a plot in which the Queen is accused of adultery with Philocles. See Wiggins, entry number 1563.

⁵ John Marston and Others, *The Insatiate Countess*, ed. by Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester: The Revels Plays (Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 52. I am not quite sure why Melchiori refers here to Elizabethan plays, when he is commenting on a Jacobean play and when so many of these Cypriot characters actually featured in Jacobean plays.

⁶ The play's authorship has been the subject of some debate, which has rather overshadowed its dramatic qualities. Lucy Munro's summary of the authorship debate can be found at < <https://johnmarston.leeds.ac.uk/the-works/the-insatiate-countess/> > [accessed 4 January 2022].

the island in a play entirely set in Italy may gesture towards the play's expression of unruly female desire, a quality particularly associated with the island via its link with Venus. Cyprus's connection with Venus seems to have interested Ford; *The Lover's Melancholy* was not the first play in which he had acknowledged the association between Cyprus and love. An earlier play, *The Laws of Candy* (?1619-23), originally attributed to Beaumont and Fletcher, but now believed to have been written by Ford, features a Prince of Cyprus named Philander, who is in love with a Cretan princess named Erotia.⁷ Although none of these plays represent as sustained an engagement with the trope of Cyprus as the domain of love as that conducted in *The Lover's Melancholy*, they nevertheless point to the ways in which the island was increasingly being asked to signify in English drama.

History and Plot Summary

The Lover's Melancholy was written for the King's Men and licensed for performance in 1628, before being published by Henry Seile in 1629. The play was performed at both The Globe and the Blackfriars theatres, but seems to have soon fallen out of favour. There is some evidence that a (highly edited) version was planned just after the Restoration, but there is no record of any performance.⁸ The play was revived briefly (albeit with significant modifications) by Charles Macklin at Drury Lane in 1748.⁹ Macklin claimed to have found an old Caroline pamphlet in which Jonson was alleged to have accused Ford of stealing *The Lover's Melancholy* from some old papers belonging to Shakespeare; as we will see below, the play does appear to have been significantly influenced by a number of Shakespeare's plays. Macklin's claim seems to have been initially accepted, until Edward Malone, writing in 1790, pronounced the story a fabrication intended to drum up publicity for the play. *The*

⁷ Although originally attributed to Fletcher when first published in the first folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's work 1647, critics have failed to find any trace of Fletcher or his known collaborators in *The Laws of Candy*. William Wells and E.H.C. Oliphant claimed to identify elements of Ford's work in the play. See E.H.C. Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine Their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others* (New York, Phaeton Press, 1970), pp. 472-86 for details. Beyond the fact that it is indicative of the way that Ford may have been thinking about Cyprus, its authorship is not relevant here.

⁸ See Clifford Leech, 'A Projected Restoration Performance of Ford's "The Lover's Melancholy"', *The Modern Language Review*, 56.3 (1961), 378-381 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3720267> > [accessed on 23 September 2021].

⁹ See Robert R. Findlay, 'Macklin's 1748 Adaptation of Ford's "The Lover's Melancholy"', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre*, 8.1 (1969), 13-22 (20) < <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/macklins-1748-adaptation-fords-lovers-melancholy/docview/1294920902/se-2?accountid=9730> > [accessed 23 September 2021]. See Findlay, p. 20.

Lover's Melancholy has not, so far as I am aware, been fully performed since this 1748 production, though it was read at the Globe's Sam Wanamaker theatre by the Read Not Dead group (dir. James Wallace) in 2008 and translated into Greek, with selected scenes read on stage, by The Persona Theater Company in Nicosia in 2014 (trans. Vayos Liapis, dir. Avra Sidiropoulou). Compared with Ford's later solo-authored plays, *The Lover's Melancholy* is a rather subdued affair, lacking the drama and spectacular violence associated with more popular Ford plays like *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (perf. ?1630, publ. 1633) or *The Broken Heart* (perf. 1629, publ. 1633), both of which have enjoyed multiple modern revivals. This may explain why it has not (so far) been revived.

The Lover's Melancholy begins with the arrival in Famagusta of Menaphon, a young nobleman who has returned home to Cyprus after a period of self-imposed exile in Athens, where he fled after his suit had been rejected by the proud and haughty Cypriot princess Thamasta. Later references to Thessaly (1.1.102), Corinth (2.1.191) and Athens (2.1.191) indicate that the action is set at some unspecified time in classical antiquity, although this is never made absolutely explicit. Menaphon is accompanied by a fair Athenian youth, a 'jewel' (1.1.91) named Parthenophill, whom he met on his travels in Greece.¹⁰ Menaphon is greeted at the harbourside by his friend Amethus, who is also Thamasta's brother; Thamasta and her brother are cousins to Palador, the Prince and ruler of Cyprus. We later learn that Menaphon is cousin to Cleophila, Amethus's beloved, and her sister Eroclea, who was once betrothed to Palador but has since disappeared. There is something not *quite* incestuous about these interconnected relationships, but they are perhaps closer than is entirely comfortable: Ford's later and more famous play *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* developed more explicitly ideas left latent in *The Lover's Melancholy*.

Palador is melancholy and appears to have been for some time; Menaphon refers to the 'fame of our young melancholy prince' (1.1.182), suggesting his condition predates Menaphon's sojourn in Athens. His mental state has led him to neglect affairs of state, and Cyprus appears to be facing both internal and external threats. Sophronos, Menaphon's father (and Palador's chief councillor), reveals that the island's 'commons murmur and the nobles grieve' (2.1.4)

¹⁰ John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Other Plays*, ed. by Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 [repr. 2008]), pp. 1 – 80. All quotations from the play are from this edition.

and '[t]he court is now turned antic and grows wild' (2.1.5) while the prince sleeps 'in the dull lethargy of lost security' (2.1.3). Meanwhile, the island's neighbours 'stand at gaze, / And watch fit opportunity to wreak / Their just-conceived fury on such injuries' (2.1.6-8) committed by Agenor, the prince's late father. The source of Palador's melancholy appears to be unknown to the play's characters, although one of the courtiers, Rhetias, suspects (correctly, it transpires) that its origins lie in the disappearance of Eroclea, the prince's betrothed, several years previously. Rhetias reveals to the prince that his now-dead father had attempted to rape Eroclea. To protect her, her uncle Sophronos had her spirited away and she has not been heard from since. To cheer the melancholy prince, Rhetias describes to Palador another young woman who, finding herself in a similar predicament, 'stole from her home and was conveyed like a ship-boy in a merchant [vessel] [...] into Corinth first, and afterwards to Athens; where in much solitariness she lived like a youth almost two years' (2.1.189-92). Playgoers might begin to suspect at this point that Parthenophill – Menaphon's fair Athenian jewel – is in fact the vanished Eroclea, but Palador believes Eroclea to be lost forever. Following her disappearance, Palador's now-deceased father Agenor accused Eroclea's father Meleander of treason, stripping him of his land and position in the Cypriot court, and confining him to his castle. Ever since these events, her father Meleander has been 'distracted' (2.1.173), cared for by his other daughter, Cleophila.

Amethus is in love with Cleophila, but she, 'too grieved to think of love' (2.2.55), will not leave her father until he is well enough to give his consent to their marriage; the arrogant Thamasta, his sister, opposes the marriage on the grounds that Cleophila is beneath Amethus socially, suggesting that it is only his 'gracious sweetness to descend / So low' (1.3.31-2), inspired by the 'meekness of [his] pity' (1.3.32), although no such objection seems to have been raised to Eroclea's betrothal to the prince. Intriguingly, Thamasta describes Cleophila as Amethus's 'dear friend's' (1.3.33) – Menaphon's – sister; this may simply be a mistake (Menaphon is in fact Cleophila's cousin), but it is also highly suggestive of the complex inter-relatedness of the young Cypriots. Amethus and Menaphon visit Cleophila and Meleander, accompanied by Parthenophill, who is deeply moved by the old man's distress. Meanwhile, both the proud Thamasta and her waiting woman, Kala, have fallen in love with Parthenophill. Under pressure from Thamasta, Parthenophill is eventually forced to reveal that he is in fact 'of the

self-same sex – a maid, a virgin’ (3.2.162). To conceal her own humiliation, Thamasta swears her to secrecy and Eroclea is able to maintain her disguise for a little longer.

In a bid to diagnose the cause of Palador’s malaise, the physician Corax recruits other characters into performing a ‘Masque of Melancholy’ (3.3.11) for the prince, in which each character performs a different type of melancholy or mental disturbance. Although the masque features a range of different types of melancholy, Corax does not represent ‘Love-Melancholy’ (3.3.95) because, he says, ‘twas not in art / To personate the shadow of that fancy’ (3.3.93-4). There is, he seems to be suggesting, no need to have someone ‘perform’ love-melancholy when the prince himself is its living embodiment. Love, Corax claims, ‘is the tyrant of the heart; it darkens / Reason, confounds discretion; deaf to counsel, / It runs a headlong course to desperate madness’ (3.3.103-5). Palador angrily halts Corax’s explanation, commanding him to ‘[h]old!’ (3.3.107) and ‘[l]et no man henceforth name the word again’ (3.3.108), thus confirming Corax’s diagnosis. The vehemence of the prince’s response confirms what Rhetias discerned several scenes earlier: Palador is suffering from love-melancholy. Despite his distress, the prince seems intrigued by Parthenophill, who has been present throughout the scene, ordering him to ‘[w]ait you my pleasure’ (3.3.109). The revelation of Parthenophill’s true identity is, for reasons never fully explained, once again deferred.

To the prince’s consternation, Parthenophill disappears shortly after the masque scene. The youth reminds him, Palador muses, of ‘something I remember / A great while since, a long, long time ago’ (4.3.29-30) but he cannot yet quite recognise her. Rhetias tells him that, although the youth has disappeared, he has ‘apprehended a fair wench in an odd private lodging in the city, as like the youth in face as can by possibility be discerned’ (4.3.35-7). Eroclea, now dressed in women’s clothing, enters at this point and reveals herself to Palador, but the prince is curiously reluctant to recognise her. He appears to think that Parthenophill has, for some reason, disguised himself as a woman and is initially sceptical, denouncing her as a ‘[c]unning impostor!’ (4.3.79) and accusing her of ‘witchcraft’ (4.3.99). Eventually, though, he is convinced; the lovers are touchingly reunited and the prince’s melancholy cured. All that remains is to reveal Eroclea’s return to Meleander. Before that occurs, Thamasta – her humiliation after Parthenophill’s rejection having given her greater emotional

insight into the pain of others – finally accepts Menaphon's suit. Cleophila agrees to marry Amethus if her father can be made well enough to consent. Palador restores Meleander's titles and honours and, at that point, Eroclea is brought before her father. He is duly restored to sanity and the play ends with its '[s]orrows [...] changed to bride-songs' (5.2.253), as the three young couples depart 'to the temple' (5.2.250) where the 'solemn rites' (5.2.250) of marriage will be performed.

The Lover's Melancholy: Sources

As William Spates points out, while Cyprus in general and Famagusta in particular 'suffered the vicissitudes of fortune' in the late sixteenth century, they also 'paradoxically enjoyed a particularly rich literary afterlife'; Famagusta 'is paradoxically more apparent in English letters than other eastern Mediterranean cities that were more frequently visited by English merchants and sailors'.¹¹ By the early seventeenth century, he continues, '[English] writers were increasingly retreating into a historicized and fictionalized imaginary', producing visions of Cyprus that he describes as 'increasingly formulaic'.¹² I suspect what Spates calls 'formulaic' I would describe as 'intertextual'. When literary or dramatic geography depends almost wholly on intertextual allusion to older texts rather than new ideas injected by actual cultural contact, Spates appears to suggest, it can fall into a kind of stasis and even stagnation. While I would query Spates's slightly pejorative language here, he is in one sense correct – by the time Ford wrote *The Lover's Melancholy*, English literary accounts of the island centred increasingly on the tropes and motifs of romance and mythology, rather than contemporary political realities. However, rather than seeing this as evidence of cultural stagnation or stasis, I want to argue that English writers developed these established tropes and motifs in new ways, to reflect on contemporary (and local) concerns that often had little to do with the seventeenth-century Mediterranean, or England's relations with it.

There is no evidence of any single specific literary source for *The Lover's Melancholy*. The play draws on the mythological tropes and emotional investments associated with what Dorothy Farr calls 'pseudo-classical romances', works set in a classically-inflected Mediterranean world, usually populated by characters with pseudo-Greek names that reveal something

¹¹ Spates, 'Power', p. 208 and Spates, 'George Gascoigne's Device for a Maske', p. 27.

¹² Spates, 'Power', p. 208.

about their characters. These tales were often preoccupied with romantic love, constancy and friendship, and – like earlier forms of romance – they were both narratively and geographically digressive.¹³ Parents were separated from children, lovers parted, and kingdoms won and lost. In this context, Cyprus (where it features) is strongly associated with Venus and protagonists' romantic travails. Lady Mary Wroth's prose romance *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), for example, narrates multiple episodes on Cyprus.¹⁴ Wroth's work is far too long and complicated to summarise here, but her protagonists repeatedly either make their way to the island, or find themselves shipwrecked and then imprisoned on its shores. Its symbolic significance within the wider narrative is emphasised by the title page of the 1621 publication, which features an illustration of the throne of love, which is situated on the island, guarded by towers of desire, love and constancy. Drawing on its mythological affiliations, Wroth characterises Cyprus as 'the island of Love' and 'dedicated to Venus'.¹⁵ Although the work features detailed descriptions of Cyprus, there is no sense of Wroth engaging with it as a 'real' – even within the confines of the narrative – space.¹⁶ Wroth had her own particular literary agenda; like Philip Sidney, her uncle, she used poetry and fiction to write about her own emotional experiences, where landscapes and journeys were used to explore interior emotional terrain. While Ford was not engaged in that sort of personal project, the sense remains in *The Lover's Melancholy* that its setting tells us something important about the play's emotional and psychological preoccupations. The two works (and others like them) draw on a shared store of Renaissance neoclassical stories in which Cyprus increasingly came to represent an idealised, affective state rather than a precise geographical or ethnographical reality.

The main plot of *The Lover's Melancholy* appears to have been Ford's own invention, albeit one informed by a number of other plays. Dorothy Farr argues that *The Lover's Melancholy* was significantly indebted to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (perf. ?1610, publ. 1620). In that play, a page, Bellario, is used as a go-between by Philaster and Arethusa. Like Palador,

¹³ Dorothy M. Farr, *John Ford and the Caroline Theatre* (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), p. 7.

¹⁴ Lady Mary Wroth, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (Abridged)*, ed. by Mary Ellen Lamb (Tempe: ACMRS, 2011).

¹⁵ Wroth, p. 252, p. 253.

¹⁶ Traces of the investments earlier chivalric romance remain in Wroth's narrative. In an incident which appears to acknowledge the island's seventeenth-century status as an Ottoman territory, she describes how – in a moment of compensatory fantasy – the king of Cyprus 'out of love to the Christian faith, which before he contemned [...] desired to receive it [...] and so became the whole island Christians' (p. 87).

Philaster – who is the dispossessed heir to the King of Sicily, whose throne has been usurped by the unnamed King of Naples (Arethusa's father) – has had to 'bear the burden of a wrong done in the past'.¹⁷ Unknown to the lovers, Bellario is actually a young woman, Euphrasia, who is in love with Philaster and has disguised herself to remain close to him. A rejected suitor later starts rumours, believed by Philaster, that Bellario and Arethusa are lovers. Their innocence is eventually proven when Bellario's true identity is revealed. While Farr overstates the similarities between the two plays – at one point claiming that *Philaster* 'provides the framework of [Ford's] main plot' – and downplays the differences, the resonances between the two do suggest some sort of relationship.¹⁸

Ford's indebtedness to a number of Shakespeare's plays is also apparent. Most obviously, the confusion caused by Eroclea's cross-dressing echoes *Twelfth Night*, with Thamasta resembling Olivia in her unwitting attraction to a beautiful young man who is actually a woman in disguise.¹⁹ In fact, Ford seems to have had *Twelfth Night* particularly in mind when writing *The Lover's Melancholy*; there are a number of other moments that seem to explicitly recall Shakespeare's comedy. Ford's play features a comic subplot featuring Cuculus, a foolish courtier whose obliviousness to the fact that his female attendant Grilla is actually a boy dressed up as a girl seems to comment parodically on Thamasta's mistake. To highlight the connection between the two plays, Grilla at one point describes Cuculus as 'rare an old youth as ever walked cross-gartered' (3.1.2). There are further similarities between the two works. Menaphon's anger at Parthenophill's supposed betrayal resembles Orsino's discovery of Olivia's marriage to 'Cesario'. Menaphon accuses Parthenophill of treachery, warning him to 'keep under wing / Or – boy – boy –' (3.2.205-6), in tones charged with the threat of violence which have echoes of Orsino's angry 'Come, boy, with me' (*TN*, 5.1.125), spoken when Olivia's love for 'Cesario' is revealed. The echoes between the two plays may tell us something about what Cyprus represents in *The Lover's Melancholy*. Like Illyria in *Twelfth Night* – another location that by the early seventeenth century was also under Turkish control – the play perhaps imagines the island as a sort of festive world, where past wrongs can be righted and (nearly) everyone is eventually united with an appropriate partner.

¹⁷ Farr, p. 17.

¹⁸ Farr, p. 16.

¹⁹ See Farr, pp. 16-21 for an extended discussion of the two plays' relationship.

However, Ford's other Shakespearean borrowings complicate any reading of Cyprus in *The Lover's Melancholy* as a space of fantasy and comic resolution. There are several elements in *The Lover's Melancholy* that appear to allude to *King Lear* (1606). Farr argues persuasively that Shakespeare's tragedy is 'deliberately recalled in [Meleander's] tragic subplot'.²⁰ Eroclea's greeting to her father '[kneeling] Dear sir, you know me' (5.2.108) appears to remember Cordelia's reunion with her father in Shakespeare's play, when she gently asks 'Sir, do you know me?' (*KL*, 4.6.41). While there is a rather happier outcome for both father and daughter in Ford's tragicomedy, the parallel is clear. Meleander's rather strange appeal to 'ye guarding ministers' (5.2.87) to keep him awake until 'the cliffs / That overhang [his] sight fall off, and leave / These hollow spaces to be crammed with dust' (5.2.88-90), with its somewhat complicated allusion to sight, cliffs, and death, may also bring to mind Gloucester's cliff top scene. Its comic closure notwithstanding, *The Lover's Melancholy*, appears to be haunted by an underlying awareness of potential tragic outcomes – including, I will argue later in this chapter, Cyprus's own tragic history.

Although Meleander's madness, in general, seems to recall *King Lear*, there is a scene in which Ford may be thinking of another play set in Famagusta. Meleander's railing against the excesses of 'desperate fools' (2.2.82) who 'roll about the world' (2.2.84) in 'gay clothes' (2.2.84) paints a picture of a society concerned with conspicuous display and consumption. Famagusta's streets throng with 'carmen, footposts, and fine apes / In silken coats' (2.2.109-10).²¹ Meleander's complaints here evoke a society not dissimilar to that described by Andelocia in the second scene of *Old Fortunatus*. In Famagusta, Andelocia complains, a poor man might encounter a man 'lapped all in damask' (*OF*, 2.90) and wearing 'on his thumb, three men's livings' (*OF*, 2.94). Famagusta's gallants 'have a rich outside and a beggarly inside, [...] wear gay trappings and good velvet foot-cloths on their backs' (*OF*, 2.162-4). After receiving Fortune's purse, Fortunatus urges his sons to 'be gallant / Shine in the streets of Cyprus' (*OF*, 2.205-6) and '[b]rave it in Famagusta' (*OF*, 2.209). Meleander's Famagusta seems remarkably similar to that imagined in Dekker's play. Indeed, Meleander's bitter rant about Famagusta's 'desperate fools' (2.2.82) seems to condemn exactly the sort of conspicuous consumption and excess moralised in *Old Fortunatus*. Ford's familiarity with *Old Fortunatus*

²⁰ Farr, p. 16.

²¹ Carmen: carters. Footpost: deliverers of messages. All part of life in a busy, mercantile city.

would not be surprising. The two dramatists are known to have collaborated on a number of dramas, most notably (alongside William Rowley), *The Witch of Edmonton* (perf. 1621, publ. 1658). The pair also worked together on a masque, *The Sun's Darling* and a trio of lost plays, including *The Bristow Merchant* and *The Fairy Queen* (both 1624). Ford may also have contributed to Dekker's *The Welsh Ambassador* (ca. 1623). This allusion – if indeed Ford did have *Old Fortunatus* in mind here – also suggests that he was thinking about his play's Cypriot setting in ways that looked beyond the mythological, maintaining a sense of the island's commercial reputation.

Perhaps surprisingly, given their shared Cypriot setting, Ford's play does not – at least on first reading – obviously engage with *Othello*. Hopkins claims that while '[a]ll of Ford's plays revisit and rewrite *Othello*', *The Lover's Melancholy* 'is much less obviously engaged with Shakespeare's tragedy' than his later plays.²² Only one scene seems explicitly to recall Shakespeare's Cyprus-based tragedy. In an incident that recalls Iago's positioning of Othello where he can witness what he believes is Cassio's discussion of his relationship with Desdemona, Thamasta's waiting woman Kala (who, like her mistress, is attracted to the beautiful Athenian youth) directs Menaphon where he can watch Thamasta courting Parthenophill, telling him to

Walk up these stairs, and take this key: it opens
A chamber door where, at that window yonder
You may see their courtship. (3.2.45-7)

Menaphon's thanks to '[h]onest, most honest Kala' (3.2.40) for her care appears to be a deliberate echo of the frequent references to 'honest Iago' in Shakespeare's play, although Kala lacks Iago's malevolence and the action is mischievous rather than part of a concerted plot to destroy her mistress. Nor are the contours of the Menaphon-Thamasta-Parthenophill triangle in Ford's play a particularly close match for the parallel scene in Shakespeare's play in which Othello is persuaded by Iago that he is overhearing Cassio confess to his adultery with Desdemona. As noted previously, the emotional resonances in Ford's scene map more closely on to *Twelfth Night* than *Othello*. Only the allusion to 'honest Kala' (3.2.40) indicates that Ford may have been thinking about *Othello* here, and while, as previously noted, there

²² Hopkins, 'Love and War', 57.

is little to link Kala's petty mischief with Iago's apparently boundless malignity, the incident perhaps suggests that Ford interpreted Iago's malice as the actions of a disgruntled or jealous servant, with Kala's frank revelation of her motivation – to 'mar [Thamasta's] market' (3.2.19) with Parthenophill – contrasting with (and perhaps commenting on) the opacity of Iago's motivation. Nevertheless, the scene may draw attention to wider resonances between the two dramas.

The two plays' most obvious connection is their shared setting, Famagusta. As noted in the preceding chapter, it seems curious that the earlier play, so apparently preoccupied with the Turkish threat, should fail to name the location of its Cypriot scenes as the city most powerfully associated with the Ottoman invasion. Nevertheless, as I argued in Chapter 4, playgoers aware of the island's history would almost have certainly assumed that the action on Cyprus would have taken place in Famagusta. In contrast, it seems perverse that Ford set a play so obviously preoccupied with affairs of the heart in Famagusta rather than Paphos, the Cypriot location most strongly associated with Venus. The limited resemblance between *Othello* and *The Lover's Melancholy* notwithstanding, Hopkins argues that their shared Famagustan setting means that Ford's play 'comment[s]' on *Othello*, and 'activates a strong set of associations'.²³ I will return to the relationship between the two plays, and what Ford's play might be saying about *Othello*, later in the chapter.

The influence of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* – particularly with respect to the 'Masque of Melancholy' (3.3.11) performed in Act 3 Scene 3 – on *The Lover's Melancholy* has long been recognised. Ford himself highlights the relationship between the two texts in a marginal comment 'Vid. Democrit. Junior' to line 3.2.105 in the 1629 quarto edition, the allusion referring to Burton's adoption of the authorial persona 'Democritus Junior' in his address to the reader; very unusually, Ford oversaw the printing of his works, so we can assume this marginal note to be his.²⁴ Some critics have speculated that the character of Corax the physician and scholar is inspired by Burton himself.²⁵ The annotated line is part of

²³ Hopkins, 'Love and War', 57.

²⁴ See John Ford, *The Lovers Melancholy*, (London, 1629), sig. F4^v. The prefatory material attached to those plays published in the dramatist's lifetime indicate that Ford himself was behind their publication.

²⁵ R.F. Hill, 'Introduction' to *The Revels Plays The Lover's Melancholy*, ed. by R.F. Hill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 1-42 (pp. 7-8).

a passage in which Corax the physician describes melancholy 'not as you conceive, indisposition / Of body, but the mind's disease' (3.1.100), the result of

... commotion of the mind, o'ercharged
With fear and sorrow; first begot i'th' brain
The seat of reason, and from thence derived
As suddenly into the heart, the seat
Of our affection. (3.1.100-10)

Melancholy, Corax seems to suggest here, is a mental or emotional state rather than a physical ailment. Critics have disputed the extent to which *The Anatomy of Melancholy* shapes the play's narrative (discussed in a later paragraph), but the various forms of melancholy performed in Corax's Masque of Melancholy at least appear to have been drawn from Burton's work. They are – in the order they appear in the play – lycanthropia, hydrophobia, delirium, phrenitis, hypochondrial, and 'the Wanton Melancholy' (3.3.86), which appears to be Ford's interpretation of what Burton calls 'St Vitus' dance; the lascivious dance', performed by 'great-bellied women'.²⁶ (Although the play makes no such connection explicit, the 'Wanton Melancholy' may also have reminded playgoers of Cypriot women's lascivious reputation, discussed in previous chapters). Several of the examples of melancholy performed in the masque seem to contradict Corax's earlier claim that the condition is a psychological or affective disorder, but there can be no doubt that Ford had the book to hand when writing his play.²⁷

²⁶ Burton, p. 147. Lycanthropia is described p. 145-6; hydrophobia p. 146-7; delirium, p. 14; phrenitis, p. 144; hypochondrial, p. 401. The matches are not always exact, but are close enough to suggest that Ford used Burton as a guide.

²⁷ Ford may also have referred to *The Anatomy of Melancholy* when writing Meleander's part. G.F. Sensabaugh argues that the old man is a text-book representation of what he calls 'sorrow-melancholy', triggered by the loss of power and fortune (see Sensabaugh, 559-61). Meleander seems to have been sent into a state of internal exile by Agenor, following Eroclea's disappearance. Rhetias recounts how Meleander was 'accused of treason, his land seized [...] and confined to the castle where he yet lives' (2.1.172-4). Quoting from Saint (John) Chrysostom's *Epistles to Olympias*, Burton describes sorrow-melancholy as 'a cruel torture of the soul, a most inexplicable grief, poisoned worm, consuming body and soul, and gnawing the very heart, a perpetual executioner, continual night, profound darkness, a whirlwind, a tempest, an ague not appearing, heating worse than any fire, & a battle that hath no end. It crucifies worse than any Tyrant; no torture, no strappado, no bodily punishment is like unto it' (qtd in Burton, p. 256. Saint John Chrysostom was a Greek church father). This sort of melancholy makes the sufferer 'hollow-eyed, pale and lean, furrow faced, to have dead looks, wrinkled brows, rivelled cheeks, dry bodies' (Burton, p. 256). Melancholy makes the sufferer 'weary of their lives, cry out, howl and roar for the very anguish of their souls', behaviours all exhibited at various times by Meleander (Burton, p. 257). According to his servant, Trollio, he 'thunders; every word that comes out of his moth roars like a cannon' (4.2.31-2).

As noted in my plot summary, there is no need to have ‘love melancholy’ performed for the prince, because he himself is its living embodiment. Here again Ford appears to be drawing on Burton, who characterises love itself as ‘a species of melancholy’.²⁸ It is a condition that it seems particularly apt the young Cypriot nobles, who are after all inhabitants of Venus’s island, might suffer from. Love melancholy, Burton claims, most commonly afflicts ‘Gallants [and] Noblemen’.²⁹ After exploring an almost interminable list of ‘cures’ for this ailment, Burton eventually concludes that the ‘last and best cure’ for love-melancholy ‘is to let [the lovers] have their desire’.³⁰ This is the end towards which the play works: Palador’s melancholy is only ‘cured’ when he is reunited with Eroclea. Only once that has taken place do the other relationships begin to fall into place and is Cyprus – the literary and mythological domain of romantic love and desire – restored to political and emotional harmony.

However, Burton’s exploration of ‘love-melancholy’ – and, indeed, other forms of melancholy – is discursive and eclectic, rather than conclusive, and we should be wary of reading *The Lover’s Melancholy* as a neat dramatic working out of a coherent Burtonian philosophy. As Michael Neill comments, while ‘Burtonian psychology has provided the basis for a number of rather doctrinaire interpretations of *The Lovers Melancholy*’, such responses tend to ‘treat Burton as a much more consistent theorist than he ever troubled to be’.³¹ G.F. Sensabaugh, for example, argues for ‘the completeness with which Ford followed Burton’, claiming that ‘no other playwright leaned more heavily upon [Burton’s] psychology’, but the material he cites to support this argument is – at best – an inexact fit.³² It is hard to see quite how, as Sensabaugh argues, the play is primarily concerned with Burton’s definition of a tyrannical or ‘heroical love’ that is ‘immoderate, inordinate, and not be comprehended in any bounds’, refusing to be contained ‘within the union of marriage’, in turn ‘begetting rapes, incests [and] murders’.³³ Although Sensabaugh does not make any such connection, Burton’s excessive, ‘heroical’ emotions more closely resemble the sorts of passions that appear to have driven Agenor, Palador’s father, when he conceived his illicit desire for his son’s betrothed. With the

²⁸ Burton, p. 670.

²⁹ Burton, p. 703.

³⁰ Burton, p. 896.

³¹ Michael Neill, ‘The Moral Artifice of “The Lovers Melancholy”’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 8.1 (1978), 85-106 (85, 86) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446919> > [accessed 23 September 2021].

³² G.F. Sensabaugh, ‘Burton’s Influence on Ford’s “The Lover’s Melancholy”’, *Studies in Philology*, 33.4 (October 1936), 545 – 571 (549) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172338> > [accessed 26 August 2021].

³³ Burton, p. 718.

exception of Thamasta's sudden passion for Parthenophil, there is little evidence of its influence on the (rather tepid) passions of the younger members of Cyprus's court. Such immoderate passions are far more in evidence in Ford's later plays, *Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *The Broken Heart*.

Although not directly related to the play's interest in love, there is an intriguing element to Corax's masque of melancholy that suggests that Ford may have been recalling another Cyprus drama when writing the scene. The role of 'Hydrophobia', the second category of melancholy represented in Corax's masque, is performed by Pelias, a foolish courtier. He rants about having been an emperor 'till the mad dog bit me' (3.3.29) – an allusion presumably to rabies – and claims that his wife 'cuckolds [him]' (3.3.33). She is, he raves, 'a whore, a whore, a whore, a whore' (3.3.33). Following Pelias's performance, Corax claims that when 'mixed with jealousy' (3.3.36), hydrophobia is 'incurable' (3.3.37). The other symptoms match Burton's description of the condition, but *The Anatomy of Melancholy* does not list sexual jealousy or delusions about being cuckolded among them; these appear to be Ford's inventions. Shakespeare clearly did not have 'hydrophobia' in mind when writing his Cyprus play, but these invented symptoms are curiously similar to Othello's behaviour and may have inspired Ford's additions. In his description of the symptoms of hydrophobia, Burton notes that sufferers 'fall into a swoon, and oftentimes fits of the falling sickness', symptoms that recall Othello's swoon, which Iago attributes to 'an epilepsy' (4.1.50).³⁴ Once again, *The Lover's Melancholy* is – fleetingly – ghosted by *Othello*.

Ford's intervention here perhaps invites us to think a little differently about *Othello*. It seems significant that, by (perhaps) attributing Othello's murderous jealousy to 'Hydrophobia' – although Shakespeare's play makes no such allusion – Ford seems to downplay Othello's race as a causal factor in the play's tragedy, likening instead his deranged jealousy to the bite of a 'mad dog' (*TLM*, 3.3.29). Othello behaves as he does, the allusion seems to suggest, not because he is stereotypically Moorish or Turkish but because he is suffering from a form of mental illness. Notwithstanding what I have argued in Chapter 4 are the geopolitical consequences of Othello's mental state, *The Lover's Melancholy* implies that we should see

³⁴ Burton, p. 147.

Othello as an intensely personal rather than a political tragedy, albeit one with significant wider consequences.

Venus's Island

As discussed in earlier chapters, the island was strongly associated with Venus, the classical goddess of love and beauty. It is perhaps surprising, then, that *The Lover's Melancholy* features so few overt references to her, leading R.F. Hill, editor of the 1985 Revels edition of the play, to claim (erroneously, I will demonstrate) that 'Ford makes nothing specific' of Venus's association with Cyprus.³⁵ She is named explicitly only once in the play, when Kala appeals briefly to '[s]weet Venus' (3.2.60), and even here she is invoked only in the hope that she will *prevent* Thamasta from seducing Parthenophill. There are, however, a number of allusions that nevertheless remind playgoers that the action takes place on Venus's island. Trying to deflect Thamasta's fervent declarations of love, Eroclea observes that

Cupid has broke
His arrows here and, like a child unarmed,
Comes to make sport between us with no weapon
But feathers stolen from his mother's doves. (3.2.156-9)

Once again the allusion is focused on the negation or denial of love; Cupid has come unarmed, and no romantic entanglement will ensue – in this case because the object of Thamasta's desire is actually another woman. Hopkins also suggests that 'Meleander implicitly recalls Venus's doves when he says of Eroclea "turtles in their down do feed more gall / Than her spleen mixed with" [2.2.34-5]'.³⁶ Cyprus's identification with Venus was, as I argued in Chapter 4, sufficiently well-known for playgoers to be able to make the connection for themselves. In fact, Venus – or what she represents – is central to the play's concerns.

Ironically, for inhabitants of an island supposedly dedicated to the classical goddess of love, the play's leading protagonists appear to find it extraordinarily difficult to embrace the amatory opportunities available to them. As young Cypriots, the audience might have expected them to be adept in matters of love and courtship. While the Cypriot protagonist of another play, Andelocia in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*, claimed that 'tis the fashion of us

³⁵ Hill, p. 4.

³⁶ Hopkins, 'Love and War', 56-7.

Cypriots, both men and women, to yield at first assault' (*OF*, 6.285-6), Ford's young Cypriot nobles are all curiously unwilling to commit to love. Eroclea narrowly escaped rape on the island and was forced to flee and live in disguise as a boy because of Agenor's illicit sexual desire for her. Palador is melancholy because he believes Eroclea, the woman he loves, is lost forever. Menaphon left Cyprus and went into 'voluntary exile' (1.3.15) after Thamasta rejected his suit, but remains hopelessly enamoured of the haughty Cypriot princess. She in turn has refused to confer her affections on either Menaphon or any other 'worthy choice' (1.1.60), but falls in love instead with Parthenophill, who is wholly incapable of fulfilling her desire. Amethus and Cleophila *are* in love, but they are kept apart because Cleophila 'more pities / Her father's poor afflictions than the tide / Of [Amethus'] complaints' (1.1.56-8). Even Kala, Thamasta's waiting woman, cannot apparently rid herself of her unwanted virginity, complaining that '[her] maidenhead will shortly grow so stale / That twill be mouldy' (3.2.18-9). Contrary to claims that Cyprus was a place where '[t]he people [are] lustfull (for Dame Venus meete)' and 'generally do give themselves to pleasures, sports and voluptuousnesse', as other commentators claimed, no one in Ford's play appears to be obtaining any of the emotional or sensual satisfactions that its setting promises.³⁷

Neill sees *The Lover's Melancholy* dramatic geography as largely allegorical, observing that 'the play is entirely set in Cyprus, the principal center of the classical cult of Aphrodite [because it is] the natural domain of Love'.³⁸ Arguing that its pseudo-Greek character names act as 'moral tags', he claims that 'if the action is examined with these type-names in mind, a significant allegorical framework emerges'.³⁹ The *Dramatis Personae* in the quarto of *The Broken Heart* (also published in 1629) is entitled 'the persons of the play, names fitted to their qualities' and each name annotated with its meaning. Although no such claim is added to the *Dramatis Personae* in the 1629 quarto edition of *The Lover's Melancholy*, Ford seems to have employed a similar device in the play. Neill interprets Palador as meaning 'wise', Eroclea as 'famed love', Parthenophill as 'lover of chastity', Meleander as 'harmonious man', Agenor as 'haughty', and so on.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ortelius, p. 90, Harington, 'Of Cyprus', l. 5.

³⁸ Neill, 89.

³⁹ Neill, 89.

⁴⁰ Neill translates other names as follows: Amethus, 'Sober'; Sophronos, 'Reasonable, Moderate, Discreet'; Aretus, 'Noble'; Menaphon, 'Courage, Vigor, Desire'; Corax, 'Raven'; Rhetias, 'Eloquence'; Cuculus, 'Cuckoo'.

According to Neill's allegorical reading, 'Ford's Cyprus should stand for a reconciliation of Love and Wisdom', with Love represented by Eroclea and Wisdom by Palador.⁴¹ Eroclea's flight from Cyprus, he continues, represents 'Love overcome by Pride of Power', and 'Love itself is protected by Divine Wisdom as Eroclea remains concealed in Athens; but her exile is a disruption of the ideal order which has disastrous consequences'.⁴² The balance between pleasure and virtue, Neill argues, has been upset by the attempted rape that has driven Love (Eroclea) away from her natural habitation, Cyprus. As the action unfolds, Harmony (Meleander) is restored by the reunion of Love (Eroclea) and Wisdom (Palador). According to Neill, Athens – the city of Pallas Athene, the classical goddess of wisdom – '[i]n the consciousness of the play' is 'an almost equally important location [as Cyprus]'.⁴³ The 'apparent opposition of Athens and Cyprus, Wisdom and Love', he argues, 'is bridged in good Neo-Platonic fashion, by the fact that Cyprus is ruled by a prince whose name associates him with Palladian wisdom'.⁴⁴

Neill appears to be working rather hard to fit the play to his proposed allegorical framework here, and some of these assertions are questionable. There is little obvious textual evidence that Athens is quite so important as he claims, although the decision to send Eroclea there was indeed wise. And while Agenor may indeed have been 'haughty', his chief characteristic so far as the plot is concerned is his illicit desire for Eroclea. Allegorically speaking, it is more plausible to argue that Agenor symbolises Lust – a far more appropriately Cypriot sin – rather than haughtiness or 'Pride of Power', as Neill claims. It is also difficult to reconcile Palador's prolonged neglect of affairs of state with the idea that he is the allegorical representation of wisdom. The play itself explicitly identifies Sophronos, Palador's minister and the orchestrator of Eroclea's escape and disguise, as the embodiment of wisdom. Eroclea attributes her preservation to 'the wisdom of my uncle / The good Sophronos' (4.3.147-8). Burton, citing

(Foolish)'; Grilla, 'Grasshopper (Cheerful)'; Thamasta, 'Glorious'; Cleophila, 'Lover of Honor'; Kala, 'Fair, Noble, Honest' (ironic). Neill, 89. Not all of the character names were Ford's own invention. Parthenophil features in Barnabe Barnes's Sidneyan sonnet sequence *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593). The name was also used by Thomas Dekker in *The Whore of Babylon* (1607) which, given Ford's history of collaboration with him, may even be a more likely immediate source for the name.

⁴¹ Neill, 89.

⁴² Neill, 89-90. See Neill, 89-91 for Neill's exposition on what he argues is the play's allegorical and moral framework.

⁴³ Neill, 89.

⁴⁴ Neill, 89.

Ovid's 'Pallidus omnis amans, color hic est aptus amanti [all in love are pale: it is the right colour for the lover]' claims that 'paleness' is a symptom of love melancholy.⁴⁵ 'Palador' may be intended, at least in part, to suggest the prince's melancholy pallor, with the second and third syllables – 'adore' – perhaps highlighting the cause of his paleness; Palador is a pale (because melancholy) lover. Similarly, the first syllable of 'Meleander' may gesture towards that character's mental state, with his name more plausibly perhaps suggesting 'melancholy man'; this would be consistent with Ford's naming his Cypriot prince in *The Laws of Candy* 'Philander', meaning 'loving man'. Eroclea's father is, for much of the play, the embodiment of Burtonian melancholy rather than harmony. It would be more accurate – and suggestive – to interpret the play as an allegory of Love's return restoring Wisdom and Harmony to Cyprus.

As the allegorical embodiment of Love, the play's Cypriot setting also strongly invites Eroclea's affiliation with Venus. Her arrival with Menaphon, disguised as 'Parthenophill', over 'the frothy foams of Neptune's surging waves' (1.1.9) recalls the goddess coming ashore at Cyprus after her birth from the Eastern Mediterranean sea foam; at this moment she perhaps also recalls Desdemona, although in Shakespeare's play the association was to have rather more tragic consequences. In *The Lover's Melancholy* however, Eroclea's return is the means by which each of the play's various problems are unravelled. Palador's melancholy is alleviated and Meleander is returned to his senses. Following Meleander's restoration, Cleophila and Amethus are able to wed. Thamasta's arrogance and pride is punctured by her mistaken passion for Parthenophill, after which she comes to realise Menaphon's worth. For each of these characters, Eroclea acts as the bringer of peace and harmony in ways that implicitly identify her with Venus in her Genetrix aspect.

In Lucretius's 'Address to Venus', the goddess is proclaimed as the divine agent through whose 'prolifique might' (l. 5) all life is generated. According to Lucretius, 'all Nature is thy gift: Earth, Air and Sea: / Of All that breathes, the various progeny, / Stung with delight, is goaded on by thee'.⁴⁶ (ll. 20-2). Nothing new can spring, he claims, 'without [her] warmth' (l. 30). References to Cypriot fecundity and fertility abound in English accounts of the island in the early seventeenth century, in ways that seem to resonate with its association with Venus.

⁴⁵ Burton, p. 797. Angus Gowland, the editor of the 2021 Penguin Edition, has helpfully provided translations of Burton's numerous Latin and Greek quotations.

⁴⁶ Qtd from Dryden's translation of Lucretius.

Fynes Moryson declares that '[t]his iland yeeldeth to no place in fruitfulness or pleasure'; it is, he continues 'most fertile'.⁴⁷ George Sandys explicitly links Cypriot fecundity and fruitfulness with the goddess. Writing about the island's fertility, he quotes a passage from the Homeric hymns:

I sing of Venus crownd with gold, renownd
For Faire: that Cyprus guards, by Neptune bound.
Her in soft fume mild-breathing Zephyre bore
On murmuring waves unto that fruitfull shore.⁴⁸

It is, he continues, 'the land that floweth with milk and honey'.⁴⁹ The idea of Cyprus as a particularly lush and fertile space, then, was well-established in English literary imagination. Writing about early modern English travellers' descriptions of the island, José Ruiz Mas notes that such accounts often emphasised the island's fertility, representing it as almost 'Eden-like'.⁵⁰ Yet there is little obviously Edenic about Ford's Cyprus. Such delights are carefully controlled in *The Lover's Melancholy*; while Amethus commends the gardens around the Cypriot court to Parthenophill as 'a curious [and] pleasantly contrived delight' (1.3.50-1), there is something controlled and almost sterile about the gardens described here indicative of the ways in which the island's fecundity is held in abeyance, pending Eroclea's return.⁵¹

The multiple marriages set to take place at the end of *The Lover's Melancholy* signal the triumph of forces symbolised by Venus Genetrix. Eroclea's return facilitates not only her own reunion with Palador, but also the union of two further young couples. The excess – the making of not one but three new partnerships – seems to promise a future bounty typical of the goddess in her Genetrix aspect. Writing about Shakespeare's Elizabethan comedies,

⁴⁷ *Excerpta Cyprica*, p. 185, p. 186.

⁴⁸ Qtd by George Sandys in *Excerpta Cyprica*, p. 205. Sandys was a notable poet and translator in his own right, publishing a translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* between 1621 and 1626. The influence of classical literature clearly influences his response to the island here. According to C.D. Cobham, there is some doubt that he ever visited Cyprus.

⁴⁹ *Excerpta Cyprica*, p. 205.

⁵⁰ José Ruiz Mas, 'English Travelers in early modern Cyprus: Piety, commerce and anti-Ottoman sentiment', *Sederi*, 31 (2021), 93-115 (111) < <http://www.sederi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/S31.5.Ruiz-Mas-OA-.pdf> > [accessed 6 December 2021].

⁵¹ Although I cannot find anything specific in the play to connect it with the tale, the idea of the island's fertility – represented in the relationships between the young nobles – being held in abeyance in Eroclea's absence might also resonate with the myth of Proserpina on some level, particularly at 4.23.74-79, where Eroclea, dressed as a woman for the first time, describes how she has 'wintered with the tempers of affliction'. Tonally the scene is slightly reminiscent of the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*.

Hopkins argues that marriage at the end of comedies ‘holds out the promise of renewed life in the birth of offspring’.⁵² It is this principle towards which early modern comedies and tragicomedies (including *The Lover’s Melancholy*), with their multiple marriages, often seem to work. In fact, such ideas are visible in the wider culture within which these dramatic genres sit. In the words of *The Book of Common Prayer* marriage ceremony, one of ‘the causes for the which matrimonye was ordeined’ was ‘the procreation of children’.⁵³ After the ceremony is completed, the minister leads a prayer in which the blessing of the ‘mercifull Lorde, and heavenly Father’ is petitioned so that ‘these two persones [...] may bothe be fruitfull in the procreation of children’ and that they might live to see ‘their childers children’.⁵⁴ Palador’s expressed hope that, restored to sanity, Meleander will ‘live to number / A happy generation’ (5.2.212-3) seems to articulate a similar sentiment. Cyprus’s bountiful future, at the play’s end, seems assured.

It is not just personal relationships that are harmonised and recuperated by Eroclea’s return; the sickness of the commonwealth (2.1.1) is healed, and Cyprus is renewed and ‘new-settled’ (4.3.143), as its prince’s melancholy is relieved. As discussed in the previous chapter, Venus’s role as the bringer of peace was often symbolised by her amorous disarmament of Mars, the god of War. The relationship between the two deities, however, signified on multiple levels in the early modern imagination. Depending on the context, the relationship could be framed variously as adulterous, emasculating or harmonising. It is notable that there is no obvious Mars figure within *The Lover’s Melancholy*’s mythologically-based allegory. None of the leading male protagonists is obviously martial; Palador, Amethus and Menaphon are lovers not fighters, although – given the threats both internal and external listed by Sophronos at the beginning of Act 2 – Cyprus appears in need of a strong leader at its helm. Rather than representing Mars in a single, allegorical figure, the chaos and threatened violence that Eroclea’s ameliorative presence overcomes is dispersed onto a more generalised sense of strife and disorder. Distressed by Eroclea’s disappearance, Palador is unable to attend to urgent matters of state, imperilling the whole island. Sophronos tells Aretus the ‘commonwealth is sick’ (2.1.1) while Palador ‘sleeps / In the dull lethargy of lost security’

⁵² Lisa Hopkins, ‘Marriage as Comic Closure’ in *Shakespeare’s Comedies*, ed. by Emma Smith (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2004), pp. 36-54 (p. 37).

⁵³ *The Book of Common Prayer*, ed. by Brian Cummings, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 157.

⁵⁴ *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 161.

(2.1.3), either oblivious or indifferent to the threat his melancholic self-absorption poses to Cyprus. Furthermore,

The commons murmur and the nobles grieve,
The court is now turned antic and grows wild,
Whiles all the neighbr'ing nations stand at gaze,
And watch fit opportunity to wreak
Their just-conceivèd fury on such injuries
As the late prince, our living master's father,
Committed against laws of truth or honour. (2.1.4-10)

In letters from a neighbouring state, Crete, 'defiance [is] threatened' (2.1.69), and Cyprus' enemies 'muster their friends' (2.1.70). Like Othello's, Palador's disturbed state of mind has, the play suggests, consequences beyond the personal and threatens the entire island's security. Although the island's sixteenth-century history does not resonate quite so powerfully in *The Lover's Melancholy*, Ford's play shares with *Othello* – at least in its opening scenes – a sense of lurking jeopardy.

By excluding any figure obviously identifiable with Venus's partner in adultery from the play, Ford ensures Eroclea embodies only the chaste and wholesome aspects of the goddess's mythology, while other, more troubling, aspects of her identity are suppressed. In fact, the play seems at pains to explicitly reject the more libidinous aspects of the goddess's identity, insisting on the primacy of marriage in romantic relations. Finally reunited with Eroclea, Palador proclaims,

Blush, sensual follies,
Which are not guarded with thoughts chastely pure.
There is no faith in lust, but baits of arts;
'Tis virtuous love keeps clear contracted hearts. (4.3.154-7)

The play works hard – although not entirely successfully – to keep the more anarchic and disruptive elements of sexual desire in check.

The play's efforts to present Eroclea as a chaste Genetrix figure are under pressure throughout from Venus's and her island's reputation for concupiscence. English writers acknowledged the unstable duality in the goddess's association with both fertility and desire. Sandys wonders if Venus was drawn to Cyprus by 'the fertility of the soile, or the beastly lusts

of the people'.⁵⁵ It is in rejecting this vision of Cyprus that Ford moves most decisively away from Burton. As Sensabaugh points out, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* appeared to think that the inhabitants of 'hot and Southern countries are prone to lust, and far more incontinent, than those that live in the North', noting that, according to Ortelius, 'the whole island of Cyprus devotes itself to pleasure, and is therefore so dedicated to wantonness that it was once consecrated to Venus'.⁵⁶ Although we see little evidence of libidinous tendencies in the play's main protagonists, Ford would certainly have been aware of both the goddess's and the island's reputation and, as plays like *The Broken Heart* and *Tis Pity She's a Whore* demonstrate, he was interested in the consequences of illicit lusts and misdirected sexual desire. For the most part, these negative aspects of love and desire are repressed in *The Lover's Melancholy's* main narrative.

However, their disruptive energies refuse to be completely suppressed. It was, after all, Agenor's attempted rape of Eroclea that sets the whole plot in motion. Kala's desire for a 'proffered kindness in a corner' (3.2.54) from Parthenophill, after Thamasta threatens to keep Kala in her 'service all [her] lifetime / Without a hope of a husband or a suitor' (2.1.316-7) seems to be a tacit acknowledgement that the more unruly passions associated with Venus – and Cyprus – will inevitably seek an outlet. And this is not the only expression of transgressive desire in the play. Perhaps recalling a particularly intense exchange between Menaphon and Amethus – at one point Amethus declares 'O, I want words / To let thee know my heart' (1.1.39-40) – which reads more like a reunion between two lovers than a pair of friends, Roger Christofides comments on what he calls 'the barely concealed homosexual desire between Menaphon and Amethus' in the play.⁵⁷ Later, Thamasta, even after she has uncovered Parthenophill's secret, confesses '[i]t will be / A hard task for [her] reason to relinquish / The affection' (3.2.176-8) she felt for the Athenian youth. While Christofides's claim that *The Lover's Melancholy* satisfies 'audience expectations of the lewd and lustful' is possibly a little exaggerated, these moments nevertheless testify to the ways in which the island's reputation threatens to destabilise the play's chaste allegory.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ *Excerpta Cypria*, p. 205.

⁵⁶ Burton, p. 725.

⁵⁷ Christofides, *Othello's Secret*, p. 106.

⁵⁸ Christofides, *Othello's Secret*, p. 106.

To what extent the play's audiences *would* have expected the lewd and the lustful, as Christofides claims, is debatable. A number of early modern writers did indeed characterise the island as the natural habitation of the lascivious and concupiscent, but responses, as I have argued in earlier chapters, were not uniform. Christofides bases his claim on what he suggests is an allusion to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Amethus reminds the newly returned Menaphon that '[t]his little isle of Cyprus sure abounds / In greater wonders, both for change and fortune, / Than any you have seen abroad' (1.1.86-8).⁵⁹ Playgoers familiar with Ovid may perhaps have recalled at this point that Cyprus was indeed the site of multiple transformations and transgressions. The *Metamorphoses* recounts at length the story of Myrrha's incestuous passion – which resulted in the birth of Adonis – for her own father, Cinryas (Book 10, ll. 327-595), for which crime she was turned into a myrrh tree. Agenor's illicit lust for his future daughter-in-law in some senses recalls the story, albeit inverting some of its valencies by making the father-figure the transgressor (in Ovid, Myrrha – with help of her nurse – was smuggled covertly into her unwitting father's bed). Cyprus was also the place where Venus transformed the Cerasts into 'boisterous bulls' (Book 10, l. 254) after they defiled her island with human sacrifice. For denying Venus's divinity, the Propoets were forced by the goddess into prostitution, before she turned them into stone (Book 10, l. 268). It may not be intentional (there is no evidence that it is) that Amethus's name recalls Amathus, the Cypriot city that was home to Cerasts and Propoets, but for playgoers able to make the connection, it may have been a further reminder of the unruly and violent passions the play attempts to deny. Characters within the play at times seem aware of their island's potential for strange transformations. Rhetias tells Cuculus that there is 'within a mile or two' (1.2.76) of the court at Famagusta 'a sow-pig [which] hath sucked a brach and now hunts the deer, the hare, nay most unnaturally, the wild boar, as well as any hound in Cyprus' (1.2.76-8). While Rhetias is gulling the foolish courtier here, the lines nevertheless remind playgoers that Cyprus was a place where strange and unsettling transformations might occur, as witnessed by the revelation that Parthenophill is in fact a girl, and (more comically), that Cuculus's waiting woman, Grilla, is a boy.

⁵⁹ Christofides, *Othello's Secret*, p. 106.

While the play's general Cypriot setting might be plausibly ascribed to its interest in matters of the heart, it is less obvious why Ford chose Famagusta as its specific setting, especially when so little effort is made to realise it as a distinctive locale. Nevertheless, Ford's specification of the play's location as 'Famagusta' on the first page of the 1629 quarto indicates that the dramatist (who, as previously noted, was to an unusual degree involved in the publication of his own plays) considered it in some respect important to the drama that follows. Menaphon's reference to his lodging Parthenophill 'privately / In Famagusta' (1.1.186-7) communicates the play's setting to playgoers, but no further reference is made to it. Why specify its setting at all, only to ignore it for the rest of the play? Over the preceding century, the city had been understood in England as the last Christian staging post on the main European pilgrimage route to the Holy Land, the centre of the east-west trade routes and (briefly) one of the wealthiest cities in Christendom. As I demonstrated in earlier chapters, memories of the city's historic significations were often preserved and transmitted in romance and other literary texts, giving these identities long cultural afterlives. However, following the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, Famagusta was increasingly associated with the 1571 siege, the city symbolising both Ottoman territorial expansion and the Turks' Islamic barbarity. Yet none of these ideas are explicitly evoked in Ford's play. Cyprus in general, and Famagusta in particular, are only lightly sketched, with the text offering little evidence of a coherent sense of (real or fictive) place. Having argued that Cyprus's primary signification in *The Lover's Melancholy* is as Venus's Island, the natural home of lovers, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to asking why, then, the entire play is set in Famagusta, and what that setting might mean in the context of the work's allegorical agenda.

Given *The Lover's Melancholy's* obvious interest in affairs of the heart, playgoers might have expected the play to be set in Paphos, the place on the island most closely associated with the cult of Venus; Famagusta was not particularly associated with Venus or with love. There are, so far as I am aware, no early modern texts that link the goddess with the city specifically. There is a moment in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* that recalls the Ottoman conquest, when Astrophil observes that 'Love' – Cupid – had

of late fled from his native place,
Forced by tedious proof, that Turkish hardened heart
Is no fit mark to pierce with his fine pointed dart. (AS, Sonnet 8, ll. 10-3)

Some readers may, encountering these lines, have recalled the Siege of Famagusta, and thus made a connection between it and Venus. But the allusion is far from explicit; indeed, Cupid is said to have been ‘born in Greece’, so that any connection made here between a specific Cypriot city and Venus remains subterranean. Nevertheless, the lines indicate the ways in which Cypriot history might be brought into play, without ever being explicitly stated, to enrich a work’s emotional resonances.

Hopkins is the only scholar to give any serious consideration to how Famagusta signifies in *The Lover’s Melancholy*; the few others who comment, like Neill, on the play’s setting do not differentiate it from the play’s wider Cypriot context. Hopkins argues that for Ford – remembering its role as the penultimate stop on the pilgrimage route – the city represented ‘a locus of the incomplete, a place that stands in sight and memory of an ideal spiritual state’.⁶⁰ In other words, the play’s Famagusta setting is intended to recall the city’s historic role as the final staging post on a journey in which the desired end was only a short (but perhaps hazardous) step away. There are moments in the play in which characters’ emotional travails are compared with the hazards of Eastern Mediterranean voyaging. At the start of Act 5 (just before the play’s various problems are, one by one, resolved by the revelation of

⁶⁰ Hopkins, ‘What Venus Did with Mars’, p. 199. In a highly speculative line of argument, Hopkins argues that Ford’s interest in Famagusta may have stemmed from a personal connection. She reports that, through his mother, he was related to the important Welsh Stradling family and that Ford’s great uncle, Sir Edward Stradling, had written a book *Winning of the Lordship of Glamorgan* that contained an account of the 1476 pilgrimage to Jerusalem undertaken by Sir Harry Stradling (see Hopkins, ‘Love and War’, 59). Sir Harry died on his way home from the Holy Land and was buried at Famagusta. Hopkins speculates that Ford may even have read a pilgrim narrative about his experiences apparently sent by Sir Harry to his wife, which is known to have been at the family seat, St. Donat’s Castle in Glamorgan, as late as 1726. Although the book is now lost, a visitor, Edward Gamage, reported that ‘[Sir Harry’s] book of travels is to be seen, to this day, in the study of St Donats Castle; remarkable for an account of the events of his journey, and the views he had of the countries, cities, towns, lands, and customs of the inhabitants of the nations, and various places he journeyed through; together, with the condition of Jerusalem, as he saw it’ (qtd in Lisa Hopkins, ‘John Ford and Cyprus’, *Notes and Queries*, 44.1 (1997), 101-2 (102) < <https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/nq/44-1-101> > [accessed 13 December 2021]). Although this is an interesting connection, Ford need not have read or even been aware of his ancestor’s connection with the island to be aware of Famagusta’s place on the pilgrim route. As discussed in previous chapters, it was recalled in multiple English texts.

Eroclea's return), Corax describes life's perils in language that recalls the dangers faced by pilgrims and other travellers, as he describes how

... in the turmoils of our lives,
Men are like politic states, or troubled seas,
Tossed up and down with several storms and tempests,
Change and variety of wrecks and fortunes,
Till, labouring to the havens of our homes,
We struggle for the calm that crowns our ends. (5.1.4-9)

As Hopkins notes, 'the sense of [the play's] characters not quite at the end of a journey is strong'.⁶¹ There are, indeed, moments in the play that suggest that its characters (including those who never left Cyprus) are about to embark on the final leg of an arduous and dangerous journey, with no guarantee of their safe arrival as Thamasta's speech to Amethus, urging him to accept Cleophila seems to acknowledge:

Here fix your heart and thus resolves: if now
You miss this heaven on earth you cannot find
In any other choice ought but a hell. (5.1.101-3)

Eroclea's reconciliation with Palador, when the prince urges her to '[c]ome home, home to [his] heart' (4.3.136), seems to represent their reunion as an emotional (and, for Eroclea, physical) homecoming for them both, rather than the arrival at a symbolic Holy Land. The two interpretations are not, of course, mutually exclusive; the journey to Jerusalem may have represented a spiritual homecoming for many Christians, and Famagusta was also an important staging post on the return leg of the journey. The allusion does not need to be precisely defined to resonate with the play's emotional concerns. Whether we read characters' experiences as pilgrimage or homecoming, Famagusta might plausibly figure in either respect.

Hopkins offers a complex and, in some respects, persuasive argument, but it is uncertain to what extent these resonances (if, indeed, Ford did have this aspect of Cyprus's historic identity in mind) would have been readily apparent to playgoers without further prompting from the playtext.⁶² The absence of any sustained representation of Famagusta itself makes

⁶¹ Hopkins, 'What Venus Did with Mars', p. 199.

⁶² She also presents a number of other suggestions about the play's Famagusta setting that I find less persuasive. In particular, she claims that in *The Lover's Melancholy* 'a general interest in art is manifested

it less likely that the rather subtle allegorical resonances Hopkins proposes here would have been apparent to all playgoers. The play's primary allegory, which hinges on Cyprus's identity as 'Venus's Island', was sufficiently understood that, even if not all playgoers were versed in the finer points of Venus's Renaissance iconography, they would have understood the significance of the play's Cypriot setting. For an allegory to work, it must invoke meanings that at least *some* playgoers might reasonably be expected to recognise; I am not entirely convinced that the associations Hopkins identifies would have been sufficiently obvious to serve the play's allegorical agenda in this way. While Famagusta's association with medieval pilgrimage was probably sufficiently well-known to still be recalled in the early seventeenth century, it is not the city's (at least without additional prompting) most obvious connotation, especially in a broadly Protestant culture in which pilgrimage, like other Catholic practices, had not been part of the cultural landscape for nearly a century. With that in mind, perhaps we should ask instead what were the associations and memories that – given the lack of actual detail about Famagusta as a place in *The Lover's Melancholy* – playgoers were most likely to bring to performances, and how these might shape their responses to the play.

Awareness of the island's wider associations (both literary and historical) helps us identify other ways in which it might figure in the play. For a brief time in the fourteenth century, Cyprus dominated the east-west trade that flowed through the Eastern Mediterranean, during which period Famagusta was its most important and wealthiest port. As we have seen in Chapter 3, where I discussed the significance of the Cyprus connection in *Old Fortunatus*, the period was often recalled in the figure of the wealthy Cypriot (usually Famagustan) merchant. No such figure features in *The Lover's Melancholy*, but the passing reference to letters from Crete, demanding the 'speedy restitution of such ships, / As by your father were long since detained' (2.1.67-8) perhaps remembers (almost in passing) this period of Cypriot history. There is, however, a further allusion that – when viewed in conjunction with the play's

chiefly in a sustained metatheatrical meditation on the relation between the physical and the metaphysical', which 'fits very well with the Famagusta setting [which was] regarded as a masterpiece of human endeavour for the strength of its defences, which were considered a triumph of the art of fortification' (Hopkins, 'What Venus Did with Mars', p. 199-200). While there are a number of moments in the play that do seem interested in, as Hopkins observes, the borders 'between art and nature and [...] art and imitation' (p. 200), I am not convinced they are in any meaningful sense connected with its Famagusta setting.

Famagusta setting – was more plausibly historically resonant. Aretus, Palador’s tutor, discussing the threat posed to Cyprus by Palador’s melancholic self-absorption, describes how

these near parts
Of Syria that adjoin, muster their friends
And by intelligence we learn for certain
The Syrian will pretend an ancient interest
Of tribute intermitted. (2.1.69-73)

The reference to Syria and the notion of tribute indicates that Ford was, at least to some extent, aware of Eastern Mediterranean history. Hill argues that the references to Syria, the Cretan ships, and the general insecurity that threatened the island, articulated in Sophronos’s and Aretus’s discussion at the beginning of the second act, is evidence of ‘Ford’s general acquaintance with its chequered fortunes as a pawn in the power struggle in the eastern Mediterranean’.⁶³ The island had, he continues, been ‘successively under tribute to Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian and Roman empires’, although ‘a scanning of likely classical authorities has revealed nothing conclusive’ about Ford’s source for this history.⁶⁴ Hill’s desire to identify a coherent sense of historicity in *The Lover’s Melancholy* perhaps leads him to overlook the allusion’s more recent historical resonances.⁶⁵ The Lusignan kings paid an intermittent tribute to the Mamlūks – the then rulers of Syria, Egypt and the Holy Land – throughout the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries. The Ottomans later used the Venetian failure to continue paying the tribute following their conquest of the Mamlūk sultanate in 1517 as one of the pretexts for the invasion of Cyprus in 1570. Although the Syrian threat is never referred to again in the play, it evokes a sense of danger that, whether read allegorically or historically, highlights the dangers posed to the island by Palador’s melancholic self-absorption. This brief allusion to a threat from the east suggests that *The Lover’s Melancholy*’s Famagusta setting is specified primarily in order to activate playgoers’ memories of the 1570 Ottoman invasion of the island. However, it is done with a light touch, so that the play’s sophisticated mythological allegory remains dominant.

⁶³ Hill, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Hill, p. 4.

⁶⁵ In trying to pin down the play’s reference to a threat from Syria to the island’s known classical history, Hill also appears curiously oblivious to the work’s classically inflected allegorical dimensions.

Othello and The Lover's Melancholy

This chapter concludes with an exploration of a particular aspect of what I want to argue is an intertheatrical dialogue conducted between *The Lover's Melancholy* and *Othello*. I have already identified a number of moments in which Ford's play appears to 'quote' (both explicitly and implicitly) from Shakespeare's play. Rather than focusing further on these elements, however, I want in the paragraphs that remain to explore a form of intertextuality employed in both plays, one that depends not on the explicit quotation from or overt allusion to other texts, but on the evocation of particular Cypriot tropes and motifs without direct reference to them. When I speak of intertexts here, I am not referring only to specific written texts (although the motifs I am referring to were certainly represented in other early modern texts) but also texts in a broader, Brusterian sense – defined in my introductory chapter – where the wider cultural network of associations and meanings might also constitute a quotable 'text'. Neither play quotes explicitly from these intertexts, but relies instead on their Cypriot settings to bring them into focus. By identifying these sorts of resonances, I aim to offer some thoughts on the significance of *The Lover's Melancholy's* Cypriot setting while also saying something about this thesis's wider critical strategies.

I have adopted throughout a multi-faceted approach to the question of how Cyprus signifies in these plays, looking not only for evidence of direct literary, geographical and historical allusions, but also thinking about how these dramas quote well-known Cypriot tropes and motifs – the Turkish conquest, the Cypriot merchant or Venus's island, for example – that appear to have taken on a life of their own – like Cooper's romance 'memes' – independent of any particular source; this, I have suggested, allows them to be replicated across a range of texts and cultural contexts, while their core meaning remains stable and recognisable. What I want to demonstrate here is that these Cypriot motifs were sufficiently well-established in the English imaginary that they no longer required explicit quotation for their presence to be felt in these plays.

Othello and *The Lover's Melancholy* are both shaped (albeit to different extents and effects) by two significant Cypriot intertexts – the fall of Famagusta to the Turks and the classical mythology that described the island as Venus's home. Neither of these is explicitly quoted nor even alluded to directly in either play, often leading critics to overlook their influence. In

fact, Hopkins argues that ‘neither *Othello* nor *The Lover’s Melancholy* is prepared to engage directly with the fall of Famagusta’ and ‘both rewrite and efface it’.⁶⁶ In the light of the absence of any direct allusion to the Ottoman conquest in either play, Hopkins’ comments are, perhaps, understandable. Nevertheless, although neither play features a Turkish invasion, both actively encourage playgoers’ recollection of it. Without ever being directly quoted, the Siege of Famagusta itself is a significant, albeit covert, intertext for both plays. Shakespeare never specifies the location of his play’s Cypriot scenes, but playgoers (or at least those with a passing awareness of Eastern Mediterranean history) would have assumed it was Famagusta, that belief bolstered by the play’s multiple allusions to the Ottoman threat. Although the play makes no reference to the Siege of Famagusta or its grotesque climax, the consciousness of those events nevertheless lurks on the play’s periphery to create a sense of jeopardy that raises the play above the level of a mundane domestic tragedy. In terms of its actual plot, the play could be set in any of Venice’s overseas territories, but without the unarticulated awareness of Famagusta’s eventual fate, Othello’s downfall would, somehow, have been less tragic. Whilst the play is not *about* the Turkish threat (often thought by critics to be embodied in the play’s protagonist), these subterranean allusions to the island’s history intensify its tragic resonances.

Surprisingly, Famagusta and its troubled history also influence *The Lover’s Melancholy*. Hopkins suggests that while Ford’s play ‘is much less obviously engaged with Shakespeare’s tragedy than *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*, *Love’s Sacrifice* and *The Lady’s Trial*, it does nevertheless comment on it’ in a number of interesting ways.⁶⁷ Observing that *Othello*’s Famagusta setting is assumed rather than stated, she suggests that ‘the naming of Famagusta in itself could perhaps be seen as making explicit what in *Othello* is only implicit’.⁶⁸ Whether or not Ford’s naming of his play’s setting is an implied rectification of Shakespeare’s omission is unclear; there is no obvious dramatic purpose to doing so. Explicitly setting his play in Famagusta may draw attention to the fact that Shakespeare does not but it also confirms that (at least so far as Ford was concerned), Shakespeare’s play *was* set in Famagusta. Ford’s geographic strategy may also be intended to emphasise the connection between the two plays. Whatever Ford’s

⁶⁶ Hopkins, ‘What Venus Did with Mars’, p. 197.

⁶⁷ Hopkins, ‘What Venus Did with Mars’, p. 196.

⁶⁸ Hopkins, ‘What Venus Did with Mars’, p. 196.

motivations, the provocative introduction of Famagusta and the Syrian threat into the play's temporal frame introduces a familiar set of resonances at the margins of *The Lover's Melancholy*. By setting his play in the same location – complete with its own analogous threat from the east – Ford appears to be attempting to import some of *Othello's* tragic energies into his own Cyprus drama. Structurally, the Syrian threat (why Syria? Why not Sparta? Or Athens?) and the demands for tribute are redundant. By setting *The Lover's Melancholy* in Famagusta (rather than Paphos, as its subject matter might suggest), Ford allows the Ottoman conquest to ghost *The Lover's Melancholy*.

There is a further geographically resonant intertext shared by the two plays: the island's mythological connection with Venus. Again, neither work directly alludes to Cyprus's identity as Venus's island but, as I have argued in this and in the preceding chapter, both plays implicitly recall the connection, both in their broader thematic concerns (notwithstanding *Othello's* racial and confessional implications, I would argue that it is, like *The Lover's Melancholy*, also interested in affairs of the heart) and, in a more focused way, in their respective female protagonists. Both Desdemona and Eroclea are represented (although with very different consequences) as embodiments of a particular aspect of forces linked with Venus. In Chapter 4, I showed that Cassio's harbourside speech seems to recognise Desdemona's procreative, harmonising promise, in ways that implicitly recall Venus in her Genetrix guise. But – because *Othello* is a tragedy – her generative potential is snuffed out before it can be realised. Aspects of this mythological structure also surface unrecognised in a number of Shakespearean tragedies, with the deaths of Cordelia and Ophelia in particular embodying the denial of the life force and the death of the future that tragedy necessarily entails. In *Othello*, the play's geographical setting brings this mythological pattern closer to the surface.

It is in this sense that *The Lover's Melancholy* most consciously revisits – and rewrites – Shakespeare's Cyprus tragedy. *Othello* could only see Venus in her baser forms in Desdemona's love and frank desire for him; by having Palador recognise Eroclea and, in doing so, embracing all that Venus Genetrix represents, Ford's play rewrites *Othello's* ending. Although, as I have suggested above, elements of these mythological resonances are discernible on a subterranean level in a number of other plays, it is these two works' shared

Cypriot setting that brings them to the surface and through which their intertheatrical connection is mediated. Such a relationship, however, only becomes apparent when we are attentive to individual works' broader intertextual affiliations, opening up new perspectives to create the critical frame that allows such readings to emerge.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the ways in which Cyprus, a particularly complex space, signified in early modern English drama, through a sustained focus on the island's meaning in four Cyprus dramas. These four were selected because each presented a particularly rich and compelling vision of some aspect of the island's identity or history. While a few critics have recognised some of the Cypriot resonances that shaped these plays, those ideas have not been subjected to a sustained investigation and it is this gap that this thesis sought to address. Distance and limited contact between the two locations notwithstanding, the island occupied a complicated and multi-layered position in the English imaginary, and this is manifested in the visions of Cyprus dramatised in these four playtexts. Highlighting the long and varied history of English literary representations of the island, I wanted to show that, even after the Ottoman conquest, the island continued to signify in complicated ways in these and other texts. Memories of the Siege of Famagusta and its grotesque aftermath did not override other visions of the island in circulation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but added new resonances to an already intricate mosaic of tropes, motifs and associations. With this in mind, and taking a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective, the thesis explored the key ways the island figured in the English imaginary both before and after the Turkish annexation. In doing so, it sought to identify what Cyprus, its people and its history represented in early modern England and – importantly – how those earlier visions persisted (often perpetuated in popular literature) even after the island's loss to the Ottomans. The visions of Cyprus represented in these four dramas were as indebted to popular literature as they were to contemporary news pamphlets and travel writing, even in works, like Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske*, apparently concerned with contemporary Eastern Mediterranean geopolitics.

As noted in the thesis introduction, dramatic visions of Cyprus – where they have been attended to at all by scholars – have often been examined within the context of English attitudes to the Islamic world in general and the Ottomans in particular. This preoccupation is, to some degree, understandable. The island's loss to the Turks, after nearly four hundred years of Latin Christian rule, was a significant event, made more memorable by the Venetian general Marcantonio Bragadino's horrific death following the Siege of Famagusta and the

Holy League's spectacular (but ultimately short-lived) triumph at the Battle of Lepanto. However, their focus on the ways in which these events resonated in the early modern playhouses has meant that critics have often overlooked other ways the island signified in these (and other) plays. Rather than asking how the events of 1571 shaped the way Cyprus was represented in these dramas, this thesis has tried to look beyond New Historicist assumptions about the dominance of these sorts of synchronic concerns (important though they undoubtedly were), to identify the influence of other Cypriot allusions and resonances. In particular, it examined the ways in which the Eastern Mediterranean in general and Cyprus in particular was understood in the late medieval and early modern period *before* the Siege of Famagusta. In doing so, it sought to develop a 'thick' reading of what Cyprus represented, one that accounted for the long history of the island's representation in English culture. Alongside this explicitly diachronic strategy, the thesis also took a wider view of what constituted a text. Drawing on Douglas Bruster's critical methodology, outlined in the introduction to his book, *Quoting Shakespeare*, I approached Cypriot history – so far as it was understood in early modern England – as a quotable text in its own right. Developing a more detailed understanding of Cypriot history uncovered the events and eras that shaped English literary representations of the island, leading to the identification of hitherto under-recognised Cypriot tropes and motifs that shaped the ways the island signified in the English playhouses.

Although this thesis has in several places questioned the value of some New Historicist responses to these plays, its analysis is intended to act as a complementary rather than a competing approach. When it is practiced well, New Historicist criticism provides valuable insights into a work's synchronic resonances in terms of the geopolitics, as well as the contemporary local concerns that shaped these work's engagements with Cyprus. The significance of the chivalric romance resonances in Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske*, for example, cannot be fully appreciated without first understanding the difficult position English in which Catholic noblemen like Viscount Montague found themselves in Elizabethan England. Similarly, the meaning of *Old Fortunatus's* Cypriot dimensions – more specifically, its recollection of Cyprus's fourteenth century economic zenith and the wealthy Famagustan merchants – only comes fully into focus if we are attentive to social and economic pressures developing in early seventeenth-century London. In the case of *Othello* and *The Lover's*

Melancholy, our understanding of the way these plays represent characters' emotional experiences is productively enriched if we ask more searching questions about their mythological patterns, rather than simply noting their presence and saying no more, as has tended to be the case until now. For the fullest understanding of each of these works, the two approaches should work in tandem.

The visions of Cyprus articulated in these plays are, like the island itself, multifaceted. While each of the four Cyprus dramas considered by this thesis appeared, on first reading, to be concerned with a particular aspect of the island's historical or literary identity, other ideas and associations resonate throughout each of them. Being attentive to Cyprus's wider significations in the English imaginary allows us to see the influence of these other Cypriot tropes and motifs in these dramas, even when they remain largely subterranean. My introduction to this thesis argued that examining Cyprus *solely* through the lens of the Siege of Famagusta and wider Anglo-Islamic relations is reductive, but it is clear that the events of 1571 were nevertheless hugely influential, even in plays ostensibly set before they occurred. Although only Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske* is explicitly concerned with the Ottoman conquest of the island, which is never explicitly mentioned in any of the other three plays, the event resonates, on various levels, through all of them. Even if Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* was not explicitly interested in the island's history, for example, memories of the event nevertheless haunt the play's semi-tragic, moralised ending. However, the event was just one Cypriot trope amongst several available to dramatists and their audiences, and often acted in concert with other motifs in these plays.

In trying to expand the critical frame in this way, I have employed a wider definition of what might constitute an intertext with these dramas, to include tropes and motifs that are not directly quoted, but are often detectable as a submerged, implied presence in the newer texts, so that the writing of Cyprus in these works takes on a distinctly palimpsestic quality. Taking this broader perspective brings new dimensions to readings of these works, facilitating a more complex and rounded understanding of what the island might represent in each drama, in turn enabling a more nuanced understanding of each work. Recognising *Othello's* unspoken mythological affiliations, for example, not only complicates any reading of the tragedy simply as a microcosm of the island's political history, but also provides a framework

through which to explore its personal tragedy more deeply. Similarly, *Old Fortunatus* need not explicitly feature a Cypriot merchant to recall the island's period of medieval prosperity, but the stock figure of the Cypriot merchant and the island's role as gateway between east and west in Hellenistic romance allows memories of that period to infuse the play, even without its direct introduction. If we pay attention to these sorts of silent intertexts – tropes, motifs, ideas and even historical events that, although they are never directly quoted, nevertheless resonate through these works – a far more interesting and nuanced vision of Cyprus begins to emerge.

Rather than seeing these four dramas as discrete works, if we examine their relationship with the wider network of Cypriot associations (one that, as I have shown, developed over decades and even centuries), a picture begins to emerge of a dynamic intertextual relationship between the plays themselves. By drawing on a shared set of wider cultural resonances, these dramas conduct a dialogue not only with their source material, but also with each other. In the sense that all four of them are, to some degree, shaped by the awareness of Cyprus's eventual fate, each of them appears to be in dialogue with the events of 1571, even if none of them are in any meaningful sense *about* the Ottoman conquest of the island. And through that shared intertextuality (recalling Bruster's argument that a historic event might constitute a quotable 'text'), these works are in dialogue with one another about the significance of that event, even though it is only referred to explicitly in Gascoigne's *Devise of a Maske*. *The Lover's Melancholy* appears to be in an intertheatrical dialogue with *Othello* conducted via a shared set of mythological resonances that are never explicitly articulated in either work, but that are nevertheless activated by their shared setting. These kind of connections only emerge following a sustained engagement with Cyprus's place in the English imaginary, and they indicate, through focus on a single geographical space, some of the advantages of complementing historicist approaches to literary interpretation with ones attentive to the history of literary form and genre.

EDITIONS

A breuiat cronicle contaynyng all the kinges from brute to this daye, and manye notable actes gathered oute of diuers cronicles fro[m] Willyam Conquerour vnto the yere of christ a. M.v.c.lii. (Canterbury, 1552)

A myraculous, and Monstrous, but yet most true, and certayne discourse, of a Woman (now to be seene in London) of the age of threescore yeares, or there abouts, in the midst of whose fore-head (by the wonderfull worke of God) there growth out a crooked Horne, of foure ynches long (London, 1588)

Ariosto, Lodovico, *Orlando furioso in english heroical verse, by John Harington* (London, 1591)

Ariosto, Ludovico, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Ausgabe des Fortunatus, trans. by Michael Haldane, available at <https://michaelhaldane.com/FortunatusLink.htm> > [accessed 22 July 2019]

Bandello, Matteo, *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Iuliet written first in Italian by Bandell, and now in Englishe by Ar. Br* (1562, repr. 1567)

Beaumont, Francis and Fletcher, John, *Philaster* (London, 1620)

Boccaccio, Giovanni, *A Pleasant & Delightfull History of Galesus Cymon & Iphigenia*, trans. by T.C., Gent, (London, 1565)

-----, *The Decameron*, trans. by Guido Waldman, ed. by Jonathan Usher, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Boemus, Joannes, *The Fardle of Facions conteining the aunciente maners, customes, and lawes, of the peoples enhabiting the two partes of the earth, called Affrike and Asia*, trans by William Waterman, (London, 1555)

Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. by Angus Gowland (London: Penguin, 2021)

Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, 1558-1589, ed. by Allan James Crosby (London: Longman & Co, 1874)

Carr, Ralph, *The Mahumetane or Turkish Historie*, (London, 1600)

Cartari, Vincenzo, *The fountaine of ancient fiction wherein is liuely depicted the images and statues of the gods of the ancients, with their proper and perticular expositions. done out of italian into english, by richard linche gent* (London, 1599)

Chapman, George, *The Widow's Tears* (London, 1612)

Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by F.N. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Chaucer, Geoffrey, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. by David Wright, ed. by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Clay, William K. (ed.), *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1847)

Contarini, Gianpietro, *The second part of the booke of battailes, fought in our age taken out of the best authors and writers in sundrie languages* (London, 1587)

Coryate, Thomas, *Coryat's Crudities* (London, 1611)

Crosse, Henry, *Vertues Common-wealth: or The High-way to Honour* (London, 1603)

d'Arras, Jean, *Melusine; or, The Noble History of Lusignan*, trans. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012)

Dekker, Thomas, *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus As It was Plaied Before the Queenes Maiestie This Christmas, by the Right Honourable the Earle of Nottingham, Lord High Admirall of England His Servants* (London, 1600)

-----, *Old Fortunatus*, ed. by David McInnis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020)

-----, *Satiromastix* in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker Volume I*, ed. by Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 299-395

-----, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* in *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. by James Knowles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-65

Drant, Thomas, *A fruitfull and necessary sermon, specially concernyng almes geving, preached the Twisday [sic] in Easter weekes The Yere of our Lord. 1572. At S. Maries Spittle. By Thomas Drant, bachelor in divinitie* (London, 1572)

Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus, trans. and ed. by Claude Delaval Cobham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908)

Ford, John, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore and Other Plays*, ed. by Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 [repr. 2008])

-----, *The Laws of Candy* in *The Collected Works of John Ford*, Volume III, ed. by Brian Vickers, on *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* <

<https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198757443.book.1> > [accessed 30 Sep 2022]

-----, *The Lover's Melancholy*, ed. by R.F. Hill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985)

-----, *The Lovers Melancholy*, (London, 1629)

Gascoigne, George, 'Devise of a maske for the right honorable Viscount Mountacute' in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres Bound Up In One Small Poesie*, (London, 1573)

-----, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, ed. by G.W. Pigman III, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Gosson, Stephen, *Playes confuted in fiue actions prouing that they are not to be suffred in a christian common weale, by the waye both the cauils of thomas lodge, and the play of playes, written in their defence, and other obiections of players frendes, are truely set downe and directlye aunswared* (London, 1582)

Greene, Robert, *The Historie of Orlando Furioso One of the twelue Pieres of France* (London, 1592)

Hanmer, Meredith, *The auncient ecclesiasticall histories of the first six hundred yeares after Christ, wrytten in the Greeke tongue by three learned historiographers, Eusebius, Socrates, and Euagrius* (London, 1577)

Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principal Nauigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation ...* (London, 1599)

Harington, John, 'Of Cyprus' in *Englands Parnassus: or the choysest flowers of our moderne poets, with their poetickall comparisons Descriptions of bewties, personages, castles, pallaces, mountaines, groves, seas, springs, rivers, &c. Whereunto are annexed other various discourses, both pleasaunt and profitable*, ed. by Robert Allot, (London, 1600), sig. AA1^r

Henslowe's Diary: Second Edition, ed. by R.A. Foakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Heywood, Thomas, *The Four Prentices of London in Three Romances of Eastern Conquest*, ed. by Ladan Niayesh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 201-89

Holinshed, Raphael, *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande: Volume 4* (London: 1577) available at *The Holinshed Project* <

http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/texts.php?text1=1577_5332 > [accessed on 11 May 2020]

-----, *An Historicall Description of the Iland of Britaine, with a briefe rehearsall of the nature and qualities of the people of England and such commodities as are to be found in the same. Comprehended in three bookes*, available at *The Holinshed Project* < http://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/texts.php?text1=1587_0060 > [accessed 24 May 2020]

Hudson, Harriet (ed), *Four Middle English Romances* (Western Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996)

James I/VI, *His Maiesties Lepanto, or Heroicall Song, being part of his Poeticall exercises at vacant houres* (London, 1603)

Jonson, Ben, *Every Man Out of His Humour*, ed. by Helen Ostovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthure and the Alliterative Morte Arthur, ed. by Larry Benson and Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute publications, 1994) < <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/benson-and-foster-king-arthurs-death-alliterative-morte-arthur-part-i> > [accessed 11 April 2020]

Knolles, Richard, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes*, (London, 1603)

Kyd, Thomas, *Soliman and Perseda*, ed. by Lukas Erne (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014)

Kynge Rycharde cuer du lyon (London, 1509)

Leo Africanus, *A geographical historie of africa, written in arabicke and italian by iohn leo a more, [...] translated by John Pory* (London, 1600) in *Early English Books Online* < <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> > [accessed 23 April 2021]

Letters sent from venice. anno. 1571 containing the certaine and true newes of the most noble victorie of the christians ouer the armie of the great turke: And the names of the lordes & gentlemen of the christians slaine in the same battell. translated out of the frenche copie printed at paris by guille[...]d niuerd, with the kings priuiledge (London: 1571)

Lodge, Thomas, *Scylla's Metamorphosis, interlaced with the unfortunate love of Glaucus* in *Sixteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by Gordon Braden (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), pp. 408-429

Lucretius his six books of epicurean philosophy and manilius his five books containing a system of the ancient astronomy and astrology together with the philosophy of the stoicks / both translated into english verse with notes by mr. tho. creech; to which is added the

several parts of lucretius, english'd by mr. dryden [Five books of M. Manilius.], (London, 1700)

Malim, William, *The true report of all the successe of Famagosta, of the antique writes called Tamassus, a citie in Cyprus* (London, 1572)

Mandeville, John, *The voyages and travailes of Sir John Maundevile knight Wherein is treated of the way towards Hierusalem, and of the mervailles of Inde, with other lands and countries* (London, 1582)

-----, *The Book of Marvels and Travels*, trans. by Anthony Bale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Markham, Gervase and Machin, Lewis, *The dumbe knight A historicall comedy, acted sundry times by the children of his maiesties reuels* (London, 1608)

Marlowe, Christopher, *The Complete Plays*, ed. by Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey (London: Penguin, 2003)

Marston, John, *The Malcontent*, ed. by George K. Hunter (London: Methuen, 1975)

Marston, John and others, *The Insatiate Countess*, ed. by Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)

Mason, John, *Mulleasses the Turke*, (London, 1610)

Nashe, Thomas, *Haue vvith you to saffron-vvalden. or, gabriell harueys hunt is vp containing a full answere to the eldest sonne of the halter-maker. or, nashe his confutation of the sinfull doctor. the mott or posie, in stead of omne tulit punctum: Pacis fiducia nunquam. as much to say, as I sayd I would speake with him* (London, 1596),

de Nicolay, Nicholas *Navigations, peregrinations and voyages, made into Turkie*, trans. by T. Washington (London, 1585)

Ortelius, Abraham, *Theatrum orbis terrarum Abrahami Ortell Antuerp. geographi regii. The theatre of the vvhole world: set forth by that excellent geographer Abraham Ortelius* (London, 1606)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Arthur Golding, ed. by Madeleine Forey, (London: Penguin, 2002)

Plutarch, *The lives of the noble grecians and romanes compared together by that graue learned philosopher and historiographer, plutarke of chæroneia; translated out of greeke into french by iames amyot ... ; and out of french into englishe, by thomas north* (London, 1579)

Regnans in Excelsis available at < <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius05/p5regnans.htm> > [accessed 24 November 2019]

Richard Coer de Lyon, trans. by Peter Larkin (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015) in *TEAMS Middle English Texts* < <https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/larkin-richard-coer-de-lyon> > [accessed 30 June 2019]

Sidney, Philip, *The Major Works Including 'Astrophil and Stella'*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Shakespeare, William *The Winter's Tale*, ed. by Ernest Schanzer (London: Penguin Books, 1969)

-----, *Henry V*, ed. by A.R. Humphreys (London: Penguin Books, 1996)

-----, *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. by Emrys Jones (London: Penguin Books, 2005)

-----, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by M.M. Mahood (London: Penguin, 2005)

-----, *The Arden Titus Andronicus*, ed. by Jonathan Bate (London: Bloomsbury, 2006)

-----, *The Oxford Shakespeare Hamlet*, ed. by G.R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

-----, *Othello*, ed. by E.A.J Honigmann (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)

-----, *The Tempest*, ed. by Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan (London: Arden, 2011)

Spenser, Edmund 'Epithalamion' in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume B*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt *et al* (London: W.W. Norton, 2012), pp. 990-9

-----, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche Jr (London: Penguin, 1987)

Stubbes, Philip, *The anatomie of abuses contayning a discouerie, or briefe summarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many christian countreyes of the worlde: But (especiallie) in a verie famous ilande called ailgna ...* (Part 1) (London, 1583)

Terrell, Katherine H. (ed), *Richard Coeur de Lion* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2019)

The Book of Common Prayer, ed. by Brian Cummings, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

The right pleasant and variable tragicall historie of fortunatus. whereby a yong man may learne how to behaue himselfe in all worldly affaires, and casuall chances. / first penned in the dutch tongue. therehence abstracted, and now first of all published in english, by T.G. (London, 1640)

The second tome of the palace of pleasure conteyning store of goodly histories, tragicall matters, and other morall argument, very requisite for delighte and profit. chosen and selected out of diuers good and commendable authors: By william painter, clerke of the ordinance and armarie. anno. 1567 (London, 1567)

The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham in A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays, ed. by Martin Wiggins, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-68

This is the begynnyng, and contynuaunce of the pylgrymage of Sir Richarde Guylforde Knyght [and] controuler unto our late soverayne lord kynge Henry the vii. And howe he went with his servauntz and company towards Jherusalem (London, 1511)

Worsop, Edward, *A Discouerie of Sundrie Errours and Faults Daily Committed by Lande-Meaters, Ignorant of Arithmetike and Geometrie* (London, 1582)

Wroth, Mary, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (Abridged)*, ed. by Mary Ellen Lamb (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adelman, Janet, 'Iago's Alter Ego: Race as Projection in *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48.2 (1997), pp. 125–44 < <https://doi.org/10.2307/2871277> > [accessed 30 September 2022].
- Andrews, Kenneth *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1984)
- Arbel, Benjamin, Hayes, Evelien, & Hendrix, Harald (eds.), *Cyprus in the Renaissance (1450-1650)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012)
- Archibald, Elizabeth, 'Ancient Romance' in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), pp. 10-25
- Artemel, Suheyra, "'The Great Turk's Particular Inclination to Red Herring': The Popular Image of the Turk during the Renaissance in England", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 5.2 (1995), 188-208 (201, n. 6) < muse.jhu.edu/article/670136 > [accessed 20 March 2022]
- Austen, Gillian, *George Gascoigne* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008)
- Bartels, Emily, 'Too Many Blackamoors: Deportation, Discrimination and Elizabeth I', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 46.2 (2006), 305-22 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3844644> > [accessed 11 April 2021]
- , *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008)
- Bergeron, David M., "'Are we turned Turks?': English Pageants and the Stuart Court", *Comparative Drama*, 44.3 (2010), 255-275 < <https://www.proquest.com/docview/765949743?accountid=9730> > [accessed 20 March 2022]
- Blamires, David, *Fortunatus In His Many English Guises* (New York: The Edwin Mellor Press, 1996)
- Boose, Lynda, 'Othello's Handkerchief: "The Recognizance and Pledge of Love"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 5.3 (1975), 360-374 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446828> > [accessed 30 September 2022]
- Bradley, A.C., *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Braudel, Fernand, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age Of Philip II*, trans by Siân Reynolds, (London: Fontana, 1975 [1949])
- Brotton, Jerry, *This Orient Isle* (London: Penguin, 2016)

Bruster, Douglas, *Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000)

Calderwood, James, *The Properties of Othello* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989)

Calvelli, Lorenzo, 'Archaeology in the Service of the Dominante' in *Cyprus and the Renaissance (1450-1650)*, ed. by Benjamin Arbel, Evelien Chayes and Harald Hendrix, (Turnhout, Brepols: 2012), pp. 19-66

Campana, Joseph, *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012)

Carrabine, Eamonn, 'Reading a "Titian": Visual Methods and the Limits of Interpretation', *Deviant Behavior*, 39.4 (2018), 525-538 < <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2017.1407113> > [accessed 19 August 2022].

Cassio, A.C. 'Kypris, Kythereia and the Fifth Book of the *Iliad*' in *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*, ed. by Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos and Christos C. Tsagalis (Boston: de Gruyter, 2012), pp. 413-26

Cawley, Robert Ralston, 'George Gascoigne and the Siege of Famagusta', *Modern Language Notes*, 43.5 (1928), 296-300 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2914136> > [accessed 12 April 2019]

Chew, Samuel, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England During the Renaissance* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965 [1937])

Christofides, R.M., *Othello's Secret: The Cyprus Problem* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016)

-----, 'Othello, Cyprus and the Greater Middle East: Past Present, Future', *Shakespeare* 16.3 (2020), 225-238 < <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2020.1790638> > [accessed 30 September 2021]

Clay, William K. (ed.), *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Prayer* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1847)

Collington, Philip D., 'Othello the Traveller', *Early Theatre*, 8.2 (2005), 73-100 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43499259> > [accessed 9 July 2021].

Conover, James H., *Thomas Dekker: An Analysis of Dramatic Structure* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015)

Cooper, Helen, *The English Romance in Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Dadabhoy, Ambereen, 'Two Faced: The Problem of Othello's Visage' in *Othello: The State of Play*, ed. by Lena Cowen Orlin (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2014), pp. 121- 48

d'Amico, Jack, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991)

DeVries, Kelly, 'A Tale of Venetian Skin: The Flaying of Marcantonio Bragadin' in *Flaying in the Pre-Modern World: Practice and Representation*, ed. by Larissa Tracy (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 51-70

Dimmock, Matthew, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005)

-----, *Mythologies of the Prophet Muhammad in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

-----, 'Experimental Othello' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, ed. by Ayanna Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 93-107

Duffy, Eamon, *Stripping the Altars: Traditional Religion in England (1400-1580)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)

Dutton, Richard, 'The Court, the Master of the Revels, and the Players' in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 362-379

Eche, Antoine, 'The Shores of Aphrodite's Island' in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 91-106

Edbury, Peter, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191 – 1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Ettinghausen, Henry, 'International Relations: Spanish, Italian, French, English and German Printed Single Event Newsletters Prior to Renaudot's Gazette, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 261-79

Evans, Robert C., *Othello: A Critical Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

Findlay, Robert R., 'Macklin's 1748 Adaptation of Ford's "The Lover's Melancholy"', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Theatre*, 8.1 (1969), 13-22 < <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/macklins-1748-adaptation-fords-lovers-melancholy/docview/1294920902/se-2?accountid=9730> > [accessed 23 September 2021]

Frazer, Paul, 'Performing Places in Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus*' in *Philological Quarterly*, 89.4 (2010), 457-80 < <https://www-proquest-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/docview/926958703?accountid=9730> > [accessed 5 September 2019]

Furniss, W. Todd, 'Gascoigne and Chaucer's Pesen', *Modern Language Notes*, 68.2 (1953) < <https://www-jstor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/2909702> > [accessed 26 August 2020]

Garber, Marjorie, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004)

Gillespie, Stuart, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

Goffman, Daniel, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

Grantley, Darryll, *London in Early Modern English Drama: Representing the Built Environment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008)

Graves, Wallace, 'Plutarch's Life of Cato Utican as a Major Source of *Othello*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24.2 (1973), 181-7 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2868856> > [accessed 21 Oct 2021]

Häberlein, Mark, *The Fuggers of Augsburg: Pursuing Wealth and Honor in Renaissance Germany* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2012)

Habib, Imtiaz, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008)

Hadfield, Andrew, 'Introduction' to *Shakespeare and the Renaissance*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield and Paul Hammond (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 1-19

Haigh, Christopher, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

Haldane, Michael, 'From Renaissance Augsburg to Jacobean London: The Translation of Place and Social Relationships in English *Fortunatus* Adaptations' in *Daphnis*, 36.1-2 (2007), 185-222 < <https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/18796583-90001020> > [accessed 2 June 2020]

Hamel, Mary, 'The Siege of Jerusalem as a crusading poem' in *Journeys toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, ed. by B.N. Sargent-Baur (Chicago: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 177-84

Herford, Charles E., *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1966)

Hopkins, Lisa 'John Ford and Cyprus', *Notes and Queries*, 44.1 (1997), 101-2 < <https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/nq/44-1-101> > [accessed 13 December 2021]

-----, 'Marriage as Comic Closure' in *Shakespeare's Comedies*, ed. by Emma Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 36-54

-----, 'Love and War on Venus' Island: Othello and the Lover's Melancholy' in *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 25.1 (2016), 51-64 < <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/670667> > [accessed 23 May 2018]

-----, *From Romans to Normans on the English Renaissance Stage* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2017)

-----, *Greeks and Trojans on the Early Modern English Stage* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020)

Howard, Jean E., 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', *English Literary Renaissance* 16.1 (1986), 13-43 < <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43447342> > [accessed 11 April 2019]

Hoy, Cyrus, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in 'The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker' edited by Fredson Bowers, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)

Hughes, Bettany, *Venus and Aphrodite: History of a Goddess* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2019)

Hunt, Sir David (ed.), *Footprints in Cyprus* (London: Trigraph, 1990)

Hutchings, Mark, *Turks, Repertories, and the Early Modern English Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

Jones, Ann Rosalind and Stallybrass, Peter, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Kaeuper, Richard W., *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Kinoshita, Sharon, "'Noi Siamo Mercatanti Cipriani': How to Do Things in the Medieval Mediterranean" in *Philippe de Mézières and His Age* ed. by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kiril Petkov (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 41-60

Kinoshita, Sharon and Jacobs, Jason, 'Ports of Call: Boccaccio's Alatiel in the Medieval Mediterranean', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37.1 (2007), 163-95

Knutson, Roslyn Lander, *Playing Companies and Commerce in Shakespeare's Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Lange, Alexis F., 'On the Relation of *Old Fortunatus* to the *Volksbuch*', *Modern Language Notes*, 18.5 (May 1903), 141-4 < <https://doi.org/10.2307/2917211> > [accessed 20 Nov 2020]

Leech, Clifford, 'A Projected Restoration Performance of Ford's "The Lover's Melancholy"', *The Modern Language Review*, 56.3 (1961), 378-381 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3720267> > [accessed on 23 September 2021]

Lublin, Robert, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern Theatre and Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011)

MacKenzie, Clayton G., 'Antony and Cleopatra: A Mythological Perspective', *Orbis Litterarum* 45.2 (1990), 309-329 < <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0730.1990.tb01970.x> > [accessed 30 September 2022]

-----, 'Fortuna in Shakespeare's Plays', *Orbis Litterarum*, 56 (2001), 355-366 < <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.0105-7510.2001.oli560503.x> > [accessed 1 January 2021]

Manion, Lee, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Markidou, Vassiliki, "'I goe outlandishe lyke, yet being Englishe borne': Catholic England, the Ottoman Empire, Venice and Fragile Identities in George Gascoigne's *A Devise of a Maske for the Right Honorable Viscount Mountacute*", *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 37. 2 (2011), 79-95 < https://brill-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/journals/erc/37/2/article-p79_6.xml > [accessed 11 April 2020]

Marshall, Peter, "'Rather with Papists Than with Turks" the Battle of Lepanto and the Contours of Elizabethan Christendom', *Reformation*, 17.1 (2012), 135-59 < <https://doi.org/10.1558/refm.v17.135> > [accessed 11 May 2019]

-----, *Heretic and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)

Matar, Nabil, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

Mas, José Ruiz, 'English Travelers in early modern Cyprus: Piety, commerce and anti-Ottoman sentiment', *Sederi*, 31 (2021), 93-115 < <http://www.sederi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/S31.5.Ruiz-Mas-OA-.pdf> > [accessed 6 December 2021]

McAlindon, Tom, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. xxi – lxxiii

McKeown, Adam N., *English Mercuries: Soldier Poets in the Age of Shakespeare* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2009)

Mulready, Cyrus, *Romance on the Early Modern Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Mulryan, John, 'The Three Images of Venus: Boccaccio's Theory of Love in "The Genealogy of the Gods" and his Aesthetic Vision of Love in the "Decameron"', *Romance Notes*, 19.3 (1979), 388-94

Neill, Michael, 'The Moral Artifice of "The Lovers Melancholy"', *English Literary Renaissance*, 8.1 (1978), 85-106 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43446919> > [accessed 23 September 2021]

Nicholson, Helen J., *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade: A Translation of the Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997)

Nicolaou-Konnari, Angel and Schabel, Chris, *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191-1374* (Leiden: Brill, 2005)

Norako, Leila K., 'Sir Isumbras and the Fantasy of Crusade' in *The Chaucer Review*, 48.2 (2013), 166-89 < muse.jhu.edu/article/522480 > [accessed 5 May 2019]

Oliphant, E.H.C., *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine Their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others* (New York, Phaeton Press, 1970)

Parker, K. Scott, 'Peter I de Lusignan, the Crusade of 1365, and the Oriental Christians of Cyprus and the Mamluk Sultanate' in *Medieval Cyprus: A Place of Cultural Encounter* ed. by Sabine Rogge and Michael Grünbart (Münster: Waxmann, 2015), pp. 53-71

Pettegree, Andrew, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (London: Yale University Press, 2014)

Prager, Debra, 'Fortunatus: "Auß dem Königreich Cipern" Mapping the World and the Self', *Daphnis*, 33.1 (May 2004), 123-160 < <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/fortunatus-auß-dem-königreich-cipern-mapping/docview/195462499/se-2> > [accessed 15 August 2019]

Publicover, Laurence, *Dramatic Geography: Romance, Intertheatricality, and Cultural Encounter in Early Modern Mediterranean Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Riley-Smith, Jonathan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

Robinson, Benedict S., *Islam and Early Modern English Literature: The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Rogge, Sabine and Grünbart, Michael (eds), *Medieval Cyprus: A Place of Cultural Encounter* (Münster: Waxmann, 2015)

Rosenthal, Margaret, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992)

Salamon, Linda Bradley, 'Gascoigne's Globe: *The Spoyle of Antwerpe* and the Black Legend of Spain', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 14.1 (2008), 1-38 < <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/14-1/article6.htm> > [accessed 24 May 2020].

Sayers, William 'Chaucer's Description of the Battle of Actium in the *Legend of Cleopatra* and the Medieval Tradition of Vegetius's *De Re Militari*', *The Chaucer Review*, 42.1 (2007) < <https://muse-jhu-edu.bris.idm.oclc.org/article/217688> > [accessed 26 August 2020]

Schlueter, June, 'New Light on Dekker's "Fortunati"', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, 26 (2013), 120 -135 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24322743> > [accessed 11 January 2021]

Sensabaugh, G.F., 'Burton's Influence on Ford's "The Lover's Melancholy"', *Studies in Philology*, 33.4 (October 1936), 545 – 571 < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4172338> > [accessed 26 August 2021]

Setton, Kenneth Meyer, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204-1571 Volume IV The Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1984)

Shapiro, Michael, 'Early (Pre-1590) Boy Companies and their Acting Venues' in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Richard Dutton, [n.p.] on *Oxford Hand Books Online* < <https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697861.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199697861-e-8?print=pdf> > [accessed 11 May 2020].

Sherman, William H, "'Gold is the strength, the sinnewes of the world": Thomas Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and England's Golden Age', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 6 (January 1993), 85-102 < https://www-jstor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/24321954?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents > [accessed 24 November 2020]

Skura, Meredith Anne, 'Reading Othello's Skin: Contexts and Pretexts', *Philological Quarterly*, 87.3 (2008), 299-334 < <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/reading-othellos-skin-contexts-pretexts/docview/211143727/se-2?accountid=9730> > [accessed 23 February 2021]

Smith, Ian, 'The Textile Black Body: Race and "shadowed livery" in *The Merchant of Venice*' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Race and Sexuality* ed. by Valerie Traub (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 170-85

Sokol, B.J., *Shakespeare and Tolerance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Sowerby, Tracey A., 'Elizabethan Diplomatic Networks and the Spread of News' in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 305-27

Spates, William, 'George Gascoigne's Device for a Maske: An Anglicized "True Report" of the Siege of Famagusta' in *City of Empires: Ottoman and British Famagusta*, ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp. 26-43

-----, 'Power, Peril and Maritime Trade Wish Fulfillment in Thomas Dekker's *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus*' in *Famagusta Maritima*, ed. by Michael J.K. Walsh, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 200-217

Steggle, Matthew, 'Othello, the Moor of London', in *Othello: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Evans (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), pp. 103-24

Strong, Roy, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977)

Sugden, Edward H., *A Topographical Dictionary To The Works Of Shakespeare And His Fellow Dramatists* (Manchester: The University Press, 1925)

Tracy, Larissa (ed), *Playing in the Pre-Modern World* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017)

Tomita, Soko (ed), *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Italian Books Printed in England, 1558-1603* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2016)

Tosi, Laura, 'Shakespeare, Jonson and Venice: Crossing Boundaries in the City' in *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 143-65

Vander Elst, Stefan, "'The holiness of that forsaken place": The Purpose of Sin in the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*', *Studies in Philology* 116.2 (2019), 195-208 < <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2217856091?accountid=9730> > [accessed 21 August 2019]

Varnava, Andrekos, *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878-1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012)

Vaughan, Virginia Mason, 'Supersubtle Venetians; Richard Knolles and the Geopolitics of Shakespeare's Othello' in *Visions of Venice in Shakespeare*, ed. by Laura Tosi and Shaul Bassi (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 19-32

-----, *Shakespeare and the Gods* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2021)

Vitkus, Daniel J., 'Turning Turk in Othello: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.2 (1997), 145-76 < [https://www.jstor-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/2871278](https://www.jstor.org/bris.idm.oclc.org/stable/2871278) > [accessed 15 November 2018]

-----, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570 -1630* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2003)

-----, 'Labor and Travel on the Early Modern Stage: Representing the Travail of Travel in Dekker's *Old Fortunatus* and Shakespeare's *Pericles*' in *Working subjects in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Natasha Korda (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 225-42

Watkins, John, 'Elizabeth Through Venetian Eyes', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 30.1 (2004), 121-148 < <https://doi-org.bris.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/23526963-90000278> > [accessed 25 May 2020]

Wallace, David, *Boccaccio: Decameron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Welsford, Enid, *The Court Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927)

Wheatcroft, Andrew, *Infidels: A History of the Conflict Between Christendom and Islam* (London: Penguin, 2004)

Wiggins, Martin and Richardson, Catherine (eds), *British Drama 1533 – 1642: A Catalogue Volume II 1567 - 1589* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

-----, Catherine (eds), *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue (Vol. 5)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) at *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* < <https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-com.bris.idm.oclc.org/display/10.1093/actrade/9780198719236.book.1/actrade-9780198719236-div2-88?rskey=IOuk8Z&result=1> > [accessed 5 Sep 2021]

Wittek, Stephen, *The Media Players: Shakespeare, Middleton, Jonson, and the Idea of News* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015)

Wood, James O., 'Woman With a Horn', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 29.3 (1966), 295-300 (298). < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3816773> > [accessed 12 Dec 20]