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Royal Authority and Erotic Desires: Marlowe's Views on Kingship

in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, and *Edward II*

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Departmental Honors Thesis
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
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“And, in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.”

Queen Elizabeth I, “Response To The Parliament’s Request
She Marry” (10 February 1559)

Introduction: Two Decades in Elizabeth’s Court

Many Elizabethan entertainments were masque-dramas and pageants written as offerings to the queen by poets at the behest of courtiers, civil corporations or universities. Performed at court or when the queen was on a progress, these allegorical pastimes were devised to flatter the queen, and to display the inventiveness and loyalty of her subjects. Their purpose was also political, as the queen was bound by rules of hospitality to listen and participate in these offerings. Typically, the patrons would use these plays to promote both general and specific political objectives (Wilson 9-10). Plays, unlike entertainments, were not offerings to the monarch and did not require a royal presence. Consequently, it was more important for plays to be monitored and censored, and so in May 1559, Elizabeth prohibited any discussion of religion and politics in popular dramas. Under these circumstances, popular dramas had to be overtly general in their subject matter and obscure in their allusions in order to avoid political censorship (Bevington 2-3).

Christopher Marlowe was a playwright whose popularity stemmed from the stage and not from courtly appeals for status. Much of what is known about Marlowe is inferred from close readings of the extant copies of his play texts, and from information provided by individuals with dubious credibility, such as Richard Baines, an Elizabethan double agent, ordained Catholic

priest and, most famously, the author of the infamous Baines Note, a list of accusations against Marlowe himself (*The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*). What can be gleaned from his plays is a deep-rooted interest in the throne, the nature of the king's authority, and much like courtiers who preceded his own writings, the queen's own approach to the usage and portrayal of her sovereign authority. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *Edward II* offer the most insight into Marlowe's opinions of Elizabeth's court with both valorizing Elizabeth's decision to remain perpetually celibate, despite the appeals of her court and potential suitors. Despite the myth surrounding Elizabeth as an icon of virginal purity, the first decade of her reign had her court filled with potential suitors.

During the first two years of her reign, there appears to have been no play or entertainment which touched on the question of the queen's marriage. At this time, there was little sense of urgency as there was a surfeit number of suitors in Elizabeth's court, and most witnesses believed that she would choose one of them when the time was right. Even though she preferred a single life, there was no indication that she took a vow of celibacy. When she responded to a parliamentary petition that she married, she told her House of Commons that, "it may please God to encline my harte to an othere kynd of life," and "ye may well assure yourselves my meaninge is not to do or determyne anie thinge wherwith the realme may or shall have juste cause to be discontent" (Hartley 45). Royal servants, therefore, had no reason to worry about the queen's marriageability; in fact, as Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Sussex explained, there were many advantages and disadvantages to all of the candidates:

And I confesse that some tyme the great amytye, some tyme the gret ryches that myght be gotten by forein marriages, some tyme the exampell of King Philip, some tyme the knitting of Scotland, and some tyme the dowte of desire of domesticall persons to exalte or overthrowe olde friendes or fo[e]s according their affections, have drawn me diversely in opinion so as I have been much dowtefull

where to settle whilst these persuasions wrought in my head (Public Records Office SP 63/2; accessed in *Nationalarchives.gov.uk*).

As a result, few of the court came out in support of any particular suitor, and most preferred to consolidate their own political positions before a royal consort was chosen. While rival candidates squabbled among themselves, there were no major divisions among the courts over the matrimonial question to disrupt political life. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that no entertainments or plays focused on the question of the queen's marriage.

In the early 1560's, however, the political situation changed when the wife of Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, and the queen's acknowledged favorite, passed away. Even while officially in mourning, he began to maneuver to win the queen's hand and consolidate his political position. His suit, much liked by Elizabeth, had only the support of some lesser figures in the court, while the most important, including Secretary William Cecil, Sir Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and Philip Howard, 1st Earl of Arundel strongly disliked his bid for marriage (British Library Manuscript 48023). For this reason, Dudley began to make dealings with Philip II of Spain and in return for Spanish help he offered to arrange for an English representative to be sent to the Council of Trent and a papal nuncio to be received in the English court (*Calendar of State Papers Spanish 1558-1567*, 178-180, 199-203). Elizabeth, in the spring of 1561, decided that she could not marry her favorite under these conditions. Nonetheless, Dudley held onto hope that his courtship would be successful as suitors began to melt away one by one with Eric XIV of Sweden being unequivocally turned down in December of 1561 (*Calendar of State Papers Foreign 1561-1562*, 444).

By this point, with the Dudley match as the focal point of interest in the court, *Gorboduc* written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, which depicts King Gorboduc splitting the kingdom between his two sons before his death, created something of a stir when it was

performed during the Christmas celebrations of the Inner Temple in January 1562, first in their own Twelfth Hall and again 18 January in the court (*The Diary of Henry Machyn* 273-274).

Although the play is sometimes portrayed as an appeal that the Grey line should be legitimized to parliament as a viable contender for succession (*The Elizabethan Succession Question 1558-1568* 38-44), the play has little or nothing to do with the Grey right of succession. Admittedly, the question of succession had become more acute in 1561 with Catherine Grey's secret marriage to the earl of Hertford and the birth of their child, whom Elizabeth insisted was a bastard; it is also true that Catherine turned to Dudley for her protection before her admittance to the Tower, so there is a possibility that he may have been prepared to take to court a play to support her claims. Nonetheless, it is clear both from the context in which it was performed and from the text itself that *Gorboduc* was more preoccupied with the royal marriage and was intended to further the suit of the Inner Temple patron, Dudley.

Gorboduc was not meant to be seen as a standalone play but rather as "furniture of part of the grand Christmas of Inner Temple" and therefore should be interpreted as part in the whole of revels on that day (*Machyn's Diary* 273-274). This included not only the plays that were performed in the afternoon but also the masques in the evening: *The Prince of Pallaphilos* and *Beauty and Desire*. In the *Queen's Two Bodies*, Marie Axton unravels the imagery of the masque, through the myth of Pallaphilos that the lawyers were presenting their Christmas Prince, Dudley as a suitable candidate for marriage by fabricating a classical genealogy for him, and through the wooing allegory of Desire and Lady Beauty the masque pressures the queen into accepting Dudley as her consort (Axton 40-45). *Gorboduc*, performed the preceding afternoon, was intended to show the dire consequences should Elizabeth refuse to marry Dudley.

Gorboduc follows the same vein in which the *Mirror of Magistrates* (1559) contends that all monarchs should use poetry and entertainments as a mirror in which to learn how to behave wisely and morally (Doran 261). Thus, the play was designed to send a clear message to Elizabeth about the dangers following her reign, should she follow in the actions of King Gorboduc. Just as King Gorboduc defied the natural order of the kingdom by dividing it up between his two sons, Elizabeth would do the same if she fails to produce an heir to ascend the throne. Similar language of swift retribution was used in a parliamentary petition in January 1563 in which Thomas Norton is believed to have some hand in writing (Hartley 92).

However, a decade later following the failed courting of Dudley, and the failed proposition by parliament for Elizabeth to wed Henry, Duke of Anjou, *The Lady of May* presented by Philip Sydney was performed before the queen as a supposed petition for the queen to accept Leicester as her suitor. However, the interpretations of the play upon its performance were ambivalent, with some believing it to be a courtly petition by Leicester and others believing its purpose was to press for more interventionist policies on the continent (Doran 269). Earlier in the same year, Elizabeth had to reconsider her policy of military non-intervention in the Netherlands. On 31 January the rebels there were decisively beaten by the Spanish army at the battle of Gembloux and needed foreign assistance to stave off further defeat. Since Elizabeth was still hesitant to commit herself to provide direct military aid, the States turned to Francis, Duke of Anjou for aid. French intervention was seen by Elizabeth and all of the Privy Council as running counter to English interests, but while some, including Leicester, argued it could be prevented by the queen agreeing to act as military protector of the States, Elizabeth wanted if possible to avoid this course of action; instead, she began to raise talks about a potential renewal of the Duke of Anjou's marriage proposal in order to control his actions, and in mid-May 1578

she sent Sir Edward Stafford to France to raise the marriage proposal with queen-mother, Catherine de Medici (Doran 269). The first decade of Elizabeth's reign was predicated by the court's desires for the queen to marry, with even the queen herself agreeing should she find a proper suitor; however, by the 1570s the queen's chastity and independence became the key focal point upon which playwrights and balladeers showed their loyalty and fidelity to their queen.

There is no evidence to indicate that Christopher Marlowe was known in the court in any capacity, especially in the first decades of Elizabeth's reign. By the time Elizabeth's status as a perpetual celibate became the center of courtly proceedings and political identity, Christopher Marlowe was attending Corpus Christi Cambridge. But his enrollment in Corpus Christi meant that he was likely aware of *Gorboduc* and *The Lady of May*, and in 1585 Marlowe was most likely already working in some capacity for the court through Sir William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley and the Lord High Treasurer to Elizabeth's court, which may have given him some insight into the proceedings of the court and the importance of these plays. Though they may not have directly influenced Marlowe in ways that Ovid and Virgil did, plays such as these did have some of the same sparks of interest about the role of monarchs and the rights to succession that Marlowe's own plays had. In particular, Marlowe's interests are focused upon the conceptual belief in divine-right, or divine intervention in the ordinance of a new king, and how Elizabeth's status as perpetually celibate circumvents divine-right. Though there is no concrete timeline of Marlowe's plays, there is enough evidence to build a rough timeline of dates for each play. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* was written at some point in 1585, and *Edward II* was written in 1593, and in these eight years, Marlowe finds both immense popularity for his verbosity as a dramatist, but also immense scrutiny for his play's subject matter. Despite the dichotomy between popularity

and scrutiny, Marlowe's plays were still pro-Elizabeth and meant to valorize her new position in the court as a ruler who uses her virginity as a tool of statecraft and the expansion of English imperialism, a position that this essay will explain by juxtaposing *Dido, Queen of Carthage* with *Edward II*.

I. Elizabeth's Pro-National Identity in *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

Dido, Queen of Carthage, written by Christopher Marlowe, in collaboration with Thomas Nashe, sometime between 1585 and 1588, is the dramatized text of the first four books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Marlowe rewrites his source material to valorize Elizabeth I's *de facto* choice to maintain her chastity her entire life. In the forty-four years of her reign, Elizabeth I was symbolic in representing English national identity on the global political stage; her devotion to her nation and her refusal to take a husband, either in the nation or a foreign member of royalty, should have resulted in the image of a strong, independent nation, modeled after the mythical Brutus of Troy's founding of the British race. In reality, however, her status as a perpetual celibate did not celebrate the independence of the nation modelled after Brutus's legendary founding of the British Isles, but rather it celebrated the political acumen of a female monarch and how she became synonymous with English imperialism.

Brutus of Troy was a seminal figure whose history was embellished through Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britan*, which included people like Caratacus and Arthur. Immediately, the *History* emphasizes the mythical status of the Kings of Britain, particularly Brutus's status as the great-grandson of Aeneas, giving the most direct link to divinity in the earliest forms of English monarchy: after Brutus and his men sacked Pandrasus's lands he went to commune with the gods where Diana came to him in a dream and told him, "Brutus, beyond

the setting of the sun, past the realm of Gaul, there lies an island in the sea.... Down the years this will prove an abode suited to you and your people; and for your descendants it will be a second Troy. A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the round circle of the whole earth will be subject to them” (Monmouth 65; trans. Lewis Thorpe). If this history is to be believed, then the *Aeneid*'s Dido should be the most dangerous political enemy to English national hegemony because she denies Virgil's Roman hero. Virgil's Dido represents a jilted paramour whose self-immolation was a necessary step in the establishment of a greater empire. For centuries, the *Aeneid* provided a model of British self-fashioning as a “second Troy” modeled after Brutus of Troy. *Dido, Queen of Carthage* illustrates the kinds of revisions necessary when centuries of Virgilian exemplarity confronted female-dominated sovereignty in Elizabeth.

As this section will make clear, the play reworks its source to highlight both the problem and potential of Elizabeth as counterpart to Dido. Dido was a highly controversial figure, for her salubrious pre-Virgilian reputation compromised by her self-immolating desires for Aeneas. To a certain extent, Dido's avowed chastity and charged sexuality make her a perfect counterpart to Elizabeth. Yet her unstable reputation – is she an uncanny seductress or hapless victim, African or European? – reinforces rather than assuages anxieties about having a female sovereign. Paradoxically, in spite of Elizabeth being the maker of English national identity, her association with Dido constructs her as the quintessential Other: exotic and eroticized because different, and dangerous because female.

By showing Dido as simultaneously predator and victim, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* reveals the intensely labile roles that Elizabeth I chose and was expected to perform. At a time when Elizabeth was focusing her energies on expansion and supporting Sir Walter Raleigh's

expeditions to Virginia, and the travels of John Newbery and Ralph Fitch to India, it celebrates a ruler known for her chastity and her nation. The play, however, obliquely dramatizes the loss of sovereignty that Elizabeth avoided to resolve about the question of marriage by characteristically refusing to resolve it at all. As will be made clear in the succeeding sections of this essay, Elizabeth's refusal to take a potential suitor as her husband and using their courtly petitions to bolster England parallels Dido's own refusal to fall to Aeneas's rhetoric while simultaneously transforming Aeneas into the more unappealing of the two. And after Marlowe and Nashe finished *Dido* the story of the *Aeneid* was never the same again. As *Dido, Queen of Carthage* transforms Virgil, the play undermines the stability of racial and geographical hierarchies and categories, demonstrating the flexibility of interpreting discourses of gender and colonialism in the early modern period.

The popular association of Elizabeth with Dido is through her name. Dido is known in history and legend as Elissa (Cartwright). As Dido became popularly associated with Elizabeth, the name Elissa became confused with the name Eliza, a short form name for Elizabeth that Spenser associates with Elizabeth in the *Shepherd's Calendar*. The earliest reference to Dido was Greek historian Taormina, and though his writings did not survive, later writers reference him, the most popular of which was Virgil (Gill). Dido/Elissa was a descendent of the Phoenicians who left Egypt and founded a settlement in Syria. Her brother Pygmalion, King of Tyre, had her husband, Sichaeus, killed. Dido committed suicide rather than accepting the forced marriage to Iarbas, king of Gaetulia, that Pygmalion forced on her. According to another related source, Sichaeus visited Dido in a dream and warned her of Pygmalion's treachery and hand in his murder. Dido immediately fled Pygmalion's court, sailing the Mediterranean with a band of loyal followers until they landed on the shores of Carthage. When she landed in Carthage, she

told the inhabitants that she did not wish to establish a large settlement and wished for a cowhide to mark her territory. She then proceeds to strip the cowhide into the thinnest strips possible and establish borders of a massive city. In honor of the cowhide that established her borders, she named the highest tower Byrsa (*Aeneid* 1, 86). Interestingly enough, the word “Brysa” translates etymologically to “open minded, leadership and courage” which reflects the exact way which Dido’s own cunning helped to create Carthage.

Reflecting her reputation for intrepid wanderings and intelligence as a political leader, Elissa’s name shifts to Dido, “the valiant one.” According to Christine de Pizan, the name Dido is related to the Latin phrase *virago*, a woman who has the strength of a man (*Le livre*). Charles Estienne’s 1670 *Dictionarium historicum* describes Dido as “*vagam seu erraticum*,” – translated as “wandering or erratic,” typing her etymologically with Aeneas himself (Estienne). As the founder of an expansionist empire, she is indeed associated with Aeneas, as her Carthage draws a model that came before Rome as an empire that grew from a simple trading outpost along the Mediterranean. During the Punic Wars when Carthage represented a major obstacle to Roman expansion, Hannibal (whom many believe to be the “vessel” of Dido’s revenge) made military history when he led his armies and his elephants through the Alps.

In spite of the classical sources, however, in the *Aeneid*, Virgil reconfigures Dido from the cunning queen with power to rival Rome into a scorned consort of Aeneas. No longer is she the queen of a country with enough manpower and influence to prove a real threat to Roman expansion; instead, she is a woman rejected by Venus as ill-fit and inappropriate to serve as Aeneas’s consort. Furthermore, her rejection by Venus makes her a forced foil to Aeneas’s own legitimacy as a ruler through his genealogical heritage. In the *Aeneid*, Dido’s fidelity to her deceased husband is a mere pretense and she willingly falls into Aeneas’s arms after having

heard the dangers he had faced to land in Carthage. She believes in the permanence of her relationship with Aeneas, in fact, going so far as to exchange marriage vows with him, and she is devastated upon his leaving Carthage. According to Aeneas, she is enflamed with her love for him; fire in the *Aeneid* is a recurring motif that preludes Dido's self-immolation: "[H]e alone has swayed my will and overthrown my tottering soul. I recognize the traces of the olden flames" (Virgil 622). Through the usage of fire as a symbol, Virgil implies that Dido is limited by her passions: raging, like a fire out of control, identifying her as the histrionic Other whom Aeneas must dominate.

Thus, Virgil transforms Dido and vicariously Carthage from an expansionist rival and military opponent into the inferior colonized, tying Aeneas's sexual domination of Dido into another notch in his imperial ascendancy. He makes Dido powerless when confronted with the demands of the empire: while Aeneas leaves for Rome, Dido alone remains burning with desire. Dido's irrepressible sexual desires anticipates an Orientalist stereotype anatomized by Edward Said that she is: "That impossible creature whose libidinal energy drives him to paroxysms of over stimulation – and yet... a puppet in the eyes of the world, staring out at a modern landscape he can neither understand nor cope with" (*Orientalism*). The Otherness that Virgil's Dido represents is an inferior creature who cannot understand or interpret the advances of "modern" society, modern, in this case, as the necessity of Carthage's burning for the sake of Rome. Thus, Virgil necessitates Aeneas's presence to manage and tame the Otherness of Dido into a mold acceptable to patriarchal society.

Virgil's portrayal of Dido generates a dynamic literary discourse that carried on for centuries. Often the best her staunch supporters can do is portray her as a wronged woman. Ovid,

who memorializes Dido with erotic longing, highlights the connection between Aeneas's sails and the evaporating promises he made to his lovers:

Are you resolved, Aeneas, to break at the same time from your moorings and from your pledge, and to follow after the fleeting realms of Italy, which you know not where? ... What is achieved, you turn your back upon; what is to be achieved, you ever pursue. One land has been sought and gained, and ever must another be pursued, through the wide world (*Heroides*).

Dido's final wish is to die, and in doing so she hopes to restore her honor and undoing the wrongs committed against her deceased husband, Sichaesus. However, Ovid transforms Aeneas into the lover through associating him with his fleeting wishes to carry on to Rome, despite the fact that he has found Carthage. Ovid's associating Aeneas with his sails implies that Aeneas is as whimsical and free as the air and holds the fleetingness of his desires as the reason for which he cannot remain in Carthage. With Ovid's transformation of Aeneas, overtime Dido becomes the more interesting of the two characters, transforming the story of Rome's foundations into a story about the tragic fall of a heroine worthy of being associated with Elizabeth. As we will see, Marlowe's Dido is undoubtedly Ovidian in nature, highlighting and emphasizing the eroticism of Dido while also emphasizing her craftiness by transforming the political moments that, in the *Aeneid*, highlighted Aeneas as the primary driving force, into moments necessary to highlight her own cunning.

Dido, Queen of Carthage opens with a stunning tableau of the juxtaposition between the playful, theatrical eroticism between Jupiter and Ganymede and Juno's heartfelt antagonism. Jupiter and Ganymede's love runs counter to the possessive, single-minded devotion of Dido to Aeneas. Like Jupiter and Ganymede, Elizabeth enjoyed amorous, flirtatious relationships outside the conjugal norm, but not eroticized relationships of dalliances with members of the court. The power imbalance in their relationship is consistent with Elizabeth's relationships; though

sometimes she liked to play the coquette, Elizabeth, like her father, Henry VIII, typically liked to take the dominant role. Like Jupiter, Elizabeth enjoyed “dandling” (1.1 stage dir.; from the Italian *dandolo* meaning “doll”) her minions, cup bearers and boy toys (Williams 44). They address her, as Ganymede addresses Jupiter, with tones of abject adoration, and sought to win her and present her with tokens of affection, such as “linked gems” (1.1.48), and jewels for their ears. Minions, more than marriage, was the reality of Elizabeth’s sexuality.

Placing Jupiter’s desires against the backdrop of the maternal watchfulness of Venus, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* dramatizes a conflict Elizabeth experienced throughout her reign: the rival claims of what her father called “pastimes with good company,” or sometimes called “The King’s Ballad,” written by Henry VIII shortly after his coronation (*Hyperion*), and the monarch’s duty to oversee the affairs of the state. Like Venus, Elizabeth was often forced to intervene in courtly dalliances when duty called and send her men, as Venus sends Hermes off to the “disquiet seas” to look after her interests abroad (1.1.146). As the mother of Aeneas and great-grandmother of Brutus, Venus is Elizabeth’s legendary ancestor; she is also the embodiment of desire, who remains elusively remote and unattached: a role Elizabeth was used to playing with her courtiers. In *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Venus recalls the Queen Dido as a single girl, implying that through her decisions to remain single, Elizabeth has remained forever young. The inclusion of Venus in the sexual dalliances of Jupiter and Ganymede carves out a space for female eroticism outside of the expectations and demands of Juno, or what Aeneas later calls “female drudgerie” (4.3.66). Dressed in leopard’s prints, Venus recalls Elizabeth’s own enthusiastic participation in dramatizations of her own iconography (Peele 1.1.182). Leading the shipwrecked crew to her “sister” Dido, who is also dressed in a “quiver girded to her side, / And

cloathed in a spotted leopards skin” (1.2.62-64), Venus could just as easily be directing them to Elizabeth’s court.

While Venus’s disguise alludes to Elizabeth’s involvement in masques and pageants, Aeneas’s ability to identify her – he insists, “I know her by the movings of her feet” (1.2.126) – transforms a moment of filial pathos in Virgil into an acknowledgment of an essential quality of queenship that cannot be obscured. But Aeneas’s own uncertain nomenclature associates both Diana and Venus with Elizabeth: “But whether thou the sun’s bright sister be, / Or one of chaste Diana’s fellow nymphs” (1.2.72-73). By associating both goddesses with Elizabeth Marlowe conflates Elizabeth’s perpetual virginity and her political acumen to a mythical status beyond her father, Henry VIII which directly contradicts patrilineal heritage and the reliance upon blood lineage to define the rules of governing a nation.

Undoubtedly, Dido’s final thoughts are of marriage. Wives in Dido’s Carthage are noticeably absent. Elizabeth discouraged marriage among her attendants and was notorious for her banishment of married ladies-in-waiting, only restoring courtiers into her good graces if their wives maintained distance from the court. Dido is depicted as gloating over her bevy of suitors, Greeks and Trojans, musicians and orators, princes and warriors and bemused by her ability to remain unaffected and unattainable (3.1.224-240). When Iarbas begs, “How long, fair Dido, shall I pine for thee?” (3.1.10) the question ventriloquizes Elizabeth’s courtiers’ desperate pleas. When Iarbas’s realization of the hopelessness of his pining for Dido magnifies just how the courtiers of Elizabeth must swallow their pride and anger when their own time in the sun is over. Dido’s relationship with Iarbas, a rather small detail by Virgil magnified by Marlowe, possibly alludes to the relationships Elizabeth maintained with favorites such as Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, which produced rumors about the true nature of their suggested intimacy. In her

relationship with Iarbas, Dido maintains a front of virginal purity which places her beyond desires:

I fear me, Dido hath been counted light
 In being too familiar with Iarbas;
 Albeit the gods do know, no wanton thought
 Had ever residence in Dido's thoughts (3.1.18-21).

As Juno rages against Jupiter and plots the murder of Aeneas's son Ascanius the image of the married woman is that of a murderous, jealous and crazed woman but most importantly a threat to the foundations of an empire. The emphasis upon Dido's virginal purity may imply Marlowe's opinion that Elizabeth's refusal for claiming a paramour in her court is a positive boon in favor of English imperialism. Elizabeth's preference for a single life and the propagandistic transformation from virginal celibacy to perpetual celibacy in the first two decades of her reign makes her the symbolic icon of England's own unattainability by other nations. Much like Dido's coquettish handling of her court, England under Elizabeth's rule remains close enough to generate political and economic discourse with other countries but permanently out of reach.

Dido, Queen of Carthage dramatizes an alternative perspective on a foundational narrative of western masculinity. Gifting Aeneas with the robes Sichaeus wore gives him the mark of her ownership as much as a favor. And by having him sit in her seat further marks him as someone upon whom she maintains ownership, allowing him to dine and sit where he may because of this ownership (2.1.115-118, 132). Dido's first words to Aeneas call attention to his alienness in Carthage: "What stranger art thou, that dost eye me thus?" (2.1.106). Addressing Aeneas in an imperious tone, as if she were interrogating one of her men who had just returned from abroad, Dido proceeds to weigh the narratives in her mind before arriving at her own conclusion:

May I entreat thee to discourse at large,

And truly too, how Troy was overcome?
 For many tales go of that city's fall,
 And scarcely do agree upon one point (2.1.159-162).

In this scene, Marlowe turns one of the most popular passages from Book Two of the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas's verbosity anticipates his sexual mastery of Dido, into a passage of queenly condescension (2.103-106; trans. John Dryden). Marlowe's Aeneas is neither princely nor golden tongued but "warlike" (2.1.112). He presents himself with humility, a breach of princely manners, upon which Dido chastises him: "Remember who thou art; speak like thyself; / Humility belongs to common grooms" (2.1.149-150). Remembering his trials, Aeneas describes himself as "miserable" (2.1.152). Unlike Virgil's Aeneas whose trials in Troy raise him to eloquence, Marlowe's Aeneas sinks into the faint, fading into an obscurity that Dido chastises him for.

When he is finally able to speak, Aeneas associates himself with Achilles, identifying himself with his enemy, a notorious hothead and sulk with silent, savage rages, rather than seductive prolixity. Marlowe's Aeneas is unable to replicate the oratorical eloquence of his Virgilian counterpart; he reduces the enthralling narrative of his predecessor into a few simple words, transforming high-toned Virgilian seriousness into low-browed comedy: "Sometime I was a Trojan, mighty queen: / But Troy is not: - what shall I say I am?" (2.1.114-115). Far from the breathless rapture Virgil's Aeneas holds over Dido, his Marlovian counterpart frequently intervenes with conjecture and questions, in which her responses build a female-oriented version of the fall of Troy. Seeing the weaknesses in Aeneas's tale, Anna and Dido ask questions such as, "O what became of aged Hecuba?" and "But how 'scaped Helen...?" (2.1.356,360), thus calling attention to the gaps in his narrative where he leaves women behind, such as his wife Creusa, and Cassandra who had begged to be taken with him. The interest Anna and Dido have

in the abandoned women undermines pure Trojan masculinity and overshadows the fates of Priam and Hector and anticipates Aeneas's betrayal of Dido. No longer a hero, Aeneas is transformed into a stranger whose bloody, savage speeches upsets rather than attracts Dido, enough that upon his account of the death of Priam she begs him to cease (2.1.354).

Resisting proto-Orientalism Otherness, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* transforms Aeneas into the silent and ill-at-ease Other. What is, in Virgil's epic, a forward-looking mandate of expansion and duty becomes, in Marlowe's play, the lame excuse of someone unwilling to commit: "I am commanded, by immortal Jove / To leave this town, and pass to Italy" (5.1.137-138). What makes Aeneas an especially unattractive figure in *Dido* is his overt reliance on religious authority. Aeneas explains his departure in terms of submission to filial and religious authority. Here, Marlowe transforms filial obedience and a sense of duty, qualities praised by Virgil, into a determinist, even superstitious, abdication of personal responsibility. Readers may be inclined to view this as Marlowe's distance from orthodox structures of belief, but its primary effect is to diminish Aeneas's claim to the status of imperialist and colonizer into a mere chattel to fate and religious authority.

By rewriting the *Aeneid* into making Aeneas the Other in favor of Dido, Marlowe rejects England's mythical origins by reducing the gods-ordained ruler's verbosity and grandeur into mere sideshow for the decisively more interesting Dido. In rejecting Aeneas's rule, but touting Dido's political acumen, Marlowe is surreptitiously rejecting the notion that divine ordinance is the necessary qualification in the crowning of a king. Elizabeth's ascension to the throne was one of the earliest examples of an English ruler who was not the first male child born to the previous ruler, and since her unconventional ascension left anxiety among different strata of English society, Marlowe's play serves as a conventional form of praise that masque-dramas could not

provide. The plays rejection of divinity validates Elizabeth's refusal to marry suitors she deemed unworthy of serving England national identity. Marlowe's opinions of Elizabeth changed very little over the years from when he first wrote the play in 1585 to his death in 1593; instead, Marlowe's opinions of the Queen's court grew stronger with his maturation as a writer with *Edward II* being his greatest defense of Elizabeth's courtly ambitions.

II. Defending Elizabeth's Court in *Edward II*

In the eight years of Marlowe's professional career his writing noticeably matured, but his pro-Elizabeth vision of the court remained. The most noticeable example is *Edward II*, the only history play in his career, that retells the reign of Edward II and his subsequent deposition. Marlowe juxtaposes Dido's court in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* where Dido's mastery over both her courtiers' and her courtly affairs with the political acuity of a seasoned ruler with the unattractive rule of Edward II, whose handling of his court resulted in his deposition and murder. By comparing Edward II's court with Dido's court, Marlowe pressures the belief that a king's authority is not all-encompassing, nor is it through the myth of divine ordinance that crowns a ruler. Rather, Marlowe's depicting Edward II's troubled reign is used to show that Elizabeth's handling of the court is the ideal way in which a ruler should handle affairs of the nation.

Edward II is the last play of Marlowe's career in which he reinforces his praise of Elizabeth's court by comparing her triumphs with the dull, unattractive reign of Edward II and his ill-fated, destructive attraction to Piers Gaveston, his acknowledged favorite. Marlowe juxtaposes *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *Edward II* by focusing on the flaws in Edward's granting Gaveston status and courtly rank. In doing so, he is defending Elizabeth's perpetual celibacy and imperialist ideology by comparing the court at the time he wrote the play to the

court of a deposed and murdered ruler. Unlike *Dido* focusing upon the relationship between Dido the colonizer and Aeneas the colonized, *Edward II* shifts focus to the external effect that such a relationship has on court affairs and the overall running of an empire.

Edward II opens with the acknowledged favorite of the king being bidden back to the king's fold. Immediately, Jupiter's (and Elizabeth's) own "dandling" of his favorite is missing, instead the favorite is requested to return to the sovereign, flipping the dynamic between master and minion in the opening scene of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Rather than the provocative and playful petulance between Jupiter and Ganymede and the adoration of Ganymede for his patron, *Edward II* reveals a royal favorite without his patron, a favorite whose patron pursues him instead. As opposed to the unadulterated admiration of the court for the sovereign, Edward II proves time and time again that he is not the coquettish seducer of his favorites as Elizabeth was, but rather he believes himself to be "Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston!" (1.1.195). The king's reducing himself to the same level of his favorite predisposes him to being merely a courtier to his desires. Similar in scope to Aeneas, Gaveston's return grants him status and power, placing him vicariously in a position similar but removed from Edward II. Similar because Edward grants him power on par with his own, but different because Gaveston is a member of lower class granted power by his patron because of the erotic feelings the two share (1.1. 121-127). Vesting him with status and power could be interpreted as Edward's placing claim on Gaveston like Dido staking claim to Aeneas and his men upon landing in Carthage. But, unlike Dido simultaneously treating Aeneas as one of her men regaling her with his conquests and exploits, Edward II claims to his beloved, "Thy worth, sweet friend, is far above my gifts, / Therefore, to equal it, receive my heart" (1.1.218-219). Edward symbolically presenting his heart to Gaveston gives the minion the dominant position in the master/minion relationship.

Flipping the power dynamic between patron and favorite pressures the mythos of kingship that Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* created. The conceptual understanding of the unattainable, untouchable nature of the king proposed and adapted by English royalty to affirm the throne's mythic connection to divine lineage is erased by Edward II, which begs the question of the exact nature of the king's authority. The homoerotic implications of Gaveston's and Edward's affair are unanswered or pressured by Marlowe, but critics and scholars have tried to make the notion of homoerotic desire central to the play's conflict. Jennifer Brady argues that the Younger Mortimer, apparently threatened by the potential sliding from homosocial to homoerotic "approves and vicariously participates in" Edward's murder, which becomes, "a phobic, sadistic denigration of homosexual love" (Brady 177). Obvious objections to this reading arise: the text makes clear that Mortimer is not privy to the exact nature of Edward's murder, and Mortimer himself replies, "his wanton humor grieves not me" to his uncle's oft-quoted speech containing his advice, "Let [Edward] without controlment have his will. / The mightiest kings had their minions" (1.4.598-610). Conversely, Bruce R. Smith takes a moderate approach on the significance of the "master" and "minion" relationship in early modern England, claiming, "Edward and Gaveston play out the roles of master and minion, with all the disparities in power those roles imply," concluding that, "the role of 'minion' does not quite fit Gaveston," in part because he "enjoys tremendous power" (Smith 211). I am more inclined to agree with Smith's assessment of Gaveston's position and view him as *Edward II's* attempt at creating an equivalent for the tremendous power Dido held.

By placing the favorite as the dominant in the master/minion relationship, the play attempts to minimize and reduce Edward's role to mere side show with Gaveston's taking central stage, similar to Aeneas's verbosity and grandeur relegated to the background in Marlowe's

Dido, but *Edward II* does not do this. Rather, the play creates situations where Edward is thrust onto center stage in highly emotional and impactful moments meant to draw the audience's sympathies or build upon their preexisting conceptions of a king's authority. Where these emotional moments fail however is because Edward's own rhetoric is as boring and overtly reliant upon his status as king as Aeneas's reliance upon divine authority to minimize his responsibilities, reducing these impactful moments into mere pandering for his own ego. One such example is when the Elder Mortimer is captured by the Scots in a war Edward II inherited upon ascension, and yet Edward is more focused on his own affairs and on Gaveston, who had recently returned from exile for a second time (2.2.236-258). Rather than focusing on the external threat to England's borders, Edward creates a narrative for himself and Gaveston that he believes should be of more apparent importance to his courtiers. Edward's emphasizing his love for Gaveston over affairs of the state pressures the courtiers and admirers of the king to respond in kind. But unlike the fawning adoration of courtly admirers ever present in *Dido's* (and Elizabeth's) court, the nobility respond by threatening violence and "lawful revolt" from the king (1.2.110).

In contrast with *Dido's* court where her playful coquettishness maintains courtly loyalty and enforces the unattainable nature of her throne, Edward's seductive petulance is merely pretense for his personal desires. Instead of using his unattainability for the cause of England's sovereignty, he internalizes his position and rationalizes it to create a narrative in which he can "have some nook or corner left, / To frolic with my dearest Gaveston" (1.4.113-114) by dividing up the kingdom among members of the court. Here Edward's petulant desire for privacy contrasts with *Dido* who claims:

The ground is mine that gives them sustenance,
The air wherein they breathe, the water, fire,

All they have, their lands, their goods, their lives,
 And I, the goddess of all these, command
 Aeneas ride as Carthaginian king (*Dido* 4.4.101-107).

Implicit here is Dido's claim to both Carthage and to Aeneas, and by simultaneously claiming both as belonging to her, she shows her understanding that she is both patron and "goddess" of Carthage. In contrast, Edward's division of his court denies himself ownership of England. Combining the flipped power dynamic and the division of the kingdom, Edward II creates an image of a weak-willed and selfish king.

Unlike Dido, whose Otherness is the result of the unanswered questions, Edward's Otherness is easier to define. He is exotic because he's the lawful king, but dangerous, because he's a self-fashioned personal king. By framing England's lawful ruler as a self-fashioned Other, Marlowe's play is presenting a damning question that is characteristically unanswered at the play's outset: What should the king's court do against an unlawful king? Paradoxically, Dido's court represents Elizabeth's own, and Edward's court represents a court of "sexual promiscuity, heathenism and... a tendency towards irrational and degenerate behavior" (Hendricks 174). In framing Edward's court as the court of "heathens" Marlowe builds a narrative in which the barons are right for their "*lawful* revolt" (1.2.110; emphasis added) against the king. Lawful discourse against the crown was not uncommon for the councilors of Elizabeth I. Secretary William Cecil, Lord Burghley was famous for his wise and faithful service to Elizabeth for more than 40 years, and, at certain points, such as the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, would use parliamentary discourse to assuage and mitigate some of Elizabeth's policies (*Queen Elizabeth I and Government*). Similar to Secretary Cecil's council and advice, the Earl of Kent, and Mortimer alongside the rogue barons at certain points, offered fair advice and service to the crown. Upon Gaveston's first return to the courts the barons with the aid of the Archbishop of

Canterbury devised a petition to banish Gaveston from the court once more: “We and the rest, that are his counsellors, / Will meet, and with general consent / Confirm his banishment with our hands and seals” (1.2.105-107).

Despite the efforts of the Archbishop and the barons, Gaveston’s banishment is rescinded and favorite and patron are reunited once more. Marlowe’s emphasizing Isabella, wife to Edward II, as the architect of Gaveston’s and Edward’s reunion raises the question of women’s roles in courtly affairs. Isabella’s affections for Edward are parallel to Edward’s own affections for Gaveston which creates a dynamic between lover and jilted paramour similar to Dido and Aeneas. The difference in the lover/jilted paramour relationship shared between Isabella and Edward and the relationship between Dido and Aeneas is that order is restored to the courts in *Edward II* and the jilted paramour’s fate is vague and unknown, after changing from lover to libelous rebel after numerous failed attempts at swaying Edward. In comparison, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* ends with Dido’s self-immolation and an irreconcilable void in Carthage’s power. Despite both plays paralleling each other, *Edward II* imposes a damning concept of the ruler rejecting and alienating himself from his council and courtiers by privatizing himself from affairs of the state.

The external affairs of England are briefly touched on in *Edward II* though they are never expanded on. The Elder Mortimer is captured in the war against the Scots under Edward’s banner to which the Younger Mortimer criticizes Edward for “drawing thy treasure dry,” through “lascivious shows, / And prodigals gifts bestowed on Gaveston” (2.2.265-267). The Younger Mortimer further claims, “Libels are cast against thee in the streets,” and “The northern borderers, seeing the houses burnt, / Their wives and children slain, run up and down, / Curs[e] the name of Gaveston and thee” (2.1.291,294-296), which emphasizes the extent to which the

personal affairs of the court have affected the running of the nation, and the responses of the general public in the face of a lack of strong, centralized authority. Despite the concrete evidence of external dangers to England by the Elder Mortimer's capture and the claims of civil unrest from the Younger Mortimer, Edward responds with:

My swelling heart for very anger breaks!
 How oft have I been baited by these peers,
 And dare not be revenged, for their power is great!
 Yet, shall the crowing of these cockerels,
 Affright a lion? Edward, unfold thy paws,
 And let their lives' blood slake thy fury's hunger (2.2.223-228).

Rather than worrying about affairs of the state, Edward rationalizes the complaints of his court as being a direct slight against him and his approach to ruling. And through this rationalization of personal slight, Edward decides that the external threats of the country are not the true threat, but rather his peers are the true threat. Revealed in this excerpt is his fear of the baiting of his peers "for their power is great!" (2.2.225), and that should he not do anything they will continually bait him away from the narrative he created when he tried to divide the kingdom the first time.

Edward alienates himself from his court, allowing for the seeds of unrest and insecurity to boil over into the destructive actions of the third act of *Edward II* where the relatively stable world of the first two acts of the play disappear. Again, similar to Act 3 of *Dido*, where the gods directly intervene to capture Dido's heart for Aeneas's sake when the two of them are caught in a cave during a storm, the act opens with the capture and execution of Gaveston which, if Edward were a proper king, should have resulted in the restoration of order to the courts; however, Gaveston's execution not only escalates the tension in the play to irreconcilable proportions it shatters the court completely. Gaveston's execution is the breaking point in which Edward declares:

[*Kneeling*] By earth, the common mother of us all

By Heaven, and all the moving orbs thereof,
 By this right hand, and by my father's sword,
 And all the honours 'longing to my crown,
 I will have heads, and lives for him, as many
 As I have manors, castle, towns, and towers (3.2.172-179).

For the first two acts Edward was reactionary to the accusations posed against him by his barons. But only when word of Gaveston's execution comes does he proactively take a leading role in punishing those that go against his rule and orders. By declaring his intentions to both heaven and the memory of his father, Marlowe is showing Edward's reliance upon a higher power to deny himself responsibility in meting out his actions against his court. By having Edward make this oath, Marlowe creates another division in the court where he emphasizes the "irrationality and degenerate behavior" (Hendricks 174) of Edward's actions against his councilors.

Conversely, the infamous cave scene of Act 3 in *Dido* has a similar effect but wholly different outcome. The act opens with Dido not loving Aeneas for love's sake, but for the boon that having him in Carthage is for the county: "To war against my bordering enemies. / Aeneas, think not Dido is in love" (3.1.200-201). But the act causes an irreconcilable shift in Dido's approach to her treatment of love paradoxically at odds with the Dido of the first two acts of the play. Gone is the woman with queenly condescension and admonition of one of her subjects, in her place remains a woman who cannot brook or reconfigure Aeneas's words into a forward facing narrative of her own design, and in doing so it flips the relationship dynamic between Dido and Aeneas as master and minion to the same one that exists between Edward and Gaveston.

Edward's lineage had the potential of making him into a fine ruler, as in the early modern period, blood and genealogy were of paramount importance in politics and court. As child to Edward I, whose fearsome reputation as the Hammer of the Scots made him a weighty threat

against other countries (Cartwright), Edward II had a strong genealogical background to build his reputation upon. Aeneas's genealogy is quite similar to Edward's own; as the child of Venus and Anchises, Aeneas has claims to both divine and royal origins. With both characters emblematically acting as the head of English court the dangers of their Otherness that Marlowe is emphasizing assuages the potential anxieties that crop up around Elizabeth's own court and her handling of the courtly affairs. *Dido* establishes a reconfigured story of English national identity by transforming Virgil's *Aeneid* into a pro-female monarchy outside the conjugal norm, and vicariously establishing Dido as one example of a model for English imperialism. Her lack of patrilineal and genealogical identifiers in Marlowe's play means that readers have to find another vector of political identity to correlate with her, and since the only remaining vector is Carthage itself, which, for the opening acts of the play, serves as a viable threat against Rome, is the most direct allusion to Elizabeth herself.

Comparing the actions of the courts in both of Marlowe's plays reveals both sides of Elizabeth's own court: Edward's court represents the dangers Elizabeth's own Otherness represents to England, but this is assuaged and mitigated by the close connection between Dido and Elizabeth that Marlowe enforces. In contrast however, as Edward II's own reign is the de facto Other against English national identity Marlowe is writing an interesting narrative that allows for audience members and future generations to speculate on about his personal feelings regarding the crown and the throne. As Marlowe's primary interest is in the high-minded overreacher and his astounding lines meant to dominate the world of the play, then scholars and critics have to use this frame of reference for authorial intentionality in his plays. The question of authorial intentionality is speculative for all scholars, but I have framed Marlowe's first and last play in his career as mirrors to each other; both represent aspects of the greatest source of world-

orienting and sovereign power in all of Elizabethan England in Elizabeth herself. Edward uses England for personal gain; Dido uses Aeneas for Carthage's gain *through* her. Similar yet diametrically opposed, Edward and Dido represent two schools of belief in Elizabeth's reign that Marlowe provides his own insight and answers to, for which his works have helped to influence both contemporaries and later generations of poets.

III. Marlowe's Influence

Published in quarto in 1594 and performed by the Lord Chamberlain's men in 1597, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* influences and informs both contemporary and future poets to create revisionist and subversive reworkings of the *Aeneid*. By telling the other side of the story, Marlowe's play raises questions concerning the humanity of the colonized: sympathetic yet tragic or monstrously Other? Pious or faithless, Aeneas is no longer the attractive hero meant to emblemize English hegemony, and Troy no longer represents the model for English fashioning. Dido, moreover, has been dignified by her association with Elizabeth.

One poet who used Marlowe's and Nashe's revisions of the *Aeneid* for the handling of erotic love in his plays is Shakespeare. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, written in 1594 (the same year that *Dido* appeared in quarto), Lucentio makes the following statement to his friend Tranio, upon seeing Bianca for the first time:

Thou art to me as secret and as dear,
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was:
Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio
If I achieve not this modest young girl (1.1153-156).

Lucentio recalls the active role Marlowe's and Nashe's *Dido* plays in seducing Aeneas. By placing himself in the role of Dido and Tranio in the position of Dido's sister Anna, Lucentio identifies himself with the Virgilian thread of ardent female passion.

A year later Shakespeare writes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where he preserves the love quadrangle of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* with the development of the roles of Anna and Iarbas. As Aeneas and Iarbas both love Dido, Dido only loves Aeneas, and Anna hopelessly love Iarbas, despite knowing he will never look her way; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has Lysander and Demetrius both loving Hermia, Hermia loves only Lysander, and Helena somewhat hopelessly loves Demetrius. Hermia alludes to the inspiration behind this arrangement when she aligns herself with Ovid's anti-Virgilian reading of the tale in her vow to Lysander: "And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen, / When the false Troyan under the sail was seen, / By all vows then ever men broke" (1.1.173-175). Moreover, while Titania's status as Queen of the Faeries codifies Elizabeth's mythical status, her love for Bottom, viewed through the lens of *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, is cast in the same absurd mold as Dido's love for Aeneas.

Marlowe not only influences Shakespeare's vision in his comedies, but Marlowe's influences also translate to his tragedies and history plays. Most notably *Edward II* influences *Richard II*. Beyond the similarities between the overall narratives of each respective play with the banishment of both Gaveston and Henry Bolingbroke in each respective play, their return to court, and a series of events that lead to the deposition of each titular monarch, the language and the artistry of both plays are in a similar vein. There are authorial differences in each, the most notable of which is the manner of the banished men's return to the court, with Henry Bolingbroke returning to reclaim his lands that Richard II repossessed upon Bolingbroke's banishment, and Gaveston's return to court through the courtly appeals of Isabella to remain in the good graces of the grieving King Edward. Despite these differences, the sentiment still remains that Marlowe's influence as one of the architects of the early modern stage remains. However, despite his influence on the English stage much of what has passed into history about

Christopher Marlowe is either hearsay or based on the evidence and testimonies of men such as Richard Baines, whose validity and credibility as a reliable source of information is speculative at best, or from information and pardons given by the Privy Council on behalf of the man himself (*The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*). The only concrete pieces of evidence we have into the mindset and thought process of the poet is through his short run as a dramatist. And even then the amount of information we have at our disposal is a small treasure trove upon which scholars have speculated and pondered over for years.

There is no doubt that Marlowe brushed shoulders with the lowest society has to offer, and simultaneously his status as an author gave him the range of mobility and freedom that the strictures of hierarchical society did not offer to everyone. He had a close connection (not friendly in some cases but a close working connection) with men such as Ingram Frizer, Robert Poley and Richard Baines; however, conversely, he was under the patronage of Thomas Walsingham, nephew to Sir Francis Walsingham spymaster to Elizabeth's court. He had a working relationship with Sir Walter Raleigh, though the exact nature of their relationship is subject to speculation – were they close because of Sir Walter Raleigh's supposed atheistic beliefs, just as Marlowe had been accused of multiple times? – and he was known by Robert Cecil upon the earls elevation to Secretary and spymaster following Sir Francis Walsingham's death (*The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe*). The fluidity of Marlowe's movement in society and his actions in service to the crown undoubtedly influenced his works, hints of which have to be dissected from his verbosity and high-minded mighty lines. Though questions still remain about many facets of Marlowe's life, this essay is not meant to answer any of them; rather, this essay's purpose is to glean some more insight into the exact nature of Marlowe's interest in the throne and Elizabethan politics. Since his association with less-than-

savory people and his own wild character makes extrapolating any concrete continuity of life difficult, one immutable fact about him remains, his mighty lines are influential, allowing for later generations of dramatists to use his own works as inspiration for their own poetry and plays.

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