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From Heroes to Villains: Deconstructing Masculinity in Marlowe's Plays *Doctor Faustus* (1604), *Tamburlaine* (1590), and *The Jew of Malta* (1592)

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Abstract

This study investigates the various ways in which masculinity is portrayed in Christopher Marlowe's plays Doctor Faustus (1604), Tamburlaine (1590), and The Jew of Malta (1592). The connection between gender, power, and morality is the primary emphasis of this examination. To investigate how Marlowe's characters transition from heroes to villains, the research draws on gender studies and psychoanalysis. In doing so, it dissects the cultural and sociological notions that formed what it meant to be a man in early modern English society. Through this study, we learn more about Marlowe's perspective on masculinity and its influence on the way individuals conceptualized gender during the Elizabethan age. According to the findings, the concept of masculinity in Marlowe's writings is multifaceted, subject to change, and intricately connected to the power systems that existed in that era.

Keywords: Classic Literature, Christopher Marlowe, Dr Faustus, The Jew Of Malta, Tamburlaine

Introduction

One of the most well-known Elizabethan playwrights, Christopher Marlowe, composed plays. that looked at many different issues, such as power, morality, and gender identity. Marlowe's plays, Doctor Faustus, Tamburlaine, and The Jew of Malta, all have male characters whose tangled relationships with masculinity, power, and self-worth show how challenging it was to live up to society's expectations in early modern England. Marlowe wrote these plays. This study aims to look at how masculinity is portrayed in these plays by breaking down the usual

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heroic roles and This study examines the anxieties of masculinity that influence character development. The goal of this study is to look at how the characters in Marlowe's works represent the change from heroes to villains, which shows how ideas about masculinity changed over the Elizabethan era.

Review of the Literature

Christopher Marlowe was a brilliant playwright from the Elizabethan age. He authored several works that are still popular today. To fully appreciate Marlowe's complex view of masculinity in plays like "Doctor Faustus" (1604), "Tamburlaine" (1590), and "The Jew of Malta" (1592), you need to look at the historical and cultural factors that influenced his view. There is little doubt that males almost always perform the lead or other important roles in Christopher Marlowe's plays. Randall Martin also says that Marlowe's plays "are defined by more uniformly masculinist assumptions." (72) Martin The best way to explain what Marlowe's principal guys do is to use Martin's synopsis. Psychoanalysis tests each of these male Marlowian characters, which might show that they are more complicated than first thought. This is true of practically every literary character. On the surface, most of these individuals seem to be very straightforward, motivated by impulses and basic wants that push them to acquire as much as they can, whether it's knowledge, wealth, power, or territory (or any mix of these).

Connell's article "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept" questions the notion of hegemonic masculinity, which is the form of masculinity that some people accept and promote in specific situations. He says that what it means to be a man is not set in stone or true for everyone, but rather the ideas of power and social interactions. Proser discusses on violence in Marlowe's plays and how it makes us think differently about the characters and what they do (Connell 834). Proser's research probably looks at how aggression influences the motivations and acts of Marlowe's characters, which helps us understand how they construct masculinity and the power dynamics in their relationships (Proser 302). The main thing to look at will be the actions, thoughts, and beliefs of the male characters. We will read the passages carefully and think about them. The project will use ideas from gender studies. First, we look at the instances when the characters in Marlowe's plays have moral conflicts and become better people. This helps to break down the image of masculinity as a hero and a villain. Second, we look at what Marlowe's plays say about how masculinity was established, broken down, and then rebuilt in early modern English society.

Deconstruction is like breaking down an old, weak, and broken structure (patriarchal heterosexualism) that has been harmed over time and by the components of the physical environment (the sociocultural milieu) that are continually becoming worse. (Philaretou and Allen 302) Some prevalent male values are valuing independence, rationalism, and aggression more than emotional attachment; managing emotions at the cost of emotional attachment; freely expressing sentiments and wants; and applauding physical strength and violence (Kaufman 29). These cultural values, beliefs, and expectations help set the basic standards for how males should behave. People are continually writing and rewriting these norms dependent on the time, place, and economic situation (White 165).

On the other hand, there are critics who believe that the lives of Marlowe and the lives of his characters are connected, and they believe that this might help explain the recurring problem of masculinity. The example of Marlowe is provided by Kuriyama. Marlowe was primarily concerned with developing a male identity that would please him and match the expectations of others for his masculinity to take on forms that are socially acceptable (Kuriyama 107–108). The playwright's personal concerns about authority, disobedience, and desire are reflected in Marlowe's characters that exhibit evidence of a masculinist complex, according to Ronald Huebert, who notes that these three themes appear frequently in Marlowe's life and work (Huebert 211–212). The plays of Tamburlaine depict a type of man whose identity is intimately connected to concepts of authority, dominance, and power. Additionally, the main character has a strong devotion to the concepts of hegemonic masculinity, which is a representation of the man's identity.

Kuriyama says that Tamburlaine thought that "an acceptable and secure male identity was the elusive object of perpetual quest" (Kuriyama 217). From the very first moment he is shown to the audience (Part I, Act I.ii), it is evident that Tamburlaine wants to have a strong male identity. In his long speech to encourage Theridamas to join him, he states, "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains" (I.I.ii.174). "Jove sometimes wore a shepherd's weed as a mask, and by those steps that he has climbed to the heavens, we may become immortal like the gods" (I.I.ii.199–201). Eugene M. Waith says that Marlowe may be showing a man who will do everything to be successful, or he might be showing how funny it is that a man feels proud of himself and his accomplishments at the same time. Kuriyama says that Tamburlaine is "overwhelmed with victory" and that this conduct is "an attempt to fill a narcissistic void so huge that nothing in heaven or earth can satisfy it"

(Kuriyama 217). Waith agrees with the idea that "earthly dominance symbolises the accomplishment of his purpose, the accomplishment of himself" (Waith 67). In the Second Part, Tamburlaine cuts his arm in front of his kids, which Kuriyama calls "evidence of bravery" (Kuriyama 115).

Methodology

This research takes a qualitative approach, carefully reading and analysing the texts to look at the major themes and character development in Doctor Faustus, Tamburlaine, and The Jew of Malta. The study is based on the ideas of gender studies, with a focus on the idea of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, psychoanalytic theory is employed to explore the internal conflicts surrounding masculinity that the characters encounter. The primary approach involves a thorough examination of specific episodes where the characters grapple with their notions of masculinity. For instance, Tamburlaine's aversion to effeminacy and Faustus's desire for omnipotence serve as pertinent illustrations of this approach. The research project integrates secondary materials, such as scholarly papers, books, and critiques, to contextualize the original texts within the broader discourse on gender and power dynamics during the Elizabethan era.

Insecurities and the Quest for Dominance: Masculine Struggles in Marlowe's Plays

Tamburlaine may have trouble being a guy because he is afraid of being feminine. John P. Cutts, who agrees with this claim, says that Tamburlaine "is basically effeminate, possessed by an almost demoniacal need to compensate for this and for the mean estate of his birth" (vii). Tamburlaine's "beautiful" comment in the fifth act of the first half backs up this claim quite well. Zenocrate's long speech, which comes after his plea for Tamburlaine to have mercy on Damascus, provides a deep look at what Tamburlaine thinks about beauty. He doesn't understand how beauty, which he just thinks of as ladies, could have such a big effect on him. It makes things worse because he has a hard time believing that Zenocrate is really thinking about his proposal that he not take Damascus. "But how unseemly is it for my sex, my discipline of arms and chivalry, my nature, and the terror of my name to have thoughts that are weak and effeminate?" he says. (IV. i. 174–177). This statement shows that Tamburlaine is afraid of not being good enough (Cutts 38). Tamburlaine says that the size of his realm shows how strong he is as a man. People would doubt his power and authority if he even thought about not following orders, especially if

a woman gave him orders. This shows that Tamburlaine is easily swayed by his feelings.

Tamburlaine's anxieties are a clear evidence that he has a more complex idea of manhood, and they are the main reason he has trouble being a man. It is said that "if a man's level of success in battles with men defines his masculinity, then women are a dangerously effeminising influence if they try to discourage one from participating in such competition" (Kuriyama 30). Tamburlaine thinks that women would undermine his authority and, as a result, his manhood. It may be that the potential revelation of his encounters with femininity poses a greater threat to Tamburlaine than the experiences themselves. Consequently, we are presented with the final sentence of his "beautiful" soliloquy. “Who’s within there?” (I.V.i.191) presents a declaration steeped in a profound sense of uncertainty and delusion. Regrettably for Tamburlaine, it is evident that no external force can suppress the emergence of his inherent gentleness, which contrasts sharply with his usual exhibition of authoritative masculinity. Nevertheless, Tamburlaine's concern remains partially unresolved. In the subsequent phase of his existence, particularly in Part II, we see that he is really focused on his kid Calyphas, his "girlish little boy," which makes him feel bad about himself. (Wath 79). Tamburlaine was adamant about bringing down Calyphas in order to demonstrate his manliness. His neurotic anxiety renders him vulnerable to threats, and the domineering individual will exploit this power to eliminate any indication of vulnerability that causes him to feel threatened.

The soldiers in Tamburlaine show features that are linked to a more complex notion of masculinity, which suggests that this issue should be explored more deeply throughout the play. The way Tamburlaine interacts with his men shows how powerful leadership can be on the behavior of a group as a whole. The combatants "depend on the conventions of culture, not just for advantage but also to keep their huge accolades alive" (Shepard 736). The soldiers—Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane—may not be as important to the story as Tamburlaine, but their roles are worth looking at since they might show what kind of person Tamburlaine is. Their quiet display of a masculinity issue may be a sign of the features shown by their insecure boss. These troops act as dedicated followers, following Tamburlaine's lofty and ambitious orders without inquiry.

This repeated pattern of unquestioning obedience shows how male dynamics continue to affect Tamburlaine's military hierarchy. When people look at Theridamas Tamburlaine, they often point out how he compares himself to deity.

For example, he confidently says, "A god is not so glorious as a king. I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven cannot compare with kingly joys on earth" (I.II.v.57). Some people would say that the troops follow Tamburlaine because they are afraid of him since he is aggressive and lethal. Others might say that they are devoted to him because they want to win, gain power, and feel safe as men. Following Tamburlaine is a definite way to win, since followers take comfort in the unshakeable power of a leader whose masculinity is unquestionable, which helps them deal with their own doubts. As a result, the soldiers who follow Tamburlaine's orders, no matter who they are, do what he says, which includes acts of conquest, torture, and killing. They find comfort in their loyalty to a strong masculine figure that protects them from their own doubts about life. The relationship between Faustus' journey and the concepts of power, knowledge, and moral judgement is the subject of Hattaway's analysis. The ethical implications of his decisions and their correlation with Elizabethan gender norms are the subject of her discussion (Hattaway 53).

The problems with masculinity that characterise Marlowe's Doctor Faustus are quite similar to those in the Tamburlaine plays. Kuriyama supports this strategy, stating that there aren't any significant differences between Tamburlaine and Faustus. His uncharted domain encompasses both the body and the mind, and his reign is more about intellectual endeavours than military might. But his fundamental desire and objective remain the same: unrestricted power (Kuriyama 103). We discussed how Tamburlaine's constant desire for dominance and power has a significant impact on his attempts to demonstrate his manhood.

People don't often feel that they're not good enough as a fighter (Cutts 115). Both Tamburlaine and Faustus clearly want to have complete control. Faustus, on the other hand, seeks knowledge and recognition to deal with his fears, which is very different from Tamburlaine, who uses violence to get authority. The difference is in the reasons behind each character's way of overcompensating. Some people think that the only difference between Faustus and Tamburlaine is the way they both fail. Faustus and Tamburlaine both have a strong desire to be great and better than their contemporaries. However, it appears that this profound sense of inadequacy and inferiority is the source of this intense yearning. In summary, notwithstanding their disparities, Tamburlaine and Faustus possess an intrinsic motivation rooted in feelings of inadequacy (Cutts 115). It's easier to figure out why Faustus feels inferior and inadequate than it is to figure out why Tamburlaine does. Faustus thinks about using magic as a method to get the knowledge and power he wants in his first

speech. Faustus says, "O, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence / Is promised to the studious man" (i.55–57). By admitting that he lacks qualities like authority, dignity, and absolute control, he unintentionally shows his true vulnerabilities. He longs for these strong traits and is afraid of what would happen if he doesn't get them. Some people say that Faustus is stuck between getting total power and feeling completely impotent, with every condition that isn't omnipotent being seen as the same as impotence.

This implies that Faustus' desire for power is essentially a quest for limitless sexual prowess and a stable, unchanging male identity (Kuriyama 114–115) His anxiety becomes increasingly apparent as he leans on magic to solve his issues, leading him to the extreme of selling his soul to Lucifer. He undertakes things with great enthusiasm because he feels that obtaining the authority he desires would demonstrate that he is a "real man." We must consider that Faustus may interpret masculinity differently than the conventional understanding on Earth. As he candidly states in his opening words, simply possessing a male persona is not enough. In his first words, he states, "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man" (i.23). He acknowledges that he believes he must possess the same level of power and intelligence as the supernatural in order to overcome his sense of inadequacy.

A distinct similarity exists between his perspective and that of Tamburlaine. Faustus contends that humanity, synonymous with being a man, does not confer authority or masculinity. It acknowledges the constraints of humanity (Cutts 112). Mephistopheles' scheme to get Faustus to align with Lucifer undoubtedly bestows upon him the requisite power. This modification introduces a distinct difficulty directly associated with the male complex. It is also posited that Faustus has yielded to what Jung describes as "ego-inflation," a significant peril for individuals in both the Renaissance and contemporary eras.

This danger is the result of a one-sided perspective that prioritises knowledge for its "technological" and manipulative influence over individuals and objects (Golden 203). However, it is only when Faustus becomes aware that his desires will be fulfilled, his sense of self-importance begins to inflate. Mephistopheles counsels Faustus to reconsider his pursuit of omnipotence, even at the cost of his eternal soul; however, Faustus defiantly instructs his demonic guide-servant to disregard such advice. “Acquire from Faustus the essence of human strength” (iii.87). In asserting this claim, Faustus unwittingly reveals an illogical compulsion to validate his masculinity. It seems that his overarching aim in engaging in this self-destructive endeavor is to illustrate that the act of trading one's essence for unrestrained power

demands a type of "masculine strength" that only the genuinely brave can muster.He is unlikely to consider withdrawing from the arrangement after previously demonstrating his proclivity for authority and therefore reinforcing his masculinity.

After the agreement is completed, Faustus' feeling of self-importance grows. This is obvious when Mephistopheles informs him he cannot marry. Faustus responds, "Procure one for me, as I desire one" (v. 146–147). Huebert believes that in this context, Faustus exhibits a degree of irresponsibility by desiring to complete the game and harbouring the belief that he may achieve victory (Huebert 221). As the narrative progresses, Faustus confronts significant moral dilemmas, contemplating the implications of his choices on his everlasting soul. Mephistopheles says, "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it" (Doctor Faustus, I, iii, 101–102). This quote brings forth the complex details of this moral dilemma. He shows how much psychological pain Faustus is in, as well as how much pain there is in eternal damnation.

Faustus is in pain because he knows how much his dreams will cost him. This shows how hypermasculinity can be hard on the mind and on the person. Faustus's moral struggle is clear as he tries to resist the pull of power and knowledge. He said, "Had I as many souls as there are stars, / I'd give them all for Mephistopheles" (II, i, 100–101). This quote shows that Faustus is not a typical heroic man since it focuses on his inner anguish and his willingness to sell his soul for monetary gains. The novel examines the significance of Faustus' actions, which lead to his death, as well as traditional views of what it is to be a decent man. Faustus's urgent endeavours to garner attention and establish his worthiness expeditiously illustrate his necessity to establish his manhood, which is of paramount importance to him.

The discussion regarding Faustus is intriguing due to his desire for unrestricted power in order to enhance his masculinity; however, he is also compelled to safeguard this identity from the dangers presented by the femininity. According to Golden, Faustus's gender-related concerns indicate that he has not yet fully reconciled the feminine aspect of his mind with his arrogant male intellect, which Jung refers to as the anima or "soul-image" (Golden 207).

In the end, Faustus's actions demonstrate that he is unsure of his masculinity and lacks confidence in himself. He takes a defensive stance against individuals whom he perceives to be a danger, particularly those who challenge his authority and confidence in himself. Because of this vulnerability, he is fast to react with wrath and quickness to any threat to his masculinity. His encounter with the knight demonstrates that he is quick to respond to danger. The persistent urge that Faustus

has to demonstrate and demonstrate his masculinity conceals a deep-seated concern that he will not be able to satisfy the ideals of manhood that society has set for him, as well as a shattered sense of his own feeling of self-worth. In the manner that he perceives himself to be superior to other people, his never-ending desire of power, and his resistance to give in to perceived risks, Faustus's character exemplifies the numerous facets that comprise masculinity.

We will examine the themes of masculine anxiety in Faustus and Tamburlaine through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, utilising the character Barabas from The Jew of Malta as an example. According to Biberman, classical masculinity is essentially hostile to Christianity as premodern social practices foster a gender ideal that continually marginalises women. The Jew-devil, a powerful male persona, shows how rigorous Christian male standards may be (Barek 298). The play shows a complicated picture of masculinity that includes both good and bad traits. This makes the audience question their ideas about what it means to be a man in a position of power.

Barabas, a character in The Jew of Malta, shows traits that go against the usual ideas of masculinity. Barabas, the Jewish businessman, shows himself to be clever, vengeful, and skilled at getting what he wants. In the first scene of Act 1 of Marlowe's The Jew of Malta, a character states, "I'll thrive in some way, in spite of all these Jews" (I, 95). This line really shows Barabas' determination to succeed, despite the challenges his religious background has created in society. The play looks into the complexities of identity and explores how power, religion, and gender come together to closely analyse masculinity in unconventional societies.

Barabas in The Jew of Malta is a figure that helps us understand the complexities of masculinity by showing us how power works, moral issues, and the subtleties of gender identity. In Elizabethan culture, the ideal man had to be a father who was the head of the family and kept a tight grip on how family members interacted with one other. But when Barabas's daughter Abigail decides to join a convent, his reaction goes beyond just being strict; it shows how upset he is: "O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!" Act II, Scene 3. In this case, Barabas is going through a lot of inner turmoil because he loves his daughter but also wants to achieve his own goals. This shows that the traditional image of the strict, authoritarian father figure is not always accurate.

Ithamore, the slave vying for the position of secondary antagonist in a contest of evil, is initially given instructions by Barabas to deliver the letter that would initiate

the fatal confrontation. "Tis poisoned, is it not?" was Ithamore's reaction. In II. iii. 369, Barabas gives his suggestion a quick thought. "And, yet it could indeed be executed in such a manner" (307). The play challenges us to think about how social exclusion affects morals and how gender identity affects power relations. In addition to encouraging us to think about the subtleties of these topics in the plays and how they relate to modern society, it seeks to help us comprehend the bigger picture of power dynamics, ethics, and gender identity. It looks at how the characters' desire for power turns them from heroes to villains and how it also helps to undermine conventional notions of heroic masculinity. Simkin, 120 We know that Barabas likes to imitate and replicate other people, and that his fixation with "playing"—rather than Machiavelli's ambition for power or the usurer's greed—drives him for the most of the play and leads him to use lethal tactics against Calymath in the end (Deats 379).

The characters' clever use of Machiavellian methods and religious deception shows that they can think strategically. The story seems to say that manipulating politics is necessary for survival, even if the Prologue makes fun of this kind of cleverness. Similar to Barabas, one employs carefully thought-out strategies to accomplish their objectives. The intricacy of Marlowe's presentation of these ideas makes it challenging to assess his level of belief in the efficacy of Machiavellian tactics. This contradiction pertains to masculinity as well, showing that although the need for domination is a natural human feeling, it is always impacted by a greater good. The play's irony adds complexity by giving a thorough picture of the motives of the characters and the changing connection between strong forces and personal goals. In "Placing the Plays of Christopher Marlowe: Fresh Cultural Contexts," Deats explores the ways in which the historical and cultural factors that shaped Marlowe's time influenced the formation of masculine identities. Deats does a great job of explaining how religious beliefs and social structures shaped Elizabethan society (Deats 1426).

"I would have brought confusion on you all, / Damned Christians, dogs, and Turkish infidels" (I, v 90) is how Barabas ends his life after discussing his elaborate plans to exterminate humanity. This quote captures the deep irony that runs throughout the play. "Why, has there ever been a display of such malevolence, so artfully conceived, and so skilfully carried out?" Ithamore seems to praise Barabas's clever scheme to kill Lodowick and Mathias. It is possible to see Barabas's complex plots as a sign of deep-rooted fears and a strong desire to establish power in a hostile setting. The success of these stories enables us to have a deeper comprehension of the characters'

faults and the actions they are willing to do to resolve the problems that threaten their masculinity within the complex situation.

This analysis offers a compelling look at how Marlowe challenges conventional notions of masculinity in his writings. These novels are like embarking on an exhilarating adventure that challenges conventional notions of heroism and reveals the complex moral dilemmas and character transformations at the core of masculinity. It is important because it reveals the profound effects that dismantling masculinity has on gender identity, power relations, and ethical concerns. The findings advance our understanding of bravery and masculinity, which helps to build the larger social and cultural framework of early modern English society. It encourages readers to think about and investigate the many aspects of gender identities, while also challenging them to carefully rethink societal norms, power relations, and moral judgments. Also, it gives us a thought-provoking point of view that helps us understand the complicated links between power, ethics, and gender identity. Marlowe's writings often show masculine characters as complex and nuanced people.

They may show attributes that are different from what is customary for men, including being vulnerable and emotionally complicated. At the same time, they may show traits that are common for men, like being strong, brave, and able to lead (Simkin, Stevie 2010). Future researchers that analyze masculinity, gender portrayal, and power relations in Christopher Marlowe's works should use an intersectional approach that takes into account the ways in which gender interacts with race, class, sexual orientation, and religion. This approach could draw attention to the intricate connections between gender identity, power dynamics, and social institutions, emphasizing the complexity of masculinity in Marlowe's works. The research looks at how Marlowe's plays give us complex insights into gender identity, power relations, and moral quandaries while also challenging traditional ideas of masculinity. This study helps us understand how power and social norms operated in the Elizabethan era and highlights the significance of dismantling masculinity. To learn more about how gender identities are complex and interact with other social components in Marlowe's writings, future scholars should examine intersectionality. This approach provides us with a solid basis for a deeper comprehension of early modern English culture's gender identity, morality, and power. Male characters in Marlowe's books are often multi-layered and complicated.

The writings of Christopher Marlowe offer an intriguing glimpse into what it was like to be a man in the Elizabethan period. They show how masculine figures evolved

from ideals of heroism to representations of villainy. Marlowe examines how early modern English culture was impacted by the complex interplay of gender identity, morality, and power in plays like "Doctor Faustus," "Tamburlaine," and "The Jew of Malta." By presenting male characters with a combination of characteristics often associated with males and characteristics that are not, these plays challenge conventional notions of gender. In order to demonstrate how masculinity was created, dismantled, and reconstructed throughout the Elizabethan era, the character arcs closely examine traditional notions of heroism.

Their study examines moral dilemmas, complex emotional landscapes, and socially unacceptable deficiencies. Compared to the typical clichés, it presents a more nuanced image of masculinity. Marlowe's writings demonstrate the complexity of power dynamics and gender in the Elizabethan era. They also show how masculinity is a social construct that changes over time and throughout cultures. This research critically analyses our deeply held ideas about masculinity and sheds light on the intricate complexity of gender identities while taking historical contexts and modern societal notions into account. Marlowe's legacy is a powerful example of the variety of human experiences and emphasizes the importance of carefully analyzing and reinterpreting social norms.

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