REFORM AND ORDER ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE: *SIR THOMAS MORE* TO *HAMLET*

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In John Marston's tragicomedy, *The Malcontent*, a play first performed around 1603, an habitué of the Genoese court is asked what religion he will be now that the recently usurped dukedom has changed hands. His reply, "Of the Duke's religion, when I know what it is" (4.5.94)[1] is a throwaway allusion to what by 1603 had hardened into a political commonplace: *cuius regio eius religio* ('whose territory, his religion'), a principle determined at the peace of Augsburg in 1555. To enjoy the benefits of court life, the courtier adheres to the same confession as the ruler. Marston's mocking presentation of confessional practice in Genoa, however, is missing in one of the three texts of the play printed in quick succession in 1603.[2] It seems likely that censorship, self- or official, must have determined the line's removal. With the death of Elizabeth I in 1603 and the Jacobean accession the nation was once more facing a potential confessional crisis as it waited to see what faith its supreme head might authorize. I do not want to overburden a casual and satirical allusion to the political expediency of early modern confessionalism. Nevertheless, the line's inclusion and its omission indicate two historical models which variously intersect in this article: the role of theatre in enacting religious reform and that of government in defining religious identity through its authorization of drama.

The confessionalization thesis has had its detractors in so far as it sees Catholic and Protestant reformations as a means of facilitating early modern state formations through social disciplining of population.[3] It has been argued that the thesis has placed undue emphasis on the state, and is thus too 'top down', disregarding resistance from below and the mindsets of common people. Scholars may have overstated the rigour and effectiveness of confessionalization, to the detriment of humanism, classicism, popular culture and common law. Yet the various instruments and processes of confessionalization undoubtedly aimed to create an obedient community, faithful to the political regime and the doctrines it espoused. It seems to me that a modified version of the confessional paradigm, to include wider cultural practices, including theatre and the authorization of plays, helps us to understand how an agenda of order and reform could be absorbed into pre-Shakespearean and Shakespearean drama. In discussing propaganda and censure as methods or mechanisms of confessionalization historians have tended to ignore the role of the the-

atre. As a medium of instruction and entertainment, albeit commercially driven, theatre, as much as any printed text, was used to shape and legitimate discourses of confessionalism.

The several reformations of the sixteenth century were orchestrated by the sovereign rather than through any popular movement or dissent. Early reforms embedded in the proclamations of Henry VIII, for example, largely determined how the nation was to worship, what it was to read and in what language. Post-1535 proclamations counter papal authority while continuing to insist on doctrinal conservatism. The abuses of the "Bishop of Rome" and his usurped power were to be "extirped, abolished, separated and secluded".[4] Proclamations aim to determine religious consciousness and precipitate a church adapted to state purposes, attesting not to renewal but alteration according to royal whim. There is a provisional, temporizing air to the 1538 proclamation "Prohibiting unlicensed printing of scripture, exiling Anabaptists, depriving married clergy, removing St Thomas a Becket from calendar": the familiar laudable ceremonies and rites should be taken for good instruction "*until such time* as his majesty doth change or abrogate any of them".[5] The following year in a proclamation prescribing rites and ceremonies, it is ordained that ceremonies "which *as yet* be not abolished nor taken away by his highness" should be observed and kept. Rites and ceremonies are to be regarded as "outward signs and tokens", not workers or works of salvation, and are to be preserved "so long and unto such time as the same rites and ceremonies, or any of them, shall by his highness be taken away or altered".[6]

Authorizing the sacramental was accompanied by the careful surveillance of scriptural exegesis. The English Bible was legalized in 1539 for the first time in 130 years and a proclamation of 1541 ordered that it be placed in every church with the warning that the laity should not presume to take upon themselves "any common disputation, argument or exposition of the mysteries therein contained".[7] The words echo a proclamation of 1539 – revised in Henry's own hand – similarly set on limiting "exposition and reading of scripture" on the grounds that diversity of opinion was infiltrating preaching and teaching, restoring, on the one hand, "the old devotion to the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, the hypocrite religion, superstitious pilgrimages, idolatry, and other evil and naughty ceremonies", and, on the other, contesting sacramentalism in wresting Holy Scriptures to contrary senses.[8] With alleged disputes breaking out "in churches, alehouses, and taverns and other places of congregation", one part of the congregation "calling the other papist, [...] the other heretic", leading to "sedition [...] and tumult [...] and destruction",[9] the remedy is to proceed in full order and resolution to "extinct" (that is, put an end to) diversity of opinion. To establish the much desired unity of opinion, the people are entrusted to the King's "cure", and he intends to proceed "to a full power [...] and resolution to extinct all such diversities of opinion". In revising

the proclamation, the King makes a telling addition. He has interlineated "order" after "power", a seemingly innocuous addition but indicative of a temporal appropriation of the spiritual concept of God's divine order.[10]

The process of confessionalization articulated in royal proclamations is vividly represented and idealized in the iconography of the frontispiece of the royally-commissioned Great Bible.[11] Here Henry is depicted graciously handing down copies of the Bible to Archbishop Cranmer and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, who pass it down to the lower clerical and lay officials, who in turn hand it out to a thankful people positioned along the bottom. The populace responds – ironically, in both English and Latin – with 'God save the King!'. God is represented crammed into the top border, allowing for the representation of a much larger Henry VIII. This is a cosmographical image designed to convey to the reading public their gratitude to the King for being given the Scriptures in their own language. It embodies both the doctrine of royal supremacy over church and state and the belief that through each "the king exercises a distinct but related God-given ministry".[12] With the abrogation of papal authority, the idea of the monarch as God's deputy on earth becomes entrenched, enabling the sovereign to institute reform and order to suit his / her agenda.

Henry's reforms were orchestrated through the press and the pen, while those of his Protestant children were conducted also through the pulpit and the playhouse. In a period of rigid press control, sermons and plays offered loopholes for the propagation of ideas and dissemination of doctrine, loopholes which were to be progressively closed. Elizabeth I confronted these potential sites of resistance in proclamations prohibiting unlicensed preaching and unlicensed interludes and plays, especially on matters of religion or policy. In the first year of her reign local officials are instructed not to permit any play "wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonweal shall be handled or treated".[13] As Sarah Beckwith has commented, "far from being the mere side effect or object of reformation of the English church, theater was, in fact, one of the principle mechanisms of reform."[14] Religious drama continued to be performed. The cycles of plays presenting the grand biblical narrative were enacted in provincial cities and towns, but doctrinally controversial matter relating to the sacraments and the cult of the Virgin, for example, are diluted and by the mid-1570s their production had been suppressed.[15] Words from the pulpit were equally constrained. Preachers were examined for conformity in unity of doctrine and instructed to move the people to unreserved obedience, observing and maintaining order and uniformity in all external policy. Limits were placed on preaching through the revival of the Edwardian book of homilies, ensuring uniformity of doctrine, proscribing ceremony and ritual and prescribing obedience. With minor revisions the homilies continued to be reprinted throughout the reign. The texts state clearly their purpose of ensur-

ing that the people "learne their dutie towardes God, their prince, and their neighbours" and the expulsion of "erronious and poysoned doctrines, tending to superstition and idolatrie".[16] One homily affirms Luther's doctrine of justification: "because al men be sinners, and offenders against God […] no man by his own actes, works and deeds (seem they never so good) be justified".[17] The volume includes the Edwardian homily, "An exhortation concerning good order, and obedience to Rulers and Magistrates":[18]

> Almighty God hath created and appointed all thinges in heaven, earth and waters in a most excellent and perfect order. […] In earth he hath assigned and appointed kinges, princes, with other governoures under them, in all good and necessary order […] every degree of people in their vocation, calling and office, hath appointed to them their duety and order: some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiors and subjects, Priests, and lay-men, Maisters and Servauntes, fathers and Children, Husbandes and Wives, riche and poore, and every one have neede of other, so that in all things is to be lauded and praised the goodly order of God without the which, no house, no Citye, no commonwealth can continue and endure or last. For where there is no right order, there raigneth all abuse, carnal libertie, enormitie, sin and Babilonicall confusion.[19]

In the dismantling of the Christian dualism of spiritual and secular authority, the slippage can be located in "order". Subjects must be obedient to the existing order, the homily continues, not only for fear of divine vengeance, but also because of "conscience": "all persons having soules […] do owe of bounden duetie, and even in conscience, obedience, submission, and subjection to the high powers, which be sent in authority by God."[20] Order and obedience become secularized theological concepts.

The insistence on 'right order' replaces an earlier pre-Reformation and evangelical desire to re-order things. In examining ideas of reformation from the Middle Ages onwards, Gerald Strauss has commented on former understandings of order as a corollary to reform in the shape of renovation.[21] One of the most famous of all late medieval reform writings, "Reformation or Order of All Estates Spiritual and Secular", has the declared aim of reformation "to bring everything into better order and condition" and to assure a stable order in all things. Earlier reform writing employs a range of images to indicate renewal and reform – recreate, remake, restore, repair, return, revert, relight, rekindle, regenerate, recover, revive – which narrow with the shift in doctrinal authority to the state. Reformation becomes increasingly associated with order in temporal as well as spiritual terms. Previous notions of religious reform in which reform had been associated with re-ordering and renewal are replaced by a view of order that requires the discipline of dutiful submission, thus controlling the more visionary expectations of religious and secular change. In effect, the cyclical view of reformation, as a return to an uncorrupted, better order,

has been replaced by a linear concept of reformation in which a new order is attained.

The pragmatic use of order as a tool in aiding conformity is evident in the documents regulating Elizabethan theatre production. As professional theatre established itself in London, authorization of playing – previously in the hands of local officials – was centralized under the control of the Master of the Revels, a servant of the Royal Household directly responsible for the content of plays. In extending the powers of the Office, the commission that was granted to the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney, in 1581, links order and reform. All players are to recite their plays before him and Tilney is empowered "to order and reform, authorize and put down as shall be thought meet or unmeet unto himself or his said deputy in that behalf".[22] The language of 're-forming' and 'ordering' is insinuated into a secular process and becomes a rationale for control. Much work on early modern dramatic censorship, including my own, has tended to focus on its secular impact, thereby imposing an artificial divide between religion and politics. What I would now emphasize is that the official licensing of plays is part of the confessionalizing process, both channelling and impeding the flow of ideas, religious and secular.

One of the critiques of the confessionalization paradigm is that it has not taken fully into account resistance and conflict to confession building.[23] As the well-known cases of Protestant and Catholic martyrs and the well-documented accounts of gruesome punishment of alleged heretics attest, confessionalization did provoke confrontation with individuals fundamentally opposed to it. The suppression of heretical books and the mutilation of manuscripts, while hardly of the same severity as the execution and torture of 'heretics', are nonetheless highly revealing, exhibiting various processes of social control and disciplining. Evidently, confessionalization in practice was not absolute. Censorship of play manuscripts indicates that boundaries between permissible and impermissible were not explicit and that playwrights were prepared to test them. On the other hand, censorship of the manuscript bears ample evidence of confessionalization as a process of enforcement. One early modern play, *Sir Thomas More*, extant only in manuscript, discloses the attempts of the Master of the Revels to reform a play contentious on both secular and religious grounds. If not equalling Luther's great stand against the Emperor at Worms, Thomas More's stand against the royal supremacy of Henry VIII and his surrender of the Great Seal of England nevertheless made him a champion of Catholic orthodoxy and loyalty. He would seem an odd or daring choice as stage protagonist in the England of the Elizabethan Settlement. More is primarily represented, however, not in the role of Catholic martyr or even steadfast opponent of royal supremacy, but as sheriff of London and pacifier of anti-alien riots with which the play opens. The first leaf of the play manuscript bears evidence of the licenser's ordering and reforming in Tilney's insistence that the xenophobic insur-

rection against "strangers", French immigrants, should be cut:

> Leave out the insurrection wholly and the cause therof, and begin with Sir Thomas Moore at the Mayor's sessions, with a report afterwards of his good service done being Sheriff of London upon a mutiny against the Lombards – only by a short report, and not otherwise at your own perils.[24]

From a twenty-first-century perspective, we might choose to see Tilney's censorship as a justifiable case of censoring incitement to hate crime, on the basis that the scenes Tilney has objected to are inflammatory, although this would be an anachronistic view of a censorship bent on maintaining public order. Equally subject to censorship is the scene representing Thomas More and the Bishop of Rochester refusing to sign unspecified "articles" (10.72) brought to them from the King by Thomas Palmer. In the manuscript the scene has been marked by vertical rules which signify that lines are to be omitted in performance:

> Sir, tell his highness, I entreat
> Some time for to bethink me of this task.
> In the meanwhile, I do resign mine office
> Into my sovereign's hands.
> (10.85–88)

Alongside the above lines in which More resigns his office, Tilney has written "ALL ALTR". We can only speculate about the underlying motives for Tilney's suppression of the lines. The nature of the articles is unspecified in the text. The trigger to More's resignation was the submission of the clergy to the Royal supremacy the day before, a detail not represented in the play. Since the allusion to the articles is so oblique, it seems unlikely that it is their substance which has initiated censorship of the manuscript. It is more probable that the cause of Tilney's intervention lies in the sympathetic treatment of More, caught, as he says, between "conscience" and "laws" (10.73). Overall, these are not images that the play seeks to project. Indeed, the constitutive exclusions, the 'silences' in the text, indicate the circumspection with which reformation politics were presented on the stage, with Tilney's check providing evidence of the wisdom of such circumspection.

The manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*, however, reveals not only intensive pre-performance censorship, but discloses reformation in response to Tilney's orders. As is well-known, bound up with the manuscript are revisions by different playwrights, including Shakespeare, intended, it may be confidently assumed, to replace some of the material to which Tilney had so vehemently objected. In discussing Tilney's censorship and the play's subsequent revisions, David Womersley is right in saying that the manuscript "bears witness in a directly physical way to the extent of what was open to interpretative negotiation in the national past".[25] His

allusion, however, to the major additions and revisions as "textual second thoughts", designed to demonstrate "persuasiveness and humanity within authority"[26] would seem to underestimate the power of censorship in remodelling a play to suit a specific agenda. "[S]econd thoughts" seems to me a rather mild way of describing the writing under duress entailed by composition in response to censorship. Certainly, in the revised scene More's humanity is writ large. He enters and entreats the rioters to be calm and compassionate, appealing to them to put themselves in the place of the immigrants, "strangers" to the land. In recent years this passage has been much quoted as an affecting speech in its own right, highly topical in an age of mass migration, and as an illustration of Shakespeare's humanity. But, such a focus tends to distort the verbal dynamic of the interpolated passage. Ultimately, it is not More's appeal to humanity that persuades the rebels to submit to authority, but his homily on obedience:

> You shall perceive how horrible a shape
> Your innovation bears. First, 'tis a sin
> Which oft th'apostle did forewarn us of,
> Urging obedience to authority;
> And 'twere no error if I told you all
> You were in arms 'gainst <God>.
> (Addition 2, 6.104–109)

More performs an act of social disciplining. The insurgents express their dismay, enabling More to drive home further his lecture on secular authority:

> Nay, certainly you are.
> For to the king God hath his office lent
> Of dread, of justice, power and command;
> Hath bid him rule, and willed you to obey.
> And, to add ampler majesty to this,
> He hath not only lent the king His figure,
> His throne and sword, but given him His own name:
> Calls him a god on earth. What do you, then,
> Rising 'gainst him that God Himself installs
> But rise 'gainst God? What do you to your souls
> In doing this?
> (Addition 2, 6.111–121)

The revision resonates with "An exhortation concerning good order and obedience to Rulers and Magistrates", shifting the emphasis from the grievances of the commons to respect for order and degree and the heinousness and anarchy of rebellion. The Arden editor has commented that these lines are ironic in that More himself

later challenges the King's authority and the audience would largely have been aware that his disobedience was on religious grounds.[27] The point could be taken further since the irony is difficult to locate. A distinction needs to be made between ironic purpose – naturally, impossible to determine – and ironic presence: the former within Shakespeare's control, the latter a consequence of revising a work devised by others. More's rhetoric on order and obedience to secular authority has been superimposed on the original text, perhaps in ignorance of it, disturbing its integrity. Still, too, Shakespeare could hardly be ignorant of More's principled stand against the King. It could be argued that the contradictions between More's words and actions, arising from the implementation of the reform and order agenda, are part of a strategy of affective irony, alienating an audience from what is being preached on stage and perhaps yielding a means of preserving some degree of artistic autonomy.

The censorship and reformation of *Sir Thomas More* are explicit. Other plays with a Reformation text or subtext suggest that censorship is productive, not in the sense of being positive or beneficial, but, as Judith Butler claims, formative.[28] Through judicious selection of material, censorship excludes and inculcates. The Elizabethan history play was particularly amenable to codifying memory and forging a national, Protestant identity as is evident in the two plays representing the reign of King John. In George Peele's *The Troublesome Reign of King John*, John's reign, specifically his defiance of the papacy, becomes proleptic of the Henrician reformation. John predicts "A king shall reign that shall suppress them all" (2:2.173)[29] and this confident assertion is maintained to the play's end. Drawing on the identification of Babylon and the "whore of Babylon" of Revelation with Rome and the Pope, the dying John utters a prophecy that Henry will destroy papal authority:

> From out these loins shall spring a kingly branch
> Whose arms shall reach unto the gates of Rome,
> And with his feet tread down the strumpet's pride
> That sits upon the chair of Babylon.
> (2:8.105–108)

In his version of the history Shakespeare rejects the "whore of Babylon" nexus of images, but retains the typological exegesis. John defiantly faces the Pope's representative, Cardinal Pandolf, declaring that "no Italian priest / Shall tithe or toll in our dominions" and that as "supreme head" the king will reign "without the assistance of a mortal hand" (*KJ*, 3.1.79–84).[30] The anti-papal thrust of the other King John play remains as John anachronistically attacks indulgences, what Luther in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* had described as "wicked devices of the flatterers of Rome".[31] In dialogue with Philip of France, John singles himself out as a lone opponent to such practices. All the kings of Christendom, John declares,

are taken in by "juggling witchcraft", purchasing "corrupted pardon of a man" who in the very act "sells pardon from himself", concluding with an aphorism: "Yet I alone, alone do me oppose / Against the Pope, and count his friends my foes" (3.1.92–97). The words provoke his instant excommunication, a position shared with Luther, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I.

King John was not published until it appeared in the 1623 Folio and, considering its Reformation subject matter, this delay in publication is not surprising. The play's doctrinal controversy accounts for the mid-seventeenth-century censorship by the Jesuits at the English College at Valladolid of the scene between John and Pandolf.[32] Yet, from a Protestant perspective the play traffics equally in dangerous matter by raising the spectre of royal excommunication and the Cardinal's sanctification of regicide:

> And blessèd shall he be that doth revolt
> From his allegiance to an heretic;
> And meritorious shall that hand be called,
> Canonizèd and worshipped as a saint,
> That takes away by any secret course
> Thy hateful life.
> (3.1.100–105)

It may be confidently asserted that no such lines would have been authorized for performance or publication in the 1590s. The Queen's excommunication in February 1570, absolving Catholics of obedience and encouraging armed rebellion, was instantly countermanded by royal proclamations against possessing or circulating "traiterous books and bulls" from Rome.[33] In a play that deals with a disordered nation order is equated with confession. The Catholic position, articulated by Pandolf, insists that all form is formless, all order "orderless", as a consequence of John's revolt against Rome (3.1.179). A restitution of order can only come about through the military opposition of the French as "champion" of the Church (3.1.181). On the English side, the "ordering" of the present time (5.1.77) passes from John to the Bastard who becomes the rallying, popular voice of Protestant nationalism. Again, there is a degree of indeterminacy in the way that both confessions appropriate order.

Plays on pre-Reformation English history posed a potential threat to reform and order by evoking residual allegiances to Roman Catholicism. The tensions or indeterminacies inherent in the texts of *Sir Thomas More* and *King John* can be attributed in part to the national importance and temporal proximity of the materials. Foreign materials and settings offered a less controversial means of reflecting matters of divinity and state. In the two Wittenberg plays – *Dr Faustus* and *Hamlet* – it might be said that through the presence of Wittenberg the German and the English refor-

mations are brought together by various threads: the individual's powerlessness before God, justification by faith in God's grace, and an expanded notion of conscience. Reformed drama, that is, in a dynamic rather than a polemical sense. In its cautionary closing chorus, Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* conforms to the pattern of the German and English Faust books with their instructive messages to the uneducated about the dangers of sorcery.[34] Yet, at the same time, *Dr Faustus* is the one play of the period on the English stage to confront head-on the doctrinal disputations that shook Europe. Moreover, the two extant texts of the play, both published more than a decade after the play's first performance and Marlowe's death in 1593, articulate differing versions of reformed theology. The two texts of 1604 and 1616 are divergent and variously corrupt. Editors have shown preference for one text or the other, and rightly pointed to the probable additions by other hands to the later text. The absorbing textual tangles or their impossibly complicated state, however one chooses to interpret the bibliographical nature of the text, have distracted scholars from the play's theological tendency and aesthetic structure. Further, the secularization of our approach to early modern drama in the mid- to late-twentieth-century and the Nietzschean readings of Marlowe's supermen with their 'will to power' have distracted from the theological underpinning of the play, a theology which at some time or times in the play's history was subject to reform and order.

"Divinity, adieu" (1.1.50), pronounces Faustus in his opening soliloquy, rejecting Luther's existential search for eternal security and, following his incomplete paraphrase of a text on which Luther was to found his revolutionary doctrine, he concludes:

> If we say that we have no sin,
> We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us.
> Why then belike we must sin,
> And so consequently die.
>
> (1.1.44–47)[35]

He wilfully omits, as commentators have pointed out, the remainder of the verse, a promise of salvation through faith: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The Good Angel – Marlowe's addition, there is no equivalent in the English Faust Book – continually urges Faustus to have faith in Christ's mercy, as does the figure of the Old Man, who is present in the Faust book, and assures Faustus of God's grace:

> Ah, Doctor Faustus, that I might prevail
> To guide thy steps unto the way of life […]
> But mercy, Faustus, of thy Saviour sweet,

> Whose blood alone must wash away thy guilt.
> (5.1.36–47)

As Faustus's twenty-four years of voluptuous living is at its end, the Old Man admonishes him one last time, insisting that Faustus alone is responsible for his damnation:

> Accursèd Faustus, miserable man,
> That from thy soul exclud'st the grace of heaven
> And fliest the throne of His Tribunal seat!
> (5.1.111–113)

Even in his final tortured soliloquy, swerving from hope to despair, the option to repent remains vividly open as Faustus sees Christ offering salvation:

> Oh I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?
> See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
> One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah my Christ!
> (5.2.77–79)

Faustus's evocative image brings to mind Cranach's Weimar 'allegory of salvation' altarpiece in which Luther and Cranach stand beside John the Baptist at the foot of the cross as a jet of blood arcs from Christ's wounded side to fall on Cranach's head. The visual is reinforced by the verbal as Luther points to the biblical text, "The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sins" (1 John 1:7). The distinction between pictorial allegory and the theatrical enactment of folktale is, of course, that while Faustus might see a merciful God and recognize Christ's atonement he lacks the all-important faith of Luther and Cranach.

In both of its published forms *Dr Faustus* is clearly a play of reformed theology, although Faustus in his despair – "oh, would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book!" (5.2.47–48)[36] – would seem to wish for a God without theology. Yet the texts disclose curious divergences of doctrine. The Old Man's lines with their insistence that salvation is open through penance and grace do not appear in the later, so-called 'B' text, nor in this version does Faustus see Christ's blood streaming in the firmament. Moreover, in the 'B' text, Faustus's damnation significantly becomes a matter of predestination: Mephistopheles has intervened and set Faustus on a course not freely chosen:

> 'Twas I that, when thou wert i'the way to heaven,
> Dam'd up thy passage. When thou took'st the book
> To view the Scriptures, then I turned the leaves
> And led thine eye.
> (5.2.96–99)

In identifying changes in theological emphasis my conclusions are rather different from those reached by Leah Marcus in her study of the texts of *Dr Faustus* and their ideological difference. Marcus sees in the 'A' text a "more nationalist and more Calvinist, Puritan, or ultra-Protestant" perspective while the 'B' text is "more internationalist, imperial, and Anglican, or Anglo-Catholic".[37] On the basis of the theological differences examined here, I would argue that the Lutheran context of the play, as it is represented in the 'A' text with its emphasis on justification by faith and divine mercy and its assurances of God's grace, has been reshaped at some point in the play's early history to conform with a harsher order of predestination.

What, if anything, can be concluded about these textual divergences within a reformed context? Certainly, the specific changes and omission of points of doctrine by a licenser or in the playhouse suggest the monitoring of Reformation theology on the stage. Further, the question arises as to whether the two texts in some way exemplify the competition of two confessional churches, each struggling to contain the other. In which case the 1616 text might be said to belong to the Second Reformation, a term that has been applied to the Calvinist Reformation. If this is so, we may say that in addition to the practical consequences it has worked in church and state, dogma has once more visited the theatre and is now discerning Protestant confessional identities.

Theology is considerably more dispersed in Shakespeare's Wittenberg play, yet I think that *Hamlet*, like *Faustus*, illustrates how Protestant habits of thought have become embedded in theatre performance. Wittenberg and its university are numinous presences in *Hamlet* as the places where Hamlet wishes to be, escaping the prison of Elsinore. Heiko Oberman has commented that the Reformation rearranged "the subtle triangular balance between the individual spheres of influence of church, governmental authority and university".[38] The university at Wittenberg pointed to a new epoch, bringing the High Middle Ages "to the brink of the new Reformation theology".[39] Shakespeare wittily draws attention to the Lutheran subtext when Hamlet, under pressure from Claudius to tell him where he has stowed Polonius's body, retorts that Polonius is at supper:

> *King Claudius*: At supper? Where?
> *Hamlet*: Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots.
> (4.3.19–23)

In this topos of the sarcophagus, Hamlet puns on the Diet of Worms. With characteristic sardonic humour, he ropes together Luther's heroic defiance of authority as, armed with his conscience, he confronted the Emperor at Worms, and the

inevitable levelling of that authority. The remark is a jibe at Claudius as well as a commonplace.

At Wittenberg Hamlet has evidently developed his tendency to theologize and moralize a landscape, a landscape which is far from desacralized. Hamlet's initial response to the Ghost is characteristic of a Protestant belief in a sacred order in the secular. He questions whether the Ghost is "a spirit of health or goblin damned" and whether it brings with it "airs from heaven or blasts from hell" (1.4.21–22), betraying an anxiety about the range of supernatural beings active in the world. It is natural that Hamlet should suspect that his father's ghost is the work of the devil since the devil was seen to represent and occasion spiritual, moral, social and material disorder in the world. Even after the Ghost's powerful plea to him and its extraction of the promise that he will revenge murder, Hamlet continues to express scepticism about the Ghost's origins:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil, and the devil hath power
> T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy –
> As he is very potent with such spirits –
> Abuses me to damn me.
> (2.2.600–605)

Hamlet knows, like Luther, that the Devil can sire spectres, quote Scripture and capture the conscience. It is only when, after the performance of "The Murder of Gonzago", Claudius has incontrovertibly displayed his guilt that Hamlet dismisses the notion of a diabolic ghost.

Wittenberg has transformed the protagonist of a revenge tragedy, obsessed with the task in hand, into a hero, deeply suspicious of externalizing displays of devotion and emotion, highly conscious that he is a sinner, acutely aware that the times are disordered, out of joint, and that he must put them right. Only once in the play does Hamlet speak in the typical language of Senecan revenge:

> Now could I drink hot blood
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.
> (3.2.379–381)

As an appointed and self-appointed agent of God's will, his "scourge and minister" (3.4.159), Hamlet is as much engaged in re-ordering the state as in honouring the dead and avenging his father. He articulates the belief, expressed often by Luther, that we are sinners by nature and that all of nature is deformed. Polonius's grudging agreement to use the players according to their deserts prompts Hamlet's

savage riposte, "[u]se every man after his desert, and who should scape whipping?" (2.2.532–533). In theatre, with its power to hold a mirror up to nature, Hamlet sees an agent of reform, not polemical, not state-serving, but moral.

If Luther was a "discoverer of conscience" and his religion, as has been suggested, a "religion of conscience",[40] then we can see Lutheran affiliations with *Hamlet* in the play's expanded sense of conscience as an arbiter of moral sense, inner truth and emotional condition, identified with both heart and mind. Confronting his mother, Hamlet lashes her conscience, forcing her to turn her eyes into her very soul, where she sees "such black and grainèd spots / As will not leave their tinct" (3.4.80–81). His conscience, if not quite Lutheran in its captivity to God, is Lutheran in its liberation from secular authority. Hamlet appeals to conscience as the highest authority or court of appeal. Conscience arbitrates action. On his return from England, confident that Heaven has assisted in his deliverance from Claudius's murderous plot, he claims the merit of conscience. It is, he tells Horatio, "perfect conscience" to kill a guilty king (5.2.68). The deaths of his traitorous friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, lie not near his conscience (5.2.59). It could be said that Hamlet is here interpreting his own liberated conscience much in the way that the authorities had feared access to the Bible in English might enable individuals to interpret Scripture, that is, in support of his own conclusions and in opposition to perceived authority. In *Hamlet* the time-servers and the reprobates appeal to secular authority with little regard to conscience. Rosencrantz, in the vein of Marston's courtier quoted at the beginning of this article, equates Claudius's ruination with the ruination of the state (3.3.11–23). Laertes succumbs to Claudius's proffered pact: "Now must your conscience my acquittance seal" (4.7.1). In the context of his own sin and burdened conscience, Claudius's evocation of the divinity that "doth hedge a king" (4.5.122) rings hollow. The conscience for Luther was the origin or place of an individual's strongest emotional responses. Throughout his work, he associates conscience with feeling, variously describing the conscience as afraid, timid, trembling, quaking and joyful.[41] Conscience is not expressly an organ of ethical consciousness, ruling on the right and wrong of actions, but is akin to the heart, the innermost part of the individual. In the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, Shakespeare seems to invest "conscience" with the richest of associations. Hamlet's assertion that "conscience does make cowards of us all" (3.1.85) alludes to the awakened conscience that has the power to judge, revealing man's culpable inadequacy before God. But, also, as he apprehends the terrors of death which prevail over earthly suffering and deter suicide, conscience stirs his emotional response to his predicament. The "To be, or not to be" soliloquy could be described as 'a soliloquy of the soul', a term used by Luther to describe the words of the psalmist in Psalm 77.[42] Claudius's attempted prayer, on the other hand, gives voice to the embattled conscience. The performance of *The Murder of*

Gonzago, designed by Hamlet to "catch" the King's conscience (2.2.607), produces the desired effect. In Claudius we witness the working and failure of conscience, as he appears for a moment to succumb to an attack of anguished conscience, demanding, "May one be pardoned and retain th'offence?" (3.3.56). Yet, mired in guilt and unable to repent, his conscience, in Lutheran terms, has been "killed by sin".[43]

In recent decades, there has been a tendency to see *Hamlet* not so much as a play of the Reformation, but, more specifically, as expressive of the traumas of reformation.[44] A play in which the living are alienated from the dead through the suppression of symbolic structures, the rituals, ceremonies and beliefs that accompanied dying. Considerable emphasis, for example, has been placed on the "maimed rites" of Ophelia's burial and Laertes's angry response to his sister's abbreviated funeral. James V. Holleran sees "maimed rites" as a motif of the play: no-one is given a proper burial until the funeral motif comes full circle at the end of the play and Fortinbras orders that Hamlet be given a soldier's burial.[45] Stephen Greenblatt has expansively explored Shakespeare's appropriation of Purgatory in the play and its topographical link with the play's living and the dead.[46] The rejection of Purgatory at the Reformation cut the living adrift from the dead, leaving the living without any means of assisting the departed. For Greenblatt, the Ghost's injunction "remember me" is crucial, evoking early-sixteenth-century debates about Purgatory and, in Hamlet's uncertainties and questionings, constructing the psychological out of the theological.[47] Near the end of his study Greenblatt raises the crucial 'famous problem', noting that despite the "heavy hints that the Ghost is in or has come from Purgatory: by 1563, almost forty years before Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was written, the Church of England had explicitly rejected the Roman Catholic conception of Purgatory and the practices that had been developed around it."[48] For Greenblatt, the obliqueness in the network of allusions to Purgatory is due to the danger inherent in representing "in a favorable light any specifically Roman Catholic doctrines or practices".[49] This is possible, although, as has been argued here, the location of *Hamlet* and its fictionalizing revenge genre gives latitude to doctrinal expression. For all Greenblatt's deft exploration of the theological contours of the play in the context of a drama depicting a "young man from Wittenberg, with a distinctly Protestant temperament" haunted by "a distinctly Catholic ghost",[50] he is forced to conclude that "[a]t a deep level there is something magnificently opportunistic, appropriative, absorptive, even cannibalistic about Shakespeare's art".[51] In the end, confessional conundrums are subservient to artistic design: the dramatic need to expose murder and activate revenge. The apparent clash of theological sensibility can be partially explained, if not fully resolved, by artistic pressures.

Like Greenblatt, I accept that the psychological is shaped by the theological. In his spiritual journey Hamlet moves from anxiety that the Devil, the menace of

mankind, may be ensnaring him to a belief in the righteousness of Providence, intimated in the fall of a sparrow. Undoubtedly, the play does disclose confessional conflict. Old Hamlet is Catholic: young Hamlet, a student in the seat of the new theology, a Protestant. It is possible, however, to see the apparent theological contradictions as part of a conscious dramatic ambiguity registering the complexity of overlapping residual and emergent belief. It was the commercial, lucrative business built around Purgatory that initiated the Protestant rejection of the doctrine. Luther and reformers attacked the buying of salvation and the offerings made for souls trapped in Purgatory. "The whole world", he complained had "piled up its wealth to liberate souls from the tortures of purgatory".[52] In selling the remission of sins, promising delivery from hell and purgatory, the Pope had "merely carried off the money, while the wretched souls were left under the power of sin, hell, and the devil".[53] On the actual existence of Purgatory Luther expressed agnosticism:

> The existence of purgatory I have never denied. I still hold that it exists, as I have written and admitted many times, though I have found no way of proving it incontrovertibly from Scripture or reason. I find in Scripture that Christ, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Job, David, Hezekiah, and some others tasted hell in this life. This I think was purgatory, and it seems not beyond belief that some of the dead suffer in like manner [...] in short, I myself have come to the conclusion that there is a purgatory, but I cannot force anybody else to come to the same result.[54]

Hamlet's reaction to the Ghost and its provenance reflects a similar uncertainty. The Ghost calls for revenge not for intercession to be freed from Purgatory. Such a thought never occurs to Hamlet. Despite an apparent rejection of the traditional rituals, the play allows for the existence of some kind of Purgatory. Even if, as has been suggested, this accords with dramatic exigencies, the play's refusal to relinquish the doctrine of Purgatory constitutes a resistance to the impositions of confessionalization.

At the same time, I would argue that *Hamlet* displays a reformist tendency. It is Hamlet – following the dictates of his conscience – and not the king who is God's terrestrial proxy. He faces death concerned about his "wounded name" but, having exchanged forgiveness with Laertes, confident of his salvation; a confidence mirrored in Horatio's wish for flights of angels to sing him to his rest. At a subtle and suggestive level Elsinore serves as a pre-Reformation landscape, urgently in need of reform, individual as much as communal. Freed from the ideological strictures attendant on the representation of English history, with its conformist deference to order and obedience, in *Hamlet* Shakespeare orientates reform towards restoration and renewal. Reform has detached itself from order. It is possible to say that in *Hamlet* we see a reformation once imposed from above now arising from individual conscience.

From an examination of the three texts of *Hamlet* there is scant evidence of censorship. The omission of lines from an exchange between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in which Hamlet refers to Denmark as a prison is missing in the second, longer edition of 1605. Censorship almost certainly occurred here because the Queen Consort was Anne of Denmark, exemplifying the point that referenceable issues are always more open to censorship. In engaging with 'reform' and 'order' in the state of Denmark, however, *Hamlet*, would seem to be free from censorship. As fictionalized tragedy, the play negotiates obliquely the political, theological and social concerns which helped stir the Reformation. Interests which, as has been noted from textual and publication details in the plays of *Sir Thomas* More, *King John* and *Dr Faustus*, when stated topically or represented in English history, were liable to evoke censorial intervention under the remit of reform and order.

Zusammenfassung

Im Zuge des *religious turn* in Studien zur Frühen Neuzeit ist bisher die Bedeutung der Zensur für die Durchsetzung konfessioneller Konformität wenig berücksichtigt worden. Gleichzeitig haben Arbeiten zur Theaterzensur deren Bedeutung für die Gestaltung und Legitimation des in den Stücken verhandelten Konfessionalismus unterschätzt. In ihrem Aufsatz untersucht Janet Clare, wie mit dem Aufbrechen des Dualismus von geistiger und weltlicher Autorität die theologischen Konzepte von 'Reform' und 'Ordnung' als staatliche Werkzeuge zur Sicherung von Uniformität übernommen werden. Mit Bezug auf *Sir Thomas More*, dessen Manuskript zensiert wurde, das anonyme Stück *The Troublesome Reign of King John* sowie Shakespeares *King John* diskutiert Clare, wie im englischen Historiendrama über 'Reform' und 'Ordnung' Grundprinzipien der Rechtsprechung aufgerufen werden. Im Gegensatz dazu werden in den beiden 'Wittenberg-Stücken', Marlowes *Dr Faustus* und Shakespeares *Hamlet*, die vom protestantischen Reformstreben beeinflusst sind und nicht denselben ideologischen Zwängen unterliegen, die mit der Repräsentation englischer Geschichte einhergehen, 'Reform' und 'Ordnung' auf ihre theologischen Bedeutungen rückgeführt.

[1] John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed. by George K. Hunter, The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1975).

[2] See ibid., xxix–xxx.

[3] See Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Confessionalization: The Career of a Concept", in John M. Headley / Hans J. Hillerbrand / Anthony J. Papalas (eds), *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor of Bodo Nischan* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Ute Lotz-Heumann, "The Concept of 'Confessionalization': A Historiographical Paradigm in Dispute", *Memoria y*

Civilización 4 (2001), 93–114. Lotz-Heumann offers a historical overview of the widening of the concept of confession-building in the work of Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling, critiques of the paradigm from a micro-historical perspective and subsequent responses to such critiques.

[4] "Enforcing Statutes Abolishing Papal Authority in England", in Paul L. Hughes / James F. Larkin (eds), *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964–1969), vol. 1, 229–232, quote 230.

[5] "Prohibiting Unlicensed Printing of Scripture, Exiling Anabaptists, Depriving Married Clergy, Removing St. Thomas à Becket from Calender", in Hughes / Larkin (1964), vol. 1, 270–276, quote 274; my emphasis.

[6] "Prescribing Rites and Ceremonies, Pardoning Anabaptists", in Hughes / Larkin (1964), vol. 1, 278–280, quotes 278–280; my emphasis.

[7] "Ordering Great Bible to be Placed in Every Church", in Hughes / Larkin (1964), vol. 1, 296–298, quote 297.

[8] "Limiting Exposition and Reading of Scripture", in Hughes / Larkin, (1964), vol. 1, 284–286, quote 284.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 285.

[11] See David Bagchi, "The Henrician Reform", in Andrew Hiscock / Helen Wilcox (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 36.

[12] Ibid., 37.

[13] "Prohibiting Unlicensed Interludes and Plays, Especially on Religion and Policy", in Hughes / Larkin (1964–1969), vol. 2, 115–116, quote 115.

[14] Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 122.

[15] See Janet Clare, *"Art made tongue-tied by authority": Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 26–29; and Beckwith (2001), 124–140.

[16] *Certaine sermons appoynted by the Queens Majestie, to be declared and read, by all Parsons, Vicars, and Curates, everie Sunday and Holy Day in their Churches: And by her Graces advice perused and overseene, for the better understanding of the simple people* (London: Edward Allde, 1595), A2r.

[17] Ibid., B6r.

[18] See *Certain Sermons, or homilies, appoynted by the Kynges Majestie, to be declared and redde, by all Persones, Vicars, or Curates, every Sunday in their Churches, where they have Cure* (1547), N1r–P2v.

[19] *Certaine sermons appoynted by the Queens Majestie* (1595), J2v–J3r.

[20] Ibid., J5r.

[21] Gerald Strauss, “Ideas of *Reformatio* and *Renovatio* from the Middle Ages to the Reformation”, in Thomas A. Brady, Jr. / Heiko A. Oberman / James D. Tracy (eds), *Handbook of European History 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. 2: *Visions, Programs and Outcomes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1–30.

[22] Qtd. in Clare (1999), 32–33.

[23] See Lotz-Heumann (2001), 113–114.

[24] *Sir Thomas More,* ed. by John Jowett (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2011), 139. All further references to this play are to this edition.

[25] David Womersley, *Divinity and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 205.

[26] Ibid., 206.

[27] Cf. *Sir Thomas More*, note to Addition 2, 6.112–120.

[28] Judith Butler, “Ruled Out: Vocabularies of the Censor”, in Robert C. Post (ed.), *Censorship and Silencing: Practices of Cultural Regulation* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1998), 247–262.

[29] George Peele, *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*, ed. by Charles R. Forker. Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). All further references to this play are to this edition.

[30] William Shakespeare, *King John*, in Stanley Wells / Gary Taylor (gen. eds), *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 436. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Shakespeare’s plays are taken from this edition.

[31] Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church”, ed. by Abdel Ross Wentz / Helmut T. Lehmann, in Jaroslav Pelikan / Helmut T. Lehmann (gen. eds), *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), vol. 36 (1959), 11–126.

[32] Roland Mushat Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 276, 283–288.

[33] “Ordering Arrest for Circulating Seditious Books and Bulls”, in Hughes / Larkin (1964–1969), vol. 2, 341–343, quote 341. See also, “Ordering Discovery of Persons Bringing in Seditious Books and Writing”, in Hughes / Larkin (1964–1969), vol. 2, 347–348.

[34] See *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition Based on the Text of 1592*, ed. by John Henry Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 181; Gerald Strauss, "How to Read a *Volksbuch*: The *Faust Book* of 1587", in *Enacting the Reformation in Germany: Essays on Institution and Reception* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 27–39.

[35] Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus: The A- and B- Texts (1604, 1616). A Parallel-Text Edition*, ed. by David Bevington / Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). All quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the 1604 'A' text.

[36] The lines are not in the 'A' text. The 'A' text has 'Wertenbeg' or 'Wertenberge' throughout. For the possible implications of this change of location see Leah S. Marcus, "Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: The Case of *Dr Faustus*", *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989), 1–29, esp. 7–9. Bevington and Rasmussen emend 'Wertenbeg' and 'Wertenberge' to 'Wittenberg'.

[37] Marcus (1989), 5.

[38] Heiko A. Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe*, trans. by Dennis Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 10.

[39] Ibid., 5.

[40] Karl Holl, quoted in Bernhard Lohse, "Conscience and Authority in Luther", in Heiko A. Oberman (ed.), *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era: Papers for the Fourth International Conference for Luther Research* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 158–159.

[41] Wentz / Lehmann (1959), vol. 1, 114; vol. 11, 240; vol. 12, 390, 405; vol. 26, 27, 212, 323, 440.

[42] Ibid., vol. 11, 24.

[43] "Conscience is something greater than heaven and earth. It is killed by sin and quickened through the Word of Christ" (ibid., vol. 7, 332).

[44] See Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

[45] James V. Holleran, "Maimed Funeral Rites in Hamlet", *English Literary Renaissance* 19:1 (1989), 65–93, quote 66.

[46] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[47] Ibid., 229.

[48] Ibid., 235.

[49] Ibid., 236.

[50] Ibid., 240.

[51] Ibid., 254.

[52] Wentz / Lehmann (1959), vol.7, 297.

[53] Ibid., vol. 4, 203

[54] "Defence and Explanation of all the Articles", in ibid., vol. 32, 95–97. See, also, "Table Talk", in ibid., vol. 53, 258–259.

Hamlet and Elizabethan England. Updated Friday, 1st March 2019. Explore the historical context of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' in Elizabethan England with Dr Hannah Lavery, Associate Lecturer at The Open University, Copyright: Jupiter Images. At the time when Hamlet first appeared on stage, questions about loyalty and national security, and the figure of the aging female monarch, were current in Elizabethan England.Â At a time when an aging Queen still sat on the English throne, projecting a sexualised image of herself in order to maintain political power, one context for a reading of Gertrudeâ€™s character is Hamletâ€™s response to her sexuality as an aspect of her position in the political court: â€˜Nay but to live/ In the rank sweat of an enseamÃ¨d bed Sir Thomas More is an Elizabethan play and a dramatic biography based on particular events in the life of the Catholic martyr Thomas More, who rose to become the Lord Chancellor of England during the reign of Henry VIII. The play is considered to be written by Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle and revised by several writers. The manuscript is particularly notable for a three-page handwritten revision now widely attributed to William Shakespeare. The typical Elizabethan stage was a platform, as large as 40 feet square (more than 12 metres on each side), sticking out into the middle of the yard so that the spectators nearly surrounded it. It was raised four to six feet and was sheltered by a roof , called â€œthe shadowâ€ or â€œthe heavens.â€ In most theatres the stage roof, supported by two pillars set midway at the sides of the stage, concealed an upper area from which objects could be raised or lowered.Â Some scenes took place in a playing area on the second level of the facade, but, again, historians disagree as to which scenes they were. Properties were occasionally carried onto the platform stage , but from extant lists it is obvious that they were few in number.