John Marston

*From Sharp Fang’d Satirist to Stoic Philosopher*

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The principal objective of this thesis is put forth evidence of John Marston's unique satirical aesthetic, through conflating interests in Horace and Juvenal, as latent content in his dramatic works. Though once held in high regard by his contemporaries, Marston's satiric intentions in drama are typically under-appreciated in current scholarship, leading to critical misconceptions of his work as amoral and sensationalist. Against such a trend, this thesis argues that Marston's satire is not only moral, but coincides with developing philosophical interests throughout his dramatic career, most commonly realised in proto-feminism and Stoicism.
This is to certify that:

i. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters

ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii. The thesis is less than 30,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices

Signed,

Tee Montague
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Introduction

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Though once held in high regard by contemporaneous literary critics and peers, the theatrical career of John Marston has been maligned and misunderstood as often as it has garnered praise in various present-day literary circles. Marston’s career began with a foray into the fashionable genres of erotic epyllion and satire with *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion’s Image and Certaine Satyres* (1598). In September 1599, he seems to have worked as a playwright for Phillip Henslowe, and wrote *Jack Drum’s Entertainment* (1599), *Antonio and Mellida* (1599) and its sequel *Antonio’s Revenge* (1600) for the Children of Paul’s. He would later share a combative relationship with Ben Jonson, the two exchanging criticisms with one-another over their stylistic approach to theatre. Marston’s dramatic experimentations are routinely understood to be morally ambiguous, particularly in light of a presumed inability, or unwillingness on his part, to "make clear the purpose of his work" (Yearling 2011, p2). Subsequently, his works have often been the target of unjust – and dare I say, uninformed – criticism.

A primary objective of this thesis is to re-evaluate Marston’s unique satirical aesthetic persisting as latent content in his dramatic works, and thereby demonstrate that contemporary criticism of Marston is often too quick to dismiss him as wholly ambiguous. As the following chapters of thesis will explain, what makes Marston interesting is his continuation of the conflating satirical styles of Horace and Juvenal in dramatic works that do not initially appear satirical. This thesis will also
demonstrate the way in which Marston's satirical interests develop throughout the course of his dramatic career, in tandem with his philosophical ideas. A great deal has been suggested about a bawdy, amoral Marston with little or no attempt at uncovering his satirical method or philosophical interests. Marston was both a diligent observer and admirer of Shakespeare¹ – the very Shakespeare whom Eric Partridge proclaimed “a practitioner of love-making, who could have taught Ovid” (2005, ix) – and a satirist of classical influence, evidenced by his ongoing relation to Horace and Juvenal, as this thesis will detail. Despite this taste for classicism, Marston has nevertheless been accused of being “scurrilous, filthy and obscene” by literary critic and Jonson-devotee William Gifford (1816, p196).² Marston’s status as an outrageous l’enfant terrible playwright, unworthy of his Jacobean contemporaries, is an unjust and yet common label in scholarship, a sentiment reflected by mid-twentieth century critic Robert Ornstein in *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*:

> Only the tactlessness of scholarship would impose the uncouth Marston on so suave and congenial a pair as Beaumont and Fletcher. Crowded in a little room they form an uncomfortable trio, so different in talent and temperament that it is hard to believe that they were contemporaries who wrote for the same audiences. We cannot imagine Fletcher committing Marston’s artistic atrocities, nor can we imagine Marston losing himself in Fletcher’s Arcadian dreamworld. (1960, p151)

Though rather fragile and poorly reasoned, Ornstein’s verdict on Marston’s work as

¹ In particular, the calamitous *Antonio’s Revenge* is highly reminiscent of both *Hamlet* and *Titus Andronicus*, while the rowdy pairing of Tysefew and Crispinella in *The Dutch Courtesan* is perhaps borrowed from Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

² The fact that the bawdiness of Shakespeare’s prose has not attracted the swarms of criticism that Marston has been subjected to can perhaps in part be explained by Partridge’s preface: Shakespearean criticism was “in the hands of academics and cranks ... the academic critics have, in the main and for most of the time, ignored the questions of homosexuality, sex, bawdiness: with one or two notable exceptions (Professor Dover Wilson, and G. Wilson Knight), they have been pitiably inadequate” (2005, xi).
nothing more than "bad art" does bring attention to one particular truth: Marston’s art is, on occasion, difficult to interpret. One can detect a tendency on Marston’s part to obscure the purpose of his work at certain points throughout his early verse satire. However, parsing the suggestion that Marston simply "lacks talent" and is thus incapable of making his objective clear is superfluous, when it is instead far more worthwhile to explore Marston’s satirical method, and peculiar neurosis over the possibility of his work being adversely judged or misinterpreted.

Therefore, this thesis will seek to reassess Marston’s satirical method, and examine the idiosyncrasies of Marston’s theatre through a transition from verse satirist to dramatist. Such a method will account for the conditions and context in which Marston was writing for both print and stage, and the aims and effects of Marston’s ironic and metaphoric language, often imprecisely termed "obscure". Perhaps the most radical objective of this thesis is to bring to light the legacy of Horace and Juvenal in Marston’s verse satire, which persists within elements of Marston’s subsequent dramatic works that do not immediately appear satirical. Furthermore, Marston's satiric inflection is transmuted into philosophical leanings, realised in proto-feminism and Stoicism, and his recurrent dramatic endorsement of the Elizabethan tradition in a post-Elizabethan political landscape, as the second chapter of this thesis will explore. In Marston’s early stage drama, satire is amalgamated with a more immediately apparent sense of dramatic irony: rather than dismiss Marston as sensationalist on this basis alone, this thesis contends that the initial dissonance created between satire and extravagant drama comes into sharper focus as Marston’s interests develop over the course of his career. As I will demonstrate in the first chapter, this multifaceted dramatic aesthetic can be attributed to Marston’s method for transposing elements borrowed from Horace and Juvenal from verse satire to the stage. Thus, the impetus for this study is the
observation that critics tend to overlook both his satirical method in drama, and his
developing interests in Stoic philosophy, and thus evaluate Marston selectively,
which has produced distortions in scholarship. Against such a trend, this thesis
proposes a holistic reading of Marston’s evolution of satire and philosophy in drama,
which I wish to treat as part of the same continuum, rather than as unrelated and
therefore dissonant aspects of his work. In doing so, my aim with this thesis is to
arrive at a clearer understanding of how these areas of interest synthesise cohesively.

**Understanding Elizabethan Satire**

When addressing Marston’s own satirical method, it is useful to first frame satire in
the context of the Elizabethan period. In his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George
Puttenham considered satire to originate as drama, writing:

> the first and most bitter invective against vice and vicious men was the
dramatic *Satyre*: which to th’ intent their bitterness should breed none ill will
... they made wise as if the gods of the woods, whom they called *Satyres* or
*Silvanes*, should appear and recite those verses of rebuke.  (p30)

Moreover, in *A World of Words* (1598), John Florio – linguist and royal language
tutor at the Court of King James I – determined satire to be “a kind of poeme
rebuking euils and abuses, an inuectiue, that regardeth no person” (p597). Over time,
poets would proceed to imitate the Greek satyrs, and as Puttenham states “taxe the
common abuses and vice of the people in rough and bitter speaches, and their
invectives were called *Satyres*, and themselves *Satyricques*: such were *Lucilius,*
*Juvenal* and *Persius* among the Latines” (1588, p30). Satire, then, expressed genuine
social concerns. Furthermore, the foremost intent of satire was understood to take
precedence over poetic design, a truth acknowledged by Marston in his address to
"Reproof" in the opening stanza of the third satire in *Certaine Satyres*:

Now grim *Reprofe*, swell in my rough-heu'd rime,
That thou maist vexe the guilty of our time. [sig. D6 v]

It was this concerted choice of matter over manner that Marston and his satirist
peers adopted to deliver what Ejner Jensen considered "an especially vivid and
confrontational presentation of his evidence" (2008, p107). As this thesis will
contend, a defining characteristic of Marston’s subsequent stage drama is his
preservation of satire in tandem with confrontational dramatic overtones.

Marston’s talent for satire and sharp wit prompted Francis Meres – perhaps
best known for *Palladis Tamia* (1598), an early critical account of poems and plays,
including those of William Shakespeare – to famously advocate Marston as one of the
very finest satirists of the day. Meres considered Marston’s works to be in a tier
alongside that of Horace, Juvenal and Lucilius as "the best for satire" and Marston as
"chiefe" among his contemporaries (p284). It is an intriguing appraisal –
particularly so in consideration of the fact that Marston’s satire, widely celebrated in
his day, is largely forgotten among present-day critics who often appear preoccupied
with his idiosyncratic dramatic aesthetic, and neglect his satirical method.

Throughout these preliminary works, Marston’s criticisms extend to courtiers,
Anglicans, Catholics and even his literary contemporaries. However, on occasion
Marston will revert to a less serious, tongue-in-cheek tone, and make light-hearted
fun of his peers and even his own satiric style. I am going to suggest, then, that
Marston sought to amalgamate both of the prevailing influences in English verse
satire, Horace and Juvenal, and continued to do so long after his transition from
print to stage. Though Marston is typically considered to more closely resemble
Juvenal3 – whose satire is generally thought to be harsh, derisive and critical of societal corruption – Meres also identifies whispers of Horace intermittently in his writing. In comparison to Juvenal's bitter portrayals of social vice, Horace's satires were of a gentler, more comical feeling. Furthermore, as Matthew Steggle suggests, Meres diagnoses an "imaginative negotiation" taking place between Marston and the competing influences of his ancient predecessors (2013, p10). In a prefatory letter to The Scourge of Villanie (1598), Marston suggests that Juvenal is at times too "gloomie", and concludes his address by defending his own "plainnes" (sig. B3 v) – a value that Horace upheld in his satire.4 As this thesis will demonstrate, Marston's inclination to amalgamate numerous classical sources lends his satiric style a high degree of sophistication.

Marston’s Reputation in Scholarship

Though Marston had a slither of detractors during his career and in the decades that would follow his abandonment of the theatre, early biographies compiled by William Winstanley, Anthony à Wood and Giles Jacob hold him in high regard. It stands to reason that Marston took the business of satire and the virtuosity of the ancients before him quite seriously, given his favourable contemporaneous reception and assimilation of Horace and Juvenal. Marston’s reputation in more recent scholarship, however, is often less than favourable, and far removed from Meres’

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3 In Plagiarism and Imitation, Harold Ogden White suggests that Marston owes his satirical tone to Juvenal (1966, p126); Reid Barbour categorises Marston as Juvenalian on the basis of his "obscurity" and "indignation" (2003, p80); Edwin Percy Whipple comes to the same conclusion in "Minor Elizabethan Dramatists" (1867, p694).

4 Marston’s self-evaluation of “plainnes” in his satire is perhaps simply acknowledgement that he is less elegant than Horace stylistically.
initial gushing praise. This section will introduce critical responses from a wide range of sources and periods so as to illustrate the disparity between Marston’s early and present-day reception.

In *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (1687), Winstanley recalled Marston as “one whose fluent Pen both in a Comick and Tragick strain, made him to be esteemed one of the chiefest of our English Dramaticks, both for solid judgment, and pleasing variety” (p137); Wood considered him “a Gentleman that wrote divers things of great Ingenuity ... was not inferior to any in writing of Comedies and Tragedies” and “was in great renown for his Wit” in *Athenae Oxonienses* (1690, 1:332-333); whilst Gilles Jacob reflects upon his works as “very well approv’d” in his *Poetical Register* (1719, p173). Furthermore, in *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), Gerard Langbaine is effusive in his praise for Marston:

An Excellent Character! and fit for the Imitation of our Dramatists; most of whom would be thought to have studied Horace: I could wish therefore, that they which know him so well, would call to Mind and practice his Advice; which is thus exprest:

Silvis deducti caveant, me judice, Fauni,—
Ne nimium teneres juvenentur versibus unquam,
Aut immunda crepent. (p347)

This passage implores the “woods to down their guard” (my translation) – intriguingly, an instruction of Horace in *Ars Poetica* (244). Langbaine seems to imply that Marston’s peers, unlike Marston himself, did not read Horace particularly well.

Moreover, in the Fourth Conversation of *The Poetical Decameron* (1820), John Payne Collier argues that Marston was closely attuned to both Horace and Juvenal, regarding him as one who “spoke boldly ... in most places, and lashed with equal severity high and low, not sparing the vices of the great nor the frauds of the little” (p233), and was thus liable to offend and repel many. Collier adds that
Marston should rightfully be placed alongside the finest of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, stating that “his dramatic works would quite as well bear republishing as those of Massinger or Shirley, did any general feeling exist in the nation for the honour of the English stage” (p251). This position is something of an anomaly in Collier’s time - broadly speaking, late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century revisionist criticism of Marston is less charitable. Ascertaining precisely what triggered a more widespread degree of prejudice against Marston during this period is a complex matter. A burgeoning interest in the invention and imagination of the Romantic mode following the death of Alexander Pope is a reasonable starting point. According to Kathleen Kuiper, such an evolution was inevitable. She writes:

The greatest satire has been written in periods when ethical and rational norms were sufficiently powerful to attract widespread assent, yet not so powerful as to compel absolute conformity - those periods when the satirist could be of his society and apart, could exercise a double vision. Neoclassic writers had available to them as an implicit metaphor the towering standard of the classical past. For the 19th and 20th centuries no such metaphors have been available. (2011, p174)

Kuiper's premise of an impasse in satire leading up to the rise of Romanticism rings true: consider Thomas Warton's evaluation of Pope – perhaps the last of the esteemed eighteenth-century Neoclassical satirists, whom Warton greatly admired – as a writer who simply lacked the aptitude and imagination to "frequently ravish and transport his reader ... whatever poetical enthusiasm he actually possessed, he withheld and stifled" (1772, 2:408-411). Warton is acutely aware that the prevailing aesthetic of the day had transitioned towards powerful emotional experiences and depictions of sublime nature.

Furthermore, as poetry gained favour among the Romantics, precise
definitions of what constituted a satire were revised, signalling further disinterest in Marston’s work. One can certainly discern how Marston’s satire – which, even in comparison to Pope’s, is coarse – fell entirely out of favour among literary critics. Marston’s linguistic modulations are heavy-handed and often jarring, and his satire is often bitingly aggressive. Marston himself attests as much in The Scourge of Villanie IX, ‘Here’s a toy to mocke an Ape indeede’:

Grim fac’d Reproofs, sparkle with threatening eye
Bend thy sower brawes in my tart poesie.
Auant yee curres, houle in some cloudie mist,
Quake to behold a sharp-fang’d Satyrst.
O how on tiptoes proudly mounts my Muse,
Stalking a loftier gate then Satyres use.
Me thinkes some sacred rage warmes all my vaines,
Making my spright mount up to higher straines
Then wel beseemes a rough-tongu’d Satyres part,

Marston was deeply invested in exceeding the boundaries of language, which firmly secured his early reputation as a flamboyant writer. Reavley Gair postulated that a new word is revealed to the audience “every fifteen lines on average” (1978, p247). This paints Marston as a writer with designs on decorating his prose with outrageous lingual gymnastics to both charm and antagonise, echoing the Horatian ideal to "teach and delight" – a concept the first chapter will explain in detail.

Marston assumed the role of “sharp-fang’d Satyrst” in the fullest, borrowing in part from the meditations of mythological satyrs whilst reinvigorating the mode with his own idiom. As Colin Burrow writes in "Roman Satire in the Sixteenth Century", Elizabethan satirists – Marston no exception – sought to "make their times

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5 In his Dictionary of the English Language (1768), Samuel Johnson had defined “satire” as “a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured ... with intention to vilify”. Centuries later, Ian Jack’s outline of English satire echoed Johnson’s concise definition, stating that satire is “born of the instinct to protest; it is protest become art” (1952, p17). It is these definitions that have been accepted by Marston’s detractors - perhaps as a matter of convenience - during the Romantic movement, and throughout 20th and 21st century, respectively.
have the fascinating corruption of their Roman originals", and would often mirror Juvenal's method for portraying a present-day age as "more decadent and more deplorable than the last ... [to] guarantee his distinction" (2005, p244-247). Burrow suggests that Juvenal differentiated his satire from that of Horace by insisting that the social landscapes described in Horace's satire had since become "unstable and unsettling", and in doing so Juvenal established himself as one who "[made] his authority by creating an environment of change and decline" (p244). "Difficile est Satyram non Scribere", the second satire in Marston's *Scourge of Villanie*, opens with an unmistakable endorsement of Juvenalian invective:

I Cannot hold, I cannot I indure  
To view a big womb'd foggie clowde immure  
The radiant tresses of the quickning sunne  
Let Custards quake, my rage must freely runne  

By contrast, Satire IV of *Scourge of Villanie* begins in distinct Horatian expression, testament not only to Marston's versatility but also his attentiveness to a myriad of classical sources:

I Marry Sir, here's perfect honestie:  
When Martius will forsweare all villanie:  
(All damn'd abuse, of payment in the vvarres  
All filching from his Prince and Souldiers)  
When once he can but so much bright durt gleane,  
As may mainetaine, one more White-friers queane.  

The restraint of this passage, transcribed in "perfect honesty", is entirely dissimilar to Marston's thirst for "rage" to be "freely runne" in Satire II. Thus, it is highly probable that Marston's sophisticated aims and unique approach to the genre contributed to his uneven reception: the diversity of satirical models with which Marston engages, by way of both Horace and Juvenal, produces variable output which is difficult for
critics to evaluate by any one standard.

Of course, satire has always had its detractors, and given that Marston’s style was anything but conformist he was as susceptible to rebuke as any other. The ingenuity and eagerness Marston applied to extending the English vocabulary found a small faction of his contemporaries accusing him of lexical histrionics: in *The Whipping of the Satire* (1601), John Weever concludes that satirists are afflicted by "some strange disease" (375), which prompts him to seek the advice of a medical expert:

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I sought a famous Cantabrigian
And brought a picture with me for a fee
He hastily replied, "Thou foolish man,
It is the flux of a luxurious tongue.
Give him a spoon of some new cow’s dung..."  (410-414)
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In the lines that follow, Weever proceeds to quote the title and opening line of Marston’s "Cynic Satire" (415-416) from the *The Scourge of Villanie*, thereby rendering the story a personal attack. Beyond Weever and Hall, however, Marston’s works had been for the most part well-received by contemporaneous readers and fellow writers alike.

By the mid-eighteenth century, and in the centuries that would follow, however, Marston was being judged in a whole new and unforgiving light. In *Chamber’s Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (1876), Scottish journalist Robert Carruthers said this of Marston:

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All his works are coarse and licentious. Ben Jonson boasted to Drummond that he had beaten Marston and taken his pistol from him. If he had sometimes taken his pen, he would have better served society.  (1:207)
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Thomas Campbell also favoured Jonson – and indeed, Hall – for satire, suggesting that Marston was “confessedly inferior to both” (1819, p127), before directing a
mocking jibe at Langbaine’s aforementioned enthusiastic appraisal of Marston’s contributions to English drama:

> It is amusing to find Langbaine descanting on the chaste purity of Marston as a writer and the author of the Biographia Dramatica transcribing the compliment immediately before the enumeration of his plays, which are stuffed with obscenity. (1819, p127)

On the surface, Campbell's criticism seems reasonable: sexuality and sexual language, as T.F. Wharton suggests, are certainly "more than a local amusement in Marston’s drama ... [they are] probably the most insistent preoccupation of his work" (2000, p6). Though what Campbell acknowledges as a crude exterior – prose "stuffed with obscenity" (1819, p127) – is indeed typical of Marston, it seems reckless to suggest that textuality is compromised as a result.

**An Introduction to Marston’s Satirical Method**

A radical concept in Marston, that this thesis will continue to explore, is the way in which satire is meaningfully sustained within works that, by being so imbued with sexualised language and dramatic irony, do not appear satirical. In a technical sense, Marston’s satires were emblematic of an opposition to vice, and as such two of the satires – *Certaine Satyres* and *The Scourge of Villanie* – as well as his erotic epyllion *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image*, were burned in the "Bishops' Bonfire" of

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6 T.F. Wharton, however, only manages to acknowledge in seeming incidental fashion that Marston “is as interested in gender as he is in sex” (2000, p6) – this greatly dilutes his criticism as he fails to explain why Marston is apparently fixated. As this project will explain in more detail in following chapters, Marston’s sexual preoccupations are thinly veiled satirical observations of gender imbalance, and often explicitly concerned with patriarchal misogyny.
1599 for being deemed "offensive in nature" (Buckridge 1998, p2). The Privy Council, likely concerned with the potential for satirical works to become increasingly widespread and defamatory, granted Archbishop Whitgift and Bishop Bancroft - both overseers of book censorship during this period in the late-sixteenth century - the authority to order a public bonfire in accordance with a decree that "no satires or epigrammes be printed hereafter" (Honigmann 1987, p24). There are several theories that attempt to expound precisely how the ban and public burning came to pass. In Press Censorship in Elizabethan England (1997), Cynthia Clegg postulates that the ban was enforced to shield the Earl of Essex from criticism over his involvement in a recent failed military campaign in Ireland (p201-202). William Jones (2010, p337), on the other hand, considers the ban to have been directly correlated with Robert Tofte's Of Mariage and Wiving (1599). Generally speaking, all works aimed at satirising vice and social abuse were considered offensive, irrespective of whether the persons targeted were recognisable or remained anonymous. Notably, the Jonson and Nashe collaborative work, Isle of Dogs (1597) – for which Jonson was arrested and imprisoned – was suppressed for an apparent satirising of numerous high officials and even the Queen herself, culminating in what Ian Donaldson in Ben Jonson: A Life (2011) labelled an "ironic mirror of the idealised world of Elizabeth's court ... a kind of royal kennels, a natural home to sharp-fanged writers" (p117). Unlike many of his peers, however, Marston escaped further punishment.

This thesis will argue that, undeterred by the ban, Marston’s satirical

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7 Following St Thomas Aquinas in Summa Theologica (c. 1225-1274), "sin is worse than vice – i.e. evil act than evil habit ... Vice is directly contrary to virtue, even as sin to virtuous act: and so vice excludes virtue, bust as sin excludes acts of virtue" (Article IV), and this would apply to "a man taking the offensive against that which is in opposition to him" (Article V).

8 Tofte's book was labelled a "booke againste woemen", though on a grander scale was likely deemed to have been written in defiance of Elizabeth I (Arber 677-678).
commentary persisted throughout his transition to the stage, disguised within more prominent dramatic elements in the early *Antonio* plays. It was from this vantage point that Marston gradually morphed into a sharply philosophical and contemplative composer of plays for a perspicacious, thrill-seeking segment of society. Marston’s satirical impulse persisted in an altered form throughout his dramatic work, and to this end Marston conscientiously instructs his audience to interpret his satire in a very specific way: as sincere denunciations of misogyny and patriarchy, derived from Juvenal, coincide with Horatian forms of dramatic extravagance. The method can initially be observed in *The Scourge of Villanie*: in the preface Marston implores the reader to shy away from decoding his fiction as an allegorical representation of the real world – Marston maintains that these are "mists" of dark conceit that deceive us (2010, p4). Buckridge, for one, takes Marston at his word, contending that attempts to identify Marston’s fictional characters as unambiguous representations of real-life individuals is "misreading" his satire (1998, p3). Marston is compelled to implore his readership to evaluate his work without prejudice, as in the highly self-conscious postscript, "To him that hath perused me", to the *Scourge of Villanie*:

Yet I feare me, I shall be much, much injuried by two sorts of readers: the one being ignorant, not knowing the nature of a Satyre (which is under fained private names, to note generall vices), will needes wrest each fayned name to a private unfained person. The other too subtile, bearing a private malice to some greater personage then he dare in his owne person seeme to malingne, will strive by a forced application of my generall reproofes to broach his private hatred. [sig. I3 r]

This preamble reads very closely to Edmund Spenser’s prefatory letter in 1589 to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which he clarified in some detail the intent and composition of his
poem, *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1609). Like Marston, Spenser’s methodical account of this piece – explicitly titled “A Letter of the Authors expounding his whole Intention in the course of this Worke” – sought to fend away “gealous opinions and misconstructions” of the "continued allegory or dark conceit" and steer the reader towards “understanding to the wel-head of the history, that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit ... which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused” (p2). Spenser's writing is self-conscious to the threat of adverse judgement, and is often prefaced with instructions on how to interpret allegory and symbolism. In the *Scourge of Villanie*, Marston’s disclaimers are somewhat reminiscent of Spenser, as he proceeds to dedicate the work to his "most esteemed and best beloved Selfe"(sig. A2r), with a nod to "entirely unworthy readers" (sig. A4v). This would seem to imply that the complexity of Marston’s satirical method will ultimately distinguish discerning, capable readers from the "unworthy". In a final disclaimer, Marston confesses to have written the piece in "some places too obscure, in all places misliking me" so as to appease a readership whose "unseasoned pallate" presumes all satire to be "palpable dark, and so rough writ" (sig. B3v).

Marston’s schematic – his impulsive inclination to anticipate the work, and then defend it – is remarkably consistent: in the much later stage play, *The Tragedie of Sophonisba* (1606), Marston once again is compelled to implore his readership to evaluate his work without prejudice:

> Then, equal reader, peruse me with no prepared dislike; and if ought shall displease thee, thank thyself; if ought please thee, thank not me: for I confess in this it was not my only end. (Preface)

Note that what Marston is alluding to is that *Sophonisba* was not written solely for the amusement of the audience at the Blackfriars – "not my onely end". The scope of
the play is far greater and more ambitious: Marston, perhaps recognising that
*Sophonisba* is a rather austere work of scarce entertainment value at the best of
times, wishes to redirect the audience's attention to the "worth" of Sophonisba and
what she represents. Sophonisba is a patently Horatian figure, through her
embodiment of the immaculate goddess she appears reminiscent of Horace's own
fascination with the beauty of form. In stark contrast to Sophonisba are Syphax and
Massinissa, both of whom typify patriarchal misogyny and are thus subjected to
Marston’s Juvenal-inspired censure in proving unworthy of Sophonisba's Stoic
virtue. As such, evidence of Marston’s assimilation of Horace and Juvenal in both
verse satire and, more radically, in drama, suggests that Marston has always been a
far more capable and judicious satiric dramatist than his detractors are willing to
acknowledge. This prompts me to investigate Marston’s satirical method holistically
over the course of his career as satirist and dramatist, and identify observable
satirical and philosophical trends in drama commonly overlooked in present-day
scholarship.

The first chapter of this thesis, "The Emancipation of a Sharp Fang'd Satirist",
will provide an examination into Marston’s reputation as a satirist in the 1590s, and
the transition Marston makes from print (satire) to performance (early revenge
tragedy). Under such trying conditions, Marston is likely to have been forced to
rework his satiric aesthetic, with his penchant for dramatic irony resulting in various
literary critics undervaluing, or misinterpreting entirely, the moral intent of his work.
Furthermore, an ancillary focus of this chapter is to survey the present critical
landscape as it pertains to Marston and dispel various misguided claims, and aim to
restore Marston’s reputation in doing so. Tracing Marston’s satirical interests in
broad cultural aspects of patriarchy, primarily through the anti-Stoic figure of
Antonio in *Antonio's Revenge*, will pave the way for an investigation of Marston’s
movement into proto-feminism and Stoicism in the second chapter of this thesis, "Meditations of the Forgotten Stoic". This chapter is primarily interested in Marston’s continuum of satirical interests, shifting from general patriarchy in Antonio’s Revenge, to more precise commentary on individual Jacobean courtiers in The Malcontent and Sophonisba, alongside an emerging advocacy of Stoic philosophy. Satire and philosophy initially appear dissonant in Marston’s early drama, and as such is imbued with dramatic irony. A progression the second chapter of this thesis will account for is the emergence of Marston’s philosophy, which in Sophonisba ultimately becomes more prominent than satire. Marston’s philosophical designs are ultimately realised through the Stoic goddess Sophonisba, and coincide with a shift of emphasis from Juvenalian critique in his early literary work, towards a greater interest in the instructive principle of Horace. This progression is evident from the outset of Marston’s dramatic career when considering the false Stoic Antonio – whose conspirators follow his retreat to a monastery to “cleanse hands / Purge hearts of hatred” (V.iii.174-175) at the altar in the wake of the murder of young Julio – in comparison to Sophonisba’s sincere dedication to Stoicism at the altar, for which she sacrifices herself.
This chapter will seek to establish Marston’s methodology in satire, and explore the way in which Marston engages with Elizabethan issues by conflating the styles of satire found in Horace and Juvenal. As was touched upon in the Introduction to this thesis, the Horatian mode is thought to be generally comical in spirit, whereas the satire of Juvenal is more direct in its criticism, and often permeated by a strain of despair for the plight of society. Marston, as I will demonstrate, draws stylistic inspiration from both of the ancients in developing a multifaceted satirical tone. It should be noted that this chapter takes a generalised, and therefore somewhat imperfect, view of the satire of Horace and Juvenal in associating Horace with didactic satire, and Juvenal with censorious social critique, as this is typically how contemporary scholarship tends to evaluate Horace and Juvenal. Therefore, such scholarship would greatly benefit from a more sophisticated understanding of Horace and Juvenal, and for that matter, Marston. Moreover, the latter part of this chapter will provide preliminary evidence on the effect Marston’s method has on his early drama, thus setting the scene for an expanded inquiry into Marston’s stage career in the following chapter.

In order to establish an appropriate method of interpretation, it is imperative to first frame Marstonian satire in its historical context, by way of critical response to the satire of the Elizabethan period. In *The Cankered Muse* (1976), Alvin B. Kernan suggests that "no author of Elizabethan satire had a clear idea of what was basically
wrong with his society", and accuses the Elizabethan satirist of being a "a strange, twisted character" who found sadistic pleasure in "multiplying his peculiarities — so much so that it often appears that they were more interested in creating a sensational satirist than in writing satire" (p89; original emphasis). In further support of this view, J.B. Leishman writes that where the Elizabethan satirist failed to live up to their Ancient Roman counterparts was in an "absence of clear outline and plan, a tendency to pile detail upon detail and to present us with just one damned thing after another" (1949, p121). George Puttenham might have agreed with Leishman's assertion, suggesting in *Arte of English Poesie* (1588) that the nature of the "Satyre" was to "openly and by expresse names tax men ... maliciously and impudently ", whilst the antagonists guarded themselves in disguises of "hatts and capps" (XIII). Puttenham believed satire to be the father of comedy and tragedy, and lambasted the presence of personal and vindictive satire in English stage comedies and dramas, lamenting that it was not until the arrival of the New Comedy – "a more ciuill and pleasant comedy, not touching any man by name, but in a certain generalitie glancing at euery abuse" – that writers "left aside their disguisings and played bare face" (XIII). It is likely, however, that Puttenham had been conflating Satyre and Greek Old Comedy with Elizabethan drama, simply out of a need to dismiss satire as archaic and irrelevant. In *De Satyrica Graecorum & Romanorum Satira* (1605), Isaac Casaubon famously dissociated the etymological connection between the Greek satyr play and Roman satire – establishing that the Latin *satura* was not in fact derived from the Greek *satyros* – thereby invalidating Puttenham's preconceived belief of a direct genealogical connection, and instead emphasising the moral intentions of verse satire as proportionate to ethical philosophy (p29). So while certain satiric elements can be perceived in Greek writings, the classical genre
itself was entirely Roman. Casaubon would hence hold the "soul" of satire in high esteem, describing satire in his *Prolegomena* (1605) as "the persecution of vice and exhortation to virtue, to the achieving of which ends it uses humour and jesting like a weapon" (p288). Such a perspective resonates with Lawrence Manley’s championing of the merit and significance of Elizabethan verse satire in *Literature and Culture in Early Modern England* (1995), in which he states:

> The improvised, associational structure of verse satire – its preference for metonymy over metaphor – is in fact an analytical instrument strikingly appropriate to the represented superficiality of the social types most often condemned. And this fit between social type and mode of figuration serves a sometimes deep and pointed reflection on society. (p381)

Fundamental to Manley’s claim is the view that Elizabethan satire was inspired predominantly by social and economic elements of the period, and not simply by sources of literal or philosophical note (1995, p194). Fredric Bogel’s more recent assessment of the cultural influence of Elizabethan satire bolsters such a contention, suggesting that the principal occupation of satire is "not to expose the satiric object in all its alien difference", but rather:

> ...to define it as different, as other: to make difference by setting up a textual machine or mechanism for producing difference... Satire of this period does not simply register a prior difference between satirist and satiric object and then play out the consequences of this difference; instead, satire works to *produce* a difference between two figures whom the satirist – who is usually one of these figures – perceives to be insufficiently differentiated. (2003, p30)

So it is from this foundation that Marston sought to carve out his own stylistic niche in verse satire. In *John Marston – Satirist* (1961) Anthony Caputi praises Marston as

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9 Francois Vavasseur, in *De Ludicra Dictione* (1656, p43), also comes to the conclusion that the origins of pure verse satire are wholly Roman.
a sharp-witted satirist with seemingly multiple personae:

At moments Marston speaks noisily through the personality of the mask; at others he retreats along the line of extension to speak much as he would in his own person ... Each [attitude] is perfectly consistent with something that Marston the young poet as satirist was trying to do. (p28)

The attitudes to which Caputi refers, in my view, pertain to Marston's assimilation of Horace and Juvenal: Caputi goes to great lengths to demonstrate the way in which Marston, through dissonant sources of inspiration, was able to thus assume "a stance, a voice, and a state of mind ideally suited to a vociferous declaration of his individuality" (p232). As Caputi rightly acknowledges, Marston's multifaceted satirical personae is observable his dramatic career, perhaps most conspicuously through the malcontent figure of Malevole:

Malevole is at once the critic, poised to denounce vice and folly, the protagonist, arousing some concern about his prospects for good fortune, the intriguer, foiling the villain and shaping the action to his own advantage, and the judge, providing the standards that in the final analysis order the world of the play. (p188)

So it is the effect that Marston's satirical impulse has on both his verse satire and early drama that demands comprehensive exploration.

**Marston’s Reputation in Current Scholarship**

A survey of the present critical landscape as it relates to Marston, then, is necessary so as to begin to reassess his satiric method in drama against a particular school of thought in scholarship that considers Marston "sensationalist", based largely on account of his proclivity for extravagant dramatic performance. This survey does not
seek to imply that Marston's twentieth-century advocates, such as Caputi, Senapati and Charles Cathcart are necessarily the "exceptions to the rule", but rather that certain oversimplified accounts of Marston in contemporary scholarship could benefit from a more refined understanding of his satiric method. In a recent critical appraisal of the *Antonio* plays – Marston's earliest movements into the dramatic world, together with *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (1600), following the Bishops' Bonfire of 1599 – Rick Bowers argued that Marston's theatre is “not to be appreciated in considerations of causal plot structure or moral stance” but simply its “over–the–top absurdity” (2000, p14). Though *Antonio's Revenge* (1600) shares a similar plot structure to that of *Hamlet* – with Antonio intent on avenging his lover Mellida, who dies of grief over Duke Piero's murderous vendetta against many of her companions – Bowers rebuffs the play as “sensationalist”, stating:

> Marston does not ‘read’ in systematic or scholarly ways. Instead, he filches, twists, shouts, improvises, and parodies in a constant search for dramatic effect. His time signatures are not classical: they are immediate, disjointed, sensational. His characters have more in common with jugglers, clowns, dancers and automatic mimes than they do with classical rhetoric. (2000, p19)

Bowers' critique merely spirals into denunciations of "mindless entertainment", a contention apparently justified solely by the bawdiness and sexualised nature of Marston’s verse. He concludes:

> [Marston] is the theatrical “bad boy” of his time, assuming his audience to be familiar and interactive with contemporary popular theatre, and using a variety of ironic techniques successfully to surprise, entertain, and emotionally unsettle that audience. (2000, p17)

This would be an extraordinary objective for a man less than a year removed from penning satire – derived quite explicitly from both Horace and Juvenal – that was often preoccupied with morose depictions of a tragic and corrupt social landscape, as
in Satire II of *Certaine Satyres*:

> Now Satyre cease to rub our gaulted skinnes,  
> And to unmaske the worlds detested sinnes  
> Thou shalt as soon draw Niuls riuer dry,  
> As cleanse the world from foul impietie [sig. D6r]

This particular passage, which concludes what is in essence an elaborate, and ultimately desperate, tirade against a treasonous age in Satire II, are distinctly Juvenalian.

Such attacks against societal corruption lend some support to Edwin Percy Whipple's claim that Marston aspired to be the "English Juvenal" (1867, p694). It is reasonable to suggest that from the outset of his literary career, Marston had a stronger inclination towards Juvenal, given that his bitter ridicule of patriarchal culture is a common theme in the satires. However, Whipple's verdict disregards Marston's diversions into the Horatian mode, as per Satire III, in which Marston mocks Lucian for his vanity:

> And having kist his hand, stroke up his haire,  
> Made a French conge, cryes. *O cruell feare*  
> To the antique Bed–post. I laught a maine  
> That down my cheeks the mirthful drops did raine  
> ...  
> Art not thou ready for to breake thy spleene  
> At laughing at the fondness thou haft seene  
> In this vaine–glorious foole? [sigs. E1v]

Satire III is written as an outspoken critique of extravagant "gallants [who] boast to be / Slaves unto riot, and lewd luxury" (sig. D8v), thus predominantly Juvenalian, though Marston's impudent drollery and Horatian jibes are observable throughout the work. Furthermore, this thesis will continue to trace a trajectory in Marston's engagements with Horace which can be seen to appreciate throughout his drama,
particularly as it relates to Marston drawing upon Horace as an instructive principle. Thus, the idea that Marston was merely an amoral dramatist whose only interest lay in lavish entertainments is seemingly at odds with his poignantly moral verse satire and developing interests in his classical sources – and as the latter part of this chapter will begin to explain in greater detail, satire is methodically retained in Marston’s drama, and generally underpins his dramatic irony.

Bowers’ appraisal of Marston as "sensationalist", then, fails to consider the Antonio plays as part of the total sum of Marston’s literary works. Thus, in Bowers' critique an opportunity for contemplative reflection over what Marston’s satire means, and what it aims to do, and what segments of society it targets, goes begging. Furthermore, engaging with these early works in isolation dilutes the significance of Marston’s inaugural designs on Stoicism. As the following chapter of this thesis will demonstrate, The Malcontent and Sophonisba evince Marston’s continuation of satire and Stoic thought in drama, and thus bear witness to a particular kind of classicism in Marston through a relation to Horace, Juvenal and philosophy.

In another recent critique, Georgia Brown accuses Marston of “capitalising on sensationalism” through gratuitous violence and moral incoherence, for the sole purpose of “giving himself a name and establishing his currency” (2005, p2). Marston’s theatrical universe is at times quite crude – even perverse – however the idea that any sense of morality is displaced for unfiltered gratuity and monetary gain is reductive reasoning at its worst. Citing Antonio’s murder of Piero in Antonio’s Revenge as a prime example of a “disgusting” and sensationalist Marston, Brown’s analysis hinges on the assumption that Antonio, as a false-Stoic, renders Marston entirely dismissive of Stoic philosophy as a whole. Marston makes no such claim. Antonio is clearly unworthy of fulfilling the Stoic ideal, but this is perhaps because he is created as a delusional anti-hero – evidenced by the utterly bizarre purification
scene at the monastery in which Antonio believes himself cleansed of the brutal and sadistic murder of a youth (V.iii), as the latter part of this chapter will explain. This becomes all the more apparent in light of the thoughtful, even advocatory, exploration of Stoicism that takes place in *Sophonisba*, where comparisons between the preceding failures of male would-be Stoics and the impeccable goddess Sophonisba come to the fore – an idea explored in depth throughout the later stages of this thesis.

An astute perspective in scholarship that this thesis advocates is Sukanya B. Senapati’s critique, “Two parts in one: Marston and masculinity” (2000), which goes against a grain of assumptions that have considered Marston to be playing into vulgarities and broad gender stereotyping, or emphasising apparently “hostile” depictions of women cornered into subservient roles by their authoritative male counterparts. Rather, Senapati ascertains misogyny in Marston to have the reverse effect. Responding to attitudes that insist Marstonian women are marginalised, Senapati states:

> Marston does indeed depict patriarchal misogyny, yet only within the context of showing the absurdities of anxious male competition. Far more radically, Marston also questions the arbitrariness of male-female gender boundaries in ways which the boys’ companies for which he wrote uniquely enabled him to do; and, with both female and male voices literally equivalent in the androgynous boys’ companies, Marston goes on to create some of the most powerful female counter-voices to patriarchal assumptions in the entire corpus of English Renaissance drama. (2000, p125)

Senapati’s line of inquiry is compelling – the idea that Marston makes patriarchal misogyny clearly apparent so as to undermine it goes a long way towards explicating why Marston’s characterisation of gender roles often appear to be rather
exaggerated, and thus misinterpreted as senseless.\textsuperscript{10} Marston’s disparagement of patriarchy in fact marks a transition into privileging the feminine throughout the course of his \textit{œuvre}, one that culminates in a sincere admiration for the Sophonisba goddess through the figure of Massinissa. This stratagem is indicative of the way I will suggest Marston’s satire functions in drama: Marston’s satiric critique, derived from Juvenal, typically coincides with wholly ironic representations of foolish and corrupt courtiers, and extravagant drama. Marston’s taste for lavish and often scandalous theatrical entertainments recall Horace’s "\textit{ut pictura poesis}" – meaning "as is painting, so is poetry"\textsuperscript{11} – from \textit{Ars Poetica} (389), and moreover the widely accepted Horatian ideal, "to teach and delight".\textsuperscript{12} Horace’s claim is that both poetry and paintings are equally deserving of contemplation and interpretation – I propose the same can be said about the balance between Marston’s satire and drama. Developing alongside Marston’s assimilation of Juvenal and Horace is an expression of philosophical interest, most commonly realised in proto-feminism and an evolving concern with Stoicism, which come to serve an analogous function for Marston, enabling serious meditations to co-exist together with sensationalist dramaturgy.

\textsuperscript{10} T.S. Eliot anticipates such a sentiment in his \textit{Essays on Elizabethan Drama}, suggesting that Marston’s drama possesses an "under-pattern" that is not as immediately apparent as the theatrical elements themselves, and as such "the tangible world is deliberately diminished — both symbolism and allegory being operations of [Marston’s] conscious planning mind" (1956, p173).


\textsuperscript{12} As cited by Michael J. Sidnell in \textit{Sources of Dramatic Theory} (1991, p7).
Marston as Adversary

To fully grasp Marston’s development of a multifaceted satirical voice that would later be transposed to the stage and assimilated with various expressions of dramatic irony, one must appreciate Marston’s early adoption of an adversarial satiric position. Throughout Marston’s formative years as a satirist in the late 1590s, he consciously implicated himself in a fiery – though brief – rivalry with Bishop Hall, as well as an ongoing feud with Ben Jonson, through which one comes to understand Marston as one whose fire was fuelled in the role of the adversary, one who often sought to not to exalt, but rather to oppose, his peers. What is perhaps most interesting about Marston's amalgamation of satirical elements of both Horace and Juvenal is the realisation of an aesthetic that would later bleed into his drama.

According to Allen (1919, p19), Marston was inspired by Hall’s satire, and at the same time, determined to undermine it. Exasperated by Hall’s display of pretension, Marston penned the following in Reactio, Satire IV of Certaine Satyres:

But come, fond braggart, crown thy brows with bay,
Entrance thyself with thy sweet ecstasy,
Come, manumit thy plumy pinion,
And scour the sword of elvish champion;
Or else vouchsafe to breathe in wax–bound quill,
And deign our longing ears with music fill.
Summon the nymphs and Dryades to bring
Some rare invention, whilst thou dost sing
So sweet that thou may’st shoulder from above
The eagle from the stairs of friendly Jove
And lead sad Pluto captive with thy song,
Gracing thyself, that art obscured so long.  [sigs. E6v]
Evidently, Marston disagreed with Hall’s literary criticisms in *Virgidemarium* (1597), in which Hall had vowed to be a disciple of Spenser, implying that he had a poetic mastery of similar worth. Marston objected to such narcissism, and did so at the expense of Hall’s "Defiance to Envy" – various stanzas of which Marston would paraphrase and turn to ridicule.13

There are numerous highly probable references to Hall throughout Marston’s satires, and as such one is best to exercise caution in respect to Buckridge’s aforementioned disclaimer that Marston is averse to satirising real world figures. For instance, a particular section of *Reactio* – "Envy, let pines of Ida rest alone, / For thy will grow spite of thy thunderstone; / Strive not to nibble in their swelling grain" (sig. E7v) – reads like a direct parody of Hall’s "Defiance to Envy". Despite later in his career satirising contemporary poets himself, in *Reactio* Marston defends numerous other poets at whom Hall had launched attacks: a double standard with which he appears unconcerned.14 Marston interprets portions of *Virgidemarium* as mocking citations of the romantic poem,15 to which he opines that Hall did "raile impudent, / At Hopkins, Sternhold, and the Scottish King/ At all Translators that strive to bring /

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13 Hall’s self-laudatory poem speaks of his "lovely thought to sing" (97), imploring the wood-nymphs and dryads to dance whilst Hall acts as their "music guide" (100), reinvigorating his art into "those shady groves / While I report my fortunes and my loves" (101–102). In the following stanza Hall even pleads with woodland dwellers to appreciate his talent – "Whether list me sing so personate / My striving selfe to conquer with my verse / Speak ye attentive swaynes that heard me late" (103–105).

14 The works which Marston willingly defends include Robert Southwell’s *St Peter’s Complaint* (1595) Gervase Markham’s *Poem of Poems*, or *Sion’s Muse* (1596) and *Mirror of Magistrates*, a catalogue of poems from the English Tudor period whose principle contributors were William Baldwin and George Ferrer.

15 Particularly troubling to Marston is *Virgidemarium* (IV.104–111), in which Hall writes:

> Whether his twilight–torch of love do call  
> To revels of uncleanly musical  
> Or midnight plays ...  
> Are summon’d to the court of venery  
> Who list excuse, when dames can hire  
> Some snout fair stripling to their apple–squire
That stranger language to our vulgar tongue” (sig. E3v). He concludes Reactio by requesting Hall cease his criticism of poetry and join in the camaraderie:

Eat not thy dam, but laugh and sport with me
At strangers' follies with a merry glee.
Let's not malign our kin. Then, satirist,
I do salute thee with an open fist.        [sig. E7v]

One would deduce from this passage that Marston, though vexed by Hall’s dismissal of the poets, was prepared to "laugh and sport" together with Hall at "strangers' follies" and put the matter to rest.16

Marston, however, would address Hall in Scourge of Villanie, and on this occasion assumed the role of adversary with vigor, scattering criticisms throughout the work and labeling Hall an “academic starved satirist” that "gnaw[s] reez'd bacon" (sig. C6v).17 Hall’s lone reply can perhaps only be located in the following description of the “Malcontent” character from Characters of Virtue and Vice – one perhaps even representative of Marston – published much later in 1608, in which he is openly critical of the satirist’s (possibly in reference to Marston) nostalgia obsession:

Though he abound with complaints, yet nothing dislikes him but the present; for what he condemned while it was, once past he magnifies, and strives to recall it out of the jaws of time. What he hath, he seeth not; his eyes are so taken up with what he wants: and what he sees, he cares not for; because he cares so much for that which is not.  (1608, 10) 18

16 Furthermore, Marston’s encouragement of Hall to "laugh and sport ... at strangers' follies with a merry glee" and "not malign our kin" momentarily recalls Horace.

17 This criticism is likely directed at Hall given that Hall had used the expression “reez’d bacon” in Virgidemarium (IV, 2).

18 It is interesting to consider what Hall is suggesting Marston may have been nostalgic for. In Sophonisba, Marston’s interest in the medieval “Cult of the Virgin” is made expressly clear, an ideology through which the biblical Virgin Mary was implicit and thus the married virgin became commonplace (Ralls 2007, p141). Furthermore its association with Elizabeth I was self-evident – in
After *Characters of Virtue and Vice* it appears that Marston and Hall ceased their quarrelling. However, Marston’s flamboyant and apparently excessive language has also brought hordes of twentieth-century and present-day detractors dismissive of his work as "non-classical" – not least of whom was Charles Osbourne MacDonald, who gave a particularly unflattering account of Marston’s verse satire, citing a poor taste for classicism (1966, p162). MacDonald’s aversion to Marston’s style is made all the more apparent in his evaluation of *Sophonisba* – Marston’s only work of classical subject matter – as a "weak play" permeated by Senecan clichés (p162). This thesis will seek to correct this "non-classical" misnomer by engaging with Marston’s satiric style in relation to Horace and Juvenal. Marston’s satiric ridicule of patriarchy throughout his satires and dramatic works can be traced back to the influence of Juvenal, whilst his interests in Horace progress from intermittently mimicking his comic style to drawing upon Horace as an instructive principle in drama. Furthermore, I will address Seneca in the second chapter, and illustrate the way in which Marston takes the uncommon step of engaging with Senecan Stoic theory in a satirical manner, by recalling *De Ira* and invoking Senecan tags in tandem with his own Stoic figures.

As a result of Marston’s often overlooked classical roots, critical reception of his satire is uneven at best: although Marston’s main rival, Jonson, has also been

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the 1570s, the government sought to manipulate the image of the queen as an object of devotion and veneration, as Sir Roy Strong writes (1977, p16):

The cult of Gloriana was skilfully created to buttress public order and, even more, deliberately to replace the pre–Reformation externals of religion, the Cult of the Virgin and saints with their attendant images, processions, ceremonies and secular rejoicing.
dealt his share of criticism, it is Marston’s satiric persona that has been more routinely corrupted, and work more typically neglected, in contemporary scholarship. Given that both Marston and Jonson were embroiled in the same "Poets' War", satirising one-another through an exchange of derisory caricatures, and together denouncing vice, folly and societal corruption, there remains an inordinate disparity between the ongoing interest in Jonson's work and the lack thereof in the work of Marston. Cathcart recently weighed in on the merit of Marston’s claim to a freer expression of art in Marston, Rivalry, Rapprochement and Jonson (2013), arguing:

For all of Jonson's animus towards Marston, the pair were more alike than he supposed. This would have been an implication more wounding to Jonson than to Marston, who appeared to have reached the same conclusion. Marston’s emulous attitude towards Jonson had more outlets and caused more reverberations than commentators usually acknowledge ... the shadow of the "Poets' War" covers more ground than it has been deemed to do since the days of Frederick Fleay. (p166–167)

Cathcart's claim is not necessarily that the rival satirists shared stylistic similarities, but rather that Marston was – at the minimum – a significant and worthy adversary to Jonson. It stands to reason that the pair found some common ground artistically given their later collaboration on Eastward Ho! (1605). Given the noted self-laudatory tenor of Jonson's satire, however, it is rather disconcerting that he, unlike Marston, survived relatively unscathed throughout the revisionist critical treatment of the Romantic period and to this day remains a focal point of scholarship. In Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820), William Hazlitt, now often regarded as one of the premier literary critics of the nineteenth century, acknowledged that Jonson inclined "more to the severe than the amiable side of things", though in the same breath called him "plain spoken" and "honest" (p151). As for Jonson's social stature among his peers, Hazlitt surmises that:
Even by his quarrels and jealousies, he does not seem to have been curst with the last and damning disqualification for friendship — heartless indifference. He was also what is understood by a "good fellow," fond of good cheer and good company: and the first step for others to enjoy your society, is for you to enjoy theirs. (1820, p151)

The same reprieve is seldom extended to Marston. However, Hazlitt's pronouncement of the "plain spoken" Jonson is telling, because it is a descriptor perhaps not entirely appropriate for Marston. What can be ascertained from Marston’s somewhat affected adversarial persona is that he is, to some degree, self-conscious of his satirical inflection. Marston’s modulations of various satiric sources, particularly Horace and Juvenal, show the breadth of his satirical enterprise, however it would seem that as a result Marston has unwittingly presented moral satire that strikes many as less than sincere.

Marston’s detractors, then, appear to be conflating a desire to experiment in various modes of expression in place of his overarching satiric enterprise – a capacity to "unmaske the worlds detested sinnes"( sig. D6v), as Marston attests in *Certaine Satyres*. As Paul M. Zall argues in "John Marston, Moralist", Marston was "a moralist almost by definition ... his plays show that he hewed close to lines of conventional morality that were essentially commonplaces" (1953, p186). Marston’s sense of morality, however, is greatly under-explored given that scholarship is quick to misattribute his satire as a mere imitation of Juvenal, dismiss any connection with Horace, and label his subsequent drama amoral. From Marston’s remonstrations on social disorder and corruption in his verse satire, to examinations into human

19 In *Collectanea Anglo–Poetica* (1879), English literary scholar Thomas Corser seems to allude to Marston’s exclusion from the selections of Henry Headley or George Ellis, as well as his omission from the extensive collections of Robert Anderson and George Chalmers, as in part resultant from Marston’s perceived "meanness and duplicity towards Jonson" (p23).
psychology, emotion and sexuality into his drama, the tenor of his satirical language is nothing if not consciously moral. So it is this enduring strain of morality, from Marston’s verse satire to his experimental stage drama, that demands further investigation.

Marston’s unique satirical inflection by way of Horace and Juvenal

To precisely identify Marston’s unique form of satire – satire, that I suggest, was sustained throughout his dramatic works, most poignantly coinciding with an ongoing interest in Stoic philosophy – one must first examine verse satire in the 1590s and early 1600s within the context of two general classifications, "Horatian" and "Juvenalian", named after the well-known and esteemed classical satirists Horace and Juvenal. In doing so, Marston’s method for amalgamating these classically disparate sources begins to gain some clarity.

Broadly speaking, Horatian satires are "gentle expositions of the folly of everyday life" (Hopkins 2007, p69) – in contrast, Juvenalian satire is darker and fraught with derisory citations of incompetent authoritative figures. Where Horatian satire remains optimistic about the betterment of civilisation, Juvenalian satire is often consumed with the debauchery of the world. While arguably the works of Chaucer and Langland contained moments of satirical imputation, it was classic Roman works that inspired a revival in the late sixteenth century. In his book English Verse Satire (1978), Raman Selden designates a clear stylistic distinction between Horace and Juvenal as “between benign and malignant laughter, between a smile and a snarl, between ridicule and vituperation” (p11). Expanding upon this view, Brian Gibbons characterises the Horatian mode as “particular in its targets and
precise in its focus”, whilst linking the acerbity of Juvenalian satire to the remonstrations of the Catholic Church (1968, p25).

The role of the satirist, irrespective of their affiliation, is to offer a thoughtful commentary on an individual, or on the tribulations of contemporary society as a whole. Satire aims to persuade the audience that something or someone is ludicrous by implying a moral code or purpose, and is typically written from a position of detached amusement.20 Marston’s contempt for patriarchy is marked – specifically, common criticisms throughout the satires are localised in social and political corruption, with Marston accusing various courtiers and officials of vanity, hypocrisy, deceit, and even outright villainy. *The Scourge of Villanie*, for example, bears witness to Marston’s critique of Puritanism – "Good hath thy tongue: but thou rank Puritan, / I’le make an Ape as good as Christian" (sig. G7v) – and attacks the Puritan for an apparent careless observance of communion:

> Almighty men that can their Maker make,  
> And force his sacred body to forsake  
> ...  
> Lewd Precisians,  
> Who scorning Church rites, take the simbole up  
> As slovenly, as carelesse Courtiers slup  
> Their mutton gruell. Fie, who can with-hold,  
> But must of force make his mild Muse a scold? [sigs. C1v – C2r]

In Satire IV, Marston reiterates the importance of sacrament by insisting upon divine Grace as a necessary moral compass:

> It is a sacred cure  
> To salue the soules dread wounds; Omnipotent

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20 Ben Jonson, for instance, was mostly inclined towards the Horatian mode, as observed in *Cynthia’s Revels* (1600) through the exemplary figure of Crites, the quintessential poet–satirist (Ward 1976, p9), and furthermore in *The Poetaster* (1601), in which the character of Horace is thought to be an idealised personification of Jonson himself (Craig 1996, p3). Through this relation to Horace, Jonson advocated "an Horatian control of the emotions, of rationality and self–restraint" (Barton 1984, ix), attributes he considered essential in taming his own wild character.
That Nature is, that cures the impotent,  
Euen in a moment; Sure Grace is infus’d  
By divine fauour, not by factions us’d  
...  
Vice, from priuation of that sacred Grace,  
Which God with-drawes, but puts not vice in place.  

Yet in spite of such emphatic denunciations of the "slovenly" Puritan, and a subsequent direct instruction to embrace a higher "sacred cure ... to salue soules dread wounds", Marston concludes this particular satire in an overtly Horatian manner with a facetious expression of doubt over his satirical motive whilst poking fun at his own unorthodox style:

But I forget; why sweat I out my braine  
In deepe designes, to gay boyes lewd, and vaine?  
These notes were better sung, 'mong better sort,  
But to my pamphlet, few save fooles resort"  

So while it would appear, as Whipple had claimed, that from his early satire Marston had at least aspired to be the English embodiment of Juvenal, I attest that he was not always entirely faithful to his muse.

For Marston’s literary purpose, his satire functioned as an amalgamation of two preeminent sources of inspiration. Empowered by indignation for societal corruption and compelled to preach his own moral code, Marston assumes a grandiose avatar of Juvenal in The Scourge’s Satire II:

Preach not the Stoickes patience to me,  
I hate no man, but mens impietie.  
My soule is vest what power will’th desist?  
Or dares to stop a sharpe fang’d Satyrist?  
Who’le coole my rage? Who’le stay my itching fist  
But I will plague and torture whom I list?  

Conversely, Marston adopts the mask of Horace at the conclusion of Satire XI by
seemingly indicating that his derision had been tongue-in-cheek:

Here end my rage, though angry brow was bent,  
Yet I haue sung in sporting merriment  [sig. Ilv]

It is a striking thing, then, to recognise in Marston that though he initially appears to share more in common with Juvenal, writing poetry and creating characters familiar from Juvenal or classical myth,21 he is not strictly a Juvenalian satirist.

The combination of such disparate elements lent Marston’s voice a sophisticated quality that would have a similar enigmatic effect upon his drama. Marston’s penchant for Juvenalian censure should not entirely outweigh his relation to Horace, particularly given that the satirical method of Marston’s drama is underpinned by the aforementioned Horatian ideal – "to teach and delight" – as the latter part of this chapter will contend. It is entirely possible that a multifaceted approach was a conscious decision on the part of Marston: following complaints of the "gloomy" Juvenal and "crabby" Persius in "To those that seem judicial perusers", preface to the Scourge of Villanie, Marston seems to express that he has little desire to plainly imitate Jonson, or any satirist for that matter, stylistically:

21 To name a few, these characters include Ganymede, from Satire III, who is described in Satire III of Certaine Satyres as a "perfum’d shee–goat" (31), and so is represented as animalistic, yet sexually passive; Diogenes is a cynic "damn’d for thy lewd wit" (47); and in "Cynicke Satyre" the effeminate Linceus is described as "open breasted", "plumy–crested" and "in beastly source of all pollution, / In riot, lust, and fleshly seeming–sweetness" (F1). Furthermore, in Satire VIII, "Inamorato Curio", figures such as Martius, Saturio, Publius, Phrigio and Curio, are filled with an excess of sexual desire for women and are thus "subjected to ... base controule", which renders their "whole soule doth turne Hermaphrodite" (G3). So in this particular satire, these men are not only slaves to women, but their obsession renders them, in essence, effeminate. Thus, when recalling figures from classical myth, Marston often exaggerates and even invents features, and subjects them to a broad spectrum of satirical denunciation.
In acknowledging the "seemely decorum" of his classical influences, Marston emphasises his ambition to create a satiric aesthetic of his own – the "substance rough" – in favour of becoming a mere "shadow" to a fellow satirist.

It should be of little surprise, then, that Marston drew inspiration from both of the ancients – Horace's good-natured escapades, and Juvenal's piercing censure – in unearthing and developing his satirical style. Marston's frequently interchanging engagements with these typically opposed classical subjects, however, has also opened his work up to sharp criticism. In an address "To Detraction" prefacing *The Scourge*, Marston signals an apparent distaste for the strictly remonstrative satire typically endorsed by the Juvenalian imitator (sig. A3v). Marston's sentiment seemingly incompatible with criticisms that attempt to pigeonhole his satire solely with Juvenal, as in Janet Clare's appraisal: "Like Juvenal, Marston castigates society by using exempla, portraying a degenerate present of debased patronage, sexual libertinism, economic exploitation, and religious hypocrisy" (2000, p197). As if anticipating such reductionism, Marston writes:

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Know that the Genius, which attendeth on  
And guides my powers intellectuall,   
Holds in all vile repute Detraction.  
My soule and essence metaphisicall,  
That in the basest sort scornes Critickes rage,  
Because he knows his sacred parentage.  
My spirit is not puft vp with fatte fume  
Of slimie Ale, nor Bacchus heating grape.  
My mine disdaines the dungie muddy scum  
Of abieet thoughts, and Enuies raging hate.
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True iudglement, slight regards Opinion,
A sprightly wit, disdaines Detraction. [sigs. A3 r-v]

Upon provoking "Critickes rage" to challenge his "powers intellectuall", Marston concludes his address by stamping a wholly personal authority over his satiric style: "I am my selfe, so is my poesie" (sig. A3'). While Marston is most certainly mindful of his predecessors, and praises the "good seemely pace" (sig. B3v) of Persius and Juvenal amidst the previously noted aspects he found disagreeable, it is not enough to simply brand Marston with the Juvenal 'label', despite its common application in recent scholarship. Marston’s "poesie" is his own, and he is his own "selfe", because he sought to modify elements adapted from classical sources to suit his own aesthetic preferences. Even William Minto, a self-confessed champion of Bishop Hall, refrained from the "English Juvenal" misnomer:

In his satires... [Marston] has a habit of turning round upon himself which may truly be called dramatic. He rails, and then rails at himself for railing. Though the language is strong enough to warrant the idea that he was much offended by the profligacy and apish fopperies of the gilded youth of the time, and he makes himself out to be a terrible cynic, "who cannot choose but bite," he does not really bite, but only belabours with a clown's cudgel of inflated skin. (1880, 1: 544–545)

What is particularly intriguing about Marston’s intent with The Scourge – an objective somewhat lost on Minto, at least in this particular assessment – is that he momentarily wishes to revel in being maligned:

Proface, reade on, for your extreamist dislikes
Will add a pineon to my praises flights.
O, how I bristle vp my plumes of pride,
O, how I thinke my Satyres dignifi’d,
When I once heare some quaint Castilio,
Some supple mouth’d slaue, some lewd Tubrio,
Some spruce pedant, or some span-new come fry
Of Innes a-court, striving to vilefie
My dark reproffes. Then doe but raile at me,
No greater honor craues my poesie. [sigs. B1v –B2r]

In this passage, Marston only openly baits his detractors as "spruce pedant[s] ... striving to vilefie", whose criticisms will "add a pineon to my praises flights", which seems to suggest that in face of such criticism his satire is, in fact, elevated. This is an entirely different persona than the one expressed in Marston’s subsequent plea to "judicial perusers" (sig B3v) in which he seemingly wishes to distance himself from criticism.22

Thus Marston’s widely varying reception is perhaps in large part owing to this multifaceted persona – alternating between the guise of both Horace and Juvenal in the satires – leading to denunciations of a perceived unartistic “moodiness” that become increasingly tenuous and unjust throughout his later revenge plays and tragicomedies. Marston’s most persistent preoccupation throughout The Scourge, after all, is to avow contempt for society’s lack of virtue: “O what dry braine melts not sharp mustard rime / To purge the snottery of our slimie time” (I.ii.70–71). Such expressions of fear for the poisoning of the soul at the hands of social disorder are made in moments of pure Juvenalian fervor, but given that his sense of aesthetics in his earliest satires is still yet to mature it would be rash to dismiss his scepticism as amoral.23 It is unfortunate, then, that such biting denunciations are disregarded as rhetoric. Such a view prompted Thomas Warton to condemn Marston’s prose, writing in The History of English Poetry (1781) that while Marston is “sometimes

22 As per the conclusion to the passage in question, which reads, "If tho perusest me with an impartial eye, reade on, if otherwise, know I neither value thee, nor thy censure" (sig. B3).

23 The violation of the soul at the hands of social corruption is alluded to Satire VII of The Scourge. Marston writes, ‘Beasts sence, plants growth, like being as a stone, / But out, alas, our Cognisance is gone’ (201–202). On this evidence alone Selden short-sightedly labels Marston amoralist and Calvinistic, “unqualified” to pen instructive satire.
bright and unpolluted”, he nevertheless “always betrays a muddy bottom ... The satires of Hall and Marston were condemned to the same flame, and by the same authority. But Hall certainly deserved a milder sentence” (p996). Elaborating on this position, Warton describes Marston as a satirist:

who too freely indulges himself in the display of that licentiousness which he means to proscribe ... inflames those passions which he professes to suppress, gratifies the depravations of a prurient curiosity, and seduces innocent minds to an acquaintance with ideas which they might never have known, [and therefore] defeats his own design. (1781, p996)

Selden would agree, suggesting Marston’s opposition to Bishop Hall’s meditations upon Horace is merely a “self-righteous and pseudo-religious pose” and not to be valued with any sincerity (1978, p70). Marston’s lofty imitations of Juvenal in his first satires, for Selden, are “artistic failures” – his rationale revolves around the idea that Marston “invents” a satiric persona of Juvenalian extremism, one that intermittently resorts to more jovial shades of Horace based on the satirist’s mood. What can be ascertained from these responses is that Marston’s experimental manner has often resulted in the undermining of his moral satire, much in the same way that satirical elements in Marston’s drama are overlooked by critics preoccupied with his idiosyncratic dramatic aesthetic.

**Stoicism and Satire in Antonio’s Revenge**

The next important point to begin to understand about Marston, then, is the way in which his satirical method bleeds into his stage drama. While *Antonio’s Revenge*, the sole tragedy in the Marston oeuvre prior to *Sophonisba*, has regrettably been
interpreted as a sensationalist and highly parodic piece by present-day critics such as Bowers and Brown – largely on account of its metatheatrical overtones and sporadic sense of morality 24 – I suggest that it is instead far more productive to explore *Antonio's Revenge* in terms of Marston’s continuation of satirical method in drama, and furthermore what it reveals about Marston’s inaugural designs on the philosophy of Stoicism.

Marston’s deliberations over Stoicism refer to the Greek school of philosophy founded in ancient Athens by Zeno of Citium, which taught an endurance of pain or hardship without the display of feelings or complaint. There is, however, a certain perspective in Stoic criticism that attempts to downplay the significance of the philosophy in drama. In *Light From the Porch* (1984), Gilles Monsarrat argues that the term "Stoic" is loosely applied in contemporary criticism, believing that what is often identified as Stoic is merely Roman, and thus makes the conclusion that there are in fact very few true Stoic figures in the plays (ix). That Monsarrat should discover very few Stoics in drama is unsurprising, given that he appears preoccupied with measuring Stoic and Christian elements in an individual’s philosophy against one another: following Michelle Martindale in "Shakespeare's Stoicism", the simplification of Stoicism in drama is "true to a similar Renaissance imprecision", and furthermore, what had attracted playwrights to Stoic philosophy was "the way it could be blended with other traditions ... thus Stoic *patientia* and Christian patience could easily fuse, however much religious writers on the gulf between them" (2005, p165). According to Audrey Chew, Seneca himself – whose theory of Stoicism Marston relates to in a satirical sense, as the second chapter of thesis will

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24 The status of *Antonio’s Revenge* as a lesser revenge tragedy next to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is somewhat unfair given that it is also necessary to evaluate in light of its primary source – Seneca’s *Thyestes*, also the inspiration for *Titus Andronicus*. 
demonstrate – had generally agreed with Christian doctrine, and thus there was no need to "twist [one’s] theology to make it agree with Stoic philosophy" (1950, p1131). Chew’s observation would seem to echo the work of neo-Stoic philologist Justus Lipsius who, as Thomas Parker explains, sought to accommodate Stoic determinism as compatible with religious freedom in his *Physiologia Stoicorum* (1604) on the grounds that the “determination of events does not preclude humans from acting freely ... God is not compelled to act by necessity despite the deterministic context of the world” (2013, p19). Lipsius’ desire to effectuate a reconciliation of Stoic theory and religious freedom is observed throughout *De Constantia* (1584) – “*In regno nati sumus deo parere, libertas est*” (XV). So it seems rather unreasonable for Janet Clare to accuse Marston of “religious hypocrisy” (2000, p197), and Zall to label him an “anti-Stoic” obsessed with the “normality of concupiscence” (1953, p186), for as this thesis will continue to show, Marston adopts a similarly contemplative approach to the philosophy. Moreover, for Gordon Braden, Stoic philosophy offered a "calculus of adaptation to unchanging realities" to those who deemed themselves to be disenfranchised, and thus "enters Renaissance literature as part of the metaphoric of the nobility" (1985, p16). *Antonio’s Revenge* reflects such a sentiment, primarily through the figures of Pandulpho and Antonio, though both are destined to be Stoic failures. The former, Pandulpho, appears a Stoical reimagining of Thyestes. Initially impervious to the news of his son Feliche’s murder, Pandulpho cackles madly in the play’s opening Act – perhaps mimicking the "Ha ha ha" of Titus (III.i.265) – but ultimately is overcome with grief and unable to live up to the extremism necessitated by the Stoic school of thought. Perhaps the most troubling scene for critics in evaluating the moral value of *Antonio’s Revenge* is Antonio’s

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25 As per John Stradling’s translation of *De Constantia*, the passage reads “We are born into a kingdom, and to obey God is liberty” (1594).
murder of young Julio in Act III, with the fateful banquet that follows rendering him reminiscent of Seneca’s Atreus. Furthermore, Antonio’s survival at the play’s end would seem to violate conventional revenge tragedy which stipulates that the revenger must die. It is this unorthodox ending that prompts Brown’s reductive criticism of Marston’s "incoherent morality" and the "self-glorification" of the revenger in the wake of harrowing acts of malice, which leads Brown to conclude the play as sensationalist and amoral (2005, p121).

Antonio’s presumed reprieve, however, is not only a testament to Marston’s Senecan sensibilities, but also an endorsement of Antonio as a striking embodiment of Stoic anti-heroism. In his book *Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy*, Gregory Staley encapsulates the Senecan design – which *Antonio’s Revenge* unreservedly embraces – as follows: "When Senecan tragedy fails to stage virtue we should see in this not the failure of Stoicism, but a Stoic conception of tragedy as the right vehicle for imaging Seneca’s familiar world of madmen and fools" (2009, p23). Furthermore, as George Geckle remarks in *John Marston’s Drama*, "Although Marston’s editors and commentators have identified all of his Senecan allusions, few have attempted to show how he uses them", adding that "Marston no doubt wanted his audience to recognize in Piero the proud and remorseless qualities of Seneca’s most horrible villain" (1980, p64). This is consistent with Antonio and his troupe also: in the final act of *Antonio’s Revenge*, the ghost of Antonio’s slain father, Andrugio, foreshadows the inevitable murder of Piero by the revengers. Andrugio utters the phrase "*Venit dies tempusque quo reddat suis, / Animam squallentem sceleribus*" (V.i.1-2),

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26 In *Antonio and Mellida*, Piero quotes Atreus in *Thyestes* as he unabashedly gloats about Venice’s victory in battle over Genoa, "*Dimitto superos, summ votorum attigi*" (I.i.60), adapted from Seneca’s *Thyestes* (888). Translated by Keith Sturgess, the phrase reads "I renounce the gods, I have attained all that prayers can achieve" (1997, p301). In response to Forobasco’s call for sound policy, Piero once again exclaims, "*O me caelitum excelsissimum!*", also from Seneca’s *Thyestes* (911), meaning "O, I am the highest of gods!” as per Pramit Chaudhuri’s translation in *The War With God* (2014, p142).
adapted from Seneca's *Octavia* (629-630), which reads "The day has come, the time in which he pays back the foul mind for its crimes" – part of an elaborate passage in which Agrippina condemns her son Nero for conspiring against her in his mad crusade for boundless riches and a palace of gold and marble. The common rationale that the troupe's retreat to the monastery is one of repentance, and thus speaks to Marston's "moral and generic confusion", as Brown had claimed (2005, p122), is therefore misguided – the men never reference their sins, only their injuries and tribulations:

Antonio: This is for my father's blood!  
Pandulpho: This is for my son! [Stabs Piero]  
Alberto: This is for them all! And this, and this! Sink to the heart of hell!  

(V.iii.108–111)

Antonio and his accomplices do not consider themselves villainous or tyrannical in the play's closing scene. Two decades prior to Brown's critique, Barbara Baines had made similar claims to the effect that Antonio's outrageous exoneration was an exercise in the limitations of morality in revenge tragedy (1983, p10). Amidst the play's anomalous ending, Antonio's imperviousness is, according to Phoebe S. Spinrad, intended to be a triumph (2005, p171). Not only does Spinrad pronounce Antonio a hero, she suggests that the Venetian senators' offer of a role in their office, and unanimous blessings – "May your honours live, / Religiously held sacred, even

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27 It should be noted that there is now a great deal of speculation in regards to the authorship of *Octavia* due to its referencing of events that occurred after Seneca's death in 65 A.D. - however, Marston could not have known about such discrepancies and therefore would have believed *Octavia* to be a Senecan original.


for ever and ever" (V.iii.127–128) – propel him to the level of patron saint. These readings ignore the entirely plausible possibility that Antonio is instead an anti-hero, emblematic of Marston’s belief that true heroism cannot exist in a degenerate post-Elizabeth society.

Perhaps more emphatically, Antonio is the ultimate scapegoat in hallmarking Marston’s insistence upon the male figure’s unworthiness of Stoicism, to which his subsequent eulogising of female figures – Sophonisba especially – appear more pronounced. Consider the following exchange between Pandulpho and Antonio during their time at the monastery:

Pandulpho: Of dirt’s corruption till dread power calls
    Our soul’s appearance, we will live enclosed
    In holy verge of some religious order,
    Most constant votaries.
Antonio: First let’s cleanse our hands,
    Purge hearts of hatred, and entomb my love;
    Over whose hearse I’ll weep away my brain
    In true affection’s tears.
    For her sake, here I vow a virgin bed;
    She lives in me; with her love my love is dead.  (V.iii.148–157)

It would appear far more reasonable to view the monastic escape in terms of its relevance to the Stoic’s divine elevation. Stoic tenets advocate observance of both the logical and spiritual, and a regimental contemplation over how one can assist in correcting societal injustices, as ancient Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote in Meditations, circa 170 AD:

I have seen that the nature of good is the right, and of ill the wrong, and that the nature of the man himself who does wrong is akin to my own. I can neither be harmed by any of them for no man will involve me in wrong, nor can I be angry with my kinsman or hate him; for we have come into the world to work
together, like feet, like hands ... To work against one another therefore is to oppose Nature.

The work of the gods is full of Providence: the work of Fortune is not divorced from Nature or the spinning and winding of the threads ordained by Providence. All flows from that other world; and there is, besides, necessity and the wellbeing of the whole universe, whereof you are a part.

(Meditations Book II, p10)

Antonio's actions are quite simply the antithesis of Aurelius' appeals for man to refrain from feeling "anger" or "hate" towards kinsman, so in this sense Antonio is most certainly opposed to Nature and Providence. Thus, the notion that Antonio's spiritual cleansing can only take place now that his vengeance has been exacted is palpably ironic – the revenger merely wishes to identify closely with Stoical virtues of celibacy and purity, but it is clear that in a proper sense of Stoic tradition that Antonio is an unfit Stoic candidate. Though Antonio certainly believes he is cleansed, and in his exile the blood stains washed away, the ritual is farcical.

In creating such an absurd spectacle, Marston ensures that Antonio is unfit to fulfill the Stoic imperative: he is compelled to mourn Mellida's death – "Sing 'Mellida is dead,' all hearts will relent / In sad condolent, at that heavy sound" (V.iii.174–175) – just as his compatriot Pandulpho mourned Feliche; and one can conceivably interpret the sprinkling of young Julio's blood over Piero's hearse as a grotesque attempt to reenact the blood christening of the altar by Moses in the book of Exodus as another delusional spiritual pledge. In the Biblical story, God addresses Moses and gives him instructions – the Book of the Covenant – to lead the people of Israel to peace and the "promised land" of Canaan. God demanded a sacrifice, and the people of Israel brought Moses an ox to be given as a peace offering. Moses was to fill basins with oxen blood and throw it against the altar, proclaiming "All that the Lord has
spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Exodus, 24:7). There is a fundamental point of difference between the blood sacrifices of Moses, and of Marston’s Antonio – in Exodus, God is the reason for, and cause of, all events, and Moses acts under his instruction in leading the Israelites to salvation; Antonio and his accomplices operate without any higher guidance and simply declare themselves saved.

Further illustrating the ironic anti-heroism of this closing scene is the sharp discrepancy between the Stoic failures of Antonio and Pandulpho, and the scene in which Sophonisba throws incense onto the altar fire in her dedication to Stoicism:

Sophonisba: But jovial Mercury
And thou, O brightest female of the sky,
Thrice–modest Phoebe, you that fit
A worthy chastity and a most chaste wit,
To you corruptless honey and pure dew
Upbreathes our holy fire   (III.i.120–124)

Sophonisba's pledge to Mercury and the moon-goddess Phoebe strikes one not only as genuine, but also appears to characterise Sophonisba as a goddess in her own right: her "corruptless honey" and "pure dew" are constituents befitting for the "holy fire". It is fascinating that Marston’s sole true Stoic happens to be female, particularly in light of contemporary criticism branding Marston a misogynist.30 It would be a mistake to assume that Sophonisba's gender and Stoic fortitude are incidental matters.

30 As per Katherine Duncan Jones’ oversimplified claim in "Reversing the Roles", in which she describes The Dutch Courtesan as a work that depicts subservient female figures being cornered into "marginalised” roles as dictated by their authoritarian male counterparts (1990, p199). Rather, Malheureux’s obsession with the courtesan Franceshina not only renders him a failed Stoic, but affords Franceshina complete control over their courtship – as evinced by her successful demands that he bring her a ring from Beatrice.
The discord between Marston’s respective representations of the Stoic in *Antonio’s Revenge* and *Sophonisba* should in fact have a profound effect on how one perceives the critical responses that have been quick to dismiss Marston as spurious and non-classical. Rather, there is symmetry and balance in his Stoic design that resonates in large part with ancient philosophic teachings of Seneca and Aurelius. What is particularly noteworthy, though, about *Antonio’s Revenge* is that the play’s pronounced sense of dramatic action and profoundly ironic resolution, simultaneously undercut by a serious inquiry into Stoicism, is emblematic of Marston’s multifaceted method in satire. That the Venetian senators should aggrandise acts of revenge as "Religiously helde sacred" (V.iii.128), and thus pay no mind to another primary instruction of Exodus – "Thou shalt not kill" (20:13) – is irony that must surely have struck a chord with Marston’s audience.

The effect created by the absurd spectacle witnessed in the exaltation of Antonio and his troupe is closely attuned to Marston’s satirical relation to both Horace and Juvenal: it is Horatian in the sense that the irony of the Antonio’s self-vindication as Stoic is employed to both "teach" and "delight" – or certainly captivate – the audience, who are in fact being instructed to perceive Antonio as anti-Stoic, and Juvenalian in its outright condemnation of patriarchal culture. Antonio ultimately exemplifies the same destructive patriarchal strain that he perceives in Piero: as the father-figure to his troupe of revengers, Antonio is obsessed with "unmanning" his rival in retribution for the way he himself was robbed of his maleness upon Mellida’s death. As Eileen Allman writes in "Misogyny and Male Rivalry", misogynistic attitudes in patriarchal culture are "the flower of male rivalry", and therefore are not merely confined to the male desire to exhibit dominion over women. Rather, such attitudes are represented equally in a man’s need to control other men:
When a man is defeated by another man, he is both unmanned and feminised; that is, he is stripped of cultural signs of dominance and forced to assume those of submission. (1999, p20)

So in his quest to regain dominion, Antonio is proven to be engendered with the same tyrannical sensibilities as Piero. Marston then, assumes the role of moral-satirist by indulging the very target of his critique – Antonio – all the while aiming to titillate his audience with confronting drama. The scene in which Antonio threatens and ultimately kills Young Julio, before serving him to the Duke as supper, is emblematic of Antonio's desire to displace Piero:

Antonio: O that I knew which joint, which side, which limb
Were father all, and had no mother in't
That I might rip it vein by vein and carve revenge
In bleeding rases! But since 'tis mixed together,
Have at adventure, pell-mell, no reverse –
Come hither, boy. This is Andrugio's hearse.

Young Julio: O God! You'll hurt me. For my sister's sake,
Pray you do not hurt me. And you kill me, 'deed,
I'll tell my father. (III.iii.20-28)

Upon killing the boy, Antonio rejoices in proclaiming that by "thy father's blood, / I thus make incense of: to Vengeance!" (III.iii.61-62): a display patently designed to confound the spectator. Antonio's ruthless language is offset by Julio's helpless pleas for clemency so as to leave no doubt that revenge here is excessive. So again, Marston indulges Antonio in his mad pursuit of bloody vengeance through all manner of dramatic posturing – "which joint, which side, which limb ... that I might rip it vein by vein and carve revenge" – even as the scene itself undermines Antonio by making him appear utterly monstrous. Marston's purpose with this resolution is to ridicule courtiers, so Juvenal remains the prevailing source of satire here: Horace's
instructive principle is comparatively understated given that it coincides with an overt display of dramatic irony. Antonio, perhaps characterising Marston’s designs on the archetypal courtier, is left exposed to the full extent of Marston’s Juvenal-inspired satiric censure that clearly resonates alongside the barbarity of the scene. However, as the second chapter of the thesis will contend, the balance between Marston's relation to Horace and Juvenal changes in his later drama: patriarchy is denounced through the Horatian figure of Malevole in *The Malcontent*, whilst the Sophonisba goddess embodies Horace's veneration for the beauty of form, and simultaneously allows Marston greater freedom for philosophic expression.

Coinciding with Marston’s condemnation of Antonio, and the patriarchal culture he represents, is a thoughtful inquiry into the extremes of human emotion. Antonio, I suggest, is a test case of human emotion against the limitations of Stoic doctrine. As signalled in the Prologue to the play, grief motivates Antonio's plot for revenge, accented by the tragic implication that an excess of grief is perhaps beyond the capacity to endure:

If any spirit breathes within this round
Uncapable of weighty passion
...
From common sense of what men must be, let such
Hurry amain from our black-visaged shows
We shall affright their eyes. But if a breast
Nailed to the earth with grief, if any heart
Pierced through wood with anguish, pant within this ring,
If there be any blood whose heat is choked
And stifled with true sense of misery,
If aught of these strains fill this consort up,
Th' arrive most welcome. (Prologue, 13-26).

The response to death is nuanced throughout *Antonio's Revenge*: Piero's servant, Strotzo, describes Andrugio's death with an alarming excess of joy, reveling in the
"Vast delights of his large sudden joys" that "Open’d his powers so wide ... That th’inner citadel was left unmann’d / And so surprised on sudden by cold death" (I.ii.244-248). News of his son’s death, however, leaves Pandulpho a broken man, "I am the miserablest soul that breathes" (IV.ii.76). Antonio himself is obsessed with grief, confiding in his compatriot Alberto that his heart spurs his "galled ribs" with "punching anguish" (I.ii.195), and later elaborating that "grief is wanton-sick, / Whose stomach can digest and brook the diet, / Of stale ill-relished counsel" (II.ii.2-4). That Antonio and his accomplices falter at this emotional level, and Sophonisba flourishes, prompts me to launch an investigation into Marston’s moral satire as analogous to philosophical designs on Stoicism throughout his dramatic œuvre, together with a gradual reversal of emphasis from Juvenal to Horace, as detailed in the second chapter of this thesis.

In this chapter I have attempted to reinterpret Marston’s satirical persona through the masks of Horace and Juvenal as something that should be celebrated – as it was, in large part, during his day – rather than treated as rhetoric or parody. Despite the "mining" that is required in his early satire, Marston’s satirical instruction in fact gains clarity following his transition to the stage – an idea that is explored in greater depth in the next chapter. It is during this period, and for the remainder of his career, that Marston shrewdly circumvents the paradoxical circumstance forced upon him by the print ban on satire, transposing his work to the stage and maintaining a sharp satirical edge through a more apparent theatrical overlay.
As has been argued in the first chapter of this thesis, the way in which Marston sought to alter broad conventions of Elizabethan satire renders him an exceptional satirist — yet it is in the transposition of Marston’s satire to the stage that one discovers an elaborate dramatic aesthetic and an ultimately valuable playwright. Thus, the fundamental objective of this chapter is to offer an insight into how Marston establishes himself stylistically, theatrically and philosophically; and in doing so, scrutinise the framework of Marston’s theatre and arrive at what Ellis-Fermor described as a "coherent expression of satiric denunciation" (1953, p80) underneath a veil of ambiguity and obscure imagery. Put simply, Marston’s innate “Sharp-fang’d Satyrist” is not only persistent, but prevalent in dramatic works that are not plainly satirical, and continues to develop together with burgeoning designs on Stoic philosophy as his dramatic career progresses.

Though the idea that Marston was primarily concerned with performance is widely-established in current scholarship, there remains a great deal yet to be understood about Marston as a morally radical voice of the age in more specific terms. As such, this chapter seeks to advocate Marston as a daringly innovative and multi-dimensional dramatist, and give credence to the idea that the precise nature of Marston’s dramatic enterprise has been routinely overlooked — and at worst, entirely misinterpreted — among contemporary circles quick to dismiss his stage career. My examination begins with a brief survey of the critical landscape as it pertains to
Marston's underappreciated satiric intentions in drama. It then proceeds to consider a specific object of Marston’s satire — his disillusionment with patriarchy, registered in the ignoble male characters — and measure the extent to which Marston’s sexual punning and bawdy wordplay sought to sabotage portrayals of patriarchal misogyny. Contemporary critical sentiment pertaining to Marston’s presumed ambivalence is thereby quashed by establishing his satirical commentary, in relation to patriarchy, as consciously moral.

This line of inquiry into Marston’s portrayal of patriarchal misogyny — the satirising of which most frequently occurs via the sexual pun and double entendre — is necessary in considering the worth of what I argue to be a "progressively feminist" Marston. A strain of proto-feminism can be detected in Marston through his supposedly subservient female figures, who are in fact more powerful and autonomous than their male counterparts, as this chapter will argue. This is particularly important in light of Marston’s most virtuous female figures, Maria and Sophonisba. This thesis will argue for Marston as an advocate of Stoicism, and in doing so is inclined to suggest that Marston is also inclined towards a proto-feminist persuasion, given that Marston goes to great lengths to disparage misogyny in patriarchy and renounce his male would-be Stoics, whilst ultimately portraying Maria and Sophonisba as virtuous and Stoically flawless. As this chapter will explore in detail, both Maria and Sophonisba hold true to their convictions and bear a resemblance to Elizabeth. It is not enough to simply think of Marston as "Elizabethan", however, given that Marston’s privileging of his female figures occurs in isolation to a nostalgia for Elizabeth: for this reason, a "proto-feminist" label is appropriate. Thereafter, I will explore observable trends in Stoic philosophy, that are realised to their full potential in Sophonisba. That Sophonisba would be Marston’s most powerful and sincerely-developed figure in all of his works, particularly in light
of the male false-Stoics that precede her, in my view pertains to a direct correlation between Marston’s Stoic advocacy and affinity for feminist discourse. Marston's interest in Stoicism — by way of Seneca, as this chapter will contend — is evident from *Antonio's Revenge*, and is subsequently revisited in *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604), *The Malcontent* and most distinctly in *Sophonisba*. This therefore necessitates a comparison between Marston’s male patriarchal figures, the women they are assumed to command, and the flawless Sophonisba in order to arrive at an understanding of Marston as not only satirical of patriarchal misogyny, but philosophically united with the female monarch through the worship of the heroine goddess.

In order to establish that Marston’s serious philosophical contemplations subsist as latent content in his theatre, one must be inclined to understand Marston's penchant for dramatic irony as a mere ruse upon a deliberate satirical angle. Doing so is imperative in ascertaining the ideal conceit of Marston’s work — realised most commonly, as Senapati had argued and this chapter will develop further, in an undermining of patriarchy. Proto-feminism registers in Marston through misogyny itself becoming the object of satiric ridicule: Marston actively takes a stance against the "misogynistic establishment" of patriarchy, whilst his female figures range from being wholly autonomous, to virtuous and empowered. The most compelling argument established in T.F. Wharton's collection of essays on Marston is in regards to Marston’s privileging of female characters:

> Marston creates some of the most outspoken female voices in the literature of the period: Meletza in *What You Will*, Crispinella in *The Dutch Courtesan*, Dulcimel in *The Faun*, and of course Sophonisba; yet Sophonisba also demonstrates Marston's tendency to martyr good women. (2000, p7)
A fundamental reason why Marston is either misunderstood, or victim of sweeping generalisations, is in large part his wilful disguising of satirical inflection in his drama, as is forecasted in the Induction to *Antonio and Mellida* — "I have a part allotted to me which I have neither able apprehension to conceit, / nor what I conceive gracious ability to utter" (99-101). Disclaimers of this nature divert attention away from the satirical content of the work, which Marston often redirected towards the dramatic performance itself.

Subsequently, the idea that satire persists under Marston's guise of dramatic irony is, generally speaking, not adequately accounted for in scholarship. Many critics are seemingly inclined to suggest that traces of Marston's satire can be found in his drama, but fail to ascertain precisely what his satiric agenda might be. This is troubling as Marston's assimilation of satire and dramatic irony is fundamental to appreciating his theatre. In "John Marston's Mismanaged Irony", Lynette McGrath contends that the inconsistencies in Marston’s satirical voice reflect a concerted effort towards a "morally persuasive" irony (1976, p393). For McGrath, Marston's erratic personae are counterproductive, resulting in impotent satire that refrains from offering "a positive alternative to the abuses that he denounces" (p393) — however, this is an awkward conclusion in light of works that reflect consistently developing attitudes, and moral expressions of increasing clarity, as his career progresses. What can be ascertained from McGrath’s reading is that drawing conclusions in regards to the exact nature of Marston’s moral irony is problematic for many literary critics: Anthony Caputi in fact endorses the versatility of Marston's satire which he describes as "delicate and complex"(1961, p22), while Fredrick Boas commented that though Marston’s “daring and extravagant vocabulary” was meticulously devised to appear innocuous on the page, it was utterly rapturous when showcased in dramatic form to his audience (1945, p132). Furthermore, John Scott
Colley suggests that there are so many layers of allegory and meaning in Marston that one may require “bi-focals” to spot all of them (1974, p2). These are fair conclusions in broad terms, yet the complexity of Marston’s moral irony, certainly in my view, demands further scrutiny.

Another critical response that this chapter seeks to expand upon concerns Marston’s method for satirising his dramatic figures themselves. An idea that William Minto, and to some degree T.S. Eliot, touch upon is Marston's inclination to construct and satirise character "types" that appear either wholly moral or immoral, as opposed to roundly-developed, worldly figures. This is likely what Eliot was referring to in Elizabethan Essays (1934), in which he had perceived a duality of real and unreal in Marston’s plays, believing his characters to be both of a real world with which we are familiar, and simultaneously an unreality from which we are denied access (p162). Eliot proposes that this is the "irregular demesne" in Marston’s drama, culminating in "an original variation of that deep discontent and rebelliousness so frequent among the Elizabethan dramatists" (1956, P173). Even William Minto, a self-confessed advocate of Hall, and detractor of Marston, acknowledges that many of Marston’s stage characters are intrinsically satirical:

If we were asked whether Marston should be classed as a satirist or as a dramatist, it would be difficult to give a satisfactory answer. His plays are full of satiric power, and his satires are not without evidences of the dramatist's way of looking at life. The personages of his dramas, though boldly and fully portrayed, are set up as types of base or noble humanity, to be vehemently disliked or liked. The author is far from being impartial in his exhibition of their character; the reader seems to be aware of him standing by with a stern moral purpose to emphasize their vices and their virtues.

(The English Poets 1880, 1:544-545)

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31 Eliot does not mean to imply that Marston's characters exhibit bizarre behaviour, but rather that they act in accordance to the laws of a world that often seems at odds with the real world.
The "satiric power" of Marston's plays, which Minto draws attention to, is typically concerned with his "way of looking at life" — a reasonable verdict. For Minto, Marston is "far from being impartial" in his "stern moral purpose": like his verse satire, Marston's dramatic works are structured around a particular moral agenda. What is most poignant about Minto's observation, however, is his suggestion that Marston's characters are routinely "set up as types", to be either "vehemently disliked or liked", and portrayed in such a way that their vices and virtues are accentuated to the audience.

So what I wish to suggest in this chapter is that whilst Marston had a taste for ostentatious theatrics and bawdy wordplay, this should not be construed as satire itself being compromised. Rather, there is a subtle persistence of satire in Marston's drama, and when one examines his dramatic career holistically, an ever-increasing fluency in juxtaposing the serious with the trivial becomes readily apparent. To some degree, Marston's fusion of such discordant matters is an extension of his original inclination to conflate Horace and Juvenal in his verse satire, and so perhaps stemming from this experimental impulse, Marston created improbable characters that were either exceedingly flawed, or flawless. Antonio, as has been established, is a profoundly flawed figure — he is, however, the tip of the iceberg in Marston's long line of abhorrent patriarchal figures: Mendoza, ruthless villain of *The Malcontent* (1603), is obsessed with power and shows little regard for women or his fellow courtiers; the lascivious Cocelelemoy in *The Dutch Courtesan* defends prostitution as a "most honourable" practice because it trades in the "best commodities" (I.ii.31); and the murderous Syphax, who kills needlessly in an attempt to bed Sophonisba, are but a few of Antonio's corrupt successors. These men stand as the antithesis of
veritably flawless women such as Maria and Sophonisba, who value chastity and honour above all else. If, as I suggest, Marston's disparate representations of men and women here reflect a pursuit of proto-feminism — and ultimately Stoicism, through the Stoic goddess Sophonisba — then one must ascertain that Marston expresses such ideas in a satirical manner. Much like the personage Marston had satirised in his verse satire, figures such as Antonio, Mendoza and Syphax seemingly exist for the sole purpose of satirical denunciation: each is of such base moral fibre that one can conceivably interpret them as objects of ridicule, more than they are fully-fledged characters. It is perhaps for this reason that Marston elects to engage with Seneca in a satirical mode, particularly with Antonio — Seneca is summoned so as to undermine Antonio as a false-Stoic. Conversely, Maria and Sophonisba exist at the opposite end of the spectrum, representative of philosophies for which Marston expresses admiration. So even as Marston develops philosophically as a playwright, he remains faithful to his satirical method — a concept that this chapter will proceed to argue and demonstrate.

Marston's Fusion of Satire and Extravagant Drama

*Antonio’s Revenge* is a valuable test-case for Marston's synthesis of satire and philosophy: the spiritual cleansing of Antonio and his troupe is a wholly ironic commentary on self-interested courtiers in a delusional pursuit of Stoicism. In believing themselves to be so morally entitled, despite numerous cruel acts and the particularly needless murder of Young Julio, the revengers are made to look profoundly foolish. With *The Malcontent* and *The Dutch Courtesan*, all manner of
courtiers and nobleman are ridiculed and portrayed in an obscene manner, whilst female figures such as Maria and Franceschina are independent, and display a level of agency over their male counterparts. In Sophonisba, Marston explores the merits and limitations of Stoic philosophy in unambiguous detail. The candid tenor of Sophonisba lends itself to the idea that Marston’s sense of morality was carefully developed as his dramatic career progressed. Through this continuum, Marston’s drama — though assuredly crafted to please commercial playhouse audiences — was nevertheless fraught with peculiarities, inconsistencies and dramatic dissonance. It would be irresponsible to gloss over such moments as they are vital to understanding the aesthetic of his theatre. Three of the general conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama — namely “sexual puns and wordplay”, “asides” and “expository speeches”, as cited by Jeremy Lopez in Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama (2003, p50) — were Marston staples. As Richard Scarr suggests in "Insatiate Punning in Marston's Courtesan Plays", Marston “revels” in sexual language and double-entendre:

[Marston] puns almost inveterately, and takes bawdy allusion and innuendo to such heights that even his non-sexual scenes can be interpreted as containing elements of suggestiveness. (2000, p83)

Scarr’s claim about Marston is a valid one, and deserving of closer attention. What in fact separates Marston from the crowd is not only the frequency of sexual language — but far more radically, the comic pretence of "bawdy allusion" is often undercut by

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32 "Sexual puns" being a self-evident twist of innuendo on a given phrase, "asides" referring to a moment in a performance in which a character directly addresses to the audience, and "expository speeches" being a section of explanatory dialogue.
poignant political satire, as with Malevole’s voluptuous description of Pietro’s court in *The Malcontent*:

Why, methinks I see that signior pawn his footcloth, that metreza her plate; this madam takes physic, that t’other monsieur may minister to her; here is a pander jewelled; there is a fellow in shift of satin this day, that could not shift a shirt t’other night. Here a Paris supports that Helen; there’s a Lady Guinevere bears up that Sir Lancelot — dreams, dreams, visions, fantasies, chimeras, imaginations, tricks, conceits! (To Prepasso) — Sir Tristam, Trimtram, come aloft Jack-an-apes with a whim-wham: here’s Knight of the land of Catito shall play at trap with any page in Europe, do the sword-dance with and morris-dancer in Christendom, ride at the ring till the fin of his eyes look as blue as the welkin, and run the wild goose chase even with Pompey the Huge. 

(I.iii.49-62)33

In this stanza, Marston is nothing if not audacious: the satiric line of discourse — specifically Malevole’s depiction of a court contaminated by voyeuristic self-indulgence — is palpably confronting. Traces of Marston's satirical roots in both Horace and Juvenal are evident in the passage: though Pietro’s court is being admonished for its excessive sense of grandeur, Marston conveys such censure with whimsical descriptors — "here is a pander jewelled; there is a fellow in shift of satin ... here a Paris supports that Helen; there’s a Lady Guinevere bears up that Sir Lancelot — dreams, dreams, visions, fantasies, chimeras, imaginations, tricks, conceits". It is this proclivity for recalling Juvenalian critique in unison with Horatian extravagance, and Marston's penchant for theatricality over textuality, that lends itself to critical misinterpretation.

33 Michael Scott engages with this particular reading in "Ill-Mannered Marston" from T.F. Wharton’s collection *The Drama of John Marston* (2000, p214), describing it as Marston’s bitter account of an "incestuous" Jacobean landscape. Given Marston’s propensity to confront his audience and attack vice, Scott’s is an entirely reasonable evaluation.
Marston was certainly no exception to the trend of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights who sought to delight their audience in featuring sexual elements and allegory in their work. Nevertheless, Marston is still a noteworthy case, given that one can reasonably interpret complex repartee in his plays as having an additional satirical thrust or political ideology, in a similar vein to Patricia Parker’s findings in *Shakespeare from the Margins* (1996):

> Continuing critical assumptions about the transparency or unimportance of the language of the plays [involves] a network whose linkages expose, even as the plays themselves may appear simply to iterate or rehearse, the orthodoxies and ideologies of the texts they evoke. (p13)

Parker’s observation of "transparent language" speaks directly to the frequency of allegory that Marston employs superficially as a comic element, that simultaneously disguises satirical observations of gender imbalance — in particular, patriarchal misogyny. When Cocledemoy arrives at a tavern with a bawd, Mary Faugh, in the opening sequence to *The Dutch Courtesan*, a strictly denotative interpretation of the scene would suggest that the pair wish to rent a room for the night — presumably to engage in sexual activity — and meanwhile, enjoy a meal as a harper serenades them with music:

> That man of much money, some wit, but less honesty, cogging Cocledemoy, comes this night late into mine host’s Mulligrub’s tavern here, calls for a room. The house being full, Cocledemoy, consorted with his movable chattel, his instrument of fornication, the bawd Mistress Mary Faugh, are imparloured next the street. Good poultry was their food: blackbird, lark, wood-cock; and mine host here comes in, cries ‘God bless you!’ and departs. A blind harper enters, craves audience, uncaseth, plays. The

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34 Sexual puns and clever wordplay satiated the audience’s desire for self-reflexive drama — the lexical twists and turns sought to draw the spectator into the entertainment.
drawer, for female privateness’ sake, is nodded out, who knowing that
whosoever will hit the mark of profit must, like those that shoot in stone-
bows, wink with one eye, grows blind o’ the right side and departs. (I.i.11-22)

Interpreting this passage with a leniency towards sexual innuendo produces an
entirely separate set of meanings, thus revealing a satirical overtone of misogynistic
perverseness. The scene associates men with vulgar impulses potent enough to
consume any semblance of moral decency — whilst the woman is far less fluid,
appearing as an idle sex object. Mary is a bawd, which suggests that she was formerly
a prostitute. She and Cocledemoy ‘consorted’ - meaning to converse, also to
fornicate, which is echoed in describing her as an ‘instrument’ of sexual pleasure.
Furthermore, it is conceivable that the harper ‘craves audience’ in the sense that he
wishes to gain admission to Mary’s and Cocledemoy’s bedroom, and revel in the
sexual display. The drawer departs for ‘female privateness sake’, which suggests that
Mary is about to engage in activity that only Cocledemoy can be privy to. To ‘hit the
mark of profit’ can be understood as both paying the price requested by the bawd,
and achieving the sexual orgasm in Cocledemoy’s and Mary’s copulation - and also
by the onlooking harper. ‘Stone’ is a probable euphemism for testicles and the
combination of ‘shoot’ and ‘one eye’ is easily connected to the male sex organ and the
orgasm. This creates an image of Mary and Cocledemoy copulating in front of a blind
harper who derives sexual pleasure from the audible sounds of their fornication.
Furthermore, Marston’s method remains essentially unchanged from Antonio’s
Revenge: Juvenal-inspired censure of misogyny once again coincides with frivolous
overtones that are distinctly Horatian. The Dutch Courtesan is rife with such
portrayals of misogyny and male prurience, and is indicative of that way that
Marston indulges misogyny so as to satirise it. So it is through this disparaging of the
misogynistic establishment of patriarchy that one can perceive Marston's inclination towards proto-feminism.

Marston's affinity for satirical language is pivotal to his dramatic enterprise, particularly in conjunction with the performative and visual aspects of the theatre itself. Acutely aware of the Elizabethan and Jacobean audience's appreciation for a multifaceted theatrical experience, Marston crafted his plays with visually complex action, making use of the full physical space of the stage whilst implicating the audience in a barrage of puns, double entendres and an audio-visual splendour of performance. Marston had a particular interest in challenging his audience, and it is this bombastic approach that prompted nineteenth century bibliophile and clergyman Thomas Corser, in *Collectanea Anglo-Poetica* (1879), to not overlook Marston for his occasional moments of "ruggedness ... or want of delicacy", but rather embrace him as a "bold and forcible satirist, and a vigorous and passionate dramatist" (9:23). Corser's claim is indicative of what I suggest is a constant in Marstonian drama: a fusion of his staple — satire — coupled with comic elements and flourishes of extravagant and over-the-top melodrama.

**Marston's reliance on Senecan Stoic theory**

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35 Lavish entertainments are not unique to Marston, but are certainly prevalent in his œuvre, and are often incorporated in the plays' base design, atmosphere and meaning. Often Marston calls upon a singular striking entrance — 'Enter Antonio, his arms bloody'; 'Enter Franceschina, with her hair loose'; 'Enter Massinissa, all in black'. Elsewhere, Marston imbues particularly striking imagery into a scene, as with this spectacular event in Antonio and Mellida:

*Enter Balurdo, backward; Dido following him, with a looking-glass in one hand and a candle in the other hand, Flavia following him backward, with a looking-glass in one hand and a candle in the other; Rosaline following her. Balurdo and Rosaline stand, setting of faces. And so the scene begins.* (III.iii.o)
Marston’s unique satirical relation to Seneca, by way of Senecan Stoic theory, is emblematic of this interdependence between satire and drama. Typically, revenge-tragedy authors engage with Seneca’s *De Ira* — or "Essay on Anger" — a work that examines the consequences of anger and how it must be controlled. Katja Maria Vogt writes in "Anger, Present Injustice and Future Revenge" that Seneca’s treatise is in accord with the Stoic position on anger as a "particularly violent emotion" — and more importantly, acknowledges the complexity of such an emotion within the Stoic framework:

According to the Stoic framework, an emotion can either be a kind of pain — *lupé* — or a kind of desire — *epithumia* — but not a complex phenomenon incorporating both. The early Stoics classify anger as a desire, and — in agreement with this classification — Seneca accepts a Posidonian definition which calls anger a "burner desire" — *cupiditas* — to punish him by whom you think yourself to have been unfairly harmed. Thus, the Stoics opt for describing anger as a kind of desire, not as a kind of pain. (2006, p58)

According to Stoic theory, the emotions as a whole fall under four broad classifications — pleasure, pain, desire and fear.36 *Anger* falls under the encompassing wing of desire, together with cravings, love of pleasures, desire for riches and renown, and sexual desire. Following Book II of *De Ira*, it would appear that Vogt’s appraisal of Seneca’s treatment of anger as a multifaceted emotion — particularly in the sense of the Stoic — is credible:

Some of our Stoics think that anger is excited in our breasts by the boiling of the blood round the heart: indeed, that place is assigned to anger for no other reason than because the breast is the warmest part of the whole body.

Those who have more moisture in them become angry by slow degrees, because they have no heat ready at hand. (II, XIX)³⁷

Senecan tragedies were certainly in vogue during the Elizabethan period — all of his tragedies were translated into English, while his heroic figures served as inspiration for revenger characters in works such as Gorboduc (1561) and Titus Andronicus (1594). What must be noted about the oft relied upon Senecan heroes is their intrinsically violent nature — Seneca’s philosophy predominantly revolved around self-control of the most violent of passions, and even De Ira itself posits a scenario in which a master beats his slave out of spite as a trial analysis for anger — and this is where Marston parts way with the overwhelming majority of revenge-tragedy authors. Marston is predominantly interested in Seneca as a test case for his own Stoic candidates, the greater part of whom fail to meet the requirements as laid out in De Ira:

The Stoics’ opinion is, that anger can venture upon nothing by itself, without the approval of mind: for to conceive the idea of a wrong having been done, to long to avenge it, and to join the two propositions, that we ought not to have been injured and that it is our duty to avenge our injuries, cannot belong to a mere impulse which is excited without our consent. That impulse is a simple act; this is a complex one, and composed of several parts. The man understands something to have happened: he becomes indignant thereat; he condemns the deed; and he avenges it. All these things cannot be done without his mind agreeing to those matters which touched him. (II, I)

Antonio’s act of revenge panders to this particular "sympathetic" condition of the mind and as such his design is the antithesis of the Senecan mould — he consciously decides that he has a "duty to avenge". Upon realising his ambition, Antonio

remorseless, and thus Marston satirises Antonio by purporting to make a Stoic out of him anyway. Marston, then, engages with Seneca with the same aim and approach as Horace and Juvenal — to achieve a particular satirical effect. In this case, the effect is to refute the possibility of a true male Stoic.

That there remains ongoing debate over Marston’s specific commentary on the Stoic philosophy is, in my view, perplexing, as throughout his dramatic career Marston meditates upon Stoicism from a defined satirical aspect. There is no sense of irony in Sophonisba’s dedication, when it is palpable in the case of Antonio. Malheureux yields to temptation for Franceshina, whilst Maria denies Mendoza’s advances and remains true to her virtue. Yet Marston’s considerations of Stoicism have divided critics, with various responses ascertaining that Stoicism is portrayed as an unattainable and miserable myth, rather than an admirable school of thought. David Blostein, in his critical introduction to *The Fawn* (1604), goes as far as to say that Marston’s apparent rejection of Stoicism is "conventional" and recalls the "skepticism about Stoic self-sufficiency expressed by Erasmus and Montaigne" (1978, p5) — an odd conclusion given Marston’s unambiguous dependence on Seneca. When one examines Marston’s full body of work on the matter holistically, and his observance of Seneca in a satirical mode, Marston quite observably gravitates towards an advocatory position on Stoic thought.

The debt that Marston owes to Seneca, whose dramatic technique and ideals of Stoic philosophy permeate Marston’s own tragedies, is significant. Stage tragedies during the early stages of the seventeenth century often borrowed elements from the classical model established by Seneca — Marston, however, took the rather unusual leap of parodying and directly quoting Seneca. As Antonio swears vengeance upon Piero, he utters this marvellous aside, the source material of which is Seneca’s *Thyestes*:
O quisquis nova
Supplicia functis durus umbrarum arbiter
Disponis, quisquis exeso iaces
Pavidis sub antro, quisquis venturi times
Montis ruinam, quisquis avidorum feros,
Rictus leonum, et dira furiarum agmina
Implicitus horres, Antonii vocem excipe
Properantis ad vos: Ulciscar (III.ii.66-74)

Borrowed from Thyestes (13-15) and (75-81) with slight alterations, most notably the inclusion of "Antonio" and "Ulciscar", as per Keith Sturgess' translation38 the passage reads:

O whoever you are, harsh judge of shades, who allot fresh punishments for the dead, or you, lying trembling beneath a hollow rock and fearful of the imminent collapse of the mountain, or you, who shudder at the fierce gaping of greedy lions and the clutches of dread ranks of furies, hear the words of Antonio now hastening towards you: "I shall be revenged".

Perhaps for the benefit of the audience, Marston further develops the pledge, as Antonio continues:

By the astoning terror of swart night
By the infectious damps of clammy graves
And by the mould that presseth down
My dead father's skull, I'll be revenged!" (III.i.76—79)

Antonio and Pandulpho, would-be Stoics of Antonio's Revenge, quote Seneca throughout the play — finally succumbing to grief of his the loss of his son,

Pandulpho cries, "He whose great heart heaven cannot force with force, /
Vouchesafes his love. Non servio Deo, sed assentio" (IV.ii.32-33).\textsuperscript{39} Antonio, attempting to console his friend, replies "I ha' lost a good wife ... I ha' lost a good friend" (34, 46), but Pandulpho believes Mellida to have lived a charmed life not afforded to his son, who had spent much time on the battlefield — "May be, may be; but that which 'may be' stood, / Stands now without all 'may'; she died good / ... I live encompassed with two blessed souls!" (44-45, 47). Not only does this scene exude a sense of Senecan moralising, the back and forth dialogue that takes place has been adapted by Marston from the exchange between Soul and Reason in Whyttynton's translation of Seneca's \textit{De Remediis Fortuitorum} (1547).\textsuperscript{40}

Elsewhere, Marston borrows from Seneca's \textit{Medea}: as Antonio's accomplices equip their armour, Andrugio declares "Fortune fears valour, presseth cowardice / Numquam potest non esse" (IV.ii.29, 31) — conspicuously, a phrase uttered by Medea at the precise moment that she intends to uphold Stoic doctrine: "Numquam potest non esse virtuti locus ... Medea superest" (161, 165).\textsuperscript{41} Marston even foreshadows the cannibalistic revenge in the same manner — albeit, with greater poetic flair — as Seneca does in \textit{Thyestes}: Piero remarks "Where only honest deeds to

\textsuperscript{39} Non servio Deo, sed assentio is from Seneca's \textit{De Provedentia} (V, 6). As per Pearman-Jackson and Neills translation, the phrase reads — "I am not God's slave, but give my assent to his decrees" (1986, p167).

\textsuperscript{40} Pandulpho continues: "Didst find her good, or didst thou make her good? / If found, tho mayst re-find, because thou hadst her. / If made, the work is lost; but thou that mad'st her / Liv'st yet as cunning ... Had lost a true friend, coz? Then thou had'st one" (IV.ii.35-38, 55).

In Whyttynton's version of Seneca's \textit{De Remediis Fortuitorum} that Marston is indebted to, Soul bemoans "I have lost a good wife", to which Reason replies, "Whether did you find her so, or did thou make her so? / yf thou foundest her so, thou mayst knowe thou haste her styll / So thoughghe thou haddest her: yf thou made her so, trust well of another" (1547, 16).

\textsuperscript{41} By way of this declaration — Numquam potest non esse virtuti locus ... Medea superest — Seneca's Medea announces herself as self-sufficient and one's "virtuti" as all-powerful. Ker perceives, however, that Medea's ambition and thirst for revenge "may be understood as a misunderstanding ... / of the Stoic moral ideal of consistency" (74-75) much in the same way that Antonio's troupe are intoxicated by bloodlust.
kings are free / It is no empire, but a beggary" (II.i.129—130), and so do Atreus and his attendants:

Atreus: Where only right to a monarch is allowed, sovereignty is held on sufferance.

Attendant: Where is no shame, no care for right, no honour, virtue, faith, sovereignty is insecure. (214—215)

When the revenge on Piero is finally carried out at the banquet, Pandulpho exclaims "Now do I glorify my hands; / I had no vengeance if I had no tears" (V.iii.75—76), a phrase also adapted from *Thyestes* — as indeed the banquet murder scene itself is, too. Such citations illustrate not only a fascination with Senecan writings, but more significantly Marston's impulse to summon Seneca at selective moments — most typically in tandem with the operation of Stoic figures. Furthermore, Marston quotes Seneca in order to satirise Pandulpho and Antonio, whose proclamations of "being revenged" and "glorifying hands in vengeance" are the antithesis of Seneca's Stoic ideal.

**Marston and the Elizabethan Tradition**

As Marston's contemplations of Stoicism continue to evolve with *The Malcontent*, *The Dutch Courtesan* and *Sophonisba*, a divergence away from the misogyny traditionally associated with revenge tragedy and tragicomedy is marked. It has been

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42 In virtually the exact same vein, Atreus boasts "Now do I praise my handiwork, now is the true palm won. / I had wasted my crime, didst thou not suffer thus" (1096-1097).
suggested that the prevalence of misogyny in revenge tragedy during Marston's dramatic career may in fact have emerged as a reaction against the Elizabethan cult's requirement for self-regulated control of the passions, as Allman had claimed in *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (1999, p212). This, however, is a trend Marston appears to reject, particularly given that *Antonio’s Revenge* and *The Malcontent* anticipate a degree of cynical disillusionment amidst the transitional period of James I's accession to the throne. This section will draw attention to Middleton and Tourneur’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606) — a work steeped in cynicism for the Jacobean court and melancholic in its recollection of Elizabeth — and illustrate ideas perhaps adapted from Marston’s *Malcontent*. To provide some context for Marston’s interests in Elizabeth, this section will also delineate a comparison between Edmund Spenser’s exaltation of Elizabeth in poetry and Marston’s own satirical method, and make the suggestion that Maria and Sophonisba are allegorical of Marston’s nostalgia for the Elizabethan tradition.

It is imperative to first recognise the cultural impact Elizabeth had at the time in relation to the rise of misogynistic attitudes in drama, and the effect Elizabeth had upon Marston. Allman contends that Queen Elizabeth's affirmation of female chastity as a symbol of power rendered sexually independent women as "wicked and licentious", thereby bolstering misogynist discourse held in opposition to a female ruler (1999, p32). During this period, poetic writings often perpetuated an unblemished view of Elizabeth: in his "Letter to The Faerie Queene" (1596), Edmund Spenser refers to her as the "Gloriana ... That greatest Glorious Queene of Faerie Land" and embellishes his description with befittingly flawless detail:

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43 This line of reasoning may have gained further traction in concert with Elizabeth’s rumoured sexual engagements, as Anna Whitelock reports in *Elizabeth’s Bedfellows* - "Throughout her reign, rumours circulated about her sexual exploits and illegitimate children. The reason Elizabeth was not married ... was because of her sexual appetites; she could not confine herself to one man" (2013, p9).
O happy Queene of Faeries, that hast found
Mongst many, one that with his prowesse may
Defend thine honour, and thy foes confound:
True Loues are often sown, but seldom grow on ground.  

(Canto IX)

As Frances Yates writes in *Astraea* (1975), Spenser's dedication portrays Elizabeth's public character as "just and righteous", her private character as a "most beautiful and virtuous lady", thus the combination Gloriana-Belpheobe was "Elizabeth as all the virtues, public and private" (p69). Whilst Marston, through the masks of Horace and Juvenal, indulges his patriarchal figures in order to satirise them and thus effectively advance Elizabethan tradition, Spenser's work was typically written as an entirely forthright affirmation of Elizabeth's political mythology and conveyed an unambiguously idealised view of her court. In his Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser confesses that "in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her", and this is indicative of his poetic method: Elizabeth encompasses virtually all of the moral, political and religious sentiment in the text. Gloriana never actually materialises as a presence in the work — she simply looms as a symbol of excellence. However, despite the patent sincerity of Spenser's poetic dedications, the idolisation of Elizabeth is likely resultant from the government manipulating her image as an object of veneration. Sir Roy Strong suggests as much in the *The Cult of Elizabeth* (1977):

> The cult of Gloriana was skilfully created to buttress public order and, even more, deliberately to replace the pre-Reformation externals of religion, the cult of the Virgin and saints with their attendant images, processions, ceremonies and secular rejoicing. (p16)

So to that end, Elizabeth not only resolutely safeguarded her chastity, but was also adamant on ruling with the same widespread authority as a male monarch, and being
revered as such. For Phillipa Berry, this afforded Elizabeth "greater imaginative or spiritual powers than ever before" and thus created "two different spheres of existence, the mythic and the historical, which paralleled the Platonic division between an ideal and a real world" (2003, p155). This must have had a profound effect on Marston: in refusing to compromise their virtue, the exemplary Maria and Sophonisba figures are moulded as goddesses, and thus ostensibly bear a close resemblance to Elizabeth.

It is intriguing to then consider the fine line between the inevitable sense of loss felt in the years after Elizabeth's death, and the resurgence of misogyny portrayed on the stage — a process Steven Mullaney terms "mourning under the sign of patriarchy" in "Mourning and Misogyny" (1999, p69), and indicative of the space Marston likely operated within. Ultimately, misogyny materialises as something of a generic requirement within revenge tragedy throughout the latter part of Elizabeth's reign.44 As a result, it became commonplace with the revenge-tragedy genre to witness women stripped of agency, objectified, blamed for leaving a trail of destruction in their wake and bringing purportedly great and powerful men to ruin, and even censured for being apparently cursed. By empowering the female figures in his stage drama, Marston aimed to resist such a trend, and can be seen as attempting to restore a powerful sense of nostalgia for the Elizabethan tradition. In *The Malcontent* it is Maria who motivates Malevole's actions, and so to a certain extent, Maria is complicit in revenge: this signals Marston's empowering of the female figure, which is ultimately realised to an even higher degree in Sophonisba. Given

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44 Certainly *Hamlet* (Quarto 1, 1603) can be understood to be emblematic of both the political landscape and the influx of misogynistic attitudes of the period: Gertrude is, like Elizabeth, an aging Queen, but also illustrative of a self-objectified woman abruptly passed from one king to the next. In consideration of the incestuous nature of her tryst with Claudius, Gertrude can be understood as a symbol of patriarchal tolerance for the treatment of women as a sexual possession.
that Maria remains Stoically true to her values, she is a particularly important — and yet, critically overlooked — figure in the play. Furthermore, Maria is allegorical of Elizabeth in the sense that while she is a veritably honourable figure, she also happens to be imprisoned, and thus unable to rule.

The Gloriana skull in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, evocative of the departed Queen, is highly reminiscent of the scenario Marston creates with Maria’s imprisonment. Though Malevole is often merely viewed as a prototypical "disguised revenger", the most intriguing aspect of his character is the way in which he operates on behalf of Maria in order to reinstate her. Vindice's objective takes a similar form in *The Revenger's Tragedy*: from the very outset of the play, Vindice's impetus to avenge his beloved and overwhelm the Duke is established — holding her skull in hand, he proclaims that 'the old Duke poisoned' Gloriana 'because [her] purer part would not consent / Unto his palsey-lust' (I.i.32-34). The audience is kept in the dark until Act III about the name of Vindice's dead betrothed — it is finally revealed, conspicuously, at the precise moment that revenge is exacted: 'Duke, dost know / Yon dreadful vizard? [. . .] 'tis the skull / Of Gloriana, whom thou poisonedst last' (III.v.147-49). "Gloriana'' is a name that recalls Spenser's iconography and portrays Queen Elizabeth's personage in a particularly laudable manner — "glorious one" — and throughout the play Vindice's contemplation of the Gloriana skull looms to champion the ambitions of his courtly peers. There are also unmistakable allusions to Hamlet's lamentations for the Yorick skull in Shakespeare's play: unlike Yorick, however, whose skull was a generalised *memento mori* and whose death was at the hands of old age, Gloriana is the specific skull of Vindice's murdered beloved herself and implicitly evocative of the Queen. That Vindice elects to poison the Duke by having him kiss the skull, rather than actively kill him, underscores the idea that
Vindice is compelled by the skull of his dead beloved to see the deed done.\textsuperscript{45} So in this way, Gloriana is an agent in her own revenge. This is foreshadowed to some degree in the opening soliloquy of the play in which Vindice pontificates over the skull, and says:

\begin{quote}
Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love, 
My study's ornament, thou shell of Death, 
Once the bright face of my betrothed lady, 
When life and beauty naturally filled out 
These ragged imperfections; 
When two heaven-pointed diamonds were set 
In those unsightly rings — then 'twas a face 
So far beyond the artificial shine 
Of any woman's bought complexion . . . (I.i.14-22)
\end{quote}

What is particularly striking here is Vindice's inclination to engage the skull as "his study's ornament" seemingly designates Gloriana as a linguistic object — she gives meaning to his position and therefore symbolises his motive for revenge. Much like Marston's Antonio, Vindice's passion for revenge becomes a point of obsession for him:

\begin{quote}
Here's an eye 
Able to tempt a great man — to serve God 
... 
Here's a cheek that keeps her colour, let the wind go whistle 
Spout rain, we fear thee not, be hot or cold 
All's one with us. And is not he absurd 
Whose fortunes are upon their faces set 
That fear no other God but wind and wet? (III.v.54-64)
\end{quote}

The "cheek that keeps her colour" is an interesting pun — this would seem to evoke the still-lingering effects of Gloriana in Vindice's mind, even in her death.

\textsuperscript{45} Further evidence of Vindice's nostalgia is witnessed in Act III as he reviews his masterplan which, executed well, will put an end to the Duke and subject him to his greatest fear — the judgement of God:
Let our hid flames break out as fire, as lightning,
To blast this villainous dukedom vexed with sin:
Wind up your souls to their full height again!  (V.ii.5-7)

This, he exclaims, in anticipation of murdering the newly crowned Lussurioso, and all of his followers, in the play's closing act. Vindice is made from the same mould as Marston's Antonio: both are profoundly flawed figures, and are satirised as such.\textsuperscript{46}

So having established the similarities between \textit{The Revenger's Tragedy} and Marston's own revenge-drama through their post-Elizabethan skepticism, this section will aim to distinguish Marston's satirical method through Maria and Malevole. It is important to consider the significant historical shift that takes place at the time of \textit{The Malcontent} — the death of Elizabeth. In \textit{Antonio's Revenge}, Marston's philosophical designs on Stoicism are relatively understated, and infused with dramatic irony. The satirising of Antonio and his troupe reflect Marston's own estimation of general attitudes in patriarchal culture. With \textit{The Malcontent}, philosophy is equally as pronounced as satire: Maria reveals a strain of nostalgia for Elizabeth in Marston, whilst the comical and patently duplicitous of Malevole offers a more precise satirical commentary of Jacobean courtiers, through which Marston draws from both Horatian and Juvenalian modes of expression.

At the crux of Marston's \textit{Malcontent} are two individual revengers; the deposed Duke Altofronto — disguised as Malevole — and his foil, Mendoza, who appears to be an extension of the corrupt courtier first witnessed in Antonio.\textsuperscript{47} Essentially an alter-

\textsuperscript{46} That Vindice should announce "Wind up your souls to their full height again!", highly reminiscent of Antonio's declaration, "Wind up invention / Unto his highest bent" (IV.iii.192-193) in \textit{Antonio's Revenge}, would appear to imply some kind of relation.

\textsuperscript{47} W. David Kay in "Commentary on The Malcontent" (2014, p25), Cyril Foakes in his "Introduction" to \textit{The Revenger's Tragedy} (1996, p3), and David Leonard Frost in \textit{The School of Shakespeare} (1968, p40) suggest that Tourneur and Middleton's most immediate point of reference, particularly for the
ego, Malevole seeks to reinstate himself and his duchess Maria, who waits faithfully in prison for his return. The superlative control Malevole possesses in seducing his courtly peers with beguiling language, whilst manipulating the events that transpire around them to suit his every whim, establishes his role as an agent working on behalf of Maria. Mendoza, the would-be usurper, is strangely charmed by Malevole's assurances: he believes him at his word that Ferneze — Aurelia's lover — has been killed, employs him to murder Pietro — a task he has no intention of performing — and even instructs him to parley the imprisoned Maria for her hand in marriage. Mendoza is not a unique pawn in Malevole's charade — Pietro is also oddly taken by Malevole's banter and ultimately becomes a puppet in the proceedings. He is encouraged by Malevole to take action against Mendoza, whom he believes to be having an affair with his wife, Aurelia, and is later dressed as a wretched hermit figure in Malevole's successful plot to undo Mendoza. Not only is Pietro compelled to act as an informant to Malevole, he engages him as though Mendoza's incessant scheming tugs at his very heartstrings — a weakness Malevole seizes upon:

Malevole: What, art an infidel still?
Pietro: I am amazed, struck in a swoon with wonder! I am commanded to poison thee.
Malevole: I am commanded to poison thee, at supper.
Pietro: At supper!
Malevole: In the citadel.
Pietro: In the citadel!
Malevole: Cross-capers, tricks! Truth o'heaven! He would discharge us as boys do elder guns, one pellet to strike out another! Of what faith art now?
Pietro: All is damnation, wickedness extreme. There is no faith in man. (IV.ii.5-16)

"disguised revenger" plot, was Marston's Malcontent, though many critics justifiably point to Hamlet as a source of inspiration also.

48 Unbeknownst to Mendoza, Maria is Altofronto’s wife
Pietro's professing that "there is no faith in man" is certainly at odds with the fact that he appears to have complete faith in Malevole. It is as though Malevole's various disguises and mesmeric language lend him an alluring quality that enraptures his subjects. Malevole, then, would seem to embody the juxtaposition between serious critique and comical artifice that Marston had alluded to in the Proemium to Book III of Scourge of Villanie — "In serious jest and jesting seriousness / I strive to scourge polluting beastliness" (1-2) — and is perhaps best understood through Marston's conflating influences of Horace and Juvenal: though a captivating and somewhat comical figure, he is invested in an entirely serious purpose to undermine and overthrow corrupt courtiers, and restore order. Having easily beguiled characters such as Pietro and Ferneze chasing after Aurelia is merely the glaring pretence of the play, for it is Malevole who is at the heart of the play's satiric expression.

So in taking extreme measures to ensure the safe return of Maria to the throne, Malevole's dynamic of disguise would seem to reflect Marston's own sense of nostalgia over the lost female monarch. The duchess Maria is a resounding figure: despite her imprisonment at the beginning of the play, Maria rebuffs Mendoza's offer for marriage — which would guarantee her not only power and riches, but freedom — knowing that it will simply aid in the strengthening of his faction. Given that Maria remains chaste throughout the play, preferring to die in prison than give in to Mendoza's propositions, the scenario draws a striking parallel with Marston's own wish for the reinstatement of the Elizabethan tradition. Moreover, this proves her devotion to Altofronto, who waits on her in disguise as Maquerelle relays to her Mendoza's proposal. Maria's response is emphatic:
For God's love, save poor wretchedness
From tyranny of lustful insolence
Enforce me in the deepest dungeon dwell
Rather than here; here round about is hell.
O, my dear'st Altofront, where'er thou breathe,
Let my soul sink into the shades beneath
Before I stain thine honour; 'tis thou has't;
And long as I can die, I will live chaste.  (V.i.78—85)

Not only would Maria rather be banished to the dungeons and left to die than be married to the usurper — a distinct point of disparity next to Shakespeare's Gertrude — this passage suggests that she has the makings of a Stoic, and in this regard Maria ostensibly foreshadows Sophonisba. Though deposed, Maria remains an empowered proto-Stoic figure, and together with Malevole would seem to allegorise Marston's own nostalgic wish for Elizabeth.

**Stoicism and the Sophonisba goddess**

Maria's chastity and virtue are seemingly fundamental to the conception of Marston's greatest Stoic, Sophonisba, through whom Marston's most poignant contemplations over Stoic immaculacy take place. A work so sincere in its meditative tone, Sophonisba has been considered by some critics overly sombre, possessing for Anthony Caputi "a singleness of effect that even Marston's most Senecan contemporaries would have thought chaste" (1961, p241). Sophonisba stands as the culmination of Marston's ongoing satirical and philosophical development in drama through which unambiguous representations of Stoicism and Elizabethan tradition are realised to the fullest. The intriguing thing to note about the play is the reversal of
emphasis that takes place between satire and philosophy — with Sophonisba, Marston's progression of philosophical ideas now usurp satire, which coincides with a far greater reliance on Horace as an instructive principle, as this section will detail.

The first point to understand about Sophonisba is Marston's deliberate use of Seneca in the work: compared with the palpable irony of the Antonio plays, here Marston utilises Seneca in an entirely sombre manner, indicative of a satiric maturation. There are fewer references to Seneca in Sophonisba, however one particular Senecan tag — *Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*, "Light griefs speak, heavy ones strike dumb" (Hippolytus, 607) — is advanced as a prominent recurring motif throughout the work. In Sophonisba, this maxim is called upon in tandem with his characters exhibiting qualities of resilience and fortitude emblematic of Seneca's Stoic. The first instance occurs as Carthalon and Hasdrubal attempt to extract information about Massinissa from his compatriot, Gelosso, whom they have captured, "Think, think how wretched thou canst be, thou art; / Short words shall speak long woes" (II.iii.50-51), at which point Hasdrubal commands of Gelosso "Down, slave!" (II.iii.54). Gelosso, however, remains uncooperative and resolute, responding "I cannot fall" (II.iii.55), and even after further provocation from his captors, stands firm - "Do what thou can, / Thou canst but kill a weak old honest man" (II.iii.89-10). Seneca reemerges later as Massinissa learns of Gelosso's death by torture - in itself implying that Gelosso stayed true to his word. Upon hearing the news, Massinissa utters "Scipio, he that can weep, / Grieves not, like me, private deep inwards drops / Of blood" (III.ii.28-30). A final instance of the Senecan maxim occurs as Massinissa adorns Sophonisba's body with the crown and sceptre he receives from Scipio in the play's final scene - "Not dare to speak, that would

49 Adapted from Hippolytus - "Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent" (607), translated by Pearman Jackson & Neill in *The Selected Plays of John Marston* (1986, p75).
express my woe / Small rivers murmur, deep gulfs silent flow / My grief is here, not here" (V.iv.56-58). Massinissa's refusal in these instances to allow anguish to overcome him is in stark contrast to the grief-fuelled vengeance of Antonio and his men in Antonio's Revenge.

The entirety of Sophonisba's soliloquy - which occurs moments after she garnishes the altar fire with incense in pledging herself to the Stoic ideal - also recalls Seneca, albeit in an elaborate fashion:

Words just and few,
O deign to hear If in poor wretches' cries
Your glory not! if drops of withered eyes
Be not your sport, be just. All that I crave
Is but chaste life or an untainted grave.
I can no more. Yet hath my constant tongue
Let fall no weakness, though my heart were wrung
With pangs worth hell. Whilst great thoughts stop our tears,
Sorrow unseen, unpitied, inward wears.       (III.i.125-133, emphasis mine)

The last two lines of this stanza recall Seneca most explicitly, and encapsulate what the Sophonisba figure represents: unwavering control of the self. It is nevertheless a passage critically important to address, given that it has been the subject of some misinterpretation. Though the Pearman-Jackson and Neill edition of Sophonisba accounts for the Seneca connection, the editors propose that "Sorrow unseen, unpitied, inward wears" is suggestive of Sophonisba's sadness inexorably "gnawing

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50 "My grief is here, not here" would coincide with Massinissa pointing to his heart, followed by his mouth.
away at the inner self”. However, this reading is counterintuitive to the gravity of the scene, for it is here that Sophonisba essentially indoctrinates herself as Stoic. So then a more appropriate interpretation of Marston's use of Seneca is to acknowledge that, for Sophonisba, there is great pride in a disciplined control of the emotions, which she wears "inward" like a badge of honour. This is a reading more consistent with Marston's representation of the Sophonisba figure as the feminine embodiment of Stoic immaculacy, and a goddess perhaps allegorical of Elizabeth.

That Marston unerringly favours Sophonisba over the false male Stoics that precede her — none of whom possess "steady virtue" and simply glorify themselves, rather than giving themselves to "heavens' glory" as Sophonisba does — suggests a strain of proto-feminism in Marston. Sophonisba's prayer in Act III — "Corruptless honey and pure dew / Upbreathes our holy fire" — carries powerful symbolism if one reads “holy fire” as Sophonisba’s chastity itself transcending the physical realm. She adds "All that I crave / Is but chaste life or an untainted grave" (III.i.128-129), a marked divergence from her would-be Stoic husband Massinissa’s sentiment in the following scene:

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Carthage first gave me life.
His ground gave food, the air first lent me breath.
The earth was made for men, not men for earth. (III.ii.3-5)
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For Massinissa, men were not born to be servants or protectors of the earth, but rather to enjoy the pleasures and liberties that the world offers. He is purportedly powerful but considerably weaker than Sophonisba, even by his own admission:

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And yet she's more;
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51 As per the editor's note attached to (III.i.133) in Pearman-Jackson and Niell's *The Selected Plays of John Marston* (1986, p444).
I do not praise gods' goodness but adore.
Gods cannot fall, and for their constant goodness,
Which is necessitated, they have a crown
Of never-ending pleasures. But faint man,
Framed to have his weakness made the heavens' glory,
If he with steady virtue holds all siege
That power, that speech, that pleasure, that full sweets,
A world of greatness can assail him with —
Having no pay but self-wept misery —
And beggars' treasure heaped; that man I'll praise
Above the gods. (III.ii.50-62)

This passage reveals a great disparity between Massinissa and Sophonisba. "And yet she's more", followed by a vivid description of praise for the Stoic virtue of having "weakness made the heavens' glory", would seem to imply that Massinissa holds Sophonisba in higher esteem than even the gods. She is infallible in her Stoicism, not even the “pleasures and full sweets” of the world can dissuade her. Massinissa's worshipping of Sophonisba as an immaculate Stoic goddess paints her as an admirable and wholly Horatian figure. So it is apparent, through the Sophonisba figure, that Marston's exposure to Horace has developed over the course of his dramatic career: Massinissa's description of Sophonisba's goddess form is illustrative of how Marston relates to Horace in a capacious sense, and draws upon his influence for practitioners and creators of art, not just satire. Following Thomas Heywood in Apology for Actors (1612), plays "have made the ignorant more apprehensive, taught the unlearned the knowledge of many famous histories ... because playes are writ with this ayme, and carryed with this methode, to teach their subjects" (p53). Heywood's assertion pertains to his belief that plays were more than just frivolous indulges; rather, it was beneficial to attend plays because they sought to teach the audience lessons. Marston recalls Horace for this very reason — to instruct — as
Sophonisba is an exemplary figure to be emulated. Through this pronounced relation to Horace, Marston allows philosophy more room to coexist alongside satire in *Sophonisba*.

Massinissa’s worshipping of Sophonisba also reveals him to be a chivalrous, but comparatively flawed figure, and indicative of the way in which the Massinissa figure is an extension of the earlier Antonio figure. Whilst Massinissa possesses a level of self-awareness that Antonio lacks, in the sense that he is at least cognisant of the stringent requirements of Stoicism, his lauding of Sophonisba merely emphasises his own inability to fulfil the Stoic imperative. Both Massinissa and his rival Syphax are compelled to overthrow one another and claim Sophonisba as their own, and neither succeeds in doing so: Massinissa is unable to consummate the marriage, whilst Syphax attempts to rape Sophonisba and is instead tricked into bed by Erictho (V.i). The two primary male figures in the play, then, are shown to be fixated on their sexual appetites — Sophonisba, on the other hand, remains chaste. Marston satirises specific individuals, then, in *Sophonisba*: though Massinissa is ostensibly a principled figure, he is clearly inferior to the Horatian Sophonisba goddess, whilst Syphax is subjected to the full spectrum of Marston’s Juvenalian censure and thus portrayed in an entirely negative light. This affords Marston the opportunity to characterise Sophonisba as exemplary.

Moreover, as Marston creates Sophonisba as the dramatic embodiment of "female glory" (Prologue, 20),\(^5^2\) she conspicuously upholds many of the same attributes of "holy" femininity and "constancie" that one would associate with

\(^5^2\) The full passage reads — "And now ye worthier minds, / To whom we shall present a female glory / The wonder of a constancie so fixd, / That fate itself might well grow envious, / Be pleased to sit, such as may merit oil, / And holy dew stilled from diviner heat" (Prologue, 19-24). A recurring theme throughout the play is Sophonisba’s inability to steer her fate — rather, her "constancie" is even more “fixd” than fate; intriguingly, the sensual and desirable nature of her worldly physical form — lushly symbolised in “oil”, “dew” and “heat”, is prefixed by the supernatural — “holy” and “diviner”.
Elizabeth. Marston draws allusions to the Cult of Elizabeth at various points throughout *Sophonisba*: selective references of Roman mythological figures such as Phoebe, the moon goddess; and Diana, a goddess of chastity, would seem to echo Spenser's own representations of Elizabeth in the *Faerie Queene*. For Marston, this is the virgin Stoically re-imagined — Sophonisba is powerful, and is so because of her virginity:

A modest silence, though't be thought
A virgin's beauty and her highest honour;
Though bashful feignings nicely wrought
Grace her that virtue takes not in, but on her;
What I dare think I boldly speak.
After my word my well-bold action rusheth;
In open flame then passion break!
Where virtue prompts, thought, word, act never blusheth.  (I.ii.43-50)

To be virginal is not to be modest, but "boldly" outspoken, thus Sophonisba's polite graces are "feignings", and in "thought", "word" and "act" she will be empowered. Rather, it is Massinissa and Syphax that soon prove to be fallible and lustful. Initially, Massinissa — even his rival, Syphax — appear to share Sophonisba's Stoical imperviousness: Massinissa is just and virtuous, and praises Sophonisba as if she were a goddess. Syphax, meanwhile, is an imperious warrior. Sophonisba, though, is evidently Marston's most powerful figure, emblematic of the way in which Marston's satirical lines of inquiry have endured as latent content in his drama. In their rivalry both men attempt to seduce Sophonisba into temptation and find themselves irrecoverably drawn to the virginal woman — evidently, and perhaps unwittingly, conceding that to be virginal is to be powerful.

From this precise moment in the play, Sophonisba is afforded complete control over her weaker suitors, and in particular, closely mirrors the Cult of
Elizabeth's establishment of a virgin-dominant hierarchy, as per Eileen Allman's dissertation in *Jacobean Revenge Tragedy and the Politics of Virtue* (1999):

Because virginity involved women voluntarily controlling their allegedly voracious sexual appetites, it was an area of female power granted them by and within patriarchal theory and often honoured with the highest compliment: it made a woman male. Virginity, then, allowed Elizabeth to erect an edifice of female-based androgynous power that could exist as a separate and parallel authority structure within the patriarchy. (p26)

Marston appears to sympathise with neo-Stoic ideals in his construction of an impervious Sophonisba, given that both Antonio and Pandulpho in *Antonio's Revenge*, and Malheureux in *The Dutch Courtesan*, were conspicuously proven to be unworthy Stoics. Initially after receiving news of his son's death, Pandulpho refuses to weep for him:

If he is guiltless, why should tears be spent?  
Thrice-blessed soul that dieth innocent  (I.ii.332-333)

Pandulpho's staunch resistance to displays of emotion would seem to be characteristic of the emotional resilience necessitated by the Stoic. Yet as his son is being laid to rest, Pandulpho is overcome with grief:

I spake more than a god,  
Yet am less than a man  
I am the miserablest soul that breathes  (IV. ii.74-76)
He realises that he is merely human, susceptible to grief and anguish, and Stoicism requires a godlike fortitude. When Bryan Love writes in *Ending Well* that "Sophonisba's extraordinary and heroic acts lead to a near-escape, only to have a final twist entrap her in such a way that suicide seems to be the only honourable way out" (2011, p62), he neglects to realise that Sophonisba would not view her death as a sacrifice — "With even disdainful vigour I give up / An abhorred life" (V.iii.98-99).

Sophonisba's dying words are emphatic:

O my stars,
I bless your goodness, that with breast unstrained,
Faith pure, a virgin wife, tried to my glory,
I die, of female faith the long-lived story,
Secure from bondage and all servile harms,
But more, most happy in my husband's arms.  (V.iii.101-106)

Sophonisba is emblematic of the Senecan concept of forsaking the "tempests" of worldly existence in order to discover one's own excellence. She is impervious to adversity, proclaiming — "Yet hath my constant tongue / Let fall no weakness, though my heart were wrung / With pangs of hell" (III.i.129-132). This, for Sophonisba, is freedom.

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53 Similarly, Malheureux had vowed to maintain complete control over his emotions in *The Dutch Courtesean*, dismissing the advances of suitors. He soon discovers the task to be impossible, however, finding himself desperately infatuated with the courtesan Franceschina.

54 Rather, it is Massinissa who is made to look entirely at odds with the Stoic mould. As he adorns Sophonisba's body, it occurs to him that the Stoic must abstain from expressing his sorrow — a "constant tongue ... Let fall no weakness". Massinissa's realisation is paradoxical, however, at it coincides with his verbal outpouring of grief:

O, thou for whom I drink
So deep of grief that he must only think,
Not dare to speak, that would express my woe
Small rivers murmur, deep gulfs silent flow
My grief is here, not here.  (V.iv.54—58)
So it is without any reservation that Marston portrays the female Sophonisba as the sole representation of true Stoicism, in light of masculine Stoic candidates that all eventually falter. That Massanissa should praise her as a “Wondrous creature, even fit for gods, not men” (I.ii.27) implies a degree of excessiveness in Sophonisba and emphasises her celestial condition. It is here, through the Massinissa figure, that Marston’s exaltation of Sophonisba resembles Spenser's poetic glorification of Elizabeth: philosophic deliberations that had previously been mitigated by Horatian and Juvenalian influences in Antonio’s Revenge and Malcontent, now give way to unambiguous philosophic expression. Marston’s satire, then, has matured throughout his dramatic career in tandem with increasingly sophisticated designs on Stoicism and proto-feminism. Sophonisba is the heroine goddess that Marston sorely requires to advance Stoic doctrine and in doing so, Marston empowers the feminine. If true Stoicism is achievable, it would appear that Marston believes it to be so for the woman – evidently, not for the man.

My aim with this portion of the examination was to restore Marston’s satiric line of discourse in drama — his Stoic inquiry, and advocacy of the female monarch, so often overlooked in scholarship — as something exceptionally valuable. Marston’s divergence away from the misogynistic establishment of patriarchy, and relative empowerment of his female figures, reflect a strain of proto-feminism, which Marston ultimately channels into a pursuit of Stoic philosophy through perhaps his most important figure, Sophonisba. The main body of the chapter has sought to revive discussion of Marston’s profound interest in the Stoic philosophy, with evidence supporting the notion of a nostalgic longing for the female monarch. Marston is unerringly critical of the post-Elizabethan court, and yet goes to great lengths to suppress such criticism — typically through conflating engagements with Horace and Juvenal. Prior to Sophonisba, Marston’s satire coincides with dramatic
irony and superficial bawdiness, however Marston cultivates his method to
ultimately realise equally sophisticated satirical and philosophical aims through the
Sophonisba goddess. Revealing Marston's natural satiric inclination amidst the
dramatic aesthetic of the period, as I have aimed to achieve with this chapter, paints
his drama in an entirely new light, and creates wealth of opportunities for ensuing
investigations into this often underestimated playwright.
The principal objective of this thesis has been to demonstrate Marston’s satirical impulse as persisting in drama through multifaceted engagements with the satire of Horace and Juvenal, coinciding with developing philosophical interests. In achieving this, I hope to renew interest in Marston as a satirist and playwright worthy of thoughtful critical examination. It is evidently in more recent centuries that Marston’s reputation has been tarnished and ultimately displaced, given that his contemporaries had, for the most part, held him in high regard. To some degree, Marston’s fall from grace can be attributed to his proclivity for foregrounding extravagant drama and language, and obscuring his satire, which has resulted in his satirical content being overlooked. A lack of critical appreciation for Marston’s synthesis of Horace and Juvenal in drama has resulted in misconceptions of an "amoral" Marston, as per Robert Chambers’ assertion in *Cyclopedia of English Literature* (1844) – "[Marston’s dramatic works] contain strong biting satires ... but he is far from being a moral writer" (1:215). This is precisely the kind of view readily accepted in current scholarship, and typically reason enough for critics to treat Marston as one versed solely in parody. Against such a trend, this thesis has argued that Marston’s satire is not only moral, but parallels sincere philosophical contemplation, realised in proto-feminism and most prominently in Stoicism.

As has been argued throughout this thesis, in negotiating a transition from verse satire to the stage, Marston’s satirical voice endures as latent content in his
drama. The first chapter of this thesis established Marston’s early adoption of an adversarial role in satire, in which Marston signalled a departure from convention by integrating elements from both Horace and Juvenal, creating an experimental satirical aesthetic that he would ultimately transfer to the stage. Marston’s designs on experimentation should not be read as evidence of ambivalence or amorality: it is far too easy, and wholly misleading, to simply point to superficial aspects of Marston’s satires and plays and declare him sensationalist on such elements alone. Moreover, it is unfair to pass judgement on Marston without taking into account his career in its entirety. When Rick Bowers dismisses Marston as a serious satirist-philosopher by suggesting that "to reach back through Seneca and Stoicism for Marston’s resonances is to de-emphasise his more immediate sense of loud theatricalism and self-conscious parody" (2000, p19), he appears to be engaging with the Antonio plays in isolation, rather than considering how these plays emerged from a multifaceted satirical persona, and inaugurated ongoing engagements with Seneca and Stoicism that would mature throughout Marston’s dramatic career as a whole. I have argued that Marston’s method, from his verse satire to subsequent stage drama, has been to juxtapose the serious with the trivial. As such Marston’s more pronounced satirical critique, through Juvenal, typically coincides with Horatian jibes in his verse satire, and underpins dramatic irony and sincere philosophical inquiry in his drama.

The previously noted narrow-minded suggestion that Marston is an amoral writer can be rightfully put to bed by reviewing Marston’s method for conflating Horace and Juvenal in his early satires – a schematic retained in subsequent dramatic works. Such reductive criticism is certainly a far cry from Francis Meres’ estimation of Marston as one of England’s preeminent satirists, and particularly unjust when one examines Marston’s development from satirist to satirist-dramatist holistically, and the way in which Marston’s satire not only persisted, but evolved
over the course of his dramatic œuvre. As I suggest in the first chapter of this thesis, Marston’s idiosyncrasies should not be thought to invalidate the moral purpose of his satire: to "unmaske the worlds detested sinnes" (158), as professed in *Certaine Satyres*. Marston levels criticism at a wide breadth of targets in his verse satire, though he has a particular fixation on patriarchy and disingenuous religious practice. In *Metamorphosis of Pigmalion’s Image* (1598), the Roman Catholic church is a manifest subject of derision:

    Looke how the peevish Papists crouch, and kneele,
      To some dum Idoll with their offering,
      As if a seeneles carued stone could feele
      The argo of his bootles chattering.       [sig. B1r]

This critique of "peevish Papists" kneeling before a "dum Idoll" with a presumably insincere "offering" is reminiscent of Antonio's fraudulent Stoic dedication in *Antonio’s Revenge*. In the aftermath of the Venetian senators' blessing of Antonio's honour as "religiously held sacred" (V.iii.127-128), Antonio proceeds to "close the last act of vengeance" by purging "hearts of hatred" (V.iii.153), and thus absolve himself of sin. Marston’s condemnation of contrived Catholic church practices and the patent hypocrisy of Antonio's Stoic pledge is indicative of an enduring strain of moral satire in drama. Antonio, as an anti-Stoic, is subjected to a thoroughly negative portrayal, so in this way Marston’s satiric censure is categorically derived from Juvenal. Moreover, in the case of Antonio, Marston’s observance of the Horatian ideal – "to teach and delight" – is apparent: the censure of Antonio as anti-Stoic coincides with the dramatic irony of his self-vindication. Horace is therefore drawn upon to delineate an instructive principle in irony, and as such, it is not sufficient to simply equate Marston with Juvenal.

Underestimating Marston’s penchant for satire – as contemporary criticism is
wont to do, preferring to concentrate strictly on Marston’s unusual dramatic aesthetics – has been a primary cause of critical misinterpretation, and has resulted in the treatment of Marston’s work as something of an oddity in Renaissance drama. In light of difficult sociological conditions resulting from the public ban on satire, Marston appears as nothing other than a shrewd and well-versed satirist, who drew inspiration from both Horace and Juvenal and sought to adapt his satirical aesthetic to suit the Jacobean stage. The ban sought to eradicate all literary works perceived to undermine political authority, which must have been a problematic situation for Marston to negotiate given his proclivity for Juvenal-inspired critique in his early satire. As Janet Clare argues, Marston’s career as a satirist and playwright was "unduly shaped by the exigencies of state controlled drama", and since libel in Marston’s day had inclusive terms of reference – "personal defamation" and "seditious discourse" – the position of the satirist was particularly vulnerable (2000, p195). One can deduce that Marston, unwilling to conform to regulatory suppression, was thus compelled to rework his satire into a new medium of expression: stage drama. *Antonio’s Revenge* bears witness to the continuation of Horatian and Juvenalian modes, through Marston’s satirising of broader cultural aspects of patriarchy and misogyny in tandem with a prevailing expression of dramatic irony. This is an ongoing trend throughout Marston’s dramatic works, and coincides with developing philosophical interests that ultimately usurp satire in *Sophonisba*. One can trace a trajectory from Marston’s early satire, in which he appears to more frequently engage with Juvenalian-inspired censure of patriarchy with intermittent digressions to Horace, alongside increasingly pronounced expressions of Stoic thought through the Horatian figures of Maria and Sophonisba in his later drama. Marston’s relation to Horace encompasses not only satire, but also art in general, and so he uses Horace to delineate his advocacy of Stoic philosophy by portraying
Sophonisba as an immaculate goddess figure. This would seem to indicate a reversal of Marston’s initial preference for Juvenal, to what is ultimately an inclination towards Horace, as his philosophic designs gradually take shape.

So it is from this standpoint – establishing Marston’s unification of Horace and Juvenal – that the first chapter of this thesis has endeavoured to reclaim *Antonio's Revenge* from its undeserved status as a morally erratic work of parody. Charles and Elaine Hallett condemn Marston’s resolution in *Antonio's Revenge* on that basis that "the revenger, having exceeded the limitation of human prerogative, must pay for his presumption ... Marston [must] adhere to the convention" (1980, p180), which falls in line with Fredson Bowers’ assertion in *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* that "no slayer in Elizabethan drama escaped some penalty, and that penalty was usually death" (1971, p124). These are patently misleading sentiments that many literary critics accept at face value. Such criticism is far too quick to pass judgement on Marston, who is likely to be very much in the process of exploring his dramatic aesthetic – at the very least, a responsible critical analysis should afford Marston the benefit of appraising the work as a very early, and highly experimental, foray into stage drama. The assumption that Antonio and his troupe are crowned

\[
\text{I’ll lead Hieronimo where Orpheus plays,} \\
\text{Adding sweet pleasure to eternal days.} \quad \text{(IV.v.23-24)}
\]

Furthermore, Horatio’s blessing of Hamlet in the closing act of Shakespeare’s play implies that his soul is bound for heaven:

\[
\text{Now cracks a noble heart.} \\
\text{Good night, sweet prince,} \\
\text{And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!} \quad \text{(V.ii.355-357)}
\]

Thus, it is somewhat unreasonable to suggest that Marston alone defies convention, as per the Hallets’ claim.

\[\text{\small 55 Though the idea that Antonio is portrayed as heroic is in itself misguided, revengers have in fact been martyred in death elsewhere: at the end of Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1589), the Ghost of Andrea declares that Hieronimo will find peace in Elysium:} \]

\[
\text{I’ll lead Hieronimo where Orpheus plays,} \\
\text{Adding sweet pleasure to eternal days.} \quad \text{(IV.v.23-24)}
\]

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\]
heroes at the play’s end would seem to negate the play’s satiric allusions to the blood sacrifice God commands of Moses in Exodus. Furthermore, such criticism fails to recognise the ironic representation of Antonio as failed Stoic because *Antonio’s Revenge* is not appropriately examined here in context of Marston’s overall body of work, and as such subsequent meditations on Stoic philosophy that culminate in Marston’s Sophonisba goddess are altogether ignored.

As a result, one of the most overlooked aspects of Marston’s drama is his satirising of male Stoic figures, who fail resoundingly when tested against the stringent requirements dictated by Stoic philosophy. Even prior to Sophonisba, Stoicism appears to be contingent upon the feminine – most notably Maria in *The Malcontent*, as I have contended in the second chapter – and this too is an area critically undervalued. The common thought in current scholarship that the *Antonio* plays reveal Marston as a disbeliever of Stoicism is entirely short-sighted: rather, Antonio underscores the disdain with which Marston specifically treats his male Stoic candidates. Marston’s method for undermining his patriarchal anti-Stoics, particularly in *Antonio’s Revenge*, is to invoke Seneca. Typically, Marston does so to portray these figures in a wholly villainous light. What is striking about Marston’s engagements with Seneca is that not only does he to his source at specific moments, but also that his engagements are derived from Senecan figures who themselves are the antithesis of Stoic doctrine. Seneca, then, is recalled in an unusually satirical manner. Therefore, a great deal of the critical confusion regarding Marston’s line of inquiry into Stoicism in *Antonio's Revenge* is perhaps due to a preoccupation with Antonio’s survival. I contend that Antonio’s presumed reprieve demonstrates Marston’s method for dramatic irony, and furthermore suggest that philosophical contemplation is overlooked as the latent content of the work. Marston’s ridicule of patriarchy, by way of Antonio and his troupe, is more plainly evident than a sincere
interest in Stoic thought. This is therefore indicative of Marston’s satirical impulse proving stronger than his philosophical designs at this very early stage of his career.

Following the death of Elizabeth, however, Marston’s philosophical interests come into sharper focus, and coincide with a more precise satirical commentary through the figures of Maria and Malevole in *The Malcontent*. This play marks a transition from satirising general aspects of patriarchy and misogyny, to satirising Jacobean courtiers in specific, and notably coincides with the historical shift of Elizabeth’s passing and James I’s ascension to power. Malevole is a comical, and therefore ostensibly Horatian figure, however the fact that he is able to so easily manipulate and deceive his corrupt courtly peers lends his character a distinct Juvenalian quality. The virtuous and helplessly incapacitated Maria, meanwhile, would seem to be evocative of Elizabeth. Moreover, her situation draws a likeness to the Gloriana skull in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*. Malevole’s sole purpose in the play is to reinstate himself and Maria to the throne, the effect of which is twofold: the Jacobean court is purported to be brimming with fools, and Maria’s virtue, stemming from the Elizabethan tradition, is lauded in the process. In Maria, Marston finds a wholly autonomous proto-Stoic, who both stands against the "objectified woman" prevalent in the Jacobean aesthetic, and ushers in a new wave of nostalgia for the Cult of Elizabeth. As the second chapter of this thesis has argued, Marston’s satirical line of discourse on Stoic philosophy can be traced from the beginning of his dramatic career, and closely parallels a persistent longing for the female monarch. Maria not only foreshadows Sophonisba, but is also situated in direct opposition to the numerous mocking citations of patriarchy that permeate *The Malcontent*, and the extreme disdain with which Marston treats the court of King James. Marston’s interests in Stoicism and proto-feminism are advanced further through the Maria figure: so in this sense, philosophical meditations that had previously been obscured
by satire and dramatic irony in Antonio’s Revenge, are now afforded equal prominence to satire in The Malcontent.

This philosophical strain in Marston culminates in Sophonisba, whose chastity and virtuous disposition epitomises widespread public perceptions of Elizabeth at the time. As Philippa Berry writes in Of Chastity and Power (2003), Elizabeth's unmarried state "freed her from subordination to a husband", rendered her "idealised in courtly literature ... as the unattainable object of masculine desire", and permeated "an increasing sense of her capacity to elude or unmask masculinist manipulations" (p59-60). Similarly, Sophonisba, the self-proclaimed "faith pure, virgin wife, tried to my glory" (V.iii.103), is desirable and yet beyond the reach of Massinissa and Syphax. She is adept at using her "much enticing voice" (I.ii.215) and charming allurements to manipulate her suitors – which Syphax confesses causes his "strong blood" to boil (III.i.23) – in a way that bears a striking resemblance to Elizabeth's court exploiting an utterly romanticised image of her status as queen. According to Berry, the Cult's propagating of Elizabeth ensured that she would be identified as the "courtly conception of the chaste beloved" (p60), and this parallels Marston’s conception of the virginal Sophonisba goddess as philosophically united with the flawless Stoic.

What is also particularly intriguing about Sophonisba is the reversal of emphasis that takes place between satire and philosophy. Though Marston’s satirical method is still discernible in the work, the philosophical expression of Stoicism now usurps satire. Massinissa, I have argued, is an extension of the Antonio figure: he is proven unworthy of Sophonisba, and therefore unfit to fulfil the Stoic imperative, through a desperate desire to both overthrow Syphax and consummate the marriage. Though Massinissa is more self-aware than Antonio, and appreciative of what true Stoicism necessitates, his praise of Sophonisba merely emphasises his own
shortcomings. Syphax, meanwhile, tries and fails on two occasions to rape Sophonisba, and is ultimately tricked into sleeping with Erictho (V.i). So while the rivalry between Massinissa and Syphax emphasises their sexual appetites and bestial thirst for violence, Sophonisba remains impervious and true to Stoic virtue. Satire occurs at an individual level, then, in *Sophonisba*: both Massinissa and Syphax are subjected to a negative portrayal, from Juvenal, whilst Sophonisba's immaculate "goddess" form recalls Horace as an instructive example to be admired. Therefore, what had previously seemed dissonant or irreconcilable in *Antonio's Revenge* through competing elements of satire and philosophy, attains greater clarity in *Sophonisba* in an unambiguous expression of Stoic advocacy.

This thesis has proposed that the most compelling satirical and philosophical elements of Marston – his early adoption of a multifaceted satirical voice by way of amalgamating typically opposed classical sources, Horace and Juvenal, to the dramatic progression of Marston as a proponent of Stoic philosophy – have been under-explored in scholarship. A primary aim of this thesis has been to evaluate Marston holistically, and demonstrate a continuum of a unique satirical method in drama through the masks of Horace and Juvenal. By adopting an holistic approach, Marston's works are evocative of a judicious, and often severe, moralist, as many of his contemporaries were eager to report. As such, the implication that Marston completely abandons his moralist roots upon entering the world of the theatre, so readily accepted in present-day criticism that labels his drama "parody", is an argument for which there is little supporting evidence. A supplementary aim of this investigation, then, has been to reclaim Marston's reputation from derivative scholarly attitudes. Marston's drama is admittedly boisterous, often provocative, and brimming with sexualised imagery, though to dismiss even his early dramatic works as parody requires one to be entirely distracted by elements perhaps simply intended
to keep audiences amused. Furthermore, such criticism ignores any semblance of satirical latent content underneath Marston’s quintessentially metaphoric and ironic language. There are, in fact, many consistencies in Marston that steadily develop as his dramatic career progresses: Marston is unwavering in his denouncement of male courtiers and patriarchy; Marston liberates his female figures, often granting them a degree of autonomy and agency that elevates them beyond their male suitors; and most significant of all, Marston’s designs on Stoic philosophy coincides with a sincere nostalgia for the reign of Elizabeth. Thus, the evidence presented in this investigation advocates Marston as a sophisticated satirist and dramatist worthy of incisive scholarly examination.
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List of Works Cited – Chapter Two:


List of Works Cited – Conclusion:


Author/s:
Montague, Tee

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