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Misrule and Reversals

Carnavalesque Performances in Christopher
Marlowe's Plays



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Contents:

I. Theoretical Part:

1. Introduction.....	8
2. Defining Misrule and Reversals.....	34
3. Defining Carnival. Critical Approaches to Carnival.....	42
3.1. Carnavalesque Shows as Transitory Delusions and Reassurances of Authority.....	42
3.2. Carnival as an Agency of Resistance and Permanent Loss of Social Cohesion.....	50
4. Bakhtin`s Carnavalesque and Carnival.....	59
5. Carnival and Laughter.....	70

II. Carnavalesque Performances:

6. Carnavalesque Performances and Laughter in <i>Doctor Faustus</i>	79
6.1. Carnavalesque Clowns and Laughter.....	85
6.2. Inversion and Misrule. The Downward Trajectory of the Devil Invocation.....	95
6.3. The Carnavalesque Pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins. Corporeality and Feasting.....	110
6.4. Disturbance of Solemnity. Solemn Rituals and Laughter.....	120
7. The Imperial Sublime and Subversive Blasphemy. Violence and the Carnavalesque. Laughter in <i>Tamburlaine the Great</i>	133
7.1. Mingling of Kings and Clowns.....	142
7.2. Devaluation of Symbols of Royal Power.....	152
7.3. Gluttonous Banquets and Pageants.....	160
7.4. Tamburlaine`s Disguises.....	170

8. <i>The Jew of Malta</i> . Faces of Deceit. Carnavalesque Revenges and Counterfeit Professions.....	184
8.1. Parody and Counterfeit Professions. License for Scapegoating.....	190
8.2. Masking and Cross-dressing. Tricksters' Disguises.....	206
8.3. Anti-celebratory Feasting and Cannibalistic Images of Consumption.....	223
8.4. The Mock Resurrection. Performing Death as Parody. Tragedy as a Farcical Event.....	227
9. The Grotesque Body of Carnival. Forces of Debasement and Masquerade in <i>Edward the Second</i>	236
9.1. Carnavalesque Shows and a Carnivalized Court.....	236
9.2. The Death Scene and the Grotesque Body of Carnival.....	258
10. Conclusive Thoughts.....	270
11. Bibliography.....	275

Tempting images of pleasure and reward,
 inducement of illusionary faces
 with restraints paid no regard,
a carnival of both impervious resistance and appeasement,
a clandestine door within the self-opened with no reconciliation,
 an entertainment of authority figures,
 a compliance with a shade of liberation,
 a release from inflexible meaning setting fantasies free,
undressing restricting robes and conflicting roles to play,
 what remains behind the mask nobody knows-
 neither incarceration, nor freedom as the perplexity grows,
power and selves become transformed in a burlesque theatre of wicked passion,
a circus of perfumed identities and imitations-the self as fashion,
 strange impersonations and pleasure to act
the true meaning of masquerade- an unresolved secret-a fact,
 death, life and resurrection,
 a violation of taboos,
 transmission of power,
a king as clown and a clown as a king
 all enacted with perfection...

I.Theoretical Part:

1.Introduction

Carnival produced symbolic imagery and had one of the greatest influences on European culture and comic drama. There cannot be a universal interpretation of carnival as it employs a set of images of its own that are independent of any particular social function they perform. Carnival creates a space for creativity and permutations as it mocks the established, the old, and the authoritarian and turns it upside down by stimulating new meanings, social commentaries and interpretations. Popular and elite festive practices which flourished on the early modern streets and at court remained vibrant on the Renaissance stage when playwrights appropriated folkloric, performative materials including jiggging, slap-stick comedy and puppet shows for dramatic purposes (Agnew 1986, 26). As Muir emphasizes, during the Renaissance carnival came to be transformed from a truly universal festival with mass participation into one in which different forms of entertainment proliferated. On the other hand, the proliferation of commercial entertainment in the form of theatrical performances and spectators supplanted collective festive participation. Carnival language derives its vocabulary from the human body and its processes. „Understanding the syntax of the body as it was constructed in Carnival helps explain how a festival could dramatically shift from creating a sense of community to destroying it through violence“(Muir, 2005, 86). The word “carnival” literally means “carne-vale” and can be translated as “farewell to the flesh”. Michael Schoenfeldt provides this useful gloss for the term “carnival” in his study *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (Schoenfeldt 1999, 14). The carnival season extends from Advent to Lent and includes Christmas, New Year, Twelfth Night, and Mardi Gras known as Shrove Tuesday in Protestant England. Feast days that were celebrated in early modern England included Saint George`s Day, May Day, Whitsuntide, Saint Bartholomew`s Day, Michaelmas, and Halloween among others. Spring and summer festivals included morris dancers wearing painted masks (Hutton 1996, 81-82). Francois Laroque observes how Christmas rituals in early modern England also included mummers`folk plays and court masques. The term “mumming” refers to the wearing of a festive mask or disguise and derives from the Greek word “mommo”, meaning “mask”. Thus mummers frequently wore animal head masks, skins, horns, creating grotesque, hybrid figures (Laroque 1991, 48). Ronald Hutton describes in *Stations of the Sun* how the term “momerie” first appeared in Britain in the 13th century and by the 16th century the folk practice of mumming had contributed to the development of the masque featuring masked performers, a genre most prominent at court and other elite, private

settings with aristocratic audiences (Hutton 1996, 11-12). Temporary misrule, role reversals, and disguises were recurring practices during the space and time of carnival in early modern England. Masks, cross-dressing, and elaborate, hybrid costumes were common. Processions that included horse drawn floats and other forms of pageantry were essential during this carnival season as well:

Performances of play, mummery, dancing, and elaborate spectacles such as masques at court were often central. Parodies of religious or political figures, burlesques, and farce were abundant during ritualized, seasonal occasions, as were forms of “billingsgate”, a Bakhtinian term referring to curses, scatological jokes, and comic tricks often instigated by the folkloric figure of the trickster (Vaught 2012, 5).

Jennifer Vaught further observes in her study *Carnival and Literature in Early Modern England* that carnivalesque, grotesque and parodic motifs particularly relevant to the subject of carnival are not only limited to those associated with a sacred or secular occasions during the festive calendar. The word carnivalesque means characteristic or of the style of carnival season. The term is associated with misrule and describes literary works and cultural history artefacts that foreground excessive bodily indulgences or forms of transgression beyond normal boundaries or limits. Vaught explores how carnival tellingly responds to issues about the monarchy and its weakening authority, the aristocracy and its diminishing monetary power and the increasing number and sway of the merchant and labouring ranks. In Vaught’s opinion, carnivalesque motifs and episodes exhibit grotesque and parodic aspects. The term “grotesque” refers to the intermingling of people and animals in a fantastic or bizarre way, or a literary figure or style exhibiting comic distortion or exaggeration and is ludicrous, strange and absurd (Vaught 2012, 6). Stuart Hall argues that “the carnivalesque...represents a connection with new sources of energy, life, and vitality- birth, copulation, abundance, fertility, excess” (White and Hall, 1993, 7). According to another scholar of the subject of carnival Chris Humphrey, the word carnivalesque refers to “art or activities which convey a sense of copiousness, abundance, or transgression, from ancient times through to the present day” (Humphrey 2001, 3). Bakhtin describes parody, another common feature of carnival, as a “double-voiced discourse” which provides the opportunity for challenging and undermining dominant, authoritative voices (Bakhtin 1968, 324). While both carnival and theatre engage in the confounding of differences, the blurring of moral distinctions, the counterfeiting, the violations of vestimentary order, the breaking and contaminating of accepted

boundaries of hierarchy and gender, and finally the promiscuous creation of a mass heterogeneous audience, the relationship between Carnival and the carnivalesque and the early modern theatrical stage is an intricate one worth discussing. Renaissance festivity became an antagonistic medium. It questioned the place of authority within society through its cyclical return and catharsis, and it mediated the voice of the popular masses and the mutations it contributed to the system of authority (Coronato 2003, 7). Coronato argues that “the censorship and reformation of carnival all over the continent occurred roughly at the turn of the sixteenth century” (Coronato 2003, 26). Yet he contends that theatre offered favourite ways of assessing how literature re-adapts festivity despite sustained reformist efforts to contain and curtail its celebration in England (Coronato 2003, 38).

Renaissance festivity changed. Renaissance England and its literature had a complex relationship to the traditions of carnival and its culture. While it had been a concrete social reality in the Middle Ages, it gradually disappeared in the Renaissance in a period which experienced a religious transition. As Peter Burke observes in his study *Popular Culture* there was a gradual withdrawal of the elite from participation in popular culture and the emergence of an increasingly rigid divide between both poles of cultural practice (Burke 1978, 178-204). Francois Laroque observes how the Renaissance as a whole and the Elizabethan Age in England were indissolubly linked with the notion of periodic celebration and rejoicing and thus the age was pervaded with the spirit of festivity (Laroque 1991, 4).

Carnival heralded the liberation from the constraints of the civic year and religious law by diverting people from the everyday world and obedience towards established codes. Carnival obeys the logic of antagonistic iconoclasm, couched in the utopian reconciliation of joyous abundance. In Bakhtin`s view it is founded on collective, redeeming laughter as a possible redemption from submission and its rationale is the material bodily principle and the concept of grotesque realism which regenerates through destruction, both denies and affirms and simultaneously portrays old and new time. Bakhtin`s carnival provides an intuition of the individual as existentially free, unique and unpredictable, hence impossible to understand, and plays a heuristic role in retracting the collapse or merging of hierarchical distinctions within society, ultimately outlining the basic commonality of human experience (Coronato 2003, 36). It becomes problematic to trace specific representations and rituals in the Renaissance period as these transgressive customs of uncrowning and inversion or the ridiculing of authority were gradually curtailed and removed from the public sight. The Renaissance accused carnival and other medieval festivities, especially highly influenced or part of the Catholic calendar, of being the degeneration of ancient festivities that had no place in Protestant culture or

religious calendar. The relation between the culture of the early modern playhouse and the traditional Carnival rites and carnivalesque practices is examined by Michael Bristol in *Carnival and Theater*. He points out that spectacle, pageantry and public gatherings in the streets and village squares in Renaissance England were of primary importance because they were capable of affecting large numbers of people in a reasonably short time, and because they could leave a memorable impression on their audiences:

masks and *dramatis personae* of Carnival and other popular festive forms were the preferred medium of communication for the common people, since these anonymous public forms offered a way to express unauthorized political opinions and suggestions with little risk of penalty (Bristol 1985, 57).

Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter argue in *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* that “carnival masking did not belong solely, or even chiefly, either to the popolani or to the aristocracy or authorities. Either end of the spectrum might at times dominate or appropriate it”. Carnival inversions included masks that featured long, phallic noses, cross-dressing, elaborate, hybrid costumes of wild men and women and animals. Processions presented horse-drawn floats and various kinds of pageantry (Twycross and Carpenter 2002, 61). The question whether stage spectacles of the early modern theatre operate in continuation, in complementarity or substitution of the banned carnivalesque practices in the social space is a salient point which has to be put to discussion. According to Bristol, “in Renaissance England, however, the theater objectified and recreated broadly dispersed traditions of collective life that were also represented and disseminated through anonymous festive manifestations such as Carnival” (Bristol 1985, 3-4). The relationship between the newly founded institution of the theatrical stage in the early modern period and the practices of inversion and reversals of carnival is an interesting one. The period from the 1558 to the end of the reign of Charles I saw the passage of 84 years during which the theatre was transformed and the drama startlingly expanded and diversified. In the early years of the Elizabeth`s reign groups of players performed where they could, occasionally indoors in halls to provide entertainment at court, or in great houses, but more frequently in public in the square or rectangular yards of a number of inns. The civic authorities generally showed hostility to players, whom they saw as nuisance, promoting crowds and disorder, and distracting people from their proper occupation. 1567 was a highly significant moment in the development of the English professional theatre with the beginnings of secular commercial theatre and professional playwrights. This

newly founded institution though aroused not only interest but was feared as a source of moral contamination. Play-going was believed to encourage idleness, licentiousness and disorder. Players had an ambiguous position in society as they could be rogues, vagabonds or even beggars or licensed retainers of aristocratic households. Therefore, the relationship between the stage and the state was bifold (Clark 2007, 1-6). The new commercial institution of the early modern theatre was concerned with issues of power and authority which were as important for the theatrical stage as spectacle for the state. The evolution of the early modern system of social rank and degree was inextricably bound up with the changing pattern of economic development and the more and more diverse and fluid system of social hierarchy. Matters of social rank became important as well as the tension between the emerging new classes and the old aristocracy. London of the 1560s saw the year of theatre-building and play-performing. The medieval period was rich in varied forms of drama much of which was entirely bound up with the folk traditions of an agrarian society. Drama of the medieval period dealt with Christian notions of death and resurrection that owed something to pre-Christian traditions celebrating the cycle of changing seasons. The new early modern plays also showed an awareness of these older traditions and incorporated them into the new work. Until that point, plays had been performed in halls, market places, inn yards or baiting arenas. In 1567 the Red Lion Theatre opened in Whitechapel, the Southwark's Rose in 1587, the Swan Theatre in 1595 and the Globe in 1599 (Barker and Hinds 2003). Plays drew attention to the fact that they are mere plays, but at the same time expressed anxieties and discontinuities which were inevitably produced in a historical period of unprecedented change.

Theatre might be interpreted as a continuation of popular festive activity in which the social purpose as well as the playful atmosphere of other popular sports and pastimes sustained. The public playhouse, then, must be considered a politically significant *mise-en-scene*, where the energy and initiative of collective life are forcefully manifested in texts, in performance convention, and in the reception and appreciation of theatrical spectacle:

Renaissance drama is important in that it invites consideration of forms of collective life and of subjectivity other than those proposed and legitimated by a hegemonic culture. For the first few decades of its existence, the public playhouse of Elizabethan England was not yet fully differentiated from more dispersed and anonymous forms of festive life, play and mimesis... Theater and popular festivity were closely related forms of social life, neighboring institutions with similar orientation and similar economic practice (Bristol 1985, 4).

As Bristol puts it, Carnival is a heuristic instrument of considerable scope and flexibility. Though it is a festive and primarily symbolic activity, it has immediate pragmatic aims, most immediately that objectifying a collective determination to conserve the authority of the community to set its own standards by appropriate means:

At the same time Carnival is a form of resistance to arbitrary imposed forms of domination, especially when the constraints imposed are perceived as an aggression against the customary norms of surveillance and social control. It is, finally, an idiom of social experimentation, in which utopian fantasies are performed and collective desires for a better life are expressed. These objectives are realized through the characteristic expressive features of Carnival, which include masquerades that take the form of travesty and misinterpretation, stylized conflict and agonistic misrule, and utopian imagery of unlimited material abundance and social peace. But the secular orientation of Carnival should not be regarded as an instance of historical desacralization of practices that initially retained a religious significance. Despite the saturation with temporal concerns, Carnival in early modern Europe belongs to a social world where everything is invested with a sacred character, but only intermittently (Bristol 1985, 52).

Festivals typically combine solemn and stately formalities, as Bristol stresses, with a suspension of some of the ordinary rules of social life:

Both formalities and informalities are playful in that they contrast sharply with the routines of ordinary practical life, and yet it is clear that the play element has a serious, perhaps a sacred purpose, even in the most secularized societies (Bristol 1985, 26).

One of the most famous actual depictions of Carnival and Lent is Bruegel's painting *The Battle between Carnival and Lent* in which the ambivalent and enigmatic ugliness of both figures of Carnival and Lent is evident as both are depicted as equally grotesque and pathetic. Although *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent* does make use of a number of simple binary oppositions-fat and thin, butcher and fishmonger, beef and herring, colourful clothing and black clothing-the formal rule relating the two terms is not a juxtaposition of mutually

exclusive categories. The battle is thus between two equally and complete images:

The fat-bellied, cheerfully gluttonous figure of Carnival represents the “abundance of the material principle” generated by social labor-production, destruction or consumption, and reproduction. But Carnival has an abstract and orderly aspect as well, the imagery of production implying principles of social discipline and the regulation of social conduct...The severe and abstemious figure of Lent is, on the other hand, primarily an image of social discipline and regulation, the embodiment of rules of abstention and the prohibition of physical pleasures (Bristol 1985, 77-78).

Ghose also includes the painting of Brueghel in her article “Shakespeare and Laughter”. She emphasizes the dichotomy of carnival and Lenten periods. While Carnival is personified as a potbellied Falstaffian figure, bursting out of his colourful clothes and is seated on a barrel surrounded by people selling pancakes, singing, performing and eating, Lent is depicted as an old woman dressed in black, carrying fish (Ghose 2002, 37).

The relation between Carnival, language and the theatrical stage of the early modern period is an intricate one that needs to be explored. Discussions about the theatre and the structure of authority were present in Renaissance England. The theatrical stage with its ambivalent status was certainly exposed to a heated public debate and subjected to a continuing stream of criticism and interference from different authorities. Nevertheless, exactly this theatrical stage created a special space that enabled the voicing of contentious issues and the reading of controversial matters from different perspectives. The theatre gave audiences a way of thinking about things conflicting with authority (Dillon 2006, 138). Was theatrical activity of the early modern period surveyed in a similar way as carnivalesque practices were? Theatre of that time was not only connected to public entertainment but also to the fear of contagion and mingling, the disturbing of social discipline, the spread of blasphemy and immoral behaviour or even the danger that dramatic images might not remain only dramatic but also influence social conduct and certain behaviour in the public. It is true that diverse and heterogeneous people were mingled both in the early modern theatre as well as in carnival, but the question is whether the carnivalesque crowd involved in masquerade and carnival can be fully compared to the actors and audience involved in a theatrical spectacle:

The playhouses were subjected to a virtually constant stream of criticism and official interference from various social and ideological communities.

Officers of the Crown conducted an uneasy surveillance of theatrical activity and were obliged to suppress performances from time to time out of an evident fear of seditious utterance (Bristol 1985, 107).

In Bristol's opinion, theatre creates an ambiguous temporal situation outside the schedules of work and religious devotion, it disrupts time and represents a sort of anachronism as narrative time contradicts the authority of the calendar:

The playhouse is not simply a theatre in which literary heteroglossia is performed, but an actual heteroglot institution in which the exchange of experience crosses every social boundary, and the diversity of speech types traverses the genres of literature and of authoritative discourse (Bristol 1985, 122).

The English Reformation affected crucially the Old Catholic calendar which was changed and purged. Recriminations were made as castigation of excesses and the abandonment of spiritual duties in favour of the satisfaction of desire and appetite was condemned. Thus the Renaissance festival was not quite the same as the medieval one after the break up with the medieval religion and the suppression of the traditional cult of saints, which led to the simplification and reduction of the feast days. Great religious festivals of the Catholic calendar were banned and obliterated from the public. Expression of extrovert religious feeling demonstrated in the streets was replaced by the encouragement of a religion of more austere and individual nature. This was expressed in a movement away from demonstrative religious manifestations and the relocation of more grandiose festive occasions. All of this does not mean that popular beliefs, pagan superstitions and ancient magical beliefs ceased to exist but rather continued with a persistent vitality and pagan veneration was not completely forgotten. As Francois Laroque points out, especially in rural regions, magical beliefs and folklore continued to co-exist without clashing with piety and Christian reverence. Festivals had the amazing power to trigger and re-awaken collective memory. Festivities such as carnival were linked to vulgarity, excessive laughter, cruelty and even violence by Protestant religion as they were closely associated with paganism, distraction from players and the neglecting of religious duties. There was a wave of nostalgia for popular culture in the Elizabethan period, in which laughter, the urge to turn the world upside-down, irreverence and the grotesque were all moving forces, represented a reaction against the rising tide of gravity and efforts to purge religion of all frivolous and

folkloric excrescent.” Now the lewd, cruel, cheerfully obscene laughter of the clown was increasingly unacceptable to the more refined social strata and those moving in that direction” (Laroque 1991, 41). In Jennifer Vaught’s opinion the rise of the market economy as well as Puritanism in early modern England radically altered elite and popular festive customs and habits, which were frequently appropriated by rulers and the well-to-do for conservative, repressive purposes during the 17th century. As part of the emerging cult of decorum shaped by Puritanism, members of this sect condescendingly viewed laughter, which was a key aspect of theatre clowning and holiday jests, as the property of children, women and common people:

Yet melancholic rhetoric lamenting the loss of Merry England and the suppression of its annual, communal festivities often veiled elitist impulses to restore a rigid, social hierarchy that was based upon traditional estates of ranks and that largely privileged landowning, titled aristocrats (Vaught 2012, 16-17).

The foundations of Elizabethan society were insecure from the beginning of the period to the end. Its cohesion was due in large measure to the continued threat of invasion and to the harsh repression of internal dissent (Mac Alindon 1994, 3). The more fervent representatives of the Reformation were even deeply hostile to theatricality and eloquence, associating them with the delusive arts of the devil and the showiness of Roman Catholicism. Whereas the humanists emphasized the dignity of human nature and man’s capacity to win salvation for his soul through reason and divine revelation, Calvin and Luther preached the utter degradation of fallen human nature and the total incapacity of mortals to save themselves from the damnation that they so thoroughly deserve. Whereas humanists regarded human beings as free to choose what they will become, Luther and Calvin saw them as miserable creatures in bondage to Satan and the law and instead that those who are released from such bondage owe their liberation to the entirely unmerited gift of divine grace. The central doctrine of the reformed church was justification by faith: works implicitly associated with the prescribed rituals of the Catholic Church accomplish nothing; only faith in divine grace can save the soul from eternal punishment. This humbling doctrine was closely tied to the terrifying doctrine of election, according to which God, in his unfathomable justice, has predestined from the beginning those who will be saved and those who will be damned. The political troubles of Elizabeth’s reign, and most of the bitter constraints endured by her subjects, are bound up with the effects of the Reformation. Elizabeth inherited a nation confused and divided after the committed Protestantism of Edward’s reign (1547-1553) and the

relentless Catholicism of Mary's reign (1553-1558). As the head of the established Church she sought to achieve a unifying compromise between the old and the new but could satisfy neither the Catholics nor her own radical co-religionists. Meanwhile, Puritans contended that the church had yet to cleanse itself of its residual popery. Rites and ceremonies, all that theatrical display, had to be abolished and the same was valid for the hierarchical mode of government embodied in episcopal rule. The full coercive power of the state was brought to bear on dissenting Protestants. Incompliant bishops and clergy were suspended, sentences of exile and even death could be passed on those who refused to attend church, and parliamentary discussion of religious matters was forbidden (MacAlindon 1994, 6-7).

Ethan H. Shagan is another scholar who examines the process of the Reformation in his study *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*. He stresses the importance and pervasiveness of religion and faith in the sixteenth century in Europe. Religion could be found everywhere, not only in churches and liturgies, but in financial transactions, legal proceedings and scientific treaties:

By destabilizing traditional religion, the Protestant Reformation sent violent shock waves through even the most seemingly stable communities and institutions. As old certainties were questioned, old loyalties tested and old practices undermined, the Reformation seemed to dissolve the glue that held together the familiar coherence of the social world (Shagan 2003, 1).

He also observes that if religion permeated every aspect of 16th century experience, this implies that religion itself was not a rigid or self-contained sphere but rather was structured through its interactions with the culture in which it was imbedded. Shagan sees the Reformation as a process in which politics and spiritual change were irrevocably intertwined but the battle between two incommensurate worldviews forced to the forefront the issue of authority and obedience within the church as every belief and practice had to be interrogated of upon what basis that belief or practice was held. It began in the late 1520s when ecclesiological issues first began to impact people's lives through Henry VIII's divorce, his attack on the clergy and his break with Rome. The Reformation brought enormous changes in how English people imagined the Church, the relationship between Church and State and the meaning of their religious practices. In 1534 Henry VIII was endowed with the authority of supreme head of the Church of England and thus papal authority was overthrown. All of that made also a way for dissention and violence, iconoclasm

and destruction, numerable disputes within the communities and radical challenge to all forms of faith.

Religious change occurred not simply in the adoption of new doctrines, but in the acceptance of new political partnerships between traditionalists and heretics; in the creation of links between evangelical theology and agrarian grievances; in the financial “investment” by even humble peasants and artisans in the dissolution of monasteries and chantries; in the growing acceptance of religious division rather than religious unity as the foundation of the political order... (Shagan 2003, 308).

The turmoil between the conflicting Catholic and Protestant religions created difficulties in the individual formation of faith, specifically where contradictory beliefs such as predestination and the view of afterlife emerged. Mendel also observes how the average person living at the time had to decide whether or not to accept the new notions of Protestantism and discard many of the old practices of Catholicism (Mendel 2008, 28).

Before further exploring the question of what sort of carnivalesque spectacles and elements are pertinent in Marlowe’s plays, it will be interesting to briefly sum up some of the interpretations of carnival and the carnivalesque in relation to other famous playwrights of the early modern period. An impressive amount of literature has already been devoted to Shakespeare and Carnival. Bakhtinian treatment of his plays is presented in critical works such as Siemon’s *Word Against Word: Shakespearean Utterance*, Stallybrass and White’s *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* and Knowels’s *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*. Francois Laroque and Phebe Jansen deal with Elizabethan and Jacobean texts in terms of festivity and focus on Shakespeare. Clownish appearances such as Feste in *Twelfth Night* or the representation of carnival misrule in the persons of Toby, the gull, the clown and the mischievous servant Malvolio as Lent are familiar too. Especially the contrasting world of Carnival and Lent has been put to discussion in many critical studies. This confrontation between Carnavalesque and Lenten principles, the transgressive rescheduling of the normal order of day and night typical of Carnival and other forms of misrule is pertinent in *Twelfth Night*, but the battle of carnival and Lent is an explicit structuring device in the two parts of *Henry IV* too in the image of Falstaff and his revelling of the kitchen, disturbance of the household order and perpetual eating and drinking, his disrespect of time, place and person are typical features of Carnival, and thus he is the perfect representation of a festive persona. The clash between Malvolio and Sir Toby is a clash between time order and disorder

similar to the time of Carnival and the other time of the year that belongs to certain codes and norms. Like Carnival he is an ambivalent and grotesque figure, and the language that Bakhtin identifies as belonging to the lower bodily stratum in which degraded excremental images coexist with images of the digestive organs that consume food in the play (Bristol 1985, 205). It is not only the feasting, indulgence and licentiousness that is pervasive and signalling of carnival rituals in Shakespeare's plays but also the principle of mockery and the struggle between rule and misrule as in *Hamlet*. Claudius is interpreted as a carnivalesque Lord of Misrule, indulging in drinking bouts and indiscreet public foundlings, making a mockery of kingship by appearing in public in the robes of the real king, and thus becoming an object of derision. His coronation and marriage are an occasion of Carnival mirth (Bristol 1985, 208).

In the tradition of popular pageantry, material abundance is represented as a direct relationship between consumption and production. Rank and status, the categories of vertical social structure, are retained, but hierarchical placement is established in accordance with the principles of material life and domestic order (Bristol 1985, 67-68).

Carnival remained an ambiguous site in Shakespeare's drama:

Indeed, it took up familiar, recurring calendrical cycled and customs while simultaneously opening transgressive spaces, with its unruly wives, rebellious children or threatening strangers that all seemed likely to put the social and sexual hierarchies upside down (Laroque 2011, 204).

Laroque further observes how carnival is endowed with a double face, a bright and a dark one, and Shakespeare seems to have been interested by this form of ambivalence and contrariety. Shakespeare also freely refashions and reconfigures familiar types, stock figures and plots which he inserts in different contexts and perspectives and this liberty and apparent absence of rules and the art of restoring to a number of open-ended structures is close to the living world of carnival with its encouragement of improvised speeches, its satirical gibes and grotesque humour, its use of disguise which provided so many variations on the comedy of errors paradigm (Laroque 2011, 205-206).

Ben Jonson is another playwright who included images and symbols of carnival and the carnivalesque in his plays. His theatre allows for an original

interpretation of the grotesque as a formal culture of antithesis and opposition including carnival. He presents an adaptation of the Renaissance poetics of festive redemption in his play *Epicoene*, discusses the function of the eye of the ruler and the visual poetics of carnival in *Bartholomew Fair*, and the Renaissance contrast and tradition between Carnival and Lent in *The Staple of News*. Jonson's masques also offer quite rewarding case studies by way of the relation with Rabelais's antithesis between nature and anti-nature in *Pleasures Reconciled to Virtue*. According to Coronato, Jonson's plays divest the premises of Bakhtin's carnival of their folkloric and political drive and enhance the form of the grotesque. Jonson examines how language could become disintegrated from stable meanings and the expression of truth, incorporates patterns between conflict and resolution and images of feasting and fasting (Coronato 2003, 9).

Phebe Jensen discusses in her study *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* how the process of secularization was not completed quickly in Renaissance England and neither were the theological issues of the Reformation or the disagreements over the religious transgressiveness of traditional festive practices fully settled. Festivity provides a particularly useful way to investigate the intersections, inconsistencies, retrenchments in matters of faith and belief since traditional pastimes were from the beginning of the Reformation associated with religious controversy (Jensen 2008, 4-5). Furthermore, festivity continued to be religiously controversial throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods as Ronald Hutton's *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* shows (Hutton 1994). The overall success of efforts to secularize festivity should not mask the fact that traditional pastimes continued to have religious associations, both positive and negative, in early modern England. Jensen emphasizes how there was a continued association between traditional pastimes and Catholic superstition. Thus the topic of festivity provides a way to explore Catholic culture and the intersection between Catholicism and Protestantism since changes in festive practices in the 16th century were part of the Protestant ideological break with the Roman church and since these activities continued to have devotional charge in certain contexts. "Since the main thrust of Reformation efforts to control festivity was to detach mirth from worship, the claim that the church encouraged these activities is particularly misleading, as it obscures the religious tensions that continued to surround such practices" (Jensen 2008, 11). When occurring in drama, representations of festivity were further complicated by the formal and historical relationship that existed between old-fashioned holiday ritual and the early modern professional theatre. The plays that represented maypoles, Morris dancers, country fairs, clowns, sheep-shearing festivals, bears, and other traditional pastimes, themselves had performative roots in what Louis Montrose describes as „the hodgepodge of popular entertainments: juggling and clowning, singing and miming, dancing

and fencing, cockfighting and bear-baiting” of traditional pastimes (Montrose 1996, 19). Robert Weimann and Robert Schwartz’s study *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition* provides an analysis of the formal interplay between festive play, ritual and drama. They argue that the festive spirit erupts in moments of non-representational action that recall the improvised energies of carnival, including that of the vice and clown of the medieval stage. Moments of ludic play associated with the playing space of the late medieval theatre, contrast with the formal, distanced, representational action identified with the locus of earlier playhouses (Weimann and Schwartz 1987). Festive energies on stage challenged the social and political orthodoxies of early modern England. Jensen points out in her study that, despite the fact that by the early 17th century festivity had been mostly cleansed of its popish associations and reconfigured from Protestant culture, anxieties about the popery of traditional pastimes continued to register in royal policy, rural practice and the controversial and popular literature of the reign (Jensen 2008, 20). The association between Catholicism and festivity stayed alive partly because it was embraced by the early modern recusant community. The Reformation attack on traditional pastimes was part of the larger project to purge the church of idolatrous rituals that detached from the worship of Christ through the word. The characteristic that most clearly distinguished late medieval from early modern festivity was that on the eve of reform, folk customs and secular pastimes were part of a larger cycle of religious celebrations connected to the liturgical year, and secular activities took place under its larger calendric umbrella (Jensen 2008, 26). Jensen further explores how customary pastimes had been detached from worship, taken out of the church yard and displaced from a traditional place in the old liturgical calendar or were re-configured to support the early modern stage instead of the church. In England on the eve of reform, the ritual year dictated that folk customs and traditional pastimes such as processions at Candlemas and Palm Sunday, Whitsuntide festivals, Corpus Christi celebrations and activities associated with Easter Week on Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Black Saturday and Easter Sunday punctuated and accompanied liturgical celebrations. That relationship between secular and sacred is clear also in the late medieval period in rituals such as Boy Bishop and the Lord of Misrule, hogging, disguising or mumming, and the performance of plays. The mystery plays were important expressions of lay devotion as well as of social and political relationships.

Late medieval festivity, then, can be seen as part of the larger cyclical celebrations of the Christian church year that included professionals, perambulations, church ales, church wakes, Plough Monday celebrations, foot-washing at Maundy Thursday, candlelight vigils, bell-ringing, and plays by travelling professional players, regional amateurs, and guilds (Jensen 2008, 28-

29).

There were ideological differences between Catholic and Reformed attacks on festivities and those differences defined attitudes towards festivities. At the Reformation, the state-mandated reduction in traditional festivity was part of the larger attack on images and ceremonies. The goal was to detach mirth from an association with religious observance. The Protestant Reformation explicitly identified the joining of the sacred and profane with Catholic practice though the Counter Reformation Catholic church would make similar efforts in suppressing popular culture. Traditional pastimes such as the Lord of Misrule continued but they were no longer part of the liturgical year (Cressy 1989, xi-xiv).

What was allowed to flourish in the Edwardian as well as the Elizabethan and Jacobean reigns was festivity that did not conflict with proper Protestant piety because it had been detached from its popish associations with late medieval ceremony, ritual, and image-and saint-worship, and served the Protestant cause. The nationalization of festivity was one particularly successful result of this general effort to detach mirth from worship:

Mainstream Church of England attacks on festivity, then, were originally part of the larger, iconoclastic attack on what was perceived as idolatrous Catholic practices...Since the attack on festivity was primarily engineered and upheld by the Church of England, it should not be assumed that Puritans were the only opponents of revelry in the period, nor were they alone in associating Catholicism with festivity (Jensen 2008, 32).

Huston Diehl reminds that Protestantism was not itself entirely hostile to ritual, showing that reformed attitudes toward, and anxieties about, ritual and theatre were also explored on the London stage (Diehl 1997, 11-37). What complicated the situation even more is the plays, even if they did not originate with the Catholic liturgical year, would be still considered as idolatrous because of origins in Greek and Roman pagan religious festivals and because the Catholic mass was defined as a piece of idolatrous theatre as well (Shell 2004, 36). The reform of festivity aimed its detachment from religious observance, pagan worship, idolatry, associations with late medieval Catholicism in a long process of secularization. By the 1590s, however, the ideological picture became even more complicated as there was an increasing nostalgia for the “merry England” which went along with the continuing decline of festivity (Hutton 1994).

Indira Ghose also discusses the reformation of manners, festivities and the changed perception towards laughter in Renaissance England partly

implemented by both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. But she also stresses the importance of other factors which played a role in the decline of popular festivity:

In England a sharp increase in poverty, fuelled by economic vicissitudes and a string of disastrous harvest failures, led to the formation of an underclass of masterless men consisting of vagrants and petty criminals, who might be regarded as a form of lumpenproletariat. The poor seemed to be posing a threat to the stability of society. A contemporaneous development was the growth in education and refinement for the elite. The focus of interest shifted to a culture of manners that increasingly gained in influence and prestige. The elite withdrew from popular culture and from their involvement in country pastimes, no longer providing large-scale hospitality to their retainers. It remains a moot point to what extent ideological factors or economic circumstances influenced the demise of popular festivity in the country. Certainly the transition to a market economy exerted pressure to reduce the number of holidays. This was related to attempts to impose a more rigorous labour discipline and adapt the population to conditions of proto-industrial production. At the same time the birth of a consumer society became apparent, with the concomitant beginnings of the commercialisation of leisure (Ghose 2008, 66).

Indira Ghose underlines how a new work ethic was instigated in Protestant thought and subsequently propagated by the reformers of the Counter-Reformation. Occasions of recreation were banished from their customary place within the institution of the established Church. What evolved from the suppression of festivity is the displacement of mirth on to what emerges as an incipient entertainment industry-the theatre. "Seasonal cycles of mirth were transmuted into a localized site of pleasure: carnival on a daily, if temporary basis" (Ghose 2008, 67). The early modern battle over laughter and festivity was not fought between an exuberant carnivalesque people and a Lenten disciplinary social order but the battle lines were drawn along lines of taste and decorum (Ghose 2008, 68). What can be traced is an increasing divide between elite and popular culture that historian detected as a major impetus in the early modern period.

The campaign to reform manners was spearheaded by precisely the same thinkers who propagandised the value of laughter and recreation...While they might applaud the value of recreation and pleasure, they frowned upon the

excesses of disorder, drunkenness, debauchery, and violence associated with popular festivals. Paradoxically it was the commercial theatre with its roots in festivity that reconciled the notions of pleasurable recreation and communality-by inventing the concept of commercial entertainment. This implied shifting the focus from laughter as a social corrective to laughter as playful diversion (Ghose 2008, 70).

Edward Muir suggests that carnival might be best understood in dramatic terms as the festival provided an occasion, the week or so before the beginning of Lent, and a stage, usually the market square and the streets of the town. Muir describes how the audience and participants of carnival mingled into a single carnivalesque crowd:

It supplied some of the characters, mimed by average citizens who dressed in costumes as wild men, giants, kings, peasants, Turks, or peacocks, in short, something other than what they were in daily life. There was, however, a great deal of ambiguity about who was on stage and who was in the audience; in fact, the roles could be completely interchangeable. There was considerable ambiguity about what a particular Carnival character or motif meant; it may be futile to try to determine the meaning of performances that had the unpredictability of all forms of play (Muir 2005, 100).

Jennifer Vaught provides one of the most recent studies on the subject of how dramatists appropriate carnivalesque materials that have enliven the streets, the theatrical stage and other entertainment venues. She examines how plays include clowns and tricksters, the mockery of Catholic or Lenten figures, masks, disguises, parades, and festive banquets, linking images in the plays to excessive feasting as in carnival. She examines the gastronomic and sadistic dimensions in some of Marlowe's plays, illustrates the ideologically malleable dimension of the trickster figure of the puppet and its adaptability as a signifier for radical and transgressive purposes or conservative and normative ends. Her study examines the incorporation of a variety of elite and popular festive elements ranging from cakes and ale, Morris dancing, jesters, role reversals, cross-dressing, ballads and puppet shows. Vaught argues that numerous figures in those plays exhibit degrees of social mobility, conflicts between diverse ranks which often erupt into violence. "...reactions to an increasingly fluid social hierarchy range from support to republican ideas of liberty; to ambivalence; to conservative opposition to a carnivalesque world turned upside down" (Vaught 2012, 21-22).

From that perspective, it is interesting to see whether similar carnivalesque images of feasting and fasting, of boisterous merrymaking and abstemiousness, of ridicule of mock authorities and images of body functions are present in Marlowe's plays too, or if there are different reverberations from festivities. As mentioned before, such celebrations after the Reformation were put into strict control and were viewed as part of the old forbidden faith which is to be subjected to abolishment and restriction by the newly founded Anglican Church. Which images and ghosts of Carnival and the carnivalesque are conjured up by Marlowe's plays from the old culture onto the newly founded theatrical institution?

This was the world which inspired his daring generic inventions in plays where laughter and terror, joy and disaster are constantly on each other's heels, thus making for the ebullient life, the energy and the exuberance that are among the hallmarks of Shakespeare's specific genius and extraordinary modernity (Laroque 2011, 219).

Carnival and the carnivalesque are the major topics of many studies. Wilson and Dutton write in *Shakespeare's Roman Carnival* that carnival was never a single, unitary discourse in the Renaissance, but rather a symbolic system over which continuous struggle to wrest its meaning was waged by competing ideologies (Wilson and Dutton 1992, 155). Peter Stallybrass and Allon White are more concerned with the question why a festive ritual that had virtually disappeared from European popular culture had taken on such an epistemological value. They interpret carnival as an analytic category, one instance of generalized economy of transgression and of recording of high and low relations across the whole social structure. Both authors discuss how carnival is presented by Bakhtin as the world of topsy-turvy, of heteroglot exuberance, of ceaseless overrunning and excess where all is mixed, hybrid, ritually degraded and defiled (Stallybrass and White 1986, 8). They show how there is a large and increasing body of writing which sees carnival not simply "as a ritual feature of European culture but as a *mode of understanding*, a positivity, a cultural analytic" (Stallybrass and White 1986, 6). Carnival in a wider context embraced many different festivities such as fairs, popular feasts and wakes, processions and competitions, comic shows, mummers, open-air amusements with costumes and masks, giants, dwarfs, monsters or trained animals (Burke 1978, 178-204). There was a gradual withdrawal from popular culture by the ruling classes and a gradual waning of rural feasts accompanied by the persecution of popular religion. The ruling class attempted to direct the

carnavalesque into the celebration of church and state and constructed carnival as a controlled misrule in a paternalistic move to provide a safety valve to more subversive energies. There are only scanty references to English festivity after the middle Ages. Continental Carnival was used to expose Catholic idolatry and to show that it is just one among the countless sins of the depraved Papists (Coronato 2003, 30). Francois Laroque underlines the ephemerality of festivity more at large, a protean phenomenon related to the domain of imaginary representations and he discusses the festive calendar of Shakespearean time. He also points out that a cold blast of censorship had frozen the glorious rituals of carnival well before Shakespeare's period. Furthermore, as Carnival digs and delves deeply into the millennial comic culture of the folk, the Renaissance accused it of being the degeneration of an ancient festivity rather than the regeneration of a utopian liberation. This paradigm of carnival as the degeneration of classical festivity is a popular one (Laroque 1991, 22-23). Bristol discusses how popular festive form celebrates and briefly actualizes a collective desire for a freer and more abundant way of life. "This desire is at once a forward-looking hopefulness and a memory of better times. Recollection of a golden age was an important element in the Roman Saturnalia, a winter festival during which masters served their slaves, in celebration of the reign of Saturn" (Bristol 1985, 88). Terry Eagleton is concerned with the function of carnival as a licensed affair:

Indeed carnival is so vivaciously celebrated that the necessary political criticism is almost too obvious to make. Carnival, after all, is a *licensed* affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art. As Shakespeare's Olivia remarks, there is no slander in an allowed fool (Eagleton 1981, 148).

This study will trace the presence of recurring carnivalesque, grotesque and parodic motifs such as temporary misrule, role reversals, disguises, masks, forms of pageantry and burlesques in Christopher Marlowe's plays *Doctor Faustus*, *Tamburlaine the Great Part 1 and Part 2*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward the Second*. Reversal in the Bakhtinian sense shares the logic of the inside out, of the turnabout, of a continual shifting from top to bottom; inversion in the oppositional nature of Carnival as overturning and unveiling the constant, utopian and grotesque abundance (Bakhtin 1968, 198). Carnavalesque transgressions involve rituals of reversal, topsy-turvydom, uncrowning and overturning. I would like to view in what kind of reversals and parodies do

Marlowe's dramatic characters persistently entangle and how do the texts play with the characters of the trickster and the clown. How far can disorder, anarchy and festive misconduct go in Marlowe's theatre?

I will address the spirit of revelry, the impermanence of social forms and the carnivalesque reversals and inversions enacted by the figures embodying carnival. Although the plays which I would like to consider are regarded as belonging to the genre of tragedy, the pure paradigm of tragedy of vice and retribution is not completely followed. The seriousness of the plays is often carnivalized by comic elements, figures of farce and heavenly labels are transferred onto grotesque shapes. Images symbolizing official pageantry and rituals or linked with authorities are irreverently assaulted, mocked and mingled with carnivalesque or grotesque counterparts. Furthermore, laughter and comic elements are incorporated into the tragedies and laughter comes from the margins of society, from members often oppressed, restricted and excluded from that society, or is aimed at figures at which it is blasphemous or inappropriate to laugh. Comedy in tragedy seems to be a suitable place to study the fleeting, transitory and fugitive dimension of human existence. One experiences a release and a permission to break the shackles of restrictive sociality and through satire expresses criticism at societal jurisprudence and law enforcement. Cultural rebels express challenges towards the status quo and advocate alterations to the social structure. Language becomes a comic tool and a tool for derision and satire. It is the joke and the one joking (both in the forms of hero and butt) that test the limits of "proper" sociability" (Ghose 2008, 17). The crucial effect of joking is to produce a brief mastery of the systems and thus comedy can offer a brief individual respite from social bonds in comic delusions. Comic vitality, the grotesque, the irrational, the carnivalesque and orderly disorder have a liberating potential. The revelling unites individuals into an undifferentiated mass breaking down individualized fear of death in celebration of the immoral life of the social unit. Comedy celebrates nature and attacks the arrogance of abstract reason (Ghose 2008, 104). Order and disorder comprise in a single unit. If there was a wave of nostalgia for popular culture, in which laughter, the turning of the world upside down, irreverence and the grotesque are moving forces, it will be interesting to examine the nature of popular excrescences in Marlowe's plays.

My study will explore the appropriations of carnival and the carnivalesque motifs in Christopher Marlowe's texts and examine how they might vary in their functions or relate to the debates over the preservative and normative or revisionary and transgressive agenda of carnival celebrations. Jennifer Vaught's study challenges more restrictive, binary understandings of carnival as either authoritarian suppressions of popular, rebellious energies by those at the top of the social hierarchy or as grassroots movements tied to social protest and liberation of folk and disempowered groups. She observes how:

celebrations of carnival can act as safety-valves that allow the lower ranks to vent discontent during a limited period of misrule that ultimately reinforces the status quo; alternatively, these festivities can lead to riots, rebellions, and other violent conflicts that address, expose, and critique social and economic practices that oppress the weak (Vaught 2012, 7).

The starting point in the analysis of carnival and the carnivalesque will be tied up to the definition of misrule and reversals and the subsequent meanings triggered by their incorporation in the plays. Misrule and reversals are part of carnivalesque festivities such as Boy Bishop, The Feast of Fools, May games and Corpus Christi and in “Defining Reversals and Misrule” I will discuss the key concepts connected to reversals and misrule and outline significant motifs and concrete practices of carnival and the carnivalesque. Carnival and masquerade could be defined and interpreted through different angles and I will provide some relevant critical approaches to the topics of the carnivalesque, the burlesque and masquerade in the following chapter “Defining Carnival. Critical Approaches to Carnival”. The approaches to masquerade and carnival can be presented as anything but homogenous or consistent. Viewing these critical approaches to carnival and masquerade, one can easily distinguish two contrary, often conflicting points of view through which these topics are interpreted and discussed. Although in some major points these contrary views may coalesce, they interpret carnival and masquerade either in terms of a beneficial repression, inspired by the anxiety of irresolution or variability, or a deliberate resistance towards all that is established as permanent, inalterable, or restricted. Despite the differences and contrasting points that these two approaches point out, omitting one of these ways of interpreting carnival and the carnivalesque would leave out some relevant arguments to understand the way in which carnival is viewed or could be viewed. Both approaches to carnival need to be discussed as carnivalesque shows could be both transitory delusions and reassurances of authority, but also subtle agency of resistance and renewal bringing with itself deliberateness in the violation of constraints and a permanent loss of the social cohesion. An important part will constitute the discussion of the diverse aspects of carnival in which the carnivalesque politics and functions of carnival and masquerade will be briefly pointed out. Carnival can be interpreted as a cycle or birth, death and resurrection of selves, shapes and identities. Following Bakhtin’s logic, this cycle implies obliteration and renewal, both creativity and destruction. Identity is being complicated and resolved, revealed and disguised, concealed and then reinforced and unmasked in a state in which two selves and

bodies coalesce and compress a hidden inner reality. Furthermore, the body in its physicality, grotesqueness and corporeal impulses becomes the centre of the carnival rites of festivity.

Carnival is also interpreted in terms of true nature as opposed to disguise, as inner reality in contrast to external reality, as the presence of surfaces and facades and a hidden meaning which needs to be revealed. Masquerade and carnival can also signify liberation and confinement, rebellion and conservative release. Similar to the clown involved in burlesque parodies, carnival performers signify the exuberant laughter of the mask and the bereft sadness in the restraints imposed by the inevitable carnival roles. I will also elaborate on the arguments connecting carnival to heterogeneity as it contaminates, corrupts and mingles different symbols. Moments of incontrovertible truth and permanence are complicated by the proliferation of contingent and arbitrary identities and roles, the exchange of selves and shape shifting, the negation of inalterable forms of existence and the unaccountability of a single identity. "Bakhtin's Carnavalesque and Carnival" will outline Mikhail Bakhtin's view on carnival and his interpretations of the carnivalesque in literature establishing some concepts such as "folk laughter" and "grotesque realism".

It is interesting to trace how Marlowe's characters indulge in sinful revelries as gluttony and lasciviousness; whether scenes demonstrate a close affiliation between carnival festivities and violations or irreverence as well as the interrelatedness between carnival and authority. Misrule and festive misconduct go along with carnival and it would be interesting to view whether they take the form of a permitted, restricted in time transgression or become extended into the experience of forbidden liberties and festive violence in everyday life. Profanity and sacred matters are both interrogated in carnivalesque performances and I would like to see how are secular interests and religious observance interrogated in Marlowe's plays. Recent approaches to Christopher Marlowe's plays and the topic of carnival and deception will be also examined. Do Marlowe's plays show persistence in the function of festivities in their reinforcing of social order and in the promotion of solidarity in communities, or do they reject the possibility of a social cohesion and go too far? Are his characters brought back into conformity with the established social discipline after the permission to reverse, and are the clowns absolutely unreflective and analytical about the mockery they are performing or do they pose important comments on such authorities? Transgression and violation often replace law and order, deference and disobedience are obliterated by irreverence and violation of restraints. A pervasive sense of misrule and disorder overshadows permanence and intractable stability. Marlowe's plays often make references to disguising and transformations. An overview and a selection of some relevant critical literature will provide a brief survey of some of the major points that come in this

discussion of Marlowe and carnival rituals. Carnival is indeed a time of festive abundance and overindulgence and the study will examine the plays for scenes which proliferate in such consumption, disruptive behaviour, and symbolic disorderly conduct. Which instances of disguise and festive processions, role-reversals and manifestations can be connected to both the theatrical and the carnivalesque? Public spectacle, display of rank and difference are staged in the plays. The question is whether the symbols of official spectacle and pageantry are used as an efficacious technique to promote social cohesion and social discipline, or are related to social conflict and forces of disorder. The forces of disorder unleashed by carnival could be temporary and often are replaced by the forces of order. Do conflict and social dissonance arise from subordinate and marginal levels of society refusing to keep their prescribed positions in hierarchy and how powerless or powerful are they in carnival time, or how much change is achieved after carnival's traces perish? Mockery of holy ideology and a less serious interpretation of the world characterize carnival along with travesties and reversals of all sorts:

The artifacts of Carnival are fragile objects made of cheap, impermanent materials. Scenarios, traditional songs, stories and characterizations are transmitted and preserved primarily in oral form, while purely topics, extemporaneous performances are completely ephemeral (Bristol 1985, 57-58).

Carnival is evanescent and although it might leave some permanent traces or bring some change, it is restricted to a certain time of the year. At the same time, order and hierarchies are fragile and ephemeral too, and its structures could easily become the target of travesty. Bristol describes travesty as "the comprehensive transgression of signs and symbols, is a general refusal of identity...Carnival masquerade draws attention to a powerful flow of social energy and to the improvisatory competence of the social group" (Bristol 1985, 69-70).

Masks and costumes are part of carnival and enhance the impression of an illusion of a presence as they manipulate and appropriate visible appearances and shapes. They stage the experience of change. Theatre shows how identity can never be permanent as everything can be changed or become something else in the next scene. Masking and disguise can be used for concealment and veiling, they may imply threat, dehumanization and deformity as appearances remain elusive and difficult to recapture after the transition to a different being. Society itself can be interpreted as a travesty. Masking could be applied for deception or subversion as it conjures extraordinary material shapes which

borrow or misuse the appearance from someone else. In this context, I will examine the question of whether the items of disguise, costume and mask, liberate or confine their wearers, whether they represent freedom in transforming and regeneration, or imprison in the constructed self with their compulsion to play the role they signify. How far does the will for deception go in *The Jew of Malta*, how is the crown in *Tamburlaine the Great* used as a masquerade item and how the constant exchange influences the perception of the impermanence of any relationship between an individual and the social identity claimed by the symbolism of his clothing? Can identity be a guise and a disguise, a social integument rather than a fixed category?

The traces of carnival which I will interpret in the plays will be the moments of anarchic revelry in the middle of solemn veneration, the instances of carnivalesque misrule, the cycle of death and resurrection related to carnival symbolism, the violation and resistance implied in the staging of masquerade shows, and the staging of carnivalesque rituals, costumes and masks on stage. There can be found traces of carnival rituals such as the Feast of Fools, Boy Bishop, pageants and processions, and of carnival impersonations such as the carnivalesque king, Lords of Misrule, clowns, the devil and some other. The relationship between carnival, language and theatrical stage, the connection between actors and masquerade as agents of carnivalesque seduction, the playwright as the mask-maker, sewing and constructing the costumes and roles of figures has to be mentioned too. There can be traced several parallels between actors and masquerade roles and the ambivalent role of the playwright as the conjurer of carnival as in *The Jew of Malta*. Marlowe's stage subtly presents characters such as the Jew with disguised intentions and pretenders of humility and honesty as they are releasing the ostentatious carnival show: the carnivalesque rebel, tempted into art of betraying, experimenting and innovating; the carnival insurgent and seditious agent, malcontent instigator of intrigue and faking and misbehaving against all rules of order. Such masters of disguise and dissembling may be rude and ignorant burlesque clowns, devils dressed up as humble friars, devilish appearances wearing scary masks hiding humble faces or reverse, carnivalesque royal victims of farcical violence and betrayal, Jews resurrected and indulging in the identity of criminals, or deluded scholars, permitted a glimpse into forbidden worlds of reversals. They are all entangled into these unexpected reversals and they all are there to entertain and indulge with their enraptured audiences in the disorder and festive spirit released by carnival.

Laughter and derision are further intrinsic elements that are at the core of carnivalesque performances. The ability of a playwright to create characters and scenes arousing laughter is an art that might be conjured up deliberately or unconsciously. There are different kinds of laughter and what is perceived as

comic, and Manfred Pfister discusses this in *A History of English Laughter*. Laughter can be:

merry or bitter, conciliatory or aggressive, disarming or provocative, pathological or remedial, foolish or wise, salacious or anguished, excessive or muted, scoffing or rollicking...But these varieties of laughter appear to exist side by side in each period of human history, seem to be an unchanging element of human nature rather than one of changing specific cultural situations... (Pfister 2002, 5).

Indira Ghose describes how laughter serves both as a safety valve for social tension as well as a liminal space of liberty from authority, an escape from norms and this ambivalence is reflected in the history of Carnival too (Ghose 2002, 35). Visual or conceptual incongruities or disjointed concepts and images may arouse laughter and ridicule, but humour may also imply an indulgence and an inclination for the ludicrous and the absurd. Images and concepts that do not fit into expected categories arouse laughter. Humour and the indulgence in unrestrained laughter are often interpreted as a catalyst for personal and collective healing. Humour may be aggressive or defensive, playful or derisive, releasing restrained energies that are often associated as forbidden and repressed otherwise as social taboos. Laughter works as the fault line that reveals the anxieties and pressures at work at a given historical moment (Ghose 2002, 43). Marlowe's plays proliferate in puns, parody, satire and irony, present the serious and dignified in the shape of a caricature and play with the idea of laughter and carnival as releasing valves of repressed and transgressive fantasies and impulses.

Carnival symbolic implies a persistent manipulation of identities, symbols, social distinctions and the impermanence of social forms:

Elements of social structure, social change and the process of material production are linked in the pageantry of Carnival, just as they are in official spectacles, but the images of Carnival are not animated by resemblance between a visible sign and an invisible but valuable meaning (Bristol 1985, 63).

The world of travesty and laughter with its mimicked and misappropriated signs and other symbolic manifestations is present in Marlowe's plays. Masking can imply both confinement or liberation and from social identity as in carnival

there is no fixed order or orderly setting to be preserved and kept away from the proliferation of identities and differences. The disguise behind which one is hiding could be a liberty with restrictions, a containment entity that releases a sense of freedom, but freedom with limitations. The carnivalesque figures or those involved in carnival festivity may be permitted to manipulate any reliable visual signs of identity and knowable selves, but they seem to get into the trap of those carnivalesque reversals and delusions, to lose the distinction between revelation and concealment. They are caught into an irretrievable trap as they are suddenly compelled to play and entertain, restrained in the carnival roles displayed to them. Similarly to the popular festivities and pagan rites, the plays which I would like to consider indulge in feasting and the yearning for consumption, irreverent gestures or behaviour, the mimicking of official pageantry or processions, and the mingling of heterogeneous images that are made to seem less reliable and more arbitrary. Furthermore, Carnival is about consumption and feasting.

In the tradition of popular pageantry, material abundance is represented as a direct relationship between consumption and production. Rank and status, the categories of vertical social structure, are retained, but hierarchical placement is established in accordance with the principles of material life and domestic order (Bristol 1985, 67-68).

Shakespeare's plays have often been viewed in carnivalesque terms and it is now time to examine Marlowe's plays and their relation to the culture of carnival, religious rituals and popular festivities.

Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften

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