

## Christopher Marlowe in Slovenia

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Slovenia has been an independent state since 1991, its territories having previously been part of, among others, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and the Habsburg Monarchy. Similarly to other peripheral and small literary systems, and without a nation state to rely on, Slovenian literature and culture (with only about two million speakers of the language) have always drawn in various important, but selective, ways on translation<sup>1</sup> and foreign influence.<sup>2</sup> Still today, translations account for about 40% of published books of prose, poetry and drama.

On the other hand, there is the globally influential English literary system, where it is a cliché to wonder what it would have been like if William Shakespeare had died at the same age as Christopher Marlowe. Indeed, it was from comparisons between Shakespeare and Marlowe that many of the influential conclusions about the latter were traditionally drawn: that Marlowe wrote about passions, not people, that his plays ended in nonsense and excess, that his heroes and plays were autobiographical, that he had no sympathy for ordinary people and no sense of humour, that he was a great poet but not a great dramatist.<sup>3</sup> Several authors have subsequently problematised the critical commonplace in which Marlowe “is made significant only by comparison; he is the inferior precursor of a great poetic genius.”<sup>4</sup> Emma Smith thus argues that referring to dramatists as “non-Shakespearean” or “Shakespeare’s contemporaries” inevitably carries “distinctly evaluative implications.”<sup>5</sup>

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I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and valuable comments.

<sup>1</sup> Majda Stanovnik, *Slovenski literarni prevod 1550–2000* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Janko Kos, *Primerjalna zgodovina slovenske literature* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Friedenreich, *Christopher Marlowe: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism since 1950* (Metuchen and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1979), 3–7.

<sup>4</sup> Clare Harraway, *Re-citing Marlowe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Emma Smith, “Shakespeare and Early Modern Tragedy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 132. Even some of the studies that place Shakespeare in the broader contexts of his contemporaries, rather than in an isolated tower of a lone genius, or focus on others, not Shakespeare at all, often symbolically indicate the hierarchy by including (only) Shakespeare’s name in their titles, with the others being the “Co.,” that is, the “players in his story,” his “contemporaries” or “opposites.” See, for example, Peter Happé, *English Drama before Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1999); Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare and Co.: Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, John Fletcher and the Other Players in His Story* (London: Penguin, 2006); Andrew Gurr, *Shakespeare’s Opposites: The Admiral’s Company 1594–1625*

Following from the above, this essay will attempt to explore the reception of the author who has been persistently described as the second greatest playwright of the English Renaissance in “one of the internationally least studied East-Central European peripheries: Slovenian literature.”<sup>6</sup> It will illustrate the mechanisms at work in a peripheral literary and cultural environment which does not participate in—and is therefore under the radar of—mainstream, anglophone Marlowe Studies. What is the view on a (traditionally) peripheral author from the periphery?

The article will first look at the general reception of Marlowe in Slovenia, followed by a brief summary of how some of his dissidence has been perceived by Slovenian authors. It will proceed with Marlowe’s translated texts and finish with the three productions of his plays on the Slovenian stage. Although crucially important, Marlowe criticism and critical theory in English speaking communities will not be the subject of my analysis as they have been studied comprehensively elsewhere, except for some necessary background to the most relevant Slovenian criticism.

### **Marlowe in the Slovenian Literary System**

Whereas Christopher Marlowe’s appreciation in the English literary system skyrocketed in the early nineteenth century, when the English Romantics started to see in him a kindred soul, “a historical example of the romantic radical who shunned convention,”<sup>7</sup> the historical and cultural situation in the Slovenian lands of the period was markedly different. Here, it was paramount first to establish the national canon and, as Marko Juvan argues, “in East-Central European and other (semi-)peripheral literatures of the Romantic and Post-Romantic period, the canonization of national poets provided the nation-building with central ideologemes.”<sup>8</sup>

It was France Prešeren (1800–1849) who would become the Slovenian national poet and canonical author. He depended in his poetics on Matija Čop (1797–1835), his friend and mentor, “the mastermind of Slovenian Romanticism.”<sup>9</sup> This moment also reflected the difference noted above between the appreciation of Marlowe and Shakespeare, this time at the level of Marlowe’s early Slovenian reception. Whereas their acquaintance with Marlowe’s contemporary Shakespeare is well known (Čop explicitly referred to Shakespeare

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jonathan Hart, *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Marko Juvan, *Worlding a Peripheral Literature* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Dabbs, *Reforming Marlowe: The Nineteenth-Century Canonization of a Renaissance Dramatist* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991), 116.

<sup>8</sup> Juvan, *Worlding a Peripheral Literature*, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Juvan, *Worlding a Peripheral Literature*, 158.

and had several of his plays in his library—in German and English—and Prešeren alludes to Juliet in one of his poems), the familiarity of the Slovenian Romantics with Marlowe is much less certain.<sup>10</sup> The inventory of Čop's private library, which Prešeren had access to, reveals that he had in his collection *The Ancient British Drama in Three Volumes* (published by William Miller in 1810, which includes *Edward the Second* and *The Jew of Malta*) as well as *Doctor Faustus* in Oxberry's 1818 edition.<sup>11</sup> While this indicates that he may have known (about) Marlowe, it is impossible to assess how well or how much.

The first milestone in Marlowe's Slovenian reception thus only dates back to 1972 and to the cultural realities of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. On 19 October of that year, a regional theatre in the town of Celje staged *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, the first production of Marlowe in Slovenian. It had also inspired the first Slovenian translation of Marlowe, made by Janez Menart.<sup>12</sup>

At that time in English-speaking communities, the romantic construct of Marlowe as a rebel against established social values continued to have a strong influence on the interpretations of his texts. Una Ellis-Fermor described *Doctor Faustus* as “perhaps the most notable Satanic play in literature”<sup>13</sup> and Irving Ribner quoted the view that this play cannot be “a Christian morality play, for it contains no affirmation of the goodness or justice of the religious system it depicts with accuracy of such detail. It is, rather, a protest against this system.”<sup>14</sup> Susan Snyder's thesis about *Doctor Faustus* as an inverted saint's life, as a parody of conventional hagiography, was also resonant.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, there were interpretations arguing that to see Faustus as a symbol of the “new” man meant ignoring the text of the play. Leo Kirschbaum, one of the major opponents of the romanticisation of Marlowe and the conflation of his biography with his texts, insisted that “the Christian view of the world informs *Doctor Faustus* throughout—not the pagan view. If we do not accept

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<sup>10</sup> Dušan Moravec, “Shakespeare pri Slovencih,” in *Shakespeare pri Slovencih*, ed. France Koblar (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1965), 182–184.

<sup>11</sup> Lucijan Adam, *Knjižnica Matije Čopa: diplomatska naloga* (Ljubljana: [L. Adam], 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Janez Menart (1929–2004) was one of the most celebrated and popular Slovenian poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was also a highly regarded translator. His translations of English and French poetry and drama were particularly significant. He translated, among others, Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Burns, Coleridge, Hugo, de Lamartine, de Musset, Prévert, Villon, Jonson, Kyd, Webster and Marlowe.

<sup>13</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Frontiers of Drama* (London: Methuen & Co., 1945), 142.

<sup>14</sup> Irving Ribner, [Untitled], in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Doctor Faustus*, ed. Willard Farnham (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 109.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Snyder, “Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as an Inverted Saint's Life,” *Studies in Philology* 63, no. 4 (1966): 565–77.

that Faustus's selling his soul to the devil for earthly power and pleasure is a serious business, we simply are not hearing what Marlowe wrote."<sup>16</sup>

The Celje theatre published a production programme with a short text by the production's dramaturge, Janez Žmavc, who seems to have relied on the more atheistic interpretations of *Faustus*, possibly in line with the then anti-religious socialist cultural agenda. Žmavc exclaims: "An atheist on the stage, in a land that punished atheism with death!" Above all, he finds it noteworthy that with Faustus there came new driving forces of the world – doubt, scepticism and rebellion. The author also believes that Marlowe rejected the Christian framework in which the play was supposed to be set: "Taking *Faustus* as a whole, Christianity has no real place in it, neither as an allegory, nor is it integrated into the author's vision of the world. Marlowe was not a Christian, his worldview was classical."<sup>17</sup>

Published reviews suggest that the Celje production was not particularly successful in presenting Faustus's inner struggles, nor in staging the dissident potential of *Doctor Faustus*. Andrej Inkret emphasised that devils no longer functioned as they had in the Elizabethan era and, consequently, the production was partly amusing and partly embarrassing.<sup>18</sup> Božena Orožen was also critical of the ineffectiveness and ridiculousness of the devils,<sup>19</sup> and the same point was made by Janez Erklavec, who commented that "even the spiritual dilemmas were left unresolved." The critic furthermore suggested that the production should have been modernised to keep the text up to date.<sup>20</sup> The question of the modernisation of *Doctor Faustus* was also raised by France Vurnik, who believed that the Celje production was "fairy-tale-like, and by no means frightening like a morality play."<sup>21</sup> Mirko Jurak was also critical, claiming that the production was not sufficiently philosophical, and that the will to power would have been a more interesting emphasis than the mystical and allegorical moments on which the director relied.<sup>22</sup>

In 1976, four years after *Doctor Faustus* was staged in Celje, the text of the play, together with Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (never staged before or since) and Jonson's *Volpone* (staged in 1970, 2004, 2019), was published in *Drame angleške renesanse: Marlowe, Kyd, Jonson* (English Renaissance Plays: Marlowe, Kyd, Jonson), translated and

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<sup>16</sup> Leo Kirschbaum, "Marlowe's *Faustus*," *The Review of English Studies* 19, no. 75 (1942): 229.

<sup>17</sup> Janez Žmavc, [Untitled], *Gledališki list Slovenskega ljudskega gledališča Celje*, no. 2 (1972).

<sup>18</sup> Andrej Inkret, "Težave s hudiči." *Delo*, October 22, 1972, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Božena Orožen, "Nova gledališka sezona." *Lepo mesto*, no. 2 (1972): 6.

<sup>20</sup> Janez Erklavec, "Na celjskem odru: Faust, Bog in hudič." *Novi tednik*, October 26, 1972, 7.

<sup>21</sup> France Vurnik, "Zgodba o doktorju Faustu: uprizoritev *Tragedije o doktorju Faustu* Christopherja Marlowa v SLG Celje." *Dnevnik*, October 28, 1972, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Mirko Jurak, "Sta Shakespeare in Marlowe še naša sodobnika?" *Naši razgledi*, November 24, 1972, 613–614.

introduced by Janez Menart.<sup>23</sup> This volume remained the single most important source on Marlowe until the translation and production of *Edward the Second* in 2005. In his introduction, Menart describes the historical, social and political contexts of Elizabethan England and devotes considerable space to the origins, functioning and importance of theatres and acting companies, as well as to the development of English Renaissance literature, mainly drama, from its origins in the “university wits” (with Marlowe “the greatest artist” among them) to its culmination in Shakespeare. Mostly echoing the Victorian ideas about Marlowe summarised in my introduction, he briefly introduces *Tamburlaine the Great* as “a heroic epic drama in two parts” and “a rather static play about a famous Mongol conqueror, with long speeches and a flimsy dramatic structure,” but “full of new ideas, written in vivid images and exquisite blank verse, and interspersed with flashes of real lyricism.” *The Jew of Malta* is summed up as “a heroic drama with action that becomes the less believable the longer it proceeds.” *Edward the Second* is seen as the best of Marlowe’s plays, “a model for Shakespeare” and “the first real history play.” Unlike *Edward*, *The Massacre at Paris* is judged to be “badly constructed and poorly motivated,” yet “very lively, full of rapid and violent action.” Finally, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, although “later finished by Thomas Nashe,” shows “that Marlowe knew how to delve into a woman’s soul with great understanding.”<sup>24</sup>

Menart’s biographical sketch of Marlowe (which he starts with a mistake, giving Coventry as his birthplace) provides some details of his schooling and translations of Ovid and Lucan, as well as his plays and *Hero and Leander*. He also mentions Marlowe’s troubles with the authorities and Kyd’s supposed responsibility for his arrest “for impiety and blasphemy.” Of Marlowe’s murder, Menart writes that it was “ordered by the secret police” because of his contacts with Scotland, about which Marlowe was said to have known too much, at a time when even a casual remark concerning Elizabeth’s succession was deemed high treason.<sup>25</sup>

In his private diary, Menart expressed surprise at the publisher’s willingness to accept his proposal for the publication of the volume “without excuses that it was unprofitable

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Tragedija o doktorju Faustu*, trans. Janez Menart, in *Drame angleške renesance: Malowe, Kyd, Jonson*, trans. and ed. Janez Menart (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1976), 109–161, 409–416.

<sup>24</sup> Janez Menart, “Pregled angleške renesančne dramatike,” in *Drame angleške renesance: Malowe, Kyd, Jonson*, trans. and ed. Janez Menart (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1976), 42–44.

<sup>25</sup> Janez Menart, “Christopher Marlowe,” in *Drame angleške renesance: Malowe, Kyd, Jonson*, trans. and ed. Janez Menart (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1976), 103–105.

goods,”<sup>26</sup> which indicates the peripheral position of non-Shakespearean English early modern drama in the Slovenian literary system at the time. Nevertheless, looking at the broader context of the then common state, Yugoslavia, a similar volume (in Serbian) had already been published in Belgrade in 1959.<sup>27</sup> In addition to an introduction by Svetozar Brkić, it contains translations of Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (the B-text), Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* and Ford’s *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Brkić writes in his introduction, among other things, of “Edward II’s perverse love,” of his unnatural love for Gaveston, and of Marlowe’s comic scenes, which are probably not his own, since he was capable of neither humour nor satire.<sup>28</sup> Also in line with traditional views, Marlowe is labelled as “the first atheist among artists,” and his plays are read as reflections of his personal desires and problems.<sup>29</sup>

In the period after the Celje production, Marlowe had become sufficiently well-known, and the first translation of *Faustus* was already available, to be included in the literary anthologies of the day,<sup>30</sup> although he remained a relatively minor author for the next three decades. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Marlowe still typically appeared as a side character rather than as the main subject of critical debates. Boris A. Novak, writing on a new translation of Goethe’s *Faust*, provides a characteristic summary: “On the basis of the English translation of this book [The Faust-book], the English Renaissance playwright Christopher Marlowe wrote the first magisterial artistic rendering of this controversial character, the play *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*, as early as 1588.” The author also mentions Marlowe’s early reception, in particular the reports that “Marlowe himself was regarded by the people of London as a servant of the devil because of his intellectualism and scepticism.”<sup>31</sup> Anton Janko’s comments are very similar: “As early as 1588, Christopher Marlowe, a contemporary of Shakespeare, supposedly began to write his play *The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus*; the material and inspiration for it came from the English translation of the German Faust-book. The material was very close to his heart, because in *Faustus* Marlowe discovered a kindred spirit.” Janko emphasises—and relativises—the

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<sup>26</sup> Janez Menart, *Dnevnik 1953–2000* (Celje: Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2010), 22.

<sup>27</sup> Zoran Mišić, ed., *Engleske renesansne tragedije*, trans. Živojin Simić and Sima Pandurović (Beograd: Nolit, 1959).

<sup>28</sup> Svetozar Brkić, “Engleska renesansna tragedija,” in *Engleske renesansne tragedije*, ed. Zoran Mišić (Beograd: Nolit, 1959), 6, 19, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Brkić, “Engleska renesansna tragedija,” 15.

<sup>30</sup> Janko Kos, ed., *Antologija svetovne književnosti: od renesanse do romantike* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1977), 70–72.

<sup>31</sup> Boris A. Novak, “Končno integralni prevod kanoničnega teksta svetovne literature,” *Sodobnost* 47, no. 9/10 (1999): 856.

religious aspect of Marlowe's dissidence: "He was an atheist, but still too close to religion not to fear punishment for blasphemy. The fervour of his statements about God shows, of course, that he—and, by implication, his Faustus—had not completely shaken off all metaphysical ties."<sup>32</sup>

In his psychoanalytical study on greed, Mladen Dolar considers a selection of texts with regard to this mortal sin. He writes extensively about Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, but he also touches upon Marlowe, in particular *The Jew of Malta*, which is quite rare in Slovenian criticism. Noting that the play's Jewish character Barabas is a representative of evil, of outright Machiavellianism, Dolar maintains that, according to Marlowe, the representatives of the other two great monotheistic religions are just as corrupt and that, in fact, Christians are even worse in that they pretend to be better than the others.<sup>33</sup>

With all that has been said so far about the reception of Christopher Marlowe in Slovenia, we are approaching his second and third theatre productions rather unprepared, since as late as 2005 this author continued to be regarded as one of the "lesser-known Elizabethan playwrights."<sup>34</sup> Yet it was in 2005 and 2006, fifteen years after Slovenia became an independent, democratic state, that *Edward the Second* and *Doctor Faustus* were staged in Slovenian theatres, with *Faustus* in Menart's existing translation and *Edward* in a new translation commissioned for this production.

When *Edward the Second* premiered at the Slovenian National Theatre in Ljubljana on 4 June 2005, the production programme published the Slovenian translation of the play, which remains the only publication of the text to this day,<sup>35</sup> and eight articles discussing Marlowe and the play. Three of the articles were written by Slovenian authors, and five are translations. The first among the latter is an abridged text originally written by Thomas Cartelli for *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (2004) on the modernity of Marlowe and *Edward the Second*, and on sodomy as an intimate and public political category. The second is an abridged version of Martin Wiggins's "Introduction" to the New Mermaids edition of *Edward the Second* (1997), which also focuses on the homoerotic aspects of the play and its reception. Next is an excerpt from Jonathan Bate's *The Genius of Shakespeare* (1997) on the relationship between Shakespeare and Marlowe as seen through

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<sup>32</sup> Anton Janko, "Razmišljanje o Goethejevem *Faustu*," in *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, trans. Božo Vodušek and Erika Vouk (Maribor: Obzorja, 1999), 15.

<sup>33</sup> Mladen Dolar, *O skoposti in o nekaterih z njo povezanih rečeh* (Ljubljana: Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis, 2002), 124–125.

<sup>34</sup> Stanovnik, *Slovenski literarni prevod*, 122.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Edvard Drugi*, trans. Srečko Fišer, *Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana* 84, no. 12 (2005): 53–100.

Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence. The abridged chapter by Patrick Cheney from *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* discusses Marlowe's reception in English-speaking settings, from the time of the playwright's contemporaries to the present day, and his relevance today. The only non-English source text is from Hans Mayer's *Außenseiter* (1975), which identifies *Edward the Second* as Marlowe's (homosexual) confessional play.

The Slovenian contributions are in close correspondence with the translated ones. Tadej Zupančič provides a summary of selected texts (including fictional biographies of Marlowe) to highlight the prevalence of subversive readings of Renaissance drama and Marlowe's heretical and blasphemous ideas.<sup>36</sup> Diana Koloini notes two main reasons for the great interest in *Edward*: the play's genre—she identifies the history play as one of the most eminently political genres—and the play's status as the most important classic play with a homosexual protagonist. She goes on to argue that the key to the play is in the interplay of the political and the erotic, especially in relation to Edward's kingship.<sup>37</sup> Lilijana Burcar approaches Marlowe as a turning point in the development of Elizabethan drama, which broke away from medieval Christian doctrine and brought to the fore the importance of human agency, will, ambition and Machiavellianism. According to her, Marlowe's politically astute and anti-church writing exposes the appropriations and interests of the ruling order and the questionable legitimacy of all churches, and his plays represent, at least on the face of it, a site of resistance against dominant ideologies and their mechanisms.<sup>38</sup>

The second Slovenian production of *Doctor Faustus* premiered on 30 March 2006 at the Slovenian National Theatre in Nova Gorica. The production programme published four articles. Three were translated extracts and the only article by a Slovenian author was by Diana Koloini, who lists some of the labels used in traditionally describing Marlowe: the best poet of his time, an outstanding translator and the greatest English dramatist before Shakespeare, a spy, a delinquent, an alleged heretic and a politically subversive man, a sodomite and a brilliantly witty orator. The author also recalls the legendary accounts of how his contemporaries believed he had given his soul to the devil and suffered a just punishment.<sup>39</sup> The translations are all very short excerpts. The first is from Gerald Pinciss's

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<sup>36</sup> Tadej Zupančič, "Račun v penzionu na koncu mesta," *Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana* 84, no. 12 (2005): 9–13.

<sup>37</sup> Diana Koloini, "'A krvoločni psi ga bodo pokončali,'" *Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana* 84, no. 12 (2005): 14–19.

<sup>38</sup> Lilijana Burcar, "Spol-nost države," *Gledališki list SNG Drama Ljubljana* 84, no. 12 (2005): 20–24.

<sup>39</sup> Diana Koloini, "Marlovov Faust," *Gledališki list SNG Nova Gorica* 51, no. 4 (2006): 10–12.



*Christopher Marlowe* (1975), in which the author admits that the facts of Marlowe's biography are controversial and unclear, but nevertheless lists some of the characteristics of his personality: quick-tempered, bold, daring, aggressive, intelligent. Peter Happé's text is taken from his study *English Drama before Shakespeare* (1999). He suggests that Marlowe, in *Faustus* and elsewhere, did not deny the whole theological system although he was critical of failure in religious practice. J. P. Brockbank's extract is from *Marlowe: Dr Faustus* (1962), and the translated passage is a close reading of Faustus's downfall, mainly through references to the Bible, which leads Brockbank to conclude that Marlowe honours Christianity and that this play fuses heroic drama and morality.

The first, and so far only, book-length study of Christopher Marlowe in the Slovenian language was not published until 2016. The author insists throughout on distinguishing between fact and speculation, especially with reference to the constructions of Marlowe's dissidence, which is the central issue around which this monograph on Marlowe's reception in English-speaking and Slovenian literary systems as well as on Slovenian translations and performances of Marlowe's texts is based.<sup>40</sup> As no stage production or major work of criticism has appeared since then, it is impossible to assess what, if any, impact the book has had.

If the range and diversity of analyses, approaches and conclusions about Christopher Marlowe from English-speaking backgrounds are compared to those from Slovenia, it becomes obvious that it would be impossible to conceive of the complexity of the understandings and constructions of this playwright, poet and translator if one relied only on Slovenian authors writing about him. Marlowe's Slovenian reception can be described as a sequence of isolated events, mostly concentrated around translations and performances of Marlowe's texts, but without any real tradition. When these occur, they refer to anglophone criticism and engage with some of the same critical issues, such as gender, identity, politics and religion. Marlowe's precarious status in the Slovenian literary system is also indicated by a glance at literature textbooks, where the author, when present, is only briefly mentioned as one of the major playwrights of the English Renaissance and Shakespeare's predecessor, as one of the candidates in the "Shakespeare authorship question," and/or as the author who first worked on the Faust myth.

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<sup>40</sup> Andrej Zavrl, *Christopher Marlowe, kanonični odpadnik* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2016).

### Marlowe's dissidence

Although Marlowe's texts, especially his plays, have been subject to radically different, sometimes mutually exclusive interpretations, there is some similarity between the first authors (who saw Marlowe's destiny as a sign of divine providence and justice) and modern authors (who see Marlowe as a representative of all sorts of subversiveness): whether puritan, romantic, new historicist, gay and queer, feminist, atheist or other, most of them are ideological and speculative.

It seems that everywhere one looks, including in Slovenian literary scholarship and criticism, it is impossible to avoid the image of Marlowe as a multi-dimensional dissident, but the conclusions are often based on over-generalisations or even errors and misconceptions, and there is little attention paid to textual, editorial, bio- and bibliographical constructs and to the problems of linking interpretations of Marlowe's texts to his highly uncertain biography. For instance, Mirko Jurak argues that Marlowe held and defended atheistic views and explains that his death was part of a political conspiracy. He also draws a parallel between Marlowe's biography and the character of Faustus, in whom Marlowe is said to have returned to his Cambridge days and political interests and activities.<sup>41</sup> Nike K. Pokorn writes that Marlowe "spent his life combining a career as a playwright with secret political assignments on behalf of the government [...], had a reputation for violent behaviour (he killed a man in a sword fight), and was accused of atheism and homosexuality."<sup>42</sup> However, there is no evidence that Marlowe killed anyone and the accusations about his atheism, homosexuality and "secret political assignments on behalf of the government" are elusive. Following Menart, Alenka Vesenjajk writes without evidence that Marlowe was murdered because he was "acquainted too well with the contacts that the English court had with Scotland," and because he generally "had problems with the authorities."<sup>43</sup> Correspondingly, a newspaper notice announcing the premiere of *Doctor Faustus* in Nova Gorica states that Kyd "told us that Christopher could not restrain himself when it came to male lovers,"<sup>44</sup> which, although a fictional statement, confirms Lois Potter's observation that

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<sup>41</sup> Mirko Jurak, *Notes on Shakespeare* (Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 1980), 62–63.

<sup>42</sup> Nike K. Pokorn, *British Literature: From the Anglo-Saxons to the Victorians* (Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 2006), 47.

<sup>43</sup> Alenka Vesenjajk, *Album svetovnih književnikov I: Svetovni klasiki od antičnih začetkov do moderne* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2008), 36.

<sup>44</sup> Rok Vevar, "Doktor Faust." *Delo*, March 30, 2006, 18.

biographical interpretations prove useful time and again in ensuring the place of a particular author—“especially one with a criminal record”—in the theatrical repertory.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike religious heterodoxy, which had been addressed throughout Marlowe’s Slovenian reception, it was only in the 1990s that his sexual non-normativity started to be approached more openly. One of the first to focus on Marlowe’s alleged homoeroticism affirmatively was the poet, editor and activist Brane Mozetič, who in 1997, in an essay devoted to homosexuality in literature, took Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s texts as the beginnings of overt writing about same-gender desire.<sup>46</sup> However, Mozetič’s primacy is challenged by the dramatist and writer Ivan Mrak (1906–1986), who wrote in his diary in 1969 that:

It is likely that in the centuries to come Shakespeare will be re-evaluated as far as we will value e.g. Marlowe’s *Edward II*, Kleist’s *Penthesilea* more highly than Shakespeare’s tragedies [...], because they are infinitely purer, more definite. [...] I also assume that the repeal of a paragraph in Germany would allow Marlowe’s tragedy of *Edward II* to be accorded its rightful place.<sup>47</sup>

Although this diary entry remained private until its publication in 2005, it is important in several respects and the time when it was written makes it unique, at least in the Slovenian context. It is significant because it recognises Marlowe’s worth and hopes that he will cease to be perceived as Shakespeare’s inferior, but also because it sees *Edward the Second*’s sexual heterodoxy as the reason for the play’s neglect in a homophobic world (the “paragraph in Germany” that Mrak refers to is Article 175 of the German Criminal Code, which criminalised sexual acts between men between 1871 and 1994). For Mrak, then, Edward was essentially defined by his homosexuality, both inter- and extra-literarily.

### **Translations of Marlowe**

It is beyond the scope of this essay to provide an in-depth analysis of the Slovenian translations of Marlowe’s texts; therefore, the following section will focus on selected examples of religious and gender/sexual unorthodoxies, which literary and cultural studies often highlight as key elements in Marlowe’s modern reception, to see how Slovenian translations compare to the source texts and how they (cor)respond to contemporary cultural, literary and translation debates.

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<sup>45</sup> Lois Potter, “Tragedy and Performance,” in Smith and Sullivan, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, 105.

<sup>46</sup> Brane Mozetič, “Literatura na margini?” *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* 25, no. 185 (1997): 253–264.

<sup>47</sup> Ivan Mrak, *Dnevnik I* (Ljubljana: Društvo 2000, 2005), 215–216.

### *Doctor Faustus*

*Doctor Faustus* was translated into Slovenian by Janez Menart in 1972. The translation is based on the Folger Library edition prepared by Wright and LaMar (i.e., the A-text).<sup>48</sup> Countless interpretations of the play focus on Faustus's and *Faustus*'s relationship to the fundamental questions of Christianity, that is, the questions of God's existence, of heaven and hell, of God's relationship to humankind, of salvation and damnation, and above all of transgression and redemption. It had been well established by the time of Menart's translation that Marlowe's theology was "impeccable," that he knew "all the arguments"<sup>49</sup> and that *Doctor Faustus* "proceeds in the language and the concepts of divinity."<sup>50</sup> The play's theological complexities continue to be the subject of modern analyses and, as such, they will constitute the central part of my translation analysis.

First, some divine names. In addition to "God," which is translated consistently as "Bog [God]," and "Jehovah," which is translated just as accurately, Marlowe's text uses the name "Jupiter" three times, twice to denote the planet (6.49, 6.63) and once to name the Roman god (13.122). Menart uniformly, and adequately, translates this as "Jupiter." Marlowe also uses the name "Jove" three times for the same god, which Menart translates twice as "Bog" (1.80, 3.103) and omits once (7.3). The translator explains this by stating that "the playwright uses the name Jove because in England it was forbidden to name God in plays by a special decree. Unless the meaning requires otherwise, I use the word God or god—depending on what was intended."<sup>51</sup> His reference to the "special decree" is most likely to the 1606 *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players*, but the Act was not enacted until two years after the publication of A1 (1604) and, moreover, it applied to performances, not to printed texts, which renders the translator's emendation questionable.<sup>52</sup> For example, in "Be thou on earth, as Jove is in the sky" (1.80)—"Na zemlji bodi, kar je Bog v nebesih [Be on earth as God is in heaven]"—the double shift (from "Jove" to "God" and from "sky" to "heaven") makes the classical simile distinctively Christian and the blasphemy more pronounced in translation

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. LaMar (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963). All in-text references are to this edition. My literal translations from Slovenian back into English are in square brackets.

<sup>49</sup> Philip Henderson, *Christopher Marlowe* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), 35.

<sup>50</sup> A. L. Rowse, *Christopher Marlowe: His Life and Work* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1964), 160.

<sup>51</sup> Marlowe, *Tragedija o doktorju Faustu*, 414.

<sup>52</sup> David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, "Introduction," in *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-texts (1604, 1616)* by Christopher Marlowe and his collaborator and revisers (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 76.

compared to the original. The use of “Jove” mitigates the blasphemy of the source text to a certain extent, since the pagan god could be seen by Marlowe’s audience as a more or less unbinding myth, which would not have been possible with “the Christian God, whom they were all expected to accept as omnipotent and omniscient.”<sup>53</sup> Andrew Duxfield argues that *Doctor Faustus* “appears to be variously a medieval morality play and a Renaissance tragedy, and also infiltrates a patently Christian theme with abundant images of Classical mythology.”<sup>54</sup> Lisa Hopkins furthermore underlines that the classical references remind us that “the Christian belief system [...] is not the only one ever to have held sway over people’s imaginations.”<sup>55</sup> The deletion of these references at the micro level can therefore have an impact on the meaning of the text at the macro level.

Could one argue, on the evidence of the example above, that the play in the Slovenian discloses a higher degree of blasphemousness due to its reference to the Christian rather than the classical god? Due to the subjective factors that influence meaning making, it seems impossible to say to what extent or how individual micro shifts impact on the macro level, although it is very likely that they do. One would only be justified to assume that specific perceptions have changed at the macro textual level as a consequence of specific shifts at the micro-textual level if the micro-textual shifts were consistent and unambiguous, thus indicating that a translational or ideological norm had been at work.

*Faustus*’s metaphysical geography is based on two poles – “heaven” and “hell.” The translation of the former demonstrates considerable variation and synonymisation (Figure 1). Any such shift in translation may have interpretative consequences, especially when physics and metaphysics (but also rhetoric and poetics) are at stake, but conclusions will depend on whether or not a semantic item is seen as a *terminus technicus* requiring consistent translation.

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<sup>53</sup> Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 87.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Duxfield, *Christopher Marlowe and the Failure to Unify* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 65.

<sup>55</sup> Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe*, 87.

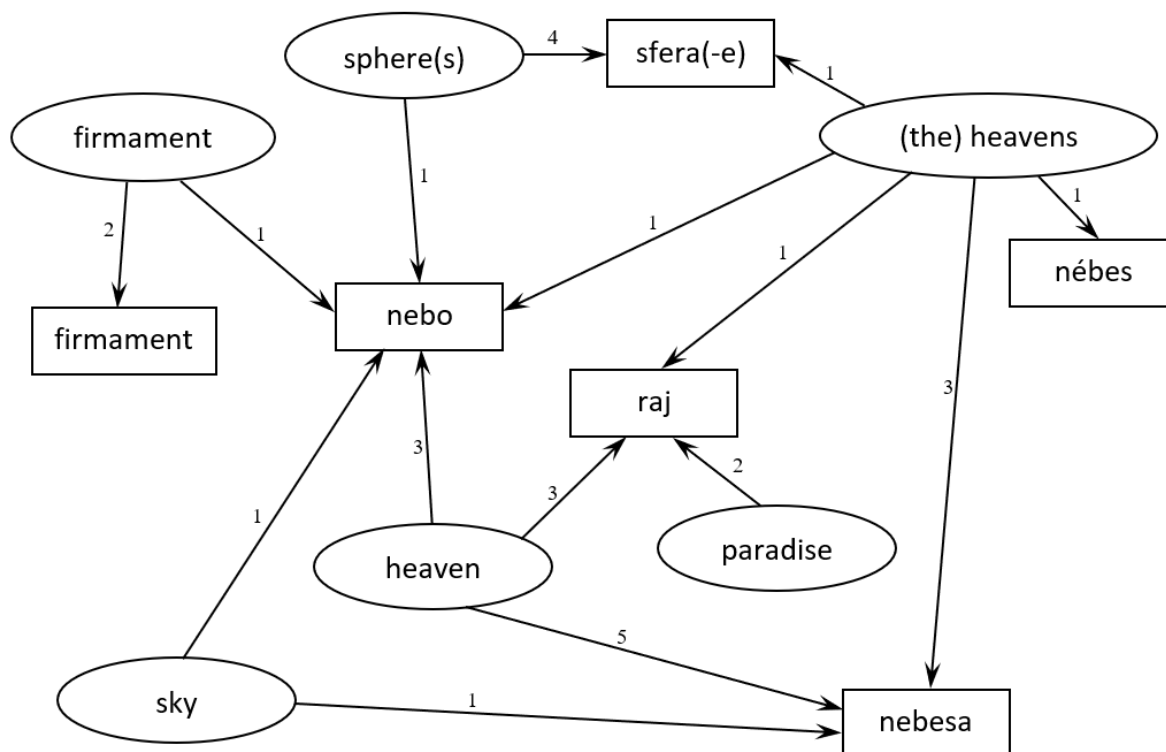


Figure 1: Examples of lexical variation and synonymisation in the Slovenian translation of *Doctor Faustus* (numbers indicate the occurrences of each translation).

Comparably, both times the term “paradise” is used (in connection with the creation of the world and the first humans) it is translated as “raj” (6.129, 6.131), that is, the same as “heaven” and “(the) heavens.” In Slovenian, “raj,” like its English counterpart “paradise,” can mean both the original abode of Adam and Eve and the place where the souls of the righteous await resurrection. However, the source text seems to distinguish between the two uses, with “paradise” being used only in the first sense and “heaven” only in the second.

The object of the heavenly and infernal battle is, of course, Faustus’s “soul,” which is translated very consistently into its Slovenian equivalent (“duša”). Another important lexeme which denotes immaterial categories is “spirit(s),” which Menart translates consistently as “duh(ovi).” He also translates the phrase “power of my spirit” (10.66)—which is ambiguous, since it can mean Faustus’s spiritual power or Mephistopheles, who is ontologically a “spirit”—using the Slovenian word with the same root as spirit (“s svojo duhovno močjo”). Additionally, the Slovenian text translates “subjects” (1.127) with the same term it uses to translate “spirits,” although this translation may be defensible on the ground that the B-text has “spirits” instead of “subjects.” Marlowe’s distinction between different metaphysical

entities is further blurred when the Slovenian translation renders the term “ghost,” which appears three times, in the same way as it does “spirit.” But in the source text a distinction is made between “spirit” (which is defined by the diabolical, infernal and damnation) and “ghost” (which is the shape the deceased takes on in the afterlife). The same Slovenian word is used to translate “familiars” (4.31), which denotes demons that may accompany an individual, as well as the phrase “dominion or *Intelligentsia*” (4.31).

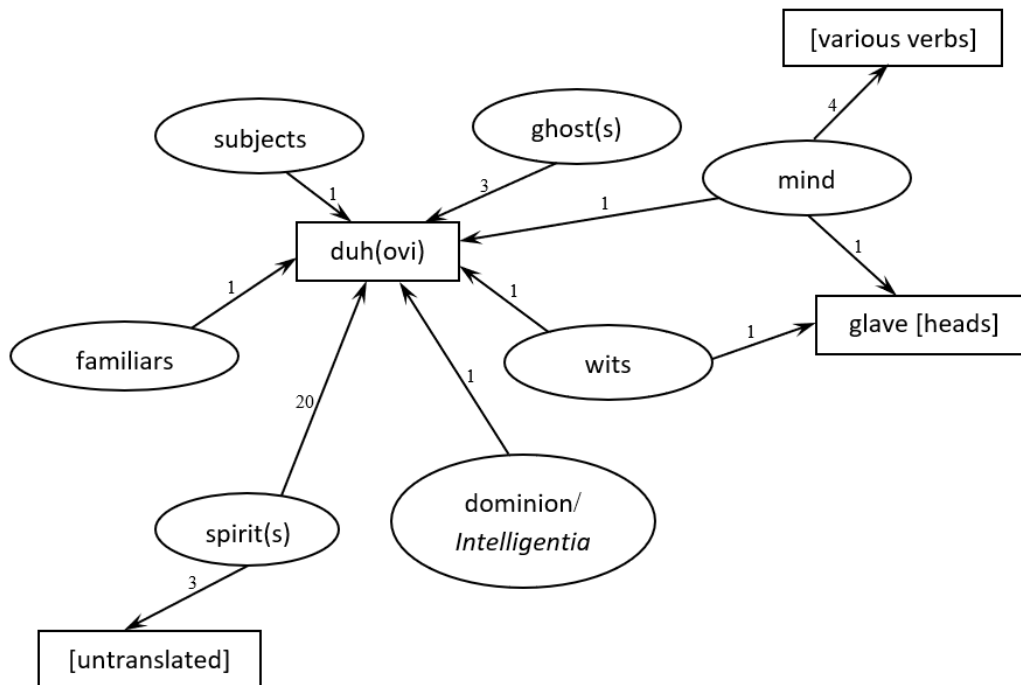


Figure 2: Examples of lexical reduction in the Slovenian translation of Doctor Faustus (numbers indicate the occurrences of each translation).

While Figure 1 showcased lexical variation in translation, Figure 2 illustrates the opposite: lexical reduction. It is possible to argue for the adequacy of each translation in isolation, but it seems questionable to use one and the same term in the target text for all the different lexemes in the source text. As a result, if one wanted to argue for important semantic distinctions between the different metaphysical categories and modes of being, one could only do so using the original, not the translation. Such extensive lexical reduction is problematic, especially given Marlowe’s theological proficiency and the many analyses that take this topic as their focus. If it should turn out that Slovenian does not differentiate between all these categories, the use of disambiguating adjectives or, at least for reading purposes, explanatory notes might help.

### *Edward the Second*

*Edward the Second* was translated by Srečko Fišer<sup>56</sup> for the National Theatre in Ljubljana in 1996 (when the production of the play was originally planned), using Steane's Penguin edition.<sup>57</sup> He revised the translation for the actual staging in 2005. I will note a few instances of how the semantic layer of the text was rendered into Slovenian, focusing on the notions of (male) friendship and (homo)erotic desire.

Fundamental to the medieval and early modern understanding of sodomy is its connection to unnaturalness, to something that disrupts the natural order, whether it is a monarch's divinely sanctioned role or sexuality. In *Edward the Second*, Marlowe does not use the lexemes "sodomy" or "sin," but "unnatural" appears six times (3.2.88, 3.3.33, 4.1.8, 4.5.18, 5.1.17, 5.6.76). It is first used to describe the King, perhaps hinting at his sexuality, and then his opponents and the Queen, who conspire against the King and ultimately have him killed.

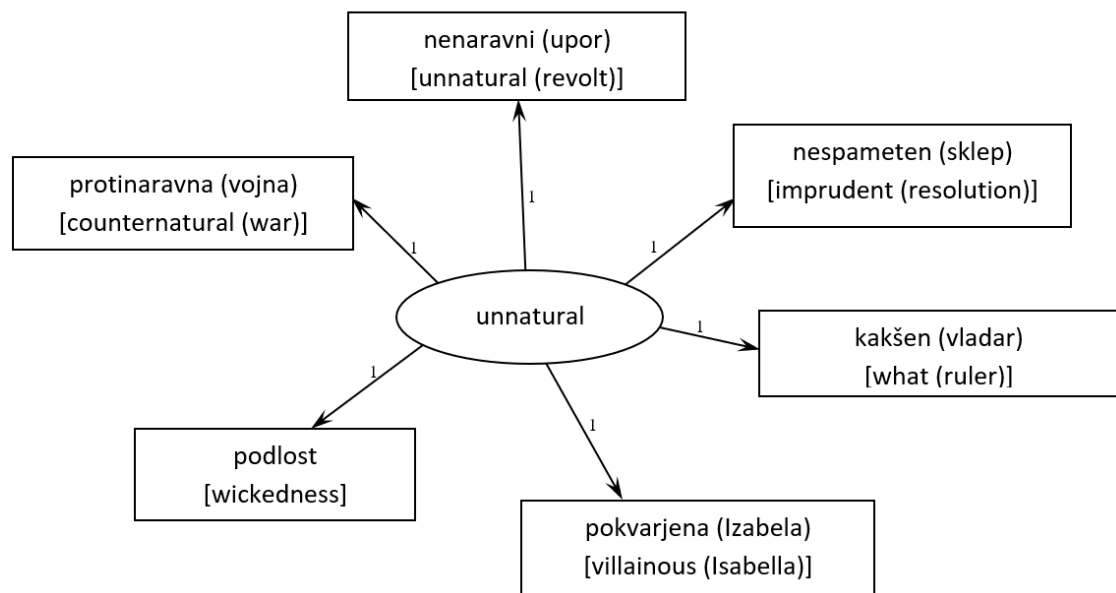


Figure 3: Examples of lexical variation in the Slovenian translation of *Edward the Second* (numbers indicate the occurrences of each translation).

<sup>56</sup> Srečko Fišer (b. 1953) is one of the most highly regarded translators in Slovenia. He has translated works of prose (e.g. Hemingway, James, Eco, Woolf, Svevo, Calvino, Ishiguro, Faulkner), poetry (e.g. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Michelangelo, Petrarch) and drama (e.g. Pasolini, Pirandello, Ayckbourn, Goldoni, Ionesco, Corneille, Beckett). In addition to Marlowe's *Edward the Second*, he has also translated Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (staged in 1988), Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet* and Shakespeare and Middleton's *Timon of Athens*.

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), 431–533. All in-text references are to this edition. My literal translations from Slovenian back into English are in square brackets.



The Slovenian translation (Figure 3) does not display any uniformity in translating this lexeme, as no two translations are identical. Two adjectives in the target text (“nenaraven,” “protinaraven”) are derived from the same root (“narava” [nature]), but the others differ from each other, and one was turned into a noun (“podlost” [wickedness]) and one into a pronoun (“kakšen” [what]). The former occurs at 5.6.76–77, where Edward the Third considers his mother’s role in the murder of the King (“I do not think her so unnatural.”—“Sam ne verjamem, da bi zmogli takšno podlost.” [I do not think she would be capable of such wickedness.]), and the latter at 4.1.8–9 (“Unnatural king, to slaughter noble men / And cherish flatterers!”—“Kakšen vladar je to, ki ubija plemiče, / lizune pa časti?” [What ruler is he that slaughters noble men / and cherishes flatterers?]).

The term “minion” is used ten times to refer to the King’s relationships with Gaveston and others. The barons and the Queen use the word offensively, but Edward himself also uses it non-pejoratively (once, at 1.4.30). The word can have several meanings, from (homo)sexual lover, best friend, child or servant, to royal favourite,<sup>58</sup> and it is this semantic range that allows for different connotations to be implied in different contexts and by different characters. The Slovenian translator uses seven different possibilities when translating “minion” (Figure 4). Although he does not apply a single term, his translations, in the end, cumulatively, cover most of the semantic range of the source text. This could be seen as an example of how disambiguation at the micro level does not necessarily entail a reduction in meaning at the macro level.

The target text further reveals that Fišer uses the lexemes “minion” and “favourite” synonymously, but because the two lexemes have overlapping meanings in the source text, the translation seems adequate despite the variation and synonymisation. Any judgement on this must be based on whether or not the two lexemes have meanings in the source culture and language that are similar enough to make this a justified translation choice. Fišer explained his personal translation strategy to me in private correspondence, maintaining that any “terminologisation” of literary translation was nonsensical as well as impossible to achieve in verse. In his view, “a literary text must grow organically in the language of translation, and not keep clinging tightly to the original; various categorical imperatives can be a serious hindrance to it.”

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Hammond, *Love between Men in English Literature* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 50.

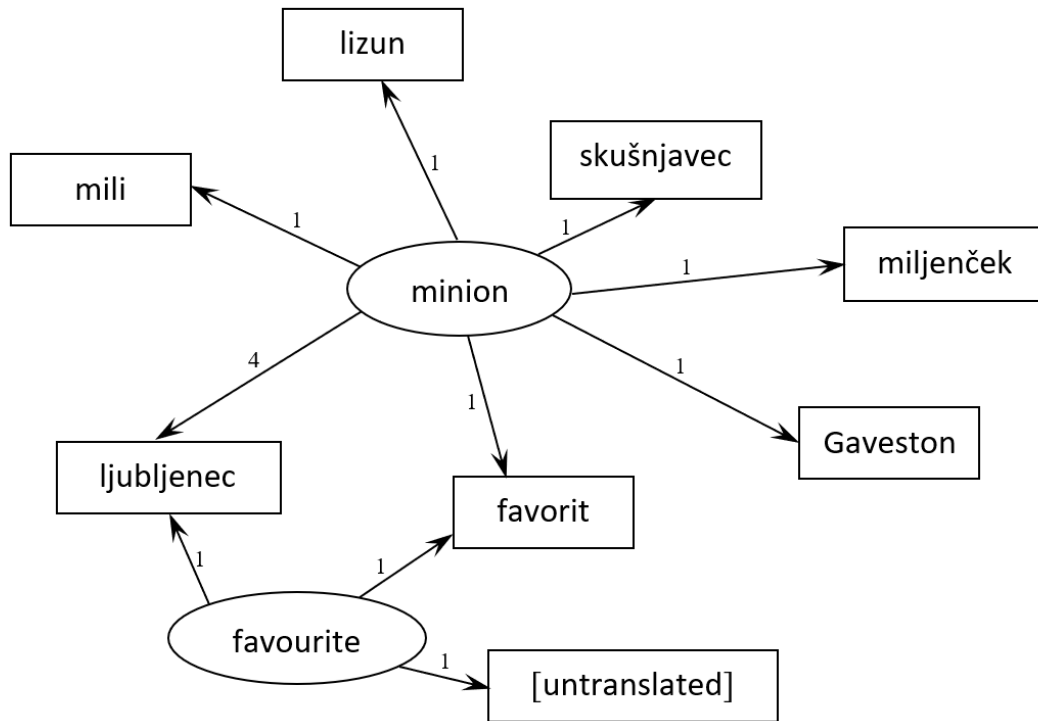


Figure 4: Examples of lexical variation and synonymisation in the Slovenian translation of Edward the Second (numbers indicate the occurrences of each translation).

### “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”

Patrick Cheney locates Marlowe’s lyric poem “The Passionate Shepherd” at “the center of a complex and learned intertextual system,”<sup>59</sup> including, among others, Virgil’s *Eclogue 2* (the confession of the shepherd Corydon who pursues the beautiful but unresponsive Alexis), which is “a key text in the pastoral tradition.”<sup>60</sup> These intertextual links are also relevant to the question of translation. Marlowe’s poem (in its 1599 version) was first translated by Janko Moder and published in 1973 as part of *The Passionate Pilgrim* in the translation of Shakespeare’s *Collected Works*.<sup>61</sup> Its 1600 version was rendered by Janez Menart and published in *Antologija angleške poezije* (Anthology of English Poetry) in 1996.<sup>62</sup> Upon

<sup>59</sup> Patrick Cheney, “‘The Passionate Shepherd to His Love’ and *Hero and Leander*,” in *Christopher Marlowe at 450*, ed. Sara Munson Deats and Robert A. Logan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 169.

<sup>60</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 147.

<sup>61</sup> William Shakespeare, *Zbrana dela*, 14 (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1973), 127.

<sup>62</sup> Marjan Strojjan, ed., *Antologija angleške poezije* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1996), 102–103. The translated text of the poem had already been read in a broadcast on English Renaissance poetry on Radio Slovenia three years earlier.

reading the source text, especially the untitled, 1599 version of the poem, it is unclear who the subject is, who the addressee is, and in particular what gender they are. The 1600 version title (“The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”) partially limits the interpretative possibilities by assigning male gender to the speaker, although the identities in the poem itself are ambiguous and the addressee’s gender remains unspecified.<sup>63</sup>

On the other hand, both Slovenian translators disambiguated the semantic polyvalence of the source texts and radically narrowed the interpretative potential by assigning the speaker male gender and the addressee female gender. Undoubtedly, there are sometimes unbridgeable differences between languages (an important one being that Slovenian is a highly gendered language), but the fact remains that the translations of the poems cancel out the analyses and readings—and there have been many in recent decades—that focus on the intricacies of gender, gender roles and sexuality. This is not an isolated case. Incidentally, the two translators of Marlowe’s plays are also the authors of the two integral Slovenian translations of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* (Menart in 1965 and Fišer in 2005). These were traditionally understood as falling into two groups: sonnets 1–126 were said to celebrate a handsome young man and sonnets 127–154 were thought to address a “dark lady.” The textual truth, however, is that the addressees in most of the sonnets are ungendered and unspecified. In confronting gender ambiguity in the source texts, both translators followed the traditionally assumed gendering of the sonnets, but Fišer maintained neutrality in a slightly larger proportion of the sonnets than Menart.

### **Staging Marlowe’s plays**

The first productions of Marlowe in continental Europe were by travelling English actors. In January 1608, an English company performed *Doctor Faustus* (probably by Marlowe) and *The Jew of Malta* in the Austrian town of Graz,<sup>64</sup> the capital of Inner Austria, which at that time included territories with Slovenian population. Visiting theatre groups in Slovenian lands are less well documented. According to Jurak, it is very likely that “in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century some English actors who had been expelled from England by the Puritans in 1642 and joined travelling theatre companies in Germany came to

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<sup>63</sup> Georgia E. Brown, “Marlowe’s Poems and Classicism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Patrick Cheney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 114–115; Tom Rutter, *The Cambridge Introduction to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 111–112.

<sup>64</sup> Bevington and Rasmussen, “Introduction,” 49–50.

Ljubljana.”<sup>65</sup> The first visit by a German theatre group is reported to have taken place in 1653, and it seems that the Insbruggerische Comödianten—whose repertory included mythological and pastoral plays, as well as Marlowe’s and Kyd’s works translated into German—played in Ljubljana in 1662, but they did not perform Marlowe.<sup>66</sup> On 23 January 1702, German-speaking actors staged a “comedy about Faustus” in Ljubljana’s Townhall, but since different *Faustuses* were circulating at the time, it is not clear which version they performed.<sup>67</sup>

Some Slovenian theatre practitioners had already considered staging Marlowe long before the first translation and performance in 1972. Fifty years earlier, the Slovenian newspaper *Jutro* published the news that the Czech National Theatre in Prague had staged *Edward the Second*,<sup>68</sup> in the same year, the director Osip Šest (1893–1962) mentioned this Czech production, regretting not having seen it.<sup>69</sup> It was also he who, in 1939, on the occasion of his 200<sup>th</sup> stage production and 20 years of working as director, contemplated putting *Edward* on the Slovenian stage.<sup>70</sup> Afterwards, the regional theatre in the town of Kranj planned *Doctor Faustus* for its 1952 repertory, but nothing came of it,<sup>71</sup> and the play was not staged until twenty years later in another regional theatre, in Celje (directed by Franci Križaj). The second and third productions of Marlowe followed in 2005 (*Edward the Second*, directed by Diego de Brea, Slovenian National Theatre in Ljubljana) and 2006 (*Doctor Faustus*, directed by Diego de Brea, Slovenian National Theatre in Nova Gorica). What follows is very far from a comprehensive evaluation of the Slovenian productions of Marlowe; instead, I will highlight only one aspect of each production in line with my overall emphasis on Marlowe’s dissidence.

The 1972 performance of *Faustus* employed gender non-normativity (in this case cross-dressing) for comic purposes, at a time when there was little understanding of its implications. The “Devil dressed like a woman” (5.192) that Mephistopheles introduces to Faustus, arousing revulsion in him, was played by a supposedly “comically” cross-dressed male actor. On the other hand, Helen of Troy, who for Faustus signifies everything that is

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<sup>65</sup> Mirko Jurak, “Pogledi na razvoj angleške poezije,” in *Antologija angleške poezije*, ed. Marjan Strojjan (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1996), 776.

<sup>66</sup> Dušan Ludvik, *Nemško gledališče v Ljubljani do leta 1790* (Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 1957), 20–21.

<sup>67</sup> Ludvik, *Nemško gledališče*, 23.

<sup>68</sup> “Marlowe v češčini,” *Jutro*, February 2, 1922, 2.

<sup>69</sup> O. Šest, “Počitniški film.” *Slovenski narod*, November 3, 1922, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Maša Sl., “Dve sto režij prof. Šesta.” *Jutro*, May 20, 1939, 7. In the 1920s and 1930s, Šest directed a number of plays by Shakespeare, as well as, in 1929, Zweig’s adaptation of Jonson’s *Volpone*.

<sup>71</sup> “Kaj bodo igrali v slovenskih dramskih gledališčih,” *Ljudska pravica*, August 9, 1952, 8.

beautiful, was played by an actress—although, ontologically, Helen of Troy and the devil in feminine attire are related: they are both masks put on by the devil. By opting for an actress to play beautiful Helen and a cross-dressed (and therefore presumably repulsive or comic) actor to play the devil, the performance reinforced (and reflected) traditional interpretations of Helen and the devil as well as gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, the 2006 performance of *Doctor Faustus*—with a radically slimmed down list of characters, which only consisted of Faustus, Wagner, Mephistopheles, Evil Angel, Good Angel, Cornelius, Valdes, two scholars and Lucifer—made all the “spirits” that it did not cut altogether invisible to everyone but Faustus. This was supported by the ending of the performance: Faustus, in a comical costume throughout, remained on stage without anything obvious happening to him. In sharp contrast to the medieval belief system, the production seems to have placed all Faustus’s struggles in his mind (perhaps hinting at his mental instability) and called into question any objectively demonstrable existence or power of supernatural beings and religion.

The reviewers described this *Doctor Faustus* as a grotesquely stylised and tragicomic morality play.<sup>72</sup> They emphasised the production’s tendency towards the grotesque, “touching on the tragic and escaping into the comic.”<sup>73</sup> The performance was also defined as a comic tragedy and parodic grotesque.<sup>74</sup> The reviews draw a confused, bewildered man<sup>75</sup> and a neurotic explorer with Faustus in the actor Ivo Barišič’s depiction delimited by helplessness and whims.<sup>76</sup> Slavko Pezdir described him as “clownishly feminised (with a woman’s wig and curlers, a clumsy white ‘plate’ around his neck and high heels).”<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Tanja Lesničar-Pučko considered Faustus and Wagner in this staging to be a burlesque couple and the performance an empty, superficial and aestheticised image without tension.<sup>78</sup>

The textual and critical controversy about the method of the King’s murder in *Edward the Second*, often discussed in association with the King’s sexuality, was resolved in the 2005 Slovenian production by Lightborn not giving any instructions about what to prepare for the murder. The infamous spit was not mentioned at all. The act of the murder was carried out by Edward being nailed horizontally onto a table on which he was lying. This can be linked to

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<sup>72</sup> Slavko Pezdir, “Zgodba o pogubljenju,” *Delo*, April 3, 2006, 26.

<sup>73</sup> Lea Širok, “Dr. Faust v SNG Nova Gorica,” *Danes do 13h*, Radio Slovenija, March 31, 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Iva Koršič, “Pogubna zaveza s hudičem,” *Novi glas*, April 27, 2006, 13.

<sup>75</sup> Andraž Gombač, “Pekel v nas, mi v peklu,” *Primorske novice*, April 1, 2006, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Širok, “Dr. Faust.”

<sup>77</sup> Pezdir, “Zgodba o pogubljenju,” 26.

<sup>78</sup> Tanja Lesničar - Pučko, “Od komične opere do prazne estetizacije,” *Dnevnik*, April 3, 2006,

the more general attitude of Diego de Brea's production towards the King's sexuality. The reviews published at the time quoted the dramaturge and director of *Edward the Second* as saying that the King was characterised above all by his homoeroticism.<sup>79</sup> In my interviews with them almost a decade later, however, both claimed that they did not consider homoeroticism to be Edward's central problem. Nevertheless, in the production, the King's adversaries were very direct in their non-linguistic communication and their behaviour and actions—especially gestures, gesticulations, simulations of rape, etc.—could hardly be understood as anything else but a sexually violent and homophobic shaming of the King's supposed sexual non-normativity. And yet the actor Janez Škof played Edward as petulant and childish,<sup>80</sup> whimsical, infantile and stubborn, helpless, erotically confused,<sup>81</sup> incompetent, semi-infantile, and mentally and physically decaying,<sup>82</sup> and bordering on madness.<sup>83</sup> This—along with several comic interludes—leaves us with the dilemma of whether the King's love was to be taken seriously and evoke sympathy and affection, or just another element of his childish wilfulness and foolish stubbornness. According to Jaša Drnovšek, the comic elements and the “semi-improvised gags” made fun, without any good reason, of the characters and the relationship between the King and Gaveston.<sup>84</sup>

Having seen both de Brea's productions and considered the reviews, one can conclude that the director created comic or grotesque performances based on Marlowe's tragedies. The two main characters, Faustus and Edward, were characterised in these performances—mainly by non-linguistic means—as comical and infantile. The reasons for this are open to speculation, but the change is undoubtedly significant.

## **Conclusion**

One of the first Slovenian authors to have admired Shakespeare was Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756–1795), a playwright and historian (best known as the author of the first stage play in Slovenian), who got to know Shakespeare's plays in Vienna. When he wrote his first play (in German), *Miss Jenny Love* (1779), he explicitly acknowledged Shakespeare's influence.<sup>85</sup> Theatregoers in Slovenia (mostly in Ljubljana) could see Shakespeare performed by German

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<sup>79</sup> Gregor Butala, “S prestola v greznico,” *Dnevnik*, June 3, 2005, 19; Tanja Jaklič, “Diego de Brea in Edvard Drugi,” *Nedelo*, June 5, 2005, 20; S. S., “Edvard Drugi,” *Delo*, June 4, 2005, 12.

<sup>80</sup> Ana Perne, “Kraljeva homoerotičnost,” *Finance*, June 7, 2005, 20.

<sup>81</sup> Vesna Jurca Tadel, “Igračkanje z oblastjo,” *Delo*, June 10, 2005, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Špela Šink, “Horizontalno križanje,” *Delo*, June 11, 2005, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Marjana Ravnjak, “Edvard II. na odru ljubljanske Drame,” *Odmevi*, TV Slovenija, June 6, 2005.

<sup>84</sup> Jaša Drnovšek, “Med tekom in kričanjem,” *Dnevnik*, June 6, 2005, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Moravec, “Shakespeare pri Slovencih,” 178.

theatre troupes in German between the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, for instance *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard the Third* and *King Lear*.<sup>86</sup> During that time, the English language and English culture were less influential, with German generally playing a much more central role, and German was also frequently used as an intermediary language in translation. The first translations and criticism of Shakespeare also date from the 1860s and 1870s, and translations began to be printed at the turn of the twentieth century, first tragedies and comedies, followed in the 1950s by histories, which had been considered less important until then. By the 1960s all Shakespeare's texts had been translated, leading to the publication of his *Collected Works*.<sup>87</sup> Some texts have been translated more than once (*Hamlet*, for instance, six times, *Sonnets* twice, etc). The first play by Shakespeare to be staged in Slovenian was *Othello* in 1896,<sup>88</sup> over 75 years before the first Marlowe production. Since then, there have been frequent Shakespeare performances by professional, amateur, student and other groups and theatres.

Compared to Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe has struggled to enter the Slovenian literary and theatrical landscapes, and still today he is not a strong presence. The history of Marlowe's reception is mostly a history of brief remarks and relatively cursory observations, which appear in predictable contexts: Marlowe is most often mentioned as Shakespeare's predecessor, contemporary or role model, or as one of the most important Elizabethan playwrights and innovators of blank verse. He is mentioned less often as a poet or translator; "The Passionate Shepherd" has been translated into Slovenian, but is less frequently discussed, and *Hero and Leander* is hardly known at all. Among Marlowe's plays, *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward the Second* are given prominence, which follows from the fact that these are the only Marlowe plays to have been translated and staged (1972, 2006 and 2005 respectively). Marlowe is often referenced in discussions of the Faust motif as the first to turn it into a work of literature. Another topic with Marlowe sometimes appearing in a supporting role is anti-Semitism (especially with his *The Jew of Malta*). And yet—leaving aside Shakespeare, whose position and popularity among early modern English authors are unrivalled (including in Slovenia)—the three productions of Marlowe's two plays as well as criticism of his work compare quite favourably to his other (near) contemporaries, who have been staged: Jonson (*Volpone* in 1970, 2004 and 2019),<sup>89</sup> Webster (*The Duchess of Malfi* in

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<sup>86</sup> Moravec, "Shakespeare pri Slovencih," 180.

<sup>87</sup> Stanovnik, *Slovenski literarni prevod*, 122.

<sup>88</sup> Moravec, "Shakespeare pri Slovencih," 206.

<sup>89</sup> Previously it had been staged a number of times in Stefan Zweig's adaptation.

1988),<sup>90</sup> Middleton (*The Changeling* in 2009 and, with Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens* in 2013).

Modern translation analyses tend to avoid impressionistic descriptions of translations as, for example, good or nice-sounding, but even complex analyses linking micro-, meso- and macro-textual levels can sometimes seem impressionistic. The subjective aspects of meaning-making make it challenging for translation scholars to state unambiguously to what extent individual micro-textual shifts affect the macro level, especially if they restrict themselves to a relatively narrow lexical and semantic analysis such as my own. Given the polysemy of literary texts, every shift is potentially significant, although it is difficult to say exactly how it affects the meaning of the text as a whole, since there are no objective criteria for interpersonal verification of such conclusions. Each text is read and understood differently even by readers socialised in the same environment, let alone by those from different social and historical backgrounds (e.g. Elizabethan England and twentieth-century Slovenia). Furthermore, it is difficult to know exactly how particular terms are used in the source text. Although some authors consider Marlowe to be very precise when writing, for instance, about magic and theology or male friendships, his plays are nevertheless literary texts (as well as blockbusters of early modern commercial theatre), not scientific writings.

The polysemies of source and target texts are not the same, even though both texts are polysemic in their own ways, and each translation or stage production creates new meanings that necessarily diverge from the texts on which it is based. It should also be stressed that just as the translator can only render their understanding of the source text, the translation scholar can only analyse their understanding of their relationships between source and target texts, and the theatre critic can only analyse their understanding of the performance. Thus, while it is possible to describe the shifts that occur in translation and production more or less objectively, their interpretation is just that—an interpretation, just as each translation and each production is an interpretation itself.

Despite these concerns, my analyses of the translations of the selected lexemes from *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward the Second* allow me to say that apart from observable lexical variation, synonymisation and reduction (the exact significance of which at the macro textual level is difficult to assess) and the fact that the Slovenian translation of *Doctor Faustus* tends, perhaps a little more than the English original, towards an atheistic framing of Faustus, there is no obviously perceptible ideological censorship or significant reduction in textual

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<sup>90</sup> Webster's *The White Devil* was translated by Janez Menart and published in 2004, but never staged.



polysemy in the Slovenian translations of Marlowe's plays. However, an obvious shift occurred in the translations of both versions of "The Passionate Shepherd," which heteronormalise Marlowe's poem.

On the other hand, translation shifts occurring in Marlowe's plays are hardly noteworthy compared to the transformations taking place in stage performances. The latest two productions (both directed by the same director) intervened extensively at the levels of the text (abridgement, omission, rearrangement), *dramatis personae* (omission, merging) and action. The main reasons for this lie in the nature of bringing a dramatic text into a new medium as well as in the artistic, ideological and other decisions made by the creators of theatre performances. And thus Marlowe—or "the Marlowe effect,"<sup>91</sup> that is, the editorial, critical, translational and theatrical constructs that are always in the making—can be anything from "a sort of Elizabethan James Bond"<sup>92</sup> to "a kind of cross between Oscar Wilde and Jack the Ripper."<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Thomas Healy, *Christopher Marlowe* (Plymouth: Northcote House and the British Council, 1994), 1.

<sup>92</sup> Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 1.

<sup>93</sup> Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 19.

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