

## Marlowe in Sheets: Teaching Christopher Marlowe's Books Through Digital Materiality

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“Hold, take this booke, peruse it thorowly”

Christopher Marlowe<sup>1</sup>

The online resource *Marlowe in Sheets*, a sister project to Tara Lyons' *Shakespeare in Sheets*, puts forth Marlowe's works in a manner never offered before to students and scholars: the original printed but unfolded and uncut quartos and octavos from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, reformatted and rebuilt into custom downloadable PDFs for academic and public use.<sup>2</sup> Playing with digital reproductions of Marlowe's widely studied works in their first printed form enriches the study of pre-modern literature by enabling users to navigate and engage critically with the fields of the history of the book, bibliography, and the history of reading. A strong focus on how readers first came across and interacted with early printed texts highlights the marked differences these unassembled works possess in terms of form and appearance compared to their modern-day equivalents, which are generally heavily edited, annotated, prefaced, equipped with reading aids and guides, and, most of all, ready-made. The primary advantages afforded to us by accessing the original physical book forms of Marlowe's corpus and bridging the domains of the digital and material with Renaissance literature are twofold. First, user-printable, -foldable, -cuttable, and -creatable paper Marlowe books provide a unique hands-on experience that enhances understanding of how the texts came into being, from their initial state as sheets in the printing house, through wholesale and retail distribution as stacks of leaves in the stationer's shop, to the eventual book assembly and interpretation by readers. Second, digital renditions of Marlowe's earliest material books

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I would like to express my gratitude to the special edition editors, Adam Hansen and Paul Frazer, for this opportunity to showcase my digital humanities project. Additionally, I am grateful for the valuable feedback and insightful comments provided by the anonymous reviewer at the *Journal of Marlowe Studies*, which greatly contributed to improving this piece.

<sup>1</sup> *Doctor Faustus* (London: 1604), STC 17429, sig. C2r.

<sup>2</sup> To view the *Marlowe in Sheets* project and access and download the PDFs, please visit [www.snm.ds.lib.uw.edu/marloweinsheets/](http://www.snm.ds.lib.uw.edu/marloweinsheets/)

offer a pedagogical tool for educators to incorporate into applicable learning environments. By actively participating in the process of physically (re)making Marlowe's books—that is, printing, folding, cutting, trimming, stitching or binding, and personalizing sheets—the *Marlowe in Sheets* team contends that users can immerse themselves and experience first-hand key aspects of pre-modern print culture that might otherwise be difficult to grasp. Ultimately, constructing Marlowe's books can foster a more intimate, material connection to the Renaissance literature we still cherish, study, purchase, preserve, and rely on today.

This project takes inspiration from and is indebted to the *Shakespeare in Sheets* project created by Tara Lyons at Illinois State University. As Lyons states, her “project recreates [Shakespeare's] early plays and books in printable and foldable sheets of paper,” offering various downloadable PDFs that resemble unfolded quartos (pages approximately 9½"x12" when folded) and octavos (pages approximately 6"x9" when folded).<sup>3</sup> The concept for *Marlowe in Sheets* was realized during correspondence with Prof. Lyons in the summer of 2021 when we suggested the potential expansion of the *Shakespeare in Sheets* model to encompass other playwrights from Shakespeare's era. Marlowe was selected for our offshoot project for several key reasons. For a start, while separated by only two months in age, Marlowe's career as a London playwright preceded Shakespeare's by a few years. Plays such as *The Jew of Malta*, *Tamburlaine*, and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* graced the commercial stage in the 1580s, with print publications following in the early 1590s before and shortly after his death in 1593 (*Tamburlaine* in 1590 and 1593, *Dido, Edward II*, and *The Massacre at Paris* in 1594).<sup>4</sup> Marlowe's literary influence can also be seen in Shakespeare's work.<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Logan has argued that Shakespeare drew influence, wittingly or unwittingly, from many of Marlowe's theatrical and literary practices, appropriating Marlovian dramaturgical techniques, such as plot, characterization, and thematic structure, as well as linguistic style

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<sup>3</sup> Tara Lyons, “Shakespeare in Sheets,” *Shakespeare in Sheets: Making Shakespeare Books*, accessed August 28, 2023. [www.about.illinoisstate.edu/shakespeareinsheets/](http://www.about.illinoisstate.edu/shakespeareinsheets/). For the approximate dimensions of early book formats, see Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 80–87.

<sup>4</sup> Dates of first performance derived from *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks*, ed. Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser. Created 2007. Accessed 2 October 2023. <http://deep.sas.upenn.edu>.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean find lines from *Doctor Faustus* echoed in Shakespeare's *King John*; Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and Their Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 156–158. Charles Nicholl states that Shakespeare's “relations with Marlowe are unrecorded except in the form of Marlowe's literary influence on him, though their collaboration on the *Henry VI* cycle, or some antecedent version of it, remains a possibility.” Charles Nicholl, “Marlowe [Marley], Christopher (bap. 1564, d. 1593), playwright and poet,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 725.

throughout his career.<sup>6</sup> The editors of *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (2016) even identify and credit—rather controversially—Marlowe as Shakespeare’s collaborator (or co-author) in *1, 2, and 3 Henry VI*.<sup>7</sup> A special focus on retrieving Marlowe is warranted in a different way when we think about the fact that Marlowe’s posthumously published books were publicly destroyed at the end of the sixteenth century. The Bishops’ Ban of 1599 ordered the burning of Marlowe’s English translation of select Ovidian elegies in *Epigrammes and Elegies by I.D. and C.M.* (1599, STC 6350.5) with the stipulation “That no Satires or Epigrams be printed hereafter.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, handling Marlowe sheets in the modern day may perhaps evoke a kind of *saudade*, given their destructive past and relative scarcity when compared to Shakespeare, who enjoyed a much more extensive record of print publication during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. More practically, though, Marlowe’s extant single- and first-edition dramatic output, in comparison to Shakespeare, is much smaller (seven versus twenty-one, respectively) and, therefore, more manageable to publish in its entirety.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, it is worth noting that several printers of Marlowe’s earliest books also printed Shakespeare’s books.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, we should consider the story of Marlowe’s posthumous rise in the early English book trade as somewhat intertwined with the gradual proliferation of Shakespearean print. Considered together, then, *Marlowe in Sheets* and *Shakespeare in Sheets* serve as natural companions for explorations into the workings of early English print culture, particularly in the context of belletristic literature.

The *Marlowe in Sheets* project also emerged from the idea that the book-historical discourse surrounding Marlowe’s works—often produced by and written for specialists—could be rendered more intelligible to students of early modern literature. We see the construction of books from loose sheets as one starting point for making specialized Marlowe

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<sup>6</sup> Robert A. Logan, *Shakespeare’s Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare’s Artistry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan, eds., *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Critical Reference Edition*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640 A. D.*, vol. 3 (London, 1876), 677. The order specifically lists Marlowe’s name: “DAVYES *Epigrams*, with MARLOWEs *Elegyes*.” For a literary contextualization of the Bishops’ Ban, see Adam Hansen, “Writing, London, and the Bishops’ Ban of 1599,” *London Journal* 43, no. 2 (2018): 102–19.

<sup>9</sup> *Marlowe in Sheets* also features *Hero and Leander* in its list of available PDFs.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Allde printed *The Massacre at Paris* (1594, STC 17423) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1597, STC 22322); Richard Bradock printed *Edward II* (1598, STC 17438) and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1600, STC 22302); Valentine Simmes printed Shakespeare’s *Richard II* (1597, STC 22307; 1598, STC 22308; 1598 STC 22309), *Richard III* (1597, STC 22314), *2 Henry VI* (1600, STC 26100), *2 Henry IV* (1600, STC 22288), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600, STC 22304), *Hamlet* (1603, STC 22275), and *1 Henry IV* (1604, STC 22282) before printing Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (1604, STC).

studies more accessible to non-specialists. Frequently, even with advanced students, bibliographical and book-historical research involves the use of online resources, such as *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, to consult digital facsimiles for the sake of convenience rather than embarking on the seemingly intimidating or unfamiliar trip to special collections or archives. But digital reproductions of books can sometimes inadvertently obscure the processes of textual production and assembly.<sup>11</sup> Students across all levels in humanities disciplines have much to gain from the hands-on examination of (and close engagement with) the primary artefacts that inform their studies. To those ends, this project connects students with facsimiles of loose sheets that once circulated in the early modern book trade and were handled by Marlowe's earliest readers.

*Marlowe in Sheets* made its public debut as a digital exhibit at the 2023 Shakespeare Association of America annual conference in Minneapolis, MN. The exhibit brought professors and students into dialogue over Marlowe's first publications with multiple sample sheet sets on display for conference attendees to demo. We intend to reapply as a digital exhibit for the 2024 Shakespeare Association of America annual conference in Portland, OR in order to exhibit forthcoming Marlowe sheet PDFs (*1 and 2 Tamburlaine*, *The Massacre at Paris*), as well as to continue to engage with the early modern studies community. Our goal is to offer an expanded range of sample sheet sets for students and teachers to use in their home institutions. We welcome future feedback on their usage, successes, and challenges in the classroom (*Marlowe in Sheets* feedback form under development). Additionally, we aspire to present our project at an academic function in Marlowe's home country of England.

In accordance with the objectives of *Shakespeare in Sheets*, the primary contribution of *Marlowe in Sheets* to the broad discipline of early modern studies lies in the publicly accessible digital publication of Marlowe's drama and poetry in these uncut, foldable sheets in quarto and octavo formats. Supported by generous funding and support from the Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA, and with permissions granted by the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Harry Ransom Center at The University of Texas Library at Austin, the Huntington Library, and the Zurich Central Library in Germany, the *Marlowe in Sheets* team initiated the project during the summer of 2022. This endeavor involved the retrieval and reverse-engineering of .JPEG and .TIFF

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<sup>11</sup> For example, consider Jeffrey Todd Knight's call to "do archival research *in archives*," as less visible components of the book, such as the "ghost image," sometimes do not appear in digital reproductions; see Jeffrey Todd Knight, "Invisible Ink: A Note on Ghost Images in Early Printed Books," *Textual Cultures: Text, Contexts, Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2010): 53–62.

facsimiles of playbooks *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1594, STC 17441), *Doctor Faustus* (1611, STC 17431), *Edward II* (1594, STC 17423), and *The Jew of Malta* (1633, STC 17412), and the poetry book *Hero and Leander* (1598, STC 17414) into double-sided A3-size sheets, faithfully replicating the original format in which these works were first printed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century London. In addition to A3-size sheets, *Marlowe in Sheets* PDFs are also available in the more common A4-size format to enhance the accessibility of the project for those unable to obtain A3 paper and a printer capable of printing A3 paper. We believe this added feature, combined with printer settings and comprehensive instructions for printing and folding, makes our project more approachable and convenient to everyday users.



Fig. 1. First side of the first sheet of Marlowe in Sheets PDF *The Jew of Malta*, STC 17412, courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

In terms of the digitization process, the *Marlowe in Sheets* team employed photo editing software on macOS to first resize and convert each Marlowe text's facsimile images to black and white color. Next, we split two-page scans into single-page images, organized these single-page images into sets of four (or eight, in the case of octavo texts), arranged to recreate the out-of-reading-order patterns in which quarto sheet sides were originally printed.<sup>12</sup> We then touched up image quality for readability (i.e., adjusting image darkness and contrast, and erasing ink blots caused by bleed-through from the opposite side of the sheet). Finally, the team compiled and exported these sheets into single PDF files. Most of these files, minus a few works in progress, are available for viewing and download on the *Marlowe in Sheets* website.<sup>13</sup>

So, what do scholars, teachers, and students of the English Renaissance gain from this approach to engaging Marlowe's literary works? We propose that *Marlowe in Sheets* creates three distinctive inroads into early English print culture, each possessing informative and educational value. First, it provides an opportunity to learn about the bygone and seemingly antiquated ways of hand-press era book printing, making, and assembly. Second, it enables us to reacquaint ourselves with how early modern book buyers, as active participants in print culture, encountered, interacted with, and physically fashioned books. Third, it offers free digital-material teaching tools and a repository of relevant publications and digital projects that can be used to supplement the study of Marlovian literature.

### **Marlowe in the Printing House**

Bibliographers and book historians know that, initially, after being printed and hung up to dry, early modern hand-printed books had their many sheets (measuring approximately 12"x19") laid out in piles according to their signatures before being gathered into complete copies of books, a process unfamiliar to most of us in the modern day. Once all sheets were collated, they were typically folded, pressed, and bundled into bales for transport or storage, still resembling a distinct unbookish pile of papers, rather than the familiar book form we know today. Finally, these sheets were moved into storage at a stationer's shop in preparation for future wholesaling.<sup>14</sup> However, the manifold processes involved in the manufacturing of a book, including tasks such as setting type, imposing pages, and presswork, can sometimes be

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<sup>12</sup> For format diagrams of quarto and octavo sheets, see Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, 89–95.

<sup>13</sup> "Download Marlowe's Plays and Poetry," *Marlowe in Sheets*.  
[www.srn.mds.lib.uw.edu/marloweinsheets/marlowe-in-sheets/](http://www.srn.mds.lib.uw.edu/marloweinsheets/marlowe-in-sheets/)

<sup>14</sup> Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, 143–145.

challenging to fully grasp in the abstract, particularly for individuals new to book-historical research. The *Marlowe in Sheets* PDFs provide a means to access and observe first-hand the work of the printing houses responsible for producing books for public consumption.

Whether used in isolation or paired with the academic study of Marlowe's works, these full sheets serve as entry points and catalysts for discussion aimed at deepening our understanding of pre-modern printing practices that materialized the canonical Renaissance literature we still read and study today. In this capacity, the project also encourages us to interrogate the history of reading, prompting us to (re)examine and (re)interpret how early English readers participated in the process of meaning-making through not only the physical forms, but also the construction of books.

We envision one approach to using the *Marlowe in Sheets* PDFs in the classroom as follows:

1. Begin by selecting one Marlowe text for the exercise.
2. Print enough PDF copies for the total number of students in the class. These can be printed on A3 or A4 paper.
3. Split printed PDF sheets into separate stacks, arranged by signatures.
4. Instruct students to collect one sheet from each stack (in arranged order).
5. After gathering all sheets, students should follow the *Marlowe in Sheets* folding instructions to fold their sheets correctly.<sup>15</sup>
6. Once all sheets are folded, students can choose to secure the folds or spines of their sheets through stab-stitching or stapling.<sup>16</sup>
7. Finally, students can work collaboratively to cut and trim their assembled books to their preferred size.<sup>17</sup>

This exercise allows students to physically handle and grapple with facsimiles of primary source material without the need to visit an institution's special collections or archives. Subsequent questions and discussion points may include: the significant time and labor required to transform multiple sheets into a sequential book fit for reading; constructing (and

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<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, for folding and stab-stitching instructions, see the Folger Shakespeare Library's *DIY Quarto* project: [www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeare-in-print/diy-quarto/#about-diy-quarto](http://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeare-in-print/diy-quarto/#about-diy-quarto).

<sup>16</sup> For the significance of "stab-stitching" in small-format early English playbooks and literature more broadly, see Aaron T. Pratt, "Stab-Stitching and the Status of Early English Playbooks as Literature," *The Library*, 7th ser., 16.3 (2015): 304–28.

<sup>17</sup> An alternative approach might consider assigning students to work in small groups and tasking them with the assembly of sheets without providing any instructions. This method would encourage students to use inductive reasoning to solve the problem of correctly folding Marlowe sheets into a sequential book.

reading) books without pagination, relying on signatures instead; the (in)stability of early modern hand-press books; the malleability and combinatory potential latent in sheets as well as the practice of readers bundling multiple works together to create larger *Sammelbände*; the ephemeral nature of early modern print culture.<sup>18</sup> To foster and facilitate further inquiries into the activities of the printing house, user assembly of small-format books, and related subjects, the *Marlowe in Sheets* website will also feature a bibliography page with curated lists of secondary sources and external links to other related digital projects, such as the University of Victoria's *The Map of Early Modern London* (MoEML), Rob Carson's *Marlowe Census*, and the Folger Shakespeare Library's *DIY Quarto*.<sup>19</sup>

In a similar vein, having access to the full gamut of Marlowe sheets allows us to reimagine the local experiences of the first book browsers, readers, and buyers who came across Marlowe's works while walking the streets of early modern London. One way this is accomplished is through examining extant title leaves or the swift reading and intelligence gathering of a book's contents through scrutiny of its title-page. Literary students and scholars generally know, by rote, the names of Marlowe's works; but rarely do we analyze the advertised title-pages and printed titles of Marlowe's books from the 1590s and early 1600s, which served as important paratexts for both on-the-ground readers and publishing and bookselling stationers in the London book trade.<sup>20</sup> As Paul J. Voss and Stern have shown, title-pages were affixed to posts and hard surfaces all around London to advertise the sale of new books and specifically where these books could be purchased wholesale by other stationers looking to stock up their shops.<sup>21</sup> Book buyers seeking newly published reading material could also use the information provided in the imprint to locate the site of the wholesaling stationer's shop.<sup>22</sup> Michael Saenger has argued that, as a commodity, the title-page played a unique, critical role in the book's marketing because, unlike other wares, such

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<sup>18</sup> For modularity in early English compilation culture, see Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Janelle Jenstad, dir., *The Map of Early Modern London* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 2006–present) <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca>; Rob Carson, ed., *Marlowe Census* (2021–present). [www.marlowecensus.org](http://www.marlowecensus.org).

<sup>20</sup> For the significance of title-pages and titles in literature, see “The title page and its appendages” and Chapter 4 “Titles” in Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 33, 55–103. For difficulties in applying Genette's theories on paratexts to the early modern period, see the Introduction of Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, eds., *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–14.

<sup>21</sup> Paul J. Voss, “Printing Conventions and the Early Modern Play,” *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 15 (2003): 98–115; Chapter 2 “Playbills and title-pages” in Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36–62.

<sup>22</sup> The fact that “the name of the seller registered when reading title-page advertisements suggests that passers-by might also consider buying from the wholeseller's shop”; Stern, *Documents of Performance*, 271.



as food, fabric, and jewelry, which did not come attached with self-advertising inscriptions, “the book . . . was special because rather than being an object which was marketed with discourse, it was an object which was in large part constituted by the very discourse which framed it: it was an object which transformed itself into a commodity.”<sup>23</sup> In addition to serving as standalone advertisements across London, title-pages were regularly displayed on stalls in shopfronts for passersby to view before inquiring into the purchase of specific books. Thus, readers not only chanced upon posted title-pages in various parts of London, even when not actively seeking out books, but they also came across these single-page adverts in the frontages of bookshops and could use them as visual aids to assist in gauging levels of interest in for-sale literature and determining whether to open their purses for a purchase.

### Marlowe on Posts and Stalls

Considering these circumstances, what might closer attention to Marlowe’s title-pages reveal about their promotional strategies, and how might this help us interpret the texts (and their producers and readerships) themselves? What details do the title-pages disclose, emphasize, and elevate? Conversely, what do they downplay, omit, and ignore? How might their printed titles “open and close paths of interpretation,” as Jeffrey Todd Knight has observed in Shakespeare’s small-format plays, while also prescribing and shaping interpretive possibilities?<sup>24</sup> Without examining the original title-page, we would not know, for instance, that the first (and only) 1594 quarto of the Children of the Chapel play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* by Marlowe and Thomas Nashe, advertises the full cast of “actors” or characters, a somewhat uncommon feature for playbooks stemming from London’s professional companies in the 1590s.<sup>25</sup> Might Thomas Woodcock, *Dido*’s publishing bookseller, have

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Saenger, *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Todd Knight, “Shakespeare in Bundles,” in *Shakespearean Configurations*, special issue of *Early Modern Literary Studies* 21 (2013).

<sup>25</sup> *The Tragedie of Dido Queene of Carthage* (1594, STC 17441), sig. [A1]r. To the best of my knowledge, *Dido* appears to be the first playbook to feature both a professional company attribution and a character list on its title-page. While character lists can be commonly found on the title-pages of earlier interludes, such as Ulpien Fulwel’s *Like Will to Like* (1584, STC 11474), Nathaniel Woodes’ *The Conflict of Conscience* (1581, STC 25966), and Thomas Garter’s *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* (1578, STC 11632.5), they are not a common feature of professional playbooks that were published during the 1590s. Thomas Lupton’s *All for Money* (1578, STC 16949) is an adult professional playbook with a character list on the title-page, but it does not feature a company attribution. The same applies to possible professional playbooks *Common Conditions* (1576, STC 5592) and George Wapull’s *The Tide Tarrieth No Man* (1576, STC 25018).

envisioned that his customers would appreciate a complete character list, thereby making his new playbook stand out from other books at his shop or neighboring establishments?<sup>26</sup>

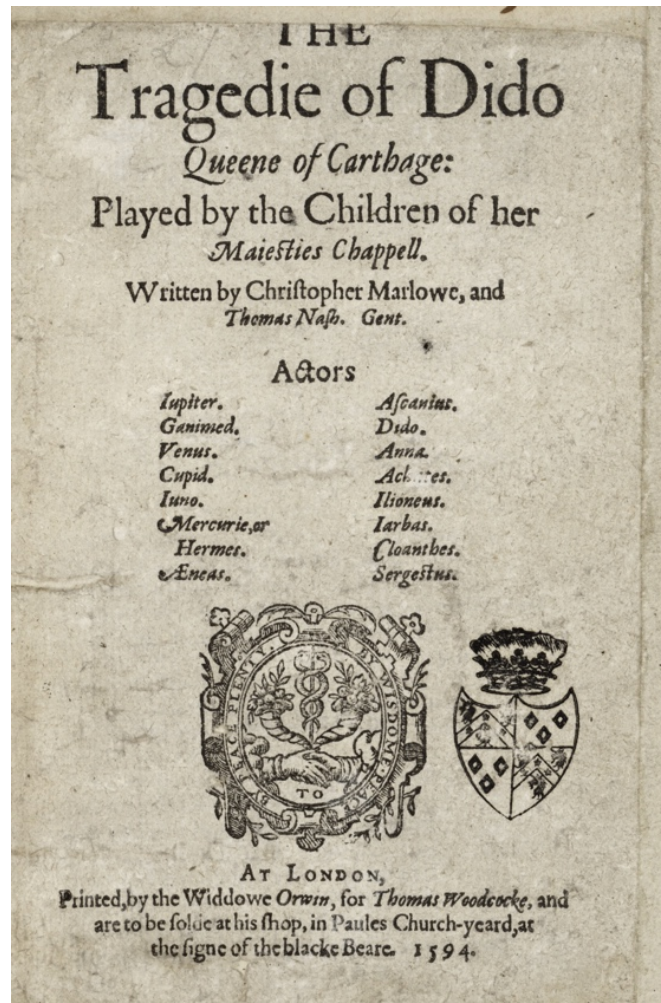


Fig. 2. The 1594 title-page of *Dido, Queene of Carthage*; STC 17441, image 9488, Folger Shakespeare Library

What might such an editorial strategy say about readerly expectations when engaging with dramatic literature? Comparatively, bookseller William Jones' second 1598 quarto of *Edward II* features no character list but expends plenty of ink to describe character arcs, highlights, and deaths enclosed in the playbook through a condensed narrative of sorts.<sup>27</sup> Browsers, especially those unfamiliar with the play's stage performance or historical context, could benefit from this small-scale preview of the playbook without the need to turn a single page.

<sup>26</sup> For a breakdown of *Dido*'s title-page marketing strategies, see the opening section of Chapter 4 "Flasket and Linley's *The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage* (1594): Reissuing the Elizabethan Epyllion" in Kirk Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing and the Makings of Literary Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 137–54.

<sup>27</sup> *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second* (1598, STC 17438), sig. [A1]r.

In this sense, book browsing in early modern England may not have been so different from contemporary window shopping or conducting cursory searches on online platforms such as AbeBooks or Amazon for specific books (along with exploring algorithm-generated “recommended” and “suggested” titles) and their blurbs, details, reviews, and so forth. We see a similar strategy at play in Marlowe’s first unattributed publication during his lifetime, the 1590 *1 and 2 Tamburlaine* duology “Deuided into two tragicall discourses,” which does not exactly divulge key narrative details like *Edward II*, but spends half the title-page emphasizing, embellishing, and promoting Tamburlaine’s rise to villainous power.<sup>28</sup> Just from quick observations of these title-pages, we can perhaps glimpse forgotten rhetorical strategies that may have piqued the interests of Marlowe’s first public book buyers. Such explorations may, in turn, serve as starting points for offering new frames of reference for students in the modern day. *Marlowe in Sheets* seeks to make the first steps of book browsing easier to understand for a general audience. In so doing, we hope to raise further questions and inquiries about how early modern readers encountered and understood Marlowe’s books before perusing them. We imagine that by discussing title-page content alongside playtexts in classroom settings, students can better grasp Marlowe’s work within the broader context of the early modern literary landscape.

### **Marlowe and Geographies of Print**

Even paying closer attention to the imprints at the bottom of these title-pages, which list stationer names and often bookshop signs, can afford us fresh perspectives on specific bookselling milieux that vended Marlowe’s plays and poetry.<sup>29</sup> In the current technological era, many of us have grown accustomed to ordering books from internet retailers using our laptops and smartphones, infrequently stepping foot inside a physical shop to learn about and procure a book of interest. Some of us may even be guilty of browsing in a bookshop only to order a cheaper or secondhand copy through an online retailer later. But for Marlowe’s first print readerships, the brick-and-mortar experience was the customary means of accessing brand-new literature. What would it have meant for readers to buy Marlowe’s plays and poetry from certain stationers known to the public to vend particular kinds of books? Alongside Marlowe’s works, what other books might have been on offer, with their title-

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<sup>28</sup> *Tamburlaine the Great* (1590, STC 17425), sig. [A1]r.

<sup>29</sup> For a recent impressive examination of networks of stationers and their places of operation, see Ben Higgins, *Shakespeare’s Syndicate: The First Folio, Its Publishers, and the Early Modern Book Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

pages potentially promoted in the shopfront? What was the experience and significance of acquiring Marlowe sheets in St Paul's Cross Churchyard, the bustling centre of the London book trade, in contrast to slightly less centralised areas beyond the city walls such as Holborn Conduit? One possible entry point to Marlowe's print history is the exploration of the environs in which Marlowe's books were printed and published using *The Map of Early Modern London's* "The Agas Map."<sup>30</sup>

The *Marlowe in Sheets* team is currently developing a webpage and drafting a journal article that surveys each early modern London bookshop that distributed Marlowe's works, thinking about the environs of these shops and the other works they were promoting and selling. The purpose of this research is to illuminate Marlowe's publication and bookselling history, showcasing potential insights that can emerge from combining cultural bibliography approaches with the literary worlds found inside Marlowe's works and other books sold in proximity.<sup>31</sup> For example, within a radius of approximately five to six shops, Thomas Woodcock's issuing of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in 1594 from the sign of the Black Bear in Paul's Churchyard coincided with the release of John Dickenson's romance *Arisbas, Euphues Amidst His Slumbers*, bookseller John Harrison's vending of Shakespeare's first editions of *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, and the sign of the Sun's dissemination (by bookseller Abraham Kitson or Richard Bankworth) of university wit Thomas Lodge's ancient Roman play *The Wounds of Civil War*.<sup>32</sup> These historical titles might have allowed the book buyer to discover *Dido* alongside other classical texts. Consider, too, that in the same year, bookseller Edward White, situated at the Little North Door of St Paul's Cathedral, which was relatively nearby to the west of the Black Bear, published Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* along with Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*.<sup>33</sup> White's establishment at the sign of the Gun offered the dramatic work of three acquaintances recently deceased—Marlowe, fellow

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<sup>30</sup> *MoEML's* Agas Map can be found at <https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/agas.htm>. For instructions on how to use the Agas Map, see Martin D. Holmes and Tye Landels-Gruenewald, "Interact with the Agas Map," *The Map of Early Modern London*, edition 7.0, ed. Janelle Jenstad (Victoria: University of Victoria), accessed May 05, 2022. [https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/edition/7.0/agas\\_instructions.htm](https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/edition/7.0/agas_instructions.htm).

<sup>31</sup> The practices of cultural bibliography are best delineated in two collections of essays edited by Marta Straznicky, see Marta Straznicky, ed., *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006) and *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> *Arisbas, Euphues Amidst His Slumbers* (1594, STC 6817); *Lucrece* (1594, STC 22345); *Venus and Adonis* (1593, STC 22354; 1594, STC 22355); *The Wounds of Civil War* (1594, STC 16678).

<sup>33</sup> *The Massacre at Paris* (1594, STC 17423); *The Honorable Historie of Frier Bacon, and Frier Bongay* (1594, STC 12267); *The Spanish Tragedie* (1594, STC 15087).

Cambridge graduate Greene, and ex-roommate Kyd—side by side for readers to navigate and ponder alongside the anonymously issued *Titus*. Four years later, in 1598, Marlowe’s epyllion or “little epic” *Hero and Leander* was also wholesaled by Edward Blount at the same sign of the Black Bear in Paul’s Churchyard. In the same year, one shop down from Blount to the west at the sign of the Angel, future Shakespeare First Folio co-publisher Andrew Wise brought out editions of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, *Richard III*, and *Henry IV Part I*.<sup>34</sup> This not only saw Marlowe and Shakespeare books jockey for position again, but also placed posthumous Marlowe in the thick of an early Shakespearean hotspot at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

What other intertextual collisions, links, networks, and interactions might we uncover by attending to the places and spaces that sold Marlowe’s books? *Marlowe in Sheets* aims to establish a cultural bibliographical foundation for these kinds of queries so that both curious researchers and students can immerse themselves in the world of Marlovian book distribution, procurement, assembly, and reading that is no longer mostly intangible. For educators, we envision possible in-class exercises or assignments that entail tasking students to explore one Marlowe text in conjunction with these kinds of locale-related multi-book connections. Implementing compare-and-contrast approaches to reading across books that were simultaneously sold to early modern readers may serve as the basis for literary analysis papers. This would allow students to deepen their understanding of Marlowe’s works in their earliest book-historical contexts—much like how the early modern reader would have considered and engaged Marlowe in print—rather than in isolation, as is often the case in the present day.

At its core, *Marlowe in Sheets* sets out to facilitate the reimagination and recreation of bygone bookmaking processes in a manner that is accessible, instructive, and conducive to learning for all students of Renaissance drama and poetry. In this regard, *Marlowe in Sheets*, along with *Shakespeare in Sheets* and the Folger Shakespeare Library’s *DIY Quarto*, positions itself as uniquely pedagogical in its ability to make material the sometimes-abstract idea of the quarto and octavo, as well as provide blueprints to explore the interplay between

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<sup>34</sup> *The Tragedie of King Richard the Second* (1598, STC 22308; 1598, STC 22309); *The Tragedie of King Richard the Third* (1598, STC 22315); *The History of Henrie the Fourth* (1598, STC 22279a; 1598, STC 22280).

<sup>35</sup> For more on this Shakespearean hub in Paul’s Churchyard during the late 1590s, see Chapter 2 “Sweet and swaggering: Shakespeare’s plays, Playfere’s sermons, and the publisher Andrew Wise” in Adam Hooks, *Selling Shakespeare: Biography, Bibliography, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 35–65.

Renaissance readers and Marlowe's unassembled books. As one of its main didactic goals, *Marlowe in Sheets* posits that our interaction with these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts can be—and arguably should be—a sensory, tactile experience, and it is through the fusion of digital materiality and hands-on play that we can reconnect and reacquaint ourselves to the materiality of the text, not only glimpsing the textual past, but also physically touching, remaking, and reliving it.

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