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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Rebecca Leslie Caldwell entitled "Marlowe's 'Studious Artisans': Learning the Language of Power." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

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MARLOWE'S "STUDIOUS ARTISANS": LEARNING  
THE LANGUAGE OF POWER

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
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## ABSTRACT

Christopher Marlowe freed the theatre of his day from its "jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits"; he replaced that with a language all his own--the language of aspiration. His most memorable characters, Tamburlaine, Barabas, Faustus, and Edward, speak that language in an effort to fashion themselves and their worlds into what they desire. Tamburlaine, through his "working words," would get for himself "perfect bliss" by conquering one "earthly crown" after another; Barabas would try to "enclose infinite riches in a little room"; Faustus, despite his vast learning, would attempt through magic to attain "worlds of profit and delight"; Edward would simply desire some "nook or corner" in which to escape the intrigues of his court and "frolic" with his Gaveston. Each aspires to attain the power that would remove all boundaries or limitations which defeat ordinary men. Yet each is unable to fulfill his desire through words alone. He must master the language of spectacle as well as the spoken language of aspiration in attempting to attain unlimited power.

Only Tamburlaine, perhaps not Marlowe's most studious artisan but certainly his most successful, is able to appreciate fully that he must be a lord in deed as well as word--that he must translate his spoken word into visual spectacle. But each successive protagonist is prevented from grasping the object of his desire through his increasing inability to manipulate either

the language of aspiration or the language of spectacle. Each fails utterly in his attempt to procure and to exercise unlimited power.

We realize, however, that each character's failure is the playwright's triumph. Marlowe demonstrates in his most famous plays--Tamburlaine the Great, The Jew of Malta, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II--the power of spoken word and spectacle, working counter to each other and in purposeful conjunction, which leads his audience toward its own recognition of each hero's ultimate impotence.

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O, what a world of profit and delight,  
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,  
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!

(Doctor Faustus.i.52-54)

## INTRODUCTION

[Y]our typical Elizabethan heroes of the mighty line having neither the eyes to see anything real nor the brains to observe it, could no more conceive a natural or convincing stage figure than a blind man can conceive a rainbow or a deaf one the sound of an orchestra.<sup>1</sup>

Thus George Bernard Shaw pronounces his judgement on Christopher Marlowe and the whole "obscene crew" of Elizabethan dramatists, exclusive, most assuredly, of Shakespeare. Marlowe's own "muscularity of expression" proves particularly galling to the already acrid-tongued Shaw; he labels Marlowe the "true Elizabethan blank-verse beast." Happily his sentiments are shared by few critics. Indeed, in Shaw's own time through the present day, criticism has tended toward the opposite extreme. Marlowe is to an enraptured Swinburne, "Crowned, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,/ . . . Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far."<sup>2</sup> To many, though, Marlowe is most often confused with his own heroes<sup>3</sup>--the shoemaker's son

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<sup>1</sup>George Bernard Shaw, "The Spacious Times," in his Dramatic Opinions and Essays, Vol. II (New York: Brentano's, 1922), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, "Sonnets of English Dramatic Poets: I. Christopher Marlowe," in Poetry of the Victorian Period, ed. Jerome Buckley and George Woods, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1965), p. 738.

<sup>3</sup>For instances of this Romantic approach to Marlowe criticism see Una M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe (London: Methuen, 1927); Paul H. Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning and Character (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1946); and Harry Levin, The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952).

from Canterbury who, like Tamburlaine, meant with his own hand to "turn Fortune's wheel about." This he succeeded in doing and to a degree of success never imagined by his mightiest hero, Tamburlaine. Marlowe freed the theatre of the day from its "jigging veins of rhyming mother wits," replacing that with a language all his own. Muscular to Shaw, mighty to Jonson, Marlowe's language is ultimately the language of aspiration. In speaking it, his greatest and most enduring characters attempt to fashion themselves and their worlds into what they desire. We have come to associate these roles-- Tamburlaine, Barabas, Faustus, and Edward II--with a sort of verbal virtuosity unparalleled except perhaps in the Shakespearean repertoire.<sup>4</sup> But we have only to see a production of any of Marlowe's four great tragedies to appreciate fully what to John Russell Brown seems so obvious. He remarks:

While words fill the mind on reading one of Marlowe's plays, in performance its visual effects can dominate the verbal. There are opportunities for spectacle in which Marlowe seems to join hands with Cecil B. deMille: parades and processions, coronations and funerals, pursuits, battles, and horrors are found variously in every play.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The part of Tamburlaine alone runs 1,852 lines--104 lines longer than Hamlet which is usually considered the longest classic part in dramatic literature. Albert Finney, who has played both demanding roles, ruefully admitted that Hamlet was easy in comparison. See John Heilpern's entertaining article, "Play it with Chutzpah!" Observer Magazine, 19 Dec. 1976, pp. 12-17, for an insider's look at the many problems which plagued Peter Hall's National Theatre production in 1976.

<sup>5</sup>John Russell Brown, "Marlowe and the Actors," Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 162.

Only slightly overstating his case, Brown nevertheless succeeds in directing our attention from the written page to the stage, whereon we watch Marlowe's heroes strut, fret, cajole, conjure, and dissemble with varying degrees of success. We listen carefully as each attempts to master the language of aspiration--those "high astounding terms," with which they would procure for themselves "perfect bliss," "infinite riches," "worlds of profit and delight," or simply some "nook or corner" in which to "frolic." But in Marlowe's theatre, the audience must do more than listen, just as the characters, to be at all "natural or convincing," must do more than speak. We, like Peter Brook, are forced to question whether there is another language, "one just as exacting for the author, as a language of words?" "Is there," Brook asks, "a language of actions, a language of sound--a language of word-as-part-of-movement?"<sup>6</sup> And, of Marlowe's theatre, we would be forced to answer yes. There exists another language, the language of spectacle--just as powerful as the spoken language of aspiration--which Marlowe's heroes must master as well in attempting to fashion themselves and their worlds according to their desires.

Only Tamburlaine, perhaps not Marlowe's most studious artisan but certainly his most successful, is able to appreciate fully that he must be a lord in deed as well as word. But each successive protagonist is prevented from grasping the object of his desire

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<sup>6</sup>Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Athenum, 1982), p. 49.

through his increasing inability to manipulate either the language of aspiration or the language of spectacle. Thus power, that which each of Marlowe's overreachers most desires, is lost to him. Instead, we realize that his characters' failures to mate their language of aspiration with their deeds and the potential for fulfillment is, in fact, the playwright's triumph. The triumph is manifested in the brilliant ability of the playwright himself to manipulate the language and spectacle of his characters' failures. Through dramatic expertise and control he leads his audience toward its own recognition of each hero's ultimate impotence. Indeed, as Judith Weil so astutely notes:

Marlowe extends the sense of freedom from characters to audience . . . . By appealing to our memories of literature and tradition, by inviting us to ponder analogies and scrutinize shows, Marlowe stimulates our imaginations. By praising folly he exercises our wisdom. He invites us to use those faculties of choice and recognition which his heroes neglect. Marlowe creates in his audience the prophetic spirit lacking in his heroes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Judith Weil, Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1977), p. 172.

## CHAPTER 1

### TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT

But since I exercise a greater name,  
The scourge of God and terror of the world,  
I must apply myself to fit those terms,  
In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty . . .

#### Tamburlaine the Great, Part One

It is odd that, having led us to the "stately tent of war,"<sup>1</sup> Marlowe does not choose immediately to introduce us to the Scythian Tamburlaine who will astound us with his threats and conquests. Instead, we learn of Tamburlaine indirectly, through the descriptions of others, thus beginning a pattern which Marlowe follows throughout the rest of the drama. Because his reputation precedes him, Tamburlaine never seems of mean estate as he would have us believe at his first entrance. As a matter of fact, before each conquest Marlowe carefully reiterates a description of Tamburlaine's person and fantastic deeds, the theme to which each messenger adds his own embellishment and ornate variations. We must first learn of Tamburlaine from the ineffectual Mycetes in conversation with his adviser, Meander. To Mycetes, Tamburlaine is no more than "that sturdy Scythian thief" (1 Tam.I.i.36)--"That like a fox in midst of

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, Parts One and Two, ed. J. S. Cunningham (The Revels Plays, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981), p. 5. All further references to this play will be noted parenthetically by part, act, scene, and line number within the text.

harvest time/Doth prey upon my flocks of passengers,/And, as I hear, doth mean to pull my plumes" (1 Tam.I.i.31-33). Mycetes' unimaginative description, however, in no way prepares us for the imposing figure we meet in the next scene. Tamburlaine enters, the head of a triumphal procession bearing his newest store of treasure, including Zenocrate and her lords. Even dressed in shepherd's weeds as he is, we recognize immediately that this is no "paltry Scythian" (1 Tam.I.i.53). Within forty lines of verse, he proclaims himself as one who "means to be a terror to the world,/Measuring the limits of his empery/By east and west as Phoebus doth his course" (1 Tam.I.ii.38-40). But Tamburlaine, anticipating his prisoners' scepticism, punctuates his high-flung rhetoric with visual reinforcement: "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove" (1 Tam.I.ii.34), proclaims the warrior, who promptly sheds his shepherd's garb to reveal complete armor and curtle-axe--"adjuncts more beseeming" him. These more becoming adjuncts prove an integral part of the play's visual power. As David Hard Zucker asserts, "No play is so effective in the use of costume contrast."<sup>2</sup> For example, the play opens on Mycetes in the robes of a king and the usurping Cosroe donning the robes of empery, yet Tamburlaine enters in shepherd's weeds and only later dons the raiment of conqueror. The implications of such a costume change are twofold. First, visually, we have already been made to realize that the right to rule is not granted merely because of one's

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<sup>2</sup>David Hard Zucker, Stage and Image in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache and Literatur, 1972), p. 29.

familial claim; nor can it be gained by simply assuming the crown and all its trappings. The right to rule is a trait inborn, no matter how obscure the parentage. It is also a trait which must be proved by one conquest after another until no doubt remains. And, second, by his costume change Tamburlaine demonstrates his awareness that though his own words declare himself conqueror, his deeds--that which must be seen and felt--must follow in order to strengthen his claims.

Initially, the audience is drawn to the warrior because of his instinctive mastery of both the spoken language and the spectacle of empery. The confident hero, an extraordinary poseur, rarely misses an opportunity to exercise his rather formidable rhetorical skills. For example, while we have no doubt of his sincerity, we look on, fascinated, as the "princely lion" turns playful and positively flirtatious in his bid for Zenocrate's affections. Irresistible terms of endearment are the means to her seduction. He promises:

Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine  
 Than the possession of the Persian crown,  
 Which gracious stars have promis'd at my birth.  
 . . . . .  
 Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,  
 Enchas'd with precious jewels of mine own,  
 More rich and valurous than Zenocrate's;  
 With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled  
 Thou shalt be drawn amidst the frozen pools,  
 And scale the icy mountains' lofty tops,  
 Which with thy beauty will be soon resolv'd.

(1 Tam.I.ii.90-101)

The descriptive language, depending for effect on the interplay of hypnotic rhythms with the richly suggestive adjectives, holds all

its listeners rapt. Zenocrate's wooing takes place, after all, with no less than six on-stage auditors in addition to the lover and his lady: Tamburlaine's surprised henchmen, Techelles and Usumcasane, along with the many members of Zenocrate's train, observe the scene. "Women must be flattered," Tamburlaine replies patiently to an incredulous Techelles, but then adds more reverently, "This is she with whom I am in love" (1 Tam.I.ii.107-08).

Because Marlowe chooses so often to demonstrate Tamburlaine's penchant for poses, we might very easily agree with Una Ellis-Fermor's complaint that Tamburlaine is presented more as an "idea" than a conventionally developing dramatic character.<sup>3</sup> However, Peter Hall's recent revival of the play at England's National Theatre chose not to see Tamburlaine's early attempts at self-definition as a hindrance. J. S. Cunningham's description of Albert Finney's interpretation enriches our understanding of the character in his opening scenes:

Albert Finney drew his followers, and often the audience, into a delighted and mirthful partisanship with his rise to power. That rise was itself conceived of as an opportunistic and daring development by Tamburlaine as a style for himself, based partly on perceptive and irreverent mimicry of the grandeur he observes in others.<sup>4</sup>

In his review of the production for The Shakespeare Survey Cunningham adds, "This sense that the early Tamburlaine is inventing his own

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<sup>3</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup>J. S. Cunningham, Introd., Tamburlaine the Great, Parts One and Two (The Revels Plays).

style, trying out formal poses and gestures, learning to out Herod-Herod, can lie dormant on the page."<sup>5</sup>

Tamburlaine's success in wooing Zenocrate can be attributed partly to his already possessing a captive audience upon which to exercise his "style," including his proven dexterity with the language. However, his conquest of Theridamas is not so easily won, and it requires much more of a concerted effort from Tamburlaine than the mostly improvised seduction scene that we just witnessed. The Persian general's seduction is a premeditated pageant staged as proof of Tamburlaine's worthiness as first an opponent and, soon after, a conqueror and valuable friend. Tamburlaine must promise no less than immortality for the general to forsake the Persian king and join with him. He is at first threatening in tone:

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,  
And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about;  
And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere  
Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.  
Draw forth thy sword thou mighty man-at-arms,  
Intending but to raze my charmed skin,  
And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven  
To ward the blow and shield me safe from harm.

(1 Tam.I.ii.174-81)

But the threats gradually give way to cajolery as Tamburlaine pledges, "Both we will walk upon the lofty cliffs;/ . . . Both we will reign as consuls of the earth,/And mighty kings shall be our senators" (1 Tam.I.iii.193-98). And despite their temporary

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<sup>5</sup>J. S. Cunningham and Roger Warren, "Tamburlaine the Great Re-Discovered," Shakespeare Survey, No. 31 (1978), p. 157.

obscurity, Tamburlaine assures Theridamas that they may "become immortal like the gods" (1 Tam.I.ii.201). "Not Hermes, prolocutor to the gods,/Could use persuasions more pathological" (1 Tam.I.ii.210-11), exclaims an enchanted Theridamas. But Tamburlaine has punctuated his pathological persuasions with an equally persuasive picture. He directs his company to look "friendly" on the Persians and to lay his newly-procured treasures out to their view, and then, partly bluffing, partly serious as well, Tamburlaine gestures to the display of wealth. "See," he asserts, "how [Jove] rains down heaps of gold in showers,/As if he meant to give my soldiers pay!" (1 Tam.I.ii.182-83). The double-valued assault on Theridamas proves so seductive that the Persian general yields all to Tamburlaine, saying, "Won with thy words and conquer'd with thy looks,/I yield myself, my men, and horse to thee" (1 Tam.I.ii.228-29).

Though his "words" never cease to be winning, what becomes increasingly more obvious as the play progresses is that Tamburlaine is most clearly defined to the audience through his conquering "looks"--the spectacle by which he completes his transformation from shepherd to emperor. Initially, Marlowe's Tamburlaine is, in the audience's eyes, a figure of Apollinian beauty.<sup>6</sup> That we are meant

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<sup>6</sup>George L. Geckle, in his article, "The National Theatre Production of Tamburlaine," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 30 (1978), p. 332, reminds us that the historical Tamerlane (d. 1405) was, in fact, a cripple, hence his name, Timur the lame. Geckle adds, "When his body was exhumed . . . the skeleton of the 69-year old conqueror was found to be that of a strongly built man of 5 feet, 8 inches with a fused right elbow and right knee and reddish hair streaked with grey."

to recognize the association between Marlowe's hero and the sun-god is borne out in the many spoken references to Phoebus-Apollo as well as in the opportunities which Marlowe provides to exploit the association visually. We are reminded that the costume for the hero in the play's first production was "surely chosen to suggest the fire and gold of the sun-god."<sup>7</sup> The Tamburlaine before us in the play's opening scenes is so "wondrous" a man as to inspire Menaphon's glowing description of him to Cosroe:

'twixt his manly pitch  
A pearl more worth than all the world is placed,  
Wherein by curious sovereignty of art  
Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight,  
Whose fiery circles bear encompassed  
A heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres  
That guides his steps and actions to the throne  
Where honour sits invested royally,  
Pale of complexion--wrought in him with passion,  
Thirsting with sovereignty, with love of arms;  
His lofty brows in folds do figure death,  
And in their smoothness amity and life.

(1 Tam.II.i.11-22)

The audience, however, along with Cosroe and Menaphon, learns all too soon that Tamburlaine's visage more often figures "death" than "amity and life." Zenocrate's confidant, Agydas, is among the first of Tamburlaine's conquests to read the fatal message which his "lofty brows" impart. To Agydas Tamburlaine is too "vile and barbarous" (1 Tam.III.ii.26), too "fierce" in looks to merit Zenocrate's anguished declaration of love. But the object of Agydas'

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<sup>7</sup>William Armstrong, Marlowe's Tamburlaine: The Image and the Stage (Hull, Yorkshire: Hull Printers, Ltd., 1966), p. 16.

scorn stands silently and shamelessly eavesdropping on the scene. His reply to Agydas' charges is just as scornful but is much more succinctly stated. Tamburlaine's "wrathful look" and the "naked dagger" he sends by Techelles convey his meaning well enough. "See you, Agydas," says Techelles, "how the king salutes you./He bids you prophesy what it [the dagger] imports" (1 Tam.III.ii.88-89). Without a word spoken by his adversary, Agydas' fate is sealed, his course of action clear: "He [Tamburlaine] needed not with words confirm my fear,/For words are vain where working tools present/The naked action of my threatened end" (1 Tam.III.ii.92-94).

Tamburlaine's visage again imparts a serious message when it assumes the three colors of his ritual in battle. All is white on the first day of his ritual, including Tamburlaine himself; the color signifies the "mildness of his mind/That, satiate with spoil, refuseth blood" (1 Tam.IV.ii.52-53). White, however, gives way to red on the second day: "then must his kindled wrath be quenched with blood,/Not sparing any that can manage arms" (1 Tam. IV.ii. 56-57). "But," we are told, "if these threats move not submission" in Tamburlaine's foes, his colors change again, this time to black:

Black are his colours, black pavillion,  
His spear, his shield, his horse, his armour, plumes,  
And jetty feathers menace death and hell--  
Without respect of sex, degree, or age,  
He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.

(1 Tam.IV.ii.58-63)

We are witness to Tamburlaine's deadly ritual when, on the first day of his seige of Damascus, he enters "all in white." His tents of white are pitched, and his "gentle flags of amity" are displayed (1 Tam.IV.ii.111-12). The Governor, however, is not yet inclined to be amicable and does not yield. The colors, in response, turn to scarlet and on to black. On the third and last day of the seige, Tamburlaine enters "all in black, and very melancholy" to greet the four Virgins who have been sent to sue for peace. They entreat the "image of honour and nobility" (1 Tam.V.i.75) to spare the city. Yet Tamburlaine's own sense of honor requires the ritual be carried out to the conclusion that his demeanor dictates. Clothed in black, he stands in emblematic contrast to the Virgins, dressed as they are in the white robes of purity and innocence. Our sense of him here "is a compound of wonder and revulsion: repellently inhuman, he is also portentously extra-human."<sup>8</sup> No longer is Tamburlaine "wrapt in silence of his angry soul" (1 Tam.III.ii.71); no longer is "ugly death" merely indicated in his "wrathful look." Tamburlaine now possesses the ability to evoke through word and deed the figure of Death itself to his victims. Directing the Virgins' gaze to his sword's point, he declares, "There sits imperious Death,/Keeping his circuit by the slicing edge" (1 Tam.V.i.111-12). No longer are we entered into a "delighted and mirthful partisanship" with the Scythian shepherd. He has, instead, forsaken us and entered into

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<sup>8</sup>Cunningham, *Introd.*, p. 44.

an alliance with his servant Death. The two together spare no one who might prevent Tamburlaine from achieving "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown" (1 Tam.II.vii.29).

The crown, of course, is that object which has "ravished" Tamburlaine. According to Michael Goldman, Marlowe's heroes are all ravished men. "To be ravished," Goldman explains, "is to have been aroused by a single source to the possibility of entire bliss."<sup>9</sup> Tamburlaine is aroused by "the thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown" (1 Tam.II.vii.12). His zeal to obtain one crown and then another and then many more after that is the driving force of Part One. We are made aware, even before his entrance, of the power inherent in a crown and of the fascination it exercises. But we also become aware of the crown as a mere external. To Mycetes, the crown is a not-so-seeming adjunct. He even seeks to hide it when it becomes the "pin that thousands seek to cleave" (1 Tam.II.v.9). Cosroe draws us closer to the audience's preconceived notion of splendor and power associated with the crown. Not until the appearance of Tamburlaine, however, do we receive a fully exalted sense of empery.

Tamburlaine alone of the play's many kings possesses the ability to take and keep the crown. The taking of Mycetes' crown is pure sport, a prelude to outwitting a more tempting and only slightly more clever prey--Cosroe. Both Cosroe and Mycetes are unable to

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<sup>9</sup>Michael Goldman, "Marlowe and the Histrionics of Ravishment," in Two Renaissance Mythmakers, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), p. 22.

retain their crowns because of their inability to learn the language of power. To speak poorly in this play is to invite utter defeat. Tamburlaine, on the other hand, has proven himself a master of both the speech and the spectacle of empery. Yet we have also seen how the mastery of speech and spectacle which so defines his character to the audience undermines it as well. One instance of Tamburlaine's prowess undermining his stature rather than elevating it is on the occasion of Cosroe's overthrow. Tamburlaine is moved to meditate on the attraction of the crown:

Nature that framed us of four elements  
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:  
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
 The wondrous architecture of the world  
 And measure every wand'ring planet's course,  
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite  
 And always moving as the restless spheres,  
 Wills us to wear ourselves and never rest  
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all  
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,  
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

(1 Tam.II.vii.18-29)

Once again, we tend to become carried away with the "mighty line"; consequently Tamburlaine appears in an heroic light. We often forget, however, that the moving speech is not a soliloquy, portraying, as the tradition dictates, the character's innermost thoughts. Rather the speech is performed for the benefit of loyal followers and dying foe. Tamburlaine's tone in the speech is noble, but his actions suggest otherwise. As Cosroe draws his last breath, Tamburlaine snatches the crown from his head and puts it on. David Hard Zucker notices the convergence of two themes at this moment: "Tamburlaine's

superb superhuman conquest of a king put in mythological terms [and] the gloating triumph of a megalomaniac hyperbolized grotesquely."<sup>10</sup>

Marlowe pits one megalomaniac against another when Tamburlaine's "thirst for rule" leads him to his most worthy opponent and his most grotesque conquest of Part One, the Turkish emperor, Bajazeth. As he had done before with his two previous conquests, Tamburlaine predicts his victory in the field. "I speak it," he says, "and my words are oracles" (1 Tam.III.iii.102). Bajazeth, too, makes use of aspiring lines to predict his victory, but ultimately he is unable to translate them into action and is unseated with only a modicum of effort expended by our hero. Tamburlaine's gloating triumph over Bajazeth takes him much further than impromptu orations delivered over dying kings. He attempts to strip Bajazeth and his empress, Zabina, not only of their positions but of their human dignity as well. Imprisoned in a cage, fed with table scraps, used as a footstool, the Turkish emperor in captivity is made to endure one ignominious insult after another. As the scenes between Tamburlaine and his captives unfold on the stage, the audience becomes aware of an ironic reversal taking place. The lower Bajazeth and Zabina fall into ignominy, powerless to effect any change, the higher they rise in our estimation. Reduced to mere props in Tamburlaine's pageants of power, the pair achieves an eloquence in suffering which they never achieved in triumph. Tamburlaine, on the other hand, sinks progressively lower in our estimation at the same time his

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<sup>10</sup>Zucker, p. 35.

rhetoric soars upward to the stars. We watch in IV.ii as he enters, dressed all in white, to preside over a procession which includes his three loyal friends, Zenocrate, and two Moors drawing Bajazeth in a cage. The Turkish empress in chains follows her husband. While Tamburlaine's costume indicates "mildness" and "amity," again his actions indicate the opposite. He calls for Bajazeth to be taken from his cage so that he might use his prisoner as a footstool and mount his throne. Once seated he exults:

Now clear the triple region of the air  
 And let the majesty of heaven behold  
 Their scourge and terror tread on emperors.  
 Smile stars that reigned at my nativity  
 And dim the brightest of their neighbor lamps--  
 Disdain to borrow light of Cynthia,  
 For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,  
 First rising in the east with mild aspect  
 But fixed now in the meridian line,  
 Will send up fire to your turning spheres  
 And cause the sun to borrow light of you.

(1 Tam.IV.ii.30-40)

And of his imminent battle for Damascus, he prophesies:

But ere I march to wealthy Persia  
 Or leave Damascus and th' Egyptian fields, . . .  
 So shall our swords, our lances and our shot  
 Fill all the air with fiery meteors;  
 Then when the sky shall wax as red as blood  
 It shall be said I made it red myself,  
 To make me think of naught but blood and war.

(1 Tam.IV.ii.47-55)

Again Tamburlaine is true to his word. Damascus falls along with all its many inhabitants, including the four Virgins. He is again victorious during a short clash with the Soldan of Egypt, Zenocrate's father. In the meantime, however, events transpire which prove beyond even Tamburlaine's ability to control. Bajazeth

escapes his tormentor's wrath by the only means which are available to him. He bids his wife to fetch him water so that life might be prolonged, but upon her exit he instead takes leave of his life.

"Now, Bajazeth," he determines, "abridge thy baneful days/And beat thy brains out of thy conquered head,/Since other means are all forbidden me/That may be ministers of my decay" (1 Tam.V.i.286-89).

He is followed closely in death by his empress. The "bloody spectacle" is discovered by Zenocrate who delivers at once a moving eulogy and a prophetic warning:

Blush, heaven, that gave them honour  
                                           at their birth  
 And let them die a death so barbarous.  
 Those that are proud of fickle empery  
 And place their chiefest good in earthly pomp--  
 Behold the Turk and his great emperess!  
 Ah Tamburlaine my love, sweet Tamburlaine,  
 That fightest for sceptres and for slippery  
                                           crowns,  
 Behold the Turk and his great emperess!

(1 Tam.V.i.351-58)

What is "bloody spectacle" to Zenocrate is to Tamburlaine "All sights of power to grace [his] victory;/And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine" (1 Tam.V.i.475-76). The bodies of his defeated foes at his feet, now joined by the Arabian prince, Tamburlaine calls for his friends and newly-won allies to don scarlet robes and hang up their weapons, "For Tamburlaine takes truce with all the world" (1 Tam.V.i.525-30). Despite his call for a truce, Tamburlaine demands his train put on livery which we have traditionally associated with his grim battle ritual and with the bloody slaughter which its colors symbolize. Thus with Tamburlaine's words ringing in our ears

and having just been witness to a splendid coronation, carried out amidst the grisly spectacle of three dead foes, the curtain of Part One closes on a perplexing note. What are we to think of this figure which has alternately astounded, delighted, and repulsed us?

This final tableau is perhaps most instrumental in cementing the definition of Tamburlaine's character which will be sustained throughout Part Two. We have watched him play the orator; we have watched him play the lover; we have watched him play, if only for a moment, the aesthetic; and we have watched him play the conqueror. Nothing, though, has prepared us for this final role of Part One. Charles Masinton predicts and describes the state of confusion which the attentive viewer experiences at Tamburlaine's ultimate role:

Part One of Tamburlaine is a kind of Elizabethan equivalent to a modern film about a fabulously successful gangster: since the protagonist lives outside the law, exults in the use of violence, and establishes a huge empire before our amazed eyes, he appeals to our fantasies of uninhibited power and vicariously satisfies our craving for an exciting, romantic life; yet his behavior outrages our moral sense, and he thus has no legitimate claim to our approval.<sup>11</sup>

Marlowe has, of course, anticipated his audience's simultaneous aversion/attraction to his protagonist. Before Tamburlaine ever enters the playing area, the dramatist instructs us to "view but his picture in this tragic glass/And then applaud his fortunes as

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Masinton, Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), p. 36.

you please" (1 Tam.Prol.7-8). This is not the typical Elizabethan bid for applause. Rather, the statement is the axiom of an artist of the theatre who will astound us with his "terms" and present us with the stirring spectacle, but will ultimately guide each individual viewer to his or her own definition of the character.

### Tamburlaine the Great, Part Two

Regardless of the Elizabethan audience's good or bad opinion of its hero, Tamburlaine Part One proved a very successful first effort for its young playwright. Marlowe himself tells us, "The general welcomes Tamburlaine received/When he arrived last upon our stage/Hath made our poet pen his second part" (2 Tam.Prol.1-3). But in doing so Marlowe was faced with a problem: having already exhausted the better part of his source material, what could the playwright do with a figure who, in Stephen Greenblatt's words, "had already risen to the top of the wheel of fortune and then steadfastly refused to budge"?<sup>12</sup> The first answer which occurs is of course to provide the audience with more of the same and not to vary the prescription which had begun to cure the theatre of its "jigging veins" and its "conceits as clownage keeps in pay." Yet upon closer consideration, Part Two of Marlowe's epic does not yield quite so easy an answer. The truth is that Marlowe does vary the formula used in his first success: the sights of power which

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<sup>12</sup>Stephen Greenblatt, "Marlowe and Renaissance Self-Fashioning," in Two Renaissance Mythmakers, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), p. 52.

throughout Part One, grace Tamburlaine's victories, in Part Two only undermine Tamburlaine's heroic stature and underscore his unquenchable thirst for blood. Marlowe in Part Two, by being more explicit in the presentation of his hero, forces us to be more implicit in our judgements.

The prologue relates to the audience the exact course of events in the play, just as Marlowe had done with Part One; however, the dramatist also immediately alerts us to the certainty of a tragic outcome to the progress of Tamburlaine's pomp. Fair Zenocrate's death, the sacrifice of a city in celebration of her funeral, and, inevitably, the death of the warrior and the eventual "throwing down" of his triumphs are all events included in the second part of "the bloody conquests of mighty Tamburlaine" (2 Tam.Title page). The adjective is the key word here. For it is blood, or its theatrical counterfeit, that ultimately defines this character to the audience.

The "delighted and mirthful partisanship" with Tamburlaine long since broken, the audience now sees the tyrant of Ellis-Fermor's description: "The Tamburlaine of the second part has sunk down to an oriental despot, savage, extravagant, half insane; a type of which history furnishes enough records."<sup>13</sup> Sibyl Truchet embellishes upon that theme: "Rather like a Mexican deity, Tamburlaine incarnates a life-force which needs blood for him to be able to control the elements, attain union with transcendental powers and 'move the

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<sup>13</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 40.

turning spheres of heaven.'" <sup>14</sup> Tamburlaine himself adds the most grotesque embellishment to this theme when we hear him instructing his young sons on how they might best rule:

For he shall wear the crown of Persia  
Whose head hath deepest scars, whose  
    breast most wounds,  
Which, being wroth, sends lightening from  
    his eyes,  
And in the furrows of his frowning brows,  
Harbours revenge, war, death, and cruelty;  
For in a field whose superficies  
Is covered with a liquid purple veil  
And sprinkled with the brains of slaughtered men,  
My royal chair of state shall be advanced;  
And he that means to place himself thereon  
Must armed wade up to the chin in blood.

(2 Tam.I.iv.74-84)

The object of Tamburlaine's aspiration is no longer the "sweet fruition of an earthly crown." Momentarily surfeited of crowns, Tamburlaine's words indicate that he has turned instead to a "diet of blood."<sup>15</sup> For only through much bloodshed and slaughter may his "royal chair of state be advanced." He returns to this particular lesson in III.ii, heedless of the city behind him which burns at his command. Fearing that the full impact of his "astounding terms" might be lost on his sons, Tamburlaine again sees the need

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<sup>14</sup>Sibyl Truchet, "Tamburlaine on the Modern Stage," Cahiers Elisabethians, 13 (1977), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup>Bernard Levin, in his "A Honyhnhnm to the Rescue of Marlowe's Mighty Line," The Sunday Times, 10 Oct. 1976, p. 35, called Finney's Tamburlaine "horribly appealing . . . a savage unable to resist a grin of primitive delight in his own prowess, becoming increasingly crazed by the slaughter in which he revels; as the evening wears on, his very voice seems to thicken with his diet of blood."

to prove himself in deed as well as word. He cuts his arm, and when his own life force issues from the wound, he exclaims, "Blood is the god of war's rich livery" (2 Tam.III.ii.116). He instructs his sons to "search" the wound and in his blood to "wash" their hands at once (2 Tam.III.ii.126-27). Smiling at the sight, he pronounces, "My speech of war, and this my wound you see,/Teach you my boys to bear courageous minds/Fit for the followers of the great Tamburlaine" (2 Tam.III.ii.142-44).

We are witness for the first time to a number of particularly brutal acts committed before our eyes and by our supposed hero. Previously, as Douglas Cole stresses, the murders had been committed offstage and never by Tamburlaine's own hand.<sup>16</sup> This is not the case, however, in Part Two. Three of his deeds in particular serve to color the audience's perception of Tamburlaine a deeper shade of red than at any time previously. The first and perhaps most shocking deed is the killing of his own son, Calyphas, because the boy took "no pleasure to be murderous." Nor cared he for blood when wine would quench his thirst (2 Tam.IV.i.29-30). Declaring the boy "A form not meet to give that subject essence/Whose matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine" (2 Tam.IV.i.112-13), he slits his son's throat before horrified foes and friends alike. Although we had earlier witnessed Olympia's performing much the same deed (2 Tam.III.iv), we recognize at once the vast distance between her brave and loving

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<sup>16</sup>Douglas Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), p. 102.

sacrifice and the deed which Tamburlaine excuses incredibly as "argument of arms." We recognize, too, Olympia's selflessness, for had she not been prevented, she would have joined her son in death. However, we are meant to deplore Tamburlaine's savagery and his selfishness in murdering his son. He is unable even to justify the act through his own aspiring words. He argues for "martial justice," yet the sight of the three contributory kings, themselves great warriors, kneeling and entreating him to pardon the boy, stresses visually what we already know to be true--that there is no justification for an act such as this.

Dramatically, however, the act is necessary.<sup>17</sup> The bloody murder of his son is the first which we have actually seen Tamburlaine commit. Cole notes, "He is always at least once removed from his victims; Death, his servant, does all the work for him. Tamburlaine, himself, for all his thirst for war and blood, remains somehow 'above' suffering and death."<sup>18</sup> But gradually we have witnessed Tamburlaine assuming through word and deed his servant's identity. When Tamburlaine and his retinue meet their Turkish foes before the play's major battle, Usumcasane remarks how the mighty warrior's presence makes the Turks pale and wan. He says, "Poor souls, they look as if their deaths were near." Tamburlaine answers, "Why, so he is, Casane, I am here" (2 Tam.III.v.61-62), and as always, Tamburlaine is true to his word. Death temporarily spares the Turkish viceroy

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<sup>17</sup>Truchet, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup>Cole, p. 102.



And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,  
 Spangled with diamonds dancing in the air,  
 To note me emperor of the threefold world;  
 . . . . .  
 Then in my coach like Saturn's royal son . . .  
 So will I ride through Samarcanda streets  
 Until my soul, dissevered from this flesh,  
 Shall mount the milk-white way and meet him there.  
 To Babylon, my lords, to Babylon!

(2 Tam.IV.iii.114-18,125-33)

So enamored is he of his ability to translate language into deed that Tamburlaine would use it without hesitation to transform himself into a god. The transformation is quite natural in his eyes. He has, after all, appeared before us in many guises--as Scythian Shepherd, kingly conqueror, and as Death incarnate. And god-like, dressed in black, he presides over the destruction of Babylon from his chariot. He orders the governor be hoisted in chains and shot by his many soldiers; he relieves the "broken-winded" jades who draw his chariot only to have them "despatched" and replaced with two more; he directs his soldiers to sack the city after drowning all its inhabitants. Not content with his day's work, he calls for Usumcasane to bring the "Turkish Alcoron" [the Koran] and all the "heaps of superstitious books/Found in the temples of that Mahomet" (2 Tam.V.i.173-74). These, he says, shall be burned. While his followers light the fire and feed the books into the flame, Tamburlaine, with his "astounding terms," dares god from out of the heavens: "Now, Mahomet, if thou have any power,/Come down thyself and work a miracle" (2 Tam.V.i.186-87). Throughout the challenge, as testimony to Tamburlaine's own certain power, the governor's ravaged body hangs, "Having as many bullets in his

flesh/As there be breaches in [the city's] battered wall" (2 Tam.V.i. 158-59). The lengthy scene constitutes one continuous assault on the audience's sense of sight and its outraged sense of morality. For Tamburlaine, it constitutes the continual plunge into the abyss which he inadvertently created as a result of his own exalted perception of himself and what we see to be the truth.

Feeling himself "distempered" suddenly, we remember other events of the play which too have proved beyond even the powers of the scourge of God; we realize that the crown, the symbol of "perfect bliss and sole felicity" does not endow its bearer with immunity to earthly woes and suffering. And with Zenocrate's death, for example, we were witness, for the first and only time, to Tamburlaine's capacity for human suffering. Previously, his speeches at her bedside had been beautifully executed and too calculated to be moving; however, the desperate rage he feels upon finding his fair Zenocrate has been taken from him is perhaps his only spontaneous outcry amongst many grandiloquent speeches. He cries, "Behold me here, divine Zenocrate,/Raving, impatient, desperate and mad,/ . . . And if thou pitiest Tamburlaine the Great,/Come down from heaven and live with me again!" (2 Tam.II.iv.111-18). "What one senses primarily," according to Martin Kelsall, "is that in this scene Tamburlaine's working words and his will no longer control events. It is the first time that his explanation of the nature of things, within the play's world, becomes suspect on the basis of empirical evidence."<sup>20</sup> Not

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<sup>20</sup>Martin Kelsall, Christopher Marlowe (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), p. 121.

content to admit this one defeat to death, once his servant, Tamburlaine vows to his wife's corpse:

Thou shalt stay with me  
 Embalmed with cassia, ambergis and myrrh,  
 Not lapt in lead but in a sheet of gold,  
 And till I die thou shalt not be interred.

(2 Tam.II.iv.129-32)

Tamburlaine must in effect make Zenocrate into yet another symbol of his power. And while we see the hearse only once before the play's end, the property remains in the back of the viewer's mind until that moment when it is brought together with Tamburlaine's other symbol of his exalted empery, his chariot drawn by the Turkish kings (2 Tam.V.iii.223). Individually, the two are powerful icons:

"one represents his inability to stop death, the other the inability of others to stop him killing."<sup>21</sup> Kelsall contends that the two icons are "nonetheless potentially divisive if combined."<sup>22</sup>

Divisive indeed, for the resulting spectacle speaks eloquently of Tamburlaine's rapidly deteriorating control. The hearse which is brought in to serve as part of Tamburlaine's funeral symbolizes those events which take place independent of Tamburlaine's "working words." The "royal chariot of estate" is passed on to his son who is warned, "The nature of thy chariot will not bear/A guide of baser temper than myself" (2 Tam.V.iii.242-43). And the map which Tamburlaine surveys signifies only what a "world of ground" remains unconquered. Neither is he able to fend off his former slave, "the

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<sup>21</sup>Kelsall, p. 125

<sup>22</sup>Kelsall, p. 125.

ugly monster Death," who stands aiming at Tamburlaine with his "murdering dart" (2 Tam.V.iii.67-69).

Now neither his words nor his deeds can protect him from a sudden ailment, the accidental heat of his veins by which the moisture of his blood is dried (2 Tam.V.ii.84-85). And all we feel is amazement that an ailment so slight, a sort of medieval flu, could fell so great and heretofore invulnerable a warrior. Tamburlaine dies, deluding himself with how well the newly-crowned heir becomes the father's majesty and bidding farewell to his sons and to his dearest friends:

My body feels, my soul doth weep to see  
Your sweet desires deprived of my company,  
For Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die.

(2 Tam.V.iii.245-48)

Peter Hall directed Albert Finney as Tamburlaine to fall over Zenocrate's golden coffin with his head facing the audience, whereupon he and the coffin descended via the hydraulically operated center stage trap.<sup>23</sup> The final moment, according to George Geckle, "inspired wonder and, ultimately, relief at an end to the seemingly limitless energy directed toward carnage."<sup>24</sup>

The spectacle of the play's concluding scene brings about this cathartic audience release because it has finally happened independent of Tamburlaine's language and earlier relentless translation of this language into the horrible visual spectacles. Death, then, is the

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<sup>23</sup>Geckle, p. 342.

<sup>24</sup>Geckle, p. 342.

final conqueror, as it mocks Tamburlaine's former pageants of power. Thus, the audience renders its decision in its bout with Tamburlaine the Greatest. We might, however, agree with one recent critic that ultimately "this character won't rot in the grave; instead he'll rust."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Benedict Nightingale, "The Blood and Bombast of Tamburlaine," The New York Times, 17 Oct. 1976, Sec. 2, p. 5, col. 1.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE JEW OF MALTA

No, Barabas is born to better chance  
And framed of finer mould than common men,  
That measure naught but by the present time.  
A reaching thought will search his deepest wits,  
And cast with cunning for the time to come,  
For evils are apt to happen every day.

Barabas himself is the speaker of these lines, so we might at first think them spoken in idle and vain boast. However, as we follow Marlowe's Jew throughout the play--searching his deepest wits, cunningly controlling and contriving those evils that "are apt to happen every day"<sup>1</sup>--we realize that, on this particular occasion and of himself, he speaks the truth. While his speech is not quite so elegant as Tamburlaine's Barabas nevertheless proves himself to be a skillful manipulator of both the language of aspiration and the language of spectacle. He is, of all Marlowe's heroes, the most astute observer of himself and of his surroundings. And the shrewd manner in which he acts upon his observations matches and, at times, surpasses Tamburlaine's inspired theatrics. Barabas' forte, it seems, lies in his staging of particularly gruesome murders; the audience witnesses no less than seven murders and hears evidence of countless

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, The Jew of Malta, ed. N. W. Bawcutt (The Revels Plays, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), I.ii.225. All further references to this play will be noted parenthetically by act, scene, and line number within the text.

others. Despite the many deaths attributable to him, Barabas retains if not our fascination then our curiosity.

Barabas is much more than a "mere monster brought in with a large painted nose to please the rabble."<sup>2</sup> Ever coldly resourceful and an expert dissembler, Barabas teases and tests his audience, eventually forcing us to turn from him as his crimes increase in frequency and sheer brutality; Barabas extracts his pound of flesh and then some. Yet the audience, at least for a time, entertains Barabas, the main reason being that he entertains us. He overcomes our initial distrust; he has, after all, been introduced by Machevil, and he bears a name with rather unsavory connotations. He tricks us into forming an alliance with him, and, by his many asides to us, he forces his audience to share his confidences. According to Charles Masinton, "Barabas invites us to see him as a kind of dramatic artist whose technical specialties are scene-arranging and play-acting and whose aim is the deception and defeat of his opponents."<sup>3</sup> We who know of his eventual artistic failure, however, are not duped as are his townsmen by his playacting. Or are we? To "grace" Barabas as he deserves, we must look closely to see how smoothly his spectacles progress and how easily his "play-acting" convinces both of his audiences--on the stage itself and in the galleries.

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<sup>2</sup>Charles Lamb, "Characters of Dramatic Writers Contemporary to Shakespeare," The Portable Charles Lamb (New York: Viking Press, 1949), p. 548.

<sup>3</sup>Masinton, p. 60.

"Enter Barabas in his counting-house, with heaps of gold before him." Thus Marlowe's stage directions provide us our first look at the "bottle-nosed knave" whose fortunes we will follow throughout his time upon the stage. We have been warned in the Prologue by Machevil (note Marlowe's spelling) that he is to present us with "the tragedy of a Jew,/Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed" (Prol.30-31). Immediately we are struck with the irony: tragedy in the midst of infinite riches? Our attention riveted to the "heaps of gold" and loose jewels which lie on Barabas' table, we are as yet unaware of any tragedy connected to this glittering display. For the moment, we gaze at the riches, and we listen to the Jew as he takes stock of his profit from a single successful venture. He flings aside "paltry silverings" to caress the gold coin and the precious stones. Only with these riches, Barabas exclaims, can a man tell that which may "maintain him all his life" (I.i.11). We realize that the properties, themselves mere representations of gold and jewels, indicate only one small part of the Jew's entire fortune. Barabas, of course, rests secure with the same knowledge, thus causing him to react curiously to what lies before him on the table. He delights in telling of the casual disregard of the Moor for the uncounted stones heaped in his house and, in turn, holds one "indifferently rated" stone up to the audience's gaze. And yet, this wealth, so carelessly handled, is that which "maintains" Barabas; it is literally and metaphorically that which gives him sustenance, that with both delights and disgusts. The wealth before him is that which moves Barabas to a poetic appreciation of its

value in itself and in the influence with which it provides its owner.

We are somewhat surprised to learn of Barabas' imaginative and poetic bent. "His soaring thoughts," Masinton notes, "far transcend those of an ordinary miser or usurer."<sup>4</sup> And with his equally soaring language, Barabas luxuriates in the sight and the feel of his wealth:

Give me the merchants of the Indian mines,  
That trade in metal of the purest mould;  
The wealthy Moor, that in the eastern rocks  
Without control can pick his riches up,  
And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones;  
Receive them free, and sell them by the weight,  
Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,  
Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,  
Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,  
And seldseen costly stones of so great price  
As one of them indifferently rated,  
And of a carat of this quantity,  
May serve in peril of calamity  
To ransom great kings from captivity.

(I.i.19-32)

Though enamored of the jewels' beauty and brilliance, Barabas is, again to use Goldman's term, "ravished" by the sense of power which the display excites in him, and it is inconceivable to him that any man might want to ignore opportunities to obtain even more wealth and, as a result, more power:

This is the ware wherein consists my wealth:  
And thus, methinks, should men of judgement frame  
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
And as their wealth increaseth, so enclose  
Infinite riches in a little room.

(I.i.33-37)

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<sup>4</sup>Masinton, p. 65.

Barabas' speech, with its expression of boundless aspiration, seems paradoxical in intent but thoroughly Marlovian in character. As Masinton notes, it "teases us with the notion of setting limits to the unlimited and masterfully compresses the Jew's extravagant ambitions into a single compact image."<sup>5</sup>

Although we might presently think Barabas' reactions extreme, we soon come to realize that the same objects cause extremities of behavior elsewhere within the play. That which maintains Barabas shapes other characters as well. Indeed, the desire to enclose "infinite riches in a little room" is the force which propels the action of the entire play. It is the strongest force underlying each crime, each act of vengeance, and each act of betrayal committed. When asked later in the play what drives him, the Turkish Bashaw's reply might just as easily be spoken by any other character. He answers, "The wind that bloweth all the world besides, Desire of gold" (III.iv.3).

Apparently not even the Christian Knights of Malta are exempt from the rather base desire of gold. The city's wealth depleted from the knights' crusades, payment of the long-overdue Turkish tribute must be extracted by unchristian means from unchristian sources. Ferneze, the Governor, decrees that Malta's Jews must willingly yield half their fortunes. If payment is denied, the Jews shall be forcibly converted, or all of their wealth will be confiscated for the state. Upon hearing the knights' conditions,

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<sup>5</sup>Masinton, p. 66.

Barabas' compatriots straightway yield half; Barabas, however, hesitates and for his hesitation loses all, including his home which is set aside as a nunnery. The act is justified according to Ferneze, for "better one want for a common good/Than many perish for a private man" (I.ii.99-100), particularly if that "private man" is a wealthy Jew in a Christian society. We are moved here to feel compassion for the Jew because we, like Barabas, know that "of naught is nothing made" (I.ii.105).

His wealth and home gone, Barabas "adopts the manner of an Old Testament prophet lamenting disaster":<sup>6</sup>

but I may curse the day,  
Thy fatal birthday, forlorn Barabas,  
And henceforth wish for an eternal night,  
That clouds of darkness may enclose my flesh,  
And hide these extreme Sorrows from mine eyes:  
For only I have toiled to inherit here  
The months of vanity and loss of time,  
And painful nights have been appointed me.

(I.ii.192-99)

What we and the Jews who have just left Barabas to his "ecstasy" do not realize is that we have just witnessed the first of Barabas' many stellar performances in which he makes great show of his losses. In actuality, he has already "cast with cunning for the time to come" (I.ii.224) and has hidden a fortune beneath the floorboards of his mansion. News that the nuns' residence there is imminent and that he is no longer allowed within prove only a momentary setback

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<sup>6</sup>N. W. Bawcutt, Introd., The Jew of Malta (The Revels Plays).

to Barabas; he again "searches his deepest wits" and contrives another show--the aim now to regain his secret wealth.

Barabas performs his next show without benefit of stage properties, although the stolen wealth of the first scene remains fast in our memories. Neither does Barabas require a prescribed script for his performance. A virtuoso at improvising a scene, Barabas requires nothing more than his daughter Abigail in his effort to regain his wealth. We immediately recognize in Abigail the one truly virtuous character of the play's society. She is totally loyal and without guile; yet, in spite of her virtue, she knowingly becomes a player in her father's theatre. Barabas excuses their actions quite simply: "A counterfeit profession," he says to Abigail, "is better/Than unseen hypocrisy" (I.ii.292-93). Remembering the behavior of the Maltese Knights, we see some justification for his words and deeds. Like Abigail, we are caught up in Barabas' improvisations, for we too are privy to his stage directions in I.ii. His whispered asides serve a practical purpose in that they reveal to us and to Abigail Barabas' intentions in regaining his wealth. But to an even greater extent, they also highlight Barabas' obvious relish of role-playing and his eagerness to juggle appearances in order to exact his revenge and redeem his gold. And while we cannot condone a father for using his daughter so, we cannot help but appreciate Barabas' expert dissembling, simultaneously directing his daughter into a nunnery just long enough to recover his fortune while acting the bereaved and betrayed father for the onlookers.

Barabas enters in the literal and metaphorical darkness of II.i and delivers a moving sililoquy. It is midnight, and Barabas, whose soul is deprived of its light (his gold), anxiously anticipates the appearance of his "loadstar," Abigail, at the window above.

He prays:

O thou, that with a fiery pillar led'st  
The Sons of Israel through the dismal shades,  
Light Abraham's offspring, and direct the hand  
Of Abigail this night; or let the day  
Turn to eternal darkness after this.  
Nor quiet enter my distempered thoughts,  
Till I have answer of my Abigail.

(II.i.12-19)

His anguished complaints turn to ecstatic exclamations, however, when Abigail appears and, tossing him one bag of treasure after another, directs him to receive his "happiness." Hugging the bags in his daughter's stead, Barabas rhapsodizes over the "first beginner" of his bliss: "O my girl,/My gold, my fortune, my felicity,/Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy/. . . O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss!" (II.i.47-54). Barabas' words and actions in the scene do much to encourage the audience's awakening ambivalence. As Abigail, the reluctant but loyal daughter, looks on from above, Barabas again possesses those objects from which he draws much of his delight and all of the imagination for his elaborate schemes of vengeance. We realize from his reaction and the resulting irony, of which he has no knowledge, that he is unable to separate his affection for his own daughter from the all-consuming love he feels for his gold.

It comes as no surprise to us that Barabas reappears in the next scene more wealthy than he once was and more than willing now to direct his energies toward revenge. According to Michael Goldman, Marlowe follows closely upon Kyd's example with his Barabas; Marlowe explores the dramatic possibilities of the revenge hero--a role which Goldman says "transforms an injured man into a playwright and allows intensities of rage to express themselves not merely in outcry but in ingenious theatrical contrivance."<sup>7</sup> Barabas' suppressed rage leads him to plot three murders in quick succession. The murders themselves are indeed ingeniously contrived and executed in a very theatrical manner; however, the choice of victims in the audience's eyes is unjust. Instead of venting his rage on the one initially responsible for his injuries, Barabas directs his revenge upon blameless and, moreover, likeable victims. Consequently, Barabas, at the height of his powers and fortunes, loses any remaining sympathy the audience might previously have held in reserve for him.

The first two of his victims are easily dispatched with the aid of the Turk, Ithamore, and one simple stage property, a letter. Ludowick, the Governor's son, and Don Mathias, Abigail's chosen love, are pitted against each other with Abigail being Barabas' unwitting accomplice. Their quarrel over Abigail is encouraged and quickly brought to its culmination by the approving father. Believing it "no sin to deceive a Christian" (II.iii.311), Barabas sends a feigned

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<sup>7</sup>Goldman, p. 31.

challenge to Mathias by the slave. Ithamore, in a comic piece of business, hesitates, knowing full well his master's mindset, and asks, "Tis poisoned, is it not?" (II.ii.374). Barabas cuts him off, but we see the seeds for Ithamore's own destruction being planted by his innocent question. Barabas and Ithamore leave, each to his appointed business: Ithamore to deliver the challenge, Barabas to "feign some lie" until he has set the young gentlemen at enmity. II.ii opens on Ludowick now reading the letter. The young men meet, and Barabas choreographs their fight from above; each neatly thrusts his blade home to the other and "both fall dead." True to Barabas' own prediction, the murders are "cunningly performed" (II.iii.369). Even the vile Ithamore is moved to admire the spectacle which the Jew has contrived. He says, "Why, was there ever seen such villainy,/So neatly plotted and so well performed" (III.iii.1-2). The audience, too, has taken note of Barabas' villainy. Though looking on "from above," god-like, he has ably demonstrated his power and his ability to effect changes, even these terrible changes, he has at the same time made us realize the very limitations such a selfish, aloof lack of morality and humanity must inevitably lead to. The audience alone at this point seems to possess the knowledge that Barabas will be made to suffer retribution for his heinous crimes, no matter that he might once have been wronged, and that the progress of his pomp, like Tamburlaine's, will be cut short by the same fate which had been visited upon his victims.

Upon the deaths of these two blameless victims and of his next, his own daughter, a great many critics have had cause to

comment on the progressive impoverishment of Barabas' character in the midst of his infinite riches. Unfair comparison with other of Marlowe's aspiring protagonists has reduced Barabas to, as M. M. Mahood points out, "a shrunken figure, withered in body and mind."<sup>8</sup> While it is true that Barabas attains neither the undisputed might of Tamburlaine, nor the tragic eloquence of Faustus or of Edward, he is most assuredly not a "shrunken figure," nor is he "withered," mentally or otherwise. In fact, at least one of the murders he commits with the assistance of Ithamore can be compared to one of Tamburlaine's actions. Each father, enraged by what he perceives as the deliberate betrayal and disapproval of his offspring, is led to murder his child. At this the comparison ends, however, for while we deplore Tamburlaine's cold-blooded murder of Calyphas, we recognize in the act an insane impulse carried to a tragic extreme, his excuse being "argument of arms" and "martial justice." Barabas, on the other hand, contrives his own daughter's murder in as theatrical a manner as that of her innocent suitors. Abigail has, in a sense, outlived her usefulness for her father after retrieving his wealth and unknowingly playing the catalyst for his revenge on the governor. When she learns of her father's duplicity from Ithamore, Abigail, like many another virtuous daughter, has two choices: suicide or banishment. She chooses the latter and reenters the convent, this time with every intention of remaining. Another important letter

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<sup>8</sup>M. M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 75.

enters the plot, a letter which enrages Barabas and bodes ill for its sender. Within moments of its receipt, Barabas not only improvises Abigail's manner of dying, but arranges as well for the destruction of the entire order of nuns who dwell in his former home. He calls for Ithamore to bring the pot of rice which simmers on the stove. The Turk's imagination fails him again as he questions how the Jew will poison Abigail with the very food that would "preserve life, make her round and plump, and batten" (III.iv.66). Barabas then reveals "the precious powder . . ./Whose operation is to bind, infect,/And poison deeply: yet not appear/In forty hours after it is ta'en (III.iv.68-72). His speech focuses our horrified gaze on the property, and the irony of Ithamore's ignorant question is driven home. The other important property of the scene, the pot and its contents, is imbued with ironic and symbolic significance also. This scene recalls Barabas' almost hypnotic manipulation of the audience through his use of the stage properties. As with the gold and jewels of scene one of Act I, Barabas skillfully turns our attention to the object and forces us to listen with a sort of horrified fascination while he intones his desires and, in this case, his curse. In this instance, the use of the property intensifies the already powerful poetry, for all the while Ithamore holds the pot, his master stirs the poison in and chants:

As fatal be it to her as the draught  
Of which great Alexander drunk and died:  
And with her let it work like Borgia's wine,  
Whereof his sire, the Pope, was poisoned  
In few, the blood of Hydra, Lerna's bane,  
The juice of hebon, and Cocytus' breath,

And all the poisons of the Stygian pool,  
 Break from the fiery kingdom, and in this [the cauldron]  
 Vomit your venom, and envenom her  
 That like a fiend hath left her father thus.

(III.iv.96-105)

Through his "conjuring" Barabas has turned an obvious symbol of systemance into the means by which to kill that very person he, as a father, should be most diligently trying to sustain and nurture. Through his words he has transformed her first to the "diamond" by which to entice Ludowick and now to the fiend whose betrayal the father is justified in avenging. We have seen, as well, Barabas' ability to transform those objects which would be instrumental in exacting his revenge. The cold, hard, inhuman coins of the play's opening scene are the objects on which he lavishes his affection; the warm, life-giving food becomes, through his "conjuring," the vehicle of death for his own daughter.

For his remaining acts of villainy, Barabas needs little in the way of properties; nevertheless, his display of dramatic talent in IV and V is a veritable tour de force. Masinton tells us that "each time his personal security or his purse is threatened, Barabas artfully creates an illusion (by improvising a scene or adopting a role) that misleads his enemies and allows him to work their downfall."<sup>9</sup> And because his victims are, for the most part, as unscrupulous as Barabas himself, we are less inclined to be critical of his methods.

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<sup>9</sup>Masinton, p. 80.

He becomes the penitent Jew in order to be revenged upon his next victims, the corrupt friars Bernardine and Jacomo. Barabas, fearing the friars know too well of his duplicity, dangles his invisible though immense wealth to entrap the two. Pleased by the eagerness with which the two swallow his bait, Barabas exclaims:

Now I have such a plot for both their lives  
 As never Jew nor Christian knew the like.  
 One turned my daughter, therefore he shall die;  
 The other knows enough to have my life,  
 Therefore 'tis not requisite he should live.

(IV.i.117-21)

Barabas' "fair words" lull Bernardine into a foolish and fatal sleep. Awakened rudely, Bernardine learns that Barabas' actions are more persuasive than his words. He is garroted with Ithamore's girdle at Barabas' direction, and then, through Ithamore's embellishment upon the scene, is propped up to look as if he yet lived. Meanwhile, the two real villains hide and look on as Jacomo enters and assaults Bernardine's lifeless body. The Vice and his "second self" reenter, feigning shock at Jacomo's evil deed, and call for justice. The spectacle is complete as Ithamore leads the friar away, wearing the true murder weapon around his waist with the supposed weapon, the staff, in his hand. Marlowe has tempered our response to Barabas' villainy by demonstrating the same sort of evil infecting the rest of Maltese society, especially its Christian leaders.

When in IV Barabas' purse is once again threatened, he responds with more of the same virtuosity and cunning role-playing.

This time, however, his victim is his turncoat slave and accomplice. Ithamore unwisely sends his blackmail demands to Barabas in a letter. He might have remembered the peculiar way in which Barabas replies to epistles not particularly to his liking. Pained as Barabas is to part with any of his precious gold, he yields a good portion of it up to his three unsavory extortionists, Ithamore, the whore Bellamira, and her pimp Pilia-Borza. We realize, though, that Barabas has no intention of parting with his precious gold for long; he merely dangles it as the glittering bait through which to lure his victims toward their own undoing. And we can too easily guess Ithamore's eventual fate, for the Jew has confided to us earlier that his slave's deeds for him are to be repaid "with a vengeance" (III.iv.116). But the manner in which Barabas casts his bait and reels in his victims is as cunningly performed as before and as entertaining. For this new role, Barabas enjoys donning a flamboyant disguise. The victims, never the wiser to the French musician's carefully timed appearance, demand a song from him and even give him the exorbitant fee of two crowns. Again drawn into his confidence, we watch Barabas fall in and out of his character, responding both to the demands on the musician and to the jabbing insults bravely directed toward the "absent" Jew.

The newly-rich but still inept extortionists fall prey to their own desires as each one luxuriates in the aroma of the fatal nosegay, all, that is, except Pilia-Borza who protests the posies "stink like a hollyhock" (IV.iv.40). We learn immediately after, through Barabas' aside, that in this manner is he "revenged upon

'em all,/The scent thereof was death" (IV.iv.41-42). Unfortunately for Barabas, his victims' knowledge follows too soon after ours; they have enough time before succumbing to betray all his scheming to the Governor, who, despite the Jew's call for justice, sentences the villain to death. Barabas' reply to his sentence falls on none but the audience's ears. He retorts, "Devils, do your worst; I'll live in spite of you" (V.i.41). And live he does, although with the aid of poppy and cold mandrake juice he appears otherwise. Mistaking him for dead, the officers throw Barabas' body over the city walls "to be a prey for vultures and wild beasts" (V.i.59). Marlowe's stage directions present a perplexing dilemma--namely, how shall the body of a live actor be thrown from the height of city walls and then miraculously awake unharmed? We can only surmise that the scene is not staged realistically since there is such a drastic and swift change in scene from inside the city walls to outside. Barabas must be thrown (albeit gently) to one side of the stage to symbolize his fall and then awake to reveal yet another charade. His resurrection signifies Malta's downfall and the knights' enslavement. Rising, he vows:

I'll be revenged on this accursed town,  
 For by my means Calymath shall enter in.  
 I'll help to slay their children and their wives,  
 To fire the churches, pull their houses down;  
 Take my goods too, and seize upon my lands.  
 I hope to see the governor a slave,  
 And, rowing in a galley, whipped to death.

(V.i.62-68)

As with Tamburlaine, what seems to be high-flown rhetoric and fanatical boasting is made real on stage; consequently, by Barabas'

means Calymath does enter in, the city and its inhabitants are made to suffer, and Ferneze is, in a sense, made to be a slave.

Perhaps it is not odd, given Barabas' past dissatisfaction with his performances, that he would not stop with Calymath's victory over the knights and his subsequent replacement of Ferneze as the governor of the island. He realizes he has gotten by his policy, "No simple place, no small authority" (V.ii.28), and that to be Governor of Malta is to fear the hatred of its people. His solution is as always to dissemble and, after forming an uneasy alliance with his defeated enemy, to "live with both,/Making a profit of [his] policy" (V.ii.111-12). He exits, warning:

My policy detests prevention [anticipation]:  
To what event my secret purpose drives,  
I know; and they [all his adversaries] shall  
witness with their lives.

(V.ii.121-23)

Barabas' "secret purpose" remains a mystery two scenes later when, according to Marlowe's stage directions, he is discovered "with a hammer above, very busy." Our instincts and past experience make guarded our response to Barabas' newest role, but our curiosity is piqued. His power to turn word into deed has shown no sign of abating, and he has shown himself a master at manipulating properties, gestures, and even costumes in his spectacles. What elaborate plotting now requires his services as his own scene designer and master carpenter, building the stage whereon he will direct the evening's entertainment? Ferneze's entrance makes clear the mystery. Barabas confesses to constructing a "dainty gallery"--"The floor

whereof, this cable being cut,/Doth fall asunder, so that it doth sink/Into a deep pit past recovery" (V.v.33-36). In addition to this ingenious special effect, Barabas has arranged for Calymath's men to be trapped within a monastery somewhat removed from the city and, at his signal, to perish by fire. So pleased is he with his script, he does not even accept the tribute which Ferneze has collected. So trusting is Barabas of his new-found accomplice that he makes Ferneze his stage manager for this final play-within-a-play and invests his sworn enemy with control of the one device on which his continued power and infinite riches depends. In his ignorance he boasts, "Now tell me, worldlings, underneath the sun/If greater falsehood ever has been done" (V.v.49-50). Barabas receives his answer abruptly. Ferneze, demonstrating his own flair for the theatrical and his own "working words," intervenes in Barabas' plot and causes the Jew to fall into the cauldron intended for Calymath. Thus, by duplicity which surpasses that of Barabas, he resumes the position for which the Jew is ultimately ill-equipped.

"A charge, the cable cut, a cauldron discovered [into which Barabas has fallen]." In the time it has taken Calymath and his men to enter the banquet hall, Barabas' plans go awry. His own dramatic abilities bring about his utter defeat and death; he has inadvertently become his own tragic victim. Before he dies, however, he receives some satisfaction in playing the sacrificial lamb. Refused aid from the Christians, Barabas intones his final curse:

Then, Barabas, breathe forth thy latest fate,  
And in the fury of thy torments strive



showmanship. From his audience he has elicited variously delight and disgust. He has, with his words and deeds, demonstrated his cunning, but he has, in the end, failed to demonstrate by either word or deed that he was "framed of finer mould than common men."

## CHAPTER 3

### DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.

A few words, spoken not in excuse or self-pity, but from self-conceit and defiance, pronounce the "tragical history" of Marlowe's best-known dramatic character; with this, his own simple statement, Faustus has set into motion the machinery by which he is damned. The same could be said by or about any of Marlowe's aspiring protagonists. They are all but men; hence, they are limited. Had they been made by their creator to believe this, however, we would not be discussing their tragedies, de casibus or otherwise. Yet, Faustus and his two predecessors aspire to become more than man and to overcome man's limitations. Tamburlaine aspires to the "ripest fruit of all/The sweet fruition of an earthly crown." Barabas, who is in his own mind "born to better chance/And framed of finer mould than common men," aspires to enclose "infinite riches in a little room," and destroys all who would prevent him. Faustus, however, aspires to dominions that exceed earthly crowns and infinite riches, that stretch even farther than the mind of man: he aspires to the role of the magus, for as he says, "A sound magician is a demi-god."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, ed. John D. Jump (The Revels Plays, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), i. 61. ATT

Each aspirant becomes, in a sense, a demi-god. We have noted how Tamburlaine and Barabas, for a time at least, are god-like in control of the spectacle surrounding them. Both manipulate enemies and loved ones alike with their "working words"; what is more, they direct their deeds in such a way as to underscore their words. Faustus proves adept as well in the delivery of his mighty lines; it is impossible to listen to Faustus or to read his lines without being struck by his eloquence and his agility with the language. Faustus is, after all, a scholar, "excelling all, and sweetly can dispute/In th' heavenly matters of theology" (Pro1.18-19). The most studious of artisans, he recognizes the power of language to transcend the printed page and transform himself into a god and his study into "a world of profit and delight" (i.52). Faustus, however, unlike Tamburlaine and Barabas, does not wax as eloquent in manipulating the language of spectacle. "What his words express and what they effect," according to A. Bartlett Giamatti, "could not be more tragically separated. As we witness the widening gap between the mental spectacle the words conjure and the theatrical spectacle actually unfolding . . . we see how Marlowe dramatizes the terrible ambiguities in the power of self-transformation through the magic of words."<sup>2</sup>

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further references to this play will be noted parenthetically by scene and line number within the text.

<sup>2</sup>A. Bartlett Giamatti, "Marlowe: The Arts of Illusion," Yale Review, 61 (1971), p. 537.

We witness the opening of this gap between the mental and theatrical spectacle and its threat to Faustus from his very first entrance in i. The scene opens on Faustus in his study, sounding for himself and for us the depth of that he professes to know. Like Tamburlaine with his crowns and Barabas with his gold, Faustus reacts in a curious manner to the objects with which he has chosen most often to associate himself and which most clearly identify and define his character to the audience. He is surrounded by his books, the wealth of his profession. Yet we learn through his words that the books no longer hold the riches they once provided him, and he would no longer be enclosed in his study with them. Faustus' words and gestures bristle with impatience as he catalogues the breadth of his learning, demonstrating at once his pride in his scholarship and his frustration at having no other arts in which to excell. His volume of Aristotle is cast aside because it affords "no greater miracle"; he says disdainfully: "A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit" (i.11). Medicine does not prove the greater subject; neither does the law. "This study," claims Faustus, "fits a mercenary drudge/Who aims at nothing by external trash,/Too servile and illiberal for me" (i.34-36). Next he turns to the study of divinity and takes up Jerome's Bible, referring as he does so to two passages which, in his eyes, doom men to sinful lives and "everlasting death." This doctrine of "Che sarà, sarà;/What will be, shall be!" (i.46-47) causes a contemptuous Faustus to bid Divinity adieu. His farewell, though, does not come before we realize that Faustus' learning is flawed.

Faustus' arrogance has caused him to turn away from his books, the very objects from which he once drew his power; however, we realize that he flings his books aside too soon, especially his Bible. For Faustus arrives at his deterministic conclusions about man's fate through faulty logic. So intent is he on condemning the first part of Romans 6:23, he neglects entirely the verse's more promising conclusion: "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Faustus commits this oversight not once but twice. The second time he reads no further than a rather harsh verse eight of I John to support his argument: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Verse nine, on the other hand, continues in a more reassuring mode: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Faustus is, in a way, like many of us who see no further than we wish to see. He has offered proof enough for his argument and is satisfied; he has, however, committed the greatest sin against good scholarship--the sin of omission. And it is this sin which makes the way clear for Faustus' successive and even greater transgressions.

Having cast aside those books which could not offer worlds of "profit and delight,/Of power, of honour, of omnipotence" (i.2-3), Faustus turns to the one book which can. He exclaims:

These metaphysics of magicians  
And necromantic books are heavenly;  
Lines, circles, letters, and characters:  
Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.

(i.48-51)

These "lines, circles, letters, and characters," the language of Faustus' forbidden study, kindle his ambitions. He boasts, "All things that move between the quiet poles/Shall be at my command" (i.55-56). The language soars; the accompanying gestures are grand; nevertheless, we know even now that both language and gestures are empty and superficial. We have witnessed Faustus fling aside his books, thinking them unworthy of him, and take up the forbidden book of necromancy. His actions have gone far in inadvertently defining his character for the audience and turning its sympathy from him. The Chorus' warning in the Prologue had done much to provoke our ambiguous response to the protagonist: "[S]wollen with cunning of a self conceit,/His waxen wings did mount above his reach" (Prologue 20-21). The allusion reduces the stature of Faustus, without our having yet seen him, to a foolish figure, boundless in ambition but heedless of warnings, whose own appetites destroy him. Not so with Tamburlaine, however, who, for so long, matches soaring words to soaring deeds. He, too, is a figure boundless in ambition and heedless of all warnings, yet we are assured even before his entrance of his success. The combined power of his mighty lines and equally mighty deeds would prove too great a match for any heavens which would conspire his overthrow.

Though Faustus' language will continue to soar at times, we have witnessed in it the opening of the gap between the "mental" and the "theatrical" spectacle of the drama. Faustus' empty boasts and haughty wishes, which he would use to transform himself into a "demi-god," in actuality only temporarily mask the inevitability

of his downfall and the utter impossibility of what his words connote. Visually and verbally, Faustus has corrupted and abused the Word to justify his turning to "heavenly" "necromantic books." He is, even now, damned. A. Bartlett Giamatti agrees and further asserts that "the play's techniques and issues are concentrated in this first speech and projected into the rest of the drama."<sup>3</sup> He continues:

The more Faustus transforms himself into a god through language, looking down on all human experience and knowledge, the more we see his very words transform him into something foolish, ignorant, superficial; the more Faustus tells of total mastery, the more we see a process of enslavement . . . . [L]anguage releases a meaning which Faustus does not pursue but which throughout the action of the play pursues Faustus.<sup>4</sup>

As the scene progresses, Faustus is, in a sense, pursued by his own conscience. His psychomachia is projected theatrically in the figures of the Good and Bad Angels. The Good Angel calls on Faustus to put his prop away. He says, "O Faustus, lay that damned book aside/And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul/ . . . Read, read the scriptures; that [the book of necromancy] is blasphemy" (i.69-72). The Bad Angel counters: "Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art/Wherein all nature's treasury is contain'd" (i.73-74). Once again Faustus' ambitions are fueled and his imagination conjures for him a wealth of Indian gold, orient pearl, pleasant fruits and princely delicacies--the same sort of wealth he had earlier rejected as "external trash." But his imagination has carried him too far

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<sup>3</sup>Giamatti, p. 539.

<sup>4</sup>Giamatti, p. 539.

to realize his folly. He credits Valdes and Cornelius' words as having won him "to practise magic and concealed arts" (i.101); yet he realizes he has to a great extent transformed himself:

Know that your words have won me at the last  
To practise magic and concealed arts;  
Yet not your words only, but mine own fantasy,  
That will receive no object, for my head  
But ruminates on necromantic skill.

'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me.

(i.100-109)

In his ravishment, he has clearly come to think of himself as an artist-magician. His comparison of himself to Musaeus, the legendary Greek poet thought to be either the pupil or the son of Orpheus, And Agrippa, the sixteenth-century German physician and student of magic, provides us our first clue. Charles Masinton elaborates: "The artist and the magician can live as God in fantasies of their own creation, forgetting for a time the limitations of mortality."<sup>5</sup> But it is the audience's awareness of its own morality and the mortality which it shares with Faustus that countermands his vision of himself as the artist-magician or even the demi-god. We recognize Faustus' fantasies and his folly in believing them to be reality; consequently, we are forced, almost against our wills, to undercut Faustus' language of aspiration with our own skepticism. For the gap is gradually widening between whatever his language implies and the increasing hollowness of the true quality of those aspirations.

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<sup>5</sup>Masinton, p. 120.

The Faustus we next see in iii is anxious now to turn his fantasies into fact. Hastening to a solitary grove to commence his conjuring, we see what Faustus does not: he has been preceded to this place by Lucifer and four Devils who keep watch as he prepares and executes his ritual. We are made to wonder at whether the heavens did indeed conspire Faustus' overthrow; the presence of the devilish quintet indicates otherwise. Here the language of spectacle proves much more eloquent than the incantations of the novice-magician. The mere presence of Lucifer and his accompanying Devils nullifies the language of Faustus' incantations and Faustus' delusions--the protective circle and his skill at conjuring--are made all the more obvious and dangerous in our eyes. Adding to the spectacle of this first conjuring scene, Marlowe's spectacular stage effects call for a Dragon to appear "briefly above," followed by a Devil which Faustus repels for its ugliness. Surprised and heartened by what his seeming magic has wrought, Faustus scoffs: "I see there's virtue in my heavenly words/. . . Such is the force of magic and my spells./Now, Faustus, thou art conjuror laureate" (iii.29-34). When Mephistophilis enters in the likeness of a Dominican Friar, Faustus learns his conjuring was not entirely responsible for the Devil's appearance. Mephistophilis claims it was Faustus' own language rather than his magic which brought him hither. He says:

For when we hear one rack the name of God  
 Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,  
 We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;

Nor will we come unless he use such means [*italics mine*]  
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd.

(iii.49-53)

The language that was "wont to make [the] schools ring with sic probo" (i.2) is now distorted to the point where it can conjure forth demons. Again the gap widens.

It is perhaps difficult for the audience to have felt any amount of sympathy for Faustus thus far. He, like Tamburlaine and Barabas, has separated himself by word and deed from both man and God. Tamburlaine and Barabas, however, were able to profit from their separation, at least for a time, simply because they gave no thought to it and because their ingenuity intrigued us. But because Faustus is in many ways too much like us--oftentimes inept, vain, boastful, and unable or unwilling to heed warnings--we sympathize, but we are also apt to want to distance ourselves from him and his actions. We are already too aware of what end his aspirations will secure for him, and our knowledge of that inevitability terrifies us. This knowledge of damnation, however, does not produce the same fears in Faustus--or so he claims. He says, "This word 'damnation' terrifies not him" (iii.61). Although the word itself may not terrify him, perhaps the reality does: he refers to himself in the third person as if to use language as a means of distancing the fact of damnation in his mind. He further distances himself in such a way that he is oblivious to Mephistophilis' implicit warning. When Faustus enquires as to the reason for Lucifer's fall, Mephistophilis replies, "O, by aspiring pride and

insolence/For which God threw him from the face of/heaven" (iii.70-71). Mephistophilis' other warnings fall on deaf ears as well. Not only do we see here the scholar's language failing because of the content even his lofty words imply, but we see language further rendered ineffectual through Faustus' ignorance and inattention to that of Mephistophilis. Faustus, thus, seems to be failing totally to come to terms with the significance of language, both that which he uses and that which is used upon him. He is impatient to be done with useless prattle. Instead he directs Mephistophilis:

Learn thou of Faustus' manly fortitude  
And score those joys thou never shalt possess.  
Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:

. . . . .  
Say he surrenders up to him his soul  
So he will spare him four-and-twenty years,  
Letting him live in all voluptuousness,  
Having thee ever to attend on me,  
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,  
To tell me whatsoever I demand,  
To slay my enemies and aid my friends,  
And always be obedient to my will.

(iii.87-99)

No thought to raising the winds, ransacking the ocean for orient pearl, or walling all Germany with brass? Faustus might just as easily be the vainglorious Bajazeth marshalling his contributory kings or Barabas directing the simple Ithamore in another heinous crime. For this Faustus would sell his soul? Here the language of aspiration is superceded by the "spectacle of naked appetite." Giamatti concludes: "While we hear the flying words, we also see

a man changing himself, through those words, from a magician to a dabbler in luxury to a general agent of death."<sup>6</sup>

However, not all eloquence is lost to Faustus, and neither is the audience's sympathy. When next we see Faustus, returned to his study, it is almost midnight, and his confidence in his decision has begun to waver. To ease his inner conflict, Faustus speaks aloud to convince himself to be "resolute" and to rid himself of his "vain fancies." He says:

Now, Faustus, must  
Thou needs be damn'd, and canst thou not be sav'd.  
What boots it then to think of God or heaven?  
Away with such vain fancies, and despair;  
Despair in God, and trust in Beelzebub.

. . . . .  
The God thou serv'st is thine own appetite,  
Wherein is fix'd the love of Beelzebub:  
To him I'll build an altar and a church  
And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes.

(v.1-14)

In this speech and in others throughout the remainder of the play, we witness Faustus attempting to ease the spiritual pain he suffers by delivering empty promises and by directing shows for his own amusement and distraction. We realize that Faustus, unlike Tamburlaine and Barabas, could not and will not carry out the deeds implicit in his words; nor will he be as adept in staging his shows, for, ultimately, the shows amount to sophomoric pranks and slapstick comedy.

Faustus' promise in this speech to build an altar and offer the blood of new-born babes to Beelzebub is made in the privacy of

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<sup>6</sup>Giamatti, p. 541.

his study with none but his books as witness. The Good and Bad Angels reappear, each exhorting Faustus to follow him. The Bad Angel's exhortations prove the more appealing: he disdains contrition, prayer, and repentance as "illusions" and "fruits of lunacy,/That make men foolish that do use them most" (v.19-20). Rather than think on "heaven and heavenly things," the Bad Angel calls on Faustus to "think of honour and of wealth" (v.22). The mention of wealth--a more tangible reward than salvation--is what finally strengthens Faustus' resolve. Mephistophilis is summoned, and he brings with him a deed of gift to be written in Faustus' own blood.

The deed itself is one of two striking visual elements in the scene. The document lies before Faustus while he glibly parleys with Mephistophilis. As they speak, the significance of the prop is gradually made clearer for us--a knowledge we share with Mephistophilis, but which is as yet lost on Faustus. Marlowe's technique in the scene is one which we have since come to label cinematic. The playwright has, in effect, zoomed in to focus our attention on a seemingly unimportant object; he enables us to realize that a mere piece of paper, in itself ephemeral, represents the inexorable fact of Faustus' commitment. Words and deeds begin to mesh, our focus is again directed outward, and Faustus takes the dagger which Mephistophilis has produced and stabs his arm. "View here," he says, "this blood that trickles from mine arm,/ And let it be propitious for my wish" (v.57-58). Blood, even its theatrical counterfeit, is a heavily referential symbol. It is,

of course, the life force which flows throughout the body, and it is also traditionally identified with the soul.<sup>7</sup> Blood flows so freely and in such abundance in both parts of Tamburlaine that the traditional association is not easily made. However, the sight of Faustus' blood is a very shocking and a very theatrical effect. He maims himself, physically and spiritually, and signs away his soul for a piece of paper, or for what has as much value as a piece of paper--twenty-four years of meaningless and empty amusement. His act contrasts greatly to another sacrificial bloodletting which was performed on a more sublime scale. Christ's sacrifice was made so that all might live eternally in heavenly paradise; Faustus makes his sacrifice so that he alone might live twenty-four years in earthly "profit and delight." Faustus himself comes to realize, too late, how blood, which damned him, might as easily have saved him: "See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!/One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!—" (xix.146-47). The identification of the blood and the soul is underscored by the fact that Faustus' blood congeals at the moment he writes "Faustus gives to thee his soul" (v.67), and by Mephistophilis' "vampire-like exclamation" as the chafer of fire clears the blood again: "O what will I not do to obtain his soul" (v.73).<sup>8</sup>

Mephistophilis is very adept at improvising diversions aimed to ease Faustus' doubt and confusion. To counteract yet another

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<sup>7</sup>C. L. Barber, "'The form of Faustus' fortunes good or bad,'" Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 110.

<sup>8</sup>Barber, p. 110.

portentous sight ("Homo fuge" written on Faustus' arm), Mephistophilis devises the first of his many shows, and he proves much more skillful than Faustus in turning word into deed. Mephistophilis claims that each of the shows is produced but to delight Faustus' mind and to let him see what magic can perform (v.84-85). We, like Faustus, are asked to be passive spectators of these "displays of Satanic power and theatrical ingenuity."<sup>9</sup> Theatrical they are indeed and ingeniously timed, for whenever Faustus weakens in his resolve and turns his thoughts toward salvation, Mephistophilis devises another spectacle to lure him back. The first of such spectacles plays upon Faustus' notion of what payment the sale of his soul merits. The stage directions call for Devils to enter at Mephistophilis' command, "giving crowns and rich apparel to Faustus. They dance and then depart." Faustus, as a result, is sufficiently delighted to abandon the urge to flee, and he delivers his deed of gift into Mephistophilis' hands. The second spectacle is devised to grant, at least in part, Faustus' desire for a wife. The aspiring hero whose ambition was once to be "resolved of all ambiguities" (i.79) has, in a few short scenes, given in to pursuits perhaps more pleasurable but much less poetical. He demands of Mephistophilis: "Let me have a wife, the fairest maid in Germany, for I am wanton and lascivious and cannot live without a wife" (v.141-43). Unable to grant him a wife on conventional terms (marriage is a sacrament forbidden to them), Mephistophilis

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<sup>9</sup>Francis Teague, "Spectacle in Faustus," Cahiers Elisabethians, 17 (1979), p. 83.

fetches Faustus a wife "in the devil's name" (v.148). Here the stage directions call for a Devil to enter, "dressed like a woman, with fireworks."

The third spectacle, by far the most theatrical show of Satanic power, is the elaborate parade of the Seven Deadly Sins. Faustus, it appears, has not been so distracted by Mephistophilis' displays and by the magic he himself has practiced that he has not feared damnation and wished to turn his thoughts toward repentance and salvation. The opening of vi finds him on the brink of a suicidal despair, a despair in which Faustus aspires to his previous heights of eloquence. Two two Angels reappear to dramatize Faustus' inner state of confusion; one reassures Faustus that he might still repent and remain unharmed, while the other threatens Faustus that should he repent, devils would rend his flesh. Faustus' despair is then interrupted by the entrance of Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistophilis who are "come from hell in person to show [Faustus] some pastime" (vi.104-05). Faustus, in turn, exclaims, "That sight will be as pleasant to me as paradise was to Adam on the first day of his creation" (vi.108-09). Lucifer admonishes him not to talk of paradise or creation, but rather to "mark the show" (vi.110). We are all entertained, and the show clearly fulfills its purpose because an enthusiastic Faustus expresses his approval: "O, how this sight doth delight my soul!" (vi.170). Lucifer's spectacle proves so obviously enthralling to Faustus that he allows it to control his very thoughts. He is so delighted by the sight that he eagerly takes to devising his own spectacles. A production staged

by and starring Orson Welles in the 1940's conveyed the notion that not only is the idea of magic ravishing to Faustus, but the spectacle of magic can be ravishing as well. Welles drastically simplified the play, concentrating mainly on the conjuring scenes rather than on Faustus' recurring bouts of conscience. He presented the character of Dr. Faustus as "an obviously and heavily made up impression of himself appearing in a magic act. Then he asked his audience, in effect, to join him in a game of admitted pretense."<sup>10</sup> The scenes in which Welles portrayed Faustus have been described as "all like magic acts and vaudeville turns presented in the grand guignol manner."<sup>11</sup>

"Vaudeville" perhaps is an apt description of the quality of Faustus' spectacle because it consists mainly of "stunts" and very physical comedy. Farcical to a great extent, Faustus' spectacle is unlike any of the spectacles we have witnessed previously. His tricks clearly lack the sophistication of those devised by Lucifer and Mephistophilis. And, as Francis Teague points out, "Faustus' tricks demand less from the players, more from the audience."<sup>12</sup> The first of Faustus' tricks requires that he become invisible; this simply means that the other actors must pretend not to see him, and we must "accept the fiction" as Faustus wreaks havoc at the Vatican.

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<sup>10</sup>Richard France, The Theatre of Orson Welles (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1977), p. 91.

<sup>11</sup>France, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup>Teague, p. 83.

He charges Mephistophilis: "in this show let me an actor be,/That this proud Pope may Faustus' cunning see" (viii.76-77). However, it is not Faustus' cunning which the audience witnesses; rather, it is his startling capacity for annoying practical jokes. Our response to Faustus' sophomoric pranks is not so harsh as it might be, though, because the Pope himself and his retinue are portrayed as vain and pompous characters. The Pope is, according to Charles Masinton, "hypocritical, cowardly, and superstitious, and he commits the very sin Faustus does in surrendering to the desire for power."<sup>13</sup> Masinton sees further evidence of Faustus' degeneracy throughout the scene. He points out that since Faustus cannot partake of the true Feast of Peter, he turns to "Childish antics that travesty the sacrament of Holy Communion."<sup>14</sup> Faustus snatches the Pope's meat, drinks his wine, and is quick to box his ears when he makes the sign of the cross to rid his feast of the vexatious spirit. We wonder at whether it was for this Faustus abjured his scholarship and, more importantly, the sight of God, so that he might infuriate God's agent on earth, albeit a corrupt agent, with petty pranks. These particular antics Faustus performs on his own, but Mephistophilis is, more often than not, the driving force behind Faustus' spectacles.

It is not Faustus' magic which summons Alexander and his paramour to appear before a blasé emperor (xii) or which fetches grapes out of season for a pregnant duchess (xvii); it is, instead,

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<sup>13</sup>Masinton, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup>Masinton, p. 131.

Mephistophilis who works the magic at Faustus' command. The other feats of magic which Faustus performs to demonstrate his prowess are inane and require much indulgence by members of the audience. We must pretend to overlook Benvolio as he steps back from sight to don his antlers, and we must ignore the obvious theatricality of the false limbs. While Benvolio holds up the head which looks like Faustus', we note (good-naturedly) that Faustus' corpse is definitely not shorter by a head-length. The battle Faustus stages in xiii between the Devils and Benvolio's men requires little more of us, although it is Faustus' most sophisticated trick. The battle takes place offstage and is punctuated by percussion. We witness merely the after-effects: Benvolio, Frederick, and Martino entering, "their heads and faces bloody, and besmeared with mud and dirt, all having horns on their heads." Teague comments:

The differences between the two sorts of spectacle help shape the audience's response to Faustus. His tricks are clumsy ones, primitive compared to Satan's. . . . Though Faustus sells his soul to get power and knowledge, his imagination proves so deficient that he squanders his time and the audience's patience. Faustus sells himself into hell for a string of practical jokes.<sup>15</sup>

That we are meant to view Faustus in this light is indicated by the veritable collision in xvii of the main plot and its comic counterpart. Only rarely before in Marlowe have we been asked to suspend, for a time, our concentration on the protagonist and focus on a subplot. The tragic but brief history of Olympia murdering her son in Part Two of Tamburlaine was one, and it mostly functioned

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<sup>15</sup>Teague, p. 84.

as contrast to Tamburlaine's cruel murder of his son. Ithamore's conspiracy with the courtesan Bellamira and her pimp Pilia-Borgia was cut short by Barabas' intrusion. Traditionally, the function of a subplot is both to mirror and burlesque the concerns of the main plot. Adds Giamatti, this is not done "simply to reduce mighty concerns to absurdity but also to show us that no man's mighty self is immune to human fallibility. . . . The subplot is the great equalizer, savagely reducing or gently jesting the main concerns as the dramatist sees fit."<sup>16</sup> To realize the significance of the subplot to the main plot, we must regress a bit and examine the scene in which the clown, Robin, and his cohort, Dick, conjure up a disgruntled Mephistophilis. Their comic shock at having been successful beyond either of their imaginings is made even more laughable (at least to the audience) by Mephistophilis' punishment. He intones:

To purge the rashness of this cursed deed,  
 First be thou turned to this ugly shape,  
 For apish deeds transformed to an ape  
 . . . . .  
 Be thou transformed to a dog, and  
 carry him upon thy back.

(x.40-46)

But, as Giamatti is again quick to point out, something serious has happened in the midst of farce. He says, "The subplot's burlesque of the main plot's mighty concerns has been gradually acquainting us, in visual terms, with the way foolish shapes are latent in

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<sup>16</sup>Giamatti, p. 540.

Faustus' aspiring words."<sup>17</sup> Mephistophilis' appearance at Robin's conjuring "clarifies" this larger issue. The clown's language, which he cannot control, releases a force which comes to control him. By it, he is transformed into an "ugly shape" at the very least. And with Faustus we again see the "transformer transformed" by his own language and deeds into an "ugly shape" and, ultimately, into nothing more than limbs strewn about the stage. The seemingly simple contrast of subplot and main plot demonstrates for us how the power of language to shape can also misshape.

When Robin and his foolish followers burst in upon Faustus' show for the Duke and Duchess of Vanholt (xvii), the subplot and the main plot merge. Faustus charms them all dumb without a word. Faustus, who would transform himself through language, has, in his deeds, denied the power of speech. The effect, finally, is to trivialize language, to reduce it to non-communication--"silence in the mouths of fools."<sup>18</sup>

The silence here prepares us for Faustus' warning when he conjures forth Helen for the first time. "Be silent," he tells his companions, "for danger is in words" (xviii.27). His words prove prophetic, for not even the complaints of the Old Man are enough to save Faustus from the danger that is Helen. Yielding to Mephistophilis' terrifying threat, Faustus turns from thoughts of repentance, which the Old Man had caused, and asks again for Helen, whose embraces may "extinguish clear/Those thoughts" that

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<sup>17</sup>Giamatti, p. 541.

<sup>18</sup>Giamatti, p. 542.

would dissuade Faustus from his vow (xviii.94). Faustus, in his ignorance, wants to believe Helen's dumb embracements would erase his disturbing thoughts and strengthen his resolve. The sight of Helen does, in fact, momentarily quell Faustus' anguish, and he is inspired to utter words of praise more glorious than those Tamburlaine spoke of Zenocrate. The language, though soaring, is rendered powerless against the actions it provokes. Faustus cries:

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.  
 Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!  
 Come, Helen, come give me my soul again.  
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips.  
 And all is dross that is not Helena.

(xviii.101-05)

Just as with the necromantic books, Faustus would create a heaven from Helen's lips. We recognize, along with the Old Man who looks on the scene, that Faustus' words and his actions are together his final act of blasphemy. Faustus is, to the Old Man, "accursed" and "miserable" (xviii.119). Helen's kiss does not bring Faustus immortality, unless we believe with W. W. Greg that Helen is the succubus whose kiss has finally sealed Faustus' fate and damned him eternally.<sup>19</sup>

Her kiss does bring misery, however. For when we next see Faustus, just before his pact expires, his anguish and his terror are pronounced. He has visually come full circle: he begins and ends his pact enclosed within his study. Verbally, though, Faustus

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<sup>19</sup>W. W. Greg, "The Damnation of Faustus," Modern Language Review, 41 (1946), pp. 97-107; rpt. in Doctor Faustus: A Casebook, ed. John Jump (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 86.

has descended from the heights of grandiloquence in i to the depths of despair in xix. His books, once the symbols of his unlimited aspiration, now only symbolize the inevitability of his fate. He cries, "I would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read a book" (xix.45-46). His words are futile, though; unable to accept the responsibility for his actions, Faustus' "store of pleasures must be sauc'd with pain" (xix.16). Faustus' pain is heightened when the Good Angel appears and directs him to look upon the descending throne:

Faustus, behold  
In what resplendent glory thou hadst sit  
In yonder throne like those bright shining saints,  
And triumph'd over hell; that thou hast lost.

(xix.110-14)

The Bad Angel then points Faustus' gaze to the hellmouth which yawns for him--Barabas' cauldron magnified a hundred times. He exclaims:

Now, Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare  
Into the vast perpetual torture-house.  
He that loves pleasure must for pleasure fall:  
And so I leave thee, Faustus, till anon;  
Then wilt thou tumble in confusion.

(xix.116-32)

The unlimited "world of profit and delight" evoked by its creator in i is transformed, by xix, to an inescapable hell with the promise of unlimited tortures where Faustus, once creator, is become creature.

The visual terror of the hellmouth subsides, but only to be replaced by the equally terrifying sound of the clock striking eleven. Faustus is left alone on the stage (excepting the trio

above), and we are made to feel the minutes passing with his final speech:

Ah, Faustus,  
 Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,  
 And then thou must be damn'd perpetually.  
 Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,  
 That time may cease, and midnight never come.  
 Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again and make  
 Perpetual day, or let this hour be but  
 A year, a month, a week, a natural day,  
 That Faustus may repent and save his soul.  
 O lente lente currite noctis equi!

(xix.133-42)

But only Faustus' words wish the night of perpetual torment to be cut short by "fair nature's eye" and "perpetual day"; his magic can no longer help him attain his desire. Neither can he become like the beasts:

Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?  
 Or why is this immortal that thou hast?  
 Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,  
 This soul should fly from me and I be chang'd  
 Unto some brutish beast: all beasts are happy,  
 For when they die  
 Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;  
 But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.

(xix.172-79)

Though Faustus' language still demands miracles, there is a total absence of any physical confirmation. The gap which has been ever widening throughout the play now stands ready to engulf Faustus--the hellmouth which has only temporarily disappeared from sight. With his final speech we witness the absolute failure of Faustus' words to evoke anything and his deeds to cause any effect in his world or life. His words and deeds are totally impotent. As he is dragged from the stage, he cries:

Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!  
I'll burn my books! —Ah, Mephistophilis!

(xix.189-90)

A production staged by the noted Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski, added an ironic and highly effective footnote to the story of Faustus' fall. Faustus' voice, at the moment of his Passion, became a series of inarticulate cries--"the piercing, pitiable shrieks of an animal caught in a trap. His body shudders, and then all is silence."<sup>20</sup> The language of aspiration reduced to inarticulate bestial shrieks and finally to silence. Faustus has failed utterly in his attempts at self-definition. Far from being the all powerful demi-god, Faustus has, at the play's end, become a mere prop in an entirely different but more eloquent spectacle than he might have envisioned, his mangled limbs a lesson to the wise "only to wonder at unlawful things,/Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits/To practise more than heavenly power permits" (Epil.6-8).

Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall.

(Epil.4)

The power of the demi-god, we recognize, was never visited on Faustus; it has instead been retained by the playwright himself. For Marlowe has shown us how, with Tamburlaine, words and deed can coalesce. The power of language and spectacle in Tamburlaine carries us along because we sense there is potential for his success. We see him convert his lofty words into action. The same is true for

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<sup>20</sup> Jerzy Grotowski, "Doctor Faustus in Poland," Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 133.

Barabas, although he never attains the quality of language that he might. With Faustus, the power of language is, if not nullified, at least rendered ironic from the beginning, because we cannot see the potential for success in a character subsumed by the language of spectacle and the ultimately perverted aims that his mighty lines imply. With Faustus' fall, Marlowe has taught us, finally, that in spectacle is there little splendor. We are taught that although we, unlike the beast, are given the god-like power of language by which to transform ourselves and our worlds, we must not soar so high as to presume to be gods. Thus the hour ends the day and the author ends his work.

Terminat hora diem; terminat Author opus.

## CHAPTER 4

### EDWARD II

But what are kings, when regiment is gone,  
But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?

The speaker of the above lines is Edward II, Marlowe's last aspiring protagonist. Stripped of his favorites, his power, his crown, and soon, he realizes, his life, Edward is to himself and to others no more than a fleeting shadow in the bright sunshine day of another's rule. The pattern is one we recognize--the descent from exultation to utter despair, defeat, and, ultimately, death. Eugene Waith, however, feels that Edward's weakness "deprives him of the fascination exerted by other Marlovian heroes."<sup>1</sup> While weakness is certainly Edward's most predominant and tragic character trait, Waith is mistaken in believing that weakness marred the dramatist's achievement in either the play as a whole or in his delicately drawn protagonist. There are those critics who note the playwright's maturity and grudgingly admit the play's dramatic success in one paragraph while maintaining in the next that the play fails to be an artistic success. Muriel Bradbrook allows that the play's construction grants it some degree of merit, but its inferiority as poetic drama deprives it of artistic triumph. She

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Waith, "Edward II: The Shadow of Action," Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 59.

puzzles over how the play is able to "fail as poetry and succeed as drama."<sup>2</sup> Bradbrook's rather unyielding distinction apparently puts the play's language at odds with its spectacle. To understand fully the nature of Marlowe's aspiring protagonists, however, we must guard against making such distinctions and learn the necessity of examining how the two forces, language and spectacle, work in purposeful conjunction with each other. Not only must we be alert to the union of the two powerful forces; we must recognize those moments when the playwright deliberately causes one force to run counter to the other. We have already defined Marlowe's protagonists, not in terms of the quality (of lack thereof) their words or deeds alone possess, but in terms of their successes and failures at manipulating both the spoken language of aspiration and the language of spectacle.

Initially, we witnessed Tamburlaine's absolute mastery of the vocabulary of absolute power, but we noted with growing alarm the vast distance between the object of each successive protagonist's aspiration and his ability to grasp it through word or deed. And with Edward we recognize immediately not his ineptitude at manipulating either word or deed, but his impotence and his inability to recognize the power inherent in each until he is totally subsumed by both.

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<sup>2</sup>M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), p. 161.

Perhaps we, like Waith, may not wish to include Edward II among his more "fascinating" counterparts. Wilbur Sanders would be the first to vote for just such an exclusion. Speaking about the play as a whole, he comments: "Edward II fails to address itself to much that is human in us; it uses a shrunken language to tell a tale of men who are less than men."<sup>3</sup> Deafened as we are by the stentorian declamations of a Tamburlaine, a Barabas, or a Faustus, Edward's revelations do seem a whisper in comparison. Whispered though it may be at times, the language of Edward's revelations is far from shrunken; the men are no less men. In fact, Edward's uncomprehension of the powerful bond between word and deed and his suffering as a result addresses itself to that which is most human in us--the recognition of our own frailty and our own frequent inability to articulate our needs, our desires, our feelings, and our pain.

Even so, Marlowe makes it quite difficult for us at first to respond to any common humanity seen to exist between ourselves and Edward. Edward is, in the play's opening scenes, the pliant and petulant king, too eager to don the trappings of his station but at the same time unwilling to assume its responsibilities. This Edward is eighteen years old. The events of the next twenty-three years of his life will be compressed into swiftly moving scenes which follow him through gains and losses, victory and defeat, and through love and death. The pliant and petulant king of the opening

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<sup>3</sup>Wilbur Sanders, The Dramatist and the Received Idea (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 141.

scenes is replaced by the warrior of the play's mid-section. Inevitably, though, the brief "resounding shout of achievement gives way to the stifled cry,"<sup>4</sup> and the Edward before us at the play's conclusion is the man of sorrows, awakening slowly to the realization of his own implication in what he is made to suffer.

The stage upon which the events of Edward's life are enacted is a very different one from those we have seen before. Often we are not even given the reassurance of knowing which locale the stage represents; there is nothing so clearly indicated as the Jew's Malta and Faustus' Wittenberg or Rome. Gone too is the opulent oriental splendor of Tamburlaine's court; this visual world is one in which austerity reigns. Edward's court is far from the Elysium of Gaveston's desires. And, despite the many spoken references to sun and light, darkness permeates this world. Darkened corners harbor intriguers and conspirators; devils are called forth to perform unspeakable acts; a king is tortured and murdered in a part of the castle where the sun never reaches. The warm and magnificent gold and copper hues of Tamburlaine's world are replaced by cold steel and the damp chill grey of stone walls. Apparently, to Marlowe, these "ragged stony walls" of Edward's court held much pomp and ceremony but little splendor.

Marlowe employs many of the same techniques from the earlier plays in defining his protagonist for the audience. He exhibits the same concern with defining the character by means of placing him in

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<sup>4</sup>Waith, p. 64.

relation to particularly telling settings, costumes, properties and encounters with other characters. The difference here from the earlier plays is that Edward is oftentimes prevented from achieving any degree of mastery over his situation by either his irresponsible use of the language and the spectacle befitting his role or by adversaries who are more studious artisans than he. What also distinguishes this play from the others is Marlowe's difference in design. Waith notes how a graphic representation of the structure of Edward II would reveal the intersections of at least five lines, each corresponding to the rising and falling fortunes of a major character.<sup>5</sup> No longer are numerous and virtually indistinguishable characters quickly herded on and off the stage merely to punctuate the protagonist's already obvious control. Rather there is a diffusion of interest due to Marlowe's weak and usually inactive protagonist:

Edward, more often than not, is the victim of the series of schemes which form the episodes of the play, and the importance thus robbed from him attaches to the perpetrators of the schemes.<sup>6</sup>

Thus we cannot discuss the form of Edward's fortunes without also discussing Mortimer's. Marlowe almost immediately juxtaposes Edward's weakness and his passivity with Mortimer's strength and his very active ambition.

However, before we meet either of the two, Marlowe introduces us to yet another unusually active and ambitious major character,

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<sup>5</sup>Waith, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Waith, p. 60.

Gaveston. Through his eyes, we catch our first glimpse of Edward. We may judge a great deal about the king through his choice of favorites. Gaveston is, we realize, another Mephistophilis, though he is dressed in Italianate finery and is not bothered by the unattractive bent towards self-castigation. Gaveston, it seems, would play the stage manager, arranging for Edward "sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows . . . /Such things as these best please his majesty."<sup>7</sup> Clearly such things please Gaveston as well; we witness him luxuriating in the knowledge of his hold over the king and in his ability to arrange tempting shows. The sibilance of his speech underscores verbally his role of Temptation in Edward's Passion Play. He says:

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,  
Musicians, that with touching of a string  
May draw the pliant king which way I please.

(I.i.51-53)

Our impression of Edward from Gaveston's boasts is immediately reinforced visually when the "pliant king" enters the stage followed by his barons. He too has adopted the current Italianate fashion, so his appearance contrasts greatly with how we imagine the barons dress. They are men of war, feudal lords, who have little patience with the frivolity of court under Edward's rule. Edward then appears a petulant child, unable and unwilling to accept the restrictions

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<sup>7</sup>Christopher Marlowe, Edward II in The Complete Plays, ed. J.B. Steane (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), I.i.56-71. All further references to this play will be noted parenthetically by act, scene, and line number within the text.

imposed upon him by virtue of his role as king. He wears his father's crown, sits on his father's throne, but has none of his father's power. His father, in fact, still holds power over him. Edward's bid to bring Gaveston back is met by a violent outburst from Mortimer Junior, who, with his uncle, had sworn to Edward's dying father that Gaveston would never return into the realm. Mortimer threatens Edward, saying, "And know, my lord, ere I will break my oath,/This sword of mine, that should offend your foes,/Shall sleep within the scabbard at thy need" (I.i.85-87). Edward counters:

Well, Mortimer, I'll make thee rue these words.  
Beseems it thee to contradict thy king?

I . . . I will have Gaveston; and you shall know  
What danger 'tis to stand against your king.

(I.i.91-97)

But Mortimer and the barons know even now that Edward's threats hold little danger and that the king has not the power to let their heads "preach upon poles, for trespass of their tongues!" (I.i.118). In this brief and angry exchange, Marlowe pits the two foes, Edward and Mortimer, against each other visually and verbally. Though this is only the first of their many confrontations throughout the remainder of the play, Marlowe directs our attention to one of his central concerns in Edward II--that the man who is able to reinforce his spoken oath or threat with action holds his opponent's fate within his grasp. It matters not who possesses the crown and the title at any given moment. This crown, unlike the many glittering prizes which Tamburlaine found so irresistible, is meaningless. Total power is the prize in Edward II; the crown

is an empty symbol. Edward himself is unaware of this; consequently, each time he brandishes his crown and warns vaguely of "danger" to those who would stand against him, Edward's audience is aware of a cutting irony which undermines his every word and action. Mortimer, on the other hand, is a much more studious artisan in the language of power. He recognizes the king's ignorance and answers it with a more clearly dangerous threat. "Come," he says to the barons, "let us leave the brain-sick king,/And henceforth parley with our naked swords" (I.i.125-26). The king's useless prattle is not the means to power Mortimer recognizes; the sight of naked swords speaks much more forcefully.

The baron's message holds no importance for Edward at the moment, for he is too quickly lost in a passionate reunion with his Gaveston. Where before he attempted without success to make the barons bow before their king, with Gaveston he too easily dispenses with the formality. He pleads:

Kiss not my hand:  
Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee  
Why shouldst thou kneel? Know'st thou not who I am?  
Thy friend, thyself, another Gaveston!

(I.i.140-43)

Edward demonstrates to us by his actions that he presently thinks so little of his position as to believe he might assume it and discard it as whimsically as he might don and then shed the decorative robes and headpiece which accompany it.

Edward further translates his irresponsibility into action when he and Gaveston cut short their reunion to abuse the Bishop

of Coventry en route to the dead king's exequies. The two gleefully relieve him of his sacred garments, his goods, his post, and almost his life in their zeal to be revenged for Gaveston's banishment. Edward recommends the Bishop be "christened anew" in the channel--an act which we will recall when Edward is himself rechristened at the hands of the brutal Matrevis and Gurney. But in this scene, the sadistic act which Edward and Gaveston so delight in represents visually, according to Jocelyn Powell, not only Edward's irresponsibility but his "degeneracy" as well.<sup>8</sup> Certainly the scene would be outrageous played to any audience; for as Edward voices his approval and even directs Gaveston in humiliating the bishop, visually he is declaring his office more sacred than the church and one of its chosen leaders. Una Ellis-Fermor is particularly perceptive in her assessment of this early Edward:

He is more imperious than a stronger man would dare to be, and presumes upon the sacredness of his kingship like a child using a talisman whose magic it does not understand but in which it has a superstitious faith.<sup>9</sup>

Edward's faith in his talisman repeatedly proves ineffectual; in retaliation for the bishop's abuse, Gaveston is again banished despite Edward's protestations. In a revealing moment, Edward pleads that the barons divide the realm among themselves, "so I may have some nook or corner left/To frolic with my dearest Gaveston" (I.iv.72-73). Mortimer, forcing Edward to sign the

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<sup>8</sup>Jocelyn Powell, "Marlowe's Spectacle," Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 198.

<sup>9</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 111.

decree, asks, "Why should you love him, whom the world hates so?" (I.iv.76). Edward's pitiful reply, "Because he loves me more than all the world" (I.iv.77), tests our sympathies somewhat. The king shows himself to be a lost and unloved child in the midst of "rude and savage minded men" (I.iv.78).

The barons and the Archbishop of Canterbury are derisive of Edward's public display of grief over his minion's banishment. Edward cries, "Instead of ink, I'll write it with my tears . . . / 'Tis done; and now, accursed hand, fall off!" (I.iv.86-88). The language of aspiration which Tamburlaine translated so effortlessly into action is here reduced to the self-pitying complaints of Edward. He attempts to effect a more forceful speech only after all have left the stage and he is safely alone. But even this speech is marred by his melodramatic posturing, and it collapses finally because of the utter impossibility of its being translated into action. Edward exclaims:

Why should a king be subject to a priest?  
 Proud Rome, that hatchest such imperial grooms,  
 For these thy superstitious taper-lights,  
 Wherewith thy antichristian churches blaze,  
 I'll fire thy crazed buildings, and enforce  
 The papal towers to kiss the lowly ground,  
 With slaughter'd priests make Tiber's channel swell  
 And banks rais'd higher with their sepulchres!  
 As for the peers, that back the clergy thus,  
 If I be king, not one of them shall live.

(I.iv.96-105)

Were the speaker Tamburlaine or Barabas, we would have little doubt of their fashioning their words into deeds. But the speaker before us is Edward, who, Ellis-Fermor adds, "is an essentially frivolous

character, with sudden, shallow bursts of emotion--violent as they are changeable--incapable of serious thought or feeling. Edward has no sense of responsibility, or of proportion, yet he is not incapable of inspiring affection."<sup>10</sup>

Edward has done little as of yet to inspire much affection from his audience. Marlowe, however, provides us with many more opportunities in which to sympathize with Edward. The tournament which Edward stages to welcome Gaveston's return from exile is one such example. We can well imagine that any occasion which Edward sanctions, especially to welcome Gaveston, would be extremely elaborate, but the proceedings are also meant to celebrate the new-found amity between the king and his barons. The reconciliation is short-lived though because of the barons' none-too-subtle devices (emblematic shields) made to commemorate the occasion. Mortimer's shield depicts a lofty cedar (Edward) upon which perches kingly eagles (the barons), but a canker (Gaveston) is creeping up the tree's bark and has reached the highest bough. The telling motto, Aeque tandem, implies that the parasite is as high as the tree itself. Lancaster's device is no more flattering toward Gaveston, and it warns that death is everywhere, undique mors est, for those who are so hated. Edward's reaction to these properties is one of stunned speechlessness. Kent is, instead, moved to protest how the barons express their rancor in visual terms rather than verbal.

The barons again display their rancorous minds when they wound Gaveston upon his return, and, following Edward's declaration

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<sup>10</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 110.

of war, when they taunt their king with his unpreparedness for battle. Mortimer jeers:

When wert thou in the field with banner spread?  
But once, and then thy soldiers march'd like players,  
With garish robes, not armour; and thyself,  
Bedaub'd with gold, rode laughing at the rest,  
Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,  
Where women's favors hung like labels down.

(II.ii.182-87)

Their words wound Edward who is again cowed into submission and must suffer their abuse in silent humiliation. With Lancaster's warning, "Look next to see us with our ensigns spread" (II.ii.199), the two rebels, confident of their eventual victory, take leave of their king. Edward is in their minds what Mycetes was to Tamburlaine--more annoyance than opponent.

Though speechless throughout the barons' attack, Edward regains his voice upon their exit. But his initial response almost convinces us of the inevitability of his defeat. He cries, "My swelling heart for very anger breaks:/How oft have I been baited by these peers,/And dare not be reveng'd, for their power is great!" (II.ii.200-02). Again his weakness and his passivity are revealed in the language, through the hyperbolic outbursts which only increase his frustration and exaggerate his impotence to the audience. The speech does not end on this strangled note, however. Midway he pauses; we begin to notice a change, physically and vocally. A more forceful Edward continues, drawing strength from his metaphor:

Yet, shall the crowning of these cockerels  
Affright a lion? Edward, unfold thy paws,

And let their lives' blood slake thy fury's hunger.  
 If I be cruel and grow tyrannous,  
 Now let them thank themselves, and rue too late.

(II.ii.203-07)

We recognize and are more tolerant of Edward's verbal extravagance, perhaps because of the injuries he has just suffered, but more so because Edward will, for a short time, be able to translate his speech into action.

His new-found resolve is severely shaken upon learning of Gaveston's untimely execution at Warwick's hands. Sinking to his knees, he cries, "O shall I speak, or shall I sigh and die!" (III.ii.125). Both speech and action are lost to him until Spenser urges him to seek vengeance through bloody deeds since words have proved insufficient. "Refer your vengeance to the sword/Upon these barons!" (III.ii.126-27), he says. And Edward, still kneeling, intones his curse on Gaveston's murderers:

By earth, the common mother of us all,  
 By heaven, and all the moving orbs thereof,  
 I will have heads and lives for him as many  
 As I have manors, castles, towns, and towers!

And rising he continues:

Treacherous Warwick! traitorous Mortimer!  
 If I be England's king, in lakes of gore  
 Your headless trunks, your bodies will I trail,  
 That you may drink your fill, and quaff in blood,  
 And stain my royal standard with the same,  
 That so my bloody colours may suggest  
 Remembrance of revenge immortally  
 On your accursed traitorous progeny.

(III.ii.131-144)

His speech is curiously mesmerizing, reminiscent almost of Tamburlaine's "persuasions most pathetic." The curse, followed by the sonorous battle chant, is punctuated by Edward's kneeling and then his standing upright, signifying his readiness to assume the role of the revenger. The entire scene is ritual-like in its tone and is most effective staged with Edward, swearing by his father's sword, flanked on either side by his loyal favorites.

With Marlowe's careful attention turned toward the emergence of the warrior in Edward, the rebels' defeat in the next scene is not surprising. This Edward is backed by stronger advisers, Spenser and Baldock, and has been provided the impetus at last to exercise his albeit limited power. Gaveston is dead, murdered by the barons, and Edward, realizing he can no longer take refuge in pleasurable pursuits, is exacting in his punishment. Impelled into action, Edward is, for the first and only time, able to make words and deeds coalesce. He orders the executions of Warwick and Lancaster, the banishment of Kent, and the imprisonment of Mortimer. And as all are led from the stage to their appointed rewards, a triumphant Edward pronounces:

Sound drums and trumpets! March  
                   with me my friends.  
 Edward this day hath crown'd him king anew.

(III.iii.77-78)

Edward's triumph carries him as far as four scenes later when, at the Royal Palace in London, his fortunes begin to turn again. Marlowe's scenes throughout the play's midsection progress with startling rapidity. In location we move from Edward's victory

at Boroughbridge, to London, to Paris, and then to London again where we see Edward confident still of his successful suppression of the rebel forces. Not more than ten minutes have passed in the events which occur on the stage, but in actuality, Edward has enjoyed over four years in the company of his favorites and advisors while the queen and the prince remain in France. Act IV.iii provides Edward with the irresistible opportunity to display his strength; the stage directions call for him to enter followed by Arundel, the elder and younger Spencers, and others. The Edward we see before us now seems no longer the flexible youth and "pliant king"; he now possesses a surer grip on his father's sword than he had previously or will in the future. Basking in the warmth of his company's loyalty, not only does Edward's physical appearance radiate vitality and confidence; his speech rings with renewed purposefulness as well. Edward exults:

Thus, after many threats of wrathful war,  
Triumpheth England's Edward with his friends,  
And triumph Edward with his friends uncontroll'd!

(IV.iii.1-3)

What sounds at first to be a new note of moderation and restraint in his speech, different from his usual extremes of strangled inarticulation and wanton ejaculation, is immediately undercut by his smug approval of the "great execution/Done through the realm" (IV.iii.6-7). He glibly comments: "Why, so: they bark'd apace a month ago;/Now, on my life, they'll neither bark nor bite" (IV.iii.13-14).

There is one remaining, however, whose bark and bite prove dangerous beyond Edward's wildest imaginings. Mortimer has always

shown much more prowess and much less hesitancy in manipulating both spoken word and spectacle to his own ends. Only once before have we seen Mortimer unable to translate his words into deeds; even then his words anticipate action, though imprisonment temporarily forbids it. On being led off to the Tower, he exclaims:

What, Mortimer! Can ragged stony walls  
Immure thy virtue that aspires to heaven?  
No, Edward, England's scourge, it may not be;  
Mortimer's hope surmounts his fortune far.

(III.iii.73-76)

When next we meet Mortimer, his fortunes are beginning to overtake and surpass his hopes. He escapes from captivity with Kent's aid, he becomes Isabella's lover in France, and the three gather forces strong enough to reckon with the king's men. Words no longer serve his purpose; he is eager now to levy arms against the king. Isabella's rambling address to the rebel forces newly-landed prompts Mortimer to demonstrate his impatience. He interrupts her saying, "Nay, madam, if you be a warrior,/You must not grow so passionate in speeches" (IV.iv.15-16). Mortimer's gentle rebuke to the queen does much to reveal his character. He thinks himself a rational man, one who recognizes and appreciates the separation of the private self from the public self. Too vehement a passion, he thinks, ill-suits the public man and renders him incapable of responsible action. And, in Mortimer's eyes, the passion which flaws Isabella's speech is the same sort of passion--greatly intensified--which flaws Edward's reign. Mortimer's main quarrel with Edward is not that he is passionate about his minions, but that he flaunts his passions

and thus allows them to become entangled with matters of policy. Mortimer in IV.iv is unswerving in his determination to further the public self even at the expense of the private. The remaining scenes in which Mortimer appears bear this knowledge out. Whether in soliloquy or in Isabella's embrace, Mortimer prides himself on his rigid control and his excellence in manipulating the language of power. It is this pride and moreover the brutally calculating abuse of power which provokes the audience's progressively more virulent antagonism to him and awakens its sympathy for his victim, Edward. Thus both victor and victim dramatically fall together.

Edward ceases to be the victor and becomes the victim in IV.v. No longer the warrior king, he is forced to flee with Spenser and Baldock when the queen's forces march on Bristol. Though he would stay and "in this bed of honours die with fame" (IV.v.7), he is persuaded by Baldock that his "princely resolution/Fits not the time" (IV.v.8-9). Edward reappears a scene later seeking shelter at the Abbey of Neath. He is accompanied only by Spenser and Baldock, and all three are in disguise. His royal armor exchanged for humble monk's robes, Edward is now defined for us visually as the man of sorrows. He has changed his costume to escape his former self, unlike his more aspiring predecessors whose disguises are carefully chosen to extend the self. Edward, in his disguise, does not wish to win acclaim like Tamburlaine, or to regain lost wealth like Barabas, or to be entertained like Faustus. Edward's disguise is one of renunciation. He renounces the pleasures and the power of his former self, for, he says, "what is he whom rule and empery/

Have not in life or death made miserable?" (IV.vi.14-15). Wearily he lays his head in the Abbot's lap and sighs, "Father, this life contemplative is heaven/O, that I might this life in quiet lead!" (IV.vi.20-21). The quiet is interrupted by Baldock, however, who mentions the name of Mortimer. Edward's reaction indicates how easily and how completely he lapses from power into passivity. The language no longer aspires to eloquence; instead it once again exaggerates his impotence:

Mortimer! Who talks of Mortimer?  
 Who wounds me with the name of Mortimer,  
 That bloody man? Good father, on thy lap  
 Lay I this head, laden with mickle care,  
 O, might I never ope these eyes again,  
 Never again lift up this drooping head,  
 O, never more lift up this dying heart!

(IV.vi.37-43)

Edward shows not by his usage but by his reaction just how powerful words can be. Surrounding him always have been those whose words wound him--even now in this place of peace and silence. And when Leicester arrives to announce that Edward "must" go to Killingworth, he can take no action but to submit. Only speech remains to him, and he is moved to comment, "Must! It is somewhat hard when kings must go" (IV.vi.83). The few moments left in the scene are perhaps some of the most moving of the entire play. Visually and verbally, the scene is stunning in its simplicity. Ironically though, the stage is crowded with actors: the somber monks and the Abbot, Leicester, and his two co-conspirators all witness Edward's poignant farewell to his friends. Realizing his inability to stop the events which he himself has put into motion, Edward awakens slowly to

knowledge of his own fate and to grief over the much more imminent fates of his friends. Rice Ap Howel would not have the moment prolonged. Glibly, he tells Edward, "My lord, be going: care not for these,/For we shall see them shorter by the heads" (IV.vi.93-94). Edward's reply and its accompanying gesture achieve a kind of eloquence which has until now been lost to him. According to Charles Masinton, Edward rises in our estimation when he throws off his disguise; it is a gesture which symbolizes the new identity the king must now accept.<sup>11</sup> Our pity is roused when Edward exits, saying, "Hence, feigned weeds! Unfeigned are my woes/. . . go I must. Life, farewell, with my friends!" (IV.vi.97-99). Ever loyal, Spenser and Baldock despair of his leaving. To them he is "noble Edward," the "sunshine" of their lives; without him all is darkness, and finally nature's debt must be paid with "cheerful countenance." Baldock intones, "Reduce we all our lessons unto this:/ . . . all live to die and rise to fall" (IV.iv.110-12). The "gloomy fellow in the mead below" stands as if to underscore Baldock's prophecy; he is a mower and carries a scythe for his tool. As Clifford Leech observes, this figure of doom has a "manifestly powerful effect visually."<sup>12</sup>

Edward's fall comes quickly after his capture, and that sight too is rich in pathos. The scene of his deposition at Kenilworth Castle further defines him as the man of sorrows in our eyes.

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<sup>11</sup>Masinton, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>Clifford Leech, "Introduction," in Marlowe, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 9.

Edward puts up a pathetic resistance when Leicester and the bishop come to claim his crown--his comforting but ultimately empty and useless talisman. He resists; he rages; he, like Faustus, prays for the celestial sun to continue ever. But unlike Faustus, who prays for eternal life, Edward merely prays for one more day as king. Knowing that fight to be lost, he prays that God make him despise "this transitory pomp" (V.i.108), for "What are kings when regiment is gone," he says, "But perfect shadows in a sunshine day?" (V.i.26-27).

Without the crown Edward is finally nothing more than a shadow and worse than dead. Marlowe has brought us full circle from Tamburlaine where the crown is the trophy of pure sport rather than struggle. The deposition scene derives much of its effect from the tension between two opposing points of view: one embodied in the bishop, who, like Tamburlaine, sees the crown as prize and places little significance in its taking; the other embodied in Edward to whom the crown signifies life, the taking of it as tantamount to murder. Unwilling and physically unable to give over his crown, he cries:

Receive it? No, these innocent hands of mine  
 Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime;  
 He of you all that most desires my blood,  
 And will be call'd the murderer of a king,  
 Take it.

(V.i.98-102)

In addition to the juggling of Edward's crown, the scene contains two other effective pieces of business, both of which emphasize Edward's total inability to perform any effective action

and, moreover, his awareness of his own impotence. To the bishop and Trussel, who bear his crown away, Edward also gives a handkerchief, "wet with tears, and dried again with sighs" (V.i.118), to be delivered unto Isabella. "If the sight thereof she be not mov'd," he says, "Return it back, and dip it in my blood" (V.i.119-20). The Edward who was unable in more prosperous times to manipulate spectacle to his advantage would, in his ignominy, employ it to inflict suffering on others and thus ease his torment. Also in an effort to ease his pain, Edward seizes and tears a piece of paper on which Mortimer has inscribed his name. He rages:

Well may I rent his name that rends my heart.  
This poor revenge hath something eas'd my mind,  
So may his limbs be torn as is this paper!

(V.i.140-42)

Waith feels the king's helplessness has brought him to a "higher peak of emotional response than he has previously reached," but Edward also shows his awareness that "unpacking his heart with words" is a poor substitute for action.<sup>13</sup> Edward knows that, without the protection of the crown and delivered as he is into Berkeley's hands (historically, Berkeley was a relative of Mortimer's), action is entirely forbidden him. The rending of his name cannot erase the fact that Mortimer possesses the power and the intent through word and deed to rend Edward's soul from his body. Edward knows not how his end will come, but, he says, "Of this am I assur'd,/That death ends all, and I can die but once" (V.i.152-53).

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<sup>13</sup>Waith, p. 74.

The words are eloquent in their stark simplicity, but the meaning of the phrase is laden with a cruel irony. Physically, Edward can die but once; mentally, however, Mortimer has many deaths in store for him, the first being the separation of the king from his crown. And before Edward actually ceases to live, he is made to endure a hell of Mortimer's own making on earth. What Mortimer creates is a hell in sound as well as sight, and Edward's suffering in that hell is as relentless as the pounding of the drum which deprives him of silent sleep and solace. Mortimer charges

Gurney:

Neither give [Edward] kind word nor good look . . .  
 Speak curstly to him; and in any case  
 Let no man comfort him, if he chance to weep,  
 But amplify his grief with bitter words.

(V.ii.57-67)

Words of another sort enable Mortimer to describe himself to one who now "makes Fortune's wheel turn as he please" (V.ii.55) and one who is "too great for fortune to harm" (V.iv.67). The speaker confidently defines himself through familiar terms in Marlowe's spoken language of aspiration. He is defined for the audience, however, not by his words but by his actions--by the unspoken language of spectacle. Mortimer, with his letters, his plotting, and his hired killers, inadvertently undoes himself as he delivers the orders which will finally cement our sympathies firmly on the side of the deposed and defamed king. No audience could help but be moved to pity by the spectacle of the ravaged figure made to suffer the brutal shaving with channel water, imprisonment in the castle's sewer, and, finally, the fatal degradation of Lightborne's hideous murder.

The same audience could neither help but loathe the villain responsible for such suffering nor fail to note, with some degree of satisfaction, the ironical manner in which he causes his own fall from power. Mortimer we know to be like Tamburlaine--aware that language's limitations are best compensated for by action. Yet Mortimer's arrogance eventually prevents him from exploiting this knowledge. Much of the credit for the grotesquely imaginative torture and subsequent murder of Edward belongs not to Mortimer but to his henchmen, Matrevis and Gurney, and to Lightborne. Mortimer falls back instead upon the written word as a means of conveying the most crucial directive of his regime. The letter itself is "cunningly" constructed; left "unpointed"--unpunctuated--its message is variously read either to condone or condemn the killing of a king (V.iv.9,12). What Mortimer does not perceive is the inevitability of the letter's reaching a more artful reader than himself. Hence, the letter, like Barabas' cauldron and Faustus' bill of deed, takes on an extremely heightened visual significance and ultimately becomes an agent of death for its two intended victims--the bearer Lightborne and Edward--as well as for two unintended and unwitting victims--Isabella and Mortimer.

Mortimer's failure then is due to his underestimating his audience; Marlowe, on the other hand, commits no such fatal error. He carefully orchestrates the bombastic rise and fall of Mortimer, the mournful descent of Edward into hell, and the wavering sympathies of his audience with one another until a "perfect crescendo of

suffering is reached."<sup>14</sup> Marlowe's virtuosity in evoking the desired response from his audience is redoubtable. One way in which to measure his success is to focus briefly on the character of Kent, whose conflicting loyalties mirror our own. Appalled at first by Edward's private excesses, he joins forces with the rebel barons, but Mortimer's grossly dishonorable public excesses prove alarming as well. Politically, then, he is moderate, but he retains a deep conviction in the sanctity of the monarchy and in the king's responsibility to all of his subjects--a conviction which, he notes sadly, Edward never shared. Kent's humanity, however, compels him to rescue his brother; his morality will not permit him to condone regicide. Marlowe depends upon us to share these qualities with Kent. Thus we, like Kent, recoil in horror at the ravaged figure before us in V.iii, whose "daily diet," it moans, "is heart-breaking sobs" (V.iii.21). No longer deluded into believing himself the imperial lion (V.i.11), Edward now knows himself to be the wren which struggles vainly against the lion's strength (V.iii.34-35). The metaphor itself is telling, but its poignancy is underscored by the shocking spectacle of Edward's jailers shaving his kingly beard with puddle water.

Douglas Cole asserts, however, that Marlowe prevents us from responding too sympathetically to the scene of Edward's debasement, one way being his omission dramatically of Edward's mock-crowning with hay. The act (chronicled by Holinshed) would imply a measure of value and sympathy which was not to the playwright's purpose.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Masinton, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup>Cole, pp. 179-80.

Cole also believes that we are "distanced" emotionally from Edward because we realize from his words that he has not yet accepted the responsibility for any of his suffering. Cole cites as his evidence Edward's cry, "O Gaveston, it is for thee that I am wronged" (V.iii.41). However, Cole neglects to consider the whole of Edward's speech from which this one line is taken. Edward does indeed realize his own implication in the deaths of Gaveston and the Spencers. Standing in excrement and bloodied by the savage shaving, Edward realizes too the inevitability of his own death. He says:

O Gaveston, it is for thee that I am wrong'd!  
 For me both thou and both the Spencers died!  
 And for your sakes a thousand wrongs I'll take.  
 The Spencers' ghosts, wherever they remain,  
 Wish well to mine; then tush, for them I'll die.

(V.iii.41-45)

The idea of death provides some measure of comfort to his misery, yet the physical reality of death, come before him in the shape of Lightborne, both terrifies and fascinates him. Upon seeing Lightborne, Edward remarks, "Small comfort finds poor Edward in thy looks,/Villain, I know thou comst to murder me . . ./I see my tragedy written in thy brows" (V.v.46-47,76). But the murderer, dressed as he is in the Italianate fashion of Edward's first favorite, dissembles with such success that Edward gives him the one jewel he still possesses. Martin Kelsall reduces Edward's last gesture to an act of bribery which, he says, "strikes one as true to the human situation, but poor morality."<sup>16</sup> However,

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<sup>16</sup>Kelsall, p. 64.

Toby Robertson, who directed two brilliantly successful productions of the play (one with the Marlowe Society in 1958 with Derek Jacobi as Edward and one in London's West End in 1964 with Ian McKellan in the lead) sees Edward's last action as signifying the permanence in Edward's nature. "This," he says, "has to emerge. It wasn't entirely deliberate when I began, but . . . it became clear that this was almost the last 'love scene' in the play."<sup>17</sup> Robertson added another level of meaning to the scene by making the jewel which Edward gives to his last "favorite" the same jewel which he had received from his first favorite. In his last moments, Edwards recalls his one-time splendor, and he tells Lightborne:

Know that I am a king: O, at that name  
I feel a hell of grief! Where is my crown?  
Gone, gone! And do I remain alive?

(V.v.91-93)

With his talisman gone, Edward cannot remain alive; he ends as he began--by defining himself in reference to that object, the crown, which ravished him. In contrast to Tamburlaine, though, rather than Edward's drawing energy from the crown and its trappings, the crown seems finally to have sapped all of Edward's life force; so much so, in fact, that he cannot even lift his hand to protest when Lightborne confesses he has come to "rid Edward of his life" (V.v.109). Edward says, "I am too weak and feeble to resist,/ Assist me, sweet God, and receive my soul!" (V.v.110-11). With that,

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<sup>17</sup>Toby Robertson, "Directing Edward II," Tulane Drama Review, 8, No. 4 (1964), p. 179.

Lightborne directs the deed be performed efficiently and with exacting precision. The language of aspiration, always just beyond Edward's reach, is reduced to the cry which Matrevis fears will "raise the town" (V.v.116). Waith observes of the murder scene:

When action is psychologically or physically impossible, speech remains to express Edward's increasing torment; when speech is denied only this partially stifled cry is possible. Appalling as the entire scene is . . . it is the perfect culmination of the main movement of the play.<sup>18</sup>

The protracted shriek of pain is the perfect culmination of Edward's own struggle to master the vocabulary of power. But Marlowe chooses to end the play not with the physical evidence of Edward's failure to grasp the language (as he had with Faustus), but instead to end with one who is no longer "frighted with words" (V.vi.27). The young king, Edward III, comes of age by learning not to succumb to the excesses which marred the rules of his father and of Mortimer. Unlike the late king and Mortimer, Edward III has truly learned the language of command. He orders his mother sent to the Tower lest he "pity her if she speak again" (V.vi.86), and to Mortimer he directs:

My father's murder'd through thy treachery;  
And thou shalt die, and on his mournful hearse  
Thy hateful and accursed head shall lie  
To witness to the world that by thy means  
His kingly body was too soon interr'd.

(V.vi.28-32)

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<sup>18</sup>Waith, p. 75.

For the first time, we look on a character who is able to translate responsible language into responsible actions. Edward III does exactly what he says he will do: he avenges his father's murder, and he does display the murderer's head to bear witness of his treachery. But in the process, the new king choreographs a pageant which bears witness to his right to rule. The monarchy restored to its former glory, the crown possessed of renewed importance, the stronger Edward ascends the throne. He is surrounded by those objects from which he draws his energy, objects which offer silent but eloquent testimony to his instinctive understanding of the language of power--the body of Edward and the head of Mortimer.

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