ABSOLUTE SELFHOOD: AN ANALYSIS OF MARLOVIAN PROTAGONISTS

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy

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CERTIFICATE

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This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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This dissertation titled **"Absolute Selfhood: An Analysis of Marlovian Protagonists"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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It goes without saying that all the shortcomings and faults are mine alone.

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Part I: Locating Marlowe

I

Any venture into the realm of Christopher Marlowe is a quest fraught with uncertainties. Between the jostling claims of Christopher/ Kit and Marlowe/ Morley/ Marlin lies more than mere ambiguity. There is the Atheist, the Spy, the Homosexual, the 'enfant terrible' of the 'Elizabethan Stage,' if you will, and the brilliant and successful playwright. And then there is the body of work left behind. Some verses, one incomplete narrative poem, "Hero and Leander," translations of Ovid and Lucan and seven plays, whose chronology is as open to question as is their textual integrity. And this is not all. There loom two even larger shadows to contend with, William Shakespeare and the 'Elizabethan Age,' both of which have acquired the solidity of institutions in their own right. Most references to Marlowe are constrained within the definitions to these two institutions.

Marlowe was an unqualified and unquestioned success of the Elizabethan Stage. The Marlowe of traditional literary discourse, however, was for a long time merely the precursor to Shakespeare: the pre-Shakespearean dramatist who gestured towards the genius of Shakespeare but never quite arrived there himself. Similarly, that Marlowe's relationship to the 'Elizabethan Stage' was again judged from a perspective anchored in the genius of 'Elizabethan Stage's' greatest practitioner, Shakespeare, whereby Marlowe's work was judged primitive, serving at best as an interesting step in the evolution of 'Elizabethan Drama' and at worst as an example of a young, untamed genius which frittered its potential.

Recent years and a wealth of scholarship have begun to look at Marlowe differently. As the long cherished and propagated monolithic view of the 'English Renaissance' came under the material scrutiny of critical perspectives such as Marxism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism, along with a generous contribution from fields and movements such as Anthropology, Political Science, Structuralism and Post- Structuraiism, so many of the hitherto held convictions gave way to newer readings of the period and its productions, especially literary productions. And in the process re-evaluated Marlowe.

Painstaking research and scholarship of authors such F.S Boas and Rowse has reconstructed the significant physical landmarks, few as they are, of Marlowe's life. The beginning is in 1564, when in February the church records the baptism of one Christopher Marlowe, son of

one John Marlowe and Catherine Marlowe nee Arthur. William Shakespeare's baptism is recorded for two months hence to the very day albeit in Stratford. Marlowe's birthplace was Canterbury, "that ancient capital of faith which racked him so much in life, and which he died denying."[1] The irony is worth savouring, for Marlowe the playwright makes sustained use of irony. When he is born the family of Marlowe, as Canterbury city records indicate, were already settled townsfolk engaged in the leather trade, enjoying relative financial stability, perhaps even a modicum of upward social mobility. Enrolled as an apprentice by Gerard Richardson in 1559-1560, John Marlowe was admitted as a Freeman in 1564 and in 1567-8 began enrolling his own apprentices. John Marlowe also became a professional bondsman from 1579 onwards.

Christopher Marlowe re-appears in the records at nearly fifteen years of age when he is elected a Queen's scholar of the King's School in Canterbury, where he remained for the next two years. Rowse surmises that he must have attended it as a commoner i.e. not depending upon the scholarship provided by the school before that. At any rate, regardless of his financial status, as a student of an English Grammar School typical to the period he was led through the typical curriculum, concisely catalogued by Rowse. The "Latin grammar of William Lily, high master of St. Paul's, which was conceived on humanist lines to lead to the appreciation of literature ... From Lily boys went on to Erasmus's *Institution of a Christian Man,* his *Copia* and his *Colloquia;* then they proceeded to Mantuan... For history the boys read Ceaser, Sallust and Livy; for comedy, Terence and Plautus, for tragedy Seneca. They graduated through anthologies and collections of poetry to Ovid, Virgil and Horace. Along with this there went a good deal of rhetoric and disputation."[2] Add this to the seven years of education at Cambridge University and the result, in Marlowe at least, was an intellect formidably steeped in education, especially the classics, and trained rigorously in the skilled manipulation of language.

For an atheist in fashioning it is yet another delicious irony that Marlowe attended Corpus Christi College at Cambridge University as the recipient of a scholarship instituted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mathew Parker, who died in 1575. The scholarship was available for six years if the recipient intended to be ordained for the Anglican Church. Marlowe appeared for and received his B.A degree in 1583-84. His M.A. degree would prove a little trickier, requiring the direct intervention of the Privy Council in 1587 to persuade the University authorities to allow him to

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1 Rowse, A. L. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography.* London: Macmillan, 1964. p.1.
2 Ibid. p.12.

receive it, despite meeting all the stipulated university requirements. The entry in the Privy Council register is worthy of attention for it is the first intimation of the maelstrom that would eventually make the life of Christopher Marlowe such rich material for conspiracy theories, myths, legends and tragic auto biographical readings of his works.

> Whereas it was reported that Christopher Marley was determined to have gone beyond the seas to Rheims, and there to remain, their lordships thought good to certify that he had no such intent; but in all his actions he had behaved himself orderly and discreetly, whereby he had done her Majesty good service and deserved to be rewarded for his faithful dealings. Their lordships' request was that the rumour thereof should be allayed by all possible means, and that he should be furthered in the degree he was to take this next commencement. Because it was not her Majesty's pleasure that anyone employed, as he had been, in matters touching the benefit of his country should be defamed by those that are ignorant in the affairs he went about. (*Acts of the Privy Council,* XXXII. 130, quoted by Rowse. 27)[3].

The cryptic, half-veiled allusions to the services rendered by Marlowe are not very difficult to theorise about and the end result locates Marlowe firmly in the murkier eddies and undercurrents of the darker and perhaps the truer nuances of the Elizabethan world. What is more difficult to establish is whether this 'Marley' is indeed the dramatist Marlowe. The vagaries and variety of Elizabethan spellings coupled with the compelling lack of authenticated records that attend Marlowe's life render the conclusions drawn merely conjectural in nature, which unfortunately is a problem that attends all aspects of Marlovian scholarship. Perhaps this Marley is the dramatist. The document itself is more remarkable still for encoded within phrases such as the 'privy council' and the 'benefit of the country' is a veritable history of not only the Tudor rule but also the evolution of the nature and the exercise of monarchy.

In the immediate context, the year 1587 was one of feverish conjecture and activity in England. There were constant reports about the threatened invasion of Philip II of Spain, who had decided to invade and depose the heretic queen of England. In fact, it was only because of the havoc wreaked on the Spanish supply ships by Drake's raid on Cadiz that had prevented the

[3] Rowse, unlike Boas has modified Elizabethan spelling, otherwise the same passage is also available in Boas, p. 22.

Armada from attacking in 1587. It was a foregone conclusion that Papal authority supported this invasion. Elizabeth had already been excommunicated in 1571. Furthermore, the Catholic Church had been active in its subversive attempts to strengthen Roman Catholicism amongst the English. Of particular interest were those students who could be seduced into "going to the Catholic seminaries abroad, Douai or Rheims, the English colleges at Rome or Valladolid, to be trained as priests for the English mission."[4] The more dangerous possibility was that they would return not as mere catholic priests but would also be politically active. According to Rowse the emigration of students to these catholic seminaries was at its height around the year 1587. And it was on the suspicion of these catholic activities that Marlowe was being denied his degree. However, as the report makes evident, Marlowe had gone to Douai on her Majesty's Service. In other words, he was a spy. The chief spymaster of England, who was credited with possessing the most capable intelligence service in Europe, was Sir Francis Walsingham, the Secretary of State. Definitively known to be a friend of Thomas Walsingham, cousin to Francis Walsingham, it is conjectured that Marlowe was employed by the powerful Francis Walsingham to spy for England.

If this Marley is indeed the dramatist, it is a fascinating and speculative glimpse into the life and personality of Christopher Marlowe who in the end received his M.A degree but did not take the Anglican orders, choosing instead to move to London, to try his fame and fortune upon the Elizabethan stage.

II

The throne and the kingdom inherited by Elizabeth I in 1558 were deeply conflicted and contested sites. The last of the Tudor monarchs, upon assuming the throne, Elizabeth had much to contend with in terms of the legacy of her predecessors. She inherited a kingdom that was fractured over the question of religion, on the verge of civil war and nearly bankrupt in the bargain. It was also constantly under threat from the two contending continental powers, France and Spain.

In 1485, a victorious Henry VII was determined to bring peace to the realm after decades of civil war. His marriage to Elizabeth of York helped, bringing together as it did the warring York and Lancaster factions within the Tudor lineage thus ending the long drawn out War of the Roses.

[4] Rowse, A. L. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography*. London: Macmillan, 1964. pp.28- 30.

After decisively routing the claims of two pretenders, Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck (both of whom claimed a closer kinship to the earlier monarchical line, the Plantegentes) he set about strengthening the monarchy, often at the expense of the nobility. The result was a triadic structure, The Monarch, The Privy Council – an advisory and administrative body, a forerunner to the modern Cabinet of Ministers, and the Parliament. "The Wise Prince," as he was described by Francis Bacon, died in 1509, bequeathing to his son a kingdom of relative stability and economic prosperity since the canny Henry VII had encouraged trade and replaced the older medieval traditions of feudality with a more centralised legal structure to which end he established Court of the Star Chamber, which would involve itself in both civil and criminal cases. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England stood on the threshold between two worlds. The older, medieval tradition of feudalism, which was in its death throws and the newer Renaissance model of an absolute monarchy, both co-existed in a curious juxtaposition. While Royal involvement in the justice system had increased with the establishment of the Court of Star Chamber, at the local level it was still dependent upon the co-operation of the nobility. Contingent upon the rise of capitalism was urbanisation. Slowly but surely, the feudal structure, with its characteristic "parcellisation of sovereignty" (Perry Anderson, cited by Walter Cohen 33)[5] gave way to the inevitable phenomenon, centralisation of power. Towns and cities as representations of fledgling capitalism did more than alter the face of the countryside; they compelled both the monarchy and the feudal aristocracy to engage in a redefined alliance.

The absolutist continental monarchies such as Spain had at their command a professional army and also the power to abandon, "as forces of disunity, their representative institutions,"[6] the feudal aristocracy, which traditionally was owed military service by their serfs, which was in turn offered by the barons to the kings. The Tudors did not posses such an army and despite the strengthening of the monarchy, lacked the power to draw out decisively the teeth of their nobility. Thus, the Parliament still had power and the King had to negotiate with it. On their part, the feudal barons were too weakened to become individual power centres strong enough to challenge the king outright. It was a system of mutual check and balance.

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5 Cohen, Walter. *The Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain.* Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985.

6 Christopher Gillie, "Renaissance Political History and Social Context," in Wynne-Davies (ed.), *A Guide to English Renaissance Literature: 1500 to 1660,* London: Bloomsbury, 1994, pp 57-65.

The courts of the princes became the source of power and the feudal aristocrat turned into the courtier, a shift that was part of the epoch. In the reign of Henry VIII the centralised court instituted by his father became increasingly important in terms other than that of governance. Visiting it in 1517, Erasmus would later describe it as "a shrine of Muses"[7]. Henry VIII's court was adorned with men of great learning, men such as Thomas More, Cardinal Wolsey, Bishop Foxe, Dean Colet ... men whose presence, learning and influence meant that this court was not just the centre of governance but also of culture. It is an important conflation, which would reach its zenith in the court of his second daughter, Elizabeth I. In England, however this coming together of the power of a prince as a monarch and the power to direct, even create culture is most significantly stated in the court of Henry VIII. Incidentally this triad of interdependence in the Tudor court, which becomes increasingly integral to the English system of governance and simultaneously more delicate a negotiation, conformed to the letter with the ideal system of government proposed by Niccolo Machiavelli in his discourse, *The Circle of Governments*, written in 1517. Machiavelli relies on the authority of the classical legislators to propose the "most stable and solid" system as one in which "there is combined under the same constitution a prince, a nobility, and the power of the people, then these three powers will watch and keep each other reciprocally in check."[8]

In the same year that the court of England impressed itself so indelibly upon the imagination of Erasmus, another man had begun to alter the course of European history forever. Martin Luther nailed to the door of the Church in Wittenberg his ninety-five theses criticising various Catholic practises such as Absenteeism, Nepotism and Simony. Protestantism had been born and the Reformation begun. But the isolated island on the north west corner of Europe remained to some extent insulated from the fierce forces unleashed upon the continent. It was more concerned with matters financial and domestic, the military pursuits of Henry VIII, against France, Scotland and the Emperor Maximilian severely depleted the treasury, necessitating the imposition of extra taxes in 1525. Nonetheless, Henry VIII, the accomplished Prince who was also a patron of art and learning wrote a book to "expose the theological errors of Luther" and in the process 'confounded' his own theologians with his "spectacular firework display of 'God's own learning.'"[9] In 1521 he was rewarded by Pope Leo X for his efforts with the title, "Defender of the Faith."

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7 Cited by Trevor-Roper, pg 67.

8 Machiavelli, Niccolo, "The Circle of Governments," in Ross, James Bruce and Mary Martin Mclaughlin. (eds.) *Renaissance Reader.*Rev.ed.,1968.U.S, Penguin:1977.

9 Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *Renaissance Essays.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1985. p.227.

Unfortunately, the Pope would prove far more intractable over the matter of a papal annulment of the royal marriage between Henry VIII and his wife, Catherine of Aragon who also happened to be the aunt of the new and powerful ruler of Spain and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. In a conflation typical to that tumultuous century, political events impacted with equal if not greater resonance on matters religious. After years of deadlock in 1529 Henry VIII called into session a "Reformation Parliament" which supported a legal separation between the Church of Rome and the English people. By the Act of Supremacy of 1533 Henry VIII was declared the Supreme Head of the Church of England. With this act the King became an absolute monarch over his state, into his hands passed not only the doctrinal authority and power wielded by the Church through the medieval ages but more importantly also its wealth. Henry dissolved the monasteries and other holdings of the Catholic Church in England, and the treasury reaped rich dividends.

Effectively this was a shift of power from Church to State. However, the matter of faith had moved out of the realm of the personal and into the public. By 1536 Henry required his officials to take an oath of allegiance approving of the break with Rome. Despite his break with Rome, however, Henry was not a radical reformer. His Six Articles issued in 1536 reaffirmed points of Catholic dogma and other conservative practises to be still followed. This did not prevent the personal crisis, which engulfed men like Thomas More who went on to be executed for his refusal to take the oath. But if Henry VIII had been content with outward compliance with his decree on the issue of religion the short lived reign of his minor son, Edward VI was marked by a whirlwind zeal of Reformation. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer led this Reformation and in 1549 the *Book of Common Prayer* was introduced. Edward VI was succeeded to the throne by his Catholic half sister; Mary I. Henry VIII had reinstituted his daughters into the line of succession. Her reign was marked by a severe and often bloody Counter-Reformation as she re-aligned England with the Roman Catholic Church. She set the seal on her Catholic zeal with her marriage to the Catholic King of Spain, Philip II.

Despite her protestant religious belief and the suspicion of complicity in the treasonous in Wyatt rebellion of 1553 Elizabeth succeeded her half sister Mary I upon her death in 1558. And the Elizabethan Age began.

III

the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too...

Myths and legends have consistently elevated the reign of Elizabeth to "The Golden Age" of English rule. Characterised as the greatest Tudor monarch, Elizabeth's forty-four year reign certainly ended with England as a dominant power in Europe, with a flourishing maritime trade, the framework of an immanent empire and a cultural legacy that is in a word unsurpassed. She was undoubtedly a shrewd and even gifted ruler but the notion of Elizabethan England as an entirely peaceful and prosperous realm with no internal strife and peculiarly able to produce an incredible efflorescence of culture as a direct result of the beneficence of the monarch is untrue. Elizabethan England was instead a society in transition; it was a moment of paradigmatic shifts in traditions of intellect, culture, and religion. Indeed, much of the veneration accorded to Elizabethan rule is a result of its great outpouring of literature. In poetry and drama, Elizabethan England produced a remarkable body of work, which helped establish the myths of the Elizabethan age.

As a queen she was popular, her youth, personality and policies coming as somewhat of a relief to a society racked by the extremes of the protestant and its counterpart, the catholic zeal of Edward VI and Mary I respectively. For Elizabeth never went to extremes. She always tended to choose the middle path. Amongst the first issues that she tackled was religion. She re-established the Anglican Church and settled for being titled the Governor of the Church of England rather than the Supreme Head in order to accommodate objections raised against her gender. Her Settlement of 1559 later referred to as the "Elizabethan Settlement" ensured the durability of the Anglican Church and created a nation wherein it remained possible to be Catholic and still be loyal to the queen. Similarly, it accommodated Protestants who were strongly anti-papist.

In effect Elizabeth channelled the energies that had powered the religious strife in a different direction, that of the idea of England. Not that she succeeded in entirely eliminating religious strife; the Protestants who remained vehemently anti-papists and wished for stronger measures to eradicate Roman Catholicism entirely, and who came to be called the Puritans, remained vociferous and active; as did the Roman Catholics who never accepted Elizabeth as the

queen of England and remained steadfast in their attempt to be rid of her, resulting finally in the failed Babington Plot as a result of which the catholic Mary, Queen of Scots was finally executed by Elizabeth. What Elizabeth did succeed in doing was maintaining a fragile and precarious balance, which resulted in the maintenance of peace. Lacking an administrative structure and an effective enough force to use coercive repression, she instead utilised a judicious mixture of repression with propaganda in which art and literature played a substantial role.

The English literary efflorescence was not an isolated phenomenon, instead it can and indeed is located within a larger phenomenon, the Renaissance. Yet the contribution of Elizabeth to this cultural maturation and the creation of a national identity is not only critical but also considerable. Elizabeth was the epitome of the Renaissance Humanist Prince, educated in the Humanist tradition, fluent in several languages, trained in Rhetoric she was also a politician of consummate diplomatic skill and the crux of the national identity formation. Elizabeth herself was predicated upon a unique binary, she was the virgin queen who was married to England, a virgin queen who was constantly wooed, a state of affairs she not only encouraged as a court practice and procedure but one which she also elevated to the level of diplomacy in delicately counterbalancing Spain and France. All her speeches and writing, carefully stage managed public appearances and official ceremonies, dress, comportment, and behaviour point to a woman shrewd enough to understand and pragmatic enough to use the power of symbols, icons and all other forms of representations. She created a monarch who was part real woman and part legendary goddess. Altogether, she and those who practised the arts of representation such as literature crafted and largely sustained a royal image of power, justice, benevolence, Protestant piety, unattainable beauty, and firm Tudor resolve. Thus when Elizabeth addressed the English troops at Tilbury before the battle with the Spanish Armada in 1588 and said, "...therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm ..." it was as much as a carefully constructed rhetorical display that called in to play all of the myths invested in the person of Elizabeth as it was encouragement for

the troops. England did go on to inflict a resounding defeat upon the Armada and establish England for all time to come as a naval power to be reckoned with.

The very contingent historical forces that made possible the conflation of the Church and the State and invested the body politic within the person of the monarch, also made possible the development of newer modes of propaganda. That art is a suitable carrier of propaganda was articulated by Plato when he banished it from his ideal Republic more than a thousand years previously for precisely its ability to contaminate young people ideologically. However, the sixteenth century witnessed the culmination of the process that not only placed art at the forefront of human consciousness but also vested it with tremendous power. Retrospectively that phenomenon was labelled as the Renaissance by authors such as Michelet and Burckhardt. Centuries later, Matthew Arnold, would seek to re-christen this age the 'Renascence,' an acknowledgement of that originary moment when the English nation was born in the guise that would lead to its being, in Arnold's own lifetime, the mightiest nation on the face of this earth. An empire that surpassed even the ancient benchmark set by the Romans.

IV

To have what he chooses, to be what he wills.

The Renaissance has long haunted and dominated the imagination of literary studies, literary theory and criticism alike not unlike a giant colossus whose presence and existence served to orient everyone in the vicinity. Perhaps because, like Greenblatt "we continue to see in the Renaissance the shaping of crucial aspects of our sense of self and society and the natural world"[10]. To begin with, the Renaissance was located and continued to be understood within a dialectical framework. As opposed to the dark medieval age, the Renaissance was a cultural rebirth, a re-awakening that helped fashion a new age and new structures of knowledge. Humanism was the ultimate expression and achievement of Renaissance. "The term 'humanism' owes its origins to a secular and anthropocentric cultural and educational program concerned with the celebration and cultivation of 'human' achievements"[11] and becomes the locus of both the

[10] Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self Fashioning.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980. p.124
[11] Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* 2004 ed. New Delhi: OUP,1998. p.45

desires and energies of that era. Renaissance humanism not only locates man at the centre but also, argues Leela Gandhi, defines that man as a sum of his acquired knowledge. The emphasis therefore is upon the pedagogy, which can fashion the humanist man[12]. Unqualifiedly the Renaissance was a period of intense flux when the borders of a new world order and its corresponding understanding of the men who peopled this new world order appear. The intellectual, social, psychological, aesthetic, religious structures, and even structures of state control and governance underwent transformation, which in some cases were radical.

The very term Renaissance is however as much of a biased construct as is the notion that there was a sharp, locatable distinction between the dark middle ages where man had no individual identity, and the Renaissance, where man was conceived in uniquely individuated terms. The nineteenth century creation of the Renaissance is permeated by sentiments of precisely this notion of individualism as expressed in these words by Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola that God created man "to have what he chooses, to be what he wills." Written in 1486, read retrospectively as almost the manifesto of the Humanist age since, The *Oratio de dignitate hominis* or *Oration on The Dignity of Man* articulates the crux of special interest Renaissance held for nineteenth century scholars; individuality. Jules Michelet was the first to use the term to describe the sixteenth century within which he located the origins of the values – democracy, individuality – that he privileged as a committed Republican. But it was the publication in 1860 of Jacob Burckhardt's highly influential *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* that for years guided the perception of that period. His startling point, in his own words, was the "discovery of the world and of man." He located its emergence in the city-states that came into being in fourteenth and fifteenth century Italy.

The nineteenth century views of the Renaissance were concerned more with viewing it as a cultural spirit that permeated the best of that period's cultural and artistic achievement. The Renaissance was however more complex and more diverse than simply the discovery of individualism. The fifteenth and the sixteenth century did witness an extraordinary upheaval and transformation in all domains of human society, from art and culture to science, politics, geography and religion. But the 'grand narrative' envisaged by the nineteenth century writers such as Michelet and Burckhardt, which traced a teleological progression from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and then to Modernity is deeply suspect in a postmodernist and post-structuralist world. "Students have found in the medieval centuries the worldliness, individualism, and

[12] .ibid. p 30

humansitic interest in antiquity once regarded as characteristic of the 'Renaissance', and in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century much that had seemed peculiarly medieval."[13] The porousness of the boundary between the middle ages and the renaissance does not detract one from recognizing the changes that did take place.

The flowering of the medieval culture in the twelfth and thirteenth century was predicated upon the rise of proto-capitalism and was the beginning of the end for not only the feudal modes of production but also the feudal tradition and its structure. The dominantly agricultural world had begun to accommodate the impact of newly emergent economic forces such as mercantile capitalism, which would ultimately force a restructuring of society and the relationship between its various classes and institutions. This new form of economy would also leave in its wake prosperity and a cultural surge, as it spread from the port cities of southern Europe such as Venice to Antwerp and Flanders in northern Europe. Unlike the eighth century classicist reforms of Charlemagne, which had served to consolidate the hold of the Church upon secular life of the middle ages and to generate the structures of feudalism, the second classical revival would ultimately serve to effect a decisive separation between the church and the state.[14] It was specifically in Italy with its "precocious development of capitalism"[15] where the classicist revival began in earnest and it is in the very Italianate figure of Petrarch that the contradictory energies and definitions of renaissance can be located. Interested in the rhetorical qualities of hitherto neglected Roman Classical writers as a scholar and a writer himself, it was Petrarch who effectively designed the outline of the humanist syllabus and defined its goal, " the unification of the philosophical quest for individual truth, and the practical ability to function effectively in society through the use of rhetoric and persuasion. To obtain the perfect balance the civilised individual needed rigorous training in the disciplines of the *studia humanitatis*, namely grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy."[16]

Petrarch was pre-occupied with the past, the classical world that could only be re-constructed from the texts. Giamatti locates in this pre-occupation of Petrarch the "need to assert exile, whether from secular antiquity and its ethics or Scriptural Paradise and its bliss, in order to refashion, or revive, or give rebirth to, or regain, what had once been purer, holier, or simply more

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[13] Ross, James Bruce and Mary Martin Mclaughlin. (ed.) "Introduction", *Renaissance Reader.*Rev.ed.,1968.U.S, Penguin:1977.

[14] Cohen, Walter. *The Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain.* Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985.

[15] ibid

[16] Brotton, Jerry. *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: OUP, 2005.

whole."[17] This was a preoccupation that also permeated humanism, which was to become "the dominant elite culture of Europe"[18] in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. In our century an emphasis on those aspects of the Renaissance, which anticipate our world, the aspects that shaped the "crucial aspects of our self and society" has led to a crucial shift in perspective. Concurrent with this shift is the term of reference; the grand narrativising tendency of the term Renaissance has been replaced by the Early Modern period. Regardless of our privileging of their anticipatory impulses, the inhabitants of that age tended to be more pre-occupied with the past.

Written in 1575, Loys Le Roy's *The Excellence of This Age* is a remarkable catalogue praising and listing in sequence the achievements of the age, which made this, his present age an 'excellent' one. This achievement of the age is predicated upon the recovery of the "good letters" and the resultant revival of the "study of the disciplines after they had long remained as if extinguished." Moreover this revival of learning is contrasted with the marital exploits of the "Tartars, Turks, Mamelukes and Persians." The implication being that while the East have sought physical glory so the West has sought and achieved finally an intellectual revival such that Europe in the sixteenth century is comparable to the most learned of the ancient traditions. In fact, many of the ancient traditions have reached greater exposition and illumination than in the past. Le Roy also locates the original impulse of this enterprise in Francesco Petrarca or Petrarch. Inclined towards a comparative study of civilisations, Le Roy cites the parallel development to Petrarch's genius in the East; the reign of Tamerlane or the Tamburlaine of Marlowe's plays.

Le Roy singles out what he considers the three great milestones of the age; the first is printing, the second is the invention of the marine compass and the third is the invention of "bombard or cannonry- which has brought an end to all other military instruments of the past, which it surpasses in force of motion, violence and speed." He does add a qualification to this third achievement by observing that it functions without distinction, destroying everything it encounters. The three milestones are indeed profound achievements; integral parts of the whole that permanently altered the horizons, the consciousness, and the geography of fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe.

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[17] Giambatti, A.Bartlett. " Hippolytus among the Exiles: The Romance of Early Humanism", in Manynard Mack and George deForest Lord. *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance.* New Haven and London, Yale University Press: 1982.

[18] ibid.

At the threshold of fifteenth century, books and literacy were restricted to an elite culture, which was both, largely urban in character and international in its distribution. Traditionally literacy and books, which tended to be laboriously hand copied manuscripts tended to be accessible only to the wealthy and the church, which had maintained a tradition of scholarship and libraries, which contributed significantly to the preservation of the knowledge of the ancient world through the middle ages. But the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1445, accompanied as it was by an alteration of economic system changed the equation. It literally revolutionised the creation, distribution, and understanding of information of knowledge.[19] Perhaps its greatest revolutionary impact, entirely unintended was on religion. With the printing of the Bible in the vernacular languages, the Church no longer monopolised the Word of God. The printing of books also allowed for a wider and faster circulation of ideas than had previously been possible. Including those heretical or sceptical of the Catholic dogma.

Corresponding to the second invention applauded by Le Roy is one of the key engagements of the renaissance, Travel, which also created interest in travel writing. In his book, *A World Lit only by Fire,* Historian William Manchester marks as the crucial moment in the birth of a new world and a new age, the renaissance, the circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan. It was moment when different streams of knowledge came together philosophical ruminations upon the shape and size of earth, astronomy, navigation, cartography, geography, imperial energies, the travel books contributed to this end. These initial voyages of discovery were part of a larger economic thrust, they had set out to find the fabled and the unknown lands, and the consequences had great impact; the discovery of the New Worlds and their subsequent colonisation. Greenblatt locates in these travel narratives of the renaissance both, the impact of these encounters on the European imagination and the crucial assumptions carried by the early renaissance travellers. The Europeans possessed "above all, mobile technology of power: writing, navigational instruments, ships.....gunpowder," and an intense confidence in the "centrality of their own culture."[20] Writing was crucially termed by the early seventeenth century writer Samuel Purchas as a "literall advantage," which it was from the European perspective, which equated non-literate cultures as cultures without history.[21] The astoundingly painful consequences these

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19 Brotton, Jerry. *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: OUP, 2005.
20 Greenblatt, Stephen. *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991. p.9.
21 Ibid.

voyages of discovery and conquest would result in were colonisation for the non-europeans. For the European nations, however it was an economic boom.

Le Roy ends his panegyric to this renaissance age with a note of caution. Just as the ancient civilisations rose and fell so too might this age; "I forsee already in my mind certain peoples, strange in form, colour, and habits, pouring in upon Europe...They will change our customs, laws, languages, and religion...." Thus even at the height of its achievements the renaissance is already under siege from the hordes who form its dialectical Other. This prevalence of anxieties alongside achievements is also a characteristic note that informs the works of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Despite these half-suppressed and half-articulated anxieties a common theme across European writers and references; from Marsilio Ficino in 1492 to Torquato Tasso in 1572, with Erasmus hailing its birth in 1517; is the idea that this is the re-birth or re-dawning of the Golden Age. The idea of a golden age is, as is so much in this age of classical revival, of classical and pagan origin. Virgil had rhapsodised the birth of a new golden age in his *Fourth Ecologue*, which among other interpretations has also been read as referring to the reign of Augustus Caesar.[22] The first reference to the golden metaphor, however, Levin traces to Hesiod. Regardless of its origin, the mythos of the golden age had permeated and percolated within the cultural consciousness of those ardent students of the ancients the humanists.

V

I am of her own country, and we adore her by the name of Eliza.

An old man in *Old Fortunatus* by Dekker.

In England the mythos of the Golden Age pervaded the culture and the literature of the Elizabethan age. Like all myths even within its lack of verification, there is in its claims the intimation of a symbolic truth. When it appeared on the English stage, the myth of the golden age had changed form slightly. It is discernible as the pastoral genre. The convergence of the myth of the golden age with the pastoral was so complete by the end of the renaissance that in eighteenth century Alexander Pope could observe, "pastoral is an image of what they call the golden age."[23] Essentially a golden age is a dream, a fantasy based upon temporal displacement; where the

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[22] Levin, Harry. *The Myth of The Golden Age in The Renaissance.* London: Faber & Faber, 1970.

[23] Ibid.

present is replaced by the past, an idyllic Arcadia. When the temporal displacement is forward looking, anticipating the future, it looks at Utopias. The very lack of attainability of the past makes the notion of a golden age a powerful metaphor of loss; the pastoral mode allows a momentary integration with that past and in the process serves a regenerative function. The identification of Elizabeth's reign as a golden age is at once a poignant dream; that of a troubled, changing society striving towards the attainment of ideals which are enshrined within the national and cultural memory; and a triumphant declaration of national confidence based upon its material ascendance.

"In the long reign of Queen Elizabeth, Englishmen 'discovered' England- its topography, its history; and they discovered it with zeal and urgency because they had seen how, in the brief reign of her brother Edward VI it had almost been lost."[24] Trevor-Roper is referring here to the *Annals, Chronicles* and *Summaries* that were produced in abundance in the reign of Elizabeth I and her successor, James I. At once history and literary texts, these were more than a record of their times. It is to these men like Camden, Stowe, Lambarde, Norden that we owe records that reconstruct for us the geographical and cultural outlines of Elizabethan England as perceived by Englishmen. Compared to the chaotic contrariness of the last two rulers it was a period of stability. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, there is a discernible release of English national energies, manifest in the nation's colonial expansion, its maritime ventures, its music, and literature and even in the growth of its cities and towns. England's growth and its increasing affluence and its increasing engagement with the continent meant greater interaction with the rest of Europe, which in turn helped shape a profounder sense of what it meant to be English.

> The idea of the developments of the closing years of Elizabeth's reign as providing an appropriate background of national confidence, strength and unity to [the] stupendous cultural achievements no longer finds much favour with historians, most of whom now see this as a time of economic crisis, dislocation and hardship, financial bankruptcy, political disintegration, declining political morality and burgeoning corruption: an age in which things turned terribly sour.[25]

Nonetheless within the national memory Elizabeth was not only remembered fondly but her reign was also remembered as being overall good, a sentiment that was evident very early in

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[24] Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *Renaissance Essays.* London: Secker & Warburg, 1985.p.95.

[25] Robert Ashton, *Reformation and Revolution, 1558-1660* (1985), p.161. cited in. A. R Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge, University Press:

the reign of James I. While that may be the result of the shortcomings of her successor, the "uniqueness of the queen as a person" retains its mystique as being the catalyst.[26] In large measure, this is the result of the identification of the nation with the prince, an identification actively fostered by Elizabeth herself. The deification of Elizabeth as "Gloriana" in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* and the naming of the colony in the New World "Virginia" an allusion to the Virgin Queen, are both examples, form two very different categories, of the power, literal and imaginative, wielded by the cult of the queen.

The cult of the queen was a part of the popular imagination and its most emphatic manifestation was the nation wide celebration of November 17, the date on which she became the queen of England, as Accession Day. It was a popular celebration that came into existence in the early 1570's, after an eventful period, which saw her excommunication by the Catholic Church, her recovery from a bout of small pox, her handling and suppression of the great Northern rebellion of 1569 as well the final settling down of the divisive religious strife. Celebration of her Accession Day, with "bell ringing and bonfires, feasts and sermons," was a "spontaneous movement, not brought into being by any government legislation."[27] At Court the too the Accession Day celebration became a ritual event, with the celebration taking the form of the Accession Day Tilts, a secular feast and a tournament, which typically Elizabeth used for practical purposes. She is recorded as conducting politics during the Accession Day Tilts in 1595, by the Dutch envoy, Noel de Carron. When there was no matter of international politics occupying her there was still the national politics of the courtiers to be conducted by the Virgin Queen, whose favour all the courtiers preferably unmarried, and attractive as well as well versed; were expected to always strive to win, not unlike the "Faerie Queen" at the heart of Spenser's magnum opus, whose court and the hope of whose favour inspired the knights to their errands of chivalry.

November 17 with its ritual of gallantry and pageantry also marked a fixed point in the calendar year of Elizabeth who spent the summer on "progresses," traveling around the country. Effectively it was the entire court with all its accompanying pomp, ceremony and accoutrements that was transported. It resulted in the memorable and magnificent entertainments, part shows, part masques, and part dramatic. As young boys, it is assumed that both Shakespeare and Marlowe witnessed not only the entertainment that accompanied the visit of a queen but also the

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[26] Jones, Marion. "The Court and the Dramatists", Brown John Russell and Harris Bernard (eds.). in *Elizabethan Theatre.* Stratford-Upon-Avon-Studies 9. London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) ltd:1966.

[27] Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The life of the Society.* London: Macmillan, 1971. p.33.

impact and magnitude of the entire spectacle of the Queen and her train, as she visited the city of Canterbury or spent some weeks at Kenilworth. Elizabeth's progresses served a function far more important that merely the entertainment of the queen. It allowed her to make contact with the population, the people saw their monarch even as she saw her country and her subjects, however fleetingly and at a distance. In her peregrinations, Rowse locates not only a social and political impact but also a profounder anthropological impact; the distancing of the catholic church, with its panoply of ritual and pageantry and the humanly accessible saints who could be looked up to and counted upon as willing to intercede on behalf of mortals, left a void. And Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, seemed to fill that void in the subconscious of the popular imagination. Thus, it is not surprising to discover that the popular celebration of Accession Day continued for more than a century, long after she had died. There is more, the "curious fact that the day continued to be observed as a public holiday at the Exchequer, and in the schools of Westminster and Merchant Taylors' up to the middle of the nineteenth century- so long as the impetus of the age continued, in small matters as in great."[28]

"Great art," writes Greenblatt, "is an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex , struggles and harmonies of culture"[29]. For art is ultimately produced by a human being who is himself in a sense a "cultural artefact" in Clifford Geertz's phrase. The greatest literary achievement of the Elizabethan age was its poetry and drama. Elizabethan England witnessed an efflorescence in the absolute meaning of the word: it was a blossoming forth of riches, producing a body of work that continues to excite the imagination centuries later. It was an almost unparalleled phenomena vis-à-vis literature. Even as various factors, among others the writing in the vernacular, the advent of printing, made the physicality of a wide spread individual readership possible, there was an accompanying development of drama and a truly diverse and vibrant theatrical culture. Literature, especially dramatic literature, occupied a vital space and more importantly played a vital role in shaping the Elizabethan imagination and thus, by extension, the Elizabethan nation. It was a moment of anticipation when all the recognised borders, physical and imaginative, began to blur. An entire society was poised upon the threshold of a new world. And at this precise moment of endless possibilities, literature played a decisive role. The most critical and fascinating engagement

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[28] E.K Chambers, 'The Court', *Shakespeare's England,* I.95. cited in Rowse, A.L. *The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Life of the Society.* London: Macmillan, 1971. p. 90.

[29] Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self Fashioning.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980. p. 5.

of literature was with the individual. A moment of mutual discovery, the two became inextricably linked. In as much as it contributed towards the category of the individual and the collective imagination, it helped provide the outlines of an "imagined community." Most importantly perhaps, Elizabethan drama is equalled only by the Athenian drama in its accessibility by all sections of society. Unlike the classical Greek theatre, however, Elizabethan theatre was engaged in shaping and creating the myths of its culture and not just reworking the older myths. It was even more emphatically engaged in capturing the vitality and the impatient energy of its age.

Part II: The Dramatic Tradition and it Overreacher

I

The brilliance of the Elizabethan drama produced in the last two decades of her reign often overshadows a very pertinent truth, illuminated in the very title of Joel B Altman's study, *The Tudor Play of Mind*; that England had a very rich and well-established tradition of drama by the time Elizabeth came to her throne in 1558. Within the superlative magnificence of Shakespeare, the rich vibrancy of Marlowe and the work of a host of other dramatists there is discernible the convergence of three major dramatic genres. Each of these came with its own rich legacy; themes, conventions and tropes; all of which it bequeathed to the multi-textured contours of the Elizabethan drama. As a term, Elizabethan drama is not only ambiguous but also misleading. Loosely speaking it is meant to encompass the English stage from approximately 1580 to 1620 roughly, although sometimes its usage is extended until almost 1642. Within the common parlance, it is a term that bestows distinction, and therefore hegemonically subsumes under it the Jacobean as well as Carolinian drama, while Elizabethan drama technically ends in 1603 with the demise of Queen Elizabeth and the accession of James I.

There are certain characteristic traits or features that continue to be attributed or sought within the drama of the last two decades of the sixteenth century, and it is these traits that allow drama produced later in the Jacobean reign to lay claim to the title of Elizabethan drama. 'Elizabethan' remains an essentialising term that privileges certain characteristics. Coupled with the personality cult of the queen is the space she was accorded within the popular imagination, there is the implication that she was personally responsible for the flourishing drama during the end of he reign. Certainly, there is a nexus between the structures of society; of which the court and the monarch were the pinnacle as well as the largest contributors; and its most vocal productions- the dramatic stage- but there is no direct contribution by the queen. As Marion Jones points out there is no relationship of straightforward patronage by Elizabeth of the arts in general and in particular the leading dramatists of her stage; in the manner of the Renaissance princes and their courts such as that in the Medici court of Florence. She "founded no academy, maintained no playwrights

as such, commissioned no play of genius,"[1] and certainly did not go out of her way to create conditions and laws peculiarly favourable to the stage. Despite being known to enjoy dramatic performances and spectacles, and despite her presence at many entertainment spectacles; of which drama was a vital component; which were designed specifically to entertain her and elicit royal approval and favour and despite even the presentation at court of plays that she particularly wished to see, Elizabeth did not personally oversee the creation of what Walter Cohen calls, the 'drama of a nation,' and which became emblematic of her reign and contributed handsomely to the enduringly myth of her 'golden' reign.

The most significant achievement of the Elizabethan stage and one of its most enduring legacies is the secularisation and commercialisation of the stage. In a sense, it was an example of the democratic credo 'for the people, by the people and to the people;' which in the modern age would become the cornerstone of the democratic structure, because by the 1580's Elizabethan stage was a market enterprise. Plays were written for a theatre that survived in economic terms by pleasing its paying audiences. Writing in the Jacobean age, as an unofficial court dramatist Ben Jonson nonetheless articulated a fundamental truth of the Elizabethan stage when he wrote that the audience dictated the content. The paying customer was crucial factor in the development of the Elizabethan stage. The first commercial theatre was, as far as records indicate, The Red Lion was erceted in 1567 by John Brayne. In 1576, Brayne along with his brother-in-law. James Burbage built the The Theatre in Shoreditch.

The 1580's also witnessed the maturity of a generation whose coming of age was conterminous with the reign of Elizabeth and its subsequent re-channelisation of the nation's energies. The period between the royal Proclamation of 1559; which; in the Tudor tradition encompassing the last three monarchs; made the censorship of drama even more stringent; the suppression of the mystery play cycles and the commercial successes; which ensured a twenty year long run for the theatre put up in 1576; was a valuable seed time, wherein the orientation of the dramatic experience; its nature of production and its purpose, outgrew its medieval obligations and conventions. The transition of the theatre and its purposes was contingent upon a host of factors and circumstances. For the sake of convenience, four markers serve as significant contributors. Renaissance with its emphasis on the classical revival brought within the ambit of

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Jones, Marion. "The Court and the Dramatists", Brown John Russell and Harris Bernard (eds.). in *Elizabethan Theatre.* Stratford-Upon-Avon-Studies 9. London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) ltd:1966.p.170.

education the classical literature and its attendant impact on language, specifically literary language, which became the carrier of more than mere communication. The Reformation not only unleashed energies of zeal, which more often than not became violent and spun out of control, but also served to re-orient the horizons of the category of the individual, by unshackling it from the dominance of the hegemonic structure of Catholic Church, which through out the middle ages channelised precisely the energy of the individual being. Counter-Reformation further strengthened the category of the individual by making it the locus of the struggle of faith. Lastly, the reign of Elizabeth itself was an important factor, despite the lack of direct patronage from her. In an age where the physical body of the monarch symbolised, at the metaphysical level, the body politic, royal indifference, or lack of action could nonetheless be consequential. Elizabeth's policies, many of which were generated by other contingent conditions such as the issue of religion, gave rise to conditions, which were peculiarly ripe for the development of the professional theatrical stage.

II

Henry VIII was a paradoxical patron of the arts and a strict censor. In his reign, the dramatic traditions of England simultaneously flourished and subjected to censorship. His acrimonious break with Rome and Roman Catholicism necessitated the attempts to lessen the presence and participation of the Catholic Church in the life and rhythms of popular culture. His reign marked the end of a popular cultural tradition for reasons of statecraft. Like its Athenian counterpart, the origins of the theatre of Elizabethan England were rooted in the impulse of religion. His suppression of the mystery cycles was not in the form of decrees or public legislation. Rather it was "royal pressure exerted through local ecclesiastical and secular authorities."[2] Already his dissolution of the monasteries had affected the religious dramatic tradition, by depriving it of its oldest patrons. His attempts at ending the performance of the mystery plays were routed through fears of a civil disorder "developing from people congregating for a religious festival in a period of theological turmoil."[3]

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2 Sanders, Norman. Richard Southern. T.W.Craik and Lois Potter.eds. *The Revels History of Drama. Vol. II. 1500-1576.* London and New York: Methuen,1980.p.9.

3 ibid.

The establishment of the Carolingian empire and its influence in the eighth and the ninth centuries, which was also the "formative period of feudalism,"[4] also witnessed the origin of the liturgical theatre in Europe. This was conterminous with the rise in influence and power of the church, which on "the one hand could protect its organisational and even territorial independence; on the other, it could in theory exercise ideological hegemony over much of Europe."[5] The church effectively became a power centre more powerful than any medieval ruler could ever aspire to be. Strictly speaking, it was the universal presence of the Catholic Church as a powerful, unified, well-organised body, which enabled the development and the spread of the religious drama.

The early liturgical drama was in Latin, furthering the church's own claims on the "the heritage of classical antiquity."[6] This drama was divorced from the popular and vernacular impulses, and served primarily to bolster the traditions and ceremonies of the church. It was not as yet a fully formed tradition of what we understand as drama, it is better understood as the theatricalisation of the liturgical ceremonies; primarily serving "communal, cultic and ritualistic functions."[7] It consisted literally of short Latin dialogues from the Bible, which were chanted by the clergy to illustrate the teachings of Mass. By the twelfth century, it had begun to absorb aspects of the popular culture and while retaining its religious impulse, began to develop a dramatic tradition. This was an evolution that owed its powering impulse not to the liturgical tradition, which by its structure ruled out evolution, but to what Cohen calls the proto-renaissance impulse of the twelfth century, which resulted in the secularization of the theatre. Through the course of its evolution, the theatrical space too evolved; form within the church it moved outside through the west door. From the churchyard it moved to the marketplace. In the process the sacred ritual enactment of the religion literally became "profane (*pro fano* before the temple.')"[8]

Cohen locates in the convergence the contributions that enabled the liturgical theatre to develop into a dramatic tradition concisely, "folk festivities contributed structural patterns and individual episodes....; mime introduced a more representational acting style and a more sophisticated relationship with the audience... as well came the taste for romantic adventure," and

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4 Cohen,Walter. *The Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain.* Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985. p.40.

5 ibid. p.41.

6 ibid.

7 ibid. p.50.

8 Cuddons, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory.*3rd. ed.1992. London: Penguin, 1977.p.561

finally the "growing use of the vernacular."[9] The mimes, the repertoire of stock characters, and the elements of farce were the remnants of the Greco-Roman theatre, which had passed on into and survived in the popular traditions of daily life. The "taste for romantic adventure" was the legacy of the medieval poets and storytellers with their long tales of chivalrous romances and quests. The new source of material for plots and stories was the Bible. The rise of urban, city centres in the twelfth century was vital in enabling this convergence of the popular traditions and the learned, liturgical theatre. The development of guilds began to strengthen further the new dramatic traditions as these guilds began to sponsor the new drama. Correspondingly, it also meant the liberation of the theatrical tradition from the control of the church and its strict insistence upon doctrinal adherence.

The early religious ceremonial theatre eventually culminated in the Miracle and the Mystery play Cycles. The distinction between them is often understood in terms of their content, with mystery referring to plays based upon a biblical episode and the miracle referring to plays that represent the history of a saint. Others critics are inclined to the view that miracle was the earlier term used in and later the term mystery replaced it. The conflation of the two is frequent, and in the context of the influence wielded, the emphasis on the distinction is tantamount to semantic quibbling. The mystery play reached its apogee in England with the development of the peculiarly English contribution to the religious dramatic tradition: the mystery play cycles. These cycles were long and essentially an attempt to cover the history of Man from the moment of his creation to Judgement Day. The Creation of Man was followed by his Fall, and then came the Redemption foretold and lastly the birth and resurrection of Christ. The high noon of these cycles was the fourteenth century. They would soon be replaced in popularity by the Morality plays.

The contribution of the mystery cycles was significant as was their presence in the culture of England. From these mystery cycles emerged the new hero, the soul of man. The co-operative involvement of various guilds alongside the church, and the accessibility of the dramatic performance by the entire populace of the city meant firstly that the dramatic culture was increasingly escaping from the dominance of the church and embedding itself in the secular sphere. Secondly, it left behind the doctrinal legacy of hope and Christian salvation deeply embedded within the cultural psyche, the echoes of which would resurface with such poignant force in Marlowe's Faustus. Third and perhaps most importantly, the mystery tradition helped set

[9] ibid. p.52.

the foundation of a culture that looked upon the theatrical space as an integral aspect of its life and culture. The increasing secularisation of the mystery genre and the resultant co-presence of "realism, comedy, satire, adventure, even random, senseless violence"[10] alongside the stories drawn from religious traditions and the Bible, evidence the containment of contrary impulses in the genre, which while contributing richly to the later secular tradition of drama, was itself unable to withstand the crisis of faith the Reformation engendered. The politically motivated and necessitated suppression by Henry VIII only further circumscribed a tradition, which in any case had exhausted its possibilities. The brief revival brought about by the reign of the catholic queen Mary I could not help in revitalising the tradition, and under Elizabeth who continued Henry's policy of implicit suppression without explicit legislation, it finally gave way in England for good. It had however, inspired the birth of another tradition, the Morality genre.

III

The Morality tradition was closer in time and perspective to the Elizabethan stage than the mystery tradition. Essentially the morality play was a dramatisation of the allegory, which had been an integral part of the mystery genre. Once again, the locus of action was the Soul of Man, but instead of directly representing his interaction with the divine creator, the morality genre represented the battle between good and evil in human terms. The overarching framework was still doctrinal, the goal remained the same, but the characters were transformed into abstract allegorical types, representing the qualities and forces of good and evil. Moreover, unlike the mysteries, here the action was both ephemeral and divine, with God and the Devil both present but on earth, in recognisable episodes, which closely approximated the daily life. The focus was on the temptations that beset Man in the world of flesh and the forces like Vice and Pride, which led him towards his fall, while representatives of goodness, such as Virtue, Good Deeds, urged him to resist the temptations and guided him to salvation. The morality plays were didactic in intention, aimed at teaching the audience the principles of a Christian life. The hero too tended to be the representation of Mankind in general, and names tended to represent that typification.

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[10] Cohen, Walter. *The Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain.* Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985. p.40.

[10] ibid. p.41.

One of the best-known English moralities was *Everyman*; its plot depicted the desertion of the eponymous protagonist by all his companions such as Goods and beauty upon his being summoned by Death. Only Good Deeds accompanies him. Ultimately, the moralities depicted a direct engagement between God and the Devil and battleground was the soul of man. The founding principle of the moralities and one of their legacies in turn was allegory. In another, *The Castle of Perseverance*, the story is again of Man. Here is born in the world, but succumbs to the evil angel and gets embroiled in the wiles and snares of temptation. Where God is on one side of the castle, the other are taken by the "Three Enemies of Man – the World, the Flesh, and the Devil." The plot is the same as any other morality play, initially taken in by the pleasures of the World, he slowly progresses up the ladder of temptation, passing by degrees from Folly to the other, more serious Sins. One day Man awakens and realises his errors, not because of any psychological reason but because at the age of forty he is no longer susceptible to the "vices of youth." And it is in order to repent that he enters the Castle of Perseverance, where the Virtues and the Vices fight for possession over him. Nonetheless, he regresses by succumbing to Avarice and dies, but his final "agonised call for mercy" brings the Mercy herself and ultimately, his cause is championed by Mercy and Peace and his soul is redeemed. [11] The archetype of morality is thus the inevitable fall and the redemption, which is granted by a merciful God at the end, despite of the follies of the protagonist.

Etymologically allegory originates in Greek, as allegoria, which in translation means, "speaking otherwise."[12] In literature the use of allegory thus demonstrates meaning on two levels, the surface and its implied or secondary meaning. The moralities, with their consistent use of allegory thus functioned as stories as well as moral lessons. The trajectory along which the moralities developed led them to the brink of politicisation of content. Here the allegorical mode was retained as was the presence of characters who were abstract representations, some of the stories continued to be drawn from the biblical storehouse while others began to take figures from lingering legends of the ancient world. The difference was in the nature of the allegory. From moral didacticism, wherein the salvation of the protagonists' soul was at stake, the allegory now concentrated more closely upon the morality of those who were in positions of power: the king.

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[11] Sanders, Norman. Richard Southern. T.W.Craik and Lois Potter.eds. *The Revels History of Drama. Vol. II. 1500-1576.* London and New York: Methuen,1980. pp.143- 145.

[12] Cuddons, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory.*3rd. ed. 1992. London: Penguin, 1977.p.561. p.22.

Often the protagonist was a tyrant, such as Herod, whose tyranny and violence was depicted at length only to pave the way for the depiction of his degradation and then redemption. The morality plays that dealt with such representation have been termed hybrid.

The performance and generic traditions of the mystery and morality plays was augmented by the development of a new sub-genre, the Interlude. It is however often difficult to separate the morality tradition from the Interludes, they overlap to such an extent that often the same plays can be cited as examples of both genres. Interlude literally meant the gap between play from 'inter', which means between and 'ludus', which is Latin for play. Possibly, they developed as short comical or farcical pieces, which were enacted in the gap between the various parts of the mystery cycles. The strain of realism, which was first discernable in the development of the morality plays, becomes even more pronounced in the plays referred to as the Interludes. The staging of the tyrant and the tyrannical passion brought upon the morality and the interlude a new ideological strain. In age where the dominant tendencies were moving towards an absolutist monarchical state; as evidenced in the reign of Henry VIII and his assumption of both secular as well as religious authority; the representation of the abuse of a king's power generated anxieties, which were not ahistorical but of immediate concern. The didactic strain struggled to negotiate between the discourse of divine right of kingship and the pertinent question of the limits of a king's power. The tyrants of the moralities and the interludes were based on an amalgamation of models, "the emperors of Seneca, the dimly glimpsed tyrants of Greek tragedy, and, close to home the glamorous Herod of the mystery plays."[13] Unfortunately, these tyrants, while being drawn from an earlier tradition echoed "contemporary images of rulers, as well as biblical traditions."[14]

The co-existence of a political consciousness alongside the historical consciousness in the moralities takes the dramatic development very nearly to the final form it would take in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign. "As the "protagonist" of political moralities, the corrupted prince shares many of Mankind's features, with those features politicised,"[15] and the attempt to achieve resolution by reversing the corruption of the prince, was increasingly attended by problems. The resolution was either moral or political; rarely could both be reconciled. One of the obvious solutions was the distancing of the tyrant by posing him as 'foreign.' The inherent fragmentation of

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[13] Bushnell, Rebecca. W. *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought And Theater In The English Renaissance.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,1990.p.84.

[14] Ibid.

[15] ibid. p. 88.

the self; inherent in a genre that was essentially the exteriorising of a man's inner spiritual (in the moralities proper) or psychological (in the morality interludes); also rendered a complete and enduring resolution impossible. Thematically the disintegration of the tyrants self was staged through his desire, which the tyrant proved unable to control, and in the process of his attempts to fulfil that desire his violence and cruelty came to the fore. Ultimately, the tyrant accepted either that his desire was legally and morally wrong, and was redeemed or he died. There were attempts at reconciling the disparate ideological demands of God and the World, in plays such as *Mundus et Infans*, but they were unsuccessful.

Characters other than the protagonist played and important part in the morality-interlude genre. In them is the first appearance of the figure of Vice, who represents all the disparate elements of vice in the earlier, more allegorical tradition of morality plays. Vice in this genre is a figure that operates on all social levels, from the royal to the comic and farcical subplots. He is both the buffoon and tempter. In plays like Thomas Preston's *Cambyses,* Vice is represented by the figures like Ambidexter, who gathers into himself the entire heritage of the allegorical figures of the vices. The formulaic representation of the Herod figure with its "swaggering boastfulness, rage, inarticulate passion, and the indulgence of appetite,"[16] and the farcical buffoonery of the vice figure were deeply embedded in the cultural psyche. In 1600, Shakespeare's Hamlet could associate a particularly bombastic style of acting with the name of Herod, and before him Marlowe could interweave the farcical strands of the figure of Vice in his *Jew of Malta*, in which tradition Eliot could read it as a "savage farce."

The mystery and the morality traditions remained rooted in their originating impulse, that of moral didacticism. Primarily homiletic they nonetheless left behind a rich legacy and a marked influence on the secular stage of Elizabethan England. They created a national culture of drama, they accustomed an entire populace to the notion that drama was an integral part of their life. Moreover, they left behind the notion that drama could provide important lessons. The characteristics of medieval drama, "authoritative, didactic, spectacular, relying on traditional responses" located the playwright as a "mouthpiece for the collectively accepted ideals of his society."[17] Drama was thus also understood as being relevant to the life of the audience.

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[16] Ibid p.88.

[17] Jones, Marion. "The Court and the Dramatists", Brown John Russell and Harris Bernard (eds.). in *Elizabethan Theatre*. Stratford-Upon-Avon-Studies 9. London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) ltd:1966. p.173.

IV

The classicist revival, which enriched the morality and the interludes by providing new models as well as plots, also enabled the development of yet another strand of drama. Close to the interlude form of morality, the Humanist drama was distinguished primarily by its elitist trajectory. In schools, universities, the Inns of Court, and the residences of noble men and men of learning plays were being written. In plays influenced by the classical models, the humanist drama differed in dramaturgy clearly, "even when the subject matter and sources were similar."[18] Here the emphasis was not on the comical or violent elements, which were such an integral part of the enjoyment of the dramatic experience in the popular tradition. Instead, it was more on the manipulation of language and accordingly the interest was on character. Here the influence was more discernibly classical, especially that of Seneca. In this, the most secular tradition of drama in England so far, there appears a new secular seriousness, a commitment to intellectual speculation derived from the rhetorical theory and practice of antiquity.[19] Essentially an amateur drama it nonetheless contributed its bit. It developed the debate structure, which allowed the author/playwright to make use of the new, classically influenced style of language. This was essentially the training to argue a case form both sides, and perspectives, "in utramque partem."[20] Secondly, the humanistic drama was inclined towards a more acute kind of political consciousness, which was a direct result of the prevailing "political orientation of the English humanism" in the early sixteenth century.[21] The humanist tradition was more flexible than both, the mystery and the morality tradition were. As a result, it borrowed richly and freely from them, especially the moralities. With the humanistic drama then the strand of roman classicism in the form of Seneca dramatic models and the rhetoric and sophistic language of Cicero and the like make a deep impression.

Many of the plays that formed a part of the continuous dramatic development between the Elizabethan stage and the earlier traditions are lost; all that is accessible are names, which suggest a rich vein of popular secular romance dramas, which must have bridged the gap. These plays such as – *The Solitary Knight, The Knight in the Burning Rock* – were presumably looked down

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[18] ibid.p.102

[19] Altman, Joel B. *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama.* Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Cohen, Walter. *The Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain.* Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1985.p.124.

upon by the practioners of intellectual dramatic criticism such as Sidney. [22] Yet they too must have contributed their share to the development of popular taste. Bevington suggests that the characteristic romantic theme of "separation, wandering and reunion" was essentially parallel of the morality pattern of "fall from grace, temporary prosperity of evil, and divine reconciliation."[23]

Despite the popularity and the richness of their own tradition, it is only the Elizabethan stage that produced drama of such enduring vision and quality. While the influences and continuities of all these traditions is discernable these traditions themselves never produced a play outstanding enough to be absorbing in its own right and not as the precursor to the later stage. The lack of such success is more understandable in the mysteries, where the commitment to doctrine and religion hampered dramatic development. It is less understandable in the case of the other morality-interlude and the humanist tradition. The escape from the shadow of the church and the greater secular impact could have, theoretically, generated greater psychological individuation and a more complex treatment of subjects. Here, perhaps, the greatest obstacle proved to be the very lynchpin of the morality tradition, and that was its pervasive spirit of allegory. The protagonist Man was never accorded subjectivity. Instead, he was the allegorically fragmented battleground upon which other abstract allegorical characters performed. The didactically pre-determined pattern of repentance and redemption too perhaps, functioned as an inhibiting factor in the subjective development of characters. The humanist tradition in turn was too classicist in its form and aristocratic or elitist in its functions to prove capable of developing by itself into a nation- wide dramatic tradition.

The contributions that they as a whole made, though, were substantial. The most fundamental was the fostering of a cultural tradition of theatre. The Tudor attempts at censorship and control of the management of drama attest to the importance theatre was accorded within the national consciousness. The post of the Master of Revels was first mentioned in the reign of Henry VII in 1494. By the time of Elizabeth, the office had developed and the Master of Revels was both, a censor of plays as well as their producer[24]. To both the form and content of Elizabethan drama these earlier traditions bequeathed a generic porousness as well as a composite cultural

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[22] Sanders, Norman. Richard Southern. T.W.Craik and Lois Potter.eds. *The Revels History of Drama. Vol. II. 1500-1576.* London and New York: Methuen,1980.p. 208.

[23] Bevington, David M. *From Marlowe to Mankind: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England.* Cambridge, Mass., 1962. p.190.

[24] Sanders, Norman. Richard Southern. T.W.Craik and Lois Potter.eds. *The Revels History of Drama. Vol. II. 1500-1576.* London and New York: Methuen,1980.p.37.

perspective. The traditions of unity; of action, location and time; had never been observed in these genres and the Elizabethans followed suit. With the lack of differentiation between high and low elements came the constant co-mingling of the most boisterous and even burlesque comedy with the keenest of tragedy. Alongside a whole host of stock characters such as the figure of Vice there also came stereotypes, such as the shrewish woman, and the cruel tyrant. From the original liturgical impulse also came the continued tradition of boys playing the parts of women. Indeed, despite being possibly the first European stage to turn commercial, the English stage was the last to repeal the law and allow women to enact the roles of women on stage. The use of vernacular and the slow but steady assimilation of native or specifically English material also helped shape a rough drama of the nation. With the development of dramatic content that functioned as social comment becoming a regular feature in the reign of Henry VIII, the Tudor audience also grew accustomed to witnessing drama articulate the current social, cultural, and national anxieties. For example in reading of John Skeleton's *Magnificence* it is discernable that "the court poet is voicing baronial fears about royal extravagance and fiscal responsibility."[25]

The professional companies of actors were another legacy of the first travelling troupes that graduated from performing the mystery cycles to the moralities to becoming the acting companies attached to nobleman. The most emphatic contributions were however in the realm of imagination. An entire population was conditioned to make tremendous leaps of imagination, which allowed the playwrights to invoke the most exotic of locations with mere words. Tudor culture was oral rather than literal, according words an imaginative liberty and power that was the result of generations of dramatic participation. Because of this willing imaginative participation, Elizabethan audiences were also appreciative of the mimetic or representative nature of drama. They accepted the notion of role-playing and enacting or feigning as an integral part of the dramatic technique and experience, and had lesser expectations of illusionistic realism. In terms of stage conventions too there is a marked continuity; "asides, soliloquy, the rhetorical question and direct address;"[26] were already familiar when the Elizabethan playwrights made use of them. These conventions were utilised to display a verbal richness and complexity of language as well as dexterity.

[25] ibid.p.13.
[26] ibid.

Intertwined with the literary legacy of classicism was the drama of Seneca and other roman playwrights. This had a profound impact, especially on the increasing subjectivisation of the protagonist. Seneccan tragedy, which is often understood as drama that was meant to be read rather than performed, not only contributed models for characterisation, but most importantly rhetoric. Rhetoric is simply put the skilled use of language with an aim to achieving a certain end. Language and its manipulation was an exercise constantly put in to practice by writers of the classical age, whether they were writing drama like Seneca or essays like Cicero. Language and its skilled use occupied a special place of interest in all humanistic studies as well as in the courts of renaissance rulers such as Henry VIII and the Elizabeth. It was a period when language was seen "as an institution with its own rules existing independently of individual speakers."[27] In the twentieth century, it has been demonstrated beyond doubt that "language is not just a function of reality but a factor that itself serves to constitute that reality."[28] In the sixteenth century, language played no less vital a role in the constitution of reality in the process Greenblatt terms "self fashioning." What is understood by the term is that in sixteenth century there were identities to be fashioned or created and the means to do so; the primary means being language. In a theatre that was primarily non- illusionistic, speech became even more powerful in conveying the circumstances; locating the action in temporal and spatial terms, and in terms of characters. Language could also be the means of identification; social classes could be categorised in terms of language, some dramatists even asserted that the characters in plays should speak in styles appropriate to their station or class: "to frame each person so,/ That by his common talk you may his nature rightly know."[29]

Along with the social standing language could also serve as a marker of the inner self of a person or character. When a speaker lays claim to plainness in the sphere of rhetoric, he is simultaneously laying claim to truth and simplicity. Shepherd demonstrates this with telling effect when he quotes the queen's speech, where in addressing the parliament in 1576, Elizabeth

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27 Shepherd, Simon. *Marlowe and the Politics of Elizabethan Theatre.* Great Britain: The Harvester Press, 1986. p.3.

28 Braunmuller. A. R and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge, University Press: 2003. p.93.

29 Edwards, R. Damon and Pithias (1565/1571) in *Old English Plays*, ed. W.C. Hazlitt (London, 1874), vol.4. in Shepherd, Simon. *Marlowe and the politics of Elizabethan Theatre.* Great Britain: The Harvester Press, 1986.

constructs the image of a caring monarch by the explicit rejection of eloquence; all the while, the speech is occasioned in an attempt to quell the democratic demands being made upon her.[30] The carefully claim to plainness notwithstanding, the queen also sends a copy of this speech to her godson for his instruction." Logically the site of such careful construction, language was ultimately also a site of power. Speech and its antonym, silence thus become functions of power and powerlessness respectively. In the censorship of drama and the state control exercised, it was precisely this power inherent in speech that the state sought to curb, control, and keep harnessed to its own energies. The subversion of state and accepted order was inherent in chronicle and history plays that despite being pre-occupied with the past could be an effective and telling political comment on the present. Especially when the subjects under discussion were the ethics and power of a monarch.

The chronicle or history play was a dramatic form peculiar to England. While it came into its own truly in the last decade of the sixteenth century in the hands of Shakespeare, as a genre they were developed much earlier. In its initial stages it resembled an epic poem rather than drama, loosely constructed, it portrayed the life of a king. What was unique was the strict adherence to the history of the protagonists life as it was mentioned in the historical sources such as Holinshed's *Chronicle*. In its dramatic representations of wars, internal power struggles and coups, and finally in its portrayal of the monarch, this genre was overtly political. That this genre reached its maturity in the hands of an artist like Shakespeare, who seems to have avoided controversy as assiduously as Marlowe seems to have courted them, is undeniable. But the person who made it a dramatically challenging genre was perhaps Marlowe, whose *Edward II* is the first really dramatic chronicle play.

Is this absolutely certain?

Given the nexus between language and power, it is perhaps not in the least surprising that drama in Tudor England was an effective vehicle of propaganda, and that it was clearly viewed as such by the authorities as well. The suppressions and counter-revivals of the mysteries at the hands of Edward VI and Mary I, the Elizabethan censorship of all religious drama all co-existed with a dramatic tradition that mutated and transformed constantly. Absorbing new impulses, seeking new directions, discovering new tropes and themes, establishing new conventions, the resultant stage was hybrid in its aims, methods, and impact. Above all, it was gloriously vital and charged with a restless energy.

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[30] Ibid.p.13.

VI

From the Red Lion theatre to the most famous theatre of all, The Globe, all the theatres were located outside the designated boundaries of London, in the suburbs known as London's Liberties. It was here in the liberties where the entertainments and spectacles- that ranged from bear baiting and gaming, to taverns and brothels and even the occasional execution- were located. And it is in this marginalized and liminal space that the theatres were located. The Red Lion was soon after followed by numerous others, until by the turn of the century playhouses ringed London. The location assumes significance, both ideologically and culturally, when the structure of the city and its civic rites are taken into account, as does Mullaney. Social and civic margins of the city, the liberties were in a sense where the repressed instincts of a culture were given free reign. The area known as liberties suggest a continuous attempt at containment and control, an attempt which was always, to some degree futile because every declaration of a "province of authority was also to declare its limits."[31]. In a sense, "what escaped classification within the social structure of the city was lodged outside the physical embodiment of society."[32] The very spectacles and rituals, which inside the city were organized around the central figures of authority, were, here in the liberties, literally centred on the marginalised and the liminal figures. If the earlier figures were emblematic of coherence and order, here chaos always threatened. [33] The result of a contrary impulse, which at once licensed and repressed the theatre's location in the liberties corresponded to the negotiations the Elizabethan drama would itself engage in, between representing the coherence of authority and its chaotic instability.

Physically the theatres tended to be large, with an assumed capacity of at least two thousand spectators.[34] This in city with a population of a hundred and twenty thousand in 1550 meant that if a play was successful enough to enjoy repeated runs then the theatre going population was willing to see it many times. In shape, they varied form the polygonal Rose theatre to the circular Globe theatre. Spectator accommodation was hierarchical, from the pits where the pits where the spectator stood to the "gentlemen's room," dependant upon the economic and social

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31 Mullaney, Steven. "Civic Rites,City Sites", in David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. eds. *Staging the Renaissance:Reinterpretations of Elizabetahn Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jcobean Drama.* New York and London: Routledge, 1991.p.22

32 ibid. p.23.

33 ibid.

34 Braunmuller. A. R and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge, University Press:

class of the spectator. [35] Clearly, all strata of society were catered to in these playhouses. An elaborate range of stage properties was at the disposal of the actors, as evidenced form surviving inventories and records. While the stage itself had three levels, the stage proper, a balcony or elevated area and a trapdoor opening into the representative nether regions. Yet the stage itself seemed to have remained bare of stage props (save 'plain coloured hangings') which would indicate the setting of scenes. Some part of the theatre tended to be open to the elements, thereby allowing in light. Without the modern lighting effects, the actors and the audiences of Elizabethan theatre shared the "same lighting, and effectively therefore, the same space in the arena playhouses, since the stage projected into the middle of the building, and the actors spent much of their time in close contact with spectators who surrounded them."[36] It seems that the audience was both participatory and vocal in conveying their displeasure; they could be rowdy, noisy and not above pelting the actors with fruits or eggs to convey their sentiments.

The players or actors themselves were part of the professional acting companies. Technically all actors were listed as 'vagabonds and rogues' under the 'Acte for the Punishment of Vacabondes' of 1572. Yet England had not only a very old and well established tradition of acting troupes but in the 1570's there were also present the professional companies of players, which appeared on the professional stage. The first recorded evidence of professional players dates all the way back to the reign of Henry VII in 1493 in the form of payment to the court interluders. Alongside these professional players, there was also the tradition of acting in schools and universities and of performances in ritual pageants and processions. The distinction between the professional and amateur players remains hazy until the opening of the licensed theatres. Then the companies exist under a system of patronage, which allows the circumvention of the 1572 statute. Any player who enjoyed the patronage of a nobleman was exempt from punishment. Thus, another peculiar contradiction emerges; the secular and commercial theatres of London were sustained by an aristocratic and feudalist structure. There was no dearth of patrons; rich nobleman patronised companies for a variety of reasons; to flaunt their wealth and status, to be able to entertain the queen, or simply perhaps they like drama; in any case under the patronage of various Earls: Sussex, Essex, Oxford, Warwick and Leicester, companies came into being.

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[35] ibid.

[36] ibid. pp.23-24.

The attempt to outline the generic features of the Elizabethan stage and the culture that produced it obscures an important point; this was a society in transition and while certain common strains may be highlighted, in its actual practices, the Elizabethan stage was tremendously varied. The dramatic texts, which offer a mediated record of the social and intellectual upheavals in motion, all point, in their very variety of form and content, to a society that was struggling to reconcile inherently contradictory impulses. The rapid growth of capitalism was not accompanied by the domination of a sizeable 'middle-class'. The forms of trade and industry too did not develop at pace with capitalist growth. Socially, an aristocratic, elitist culture was still dominant. In another context, while there was the 'Elizabethan Settlement' over the question of religion, it did not mean that religion had become a neutral category. It remained as charged as ever, and the increasing rigidity of various religious groups such as the Puritans was visible. They were opposed to pastimes such as bear-baiting and were completely anti-theatre. Among the many influential anti-theatre texts of the period were Stephen Gosson's *Plays Confuted in Five Action* (1582) and Philip Stubbes's *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583). Both attacked theatres as breeding grounds of moral ambivalence and lawlessness. City authorities frequently complained about theatres on grounds that they lured working men away from work. The defence of theatre was undertaken with equal energy and zeal. Thomas Lodge countered Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579) with in his *Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays* (1579). Philip Sidney wrote his *Defence of Poesy,* or *Apologie for Poetry*, which was published 1595, as a reply to the Puritan attacks on the stage, and in the process contributed to the tradition of literary criticism. The Elizabethan theatre was thus in a sense a constantly persecuted establishment, with its continued existence always under threat. Perhaps this constant pressure allowed the stage of that age to conjure with such startling and often even poignant vividness up the fleeting pleasures and vitality of life's experiences.

VII

The mediation between the dramatic text and society is a deeply contested site. Altman sums it up most succinctly when he asks: "does the audience join the world of the play, or must the world of the play reflect that of the audience?"[37] A fundamental question, which has long since

[37] Altman, Joel.B. *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama.* Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978. p.4..

occupied critical interest, it is at the crux an attempt to delineate the relationship between dramatic art and society. When certain plays are suppressed such as the mystery cycles or when certain themes are censored, such as religion and politics (both of which the Elizabethan dramatist was not supposed to deal with under Elizabeth's legislation) there is an implicit assumption that drama does influence its audiences deeply. In 1600 Shakespeare in Hamlet invokes very familiar metaphors to articulate the purpose of 'playing,' when he says that it "is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to show virtue feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."[38] The basic contention is that theatre not only presents to its audience an accurate picture of the society that he is part of but also articulates the contingent pressures and forces that bear upon society. It sees that great tragic art appears "in history, during centuries of crucial change, at moments when the lives of whole peoples are heavy both with glory and with menace, when the future is uncertain and the present dramatic."[39]

Plato had condemned drama on the grounds of 'playing;' mimesis or imitation, labelling it as a deception that would ultimately corrupt since what was imitated; the actions of heroes and gods, both of which were found by him to be irrational; was not a good example, and the manner of its imitation removed the result: drama, entirely out of the realm of reality, and ultimately apart from providing pleasure did not teach anything worth learning. Even the pleasure was suspect because it aroused uncontrollable passions. In order to mount a defence of drama, Aristotle first had to defend the claims of fiction. He did so on the grounds that fiction was genuinely instructive, that tragedy was both, more philosophical and more serious than history and it laid claim to a higher truth. That is Aristotle argued certain universality for fiction and drama in particular. The passions Plato found unstable and dangerous to the continuation of established order, Aristotle presented as a desirable invocation, because, so he argued the arousal of pity and fear by a dramatic performance led to *catharsis*. A term that continues to elude definitive definition two thousand years later, *catharisis* can loosely be understood as purgation. The violence of the emotions aroused is according to him desirable precisely because a dramatic performance provides a safe collective outlet, whereby these repressed emotions are experienced and dissipated without harming society.[40]

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[38] *Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. II, lines 25 – 28.

[39] Camus, Albert. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. Trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy. Ed. Philip Thody. New York: Alfred A Knopf , 1968.

[40] Eden, Kathy, "Aristotle's Poetics: A defense of Tragic Fiction," in Rebecca Bushnell (ed.), *A Companion to Tragedy*. Blackwell Companions to Literature; 32. USA and UK, Blackwell Publishing: 2005.

Whichever side of the arguments one takes, and certainly, the continuation of drama depends on various versions of the traditional Aristotelian defence, the central feature is the power wielded by drama and one its central functions is didactic. While the mystery, morality and even the interludes and humanist drama is discernibly didactic Elizabethan theatre is not so, at least not explicitly. When it is called representative of the Elizabethan age it automatically begs the questions: just how much did it represent and in what were the distortions. The Elizabethan dramatic experience is today approachable only through the medium of the dramatic text itself, which itself a mediation of a different sort; drama is written for performance not for reading and there is corresponding shift in impact. A closer, materialist scrutiny of a culture brings its own paradigm shift and correspondingly dramatic texts themselves are transformed into sites where meaning is constantly constructed and contested. Attendant upon this transformation is the understanding that the meaning derived from a text at the moment of its production is not static, that the perspective and location of the reader itself changes meaning. Above all, it privileges the text itself as the source of meaning.

The popularisation of printing and the contagion of what Petrarch calls the literary disease of writing, did not, unfortunately affect the dramatic manuscript. The approximation of Elizabethan dramatic culture is dependant upon manuscripts, which are not always authenticated. Worse, they are not necessarily the text as the author wrote them; the publisher of *Tamburlaine* does not hesitate to inform that he removed certain parts of the text that were, in his opinion, not in keeping with the dignity of the play. Ben Jonson was the first dramatist to publish authenticated manuscripts of his plays in his lifetime. Even for a playwright as successful as Shakespeare we do not have authenticated texts. With regard to Marlowe's work, there is even greater confusion. Even the authorship of the seven plays attributed to him is contested. The Cambridge companion to English Renaissance Drama lists the probable order as *Dido, Queen of Carthage* in 1586, *Tamburlaine* Parts I & II in 1587. *The Jew of Malta* in 1589 followed by *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II* in 1592 and *The Massacre at Paris* in 1593. In the summer of 1593 on 30 May he died, killed in a tavern brawl by Ingram Frizer, apparently because of the argument over the bill. The lack of authenticated dramatic scripts is a strong indicator that these plays were primarily produced for performances and rarely valued in themselves. The scripts value was purely commercial, and therefore for as long as the play remained popular it highly likely that the script was not printed or published due to prevent rival playhouses and playwrights from obtaining it. In an age where art and commerce are

Too many errors of Typing.

ideologically distanced it is ironic to realise that literature venerated, as the highest of art, was the direct result of commercial enterprise.

Of the plays attributed to him, the only one to be published in his lifetime was *Tamburlaine* and that attribution is not the result of Marlowe's name appearing as the author on the title page. Instead, we owe it to a prologue by Robert Greene in 1588, where he refers to two gentleman poets whose verses have lately appeared on the stage in 'tragicall buskins,' who not only dare God out of heaven with that atheist *Tamburlaine* but are such mad and scoffing poets that have prophetical spirits as breed of 'Merlins' race.[41] Keeping in mind the vagaries of Elizabethan spellings this reference is understood to refer to Marlowe as the author of *Tamburlaine.*

In the first printed copy of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* the authorship is attributed jointly to Nashe and Marlowe. There is no record of a performance of the play although the title –page of the play printed in the year after Marlowe's demise said, "played by the Children of Her Majetsy's Chapel."[42] Nashe and Marlowe were near contemporaries at Cambridge, as were Robert Greene and Marlowe, and it is speculated that the joint authorship was nothing more than Nashe's attempt to ride on the coattails of Marlowe's popularity. In any case, a dead Marlowe was hardly likely to contest the claim. Critics such as Rowse amongst others tend to locate *Dido* as chronologically the first play of Marlowe. If the text of *Tamburlaine* is known to be excised, the texts of *Faustus* present an even greater problem; there are two versions, texts A and B. The first was published in 1604 and is the shorter text, the other, text B, was published in 1616 is far longer and contains certain episodes missing entirely in the earlier version. The episodes deleted from text A are for many critics problematic because they find the text artistically stronger without them. The consensus, however, is that the artistic integrity invested in the 1604 text is result of attempts to typify Marlowe as a serious playwright of high minded tragedies and the farcical comedy detracts from this notion. But Marlowe's other display the same commingling of high tragedy with comedy and the patchwork effect of the longer text is in keeping with traditions of the highly untraditional Marlowe. As a rule, separating the facts from the fictions and myths of Marlowe's life and works is well near impossible. All that can be said with confidence is that all seven plays were probably written between 1586 and 1593, that they were hugely popular, they were all tragedies, and they emphatically altered the contours of the Elizabethan dramatic landscape.

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41 Rowse, A. L. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography.* London: Macmillan, 1964.pp.76-78.

42 Ibid. p.44

Like its Athenian counterpart the high point of Elizabethan drama was tragedy. What makes tragedy an enduring genre is perhaps its ability to remind the "audience of something they share and commonly struggle to forget: the progress from aspiration to death, from moments that promise glory .....to eventual surrender."[43] As genre Tragedy according to George Steiner reached its apogee in both cultures and in a post Enlightenment world is a forever unattainable dramatic genre. Even the attempts of the Romantics were undermined by their optimism. An assertion such as this deeply rooted in a specific understanding of tragedy; moreover, tragedy in this assertion is constantly contrasted with its counterpart- comedy. Steiner's view rests upon a fundamental reading of tragedy as a process that is concerned specifically with the lives and actions of "exceptional figures in whose fate could be read the extreme possibilities of existence." Secondly, such exceptional figures could be appropriated for tragedy only in a world suffused with divinity. Only in a such a worldview was it "impossible to escape a sense of the sacred, of radical danger, of dread." Thirdly, it needed language of the highest quality, not only verse but verse that was powerful enough to approximate and convey the complexity, the mysteriousness, and the sublimeness of tragic events and characters.[44]

Tragedy as a genre simply put, articulates the fall of great men. The idea of a fall was in itself neither a new one nor original to Elizabethan drama. The pattern of fall was pervasive in the morality genre, yet it does not qualify as a tragic drama not only because of it sustained use of allegory but also because the medieval notion of tragedy, inspired by and circumscribed by Christian doctrine, was vastly different from the Greek understanding of tragedy. The wheel of fortune, with its attendant notion that what goes up needs must come down, had a sense of unavoidable inevitability. For its impact, Greek tragedy depends upon a sense of needless, of senseless waste; that which happened- death, suicide- could have been avoided but for... and the reason that constitutes the pivotal category of that 'but for' is something explored at length by Aristotle and all the subsequent formulators of tragedy. Christianity, with its twin doctrines of pre-ordination and the salvation, failed to produce a tragic outlook all through the years of religious

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[43] Braunmuller. A. R and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge, University Press: p.302.

[44] Poole, Adrian. *Tragedy: A Short Introduction.* Oxford, OUP: 2005. pp.20-22.

drama, precisely because repentance and remorse made salvation and redemption possible. It would take the genius of Marlowe to produce what arguably also functions as a Christian tragedy.

Greek tragedy, at least at its best, met Aristotle's criteria for the construction of tragedy. This was "an imitation of human action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude: that is enacted dramatically rather than narrated, in language appropriately ornamented; and that arouses pity and fear."[45] The imitation was not mere imitation instead, it was a representation, through which the reality of the tragic action/ trajectory/ person was given form and realised. The completeness was the presentation of the tragedy in a properly constructed plot that emphasised causality. The hero himself had to be both, neither so good as to become unbelievable nor so low or vulgar that he did not befit the grandness tragedy illuminated and located in his character and person. There was an emphasis on unity; between the events, the fictional plot, and even temporal and spatial unity. In England, the first recognised tragedy is *Gorboduc* by Sackville and Norton. It is also the first known play in blank verse. It is not known whether Marlowe was acquainted with the Aristotelian dictum on tragedy, certainly by the time he began writing Aristotle was being read in England. Sidney's defence written before his death in 1586, certainly seems to have been written with a knowledge of Aristotelian unities.

Marlowe disregarded the unities consistently, his action was temporally and spatially scattered, instead he practised the unity of character; in his plays action is structured organically around the source well of all the action, the protagonist. His unities were more in terms of impression and character. Marlowe's protagonists were not always great men and women. His three greatest protagonists, Tamburlaine, Edward II and Barabbas, the Jew of Malta were all men who acquired power, and thus 'greatness.' However, in his plotting and treatment Marlowe created highly individuated protagonists who motives were at once complex and conducive to tragic consequences. In creating his plays Marlowe brought together many divergent strands form the older traditions, he even borrowed form the poets of his day like Spenser. but what set him and his work apart from the other dramatists of the day, even the 'university wits' and his friends such as Nashe and Greene and Kyd were his unique contributions. In some ways the manner in which Marlowe exceeds the dramatic traditions in practice is almost as an afterthought; concerned with presenting the tragedy he wants and in the terms he wants to he takes on blank verse, first

[45] Eden, Kathy. "Aristotle's Poetics: A Defense of Tragic Fiction", in Rebecca Bushnell. (ed.). *A Companion To Tragedy.* Blackwell Companions To Literature and Culture; 32. USA and UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

spotlighted in the theatre with the first English tragedy *Gorboduc*, and displays its possibilities as had never before been attempted in order to portray the gigantic ambitions and desires of Tamburlaine. Marlowe's presentation of characters in terms of their inner conflicts and the presentation of their tragedies as tragedies not only of action, but also of their character, brings on to a stage a greater intellectual freedom and experimentation. In Marlowe's hands, the stiff, ruder, and even monotonous blank verse of Sackville and Norton became a pliable form, which allowed poetic expression complete liberty while retaining the complexity of thought. Marlowe's greatest achievement was perhaps the commercial success he achieved even as he wrote plays of an enduring literary richness. He certainly helped expand the imaginative horizons of the English stage to an extent that after his death Shakespeare could immortalise the Elizabethan stage.

Part III: "If words might serve"- the Limits of Imagination

Zenocrate lies on her deathbed and the man whose words have never failed to achieve what their speaker has articulated; victory over enemies, love, dominion, the fulfilment of an ambition that knows no bounds; commands in vain for the first time:

> Tamburlaine: come down from heaven and live with me again!
> Theirdamas: Ah, good my lord, be patient! She is dead,
> And all this raging cannot make her live,
> If words might serve, our voice has rent the air;
> .....Nothing prevails, for she is dead, my lord.
> (*Tamburlaine* Part II, Act II. Sc.iv. 118- 124.)

Tamburlaine the Great appeared on the Elizabethan stage in 1587 and by all accounts was an instant success. *Tamburlaine* was played by the Lord Admiral's men, with Edward Alleyn in the lead role. As a playwright's declaration of intent it is perhaps unparalleled, rarely have twenty three year olds scored such a marked success with their very first venture. In the year that began with the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and threatened through its passage the invasion by the Spanish Armada, Tamburlaine was a representation of the martial air that blew through the length and breadth of the nation as it prepared to defend itself against the invasion. The story of a Scythian shepherd's ascent to kingship and unparalleled domination of most of the known world was neither unfamiliar nor entirely based upon fiction. In 1586 George Whetstone's *English Mirror* was published and it contained an account of the story of one Tamerlane, who had in Loys Le Roy's words, had by his valour "drawn to the East the glory of arms," and during whose reign in the East the had begun its classical revival[1]. The conquests and military success would have been enough on their own to make Tamerlane a popular figure in the imagination of people who were just beginning to embark on their military and nationalistic conquests. But the humble origins as a shepherd and the subsequent rise to kingship made his figure and person even more attractive.

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[1] Roy, Loys Le. "This Excellent Age", in James Bruce Ross and Mary Martin Mclaughlin. (ed.) *Renaissance Reader.*Rev.ed.,1968.U.S, Penguin:1997.

Tamburlaine dominates the play in Part I and the central unity of the play is provided entirely by his person on whom all the action is centred. In part II his domination is equally strong but the action is causal, originating in his actions, but set away from his person for the most part. He is at once more than a mere man and perhaps not in the least humane. But then, tyrants never are. And Tamburlaine in many aspects is the tyrant par excellence. Discernible in his tyrannical pursuit of his desires at the expense of everything else is the ghost of a generation of tyrants who entertained as they ranted and raved across the fledgling English state in a host of morality and interlude plays, from *Cambyses* to the various *Herods*. The tyranny in these, earlier plays and in the conception of a generation of humanist writers and theoreticians such as Starkey and Elyot, lay not in the modern understanding of tyranny as a will to absolute power but instead, in desire itself as a form of power.[2] This understanding of tyranny and power is best located in the controversial treatise on statecraft by Niccolo Machiavelli. Even though Machiavelli himself condemned tyranny as bestial, in common consensus his tract; with its pragmatic approach to statecraft and his concise, unvarnished understanding of power, which allowed him to be able to write that while fighting with force and not according to laws was the way of animals, a prince must be able and willing to resort to it when the first proved insufficient; was greeted with suspicion and 'machiavellian' became a derogatory epithet conjuring associations of scheming and cunning and an utter lack of scruples and morals.[3] Interestingly, this advice by Machiavelli is given in a chapter XVIII, titled: "How a Prince Should Keep His Words."

Tamburlaine always keeps his words; he follows through with his threats and grandiose claims. The play opens and without being present Tamburlaine's presence pervades the council of Mycetes, King of Persia. Here is another king who relies more on words but unlike Tamburlaine his words have a ring of hollowness and soon the contrast with Tamburlaine is obvious. Even as his captain reports on the preparations to meet Tamburlaine Mycetes digresses into words, and locates in Meander not a warrior but a 'poet' and 'jewel' whose 'wit' will enable their win over the enemy. Cosroe, brother of Mycetes is meantime engaged in dreams of his own kingship; acceding

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2 Bushnell, Rebecca. W. *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought And Theater In The English Renaissance.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,1990.p.53.

3 Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince.* Trans. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. Ed. Peter Bondanella. Oxford: OUP, 1984.p.58.

to the entreaties of nobleman, he plots to depose his brother. And to that end joins forces with Tamburlaine, whom he presumes to make his regent. Ceneus, a Persian lord and follower of Cosroe articulates the future, blissfully unaware of the irony:

> He that with shepherds and a little spoil
> Durst, in disdain of wrong and tyranny,
> Defend his freedom 'gainst a monarchy'
> What will he do supported by a king,
> Leading a troop of gentlemen and lords,
> And stuff'd with treasure for his highest thoughts!
>
> (*Tamburlaine*, Part I. Act II.sc.i.54-59.)

As it turns, he overturns Cosroe and Ceneus ironic expectations rather ruthlessly and takes the crown of Persia for himself.

Tamburlaine's appearance in act I, scene II has already rendered Cosroe and Ceneus's visions impotent. Tamburlaine appears as the Scythian shepherd who transforms visibly into the "scourge of God," as he sheds the humble apparel for a suit of armour and the axe. This transformation in appearance from shepherd to warrior is accompanied by the certainty of an ambition that is truly titanic in conception. It encompasses the crown of Persia and the exotic treasures and wealth of all the known worlds. And the whole conjures a vision of outstanding beauty, of the world measurable in words alone. He announces then that he is destined to be the unconquered conqueror of the world. And this is expressed while wooing the hand of Zenocrate, an Egyptian princess travelling through these lands, with valuables and retainers, assured of safe passage by the letters of the king of Scythia. Tamburlaine countermands them by the command of a "greater man," his own power and authority, which is established by his might. He disdains the valuables offered in ransom by Agydas, a lord accompanying Zenocrate. He desires instead the hand of Zenocrate.

Tamburlaine succeeds in all that he ventures. His conquests are effortless; the first of Theridamas, the captain despatched by Mycetes to subdue Tamburlaine; is accomplished by

appearance and words alone. The rest, even when they involve fighting require no overstraining of his prowess. As Tamburlaine says:

> My camp is like to Julius Caesar's host
> That never fought but had victory;
> Nor in Pharsalia was there such hot war
> As these, my followers willingly would have.
>
> (*Tamburlaine*, Part I. Act III. sc. iii. 152-155.)

It would have been entirely appropriate to endow Tamburlaine with the motto, *vini, vidi, vici*- I came, I saw, I conquered, had it not already been taken by the very same Julius Caesar. The real conquest, if it can be termed as such, is the verbal one with gods. Alternately, Tamburlaine identifies with the gods and challenges them, like Jove who, "sometimes masked in a shepherd's weed,/ And by those steps that he hath scal'd the heavens/ May we become immortal like the gods," The only perspective in the play is Tamburlaine's, every other character exits only to allow him the opportunity to display himself. And display himself he does in the most grandiose of terms. He who "holds the fates bound fast in iron chains" does not harbour the least doubt in his mind about the extent of his own power. The opponents exist only as "a row of ninepins to be toppled over: there is no interest attached to them, except as necessary material upon which Tamburlaine can demonstrate his power."[4] The dehumanisation, in a sense, is extended to such an extent that there is not an iota of sympathy or even pity invoked by the suffering of those who succumb to Tamburlaine. The virgins of Damascus who suffer doubly, as innocents who have committed no crime, not even that of resisting the siege of Tamburlaine, and as helpless women, whose fate is decided between the obduracy of the rulers of Damascus and the inflexibility of Tamburlaine, do not awaken any sympathy as they are condemned to death. Their blood does not haunt the imagination. The physical sufferings of Bajazeth and Zabina, and their last bloody suicide is similarly devoid of sentiment and power.

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[4] Bradbrook, M.C. "A Discussion of *Tanburlaine*." In Judith O'Neill (ed.). *Critics on Marlowe*. Readings in Literary Criticism. Ser.4. 2nd.ed. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1973.

The constant successes and victories, which continue unabated in part one, with the play ending upon the scene of a victorious Tamburlaine crowning Zenocrate as his empress and departing to celebrate their marriage, force the question: what exactly constitutes the tragedy in this play? The answer to this question requires a fundamental shift in perspective. Tamburlaine's world, indeed his very reality is constituted upon his self. His endless conquests are only the physical expression of the boundless ambition of that self. That selfhood is ultimately constructed through words. As a play, *Tamburlaine* is founded upon constant generalisations and very little particularisation. The imagery, the allusions, the metaphors are all employed to create exquisite images that dazzle the audience with their richness, and with their colour. Marlowe creates an enchanting visual world, from the "amber hair" and the "sun-bright armour" of Tamburlaine to the "milk- bright harts" that shall draw Zenocrate's "ivory sled," to the last incredible image towards the end of Part II.

> Then shall my native city Samarcanda,
> And crystal waves of fresh Jaertis' stream,
> ...
> For there my palace royal shall be plac'd.
> Whose shinning turrets shall dismay the heavens,
> ...
> I'll ride in my golden armour like the sun;
> And in my helm a triple plume shall spring,
> Spangled with diamonds, dancing in the air,
> To note me emperor of the three-fold world;
> Like to an almond tree y-mounted high
> Upon the lofty and celestial mount
> Of ever green Selinus, quaintly deck'd
> With blooms more white than Herycina's brows,
> Whose tender blossoms tremble every one
> At every little breath that through heaven is blown.
>
> (*Tamburlaine, Part II.* Act IV. sc.iii. 107-124.)

Both parts of Tamburlaine are alive with images that are vividly coloured, the dazzling yellow of gold jostles with the bright colours of rich jewels, the soft refraction of the sun through the clear green of water competes with the light of the heavens and Tamburlaine himself is signified through the three colours he makes peculiar use of, white, red and black. Tamburlaine is always perceived at second hand in a sense, whether they be emblematic signs, the relentless desires that drive him or through the perceptions of other characters. Even the description of Tamburlaine, given by Menaphon to the would- be-king, Cosroe, is removed from the realm of mortality and conversely humanity. It is awash with images of power, colour and riches, from the eyes that are "fiery circles" and the "pale complexion" that is "thirsting with sovereignty" to the hair that is amber and the head that is a pearl. It is also a "rhetorical imago," a set piece through which "Tamburlaine rises in relief from the field of desert warriors to become a creature apart. For Menaphon's words describe not a man but a colossal work of art ... the effect of this speech is not merely to elevate Tamburlaine but to locate him in an aesthetic realm beyond the reach of moral judgements."[5] The only element that humanises Tamburlaine is Zenocrate. Agydas's legitimate concerns about a man who is "vile and barbarous," whose looks are "fierce" and disposed only to "martial stratagems," Zenocrate sidesteps adroitly. In the process, she also provides a unique perspective of him, one that softens his bloody visage by diluting it in images of pastels impressionism when she likens him to the sun that is glimpsed in the waters of Nile.

The sensuous enchantments of poetic words from the shepherd turned bloody tyrant is as startling as the profusion of classical allusions and imagery throughout the play, where the characters all tend to be non-Europeans. Marlowe in not only betraying his classical education and bent of mind but also conveying through the offices of Tamburlaine pertinent anxieties and desires of his own, Elizabethan culture.

The whole play is a veritable treasury of renaissance knowledge in various fields but most especially geography, cartography, trade and the classical canon. As he accepts that his death is inevitable, the same man who once sated that "*will* and *shall* best fitteth Tamburlaine," and who while dying say, "the scourge of God, must die," insists immediately before his death upon a

Altman, Joel B. *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama.* Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.p.328.

perusal of the map. "Give me map," he demands, so that he can chart the course of his aspirations on "this disdainful earth" in tangible terms by tracing them along a map. Tamburlaine's speech constantly returns to the cartography that made the world finite. Ethel Seaton locates the maps of Abraham Ortelius, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* as the source used by Marlowe to supply the details that are so lavishly scattered in *Tamburlaine, Parts I and II.* By part II, as she points out the generalities of only ten well known locations such as Constantinople used in part I give way to some thirty "provinces of more recent interest."[6] Tamburlaine also betrays detailed cartographic knowledge when he talks of making the "point/ That shall begin the Perpendicular." Even the errors that have been identified in the geographical world of Tamburlaine, it turns out, are often the errors of the age and its knowledge and not always the result of carelessness or faulty memory. The constant references to the riches and treasures of the world, from the gold of India to the mines of the America, Tamburlaine is firmly embedded in the mercantile, capitalist and colonial enterprises and expansions of Europe as a whole and England in particular.

The classicism of the play creates not only the curious spectacle of shepherds betraying contradictory knowledge of the classics but also allows a more important distancing of Tamburlaine from the two great religious traditions that had already begun to come into conflict, Christianity and Islam. The ferocious atheism of Tamburlaine could only be articulated in the pagan terminology of the classical world, unless Marlowe was desirous of adding blasphemy to the tally of Tamburlaine. Yet Tamburlaine betrays a curious, inexplicable concern for Christians. Within the world of the play, he is the liberator of Christians oppressed by the Muslim Turks. In fact, all of the enemies subdued and conquered by Tamburlaine were both, the enemies as well as the antithesis of Europe. Ironically, by part II there is a conflation between the two selves, the Christian Europeans turn out to be no less devious than the Muslim Turks; after giving an oath sworn on Christ, Sigismund breaks his word and peace by attacking Orcanes, the king of Natolia. Orcanes; who appeals to Christ rather than Mohammad on the grounds that if he is a just god then he will help the faithful keepers of their sworn word, the Turks, to victory over the Christians; is victorious over Sigismund, only to be defeated by Tamburlaine. The last conquest of Tamburlaine is Babylon, the symbol of a thundering god's wrath in the Bible. Right after defeating Babylon and slaying its citizens,

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6 Seaton, Ethel. "Marlowe's Map", in Clifford Leech (ed.). *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.1964.

Tamburlaine dies. After having blasphemed and challenged at length the powers of Mohammad. It as ironic end, if it is to be attributed to divine forces then those are the powers of Islam and not Christianity. Clearly, religion underpins the action of Tamburlaine to an extent, but the conclusions Marlowe presents are not necessarily comforting. They come close to nihilism in their exposure of a world where there seems to be no God except the one whose "scourge" Tamburlaine is and whose wrath is demonstrated by Tamburlaine sword, and the allegiance of that god of Tamburlaine to either side of Islam or Christianity is never articulated.

The classical revival had conveyed to the humanist discourse the "pathology of the Platonic tyrannical character and the view that the prince's character defines the quality of his government."[7] The nature of kingship is implicit in play the action of which centres on a man who is always taking or even literally snatching crowns from the heads of monarchs. The subplot of Cosroe's ill-fated ambitions and the unfitness of Mycetes as a monarch and Tamburlaine's ability to inspire absolute loyalty and love among his followers are all, thus, embedded in a larger cultural discourse of kingship and its responsibilities. Tamburlaine's absolute rule reflects the absolutist aspirations and achievements of the Tudors. Tamburlaine is the ultimate representation of absolute will and absolute selfhood. Tamburlaine bridged the gap between the early humanist conceptions of absolute power, tyranny, and the later, more political representations of tyranny. In the process, he not only "replaced the vulnerable princes of the moralities with titans of ambition," he also redefined the bounds of ambition and reoriented the locus of ambition itself[8]. The locus of this ambition is the imagination of Tamburlaine, for whom mastery is synonymous with words.

The tragic vision and the tragedy of part I thus cannot be located in anything save the ambition of Tamburlaine. Tamburlaine as a figure "who is visibly "invents" himself before our eyes and is able to do so because his intense conviction of innate nobility expresses itself in "astounding terms" that compel others to obey his will,"[9] can be tragic only in the very terms that define and constitute him. The relentless ambition is ultimately made finite by its very nature; for all his lack of

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7 Bushnell, Rebecca. W. *Tragedies of Tyrants: Political Thought And Theater In The English Renaissance.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,1990.p. 29.

8 Ibid. p.116.

9 Altman, Joel B. *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama.* Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.p.327.

interest in earthly wealth for itself and for all its invocations only as a tangible symbol of his achievements; is in the final analysis only material. The most poignant and disconcerting moment in the plays is when Tamburlaine himself outlines the horizons of his titanic ambition:

> Nature, that fram'd 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 wandering 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.
>
> (Tamburlaine, Part I. Act II. sc.vii. 18-29.)

One does expect that "sole felicity" to be a crown. In the process of acquiring his "earthly crown," and keeping it, while adding more and more crowns to it, lies then tragedy of Tamburlaine, his success is his tragedy. Because it is achieved only at the constant price of his conscious cultivation of "virtue," the steadfastness and strength of character that needs must be inflexible and ever fixed upon its goal. The tragic price paid by Tamburlaine is an aesthetic one. Only once in the course of two parts does Tamburlaine articulate it explicitly, in the long soliloquy before the massacre at Damascus, where the tears of his beloved Zenocrate fail to move him to mercy even more forcefully than the rather tame entreaties of the virgins. Here he reveals that "the substitution of the aesthetic for the moral is not native to his soul, nor is it achieved without a terrible struggle."[10] In part II, the inherent nature of this tragedy is not altered. Death is for Tamburlaine the elevation to a throne in another realm. There is poignancy in the vision that sees death creeping towards him despite being glutted by the deaths of those killed by Tamburlaine, but the tragedy lies in the materiality of his death, which is to be measured in terms of lands left to be conquered.

[10] ibid. p.330.

The success of part I, which not only necessitated the writing of part II; which in structure and movement is not always the equal of part I; inaugurated a new trend on the stage. *Tamburlaine* is the first noteworthy play to use blank verse on the English stage. Despite Eliot's quibble with Swinburne's tribute that Marlowe is the creator of the English blank verse, which Eliot countered by forwarding the claims of Surrey, it is undeniable that it was Marlowe who so emphatically displayed the possibilities of blank verse. Essentially it consists of "unrhymed five-stress lines; properly, iambic pentameters."[11] It was only in Tamburlaine that it first displayed the characteristics that it made the medium of expression for the unparalleled genius of Shakespeare. In Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* and even in Marlowe's earlier attempt, *Dido, Queen of Carthage* it is constrained, not yet liberated from the clutches of rhyme. With characteristic self belief, that borders on arrogance, Marlowe alludes to this development in the prologue to part I itself, when he states "from jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits,/ And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,/ we'll lead you..." Unfortunately for his contemporaries Marlowe had the ability to fulfil his claim, much like his eponymous protagonist.

Dido, Queen of Carthage in other characteristics too is almost a prelude to the genuine genius of Marlowe's later work. Written almost, as Eliot and Rowse both point out, with a copy of Virgil's *Aeneid* in front of him, it recounts an episode in Aeneas's journey from the broken towers of Troy to the shores of Italy and the foundation of the Roman empire. Blown ashore on Carthage Aeneas meets Dido, the queen of Carthage. Interestingly, it the only play by Marlowe to have a female protagonist. Not surprisingly, his portrayal of her never reaches the grandeur of Tamburlaine or the poignancy of Faustus. Certainly, Marlowe never attempted to locate a female character at the centre of action in any of his other plays. Perhaps Marlowe was not comfortable in sketching female sensibilities because he was not interested in them, as is conjectured by the numerous critics who locate the source of this inability in his alleged homosexuality. Their conjecture is further argued on the grounds that Marlowe's portrayal of masculine companionship, dalliance and even love is as brilliant and rich as his portrayals of heterosexual relationships is limited. Such readings are valid but not necessarily the only possible readings. It is equally possible

[11] Cuddons, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory*.3rd. ed.1992. London: Penguin, 1992.

that Marlowe whose plays inevitably locate power in various guises in all of his characters was writing in an age when despite the reign of Elizabeth women were not as a matter of course equated with power. However, Dido as a monarch is a locus of power in her own right and the play is presented as her tragedy.

The framework of the play, presented far more obviously and clumsily in comparison to other plays, is explicitly divine, albeit of pagan origin. The tragedy of Dido is to be embroiled in the divine schemes of Jupiter, Juno and Venus. On the verge of giving in to Iarbas, the king of Gaetuli's suit she is pierced by the arrow of cupid and led to fall in love with Aeneas. This proves to be her undoing, because Aeneas is tied to the politics of power and predestination so firmly that Dido's love is insufficient to hold him back. The play ends with the departure of Aeneas and the deaths of Dido, Iarbas and Anna, all in the name of love. The play lends itself far more readily to reading grounded in power, politics and kingship than love. Rowse locates in it "the conflict of public duty and private pleasure, of political power and sovereignty with the passions of love."[12]

Dido blinded by her love for Aeneas is a weak monarch, who is willing to kill any citizens who demur at accepting Aeneas as the king. Iarbas is an absentee king, spending his time in Carthage in order to woo Dido. Both are transformed into weak monarchs through the agency of love. Perhaps in this a passing glance at the steadfastness of Elizabeth in remaining the 'Virgin,' therefore a strong and unchallenged monarch, can be read. Even the divine world resonates with echoes of love and its attendant disinterest. Jupiter is so engrossed in dalliance with Ganymede that he forgot to watch over Aeneas and ensure his journey to Italy until Venus appears to chide him and remind him to help Aeneas, who is her son. Juno is motivated to persuade Venus to join hands with her in making Aeneas stay in Carthage by making Dido love him only because she is angry enough at Jupiter to wish to thwart his plans for Aeneas. On the mortal plane, ultimately, the imaginative power of love proves weak, political power and duty triumph resoundingly over the enticement and pleasures of love. An absolute selfhood that is focused on its own triumph is located in this play not in the character of Dido, despite her constancy in love to the point of self-annihilation. Such a self is bestowed in Aeneas, one who is bred in the mountains of Scythia.

[12] Rowse, A. L. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography*. London: Macmillan, 1964. p.47.

Unlike his later, more absolute and more triumphant successor, however, this particular Scythian is not at the outset so absolute in his resolution. He wavers once, but the second time he holds resolute and departs, leaving Dido to lament and then finally immolate herself.

The politics of conquest are couched in terms of divine destiny, and so eventually, Aeneas after putting off his departure for good is reminded by Hermes of Jupiter's command. Aeneas sets off, only after a tearful Dido has had her say. He cuts her off, "if words might move me, I were overcome," and in doing so demonstrates the lack of her power in her words over him who is politically motivated to found his own kingdom and power and is willing to break his own word to achieve it. As a man Aeneas casts off the responsibility for Dido's emotions at the very moment he realises that cupid has played his part in ensnaring Dido's heart for him. Unfortunately, the playwright's lack of empathy for the female protagonist hampers the development of her character in tragic dimension. Her tragedy is always circumscribed. Her suicide lacks the power to move the audience; it is only a consequential by product of the real locus of the play, which is the trajectory of Aeneas's quest. What really holds the interest and even delights are once again the poetical allusions and visions created by the sensuously vivid visualisation of Marlowe. From the impassioned fantasies of Dido at Aeneas's departure in which she planned to "frame" herself "wings of wax, like Icarus" that she may "soar" into the sun only to have the wings melt over his ships that she may fall into his arms, to wanting "Arion's harp" to summon dolphins to depictions of fantasy gardens, Marlowe charms. The very same garden of Marlowe is one that Rowse terms a "renaissance garden out of book," unlike the Shakespearean English gardens. [13]

> I have an orchard that hath store of plums,
> Brown almonds, services, ripe figs, and dates,
> Dewberries, apples, yellow oranges;
> A garden where are bee-hives full of honey,
> Musk-roses, and a thousand sort of flowers;
> And in the midst doth run a silver stream,
> Where thou shalt see the red-gill'd fishes leap,
> White swans, and many lovely water fowls
>
> (*Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Act IV. sc. v. 4-11.)

[13] ibid.

Rowse makes a valid point when he contrasts Marlowe with Shakespeare and concludes that their imaginations and visualisations have antithetical drives. Shakespeare's "inner mind looked back to the dream of an older England, the pastoral countryside.....the forest of Arden and its folklore.....there is nothing of this in Marlowe: he was not a countryman, but a townsman; his imagery is bookish and intellectual, of walled cities and what one sees from them by night, moon and planets, the jewelled stars in their courses, streaming comets in the firmament, the stellar universe."[14] Marlowe's play by and large tend to be set in urban rather than strictly rural settings, they have more of kings than shepherdess and the one shepherd he does give us is one who becomes a king. The play that more than any other is located within the confines of imagination as well as a city and leaps across the whole universe in its ambition is *Doctor Faustus.* It is thus the nearest in its outlook and imaginative power to *Tamburlaine,* even though chronologically *The Jew of Malta*, was composed before it.

relevance

[14] ibid. p.1

Part IV: "No sin but ignorance"- The Failure of Imagination

I

Faustus alone in the entire Marlovian oeuvre is the only real equal of Tamburlaine. Where Tamburlaine summed up the physical dimensions of the renaissance world by taking recourse to the discourses of cartography, geography, trade and even the mechanics of war, Faustus sums up the intellectual discourses of the renaissance. *Doctor Faustus* is also Marlowe's most audacious attempt to strain the horizons of the individual imagination. Unlike the *Tamburlaine* here the "sole felicity" is not an "earthly crown" but knowledge. The very first scene opens upon a Faustus engaged in recounting the various discourses of knowledge; philosophy, medicine, theology, law; and dismissing them as incomplete and unable to explicate the infiniteness of the world of things to be known. Marlowe's summation is pithy and the breadth of the knowledge displayed in quite extensive. It is presented in a manner that would make it easily and instantly recognisable to the Elizabethan audience. It is believed that it was enacted for the first time on the Elizabethan stage in 1592 by the Lord Admiral's men. Between the success of the tragedy of *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* audience had travelled quite a distance. Until the advent of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine,* the English stage had no tradition of tragedy. The only tragedies had been the dull offerings at the Inns of Court. But between them, Kyd and Marlowe had established the audience's taste for tragedy. When Marlowe writes *Faustus* in 1592, he thus had the beginnings of a tradition;. English Renaissance tragedy "repeatedly portrays the struggle of a remarkable individual against implacable, impersonal forces, a struggle no less impressive for its failure."[1] The traditions Marlowe invoked not only met this criterion but also incorporated the traditions of a far older lineage.

Faustus lends itself most promptly for a reading in the traditions of moralities, tempting the sobriquet of being a dramatisation of faith. In its story, such an assertion holds true. *Faustus* is the story of man who offers his soul to the Devil in exchange for knowledge. In Christian folklore this theme was an often-repeated one, in the moralities the allegorical version of this theme was often dramatised. In the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, this parable like lore suddenly became

[1] Braunmuller. A. R and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama.* Cambridge, University Press: 2003.p.304.

centred on the person of one Johannes Faust, an itinerant magician in Germany, whose history, the German *Faust-Buch* was translated into English in 1592. As a myth the Faustian legend is one of enduring power and its strong hold on the creative imagination can be judged by the fact that it has been visited many times, by many of the most creative minds. The credit, however, for making the Faustian legend the emblem and the siren song of forbidden knowledge belongs strictly to Marlowe. As a stage production, it must have quite a spectacle with demons and angels jostling for elbow room, while the din of hell and the ethereal light of heaven both beckoned Faustus. The stage directions are littered with "thunder and lightning" as a precursor to the appearance of devils. Frequently the good angels hover over Faustus and attempt to recall him into the Christian fold. Equally frequently the devil and his angels tempt Faustus with his particular weakness, knowledge.

When the play begins it perhaps already too late, the chorus states with a sense of finality what Scene One reveals, Faustus embarking on the forbidden and ultimately doomed quest for knowledge. The chorus, before invoking this myth, is at pains to give the audience a thorough biographical sketch of the protagonist. In the process, they also detail both, the plot and the outcome of Faustus's audacious attempt. The imagery the chorus utilises is one that is already familiar within the Marlovian oeuvre, that of Icarus, the pagan precursor of Faustus who dared by mechanical means to rival the power of gods. There are other allusions and echoes that must have resounded with great force in the Elizabethan world; at the outset, the chorus distances the play from tales of marital valour and tales of romance. The play is neither set in "courts of kings," nor does it chronicle "proud, audacious deeds," such as presumably Tamburlaine's. The focus is instead on one solitary individual engaged in the most solitary of struggles.

> And speak for Faustus from his infancy in his infancy.
> Now is he born, of parents base of stock,
> In Germany, within a town called Rhodes.
> At riper years to Wittenberg he went...
> Excelling all; and sweetly can dispute
> In th' heavenly matters of theology.
> Till swol'n with a cunning of a self-conceit,
> His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
> And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow.

Wittenberg would resonate with astounding force in the world of Reformation and Counter-Reformation as the site of Martin Luther's criticism of the church, which spiralled into rebellion and ended with the breaking up of the Catholic Church. Already, the fate of Faustus is outlined. This allows the play to open at the very point when Faustus is about to embark on his fatal fall. Much of the action of the play is set in the study, where the play begins. From Aristotle for logic, Galen for medicine, Justinian for law to Jerome's Bible for divinity, Faustus has mastered all and yet his knowledge like the "thirsting sovereignty" of Tamburlaine seeks newer worlds to master. He turns to the books of necromancy. The good angel who attempts to turn Faustus from this course looses to the blandishments of evil, which encourages him with the promise, "be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,/ Lord and commander of all the elements." (Act I. sc. i)

After having learnt the dark magic from his dead friends Valdes and Cornelius, Faustus summons the spirit Mephistopheles and through his offices enters into a pact with Lucifer himself, his soul for eternity for twenty-four years of service by Mephistopheles. Faustus's motives are in the first instance not only grandiose visions filled with power and wealth, but once again conjure a world that is at the disposal of the imagination, moreover a world that is perhaps, in its capitalist aspirations, seeking to commodity joy itself as something that Faustus hopes to tangibly possess. As the play progresses it charts the hollowness of the bargain, Faustus's triumphant assertion that realm of magic "stretcheth as far doth the mind of man" is proved wrong, until the reach of the human mind is proved unmistakeably finite. Having received his power, Faustus does not, as expected and anticipated by him; embark on scholarly quests that will reveal to him the secrets of the finite and the infinite world. Instead, he is distracted by the vision of the seven deadly sins entertaining him; he travels but only to further expose the emptiness of his bargain. Between the episodes whereby he embarrasses the Pope and impresses the Charles, the German emperor with his conjuring tricks, are interposed subplots that border on the ludicrous. Faustus himself plays tricks on a horse-courser while his servant Wagner is engaged in comic misadventures of his own.

The critical view of these comic episodes is that they are perhaps interpolations. Eminently possible in a text the history of which is mired in even more confusion than is common

with texts from the same time, with two very divergent texts extant, both of which are themselves published years after the play's performance. Certainly, the text has more structural integrity and dramatic force in the shorter version, but such an argument is weakened by the consideration of the tradition revisited with such panache and originality by Marlowe. Faustus in its form and treatment comes closest to the morality tradition. All the ambivalences of that form are fulfilled here more richly than ever before.[2] Unlike the morality version of the life of Man category tradition, *Doctor Faustus*, however, is a genuinely tragic play with a deeply absorbing tragic vision. The tragedy of fall was rendered dramatic by the lack of a predestined course of Christian salvation, which was characteristic of the moralities. The characterisation of Faustus invokes the doctrine of free will. To repent and thereby be saved is always in Faustus's power. However, he lurches from the tragic to the comic to the farcical mode without ever being able to repent. In a sense the Aristotelian flaw of Faustus is that he can never submit entirely his will to the dominion of Christ.

Faustus remains persistently trapped in the finite world of materialism, his aspirations and even his ambitions are targeted towards learning, wealth, and power of the world. His inability to apprehend any reality above a material one is what dooms him. The power of magic too is finally terrestrial; there is no attempt in his practise of magic to reach a higher understanding of himself in metaphysical terms. Having run the gamut form the courts of kings and popes to the stables of an inn, Faustus in a sense has exhausted his world and his ambition. In this exhaustion is perhaps a criticism of material world, which was such an integral part of the renaissance understanding. More importantly, however, Marlowe seems to be "testing the viability of an imagination that seeks to liberate itself from the trap of a fallen history and reassert its dominion over nature."[3] The attempt fails with the damnation of Faustus, and part of the reason for this failure is the fall inherent within Faustus himself. Perpetually pre-occupied with himself, Faustus's tragedy is summed up by a critic cited in Altman as the tragedy of one "who 'hates' learning though he loves 'knowing.'"[4] The "academic imagination" of Faustus is ultimately "bound its own egoism."[5]

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2 Brooke, Nicholas. "Marlowe the Dramatist", Brown John Russell and Harris Bernard (eds.). in *Elizabethan Theatre*. Stratford-Upon-Avon-Studies 9. London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) ltd:1966. p.173.

3 Altman, Joel B. *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.p.375.

4 ibid.p.376.

5 ibid.

It is easy to read the play retrospectively as the ruthless defeat of Faustus's aspirations against the bulwark of Christian morality and doctrine. His aspirations in their humanist origins were entirely pagan in origin, and illustrated the limits that ultimately constrained the humanist quest. Between the optimistic Mirandolan assertion that that God created man "to have what he chooses, to be what he wills," and its dark portrayal in the guise of Faustus is a world of difference, and conversely a different world altogether. The former was written at the dawn on the new age, when a spirit of optimism informed the humanist venture. The latter portrayal comes at the close of the age, when that optimism had encountered harsher challenges, and even floundered perhaps. The distance between the declaration and the test of its viability is also temporal, and time has a power of its own. The most poignant discovery by Faustus, he who laid claim to the power capable of rendering all into his dominion, is the inevitability of time. Faustus is powerless against the relentlessness of time. The stage directions are explicit, "the clock strikes eleven," "the watch strikes," and with stroke Faustus understands at last the enormity of the consequences of his actions. As a last resort he seeks the category of aesthetic, as a last refuge. He has Mephistopheles conjure Helen and lines of unbearable eloquence come forth:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
> 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 those lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.
>
> (*Doctor Faustus.* Act V. sc.i. 97-103.)

There is a certain perverseness of character displayed by Faustus when he locates heaven in the lips of a ghost conjured by necromancy. The same perverseness that renders him unable to repent to the very last, even when he see Christ's blood stream in the firmament. The tragedy is then one entirely of character. Brilliant, foolish, vain, ambitious Faustus damned by his selfhood that forever sought the ephemeral powers over eternal salvation.

Articulated in the portryal of Faustus are the anxieties of a culture and society seeking to contain contrary impulses. The pursuit of materialism within the confines of a hegemonic religious framework. Faustus fails in his attempt spectacularly but in the process gives voice to the longings and aspirations of a peculiarly compelling individualism. His experiences and eventual tragedy are entirely interiorised to an extent hitherto impossible within the morality tradition of which Faustus is perhaps the only possible destination in a world fashioned by the humanist spirit. The only consolation at the end is perhaps "the recognition that the hero has reasserted his or her personal will and identity in the very face of death."[6] However meaningless the quest may have proved and however facile the journey might seem.

II

While Tamburlaine and Faustus are protagonists who in there failure and eventual destruction quantify the imaginative facet of individualism Barabas, *The Jew of Malta* demonstrates the equation of imagination with tangible riches to such an extent that his imagination is an expression of pure greed. When the play opens, it is introduced by a figure of much controversy in the renaissance, Machiavelli. The play itself generates no less controversy. Critics are at a loss to explain the play to their entire satisfaction on a number of grounds. the charge of racism is the most serious one; racist readings of the play are not only possible but were in fact highlighted by the popularity of the play in the Aryan Germany of the Third Reich. Anti-Semitism is rife in the play, all the stereotypes of the jews are invoked and frequently at that. Barabas himself is not shy in both, invoking the stereotype and then living up to it. As a character, he is neither particularly appealing nor redeemed. The moral ambivalence is not restricted to the Jew alone; it invades the play to such an extent that at the end there is no moral yardstick discernible in the landscape. The play has all the hallmarks of popular taste of the audience, the exotic flavour of the oriental world, the material richness of successful capitalism, violence, comedy, religion, and politics.

Structurally it generates confusion, to such an extent that it confounds immediate classification. The first two acts have all the makings of a genuine tragedy, the rich Jew of Malta is

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6 Braunmuller. A. R and Michael Hattaway (ed.).in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge, University Press: 2003.p.309

unfairly denuded of all his wealth by the Christian governor of the island, Ferneze on the grounds of political expediency. Then it degenerates into tricks and counter-tricks, villainy on an unparalleled scale takes over the stage and every one seems to be engaged in nothing save serving back handed turns to each other. There is no moral epicentre and the epicentre of villainy shifts dizzily back and forth between nearly all the characters. The end is farcical in its conclusion. The plot is a simple one, the Turks demand the money owed by the Maltese government to them in tribute and they grant a month's time. Ferenze decides to penalise the Jews in general, but his policies are aimed at the one man he knows to be rich enough/posses the sum, the Jew of Malta, Barabas. The articles of Ferenze's decree are barbaric and the veneer of legality that he tries to wrap them in does not alter the fact that it is brazen robbery.

> First, the tribute money of the Turks shall all be levied amongst the Jews, and each of them to pay one half of his estate.....
> Secondly, he that denies to pay, shall straight become a Christian.....
> Lastly, he that denies this, shall absolutely lose all that he has.
>
> (*The Jew of Malta.* Act I.sc.ii. 71-80.)

Barabas counters with his own schemes that include asking his daughter to pretend to convert and then join the nunnery that is established in his erstwhile house so that she can retrieve his buried treasure and pass it to him. The rest is/series of interwoven consequences and counter-consequences. The stage is by the end bloody with various deaths and resounding with the tales of villainy by Barabas and Turkish slave Ithamore as they try to outdo each other while comparing notes on heinous deeds committed against the Christians. Against the backdrop of the behaviour of the Christians in the play, from the governor to the friar, one is inclined to admit that the two sides are perhaps well matched. No religion leaves the island of Malta with any integrity to its credit. The play therefore is not anti-semitic as it might seem at first glance.

Within the context of Europe, anti-semitism was a well-established tradition and fact of society across the length and breadth of Europe. In 1492, the expulsion of Jews on pain of death or their voluntary conversion from Spain, where a sizeable had been settled for centuries, set in

motion Jewish communities in exile. This had profound consequences on the intellectual life and development of Europe. They disseminated the knowledge of Hebrew and of the Judaic mystical traditions such as Cabala, which decisively influenced the development of Christian Cabala. Many of these expelled Jews rose to position of great power and influence in various courts, especially in Turkey. Culturally however, they were perpetually stigmatised as the anti-thesis of Christians, and on them was visited the metaphorical sin of the death of Christ. They were stereotyped as miserly, rich usurers who meant no good for the Christian community. Their contribution to the economy, which was considerable, was accepted but they never were. In England, the Jews had expelled centuries before and despite discussions on the subject, no Jewish community was legally recognised in England. Upon the characterisation of Barabas all of these stereotypes are visited.

The play is easier to comprehend in a spirit of satire rather than tragedy. And this is the recommendation of Eliot in his essay upon Marlowe, that play be read not as a tragedy or even as a tragedy of blood in the tradition of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* but as a savage, terribly serious farce then the ending of the play becomes intelligible. The ending, which sees Barabas fall into the same cauldron that he had in deceit prepared for Ferenze. The terribly comic aspect of the ending does invoke laughter. The moral of the play is terribly ironic if the last words of Ferenze are taken into consideration:

> So, march away; and let due praise be given,
> Neither to Fate nor Fortune, but to Heaven.
> Compare it with the assertion of Machiavelli in the prologue:
> I count religion but a childish toy,
> And hold there is no sin but ignorance.

If the play is to be considered as a tragedy then it has to be read within the context of these two admonitions. Echoing the figure of Vice from the morality tradition the character of Barabas is invested with the blindness that leads to his downfall. The tragedy cannot lie in his deceptions with those that themselves deceive, neither is this tragedy of sin being punished since other, co-equal sinners are spared. The tragedy of the Jew lies not even in his Semitism, all that affords is the invocation of stereotypes in order to add to the action of the play. Barabas's tragedy

Can this view of the play be reconciled with the reading of the play as a farce?

is one of character; his fatal blind spot is the lack of farsightedness. His policy and behaviour is Machiavellian in the short term, but quite haphazard in the long term. Barabas's obsession with his wealth rivals the obsessions of both Tamburlaine and Faustus. In this obsession, he conversely loses everything, including his life. All his wit, ingenuity, and imagination are used to pursue blindly his immediate objectives, subject to the overarching obsession with his illegally taken wealth.

III

The discourses of politics and kingship are muted and somewhat incidental in the Marlovian oeuvre with the exception of Edward II. Overtly poltical it escapes censorship because it is technically a history or chronicle play, dealing with reign and overthrow of the Edward II, a plantagenet king from the fourteenth century of Britain. A weak ruler he was faced by an open baronial rebellion and was ultimately deposed and replaced by his son, Edward III. The focus of the baronial ire was the undue influence over the king enjoyed by his baseborn companion of choice, Gaveston. The exile and eventual murder of Gaveston did not deter the king from quickly finding another companion and ultimately the barons, joined by Edward II's wife Isabella overthrew him. Marlowe's play is accurate to his source in the outlines of action. Indeed, it is with Marlowe that the genre of the chronicle develops in a serious genre. The vivid characterisations, the deft tackling that conveyed a sense of history and retained dramatic force of action are among the characteristics that Marlowe invests Edward II with, thereby outlining the possibilities of a genre hitherto relegated outside purview of serious drama.

Marlowe develops the tragic action of the play in a structure that shows signs of maturity as compared to his earlier plays. He is also far more sympathetic in his treatment of Edward than he has previously been to nay of his character. As a character Edward is forever lapsing into a world of make believe, which ultimately deserts him. As a monarch, Edward's predilection for masculine companionship at the expense of governance is a crisis. The crisis of homosexual love that loses its sense of perspective and risks everything for its sake is conflated with the power struggle between two opposing factions. The baron's represent the traditional, feudal world and the king is the representative of the divinely sanctioned powers of a monarch. In the figure of the royal favourite, Gaveston, Marlowe explores a very real and contingent fear that of increasing social

No comment on Mortimer?

mobility that threatened to upset the older, established social hierarchy. The barons rebel against the king as much to suppress this violation of the social order as they do in order to have better governance.

Edward remains more involved in his desire for Gaveston, than in attempting to rescue his floundering kingship. The imaginative withdrawal by Edward, displayed consistently by Edward borders on childishness. Marlowe greatest achievement in his portrayal of Edward lies not in the manner in which explores the very confined nature of Edward's imagination but in the sympathy he evokes for Edward even as his actions do not deserve it.

IV

Massacre at Paris, probably Marlowe's last play is also his most topical. It dramatises the actual events of a huge protestant massacre at the hands of the Roman Catholics in Paris in 1572. Coupled with the anti- Roman Catholic sentiments that pervaded Anglican England and the immediacy of the issue, the play is again a successful in its conception. But structurally it seems to be incomplete, the skeletal outline of a play as it were. It conflates the massacre of 1572 with more recent events, the assassinations of the Duke of Guise and Henri III in 1588 and 1589, respectively. With the least amount of poetry the text available is perhaps, a work in progress or perhaps it was an entirely topical play written quickly for the stage, where its topical elements would prove sufficient unto the day. The protagonist is the Duke of Guise, the architect of the massacre in a sense. Rather than the tragedy of an individual, in which sense its scope is rather limited, the play is inclined towards an episodic and topical sensationalism to supply the dramatic force. And that it does with sufficient force to be success on the Elizabethan stage, but it does not expand beyond.

Could have been?

Part V: "The Fame that verse gives"

With only seven dramatic compositions credited to him Marlowe continues to be regarded as the only real dramatist who could have matched, and possibly even bettered Shakespeare. Marlowe died on 30th May, 1593, in a tavern brawl. He was twenty-nine years old. In literary measures, he had just begun to approach the greatness his work had so far hinted at so broadly. If the manner of his death is any indicator of his life then it must have been a fairly busy and interesting one. It includes amongst other achievements the allegations that Marlowe was an atheist, a blasphemer, a homosexual and the speculation that he was a government spy. The seven plays are not consistent in their quality; there are flashes of pure, scintillating genius counter pointed by momentary lapses of consistency. In their generic classifications they are marvellously varied, ranging from tragedies of character to the history plays with a digression in between towards the morality tradition. As a critic Eliot is perhaps correct in his severity, preferring to rate Kyd's dramatic skills above those of Marlowe. Marlowe's pre-eminence thus lies in something else. The first is the magnificence of his poetry, which is amongst the finest ever to grace the English stage. The most complex of ideas are expressed with a spartan elegance that does not hesitate to draw upon all the available resources of language in order to construct its exquisite images. In Marlowe often the sheer strength of his poetic genius upholds the dramatist. The second redeeming virtue is the sheer originality of Marlowe's imagination and conception. In Marlowe's educational curriculum, both at Kings' School, Canterbury and at Corpus Christi in Cambridge lay the rigorous training in classics and the art of rhetoric. In his self-imposed task of translation of the poems of Ovid and Lucan lay the even more rigorous training in the formal structure of poetry. Translation by its nature requires a command if not mastery over both the languages, and translating poetry requires a textured understanding of language and all its nuances. The years of translations proved invaluable in training Marlowe, they honed his skill and the result was the outstanding nature of his poetry, which on more than one occasion glossed over inadequacies of dramatic structure. In the manner and conduct of his life, perhaps, the originality, the verve, the exhilarating sense of possibilities.

With his tragedies, Marlowe makes an outstanding contribution to the genre of tragedy in general and to the English renaissance stage in particular. As it developed the English renaissance tragedy was at once like the Athenian tragedy and at the same time, distinctively, even startlingly different. As one of the earliest practioneers of tragedy on the English stage, Marlowe's influence on subsequent tragedies and the impact on the genre of English tragedy were considerable. With Edward II he transformed the long, rambling epics that traditionally constituted the chronicle plays into contenders for serious and superior tragedy. With protagonists such as Tamburlaine and Faustus, he redefined the subject of tragedy. At the same time, his experiment with forms and traditions also illuminated the possibilities of earlier, exhausted traditions such as the morality genre. By invoking the Vice figure of the mystery-morality tradition in the characterisation of Barabas, The Jew of Malta, he also infused the older material with a new possibility. He was not attempting to revive these older traditions, instead by ensuring continuity with them he helped lay the foundation of a drama that could claim to represent the traditions and aspirations of a nation instead of slavishly imitating the Greco- Roman Classical tradition.

The most emphatic statement of independence made by Marlowe concerning the classical tradition was in discarding the classical unities of time. The Marlovian unity is invariably bound to the figure of the protagonist and is not an externally imposed structure. This could and did lead to structural problems but those were not insurmountable problems as Marlowe demonstrated. This imposed a different, organic structure on the play that was much more suitable for the subject matter Marlowe and the English renaissance stage undertook. The subjects tended to deeply grounded within the discourses of the day, which tended to be contentious, multiple, often contradictory but always threatening at one level. Because Elizabethan England was a moment of radical transitions. England during this period struggled to come to terms with impulses of conservative repressions and subversive tendencies. As a primarily agrarian, rural and in parts feudal society was transformed into an expansionist, capitalist urban economy the social and cultural structures underwent tremendous changes. As a deeply stratified society, England struggled to come to terms with the social mobility as well the other changes wrought by the unprecedented capitalist surge. The art of troubled times tends to be deeply introspective as it struggles to make sense of its own sense of self.

All of Marlowe's protagonists return repeatedly to certain myths and themes. The over arching ambition of Tamburlaine and Faustus, the obsession with wealth that is the beginning and end of Barabas's imaginative desires, the imaginative retreat that becomes increasingly dissonant for Edward, even the power of political necessity outweighing the imaginative pleasures of love for Aeneas; all are representatives deeply embedded within the discourse of Elizabethan England. Even the constant invocation of the category of the aesthetic as both a refuge and possible salvation was the response of a culture in transition. Who at that moment could perceive the discourse of power better than a dramatist? The locus of his profession, the playhouse was at once banished to the margins of the city and at the centre of the royal discourse of power, with its threat of subversion and the lack of containment. Moreover, a dramatist whose upward social mobility; the result of sheer intelligence and presumably hard work, which won him the scholarship to study at Cambridge; notwithstanding Marlowe must forever have been conscious of his origins as the son of man engaged in the tradecraft of making shoes in a society as intensely conscious of social gradations as Tudor England was. Arguably the two most daring and imaginative of his protagonists, Tamburlaine and Faustus are both not nobly born. In Edward II the unease of the baron regarding the social mobility of the lower orders through the favour of the king is a nuanced portrayal. Even more vividly, the character of Gaveston is imbued with the sense of his own power.

The speculation most dear to any admirer of Marlowe is the 'what if,' what if Marlowe had not died and lived instead to fulfil the promises he makes in the brief oeuvre he had time to compose. Would he have rivalled a Shakespeare at the height of his poetic prowess? The Shakespeare who reached the zenith of his genius only after the death of Marlowe because whilst he lived, Marlowe was without dispute the master of the Elizabethan stage and Shakespeare the understudy. While still at Cambridge one of Marlowe's translation was of a poem by Ovid that deals with the enduring value of poetry, in its epigrammatic terseness it sums up:

> Garments do wear, jewels and gold do waste,
> The fame that verse gives doth for ever last.[1]

[1] Rowse, A. L. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography.* London: Macmillan, 1964. p.33.

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