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THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT

SOME ASPECTS OF THE RENAISSANCE AS REFLECTED IN THE WORKS OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

A THESIS

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BY

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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to show that Christopher Marlowe is an exponent of the Renaissance in that one can detect some aspects of that age reflected in his works.

Before considering the personality of Marlowe, the background of the Renaissance will be discussed in general. The characteristics of the age, the people, and the literature of the day are among the important topics to be investigated.

A resume of Marlowe's life is followed with a review of his plays and comments on the dramatist.

Acquainted now with the background of the period and with Christopher Marlowe, the man, and Marlowe, the dramatist, the main problem of the paper is reached. It remains to be seen how his writings are a reflection of the age in which he lived; how his personality and spirit are found in his plays.

It is with sincere gratitude that I express my indebtedness to all who have made this work possible. I am especially grateful to Mother Mary Gerald, O.P., and to all those of my Community who have afforded me the opportunity of attending the graduate school of the University of Detroit. To the Reverend Burke O'Neill, S.J., I extend my appreciation for his kind and generous guidance in the

selection of the subject for this investigation and for his assistance in reading and criticizing the manuscript.

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CHAPTER I

THE RENAISSANCE

With the close of the fifteenth century and in the early years of the sixteenth century a transition took place in England whereby literary, religious, scientific, and governmental barriers of the Middle Ages were cast aside. There was a gradual decay of the concepts of the mediaeval days, and new ideas of classical learning were introduced. "A new age was dawning for England, which was to raise the country to new heights of prosperity."[1] This stirring period was the Renaissance.

Life and thought were enriched with the introduction of many changes and new ideas. With the Renaissance came a marked increase in refinement in living and in letters. Contributing factors to this enrichment in the manner of living and thinking were the advance in economic prosperity, the study of classical literature revealing to the modern world the wealth of ancient thought, and the increasing contact with Continental culture.

There was, then, not only a revival of learning but in every phase of life changes were coming into being. Feudalism was quickly fading into the past and monarchy was

1. H. S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation, p. 46.

strengthened. As a result of the invention of the printing press, education was accessible to a greater number. Voyages of discovery stirred adventurous spirits. The new interest in the ancient classics was aroused by a group called Humanists who endeavored not only to bring about a revival of art, but to place before men an ideal toward which they might strive in developing their minds and bodies. A real concern was felt for the individual. Inventions and scientific discoveries had also revived the creative energy of man, and England was awakening to a new life through the Renaissance.

In his attempt to define the Renaissance, William Henry Hudson suggests that various meanings may be given to the term depending on the point of view adopted by individuals:

> The institutional historian fixes his attention on the birth of a new political consciousness with the decline of the mediaeval idea of the Papacy and the Empire and the spread of the sentiment of nationality throughout Europe. The historian of society is mainly concerned with the birth of new social conditions accompanying the breaking up of the regime of feudalism and chivalry, the growth of commerce, and the beginnings of modern industrialism. The scientist emphasises the rediscovery of nature, the opening up of the world by maritime exploration, the founding of astronomy, anatomy, physiology, medicine, and the establishment of the true scientific method. For the historian of thought the principal interest of the Renaissance lies in the abandonment of the old theological scholasticism and the rise of the spirit of free rational inquiry. To the student of religious evolution, the Renaissance suggests the Reformation; to the lover of art and literature,

> the recovery of the masterpieces of pagan antiquity and the rebirth of the classic world.[2]

Walter Pater defines the Renaissance as "a complex and many sided movement." With this statement most authorities agree. To form a clear and complete conception of the Renaissance, it is necessary to realize that it is not made up of disconnected movements in different paths, but that it is rather one general comprehensive movement revealing itself under various aspects. Too, the Elizabethan temper can be understood only by combining the separate factors into one general attitude.[3]

This new era has been characterized as an era of new quickening impulse, newly awakened activity, an age in which can be found fundamental changes in life and thought. A new intellectual life was dawning which made men aspire for knowledge, aim for achievement, and long for beauty in any aspect.

Formerly the English people of wealth had lived in old, sombre feudal castles. With their new appreciation and love of beauty they sought to live in stately villas modeled upon the Italian style of architecture. Even in their extravagant and elaborate manner of dress may be noted their love of splendour.

2. William Henry Hudson, The Story of the Renaissance, p. 2.

3. Ibid.

Indeed it was an age of enterprise and adventure, an enthusiastic age in which men realized fully the strength of human passions and the marvels of human nature and were filled with the joy of living. They possessed a boundless ambition to know and to do all things and their hearts ached with a longing for the impossible.

"Life drove them, enticed them, challenged them, made them miserable or fearful. In whatever form it took, it stirred them so they could not be still."[4] Their lives were confused and at a high tension. They thrilled at visions of conquest and expansion. "The race had been born again; it felt itself young, and its dominant notes were those of passion and imagination."[5]

The Elizabethans were a reckless, daring, cruel, and quick-tempered people. The sword was drawn at the slightest provocation; life was cheap and murder was all too frequently the result of petty feuds. Nor did they care where they drew the sword. Because they were so impulsive, the deed was accomplished before they had time to realize what had happened.

> Rarely did duellists trouble to seek the privacy of the open fields. The Elizabethans

4. E. C. Dunn, The Literature of Shakespeare's England, p. 15.

5. W. H. Crawshaw, The Making of English Literature, p. 99.

> were not a reticent race. The public streets, a tavern room, St. Paul's Churchyard were places good enough to kill your man; and everywhere a crowd gathered quickly, delighted with the entertainment that mortal combat offered.[6]

Executions and the torturing of victims seemed to delight the restless heart of the Elizabethan who possessed such a violent passion for action and conquest.

In mediaeval days works of literature and art were almost completely lacking in personal touch and individuality. Very little in the poetry or paintings revealed the character of the poet or the artist who had done the work. Tradition and convention had hindered individual genius.[7]

The literature of the Renaissance was characterized by its vital interest in the world and man and by its freedom in dealing with these subjects. It is a literature significant for its desire of fresh experience and its absorbing delight in life and beauty. No longer are impulses held in check; ideas and desires are given full rein, and man uses his imagination freely. Individualism is one of the predominant qualities.

The development of a secular literature was among the chief products of the Renaissance spirit. Influenced by theology and scholastic metaphysics, the literature of the Middle Ages was, generally speaking, religious. The period

6. John Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe: The Man in His Time, p. 164.

7. Hudson, op. cit., p. 3.

was not entirely lacking in secular literature but so little of the writings were unaffected by the religious effort that, on a whole, the literature might be considered non-secular. Now its complete secularisation meant that it had the claim to absolute freedom in dealing with its two great interests, the world and man.[8]

As has been mentioned previously, a sense of individuality developed in close association with the spread of the secular spirit during the Renaissance. The anonymous literature of the Middle Ages vanished, and in the writings of the day the individual factor is evident. The liberty which writers enjoyed in personal expression, rather than the actual originality of the works, produced a literature characterized by its freshness and vitality.[9]

"Whatever else this Renaissance literature is, it is certainly a literature of the lay mind, of free inquiry, of awakened sensibilities, of intellectual emancipation and expansion."[10] An intense vigor is evident in the writings of the Elizabethans, who filled with the delight of living, had new confidence in the ability of man to master the universe. Their powerful imaginations, their desires, longings, and impulses are reflected in the literature of the day.

8. Hudson, op. cit., p. 221.
9. Ibid, pp. 227-28.
10. Ibid, p. 220.

> They looked forward not backward. They blazed fresh trails and opened up new channels of literary expression which subsequent generations turned into broad, beaten highways. Like pioneers, too, they fumbled and blundered; but their irrepressible exuberance and fertility of mind carried them through to amazing success. In the end they created a great literature worthy of a great people.[11]

Towards the close of the sixteenth century the best effects of the Renaissance were felt in England. When Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, she had tremendous difficulties to overcome. It took a number of years to set her kingdom in order and to quiet political and religious factions; the government and the laws were sadly in need of reformation. By 1580 the nation had been restored to a national unity and harmony, and as a result, the great Elizabethan literature came into being. Formerly the literary activity was left to the upper classes and the courts. Those who associated with Elizabeth in public and private life imbibed the Renaissance culture. However, after 1580, the rising power and prosperity of the middle classes aided literary production. The education, which to this time had been provided only for the sons of the nobles, was now made available to the children of the tradesmen. The new Greek learning, classical history and philosophy took the place of mediaeval studies. No longer was the young man at Oxford and Cambridge expected to study for Holy Orders. He

11. J. B. Black, The Reign of Elizabeth, p. 240.

was permitted to make his choice for a secular cultural education instead of the theological training.[12]

Upon the completion of their education these well-educated sons of commoners made an effort to support themselves by the use of their pens. All kinds of literature was produced but their most valuable contribution was to the theatre--the Elizabethan drama.[13]

In the poetical and dramatic works of the period, in particular, the spirit of the Renaissance is manifest. In these two types there is an outburst of soaring aspirations after power, beauty, and knowledge.

With the background of the period in mind, it is fitting that the life of Marlowe and his works be examined here to judge how he measures up to the characteristics of the Renaissance period.

12. Robert Whitney Bolwell, The Renaissance, pp. xx-xxi.

13. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORKS OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

Into this stirring era Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury on or about February 6, 1564. He was the second child of John and Catherine Marlowe, and the only male child to survive infancy. Jane, Anne, Dorothy, and Margaret were his sisters and childhood companions.

Though the family lived a humble life, it was not an uncomfortable home which John Marlowe provided for his wife and five children. He was, by profession, a shoemaker of some repute at Canterbury, and, therefore, was able to provide his family with the ordinary things of everyday life. This opinion is substantiated by John Bakeless who says, "The household of the second John Marlowe, father of the dramatist, Christopher Marlowe, was an ordinary tradesman's home, no better supplied with worldly goods than a hundred others, but certainly no worse. It was the house of a respectable freeman plying a respectable craft."[1]

That John Marlowe was cognizant of the fact that education plays an essential part in a person's life was evident, for Christopher had the requisite knowledge to secure one of the fifty scholarships awarded to worthy

1. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 23.

students who might otherwise be unable to attend King's School. How Christopher received this early education is a disputed question. Some writers are of the opinion that his father was his teacher, while others maintain that a tutor was employed. Be that as it may, Christopher was well instructed and entered King's School, the outstanding institution at Canterbury, at the age of fourteen.[2]

The lad must have acquired a good reputation in the first years of his formal school life, for, at sixteen, he was awarded one of Archbishop Parker's scholarships at Cambridge. This was a coveted prize and could only be attained by students in good standing.[3]

What young Marlowe's ambitions were at this time is difficult to determine. However, since he had a good rating at King's School, it is probable that the rebellious spirit which manifested itself in later years was not in evidence during the school days. In fact, the general opinion seemed to be that he would follow plans laid out by his teachers and parents and follow the life of a clergyman.

He attended the University and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1584. Although he began to work towards his Master's degree at once, both the Buttery Book and the Scholarship Accounts record repeated absences, sometimes

2. John Ingram, Christopher Marlowe and His Associates, p. 32.

3. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 43.

for months at a time. The University was skeptical about granting a degree, but through the direct intervention of the Privy Council, pressure was brought to bear upon the authorities; and they had the chance of issuing the degree or forfeiting their heads. The resolution of the august assembly bluntly ordered the University to award the degree whether it wanted to or not, and ask no questions.[4]

> Whether Marlowe's service to the government was merely as some sort of confidential agent to the Low Countries or as a spy upon Catholic plots in England or France, whether this service ceased in 1587 or continued intermittently in the after years, whether it was connected in some way with his death at the hand of Ingram Frizer in 1593--these are all matters on which at present there is little or no real evidence and much diverse conjecture.[5]

Where he was, or what he was doing was not disclosed. He was in the service of the Queen and that was sufficient.

Consequently, Marlowe, in possession of a Master's degree left Cambridge for London in quest of fame. All thoughts of Holy Orders had long since been abandoned, and he was ready to embark on a literary career. He was well known in London, and numbered among his friends and associates were people from various walks of life. Such names as Raleigh, the Queen's favorite; Harriot, devoted man of science; virtuous old George Chapman; the Walsinghams, re-

4. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 80.

5. Paul H. Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character, p. 22.

spectable country gentry, influential in government, were coupled with Frizer, the swindler; Poley, the spy; Skeres, the cut-purse and gaol-bird. Indeed, Marlowe's acquaintances ranged up and down the scale of social, moral, and intellectual life.[6]

That he was finding a place in the literary world, in spite of the strange company he kept, is indicated by John Ingram when he says that Marlowe "was apparently working with and certainly deeply admired by Shakespeare, and respected or envied by his literary contemporaries."[7]

> Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
> And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough,
> That sometimes grew within this learned man.
>
> If these lines were written by Marlowe they have the ring of unconscious prophecy. Among the playwrights of his day he was noted for his learning which was reverenced even beyond the circle of his friends. Apollo's laurel-bough that grew within him seemed destined to put forth many a new and brave shoot. But within about a year Marlowe lay dead in Deptford, and for him, as for his Faustus, the branch was cut for ever.[8]

The circumstances surrounding his death are still very mysterious. What he was doing at Deptford Tavern on May 30, 1593, with Ingram Frizer, Robert Poley, and Nicholas Skeres,

6. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 220.

7. Ingram, op. cit., p. vii ff.

8. F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study, p. 218.

men of not very high repute, remains unknown. The official records state that Frizer killed Marlowe in self-defense. There was a dispute regarding the payment of the bill for food and drink. It is believed that Marlowe first took Frizer's dagger and Frizer "in his own defence & for the saving of his own life, then & there struggled with the said Christopher Morley to get back from him his dagger aforesaid; in which affray the same Ingram could not get away from the said Christopher Morley."[9] Ingram, with the turn of Marlowe's hand, inflicted the wound which caused Marlowe's death.

Many and varied have been the tales told of Marlowe's death and of the events leading to his tragic end. In 1925 Professor John Leslie Hotson revealed the truth for he had discovered copies of the coroner's inquest, Frizer's pardon, and the chancery writ. With the publication of these papers, he eradicated many of the errors of the years regarding the writer's unfortunate end.

Three years later The Assassination of Christopher Marlowe was published by Dr. S. A. Tannenbaum. Very convincing arguments are presented in this work to the effect that Marlowe was the victim of a deliberate assassination. There were those who felt they would be safer with Marlowe out of the way and hence it is believed that his murder

9. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 229.

was cleverly planned and executed.[10]

Christopher Marlowe's brief but full literary career was at a close. "Within six years he had charted the seas for Shakespeare, and then--death."[11]

He had begun his writing before he left Cambridge, it is thought, and one would probably not be amiss in supposing that Marlowe journeyed toward London after graduation with a few plays ready for the stage.

> In talent, temperament, and tragic end, he was, in a sense, the Edgar Allan Poe of Elizabethan England. A poet of far greater poetic and tragic power than any of his predecessors or contemporaries (except, of course, the young Shakespeare), in his scepticism and curiosity a child of the Renaissance, but lacking Bacon's scientific balance and cool intellect, with a profound imagination of tragic hue, he came into the theatre from Cambridge University like a moody young Titan, not knowing quite how to use his own strength, straining in vain at the hands of primitive theatrical form which held him down--and yet, as it proved, straining with such force that Shakespeare, his successor, could break them and free the captive drama into Life.[12]

To Thomas Kyd, England's first real playwright, belongs the credit of having set Elizabethan tragedy on its feet. In 1587 with the production of Tamburlaine, the drama "leapt from toddling childhood into ebullient boyhood."[13]

10. E. H. C. Oliphant, Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists, p. 31.

11. Ingram, op. cit., p. 102.

12. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 6.

13. Walter Prichard Eaton, The Drama in English, p. 89.

Christopher Marlowe ushered in an entirely new period in drama by his expert use of blank verse "which charmed and electrified the Elizabethans like marvellous music."[14]

"No sooner had his imagination given birth to the first part of Tamburlaine than he became the idol of the town."[15]

The diction in Tamburlaine has been classed as superb. Another virtue of the drama is that for the first time in English tragedy a hero is created who makes a permanent impression on the imagination. The powerful Tamburlaine holds a place forever in the memory of anyone who has seen or read the play. In the opinion of F. S. Boas "he is the incarnation of the spirit of aspiration--the spirit of Marlowe, and the spirit of the Elizabethan age."[16]

> It is within the limits of truth to say that the course of Elizabethan drama, the greatest part of the greatest period of the greatest literature of the world, was determined more by Tamburlaine than by any other single cause.[17]

With his first work, Tamburlaine, the dramatist met with applause from everywhere which confirmed him in his dramatic ambition. "The work that made Marlowe famous, famous not for an age but for all time was Tamburlaine."[18]

14. Boas, op. cit., p. 228.

15. J. A. Symonds, Shakespeare's Predecessors, p. 583.

16. Boas, op. cit., p. 232.

17. William Lyon Phelps, Essays in Books, p. 227.

18. John Archer Gee, "Marlowe's Tastes, Interests, and Character." Master's Thesis, Yale University Library, p. 55.

Tamburlaine is the story of a cruel Scythian peasant who titled himself the scourge of God and a terror to the world. One mighty monarch after another bowed before him in humble submission and with his conquering sword, he scourged kingdoms. His one desire was to rule the world, to be the conqueror of all kingdoms and all men. When his beloved Zenocrate was nearing death he rebelled, and, with his armies surrounding him, sought to conquer death itself. Eastern rulers were taken into captivity, forced to drag his chariot into battle, and obey his every command. His terrible cruelty led these once powerful leaders to dash their heads against the cages in which they were imprisoned that they might no longer witness the scornful frown of Tamburlaine. Weakened at last by physical ills but still maintaining his rebellious spirit, he bade his two remaining sons go forth as world conquerors. In them he had tried to instill his thirst for power. He taught them from childhood to endure wounds and sufferings. The one son, thought to be cowardly, was killed by his father. As death approached, even the mighty Tamburlaine was conquered by a mightier power than himself.

In summing up the merits of Tamburlaine, Mr. Bakeless concludes that it is an important play because it introduces not only an entirely new era in drama but also a skillful use of blank verse. It arouses its audience sufficiently to remain popular for over a century. Some of

the finest lyric passages ever written are found therein. Finally, it marks the beginning of a drama that is literate and popular.[19]

Soon after Tamburlaine, probably produced in 1588 or 1589, appeared his second play, The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus. This drama illustrates very well the superstition and defiant rationalism so characteristic of the Renaissance. Because of its theme the play was received favorably in Marlowe's time. Even today the character of Faustus in his dramatic soul-tortures holds an appeal for many an audience.[20]

Only scanty recognition, however, has been given to the true worth of this play. It surpasses the earlier plays of Shakespeare and is not too inferior to Marlowe's Edward II. Its true merits may be found in technical skill, in interest of plot, and masterly handling.[21]

Of Dr. Faustus Goethe has said, "How greatly it is all planned!" It has been called a careless string of episodes by certain historians of the drama. Mr. Eaton is inclined to agree with Goethe. He feels that the play was written carefully and cleverly to please Elizabethan London, that it has earned for Kit Marlowe his title to immortality,

19. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 109.

20. Eaton, op. cit., p. 91.

21. "Christopher Marlowe's Faustus," Temple Bar, XCVIII(1893), 515.

and that it made possible much of the great progress in English drama in the ensuing decades.[22]

> It told its story well enough for its day, perhaps, and it employed the limited resources of the Elizabethan stage and the great resources of Marlowe's poetic gift to throw the real emphasis not on mere story, but on the deeper places of drama, the human conscience, and it won through to a triumphant unity by the magic of its dramatic verse, the evocative power of its language. It marked progress by proving that great drama has a higher mission than story telling. To regard Marlowe's 'stately line' as mere rhetoric, mere poetry (whatever that means) is nonsense. It was rhetoric, poetry consciously and skillfully used to depict human character, and to create an emotional reaction in an audience.[23]

The fascinating legend of the man who in pursuit of universal knowledge sold his soul to the devil that he might know all things and do all things through the power of magic formed the setting for The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus. For twenty-four years the hero saw his every wish fulfilled and his every desire gratified, according to the agreement made with Lucifer when he signed his soul away with his own blood. Several times he was led very near to repentance but one of Lucifer's followers, Mephistophiles, took care that his master did not lose claim on the soul for which he had bargained. At the end of the allotted time Lucifer snatched into hell forever the soul of Faustus.

In 1589 or 1590 Marlowe produced the play which was

22. Eaton, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

23. Ibid.

later to serve as an inspiration for Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice.

The fierce selfishness and greed of Barabas in The Jew of Malta forced the Jew to such extremes that he perpetrated crime after crime and dismissed his evil deeds as though they were merely unpleasant dreams to be forgotten. The Emperor of Turkey sent messengers to the Governor of Malta demanding that these people make payment of the tribute which had been neglected for ten years. The Governor, unable to supply the money, called upon Barabas and others to help him. The greedy Jew refused to give half of his wealth; therefore all of his property was confiscated and his home was turned over to the nuns for living quarters. Abigail, his daughter, pretending to seek admittance to the religious life, rescued the bags of money which the Jew had left hidden in the house. Two suitors, one the son of the Governor, unfortunately fell in love with the Jew's daughter. Barabas planned a quarrel between the two young men which ended in death for both of them. Abigail, learning of her father's wickedness, reentered the convent. In a spirit of vengeance and to protect himself from what Abigail might reveal of his crimes, the Jew sent poisoned food to the convent. All the nuns died, but not before Abigail confessed her share in her father's crime. The friars were next disposed of with the help of Barabas' cunning slave. After drinking too much one evening, the servant revealed the

murder of the two young men, the poisoning of the nuns, and the true story of the friars' death. Barabas, in disguise, managed to poison those to whom the secret had been told; but they did not die until the Jew had been exposed. After taking a sleeping potion, Barabas was cast off for dead and thus managed his escape. Through more treachery he planned to overthrow the entire city, but he was thrown into the trap he had devised for another.

Edward II has been classified as the first great chronicle play in the language and, though it is not free from defects, it has scarcely been surpassed. For the first time Marlowe portrays a real human, characterized by weakness and unmanliness. He has forgotten his hero of gigantic proportions and boundless aspirations.[24]

It is necessary to know Edward II in order to realize what a loss English drama suffered because of the early death of Marlowe. His former plays were filled with rant; Edward II is free from this bombastic language. Only through the study of his chronicle play can one really understand that he had reached the threshold of his greatness when his life was ended.[25]

Edward the Second, Marlowe's last completed drama, was probably produced in 1591. A great contrast is noted in the hero of this play. Edward was not the proud man seek-

24. Oliphant, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

25. Ibid.

ing to gain power and conquer all nations. He did not strive for universal knowledge. Somewhat of a weakling, Edward was unable to assert his own rights. Like Tamburlaine, Faustus, and the Jew, however, Edward was ruined by one outstanding passion. He sacrificed his life and his throne for the passion of friendship.

Edward the Second was very much attached to Piers Gaveston. Gaveston had been sent from the Court previously but now that the old King was dead, he happily returned at Edward's pressing invitation. The nobles objected; and the Bishop of Coventry, being spokesman for the group, was thrown into the Tower. His possessions were taken from him and given to the friend of the King. Meantime, King Edward and Queen Isabel were drifting apart owing to Edward's great affection for his friend. Finally, Edward was forced to exile Gaveston. Because Edward became so sorrowful after Gaveston's departure, Queen Isabel pleaded with the nobles and the troublesome Gaveston was recalled. More troubles arose and Gaveston was seized by the barons and put to death. Shortly after when the barons thought all difficulties were at an end, the King found in Young Spenser a new favorite. This time, Mortimer, who was very influential with the Queen, caused a rebellion which led to the King's downfall. He was forced to give up his crown, was imprisoned in Berkley Castle where he endured horrible sufferings, and was eventually murdered. His young son,

Edward, realized now that Mortimer and his mother had conspired to kill his father. Assuming his rights as heir to the throne, he sentenced the Queen to the Tower and Mortimer lost his head.

As has been stated in the above resumes of Marlowe's outstanding dramas, he included among his subjects the passions of love and hate, ideals of beauty, the spirit of adventure, and the greatness and littleness of human life. His greatness lies not in the fact that he had the power and knowledge to deal with these subjects, but that he was able to interest his fellowmen in them.[26]

His characters were living and breathing realities. One can feel the fierce exaltation experienced by Tamburlaine in his various conquests; the insatiable thirst and longing for knowledge of his Faustus; the terrible greed of Barabas.[27]

Although Marlowe's works are filled with the spirit of rebellion, some of his best poetry is found in lines expressing finer emotions. Mephistophilis, experiencing the great pain of everlasting banishment from God, speaks eloquently of his deprivation:[28]

> Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it:
> Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God,

26. Arthur Compton-Rickett, "Kit Marlowe Pioneer," Living Age, CCLXXXV(May 8, 1915), 349.

27. Ibid.

28. Kocher, op. cit., pp. 115-16.

And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strikes a terror to my fainting soul.[29]

Nor is this passage less eloquent:

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place; but where we are is hell,
And where hell is, there must we ever be.[30]

The blank verse of preceding poems was not to Marlowe's liking. He varied the rhythmic pauses, altered the accents thus establishing his "mighty line" which was a major contribution to the drama. Despite the fact that Marlowe's "mighty line" has been subjected to so much ridicule and parody and has oftentimes been clumsily imitated, it gave to the English stage the "heady music of the five marching iambs." There the pentameter line remained as long as plays were written in verse. Under Shakespeare it was modified and sweetened. Beaumont and Fletcher reduced it almost to the level of conversational English. Be that as it may, it remains forever in the poetry written in books for those who honor the memory of Kit Marlowe and his "mighty line."[31]

29. Faustus, iii, 61-67.

30. Ibid, v, 105-107.

31. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 108.

> It is not too much to say that this noblest of all English verse forms is essentially the creation of Christopher Marlowe. Shakespeare was to expand its range, but in this, as in so much else, Marlowe was the master from whom Shakespeare learned the art.[32]

Though Marlowe wrote other plays than those summarized above, these are his best and the only ones attributed to him alone. Two others of inferior worth are The Massacre of Paris and Dido, Queen of Carthage. Among his works are also his unfinished poem of "Hero and Leander," translations from Ovid and Lucan, and "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," that sweet song which opens with the well known words:

Come live with me and be my love.

It has been said that during his lifetime Marlowe's poetry was very popular. The country people sang his songs as they worked at their daily chores. Shortly after the publication of "Hero and Leander" the watermen on the Thames could be heard chanting the famous lines, thus making their work at the oars a bit lighter.[33]

His reputation as an outstanding poet seems to have been established with his lovely "Hero and Leander." True, it is only a fragment, but in it can be found Marlowe's love of beauty and his poetic capabilities. It has been called

32. Thomas Marc Parrot and Robert Hamilton Ball, A Short View of Elizabethan Drama, p. 91.

33. "Marlowe," The Spectator, LXVII(September 19, 1891), 382.

one of the most exquisite pieces in English poetry because of its delightful harmony of versification and its spirit of warm and passionate susceptibility. By some it may be criticized for its sensuality, but that sensuality is so refined, so natural, so attractive, as to look almost like innocence.[34]

J. B. Black is of the opinion that Marlowe had reached the full scope of his genius before his death. He could have added nothing to the quality of his work though, it is thought, he may have increased its quantity.[35]

Thus Marlowe produced in a few years the work of a lifetime. "He was a man of intense but limited vision, a forerunner with a message preceding the true incarnation of dramatic power--Shakespeare."[36]

To his statement that "without Marlowe there could hardly have been a Shakespeare" Sidney Dark adds that Shakespeare himself never wrote anything finer than the two familiar lines of Marlowe which come from the mouth of Faustus when he addresses Helen of Troy.[37]

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?[38]

34. "Christopher Marlowe," Fraser's Magazine," XLVII (February, 1853), 222.

35. Black, op. cit., p. 251.

36. Ibid.

37. Sidney Dark, The Story of the Renaissance, p. 101.

38. Faustus, xiii, 92-93.

In tribute to Marlowe, W. L. Courtney states that it is reasonable to suppose that the "Muses' Darling" would have rivalled Shakespeare had fate not determined otherwise.[39]

Had Marlowe lived to give all of which he was capable, Shakespeare would have met his rival. As it stands, Marlowe must be recognized as the creator of the English drama, and Shakespeare as the supreme perfecter of the same.

Mr. Oliphant regards it rather stupid to compare Shakespeare's achievements with Marlowe's. One must remember that Shakespeare lived until he was fifty-two; Marlowe died at twenty-nine. If Shakespeare had died at such an early age he would have had to his credit The Comedy of Errors and The Gentlemen of Verona. The merit of these two productions would not have accorded him a place with the author of Faustus and Edward II.[40]

Granted that Shakespeare possessed a mind of greater capacity for development, this truth still remains that no extraordinary development occurred in his career comparable to the great achievement accomplished by Marlowe in the few years that elapsed between Tamburlaine and the staging of Edward II.[41]

39. W. L. Courtney, "Christopher Marlowe," Fortnightly Review, LXXXIV(October, 1905), 691.

40. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 33.

41. Ibid.

> The author of Tamburlaine was an enthusiastic boy with a classical education and the gift of poetic genius; the author of Edward II was an accomplished dramatist, familiar with his medium--a remarkable development in such a short time as five or six years.[42]

Many dramatic critics claim that Marlowe had no power of characterization. While it is true that Marlowe made no real study of humanity until the production of Edward II, Shakespeare at twenty-nine showed no greater power of characterization.[43]

Though not much credit is given to him for characterization, Marlowe must be complimented for the creation of heroic figures, splendid individuals. Because the dramatic struggle took place within the soul of his heroes, and not against external forces, he must have made some advance in character portrayal.

Though he may not be outstanding in effective plotting, structural form, and this power of characterization, Mr. Eaton believes that he has contributed a great deal to English drama through the high poetic sincerity and insight which he applied to the dialogue of his plays. Thus the thoughts and emotions of his major characters are revealed with subtlety, eloquence, and moving power. "He made poetry not an adornment and interlude of drama, but an integral element of it; he made dialogue alive and humming with over-

42. Gee, op. cit., p. 36.

43. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 34.

tones, a weapon for the dissection of the complicated human heart."[44]

Without a doubt the influence of the "mighty line" is felt throughout English literature until the time of Milton and even John Keats; it has a revival in the admiring Swinburne, "who gloried in everything Elizabethan and above all Elizabethans in Marlowe, to whom he devoted his first published work as an undergraduate at Oxford; and with whom his last published work, left in manuscript at his death, still dealt, after a lifetime of eulogy and devotion."[45]

> His actual achievement may be judged imperfect, unequal, immature, and limited. Yet nothing lower than the highest rank can be claimed for one who did so much, in a space of time so short, and under conditions so unfavourable. What Shakespeare would have been without Marlowe, how his far more puissant hand and wonderworking brain would have moulded English drama without Marlowe, cannot even be surmised. What alone is obvious to every student is that Shakespeare deigned from the first to tread in Marlowe's footsteps, that Shakespeare at the last completed and developed to the utmost that national embryo of art which Marlowe drew forth from the womb of darkness, anarchy, and incoherence.[46]

For those who may feel the praise bestowed upon Christopher Marlowe excessive, it has been suggested that a more careful reading follow the first perusal of his plays. No one can claim Marlowe unworthy of the place he holds in English literature if he notes the lines in Tam-

44. Eaton, op. cit., p. 90.

45. Bakeless, op. cit, p. 298.

46. Symonds, op. cit., p. 605.

burlaine which give such a vivid description of Tamburlaine's personal appearance; the passage which contains his exquisite address to Helen of Troy, and the famous soliloquy of Faustus in Doctor Faustus; the grandeur of his lines in The Jew of Malta comparable to the style of Shakespeare. Edward II is outstanding as the most complete and artistic of Marlowe's dramatic works.[47]

Fittingly may it be said of Christopher Marlowe that "in literature he survives as a towering figure, playing John the Baptist to the Immortal Bard."[48]

47. "Marlowe," The Spectator, LV(June 11, 1887), 802.

48. George W. Cronyn, Mermaid Tavern, Foreword.

CHAPTER III

EXPONENT OF THE RENAISSANCE

As literature oftentimes reflects the life of the people of a particular epoch, so Christopher Marlowe's personality is woven into the lines of his dramas.

J. M. Butler has classed Marlowe a lyrist, which type of poet he describes as an egotist. Such an author would be the last one to create other personalities, if nothing else but pure egotism were to hinder him. His lines must be a self-revelation.[1] The lyrist reveals the feelings of his heart, as it were, in poetic form. True, not all of Marlowe's writings may be considered lyrical poems in the strict sense of the word, but upon reading his dramas, a collection of self-revealing lyric scenes is discovered.[2]

His plays are marked as his because they give some of his particular ideas and passions. Marlowe stands out as one of the most highly subjective playwrights of his age.[3]

Marlowe used for his hero the one struggling character, a personality aspiring for power of some kind. In that his

1. J. M. Butler, "Christopher Marlowe: His Personality in His Plays." Master's Thesis, University of Virginia Library, p. 2.

2. Ibid.

3. Kocher, op. cit., p. 4.

heroes craved illimitable power in varied forms, they were all essentially the same type of character.

In these characters can be seen the struggling youth of Canterbury dissatisfied with the plans made for him by teachers and school directors that he should become a humble clergyman. Such a lowly life was not for him. He aspired to the heights, seeking to live in such a way that he might mingle with the important personages of his time and so gain the renown which he desired.

While enjoying the friendship and companionship of those who moved about in the best of Elizabethan society, Christopher Marlowe was ever mindful of his humble origin. It was natural, then, that he put some of his own spirit into the makeup of his heroes. The same ambition that overpowered him and the bitterness which he felt because of his poverty and want of social power rage in the breasts of Faustus, Gaveston, Tamburlaine, and Barabas.[4] Tamburlaine, the Scythian peasant, conquered kingdoms; Faustus, the quiet scholar, had at his command the devil for twenty-four years; the Jew became a ruler of a Christian island.[5] Like his heroes, Marlowe fought and conquered.

The soliloquy of the Duke of Guise bespeaks the mind of Christopher Marlowe in his aspirations for greater things:

4. "Christopher Marlowe," Appleton's Journal, VI (September 23, 1871), 350.

5. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 7.

What glory is there in a common good,
That hanges for every peasant to atchiue?
That like I best that flyes beyond my reach.
Set me to scale the high Peramides,
And thereon set the Diadem of Fraunce,
Ile either rend it with my nayles to naught,
Or mount the top with my aspiring winges,[6]
Although my downfall be the deepest hell.

"That spirit is Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas, Guise--and Christopher Marlowe, gentleman, of London--all in one."[7]

The introductory lines of the prologue to Tamburlaine are a key to his feelings as he began his career. Just as his characters were so entirely different from any literary creations in the past, so would his style of writing be distinguished. He would free himself:

From iygging vaines of riming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keepes in pay.[8]

The fiery youth would impart his spirit of exuberance and vigor to men through the medium of blank verse.

According to Bakeless, Marlowe often conversed with his friend, Harriot, on scientific topics. This interest in science is plain enough in the scene between Faustus and Mephistophiles who argue at length about divine astrology.[9] The planets with their movements and number are discussed and all of Faustus' questions are answered. Thus

6. Massacre at Paris, 97-106.
7. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 110.
8. Tamburlaine, 1-3.
9. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 58.

the mind of Faustus is really the mind of Christopher Marlowe manifesting his interest in matters scientific.

That Marlowe had made many enemies and particularly after his success with the drama is a well known fact. Perhaps, he was disliked for personal characteristics, but there were those who were envious of the young playwright's triumphs.

Frequently he was involved in quarrels and at one time was participant in a duel which ended in the death of young William Bradley who, disliking Marlowe intensely, was determined to bring him down a peg. Though Thomas Watson came to Marlowe's assistance and was really the murderer of Bradley, the fiery dramatist was the instigator of the trouble and probably took the guilt of the crime to himself. In Tamburlaine he may be referring to this incident when these words were spoken:

I know sir, what it is to kil a man.[10]

As Faustus in the closing scene of Doctor Faustus talks with his fellow-scholars so might Marlowe have expressed his regrets for the life he had chosen, through the words of the despairing Faustus. Remembering those with whom he had gone to school and realizing that they were now living peaceful lives as clergymen in rural English villages, Marlowe may have experienced a momentary

10. Tamburlaine, IV, i, 31.

yearning for what might have been when Faustus speaks these lines: "Ah my sweete chamber-fellow! had I liued with thee, then had I liued still, but now I die eternally."[11]

The indecisiveness of Faustus regarding his profession may be indicative of the mental conflict endured by Marlowe as he chose his literary career. In his perusal of the various branches of academic knowledge, Faustus seems to exemplify Marlowe in his attempt to justify his abandonment of Holy Orders. Finally, like Marlowe, Faustus bids divinity adieu and turns his back upon the God revealed in the religion of the day. Perhaps the hell to which Faustus is condemned symbolizes the spiritual anguish of the poet.[12]

Faustus asks of Mephistophiles the solution to those questions which always recurred to the academic mind. He inquires about the nature and place of hell and shows an interest in the evil spirits. These queries are akin to the discussions held by Marlowe with Raleigh and his friends.[13]

The ever-restless striving on the part of Tamburlaine to attain the impossible is but an expression of the poet's own aspirations and desires. Is not self-revelation made in such words as these

11. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 135.

12. Parrot and Ball, op. cit., p. 84.

13. G. B. Harrison, Elizabethan Plays and Players, p. 74.

> Shall we wish for aught,
> The world affords in greatest novelty
> And rest attemptless, faint and destitute?[14]

Thus the turbulent and fiery spirit of Marlowe is seen in his plays. The aspiring heroes, filled with boundless ambitions, are a reflection of his personality. Embittered with their lot in life, they are ever striving for the unattainable. Though they do for a short time enjoy the glory and fame they have sought for so long, they lose their power by some unforeseen circumstance.

> Both in Tamburlaine and The Jew--and later in Dr. Faustus--he brooded over the theme of power. In Tamburlaine the power came by conquest. The Jew was all-powerful because he knew how to win and to use wealth, and also because he was not confined by the moral scruples which hindered, if they did not confine, other men. Faustus sought power in universal knowledge. As the record of his life shows there is very much of Marlowe in all these plays.[15]

Since there is so much of Marlowe in his dramas and since he is representative of his age, it should not be a difficult task to find many aspects of the Renaissance reflected in his works. He is titled "the typical Elizabethan" by Stauffer.[16]

14. Ingram, op. cit., p. 108.

15. Harrison, op. cit., p. 115.

16. R. M. Stauffer, The Progress of Drama through the Centuries, p. 159.

> We hear in his plays the voice of Elizabethan England; he represents its overweening pride, the enthusiasm of discovery and conquest, the shout of success, the sky-piercing ambition which dared God out of heaven, the limitless aspirations of passion and of intellect, and the inflexible power of an abnormally developed will.[17]

Marlowe paints one of the best pictures of the enthusiasm and the joy of living of his age. The spirit and the quickened pulse of the time are reflected most impressively in his works.[18]

In Tamburlaine, Marlowe embodied in his hero a spirit which no one had worked with before his time, and few were to try after him. It was the "two-fold spirit of the Renaissance, its lust for power which found 'sole felicity' in the 'sweet fruition of an earthly crown,' and its worship of a beauty unattainable even by the 'highest reaches' of man's art."[19]

This lust for power is dominant in all of Marlowe's writings. Tamburlaine aspired through military and political power to be a conqueror. The spirit of restlessness and the constant striving for the unattainable so characteristic of the age is contained in these lines:

17. Boas, op. cit., p. 252.

18. Gee, op. cit., p. 12.

19. Parrot and Ball, op. cit., p. 82.

> 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.[20]

Once again Tamburlaine expresses his views on kingship and his worship of beauty:

> A god is not so glorious as a king.
> I think the pleasures they enjoy in heaven,
> Cannot compare with kingly joys on earth.--
> To wear a crown, enchased with pearl and gold,
> Whose virtues carry with it life and death;
> To ask and have; command and be obeyed;
> When looks breed love; with looks to give the prize;
> Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes![21]

The following single line from Tamburlaine describes very well the craving for power in the aspiring minds of the Elizabethans:

> Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms.[22]

They were obsessed with the vision of conquest and expansion. With the discovery of America and the various voyages of exploration, their determination to conquer and expand became all the stronger. Hence, Tamburlaine, in his many trips to the battlefield, was representative of the men of the period who went on these exploratory ventures for the purpose of gaining new lands and power.

20. Tamburlaine, II, vii, 26-31.

21. Ibid, II, v, 58-65.

22. Ibid, II, i, 20.

Faustus, in his desire to know and do all things, is a genuine reincarnation of the Renaissance spirit. He might well exemplify the scholars of the day with their new interest in learning. Having finished their studies at the University, they made their way to London in quest of fame and fortune. For long years, they, in their wildest imaginings, had dreamed of the splendour of London and the opportunities which awaited them there. They saw the fulfillment of those dreams in the path stretched before them. Just as Faustus lost his soul in the acquisition of earthly knowledge so did these young men, trifling with matters of faith, probably lose eternal happiness for the sake of temporary gratification of their material aspirations.

That they might possess all that they desired, they possibly uttered words very similar to those of Faustus when he surrendered his soul to Lucifer:

> bear these tidings to great Lucifer:
> Seeing Faustus has incurred eternal death
> By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity,
> Say, he surrenders up to him his soul,
> So he will spare him four-and-twenty years,
> Letting him live in all voluptousness:
> Having thee ever to attend to me,
> To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
> To tell me whatsoever I demand,
> To slay mine enemies, and to aid my friends,
> And always be obedient to my will.[23]

Faustus has been termed a sombre and grotesque product

23. Faustus, iii, 88-98.

of the Middle Ages but in his interpretation of the legend, Marlowe has made it a modern work of art with the background of the Renaissance in its imaginative splendour. The personality of Faustus is filled with the intensity of life and the audacious spirit of the era.[24]

Even the vocabulary of the German Faust is recognizable as that of a Cambridge doctor:

> Though Marlowe's Faustus pretends to be a German, he is actually a Cambridge doctor through and through. Not only does he quote the books that Marlowe studied as a Cambridge scholar; his very speech bewrayeth him; for he uses the vocabulary peculiar to the University. Faustus is 'grac't with Doctors name;' Cambridge degrees were granted by the passage of a 'grace' and were recorded in 'a Grace Book.' Faustus says that he had 'commencde' in divinity; that is the Cambridge word for taking a new degree.[25]

Typical of Marlowe are the words of the Bad Angel in Faustus. Faustus is speaking with the Good and Bad Angels. He is admonished to repentance by the Good Angel with the promise that contrition, prayer, and repentance will bring him to heaven. The Bad Angel immediately gives his opinion of these means to salvation:

> Rather illusions, fruits of lunacy,
> That make them foolish that do use them most.

> What the Bad Angel does is to treat prayer and repentance as phenomena of abnormal psychology

24. Symonds, op. cit., p. 632.

25. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 57.

> having no connection with religious truth. These things, he says, are the inventions of brainsick men, who are likely to make others as brainsick as themselves. A rationalistic explanation like this was entirely characteristic of Marlowe, and was not unknown to other Elizabethans.[26]

A true son of the Renaissance, Marlowe was in love with life and external beauty. This love of sensuous beauty, which characterized the Italian Renaissance, is found in Tamburlaine's passion for Zenocrate, upon whose shining face

> Beauty, mother to the Muses, sits
> And comments volumes with her ivory pen.[27]

Supreme expression is given to the passion for beauty in the appearance of Helen to Faustus:

> O, thou art fairer than the evening air
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.[28]

To distract the mind of Faustus from God, Helen is brought before him, which action fits in with the Elizabethan belief that the world of the senses, whereby beauty must enter in, belonged to the devil. Therefore, if one loved God, it was necessary to reject the world.[29] Hence,

26. Kocher, op. cit., p. 114.

27. Tamburlaine, V, ii, 81-82.

28. Faustus, xiii, 104-105.

29. Paul H. Kocher, "The Development of Marlowe's Character," Philological Quarterly, XVII(October, 1938), 338.

Faustus, in acknowledging the great beauty of Helen, accepts the world and its standards, and scorns God.

The man of the Renaissance does this very thing in his acceptance of the material things of this world and in his rejection of matters spiritual. Marlowe, being a typical gentleman of the Renaissance, failed to consider the production of beauty as coming from the hand of God. It has been said that had he looked beyond the creations of beauty to the Creator, he would have been a very religious man.[30] But, Marlowe, true to the age in which he lived, and engrossed in his passion for sensuous beauty, could not find the Creator of all beauty.

Marlowe's frequent references to the classics is another characteristic of the Renaissance which is traced in his writings.

In the closing lines of Faustus, the despairing scholar in his ecstasy of terror cries out

O lente, lente curite nocti equi

as he pleads with the night to pass slowly for he knows midnight begins damnation for him.[31]

There is more taken from Ovid, Marlowe's favorite Latin poet, ".... even the phrase 'pampered jades of Asia'

30. Kocher, op. cit., p. 338.

31. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 136.

had probably been borrowed from Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid, with its 'pampered jades of Thrace.'"[32]

With the ardour of a Renaissance humanist, he devoted much of his time at Cambridge to the study of the classics. The visions of beauty and heroic grandeur which he met in the radiant figures of antiquity--Helen and Hero, Paris and Leander, Achilles and Alexander remained a part of him throughout his life.[33] These visions were embodied in his dazzling and brilliant expressions of beauty.

Faustus when overcome with the beauty and radiance of Helen exclaims:

> I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
> Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sacked:
> And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
> And wear thy colours on my plumed crest:
> Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
> And then return to Helen for a kiss.
> Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
> Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
> When he appeared to hapless Semele:
> More lovely than the monarch of the sky
> In wanton Arethusa's azured arms:[34]

In the soliloquy in which he expresses his love for Zenocrate, Tamburlaine delivers an exquisite apostrophe to Beauty:

> What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?

32. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 136.

33. Frederick S. Boas, An Introduction to Tudor Drama, p. 131.

34. Faustus, xiv, 98-109.

> If all the pens that ever poets held
> Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
> And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
> Their minds, and muses on admired themes;
> If all the heavenly quintessence they still
> From their immortal flowers of poesy,
> Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
> The highest reaches of a human wit;
> If these had made one poem's period,
> And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
> Yet should there hover in their restless heads
> One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
> Which into words no virtue can digest.[35]

Love of splendour and magnificence is displayed in the admiration of the Jew for his precious gems as he gazes at the "bags of fiery opals, sapphires."

The imagery with which Marlowe adorns his allusions to dawn and to sunset is also characteristic of this age. His Tamburlaine contains many metaphors of which the Elizabethans never grew tired. The lines following are a good exemplification of Marlowe's descriptive powers.[36]

> The horses that guide the golden eye of heaven,
> And blow the morning from their nostrils,
> Making their fiery gait above the clouds.[37]

Marlowe's love for splendour is manifest in his Faustus who wishes to "fill the publike schooles with silk," and in his declaration that Roman Catholicism is the best religion "because the service of god is performed with more ceremonies." Marlowe's rebellious attitude and possibly the

35. Tamburlaine, V, i, 160-74.

36. Ellen Crofts, History of English Literature, p. 176.

37. Tamburlaine, IV, iv, 7-9.

opposition which the students at Cambridge must have offered to the rules which had been made regarding the dress of the day at the University are felt in these lines. The young man desiring to follow the fashion of the day must have resented the deprivation of his silks and richly ornamented garments and must have appeared openly antagonistic in his manner toward University authorities who tried to enforce modest and simple dress at school.

Again, reference is made to the clothes of the day, perhaps, when the chieftains are bid by Tamburlaine to dress in "scarlet robes" for his wedding. On great occasions, the doctors of the University wore scarlet, but at other times wore black silk.

The youth filled with the intensity of life and the audacious spirit of the era must have found it very difficult to obey the regulations of the University, and Marlowe no doubt speaks in his plays the feelings of those who with him possessed the love for finery typical of the Renaissance.

The various passages which have been quoted throughout this paper illustrate his adoration of beauty and the joy he experienced with the magnificence and splendour of the time.

> His work is not dead. The "thousand ships" passage, the death scenes in Doctor Faustus and Edward the Second, the lament for Zenocrate, the passage on the poets in Tamburlaine, the jewelled verse of "Hero and Leander," a single lyric, these are the Marlowe that mankind will know forever. In the mighty line--preserved and developed by

> other, greater poets, notably by Shakespeare, by many another Elizabethan, by that last, lost, strayed Elizabethan, John Keats--wherever beauty, the mother of the muses, is adored and the human spirit still climbs restlessly, there will be Marlowe.[38]

In the plays which came from Marlowe's pen, he combined wild rant--savage, bombastious, bloody-stuff, with beauty. This is not to be wondered at if one gazes in retrospection at his childhood days at Canterbury. He stored away in his memory the pomp and pageantry of Elizabeth's procession which had passed near his home when she had visited Canterbury in 1573. He had, likewise, witnessed some of the horrible penalties meted out for even trivial crimes. Since hangings and violent punishments were not uncommon in Canterbury, it is feasible to surmise that these impressions lingered in the subconscious mind of Marlowe from his youth until they finally found expression in his works.[39]

Some of the violent and cruel incidents in Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta disclose the extravagant and uncontrolled temperament of the Elizabethans.

Tamburlaine's chariot is drawn by captive monarchs who are fattened on raw meat and drink pails of muscadel. Former rulers dash out their brains against the cages in which they have been imprisoned. In his mighty battles, kingdoms are overrun; and to satisfy a whim cities are burned. Caly-

38. Bakeless, op. cit., p. 12.

39. Ibid, p. 36.

pas, the son of Tamburlaine, is slain by his father because he seemed to lack the sturdiness and courage to conquer the world after his father's fashion. The Scythian conqueror rips the flesh from his own arm to point out to his sons the endurance they must possess.

The violence and horror of these scenes depict the characteristics of those who took pleasure in witnessing the executions of the day and the punishments inflicted on those who had violated even trivial laws. Tamburlaine, satisfying his whim in destroying the city by fire, may be taken for another Queen Elizabeth who suffered many to lose their heads because they had done something in opposition to her wishes. Those who wished to remain in her favor were careful to fulfill her every wish.

In the plotting of the death of the Christians, the Jew is the victim of his own viciousness and falls into the cauldron of boiling lead which he had prepared for others. His cleverness in doing away with those who would in any way hinder his success brings one back to the Court of Elizabeth where constant plotting and intrigues helped to remove those who might prove troublesome.

To them, in their carefree and extravagant moods, life was cheap. Those who might prove a detriment to the Court and its operations were quickly sentenced to death. Individuals who were offended but slightly were impulsive in their use of the dagger.

This spirit is carried over into Marlowe's plays. Tamburlaine subjected persons interfering in any degree with his power to the most cruel and humiliating punishments and he did not hesitate to kill.

The Jew of Malta, as has been mentioned previously, committed the most foul crimes to satisfy self and his longings for wealth. Scarcely had one victim breathed his last and he was ready for the next.

Edward II is mercilessly tortured and finally murdered. Might not these barons represent those who kept Queen Elizabeth informed.

The unfortunate attachment which Edward felt for Piers Gaveston in Edward II can be traced back to the Elizabethan concept of friendship. In order to understand how this passion of friendship could cause the downfall of King Edward, it is necessary to look at it through the eyes of the Elizabethan. Frequently, friends were looked upon with more regard than wives or other members of the family. In those days, friendship was a terrible passion which elevated and degraded like other passions. As kings had been ruined by wine and by women, so it was possible to be ruined by a friend in the sixteenth century.[40] Certainly, all of Edward's troubles arise from his friendship for Gaveston. For him he abdicates, suffers horrible punish-

40. F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study, p. 249.

ment, and finally gives his life.

Marlowe, who moved about in the best circles of Elizabethan society, was possibly witness to many downfalls resulting from this passion. Thus he was able to portray in his drama so vividly the terrible consequences of this passion for friendship as friendship was regarded in the days of Elizabeth. Just as Tamburlaine, Faustus, and the Jew of Malta were possessed of passions which eventually led to their downfall, so Edward II was dominated by an attachment which ruined him.

The following passage contains the lines spoken by the Earl of Mortimer who is so true to the Elizabethan spirit even in death:[41]

> Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
> There is a point, to which when men aspire,
> They tumble headlong down: that point I touched,
> And seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
> Why should I grieve at my declining fall?--
> Farewell, fair queen; weep not for Mortimer,
> That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
> Goes to discover countries yet unknown.[42]

Marlowe, undoubtedly, embodied in his works many of his opinions that he could not otherwise express. He was an outspoken young man and a freethinker, but like the others of his time had to guard his tongue or lose his head.

41. Charles Norman, The Muses' Darling: The Life of Christopher Marlowe, p. 177.

42. Edward II, V, vii, 102-10.

The opinions of his dramatic characters most likely were the views of Marlowe. He could not have expressed in any other way his denials, criticisms, and condemnations of the dogmas and practices of the day without incurring the penalty of the Court. It is firmly believed, however, that one can perceive these opinions in the speech of his heroes.

Since there are so many aspects of the Renaissance reflected in the works of Marlowe, he truly exemplifies the period in which he lived. Further, since his writings, his life, and personality are linked so closely with the daring and vigorous days of the revival, he is rightly called an exponent of the Renaissance.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to point out some aspects of the Renaissance as reflected in the works of Christopher Marlowe.

From the historical background of the period it was learned that the Renaissance was a transition which took place in Europe beginning in the fourteenth century. This transition was felt in England most particularly at the close of the fifteenth century and in the early years of the sixteenth century. The barriers of the Middle Ages which affected government, religion, science, and literature were thrown aside. Feudalism was gradually abolished; a greater freedom was given in the practice of religion; a renewed interest in science and the classics was established.

This was a stirring period in which man affected by the discoveries, inventions, humanism, and adventurous spirit of the day knew no rest. England was awakening to a new life. Men were filled with an ambition that knew no bounds and they desired to know and do all things.

Their impulsiveness led them to commit crimes for which they could not account. So quickly was the dagger thrust and for such slight offenses that the number of

deaths resulting from feuds was very high.

Executions and violent punishments for even trivial crimes were common during this age. Witnesses to these killings and penalties seemed to take as much delight in these scenes of violence as they did in watching the frequent duels of the day.

The literature, particularly, poetry and drama, reflects the spirit of the Renaissance. All the longings, aspirations, and desires for power and the unattainable are manifest in the writings of the time.

Christopher Marlowe was born of humble parents but, like a true son of the Renaissance, aspired from his school days to reach the heights of fame. His parents had planned that he should follow the life of a simple clergyman but Christopher would have none of this. He dreamed of greater things and after completing his education at Cambridge left for London where he might begin his literary career.

Up to this time the rebellious spirit of Marlowe had not been manifested. That he was involved in some business with the government is known by the fact that the University authorities had been ordered to give him his degree of Master of Arts. Owing to his absence, they hesitated in bestowing the degree upon Marlowe, but to no avail. They received their instructions from the Privy Council, and had no choice but to award the degree.

He did not go to London as a stranger for through his

connections at the Court, he had made some influential friends. Although he numbered among his acquaintances Sir Walter Raleigh, the Walsinghams, Chapman, and other men of note, he also had dealings with men of disreputable character.

His time in London was brief. Six years from the time he left the University he was slain by Ingram Frizer. What he was doing on that day in May in the Deptford Tavern with three men of not very high repute remains a mystery. Before Professor Hotson's investigation in 1925, many and varied were the accounts of his death. Tannenbaum, a few years later, published The Assassination of Christopher Marlowe in which he expresses the opinion that Marlowe was put to death because he knew too much. The information he had gathered while in the service of the government was against him; his murder was carefully planned and cleverly done if this happens to be the actual motive of the killing. At least, it is now known that Ingram Frizer was the slayer, and a few other disputed points have been clarified.

> But 'whatever record leap to light', and however the man Christopher Marlowe be now or hereafter judged, his genius, within less than thirty stormy years, lit up the English theatre with a novel and fiery splendour which, after the dramatic revolutions of well-nigh three centuries and a half has suffered no shadow of eclipse.[1]

1. F. S. Boas, An Introduction to Tudor Drama, p. 150.

Tamburlaine brought Marlowe the fame that he was seeking and established his reputation as the leading playwright of the time. The hero, with a quenchless thirst for power, seeks to conquer all nations. He is victorious until death proves to be an unconquerable foe. Those who come under Tamburlaine's power are subjected to the most cruel torments and humiliations. He is determined in his ambition to reach his goal at any cost.

To possess universal knowledge is the aim of Doctor Faustus. It has been said that this play represents the genius and sensuality of Marlowe and the Renaissance in its passion for knowledge and in its delight in the joy of living.

An avaricious and cruel Jew portrays the lust for wealth and vengeance in The Jew of Malta. The crimes that he perpetrates are filled with the intrigues and cruel planning of the people of the dramatist's time to realize their ambitions.

Edward II is a very different type of play but resembles all the others in that it portrays a passion which is the downfall of the King. As the other heroes possessed passions of ambition, knowledge, and greed, so Edward is guilty of a passion which leads to his ruin. It is the passion of friendship. So great is his friendship for his friend that he gives up his throne, his wife, and even his life for Gaveston. This idea is in keeping with the

Elizabethan concept of friendship. It was not an uncommon thing in the Elizabethan days for a man to value his friend more than his wife or the members of his own family.

The Elizabethan spirit is evident even in the death of Mortimer whose last words reveal his satisfaction at having reached the high point to which he aspired. He does not grieve in his declining fall now, but goes forth in scorn from this world, likening himself to a traveller in search of countries yet unknown.

Marlowe has written other works but these four dramas contain the spirit of his time more than the others. Then, too, they are written solely by Marlowe. The Massacre of Paris and Dido, Queen of Carthage are not entirely his. "Hero and Leander" is the beautiful fragment of a poem in which some of his very loveliest expressions of and tributes to beauty are found.

In Marlowe's characters can be seen the youth of Canterbury struggling to free himself from his humble origin and aspiring to fame and glory. This reaching out for power, wealth, knowledge, and beauty on the part of Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Faustus resembles Marlowe in his fiery spirit setting out for London in search of renown.

With the success that he enjoyed with the production of Tamburlaine came the acquisition of many enemies. There were those who disliked him for his own personal traits and others who were envious of his triumphs in writing for the stage.

Like any other Elizabethan, he was frequently involved in quarrels. At one time he took part in a duel with William Bradley who disliked him intensely. Bradley was stabbed by Thomas Watson who had come to Marlowe's assistance and both Watson and Marlowe were held for a short time for the murder. Though the young dramatist did not inflict the fatal wound, he was the instigator of the whole scene; and it may be this incident to which he refers in Tamburlaine:

I know sir, what it is to kil a man.

He may be expressing regret for the life he has chosen through the voice of Faustus who speaks despairingly at the close of his life to his fellow scholars. Realizing that he has lost his soul, Faustus tells his companions that had he lived with them, he might still have life for many years.

The mental conflict that Marlowe may have experienced in choosing his profession may be given expression in the lines of Faustus as he ponders over the various branches of learning.

Faustus' interest in black magic as a means to gain all knowledge and his questions regarding hell and the evil spirits, perhaps, resembled the queries of those who were faltering in their religious beliefs. It is said, too, that discussions on hell and the devil were common when Marlowe, Raleigh, and his friends gathered together.

The personality of Marlowe is felt, indeed, moving

through his plays. The constant restless striving for the unattainable is found both in his life and in his plays.

During his lifetime he experienced alike the joys and woes of the day. He has been called the typical Elizabethan, and rightly so, for there is so much of the spirit and enthusiasm of the time reflected in his writings.

Upon examination of his plays this cannot be doubted; moreover, Mr. Boas confirms this opinion when he states that the voice of Elizabethan England can be heard in Marlowe's dramas. He represents the overweening pride, the joy of living, the spirit of conquest and expansion, that ambition which drove men to seek illimitable power in all things.[2]

As has been previously quoted, the Renaissance has been characterized by a two-fold spirit: its lust for power and its worship of a beauty unattainable by man in his most serious endeavors.

Marlowe, a true representative of the Renaissance, embodies in his heroes this lust for power and the adoration of sensuous beauty.

Tamburlaine shouts out his ambition to conquer all kingdoms and in his famous soliloquy, containing his declaration of love for Zenocrate, he reveals his attraction for

2. F. S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study, p. 252.

external beauty. In his desire for tyrannical and unrestrained power, he spares no one. He lives to conquer, to possess power and dominion over all people and lands.

With the renewed interest in learning many young men, eager to obtain their degrees and be on their way to London, flocked to the University. Like the Faustus of Marlowe's play who gave his soul for the acquisition of universal knowledge, many of these young men in satisfying their aspirations for material pleasures probably forfeited their souls.

When Tamburlaine speaks of his great love for Zenocrate, he includes in his soliloquy his great admiration of sensuous beauty. Faustus, at the appearance of Helen, is overcome by her great physical attractions. Tamburlaine and Faustus possess the attitude of men of the Renaissance regarding beauty, that beauty which appealed to the senses. The pagan passion for beauty in which they admired a dazzling and brilliant external beauty is felt in all of Marlowe's works.

With the new era came a revival of the classics. At Cambridge Marlowe spent many hours in studying the classics. As a result many allusions are made in his works to the classics. Hence, in Marlowe is found one more characteristic of the Renaissance.

True Elizabethans, the students of Cambridge were lovers of the finery typical of the era. The school directors had laid down rigid rules governing the dress of the

students. Faustus, in the rebellious attitude of Marlowe, intends to "fill the publike schooles with silk" when he is granted the power to do all things through magic.

The reckless, daring, violent, extravagant, and bombastic actions of the time are alluded to in all the dramas. The extremes to which Tamburlaine carries his punishments and the manner in which he so easily puts others to death is, indeed, characteristic of the Elizabethans.

The treachery of the Jew in executing his cruel plans brings out the daring and violent behavior of the people of the Renaissance. It was a dangerous age in which people lived in peril of their lives. They were quick to use the dagger and killed at the slightest provocation.

The Jew, in his greed for wealth and in a spirit of vengeance, heaped one daring crime upon another. He was impulsive and reckless, acting without any forethought. He knew what he wanted; consequently, any one who stood in his way would quickly be put out of existence.

The tortures to which Edward II is subjected remind one of the sufferings endured by the prisoners in the Tower.

Another aspect of the Renaissance is pointed out in the friendship of Edward for Piers Gaveston. Elizabethan friendship could become a passion in those days as treacherous and degrading as the passion for power. Through his attachment for Gaveston, Edward lost his throne and life.

Thus Marlowe is thought to have given free rein to

his opinions in his dramas. Since his views would naturally concern the age in which he lived, these opinions are closely connected with the spirit of the Renaissance. He could easily put into the mouths of his aspiring heroes those beliefs and thoughts which he would hesitate to publish in any other form for fear of losing his life.

> The Renaissance was an age of the "New Learning, an age of adventure, an age of criticism, an age of laughter, an age of reaction and rejection, of destruction and reconstruction, of glory for princes and of suffering for the common people.[3]

On reading Marlowe's plays one finds among his subjects the passions of love and hate, ideals of beauty, the spirit of adventure, an admiration for the greatness and glory of human life, and a reflection of the cruelty of the age.

His works are filled with aspects of the Renaissance and from the few examples quoted throughout this paper, one can readily find exemplified the characteristics of the era. If these dramas were not known to a reader as belonging to Elizabethan literature, it would not be a difficult task to classify them as such since they are a manifestation of that stirring epoch in which humanity was ever aspiring for power and beauty. Justly may we call Christopher Marlowe an exponent of the Renaissance for in his works are exemplified the characteristics of that stirring era.

3. Dark, op. cit., p. 14.

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