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INDIVIDUALISM AS REFLECTED IN MARLOWE'S
LIFE AND WORKS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter | Page |
|--|---------|
| I. The Trend to Individualism | 1 |
| II. Marlowe the Man. | 10 |
| III. Part I. | |
| The Distinctive Nature of Individualism in Marlowe's Plays. | — 16 |
| Part II. | |
| The Scope of Marlowe's Individualism. . . | 24 |
| Conclusion | 32 |
| Bibliography | 35 |

CHAPTER I.

The Trend to Individualism.

It has commonly been asserted that the thought of the sixteenth century was dominated by "individualism". Frequent mention of this aspect of learning occurs in various discussions of the Renaissance. From a cursory examination of representative sources, one gets such general statements as the following: "The Renaissance was the protest of individualism against authority in intellectual and social aspects of life. . . The essential feature of the Renaissance was individualism."¹ The historian, Cross, sets forth practically the same view when he states that the Renaissance was a renewal of interest in this life, and that with "humanism" as the new ideal, men were impelled by an "irresistible impulse to assert their individualism".² Pancoast and Shelly also credit individualism as being the dominant feature of the Renaissance: "In the true spirit of the Renaissance . . . (writers were) interested in life as life, and in men because of their humanity."³ Osgood accounts for the interest in humanism on the basis that the so-called humanists viewed the ancients as a group

¹ Monroe, A Brief Course in the History of Education, p. 160.

² Cross, A History of England and Greater Britain, p. 303.

³ Pancoast and Shelly, First Book in English Literature, p. 173.

of great individualists. He also states that the Renaissance writers were absorbed in their particular concepts "of the importance of the individual man".⁴ Moody and Lovett elaborate on this importance of man: "The individual man of the Renaissance made an effort to free himself from institutions, . . . to assert his right to live, to think and to express himself as he pleased."⁵

Mackenzie attributed the rise of individualism to the new science. There is "no real individuality in men who misunderstand and are afraid of externals." But Renaissance scientists were doing much to find out and establish new truths to bring about an understanding of phenomena strange to them. He continues by saying that a "mastery of nature is coexistent with the mastery of self".⁶ Thus it was that as the science advanced, man advanced in an understanding of himself. To become an individualist, he must first comprehend and conquer those forces which limit or bind him. Through this self-realization, he is enabled to bend the forces of nature to his own use. When man succeeds in establishing his identity as an individual, he is free to think, to act, and to live as he chooses. He takes his happiness into his own hands, so to speak, and tries to achieve the

⁴ Osgood, The Voice of England, p. 132.

⁵ Moody and Lovett, History of English Literature, p. 60.

⁶ Mackenzie, Evolution of Literature, pp. 406, 402.

maximum development of himself. This we call individualism.

Professor Cross sums up the complacent, stereotyped groove of life into which medieval man had been placed:

"The individual was bound by or absorbed into one or more great systems, outside of which his thoughts and actions had no play. His theology and philosophy were fettered by the traditions of Schoolmen. His religious life was comprehended in the universal Church under the headship of the Pope. If a monk, he was bound by the rules of his order; if he tilled the soil, he was enchained by the feudal system; if an artisan, his industrial activity was cramped by the gild organization. The dominant art--church building--was a collective, not an individual art."⁷

It must be remembered that the concern of medieval man had not been primarily with earthly life, but with God and the church. The chief value to be placed on his earthly life was that it was a preparation for the hereafter.

To become impatient with and wish to break away from authority, and live his life relatively free from external restraint is characteristic of man. The assertion of freedom from authority culminated in a philosophy which we call individualism. The rise of individualism was given the impetus it needed by the "revival of learning" in England.

Among the first of the forces which tended to give

⁷ Cross, A History of England and Greater Britain, p. 303

impetus to the new mode of thinking was the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. This incident resulted in the westward movement of a number of Greek scholars, whose learning spread eventually to England, thus giving us the "revival of learning" in England. The new knowledge transferred to Englishmen was the huge mass of learning that had accumulated from the time of the Greeks as far back as the fourth and fifth centuries. The underlying principle of the ancients' achievements was individualism. This individualism was transferred to England in the bulk of classical learning. This classical learning included speculations about the nature of the universe and what was known about the mathematical sciences, astronomy, medicine, and the arts. The popularity of this new learning was intensified by the introduction of printing in England in 1476. Numerous copies of uniform, printed books containing much of the new learning appeared on the market, and at fairly reasonable prices, making the new knowledge accessible to all. In 1496 at Oxford, John Colet announced lectures in Greek on the New Testament, thus introducing humanism into the universities. Twelve years later the first humanistic lower school was established. Within a few years similar schools sprang up in various places. Literacy became much more common as a result of the influence of printing and the rise of popular education.

This renewal of interest in Greek literature revealed how the ancients had lived, what their chief interests had been, how they had coped with the problems of life, and how they had reached practical conclusions as a result of their own thinking and experiences.

With the decline of the religious influence, Englishmen turned their thoughts toward the world in which they were living. It was a most interesting and changing world. Magellan had proved that the world was round, instead of square as had been thought. New interest in the physical world stimulated further exploration and produced the new art of map-making. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 gave England naval supremacy, making possible her commercial supremacy. New markets were established by the voyagers on their trips over the world. Tradesmen organized to promote industries, and the commercial promoters often needed capital in excess of their private holdings. This need gave rise to the practice of lending money for interest. The Catholic church objected to the taking of money as profit when no work was involved. But the Jews, who had no such scruple, became noted for building fortunes from the commercial exploitation of the Christian, who came to hate and envy the Jew. Conflicts between the Christians and Jews added turmoil to the changing economic conditions. New commercial exploits led to individual,

as well as to organized, initiative in money-making. The availability of luxuries not known before spurred fortune-seekers to increase their efforts. Fortunes were easily made and often as easily lost. Unfavorable weather conditions often caused the ships to miscarry, and frequently the trade ships fell into the hands of pirates. The financial instability accompanying the economic advances resulted in insecurity.

The chaos of the economic order was equaled by the complete turnover in the conception of the universe and man's relation to it. For twelve centuries men had subscribed to the theory advanced by Ptolemy, only to have that theory upset by a new one, put forth by Copernicus in 1543. The new theory had become relatively certain by the end of the century, after the scientific arguments of Galileo and Kepler. The Greeks had taught that the earth was the center of the universe and had ascribed to the heavenly signs many false influences over man, whose life they believed was planned and ruled by certain astral influences. Man was of central importance in this cosmological set-up. With the advancement of the new Copernican theory, which established that the earth was simply one of a number of planets all of which revolved around the sun, man came to see that the former significance he attached to himself was an exaggeration of his true station. This conflict of the new with the

old theory led man to look within himself in an endeavor to establish his identity. He began to interpret his life apart from astrological influences and to view it in the light of the new science. It occurred to him that he perhaps was able to guide and control his own life, and this is what he attempted.

In the field of medical science, equally startling discoveries were made. The entire system of medieval medicine had rested upon the teaching of Galen with his complicated theory of the humours. Curry gives the following account of the humours:

"There are four elements or simple bodies in creation, earth, fire, air, and water, which are thought to possess certain 'qualities'; earth is cold and dry; fire, hot and dry; air, hot and moist; and water, cold and moist. Corresponding with the four elementary qualities are the four bodily humours, namely, melancholia, cholera, phlegm, and blood, generated in the brain, heart, liver, and stomach. And arising from the compounding of these humours in the body come the four complexions, or temperaments of men, viz., the melancholic, the choleric, the phlegmatic, and the sanguine. The melancholic man is cold and dry, after the nature of earth; the choleric man is hot and dry, after the nature of fire; the phlegmatic man is cold and moist, after the nature of water; and the sanguine man is hot and moist, after the nature of air. In health there is a just proportion of qualities or humours mingled together in the human body; in sickness there is an excess of one or more qualities, according as the distemper is simple or compound."⁸

From this account we see that man's makeup was intricate.

⁸ Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, p. 123.

The theory of cures and remedies was equally complicated and depended largely upon the position of the Zodiacal signs.

In the early sixteenth century, Paracelsus, a Swiss physician, advanced a theory of medicine which denied the Galenic theory of the humours. The doctrine of humours had explained that in nature for each deficiency there was an excess, and for each ailment, a natural remedy. Drugs were unknown until Paracelsus introduced the use of laudannum to ease pain. Paracelsus and his followers continued to investigate the functionings of the human body and to advance new theories which further upset the old doctrine of the humours. The Galenic doctrine of the humours was upset and the ancient pseudo-science began to be displaced by scientific proof.

✓ [No doubt, Renaissance man found himself living in a chaotic time, a time which exploded practically all the existing beliefs. But with the advance of science, new knowledge supplanted the old, and man endeavored to adjust his life accordingly. His intellectual, economic, geographical, and social horizons had widened to an almost unbelievable degree. The complacent, stereotyped groove of living, characteristic of the Middle Ages, had given way to a new spirit, a new attitude toward life. Man took an active and alert interest in himself. He no longer was content to be dominated by imposed systems and authority,

but had the desire to investigate new fields and to conquer all that which lay before him and within him. This attitude is the essence of individualism.

W. L. Ustick brings together much of the concern with man's position in society. He points to the Stoic tradition as one of the observable sources of the Renaissance concept of individualism. Epictetus, who best represents the Stoic tradition, taught that it is a mark of vulgar baseness to believe that good and ill come to man from external events. This premise is the basis of the Renaissance concept which emphasizes "the power of the individual to control, within limits, his own destiny, or at all events his own response to his surroundings".⁹ Epictetan philosophy further taught that "He therefore that will be free, must neither desire nor dislike anything that is in the power of others to dispose of."¹⁰ The application of such a concept would lead to self-development as an end in itself. In other words, self-development to a high degree was necessary to maintain one's self against the world. This was a common attitude of the sixteenth century.

⁹ W. Lee Ustick, "Changing ideals of aristocratic character and conduct in seventeenth-century England", MP., XXX (1932-33), 149.

¹⁰ Epictetus, trans., by John Healy, (1610), pp. 24-25.

CHAPTER II.

Marlowe the Man.

Among the great individualists of the Renaissance was Christopher Marlowe. Both his life and his works reveal his individualism.

Recently John Bakeless established facts concerning Marlowe's life which indicate plainly that he asserted freedom in thought and action. In his relationship with society and the law, and in his education and religion, Marlowe evidences individualism.

In his own career, Marlowe defied social stratification. Son to a shoemaker, he broke the degree of society into which he was born and rose to "Christopher Marlowe, Gentleman", well-known in London for poems and plays. The belief in social stratification in the Renaissance is indicated by Shakespeare in Troilus and Cressida in the speech of Ulysses who theorizes on the conduct of Achilles, then sulking in his tent while disorder prevails in the Grecian army:

The specialty of rule hath been neglected:

.....

Degree being vizarded,

The unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask.

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,

Observe degree, priority, and place,

Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,

Office and custom, in all line of order.

.....

O, when degree is shak'd,

Which is the ladder to all high designs,

The enterprise is sick!

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows.¹¹

Shakespeare here represents the popular concept of the social order, which urged the observance of degree in society as a necessary precaution against disorder. By analogy with the universe, which recognizes and observes degree, he points to the necessity of a similar observance of degree in society. To preserve balance in society, it was necessary that each individual maintain the particular degree into which he was born. Of course, the rupture of the social stratification by one particular individual alone would not bring universal chaos, but could easily result in disorder on a smaller scale, such as the disorder provoked by Achilles' refusal to acquiesce in the plans of his general, Agamemnon. Achilles here serves as an example of an individual whose selfish motives exercised an influence over others. Patroclus, a fellow-commander with Achilles, too lounged in his tent with Achilles while others imitate:

And in imitation of these twain,
... many are infect.

In rising above the social position of his shoemaker father, Marlowe departed from a social tradition which purposed to give society a stability and order-

¹¹ Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, ll. 83 ff.

liness which it could not maintain but for the observance of degree.

Marlowe's individualism was also manifested in his relation to the law. Apparently Marlowe was not a law-abiding citizen, for on three known occasions he was brought before the law on charges.¹² Furthermore, on one occasion Marlowe incurred the fear of the law itself, for two constables appealed to courts for protection against him.¹³

Records of the last six years of Marlowe's life show him in trouble with authorities. In 1587, the University of Cambridge had refused to grant his degree until the Privy Council intervened. In 1589, he was placed in jail on a murder charge. In 1592, he was quarreling with constables, and in 1593, the Privy Council that had secured his degree for him seven years before, sent after him on vague charges; also Thomas Kydd, once friend and roommate, assailed Marlowe's conduct and character; government spies were secretly following him, and perhaps his death was plotted as a consequence of government investigation.¹⁴ At any rate, there is enough truth known to establish that he was an individualist in relation to law, for his personal action was not always condoned by the

¹² John Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe, 1937. p. 71.

¹³ Ibid., p. 91; also p. 159.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 227-232.

agents of the law.

The circumstances of Marlowe's education show a decided irregularity. His college education was made possible through the will of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This will had provided for scholarships for several select, promising Canterbury boys whose chances for higher education were slight. The Canterbury archbishop's son chose Marlowe as recipient of one of the scholarships. Marlowe was admitted to King's School at Canterbury when he was barely within the maximal age limits. It is a curious fact that Marlowe remained at King's School a year more than he was rightfully allowed by the school regulations. At the end of this time, strangely enough, Marlowe had been chosen to receive the stipend of a Canterbury scholar at Cambridge. Records show Marlowe receiving the fund even before he was a regular enrollee at Cambridge.¹⁵ His expenditures at Cambridge were often in excess of his scholarship fund.¹⁶ Attendance records show long absences of even months at a time, certainly in violation of the specified rules. Records show that especially during the last three years his attendance had been far below the regulatory requirements. The true cause for Marlowe's absences has not definitely been ascertained, but it has been suggested¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 81-87.

that he was engaged in secret service for the government.

When the college authorities refused to grant this degree, the Queen's Privy Council intervened to demand that the degree be granted, and it was granted immediately. Such extraordinary procedure surely was the result of some service to his country, performed perhaps during the long absences from the University. At any rate, the college authorities apparently looked with disfavor on Marlowe's merits, or they would not have withheld his degree. Thus it was through the archbishop's generosity and the final command of the government that Marlowe secured his degree. Soon after he had received his degree, he emerged in London society, popular as a playwright for the "godless" stage.

Soon after arriving in London, "Christopher Marlowe, Gentleman" became known for heretical views. His elemental unorthodoxy found expression in religion as it had in his relation to society and the law, and in his education. His unorthodoxy was evidenced in the bold statement that "all protestants ar hypocriticall Asses", and in the agnostic contention that "if there be any true god or religion then it is the papists".¹⁸

In an England wavering between various Protestant sects, but definitely anti-papist, it was dangerous for one to proclaim such an unorthodox belief. Elizabeth's

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

government vigorously searched out and persecuted Catholics who persisted in their worship, for they questioned the legality of the marriage of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth's parents. Thus the reason for the purge of papists is obvious, and Marlowe's assertion of freedom in expressing his religious views was in bold defiance of both decorum and law.

Furthermore, it is entirely probable that Marlowe was associated with Sir Walter Raleigh's renowned circle of atheists, whose proclamations shocked the "unconquid".¹⁹ Thomas Kydd's court testimony, if true, confirmed Marlowe's atheism.²⁰

Biographical evidence has shown the degree to which Marlowe's individualism was exercised. Marlowe has been shown to have broken the tradition of adherence to established degrees in society; he dared to break the regulations at Cambridge, and directed his education to self-chosen purposes; he dared to offend the law and law-enforcers; and in religion he expressed an unorthodox view. Thus it has been seen that assertion of individual freedom was a fundamental element in Marlowe's character.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-206.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-170.

CHAPTER III.

Part I.

The Distinctive Nature of Individualism in
Marlowe's Plays.

Marlowe's plays evidence an individualism even more excessive than that evidenced in his life. Just as Marlowe himself had not always assumed a moderate and constrained course, neither did the heroes he created. A distinguishing feature of the individualism of Marlowe's plays is that the heroes sought absolute freedom in exercising a single passion through which each sought an imaginary state of self-perfection.

Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas became monsters of ambition who sought regeneration through power. Edward, although king, was unambitious for anything except friendship. He had an uncommonly strong desire for absolute freedom to enjoy his friends; Barabas visioned self-perfection possible through an abundance of wealth; Faustus, objecting to the natural limits of human endeavor, purposed to achieve unlimited power in all things, possible to him only through magic; and Tamburlaine, incited by the prophecy of his stars, purposed to conquer the world.

A peculiar fact about their individualism is that the ambition of each hero was motivated by selfishness. Tamburlaine gave no thought to what he would do with the

universe after the conquest of it. Apparently, he had no motive other than the enjoyment of glorified conquest. Tamburlaine's conceit developed through the circumstance of his victories. His superior military success was unquestioned, for he had unfailing victory. The only evidence of Tamburlaine's inability to procure what he desired was his inability to control biological factors and, of course, the inability to conquer death. The fact that he was father to a cowardly son galled him bitterly, and he killed this son. Tamburlaine maintained hopes that the other two sons would take up his pursuit of world conquest with the determination and vigor of their father, but we have no indication of this likelihood.

With a rapidly growing empire at his command, Tamburlaine's conceit grew to immeasurable limits. He became so inflated over his victories that he boasted of many self-assumed powers which in reality did not belong to him, nor could they belong to anyone:

The god of war resigns his room to me,
 Meaning to make me general of the world:
 Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
 Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.
 Where'er I come the Fatal Sisters sweat,
 And gristy Death, by running to and fro,
 To do their ceaseless homage to my sword;
 And here in Afric, where it seldom rains,
 Since I arrived with my triumphant host,
 Have swelling clouds, drawn from wide-gasping wounds,
 Been oft resolved in bloody purple showers,
 A meteor that might terrify the earth,
 And make it quake at every drop it drinks. ²¹

²¹ Christopher Marlowe, *The Mermaid Series*, ed. Havelock Ellis, *Tamburlaine*, Pt. I, V, i, p. 83.

Certainly, his egotistic imaginings alone entitled him to boast of assurance of world victory; nor was Jove fearing Tamburlaine's encroachment upon his powers; Tamburlaine's bloodshed had been great, certainly, so there was an element of truth as foundation for his assertion that he was wearying Death with his conquests; but his boast of controlling the drouth in Africa was surely inconceivable as an actuality and reveals that his egotism was exceeding the limits of the possible.

Whether he accepted the Roman god, the Christian God, the Mahomedan god, or no god at all, it is apparent that he maintained a high sense of his own superiority. In his ecstatic condition of egotism, Tamburlaine forgot to be consistent in his recognition of a superior power. Jove he acknowledges first as his protector, then as his precedent for ambitious power, and eventually as the superior force which made him arch-monarch of the world. But soon Tamburlaine boasted that Jove, fearful and trembling at his countenance, retreated in acknowledgment of Tamburlaine's superior power. At one time apparently Tamburlaine recognized Mahomet as a god, but later denounced faith in him. Before long, Tamburlaine assumed that he had been ordained by the God of Heaven to help rule the earth. In the beginning, he had acknowledged the power of the stars in shaping his destiny. In the end when sickness befell him, he was ready to march

against the powers of Heaven who had inflicted his illness upon him. This confusion of concept shows that in his egotism, Tamburlaine was incapable of maintaining a consistent attitude toward superior powers. Tamburlaine was concerned merely with maintaining himself against the world, and his continued victory, as he once said, "Makes me to surfeit in conceiving joy". His excessive egotism remained unpunctured for the most part, until he realized that he could not prevent the death of Zenocrate and, later, that "Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die".

Faustus' egotism was based on his recognition and evaluation of his own intellect, which degenerates, as will be shown. He considered his wit too high to be wasted further in the petty endeavors of ordinary learning. His critical analysis of the branches of medieval learning indicated weaknesses in the current system of education, weaknesses by which he refused to be limited. The mastery of logic merely enabled one to argue well; accomplished physicians could only alleviate pain, and, at the best, preserve life only temporarily; the man trained in law resorted to base measures, for his livelihood was made from the mistakes and meannesses of others; the theologian was defeated in his purpose from the outset, for no amount of preaching abstinence from sin could keep people from sinning, and theology taught that the inevitable result of sin is death.

Faustus' rejection of natural learning because of its limitations indicates a high seriousness of purpose and a rational, analytical mind. His criticisms of each profession are valid. His choice of the profession of magic through which his endeavors could be made to yield satisfying results, illustrates further his unwillingness to waste his intellect in petty endeavors. But from a glimpse into some of the uses Faustus made of his magical power, it is evident that he lost his former sense of high endeavor and sought satisfaction in mere trivialities. He procured grapes in winter for the duchess; he slapped the pope and the bald-pate friars; he resorted to playing a foolish trick on the knight, employing the current superstition of the horns worn by a man whose wife was unfaithful; he engaged in low type comedy with the horse dealer; and, he desired Helen of Troy for his paramour. These simple incidents indicate a degeneracy of purpose in Faustus. It seems incongruous for a serious and noble-minded scholar to engage in such trivialities, after having once expressed a deep-seated and rational dissatisfaction with the best learning that his age afforded. The egotism which arose in Faustus as he practiced magic apparently blinded him to his former sense of high purpose, and he resorted to even less than ordinary endeavor. The difference between what Faustus ultimately accomplished through magic and what the illiterate Robin wanted to realize by means of the magic books, is, after all, a

difference not of kind but of degree. Although at first, Faustus asked Mephistophiles questions of philisophical import, his attention gradually deviated to objects of purely physical and vulgar significance.

Barabas shows egotism in the pursuit of his dominant ambition. He desired wealth chiefly for wealth's sake. His reasoning is indicated by his questioning the cause for the regard in which he was held by his acquaintances:

Who hateth me but for my happiness?
Or who is honoured now but for his wealth?

Riches were surely regarded by the crowd as a main reason for reverencing the possessor. Only, Barabas here refused to reckon with the opinion of the crowd concerning the origin of his wealth. Theoretically wealth should have been procured through honest means, and Barabas' wealth had been accumulated through the practice of usury, a practice reputedly condoned only by Jews. Barabas planned no further use of his money than to create even greater wealth by the same means that he had come by that which he had.

Barabas' egotism was immense. In the beginning, he had three lovers--himself, his wealth, and his daughter, and for all else he felt contempt:

Nay, let em combat, conquer, and kill all!
So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth.²²

²² Ibid., Jew of Malta, I, i, p. 238.

In matters of state, his interest was that of disinterested detachment and self preservation:

If anything shall there concern our state,
Assure yourselves I'll look-unto myself.²³

This absorption of self-interest thoroughly dominated Barabas. His human interest was confined strictly to himself and the maintenance of self against all externals of the world.

Likewise, Edward's desire for friends was based on an insubstantial and selfish motive, the desire of a following of base flatterers from whom no good could be expected. Gaveston, the chief flatterer, stood so high in the king's esteem that he was absolved of the symbols of respect popularly shown the sovereign. He did not kiss the hand of the king nor bow in his presence, but instead embraced him in the manner of intimate friendship. In addition to countenancing this unconventional conduct, Edward declared that he ruled only to please and honor Gaveston, whom he provided a bodyguard, gold from the treasury, and the use of the royal seal to command what he desired. Certainly these relationships were in opposition to the theoretical majesty of the king and spirit of servility due him by his subjects. In cultivating the friendship of Gaveston, then, Edward was pleasing himself at the risk of departure from a concept of accepted re-

²³ Ibid., I, i, p. 239.

lationship between king and subject.

Edward's love for Gaveston sprang from egotism. Young Mortimer inquires about the motive for his sovereign's persistent attachment to the flatterer, and the reply indicates a surfeit of self love:

Y. Mor. Why should you love him whom the world hates so?

K. Edw. Because he loves me more than all the world.²⁴

If Edward had not valued himself so highly, he would not have regarded Gaveston's esteem above all else. He liked Gaveston because Gaveston liked him; Gaveston's flattery only mirrored the king's self-love. Thus he desired Gaveston's company for a purely selfish reason, flattery for himself.

Thus we have seen that Marlowe's heroes did not seek rational self-development. They did not purpose to live as normal human beings who strive for development along manifold lines of endeavor. Instead, they became enslaved by a particular passion and were content to forge ahead to attain maximum enjoyment in only the one desire. Being thus self-limited in their desires, they eliminated the possibility of well-rounded development.

²⁴ Ibid., Edward the Second, I, iv, p. 338.

Part II.

The Scope of Marlowe's Individualism.

The individualism of Marlowe's plays reflects the concern of the Renaissance people with many universal human problems. His heroes encompass practically the entire scope of human endeavor--the social, political, religious, economic, and moral aspects of life.

Just as Marlowe himself had done, his heroes broke the tradition of an established social order, which recognized degrees of society. Defying social convention, Tamburlaine rose from the status of a poor shepherd to emperorship of great provinces. Faustus, likewise, elevated himself in society. Although born poor, Faustus, educated by generous relatives, rose from lowly insignificance to wide renown through his scholastic achievements. He mastered the four great branches of medieval learning, a remarkable accomplishment. Dissatisfied even with this, Faustus sought the use of magic through which all things were possible. Through magic he satisfied his intellectual, spiritual, physical, aesthetic, and religious interests. Furthermore, he showed interest in science, natural beauty, cosmography, travel, architecture, and various delights of varying degrees of significance.

Likewise, Barabas, of the hated race of Jews, quite in keeping with the precedent set by his fellow-Marlovian-

creations, climbed in the social world. Malta witnessed him rise from low financial standing and the status of a social outcast to great riches and the governor's chair. Edward, contrary to the preceding examples of men who elevated themselves in society, fell from kingship to a pitifully low death. Thus, we see these heroes did not preserve their respective degrees in the social order but found a place which more or less fitted their merits.

In their resolute efforts to fulfill the dominant passion, Marlowe's heroes encountered certain laws, which if obeyed, would impede their progress. Laws were ignored when they conflicted with the practical-minded, egotistical heroes' concept of necessity. To fulfill the prophecy of the stars which reigned at his nativity, Tamburlaine found it necessary to break the law of arms in his endeavor to bring all kingdoms together under his rule, thus becoming the supreme law. Faustus, too, was forced to break laws in achieving his ambition for knowledge and power. He objected to the natural laws of human knowledge and understanding, repudiated natural learning and all vestige of religion in order to secure magic, which alone could satisfy his desires. He objected to the limited power of kings and emperors, who ruled only their particular kingdoms and could not have full control of all things. Faustus wanted all knowledge and all power, with absolutely no restrictions; this, magic would afford him.

He then could, as a partial exercise of his unlimited power, control all kings, and none could rule without his permission.

Barabas, maddened by a lust for "infinite riches", at first, resisted a law which was unfair to himself. Quite naturally, he questioned the justice of the seizure of his entire wealth and goods as ransom to the Turks. After all, he was only one citizen of Malta, and a social outcast, too. So his logic in relation to the law seems reasonable, or certainly not without certain merits. Then, motivated, first, by a sense of being wronged, and later by villainous cruelty, Barabas eventually effected the deposition of the governor and directed the governing of the island himself.

In Edward's impassioned desire for flattering friends, he met resistance in the valid objections of his nobles. But, Edward, resolute in his weakness, resolved to resist his lords and ignore the commons, determining to be uncontrolled, to rule, or mis-rule, as he was capable of doing. Thus, we see that Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Edward each opposed the limitations law and government placed upon them and endeavored to secure independence from the law.

In their mad pursuit for power, these heroes refused to be hindered by religious influences. Tamburlaine, in his rashness, blasphemed Mahomet, whom he had thought a

god, and burned the religious books at the temple. He indicated a skepticism as to the existence of a divine power, and lived and died without recognizing any orthodox religious belief. To secure the power he desired, Faustus found it necessary to renounce every vestige of religion, for it was only by complete irreligion that he could secure the use of magic. Eager to practice magic, Faustus denounced all faith and vowed to refrain from thinking on the deity. This renunciation of religion certainly was the epitome of unorthodoxy. Although Barabas professed the Jewish religion, his villainy did not permit him to live by it. He plotted the death of the nuns, including his own daughter, and was instrumental in effecting the death of two friars, thus evidencing no respect for the Catholic religion. Edward, having been restricted in his choice of friends by the bishop of Coventry, permitted the bishop to be seized and his robes to be torn, and then ordered him imprisoned and the church property confiscated. Furthermore, Edward hesitated to respect or recognize church authority when the archbishop commanded him, in the name of the pope, to banish Gaveston. He questioned that a king should be subservient to a priest. Thus each of these characters evidenced a resistance to church authority and religious philosophy when they conflicted with his purposes.

Of necessity, these characters faced unfavorable

economic situations at times, and in their resolution, determined to surmount them. The cost of maintaining his flatterers at the court drained Edward's treasury. General mismanagement and extravagance added to make a financial crisis. To meet the heavy expenditures, Edward levied excessive taxes and commanded gifts throughout the land. Angered by insubservient nobles, Edward refused to ransom Mortimer, who had been captured while fighting for the king. Again, when Isabella and her son were on the king's commission abroad, he refused to finance them, thus evidencing further his uncontrolled and uncontrollable economic independence, from which the lords, the commons, and his family suffered.

When in the course of his ascension to power, Tamburlaine had need of money, he either robbed or stole. When still a shepherd, he robbed passers-by of their jewels and wealth; he took his armor from a captured soldier; he refused gold as ransom, but, nevertheless, he took the gold of Damascus.

Barabas, whose summun bonum was riches, secured his immense wealth by usury, and finally by villainy added the entire isle of Malta to his possessions. Because this acquisition was for revenge on the city, which had misused him, all Malta eventually came to suffer through this one Jew's economic policy. But Faustus, whose magic art supplied all his wants, was not impeded in his economic

pursuits and enjoyed, unrestricted, the luxuries that he desired. Thus we see that Tamburlaine, Edward, and Faustus found a means whereby they could enjoy an economic independence.

Just as Marlowe's heroes pushed aside whatever social, political, economic, and religious barriers they encountered, so did they set aside all moral responsibility. It was inevitable that Marlowe's heroes break moral laws. The ruling passion could not be exercised without resulting in the evasion of accepted standards. Tamburlaine in his madness for political and military power threw aside a number of moral standards. Robbery, theft, and treachery were essential moves in Tamburlaine's gaining the Persian crown. As he elevated himself to power, the conquered suffered mercilessly by his treatment. Nor was it necessary that Tamburlaine show disrespect for the Mohammedan religion as he did at Babylon. Although he rationalized that he must kill his cowardly son in fulfillment of martial justice, the attending officers and soldiers did not approve of the act. Tamburlaine's boast that his honor consisted in shedding blood when men offered to oppose his conquests may be said to be the keynote to his character. He desired self-promotion in political and military power regardless of the consequences to any but himself.

Faustus, in fulfillment of his passion for knowl-

edge, power, and pleasure, was compelled to denounce all faith in the Trinity and ally himself with the devil, thus freeing himself from all moral responsibility other than to the devil to whom he was bound by contract.

Barabas' moral baseness was a natural result of an insatiate lust for wealth, which he could not have secured by honorable means. In the beginning, his villainy was motivated by his sensing the injustice done him by the governor who seized his entire goods to aid in fulfilling the ransom demanded by the Turks. Having thus lost his coveted wealth, Barabas took expedient measures to reestablish his former position, barring no policy to attain his purpose. He admitted that for "lucre's sake (he would) have sold his soul". Wealth was his ultimate objective; nothing else mattered. Thinking himself one of God's chosen people, Barabas never once doubted but that he lived righteously. Before the governor and his fellow-Jews he dared one of them to charge him with any sin. Barabas sought retribution in order that his concept of justice be fulfilled. But his concept of justice extended only to himself and did not include justice to any other than himself. To perform the desired justice, by way of revenge Barabas plotted the death of the governor's son, overthrew the Turkish sovereign for whom his goods had been taken, planned the death of the friar, and also of his daughter and the other nuns, all because

of his personal desire not to be frustrated in his purpose of preserving his own interests. He boasted that his policy "detests prevention", meaning that he would repel any resistance:

For so I live, perish may all the world.

By this assertion it is apparent that Barabas' moral obligations were solely self-centered. Through his excessive egotism, he failed to sense any moral duty to any but himself, and his reckless course has shown that he took ample measures to look out for himself.

Conclusion.

Although in Marlowe's day, life generally was characterized by growing power of the individual, there were signs that the unlimited exercise of this power would lead to disaster.

One must not think that Marlowe approved unbridled individualism or that he failed to see the evil consequences of man's disregard of those limitations to which he is inevitably subject and within which he must rationally control his behavior. This study reveals Marlowe's consciousness of the evils implicit in unrestrained individualism and of the unwisdom of rebelling against the ultimate facts of actuality.

Biographical evidence shows that in his own career, Marlowe was in various ways led to see the result of his own unrestrained, individual impulses. There appears to be a biographical basis for the doctrines which emerge from the plays in regard to individualism. Certainly, individualism experienced by the living man reinforces and heightens our interest in the individualism of the plays he created.

Another significance of this study of individualism, as reflected by Marlowe, lies in the revelation that extreme individualism amounts to egotism and the consequent failure to sense objective values. The extreme

SEP 25 1939

egotism of Marlowe's tragic heroes leads them to pursue one dominant passion to the exclusion of the claims of other passions and reason.

That Marlowe's heroes were tragic characters is significant. Their unrestrained individualism proved impractical in a world of actualities. Although Tamburlaine gained a goodly portion of the world by conquest, his victories were ended by the inevitable, death. Although Faustus thoroughly enjoyed the benefits he received from magic, the term of his contract expired as the inevitable result of time. Although Barabas was successful in accumulating great wealth and enjoyed his villainous acts for a time, Nemesis eventually overtook him and his death came as the inevitable fulfillment of prevailing justice. Although Edward could have been loved by many, he opposed the many for the enjoyment of the few, and of these he was deprived before his death. Thus not one of the heroes was able to harmonize his individualism with the will of the forces which control the universe. The strivings of the spirit of man and the allurements of the world and flesh, were, in the end, incapable of logical harmony; consequently, tragedy was inevitable.

Thus the will of man, no matter how strong it may be, is made subservient to destiny. Strange as it may seem, the hero is not the protagonist in the plays; it is the divine will which bends man into accord with a

predestined order. Thus in the final analysis, it is found that human beings, when considered as independent beings, appear as poor, wretched creatures made by and swayed by a superior power. In spite of man's conception of his individual importance, further inflated by victories along the way, there eventually intervenes an infinitely greater power than the man who had valued his individual worth so highly. Rampant individualism did not prove a satisfactory philosophy of life.

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