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THE OVERREACHER IN JONSON AND MARLOWE

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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I

Introduction

Ben Jonson's genius placed him in the front rank of the men of letters of the Jacobean Age. His most famous contemporary, William Shakespeare, had unparalleled success as a playwright and a profitable career as an actor and shareholder in the Globe Theatre. But Jonson reached beyond the world of the stage to become a familiar figure at the court of James I as a poet, a writer of masques, and an authority on the classics. Today Jonson is primarily remembered for his great comedies; however, in his time the masques, the epigrams and longer poems, and, by a select few, even the two surviving tragedies were equally valued. Singlehanded, Jonson used his position to raise the status of the drama to "Workes" rather than trifles. "To teach and delight,"¹ the simple classical phrase which summed up the duty of the poet, carried great weight with Jonson, who tended to emphasize the didactic side. To educate the audience or the reader, he ranged over the whole stock of ancient learning and sought to unite the best of the past with the best of the present, little as that might be.

When Jonson translates a Greek or Latin passage and inserts it into a play or poem, he manages to transform it into something suited to Jacobean Britain as well as to

ancient Rome or Athens. Although Jonson would always place Cicero, Quintilian, Plautus, and Terence before the moderns, the former student of William Camden read Chaucer, knew the native dramatic tradition, and attempted a study of the grammar of the British language. For his plays, Jonson drew on the moralities, the de casibus tragedies, and his immediate Elizabethan predecessors and contemporaries. In the process, as with the ancients, he transformed what he used; nevertheless, his passages retain a definite resemblance to their origins. Of all his British sources, perhaps none is more important than Christopher Marlowe.

T.S. Eliot appears to be the first critic to draw attention to the affinity between Jonson and Marlowe. Writing an essay on each playwright in 1919, he makes the argument for this relationship in both of them. Eliot observes that each dramatist is a "conscious," "deliberate," and "serious" poet, but the key statement is, "Jonson is the legitimate heir of Marlowe."² Later critics of each author have quoted this comment but none has developed it fully; instead, they offer brief comments in passing or somewhat fuller examinations of parts of speeches or scenes. When Harry Levin considers Jonson and Marlowe, he points out the importance of deception and camouflage:

Jonson unquestionably inherited Marlowe's rhetoric of enticement; but, whereas most of Marlowe's characters take the proffered jewels and delicacies at their face value, Jonson's cheaters employ them as Barabas

did--to ensnare and delude. Jonson never lets us forget how selfishly and how unnaturally they deviate from the norms of morality. . . .³

Jonson scholars who have written along these lines include Alvin Kernan, Edward B. Partridge, Philip P. Brockbank, and David Cook.⁴ Partridge especially makes perceptive comments on the relationship of Jonson and Marlowe:

Even as Marlowe dramatized the glamour, the aspirations, and some of the dangers of the Elizabethan Age, so Jonson dramatized the aftermath of the aspirations that were never realized and the glamour that could never be more than ideal. He saw the obscene and ludicrous underside of the great heroes of the past, and thought of Tamburlaine, the world conqueror, as a Sejanus or a Volpone whose kingdom was a bed chamber or a council table. Faustus, who even in Marlowe's hands withered under the burden of his own pride, was never larger to Jonson than a Subtle. Mephistopheles shrank to Face, and Helen of Troy to Dol Common.⁵

Several critics of Marlowe who have remarked upon the two dramatists are Frank P. Wilson, J.B. Steane, A.L. Rowse, William Leigh Godschalk, Charles G. Masinton, and Michael Hattaway.⁶ Wilson offers the best general summation when he answers Jonson's censure of Tamburlaine in the

Discoveries:

. . . Jonson was biting the hand that fed him. The creator of those monomaniacs Sejanus, Volpone, and Sir Epicure Mammon learnt much from Marlowe, though their raptures are of earth, not of fire. But it is true that Jonson had less to learn from Tamburlaine than from The Jew and Doctor Faustus, for more

and more Marlowe's poetic energy is released from the diction of common life.

Thus the critics are agreed on the existence of a relationship between Jonson and Marlowe, but disagree on its exact nature. Kernan and Brockbank compare Tamburlaine to Mammon and Volpone respectively. But there is more of Faustus in Mammon and more of Barabas in Volpone than there is of Tamburlaine in either of them. Wilson says that Jonson had less to learn from Tamburlaine than from Doctor Faustus and The Jew, but the statement does not hold true for Sejanus and Catiline, whose protagonists clearly look back to Tamburlaine.

In "Goodness and Greatness: An Essay on the Tragedies of Ben Jonson and George Chapman," G.R. Hibbard offers a brief but perceptive analysis of the relationship between Jonson and Marlowe:

It was from [Marlowe] that Jonson learned how to write blank verse that was hard and firm in texture, assured in its forward march, resonant of sound, and pregnant with meaning. But, with his unremitting critical judgement, Jonson always seems to have been aware of Marlowe's tendency to self-indulgence, which he puts to dramatic use. When soaring rhetoric like that of Tamburlaine issues from the mouth of Sejanus, Volpone, Sir Epicure Mammon or Catiline, it is a pointer to self-indulgence by the deluded character who speaks it, not by the author. Jonson was never taken in by the Marlovian hero.⁸

The "self-indulgence," which Hibbard points out, may suit the personality of the overreacher in question, whether it is Tamburlaine, the Guise, or Barabas, as much as it

indicates this tendency on Marlowe's part. In other words, self-indulgence may be a characteristic of the Marlovian hero as well as of Jonson's overreacher. While Sejanus and Catiline look back to Tamburlaine, Volpone has more in common with Barabas, Sir Epicure Mammon has a greater resemblance to Faustus.

To my knowledge no conclusive and complete comparative study of Jonson and Marlowe has been undertaken. To concentrate on the overreacher requires that less attention be paid to other subjects which would be legitimately included. Topics such as the use of blank verse (which Marlowe perfected and Jonson often, but not always, employed), the differences and likenesses in the various theatres, indoor and outdoor, the performances themselves, and the theory of humour formed in practice by each playwright merit further scrutiny. Indeed, no examination of Jonson and Marlowe should overlook them altogether; however, only a work of inordinate length could treat them all.

What is first required is a definition of the overreacher which establishes the nature of this species of character in Jonson and Marlowe and which does not extend to include the roughly similar figures of their contemporaries. Briefly, Marlowe's overreacher is notable for his intense personal ambition, a remarkable mastery of rhetoric (the language of persuasion), and a dependence on fantasy

stretching from partial to very nearly total. Drawing on the OED, we may define fantasy as "the fact or habit of deluding oneself by imaginary perceptions or reminiscences."⁹ Attending or reading Tamburlaine Part 1 and the rest of Marlowe's plays, Jonson would have interpreted these traits as dangerous, extreme, and potentially misleading for the audience. Jonson modified the overreacher to demonstrate beyond doubt in both comedy and tragedy the evils of excessive personal ambition, excessive misuse of language, and excessive dependence on fantasy. Although the differences are equally significant, Jonson's caricatures remain true to their Marlovian predecessors.

A paragon or l'uomo singolare,¹⁰ Marlowe's overreacher frequently struts near caricature. This observation is more obviously appropriate for Barabas and the Guise than for Faustus or Tamburlaine. But the faults in Faustus' logic in rejecting all for magic, the chilling reaffirmations in his conversations with Mephistophilis, and his comic escapades at Rome and at the Emperor's court constitute together a grim and satiric comment on Faustus' initial view of himself and his aspirations. As for Tamburlaine, his exploits as the established King of Persia in Part II often seem to be sardonic exaggerations of his achievements as the Scythian adventurer in Part I. In his essay "Christopher Marlowe (1919)" Eliot puts his finger on

"this newer style of Marlowe's, this style which secures its emphasis by always hesitating on the edge of caricature at the right moment." Eliot maintains that, had he lived, Marlowe would have continued in this direction, "toward this intense and serious and indubitably great poetry, which, like some great painting and sculpture, attains its effects by something not unlike caricature."¹¹

Where Marlowe might have gone, Jonson went without faltering. In comedy and tragedy the grandeur of Jonson's overreachers is always accompanied by an unsettling sense of the absurd. Eliot indicates in his essay on Jonson how inadequate terms such as "burlesque," "farce," "satire," and possibly even "caricature" are in defining Jonson's "unique world."¹² Jonson pierces the assertions of the Marlovian overreacher and exposes their fallacies, but in each case simultaneously he establishes a towering and unforgettable aspirer. This blend of immensity and satiric deflation may account for Eliot's rather cryptic comments on Jonson's method:

it is an art of caricature, of great caricature, like Marlowe's. It is a great caricature, which is beautiful; and a great humour, which is serious. The 'world' of Jonson is sufficiently large; it is a world of poetic imagination; it is sombre.¹³

Writing on the same topic Aldous Huxley provides a key to Jonson's purpose:

There are times when we wonder whether a caricature is not, after all, truer than a photograph;

there are others when it seems a
stupid lie. But at all times a
caricature is disquieting; and it is
very good for most of us.¹⁴

Taking up Marlowe's tools of hyperbole and the "mighty
line," Jonson proceeds along the same path.

1. Marlowe's Creation

Almost every work in Marlowe's short but brilliant
career registered a tremendous impact on both the
Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. His poems and plays were
applauded, imitated, parodied, and continually revived and
reprinted. The plays' success rests largely on these
gigantic superhuman heroes, known today as the
"overreachers." After finding the term in George
Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie, Harry Levin applied
it to Marlowe's heroes.¹⁵ The word is Puttenham's
memorable English expression for the Greek device of
hyperbole. Although hyperbole suits the exuberance and
enthusiasm of the Elizabethan Age, Puttenham thought little
of the device and called it the "loud lyer" as well.¹⁶
His description throws light on the role of hyperbole in
Marlowe and in Jonson too:

now whē I speake that/ which neither
I my selfe thinke to be true, nor
would haue any other body beleue,
it must needs be a great dissimulation
because I meane nothing lesse then that
I speake, and this maner of speech is
vsed, when either we would greatly
aduance or greatly abase the reputation
of anything or person, and must be vsed
very discreetly, or els it will seeme
odious,¹⁷

Puttenham therefore suggests that hyperbole is a weapon of language, used for or against the reputation of others.

With Puttenham in mind, Levin provides valuable guidance in his description of Marlowe's heroes: At the other

extreme--for Marlowe is nothing if not an extremist--[the first extreme is infinity] the effect of rarity and of uniqueness is conveyed by the generous employment of superlatives. It is not enough for his heroes and heroines to be better than their literary prototypes; they must be the best of their kind; and, more than paragons, they must be non-pareils, beyond compare, resembling only the phoenix. Typically, the lines that characterize them commence with "The only..." and conclude with "...the world." Creatures of this sort, since they are matchless, are of necessity unrivalled. For them, accustomed to win, unwilling to lose, it is Caesar or nobody. When they deign to play the games of their fellow men, the stakes are all or nothing. Their typical gesture is to pose an absolute alternative, to impose an intransigent choice between uncompromising extremes.¹⁸

Marlowe's overreacher is generally viewed as an amalgam of extremely varied sources, including classical and contemporary, foreign and native, dramatic and non-dramatic. To an extent the origin of the overreacher lies in the resources of every Renaissance playwright. Ovid and Seneca, Machiavelli (in whatever form) and the humanists, the morality play and The Mirror for Magistrates are nearly ubiquitous in Renaissance drama. But few could equal Marlowe's command of his materials or the characters he created with them. Although he lacked a university

education, Jonson's grasp of the classics matches Marlowe's at the least, and his knowledge of the other sources is, usually just as impressive. In considering the precursors of Marlowe's overreacher, we are also examining Jonson's raw materials.

With little hesitation Renaissance playwrights accepted Seneca as the model for style and content in tragedy. The ten tragedies, in the original Latin and in English versions (occasionally expanded by the translators) served as a store of imagery, mythology, and themes for two generations of playwrights. In style they took the long set speech, the multitude of mythological parallels, and stichomythia. In content they chose the theme of revenge, fallen glory, and ambition. In thought they linked the Stoicism of Seneca's treatises to the heroes of his plays.

One of Seneca's most admirable Stoical characters, Hercules, held a position of high prestige in the Renaissance. In classical mythology Hercules represents the single successful precedent for man's aspiration to the status of a god. In his study of the Herculean hero, Eugene Waith points out the ambiguity and the paradoxes of this figure, characteristics which he finds reappear in Tamburlaine. Essentially, Hercules' attributes are so superhuman that they are beyond the comprehension and the values of ordinary men. His wrath as well as his virtue is extreme and incapable of explanation. Moral energy,

equivalent to the Greek aretē or the Roman virtū, is as important in his composition as physical courage and prowess, but, as it is a semi-divine quality, its operation can be difficult to interpret. Waith stresses the importance of surprise in the treatments of the myth; and the unpredictability of Hercules' actions, arising from his temperament, partially accounts for the mystery which surrounds him. Allegorical interpretations of Hercules' story in the Renaissance (adopted from the Stoic interpretations) portrayed him as a symbol of virtue, reason, and righteous indignation triumphing over temptation.¹⁹ Waith also notes that Cartari calls Hercules a patron of eloquence along with Mercury, and maintains that "It is, so to speak, perfectly proper to present a Herculean hero as orator."²⁰ Hercules aspired to be a god, and by his transcendence after death, succeeded. His successors inherit his pride and self-absorption, but whether any of them is "the best of all men on earth" like Hercules is debatable.²¹

In his highly favourable portrait of Tamburlaine, Waith establishes several parallels between him and Hercules;²² however, these similarities cannot be extended to Marlowe's other overreachers.²³ Of them all only Doctor Faustus might be termed Herculean, not for any deed or any characteristic such as righteous indignation or virtue, but rather for the challenging aspirations expressed in his

opening soliloquy. Jonson rarely refers directly to Hercules for his overreacher; however, when he does, the aim is satirical or critical and generally intended to emphasize the gap between the speaker and Hercules. None of his overreachers excite admiration or wonder, and few of their actions can be termed paradoxical. Jonson draws on Seneca most obviously in the two tragedies. In both Sejanus and Catiline he inserts his own translations of Senecan lines; however, the result in English can sound as much like Tamburlaine as Seneca.²⁴ Jonson mastered the art of rendering classical declarations and sententiae into the English idiom.

While Seneca often makes use of mythology, the major reference work on the subject for the Renaissance playwrights was The Metamorphoses, Ovid's attempt at the epic. The majority of his stories concern metamorphosis in the gods or in men. From Jove to Proteus the gods change shape at will without any harm to themselves. In contrast, men are changed by the gods as a form of gift or reward or remembrance or punishment. These changes are generally permanent, and the consequences, if any, are for the worse. Throughout, Ovid uses his sense of humour to balance the potential melodrama of many of the legends. He is ironic about and critical of the gods, but compassionate and gentle in making fun of the errors and foibles of mankind.²⁵ The theme of metamorphosis, followed closely by the theme of

love, affords Ovid the opportunity to deal with changes in the human heart as well as the human body. A favourite in moralized form in the Middle Ages, Ovid was even more popular in new translations in the Renaissance. Golding's version of The Metamorphoses appeared in 1565-67, and somewhat later came the notable treatment by Sandys (1626). Marlowe translated Ovid's Amores and Jonson translated an elegy in The Poetaster. Jonson's portrayal of Ovid in that "comickall satyre" criticizes his libertinism, but defends, through Horace and Virgil, his special position as a poet. The overreachers in both Jonson and Marlowe are fascinated by the thought of metamorphosis. Egoists all, they are less concerned with love. Tamburlaine or Sejanus, Barabas or Volpone, Doctor Faustus or Sir Epicure Mammon, each regards physical change as the means to all aspirations and the answer to all problems.

In the Elizabethan age of exploration, discovery, military victory, and financial success, the possibilities offered by metamorphosis were omnipresent in people's minds. One of its shapes is alchemy, a process temporarily accepted as valid by Elizabeth I as well as her subjects. Alvin Kernan examines alchemy in Jonson as the idea of transformation of people as well as things,²⁶ another way of saying metamorphosis. But none of the characters, Jonson's or Marlowe's, wants to change his personality. The overreacher views magic as working on the exterior, not the

interior of man, whereas both authors prove that, stubborn as men are in resisting it, the only alteration possible is from the inside.

Another word for metamorphosis is disguise, a mainstay of Elizabethan drama. Muriel C. Bradbrook defines disguise as follows:

the substitution, overlaying or metamorphosis of dramatic identity, whereby one character sustains two roles. This may involve deliberate or involuntary masquerade, mistaken or concealed identity, madness or possession.²⁷

While a change in apparel often affects a change in the personality of the character concerned, it is rarely what the character expected.²⁸ Magical metamorphosis does happen in Elizabethan drama ("Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art/translated."),²⁹ but for the overreacher in Jonson and Marlowe metamorphosis is usually restricted to fantasy and disguise.

A British dramatic source for the overreacher is de casibus tragedy. The "fall of princes" tragedy was popularized by Boccaccio's De casibus virorum illustrium. William Baldwin intended³ to continue Boccaccio's work in The Mirror for Magistrates (1559), to bring it up to the present day for England, and to tell the story

chiefly of suche as
 Fortune had dalyed with here in this ylande: which might be as a
 myrrour for al men as well noble as others, to shewe the slyppery
 deceytes of the waueryng lady, and the due rewarde of all kinde of
 vices.

The Mirror for Magistrates gained great popularity and was reprinted with additions well into the seventeenth century. Lily B. Campbell maintains that it "transferred to the poet the accepted task of the historian;" in effect, it "taught orthodox Tudor doctrine." Campbell continues to say that the importance of the transfer of this function can be "fully realized only when consideration is given to the long line of historical plays and poems popular during the reign of Elizabeth."³¹ In the plays based on The Mirror for Magistrates the ambitious and unscrupulous also fall to ruin from the heights of power by the turn of fickle Fortune's wheel.

Stated simply, Marlowe broke the custom of repentance and acceptance and presented heroes who would challenge the omnipotence of Fortune and of anyone or anything else; however, only Tamburlaine successfully challenges whatever powers exist. Jonson stays closer to the usual format in Sejanus and Catiline, stressing the crimes and errant thinking of Sejanus and Catiline through his choral commenta-

tors. But, while the transience of success on earth is driven home, the subjects chosen by Jonson in tragedy and by Marlowe often prevent an optimistic ending which the medieval confidence in the after life allowed. The future in tragedies such as Sejanus, Catiline, Tamburlaine Part II, Edward II, and The Massacre at Paris is essentially bleak. In Doctor Faustus the awareness of the loss of heaven is balanced, if not blotted out, by the immediacy of hell.

Of the other native forms of drama, the morality play, more than the miracle play or the interlude, can be traced in Jonson and Marlowe. David M. Bevington has shown the similarity in the staging of confrontations between the morality and several of Marlowe's plays, notably Tamburlaine.³² Critics have compared the overreacher to several figures in the morality play, including Everyman, the Vice and Anti-Christ.³³

During the Renaissance the study of rhetoric was part of every schoolboy's education. Almost every playwright had

been exposed to the countless devices available to the Roman orators. If rhetoric or oratory is the act of persuasion by speaking, then all of Marlowe's overreachers are excellent orators. But neither Cicero nor Quintilian, two of the most esteemed authorities on the subject, would fully agree with this definition. Each believed that the good orator first had to be a good man.³⁴ Although Cicero's ornate and involved style was displaced by the desire for a plainer and more concise form of expression, Jonson remained his steadfast admirer and would have viewed few, if any, of Marlowe's creations as good orators. Certainly he would have considered none of his own overreachers to be eloquent (a term which he seems to have reserved for good men). In their place Jonson would set Crites, Horace, and his own Cicero as exemplars of rhetoric. In his eyes they have what the Marlovian overreacher rarely experiences, tranquillity. This sign of true happiness, according to Cicero and the Stoics, is achieved through moral goodness, whose keys are courage and self-control.³⁵ The new approach to the classics in the Renaissance brought about a revision of the system of education. Humanists and grammarians produced numerous textbooks devoted to minute analysis of the texts. While the works of Erasmus, including his exercise books, became part of the curriculum, the reforms he advocated to instil a joy of learning in the students were generally ignored.

The movement of Christian humanism, represented in England by Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, and John Colet, helped to make possible the creation of the overreacher. The new approach to the classics, the intensified search for manuscripts, and the many new editions and translations provided a wide range of material for the Elizabethan student of the ancients, like Jonson and Marlowe. Moreover, the idea that man could reach beyond the limitations of the medieval theocentric universe to greater responsibility and achievement, while not as extensive as once imagined, was current enough to pave the way for a Tamburlaine or a Doctor Faustus. The aspirations of the overreacher, however, are usually in direct contrast with the toleration, moderation, and the common sense advocated by Erasmus. The golden mean of Christian humanism condemns both extremes and excess. Perhaps more than Marlowe, Jonson shares the Christian humanists' respect for the classics, their desire to reconcile the Christian and classical traditions, and their devotion to accuracy. A small but significant indication of Jonson's bond with the humanists is the frequent translations of passages from Erasmus in his plays.³⁶

The antithesis of Christian humanism for the Renaissance might be considered to be "Machiavellism," not the actual theories of Machiavelli, but rather the popular interpretations of them. "Machiavellism" played a part equal to that of the Christian humanists, if not greater, in

Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. As a name, Machiavelli was synonymous with atheism and evil. While The Prince and The Discourses were available in Italian, damning criticisms based on prejudiced selections, such as the work of Gentillet, were more common. In drama the Machiavel became a stock character. With his byword, "policy," he usually played the scheming villain, but he could appear as the disguised prince or even the virtuous satiric malcontent.

Marlowe introduced the stage Machiavel as the Prologue and the patron of Barabas in The Jew of Malta. Whether he ever read Machiavelli's works is a moot point. Another is whether Tamburlaine is in part Machiavellian or not.³⁷ At least two of Marlowe's protagonists, Barabas and the Duc de Guise, are termed Machiavellians; yet neither is completely the cold-blooded monster portrayed by Gentillet nor the cool-headed master of Realpolitik visualized by Machiavelli. Marlowe gives each of them a weakness: the Guise is a vengeful cuckold as well as a feared assassin; Barabas' obsession with wealth causes him to lose his poise in anxiety about his gold. Each is remarkably successful for a villain, but the tinge of irony is often present.

Jonson's total disapproval of Machiavelli's principles in any form makes the date of his reading of Machiavelli less important. While Jonson mentions him in The Case is Altered (before 1599) and also in Every Man Out of his Humour (1599), neither allusion is developed or

explored.³⁸ Jonson did read The Prince at some time because he copied extracts into Timber: or, the Discoveries.³⁹ In Sejanus (1603) Machiavellian statements and ideas arise when Sejanus and Tiberius perform their question-and-answer catechism of evil. But many of Machiavelli's more controversial comments, frequently distorted or taken out of context, had become commonplace. A famous example, mentioned often, is the necessity for the ruler to be both the lion and the fox (that is, to use both force and fraud).⁴⁰ Traces of Machiavelli occur in some overreachers in Jonson or Marlowe; however, since any evil or crime could be deemed Machiavellian, the term is of little assistance in a definition. Many of the criminal acts attributed to Machiavelli's influence had been described elsewhere, though not advocated as a course of action.

In The Marlovian World Picture William Leigh Godschalk lists several of the more prominent features of Marlowe's style and comments on their effect on the audience:

There is a recurrent use of declamation, long passages of description or narration, and monologues or soliloquies of aspiration. In a specialized form, the soliloquy becomes the protagonist's boast to have a peculiar control over his destiny. To reveal struggle, there is a continuing use of the confrontation, where one faction meets to bandy words with another. . . .

There is a feeling that the characters are declaiming at full

volume, not communicating with each other. In fact, all of these recurring techniques point to the 'loudness' of Marlowe's rhetoric, a loudness which distances the audience from the action, allowing [its members] to remain always emotionally detached. This is a basic Marlovian technique.⁴¹

Most of the foregoing comments can be legitimately applied to Jonson's dramatic method. Declamation and confrontation, in which characters shout at each other without listening, are standard fare in the middle comedies and the tragedies. Critics have noted too the emotional detachment of the audience. Each of Jonson's overreachers proclaims his confidence in directing his destiny and delivers monologues of aspiration.

Godschalk's principal contention is that "Marlowe's drama represents an inverted world, where evil has become dominant and, in many cases, has been accepted in the place of good."⁴² Here comedy has its place:

It is a world where evil grows from the ambition to attain impossible ends. But, given the finite nature of man, aspiration for ultimates becomes ludicrous, even comic. We tend to laugh at hyperbolic posturing and frenetic declamation. Nevertheless, this is not a totally comic world; it is one where aspiring evil ultimately destroys itself, hoist with its own petard.⁴³

The world turned upside down, values and all, is a frequent experience in Jonson's plays where evil usually has the upper hand until the very end. Jonson causes us to laugh more easily at such aspirations and "hyperbolic posturing."

Certainly his world is not "totally comic" either. From this amalgam came Marlowe's most prominent overreachers, Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Doctor Faustus. Although significantly different creations, they all share the characteristics commonly associated with the type.

For various reasons, the other overreachers in Marlowe's gallery, the Duke of Guise and Mortimer, are less impressive. Even in its damaged condition, The Massacre at Paris stands as a play which merits attention. The aspirations expressed by the Guise can equal Tamburlaine's; however, he also seems to be the intermediate overreacher between Tamburlaine and Barabas. The Guise is not as dominant and successful as Tamburlaine nor is he an out and out caricature in the mould of Barabas. Taken all in all, he has less impact than either of them upon the audience; instead, the horrors of the massacre and its consequences occupy the reader and likely the viewer as well.

Departing from his usual pattern, Marlowe makes the weak king the protagonist in Edward II and reduces the role of the overreacher, Mortimer. The problem with Mortimer is that he has to serve two functions: he must be the sympathetic rebel at the start and the unscrupulous usurper at the end. Although Mortimer surpasses Gaveston and Spencer in ambition and in success, he never reaches the heights attained by Tamburlaine. Steane observes that Mortimer is moved by "petty annoyance" to rebellion rather than by "moral or patriotic considerations."⁴⁴ Condemned to death by Prince Edward, Mortimer does deliver the

only speech in the play which is truly heroic, but he remains "a minor Tamburlaine in a shrunken setting."⁴⁵ The verse of Edward II also prevents Mortimer from becoming an overreacher in the pattern of Tamburlaine: according to Steane, the verse is "normally thin and drab" and "generally very arid."⁴⁶ Its strength lies in its "naturalness"⁴⁷ and tough colloquial quality. Marlowe never hesitates to experiment with his invention, but his most effective overreachers are Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Doctor Faustus.

A summary of the principal stands taken on Tamburlaine, Barabas, and Doctor Faustus will indicate both the traits that they share and the extent and nature of critical disagreement. Almost every aspect of Tamburlaine has become a topic of critical contention. However, critics often divide themselves into two camps on one major issue; namely, whether or not Marlowe shared the aspirations and beliefs of Tamburlaine. Critics such as Levin, Ribner, Waith, and Boyer advance the interpretation that Marlowe did. According to this view, Tamburlaine is a Herculean hero who stands outside the normal values of mankind, beyond reproach or even understanding. Critics who argue against this view include Godschalk, Masinton, and Cutts. In their reading of the Tamburlaine plays Marlowe criticizes the unrestrained ambition of his hero. Thus Tamburlaine is neither a Herculean hero nor a superman; instead, he becomes a Machiavellian schemer, an Anti-Christ, or an insatiable tyrant. Some critics, like Cole and D'Andrea, establish a position between these two extremes. Admitting the ambiguity in Tamburlaine, Cole finds both irony and awe in the enigmatic portrayal.⁴⁸

The immense popularity of Tamburlaine prompted a sequel. The character in Part II differs considerably from the archetype of Part I, but in the memories of the audience it is likely that all of Tamburlaine's words and deeds merged to form one unforgettable figure. The Tamburlaine of Part I set the pattern for numerous imitations and parodies and exemplifies each of the basic traits of the overreacher.⁴⁹ His limitless aspirations focus initially on the princess, Zenocrate, and then on the crown. His tools are the persuasive force of his soaring blank verse, sustained by hyperbole, exotic place-names, and allusions from classical mythology, and his unfounded but unshakable self-confidence; compared to them, his "curtle-axe," proudly displayed (I.ii.42), is insignificant. Many of his grandiose prophecies would be ignored as fantasy by his listeners except that Tamburlaine makes some of them come true. Furthermore, nothing in what he says ever suggests that Tamburlaine does not believe every word of it, twisted and confused as his relationship with Jove, Nature, and the gods sometimes sounds. He accomplishes several on-stage metamorphoses, from a shepherd into a warrior and a wooer, from a warrior and a wooer into a conqueror worthy of both the crown and Zenocrate. A more outwardly successful hero than Tamburlaine in Part I would be hard to imagine and possibly very difficult to create.

In the sequel Marlowe does not try to surpass himself. Tamburlaine retains his command of language, buoyed as always by hyperbole, and his unbroken string of victories, but now he is the established champion meeting all challengers, not the brash upstart whose every success is a matter of suspense. Furthermore, Marlowe exposes some cracks in the foundation of Tamburlaine's achievements; they are no more than the troubles which everyone faces in life, such as a child's rebelliousness, a loved one's death, and one's own death, but each comes as a great surprise to Tamburlaine.⁵⁰ His reactions to these events are so excessive that he borders on caricature: sometimes he resembles one of the tyrants whom he defeated in Part I, sometimes he appears as a grotesque exaggeration of his earlier self.

One notable difference between the two plays is that Tamburlaine no longer exercises the power of metamorphosis in Part II. Instead Callapine makes Almeda a king in a parody of Tamburlaine's style. When Zenocrate dies, Tamburlaine can neither prevent it nor can he restore her to life. By encasing her corpse in gold and carrying it with him he symbolically refuses to accept the fact of her death. Tamburlaine then discovers that he cannot transform his eldest son, Calyphas, into a warrior; he can only murder the coward, as a lesson to the rest. Only in his last moments does he realize that he too must die.

The "fond and frivolous gestures" removed by the printer Richard Jones from the "two tragical discourses" suggest that the stage revisions of Tamburlaine Part I and Part II contained comedy, perhaps in the form of a comic sub-plot. Certainly comedy is a chief ingredient in The Jew of Malta (1589 - 90). As a Jew on the Elizabethan stage, Barabas would be a successor to Judas and Herod in the miracle plays and therefore a comic figure and a target for satire as well as a villain.⁵² He also bears a strong resemblance to the Vice of the morality play. Further, Edward Meyer notes that Barabas is the prototype of the stage villain for the Elizabethan playwrights after Marlowe;⁵³ Barabas established the character of the Jew, the usurer, and to some degree, the Machiavellian.

Until he is moved to revenge, Barabas' fantasy and aspirations focus upon his little room, which he pictures crammed with exotic wealth. As soon as Ferneze seizes his house and money, Barabas reacts quickly. When he brings about the murder of the Governor's son, Lodowick, Barabas begins a series of complications which test his flexibility

at dissembling. Comically but convincingly he proves more than equal to them all, changing himself into a potential Christian convert, a French musician, a military adviser to Selim Calymath, and the governor of Malta. But Barabas is not content and seems to want to return to his room, to the way things were.

As the articulate and pragmatic merchant and kind father of Abigail in Act I and part of Act II, Barabas displays the talents of Tamburlaine in oratory, including the knack of hyperbole, but he becomes a total caricature, the monster who recites a lengthy list of crimes and who can kill his own daughter, together with a host of others. While the change in Barabas is probably part of the play's dramatic strategy, Marlowe maintains the link between his villain-hero and the audience through the soliloquy and the aside; in contrast, Tamburlaine has only the one soliloquy on beauty and no asides.

Critics generally regard Doctor Faustus as Marlowe's greatest overreacher and his tragedy as Marlowe's greatest

play. In Doctor Faustus the imminence of eternity, usually absent in Tamburlaine I and II and The Jew of Malta where the present is deemed all, hangs over every move that Faustus makes. He is the boldest aspirer, daring to be a god in a Christian world. Through Lucifer Faustus acquires the ability to transform himself into anyone or anything on earth, except the state in which he began (somewhat like Barabas). Whether Faustus is intended to resemble Everyman or an exceptional man, the reasoning of his opening monologues is faulty and sophistic. He sacrifices everything for the fantasy of magic. Later Faustus requires his store of classical mythology to offset his constant and undesired recollections of Christianity. As his quest for knowledge degenerates into a series of pranks and sight-seeing, Faustus emerges as a disquieting caricature of his original ambitions. But the caricature disappears when his time draws near and he faces the Old Man and Helen. After deluding himself until his final hours, Faustus at last permits himself to be ruled by despair. In the opinion of many his closing monologue ranks as Marlowe's finest scene.

For a discussion of the overreacher, we should consider a passage from the B-1616 text. Although the A-1604 version is more suitable for this study, the later text contains this evaluation of Faustus by Mephistophilis just

before his parting with the scholars:

Fond worldling, now his heart bloud dries with griefe;
 His conscience kils it, and his labouring braine,
 Begets a world of idle fantasies,
 To ouer-reach the Diuell; but all in vaine,
 His store of pleasures must be sauc'd with paine. ⁵⁴
 (B-1616.V.ii.1907-11)

While critical interpretations of Doctor Faustus abound, two basic positions emerge. The first accepts Faustus at face value. From this outlook he is an extremely learned man who has reached the limits of education and dares to go beyond. His decision to sell his soul for twenty-four years of pleasure, his struggles with himself, and his ultimate dismemberment by Satan, Mephistophilis, and the rest constitute a true tragedy. The second position, and the one with which I agree, takes a more negative view of Faustus and questions both his assertions and his learning. This interpretation does not necessarily deny that Faustus slowly gains tragic stature in the final scenes, say, from his return from his travels to the end. It does make Faustus more human than superhuman. In "4. The tragic folly of Doctor Faustus," Judith Weil analyzes the play along these lines. She breaks down "his tragic history" into three stages:

At first, through learned folly, Faustus proudly denies God. In mid-career, he becomes the folk-hero of Faust-books and popular legends, the best actor on a great stage of fools. Finally he reaches an intellectual understanding of the good he once denied. Because he partly realizes his great loss, he rises toward tragic stature. ⁵⁵

In the first stage Weil views Faustus as a "learned fool" who "practises sophisticated, fallacious rhetoric." In her interpretation, "Marlowe laughs contemptuously at his hero," whose "carefully articulated nonsense" in his opening monologues reveals his "ridiculous blindness" on the subjects of the soul and Hell.⁵⁶

Weil calls the second stage an "entertaining interlude" and observes that "unless [the spectators] are well entertained with magic 'sport' they will never understand how Faustus can have lost his soul for it." When she deals with the relationship between Faustus and the clowns of the low-comedy sub-plot, Weil lists the parallels in their experiences (such as the episodes on metamorphosis and the theft of the cup) and then notes a significant difference:

Differences within a general resemblance between Faustus and the clowns retain importance. While the clowns mimic the shallow art of magic, they neither invert heavenly wisdom nor presume upon deity. Their magic is a worldly means without damnable ends, zany, relatively harmless, and not very exciting.⁵⁷

In the last stage Weil maintains that Faustus reaches "near-tragic stature," but his knowledge still contains ignorance of good and of the love of God. Almost to the end he remains the "proud magician" trying to command the elements. Although "Marlowe fills the last great soliloquy with an almost unbearable tension between the foolish heart and the knowing intellect of this doomed scholar," Weil concludes that

The death of Faustus should be regarded as a tragic illusion, rather than a tragedy. The final tragic effect depends more upon the deceptive rhetoric which has amplified Faustus and upon the freedom he has hitherto enjoyed than upon his intrinsic worth or stature.⁵⁸

Whichever view one accepts, Jonson's attitude toward Faustus would be one of disapproval. In The Alchemist he creates caricatures from Faustus' aspirations and magic. If Faustus already has a comic aspect, he may be closer to a Jonsonian character than has been previously recognized.

2. Imitations and Variations

Although the precise dates for many of the plays produced during the 1580s and 1590s are impossible to determine,⁵⁹ Marlowe's plays constitute a major source for a variety of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic types. This category includes the overreacher, the villain-hero, and the Machiavelian; by and large, these terms are frequently applied to the same group of protagonists. Equally important is Thomas Kyd's extremely popular and seminal work in tragedy and the revenge play, The Spanish Tragedy. Many Elizabethan playwrights create heroes who seem to be pale imitations of Tamburlaine, such as we find in Robert Greene or George Peele.⁶⁰ Better dramatists including Shakespeare, George Chapman, and John Marston develop their own versions of the overreacher. These three later authors appear to start from Marlowe but proceed in a direction all their own. In this regard they have less in common with Jonson than Marlowe does. The audience's recollection of Marlowe's heroes increases the effectiveness of Jonson's satire in his plays. A brief examination of their more prominent figures may demonstrate this statement.

While the language and aspirations of the Marlovian overreacher help to shape characters such as Falconbridge in King John (1596 - 97) and Bolingbroke in Richard II (1595), Shakespeare's most developed overreachers are the two

aberrations of Nature, the hunchback Richard III in Richard III (1592-93) and the bastard Edmund in King Lear (1605-06).

In Richard III, perhaps his most popular play, Shakespeare depicts the salvation of England by Henry Tudor and completes the first tetralogy; but from start to finish he focuses on Richard. Critics have variously defined the play as tragedy, history, and comic his-
⁶¹tory; however, each definition rests on the approach taken to Richard. Appearing in fourteen of twenty-five scenes and speaking almost one-third of the lines, he dominates the work.⁶²

In creating Richard, Shakespeare uses ostensibly historical accounts, such as More's, the comic Vice from the morality play, de casibus tragedy, the stage Machiavel, Seneca, and Marlowe's overreachers. Through his first five soliloquies (in the first three scenes) Richard does his best to establish a feeling of camaraderie with the audience. For a time, his irony and keen sense of humour screen his essential viciousness and hypocrisy. But Richard places no value on human emotions or relationships; thus, he isolates himself in the opening scene and, at the end, faces the void alone.

As far as Marlovian aspirations are concerned, Richard is an overreacher par excellence. Like Tamburlaine, he is

a ruthlessly effective scourge of God; scarcely a victim goes to his death without calling it just retribution. The oratorical duo of Richard and Buckingham looks back to the teamwork of Barabas and Ithamore, and possibly ahead to that of Volpone and Mosca.⁶³ Richard has Barabas' cool cynical realism and disposes of Buckingham as readily as Barabas kills Ithamore when the servant proves faulty. Like many overreachers, Richard gains his crown but cannot stop there: he must eliminate the "bastards" in the Tower. What sets Richard apart from most overreachers is that he is so much more than a caricature. At his worst, he is all too convincingly human. After his last fearful nightmare a shaken Richard delivers a soliloquy in which the nervous anxiety, the soul-searching and personal condemnation of the self ("Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am." [V.iii.184]) approach⁶⁴ the heights reached by Faustus in his final soliloquy. As Edmund later comforts himself with the thought that he was loved, Richard despairs at the thought that "no creature loves me" (V.iii. 200). The overreacher's egoism usually prevents such thoughts from occurring.

In the mélange of comic words and savage deeds that is Richard III, Shakespeare takes the overreacher a step farther than Marlowe did and in a different direction than Jonson would in the seventeenth century. For Shakespeare,

Richard foreshadows Edmund, and, more importantly, Macbeth, another isolated and haunted usurper-monarch who dies fighting against his countrymen.⁶⁵

In the first two acts of King Lear Edmund's declaration that "I grow, I prosper" (I.ii.21), his deft manipulation of his father, Gloucester, and his legitimate brother, Edgar, and his Machiavellian scorn for "the plague of custom" (I.ii.3) and "the excellent foppery of the world" (I.ii.129) suggest that Edmund is cast in the mould of Tamburlaine for bravado and Barabas for deception. Among Shakespearian characters, his opening speeches and deeds mark him as an overreacher following in the path of Richard III, but he almost pales beside the villainy of Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall.⁶⁶ Unlike most overreachers, Edmund does not have to seduce a beautiful princess with his moving words. It is not necessary because both Goneril and Regan throw themselves at him. After betraying his father to Lear's enemies, which, far from suprising them, they seem to expect, Edmund has little to do. That Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan carry out Gloucester's mutilation links the deed to Lear's humiliation; however, it also leaves Edmund as an observer rather than a participant.

Although metamorphosis has a strong attraction for Edmund, he scarcely changes at all until his repentance at death. In contrast, Lear undergoes a total transformation.

from the powerful and obstinate king to the powerless but enlightened man. More obviously, Edgar experiences a series of metamorphoses in his disguises as Tom O'Bedlam, a sane peasant, a soldier, and Edmund's challenger.

While Edgar often expresses how his outlook on everything is constantly being altered, Edmund never fully articulates his aspiration to be king through the removal of Albany.

Once Edgar has fled, Edmund rarely dominates the action. At one point he even seems to be part of the spoils of victory, as Goneril and Regan quarrel over him. Edmund breaks the bond between the bastard son and his father, but Goneril and Regan destroy the bond between the father and his legitimate child, as well as the pledge between the subject and the king. Edmund's attempt to do "some good" (V.iii.243) before he dies sets his conduct apart from the usual conduct of the overreacher, but his actual death occurs off stage and is almost of no importance. Albany says on hearing of it, "That's but a trifle here" (V.iii.295). In his evil acts Edmund took second place to Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall. In death he is overshadowed by the good characters, Cordelia, who is already dead, and Lear, whose death is imminent.

Jonson and Chapman share a didactic purpose in their approach to drama, but their treatments of the over-

reacher differ significantly. While Jonson censures the overreacher at every opportunity, Chapman responds differently to Marlowe's character. In both his French and Roman tragedies Chapman usually presents an essentially sympathetic Stoic figure, the "Senecal" man ~~who~~ may be Chapman's answer . . . to Tamburlaine.

Chapman's heroes generally derive their self-confidence, not from fantasy, but from his concept of virtue founded on the works of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.

In Chapman's most famous tragedy, Bussy D'Ambois (1607), Bussy, following Tamburlaine, has a strong grasp of aspiring rhetoric and an air of purity from his lack of contact with a decadent court. He commits crimes with no criticism, stated or implied, from his creator. Like Tamburlaine, Bussy experiences no guilt for anything he does. Marlowe provides a counterweight in the growing irony of circumstances that surround his hero and reflect on his ambition and deeds, but Chapman does not. Chapman creates the paragon of his Stoic beliefs in Clermont D'Ambois, Bussy's fictitious brother in The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois (written 1610 or 1611), closely followed by Cato in Caesar and Pompey (1612-1613). Neither has anything to say in favour of ambition or "policy"; instead, each speaks his mind, criticizing the earthly powers. Free of fantasy and self-

delusion, they are realistic, preferring suicide to the world that they see all too clearly. Clermont coolly performs his act of revenge and, hearing of the Guise's death, realizes that to revenge him would be rebellion against the king and so chooses to take his own life. Refusing to live under Julius Caesar, Cato kills himself and graphically proves the play's theme, "only a just man is a free man."⁶⁷

Of all Chapman's tragical heroes Byron, in the double play The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron (1608), comes nearest to Marlowe's overreacher and also to self-delusion based on his estimating his own abilities. As the Guise would do, if he could, Byron sets his sights on the crown of France and would wreck the country to obtain it. Several of his speeches ring with Tamburlaine's presumption and indifference to the consequences. Even so, Chapman's Byron retains to the last the nobility and courage which remind us that he began as the saviour of France. At his worst the valiant and patriotic warrior which Byron once was is never totally effaced from the memory of the audience. The inclusion of a positive note in this predominantly negative portrait of aspiration is absent from Marlowe's Guise; its presence is debatable in Tamburlaine. There is nothing comparable to it in Jonson's Sejanus, or Catiline, or his comic overreachers.

Thinking along the lines of Stoic theory and Stuart rule, Chapman would have approved of none of Byron's pronouncements, but he offers a balanced view of him all the same.

In his early dramas, such as Antonio and Mellida,⁶⁸ Marston left satire for an attempt at the Machiavellian. In Antonio's Revenge Piero's ruthless schemes remind one of the Guise and Barabas. In comedy Marston first saw Jonson as a model, but his best plays do not closely resemble Jonson's. Marston employs metamorphosis, but his heroes, such as Malevole in The Malcontent or Freewill in The Dutch Courtesan, do not delight in the change nor do they lose themselves in the part. They are primarily concerned with the purpose of a disguise rather than the joy of assuming it. While Marston can make devastating use of grimly ironic humour, his characters keep their eyes set on their goal in all seriousness. They are seldom deluded about themselves or others.

Accordingly, the overreacher rarely has the opportunity to develop in Marston. In Antonio and Mellida the heroes, Antonio and Andrugio, have Stoic ideals. The villain, Piero, is usually too ignorant of the action around him to pose a genuine threat to them. In the sequel, the tragedy Antonio's Revenge, Piero is a villain along the pattern of Cambyses rather than of Tamburlaine. In The Malcontent Malevole, the disguised duke Alto fronto,

is kept so aware of everyone's movements that his return to the throne never appears in doubt. The usurper, Pietro, never develops shocking villainy or grandiose aspirations. Perhaps the closest Marston came to creating an overreacher is Quadratus in the comedy What You Will. Quadratus eloquently defends "fantasticalness," Epicureanism, and the undisciplined use of the imagination, or phantasia incomplexa. However, Quadratus never lets his urges have full rein. Instead he performs a double function in the play; first as the carefree participant in the action and, secondly, as the critical outsider. Quadratus' serious moments and critical comments indicate that he does not really believe his hyperbolic Epicurean declarations. For all his "fantasticalness," Quadratus is a bitter and disillusioned man without dreams or aspiration.

3. Jonson's Overreachers

At the time of Marlowe's death in 1593, the Elizabethan Age was at its peak of enthusiasm and optimism. The defeat of the Armada in 1588 was still fresh in people's minds, and England was emerging as a major power with exploration and expansion in the Americas. The construction of the empire had begun. Hyperbole marked much of the

literature, as well as other writings, but there was a national confidence that Englishmen could live up to these grand assertions. By the time of Jonson's Every Man in His His Humor (1598), the outlook of the people had changed. The uneasiness about the lack of an heir to the ageing monarch's throne is reflected in the popularity of satire, after an age of sonnets, and its prompt censure by the authorities. In 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England in a remarkably peaceful transfer of power, but England never felt the same about James I as it did about Elizabeth I.

Although he intended to be a good king, James I was more fatherly than flexible with a Parliament increasingly led by the rising Puritan middle class. For the most part, the authorities under the new king seem no stricter than those under the old queen. The Commons wanted a greater say in matters of foreign policy, religion and finance, Divine right or no.

In literature at least, the prevailing mood was one of melancholy. L. C. Knights argues that this melancholy stemmed from the overeducated unemployed.⁶⁹ So many scholars had been created in Elizabeth I's optimistic reign that positions with a future were rare by the time that James I, with favourites of his own to remember and reward, came to the throne. At such a moment the overreacher,

whether malcontent or satirist, posed an even greater threat to society than in Marlowe's day. One likes to think that Jonson would have written as he did no matter what age he lived in. Even so, the mood of the Jacobean era prompted him to censure and satirize "aspiring minds." As a poet and court-entertainer, Jonson was well aware of the ubiquitous scarcity of patrons. The attitude appears in his own *Macilente*, but thwarted ambition receives rougher treatment in his later plays.

With Jonson being known principally for comedy and Marlowe for tragedy, the differences in the genres might seem to preclude an analysis of the overreacher in their works; however, several factors alter this first impression. For one thing, tragedy as described by Aristotle and then limited by the later Italian critics, and tragedy as practised by the exuberant Elizabethans often differ significantly. The debates on the precise definitions of comedy and tragedy and tragicomedy too continued into the reign of James I. While Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage, Tamburlaine Part II, The Massacre at Paris, Doctor Faustus, and Edward II, may be accepted as tragedies, it is more difficult to classify Tamburlaine Part I and The Jew of Malta. In any case grimly comic irony figures prominently in all of Marlowe's plays, a feature which reappears in Jonson's works, where the

distinction between comedy and tragedy is never doubtful. Nonetheless, tragic traces do occur in Jonson's comedies, as he admitted on occasion. For all his veneration of the classics, Jonson regarded them as "guides, not commanders."⁷⁰ It is not surprising that, in practice, the borderlines sometimes fade even in his writing.

If we assume that Marlowe shared his overreachers' aspirations, then Jonson created the antithesis to Marlowe's hero and placed him in a satiric-comic-ironic setting. On the other hand, if we grant that Marlowe's irony can be directed against his overreachers as well as his minor characters, then we may say that Jonson took Marlowe's creation one step further. Marlowe satirizes Barabas beyond doubt; there is much grim irony at Faustus' expense; and the ironic reversals of Tamburlaine Part II are well-recognized.

Jonson's methods in satirizing the overreacher resemble Marlowe's in satirizing his minor characters, such as Mycetes in Tamburlaine Part I, or in cleverly undermining his own overreacher. Marlowe's success depends in part on his combination of action and long speeches. In his best comedies Jonson employs the same formula, incredible activity and long speeches that can hold their own with the action in competing for the interest of the audience. When the action flags and the virtuous men have

too much to say, Jonson tends to be boring. Jonson's message is quite clear in Cynthia's Revels, Sejanus, Catiline, and The New Inn, but the plays offer little entertainment. With the outright knave or gull Jonson can go on forever, dazzling the audience with images and ideas swiftly following one another and creating castles in the air that seem almost believable. In part the effectiveness of these long discourses derives from the use of mock-Marlovian images which undercut the speaker's intentions. However, his writing loses much of its power and appeal when Crites, Silius, or Cicero takes the spotlight.

Several characters in his early plays illustrate Jonson's initial attempts at creating and controlling the overreacher. The Case is Altered is usually accepted as Jonson's earliest extant play. Herford and Simpson have compared Jaques, the miser with a beautiful daughter, to Marlowe's Barabas, among others.⁷¹ Jaques does employ classical images which emphasize his greed; however, he remains a minor character and the resemblance is minimal. The comical satires indicate Jonson's gradual edging towards a Marlovian type of character, but his panoramic view in these plays prevents any one comically eccentric and pretentious aspirer such as Bobadill, Asotus, or Sir Fastidious Brisk from dominating the stage. Jonson had

not yet perfected the technique of permitting his overreacher a concentrated burst of speech which establishes his personality and goals. He later employs this method with Sejanus, Volpone, Sir Epicure Mammon, Catiline, and Justice-Adam Overdo, but he seems to be experimenting with Ovid and Captain Tucca in The Poetaster.

Levin has noted that Marlowe's translations of Ovid's elegies and Lucan's Civil War give the overreacher an amorous or romantic trait and an aggressive warlike trait, respectively.⁷² In Ovid and Tucca Jonson tries to deal with each aspect separately. Ovid is the classical exemplar of love, the authority on romance. Tucca is the epitome of the braggart soldier who is actually a coward. Though far apart in other respects, both are overreachers and social climbers given to unconvincing airy defenses of themselves replete with mythology. Each denies responsibility for his actions and suffers for it, running afoul of Emperor Augustus' reverence for the gods and the truth. Each is fairly successful, but the test of the overreacher as a major character in Jonson was yet to come.

The test came in Sejanus, Jonson's earliest surviving tragedy. Although Jonson had established himself as a tragic writer in the 1590s, it is likely that none of his earlier efforts resembled Sejanus. Sejanus has the aspirations and language of Tamburlaine, but Jonson

uses every device at his command to expose Sejanus for the murderous, conniving, and conceited coward that he is. In his desire to guide the audience along the proper channels, Jonson unfortunately overloads his play with lengthy commentary by his spokesmen, Arruntius, Silius, and Lepidus. Produced at the Globe, Sejanus failed, pleasing only Jonson's immediate circle of friends, but in many respects it clearly foreshadows his comic masterpieces, Volpone and The Alchemist, and one major antecedent is the use of the overreacher.

Volpone is the first of the series of comedies which established Jonson as a comic genius in his own time and for most generations thereafter. Of all the Elizabethan comedies up to 1605, Volpone has a greater affinity with The Jew of Malta. Jonson's Venice and Marlowe's Malta are much the same place. Each is an island or series of islets, famous for its trade and association with the exotic and mysterious East, and for its licentiousness, assassinations, and infatuation with deceit. Volpone's dark satirical humour and its treatment of greed and hypocrisy have close parallels in The Jew of Malta. In his apparent adoration of gold as a goal, in his elevation of

himself above others in his own mind, and in his mastery of intrigue, Volpone bears a striking resemblance to Barabas; on the other hand, in his attempt to seduce Celia, Volpone sounds like Ithamore, the slave, courting Bellamira, the courtesan. Volpone is a lover of deceit, a lover of wealth, and a would-be lover of women. And in each role he can effortlessly declaim in Marlovian terms. Much more subtly than with . . . Sejanus, Jonson diminishes Volpone's early grandeur to expose him as a figure of satire and to punish him thoroughly for his crimes.

Jonson followed Volpone with Epicoene, or The Silent Woman, which Dryden considered to be a "perfect play" by "Father Ben."⁷³ The play does not have a Marlovian figure as such, but Morose is the antithesis of the overreacher in many respects. Far from seeking to control the world or to gather in its riches, Morose wants to cut himself off from all communication and traffic with society. His mind is made up, and he feels no need to persuade others that he is right. Accordingly, he never uses rhetoric. The sterility of his imagination is revealed in his tirade against Dauphine when all he can do is repeat "it knight-hood."⁷⁴

Jonson's next work, The Alchemist, may be his greatest comedy. In it he satirizes both the magic and the visions of Doctor Faustus. In Subtle Jonson destroys the pretensions

of all practicers of alchemy and quacks in general. But his comic talent reaches its apex in the towering figure of Sir Epicure Mammon. Unlike Volpone, Mammon is a gull rather than a knave, a caricature of a fool incapable of hurting others or of deceit. But, having acquired a knowledge of mythology, Mammon pushes the ambitions of the overreacher to their most extreme in his mind. The delusions of Mammon may be compared to the initial dreams of Faustus. Faustus too is a victim who willingly deceives himself. Like Faustus, Mammon wants the power of a god to satisfy his fantasy. Each is shown to be more concerned with thoughts of sensual luxury than with good deeds for mankind; further, each distorts what learning he has to justify his desires. Although Faustus' loss of his soul far outweighs Mammon's loss of his gold, Jonson drives home the danger of such agreeable fallacies through the total deflation of Mammon.

Following The Alchemist, Jonson produced Catiline, his second known tragedy. Written eight years after Sejanus the work resembles its predecessor in several aspects. Like Sejanus and Tamburlaine, Catiline is an unscrupulous overreacher of no mean ability. He is an accomplished rhetorician, who can persuade almost anyone to do anything and who aims at nothing less than the total destruction of Rome. One of his principal

conspirators, Cethegus, apes Tamburlaine with his bombastic rant. Jonson's Cicero, calm, virtuous, and restrained, proves to be the Nemesis of both the aspiring Catiline and the headstrong and impetuous Cethegus. Nevertheless, Cicero has to employ Machiavellian tactics and the skill of a Tiberius or a Barabas to win the day for Rome. As is the case with Sejanus, the Globe production of Catiline failed.

The last of Jonson's great comedies, Bartholomew Fair, contains one of his most obvious references to Marlowe, the puppet play's parody of Hero and Leander. Jonson draws broad caricatures from hints already present in Marlowe's famous poem. In Justice Adam Overdo Jonson creates an unusual blend of overreacher and legal authority. Overdo is a greater "enormity" than any he discovers at the fair, but his gradual process of self-awareness saves him from the total deflation suffered by Mammon. Overdo can be purged of his grandiose fantasy of himself as an omniscient judge in the style of Jehovah to become, instead, a genial dinner host for all the fair-goers.

After Overdo, Jonson no longer creates overreachers on the mammoth scale of a Volpone or a Mammon, but the overreacher does not entirely disappear. Instead, Jonson softens the harsh edges of the overreacher, fewer knaves are created, and fools are usually redeemed.

In The Divell is an Asse Jonson combines situations from Doctor Faustus, The Alchemist, and Volpone. Fabian Fitz-dottrell, the "Duke of Drown'd-land" (II.4.v.22), has something in common with Mammon as the projector's gull; however, he lacks Mammon's knowledge of mythology and unbounded imagination. An unlettered Faustus in search of his Mephistophilis, Fitz-dottrell is unwillingly served by the devil in disguise. His relationship with Pug is frequently humorous, but, for the most part, undeveloped. When Pug makes a Mephistophilian revelation of himself to his master, Fitz-dottrell, unlike Mammon or Faustus who would accept it without question, beats the devil for lying. Fitz-dottrell cannot rush on to the overreacher's usual extremes because, at the end, he must remain the husband of the noble and chaste Lady Fitz-dottrell. The preservation of her virtue and Wittipol's rescue from temptation limit the scope of the aspiring fool.

In The Staple of Newes Peniboy Senior, the usurer, has the potential to rank with Mammon or Morose, but he seldom rises above the status of Jaques; he remains a miser, a curmudgeon, and a minor comic target best suited for the "leerers" (V.v.).⁷⁵

In The New Inn Herbert Lovel begins as a Neoplatonic Petrarchan - Spenserian overreacher in love. Jonson mocks

the pendulum swings between joy and despair and couples the satire with a derisive estimate of the education of a gentleman. Arguing with the Host in the first act, Lovel supports his claims for love and the gentleman's up-bringing with classical allusions, usually to the myths. But, destined for Lady Frampul, he cannot remain dedicated to his excesses. By the time of his dialogues, Lovel is voicing Jonson's opinions on love and valour and "ouer-daring" (4.4. 120-21).

Lovel develops into a fellow-companion of Crites or of Compasse in The Magnetick Lady. Here hints of the overreacher appear in Sir Diaphanous Silkworm. When Silkworm puffs himself up, drawing on mythical ancient heroes such as Achilles, Compasse, as the proper "orator," swiftly reduces all pretensions based on "fights imaginary" (III.iii.116). Accordingly, Silkworm is never more than a minor agent in the contest for Placentia.

In contrast to the permanent divisions in the masterpieces, such as Volpone, The Alchemist, or Epicoene, the characters of the "dotages," to use Dryden's word, are reunited into a social bond in the last scene. This theme of reconciliation limits the range of the overreacher who cannot be himself and a compatible member of society at the same time. The closest Jonson comes to a sustained development of the character in the late plays occurs in

The Sad Shepherd fragment. Aeglamour, the Shepherd, wails and laments for his lost Earine in a Marlovian vein and never thinks of investigating her death. Jonson's irony punctures the pretentiousness of the mythological references and thus mocks the value of such love. In the active and practical Robin Hood, Jonson sets the hero of native English folklore beside the typical classical shepherd and comes out in favour of England. Aeglamour is as obstinate and self-deluded as Mammon, Volpone, Faustus, and Ithamore. Nevertheless, Jonson had not forgotten reconciliation, as the name of the hermit, "Reuben the Renconciler," indicates. Unfortunately, Reuben appears only in the cast list. If he had finished The Sad Shepherd, Jonson probably would have fused the theme of the overreacher, excessive and foolish in love, with the theme of reconciliation.

Jonson's affinity to Marlowe can be traced from the beginnings to the end of his dramatic career, but its fullest development appears in his middle period, the time of his greatest plays. With the exception of Epicoene, my study deals with these works, namely, Sejanus, Volpone, The Alchemist, Catiline, and Bartholomew Fair. The Jonsonian overreacher possesses the boundless aspirations and the skill with language characteristic of Marlowe's figure; however, whether he appears in tragedy or comedy, Jonson satirizes his creation more openly than Marlowe

usually does. Jonson sharply scrutinizes the overreacher's ambition and his rhetoric, and shows that both are empty and menacing to society and to the overreacher himself.

Notes

¹"To teach and delight" is a standard classical adage, but, for his version, Jonson combined two lines from Horace.

²"Ben Jonson (1919)" and "Christopher Marlowe (1919)" in Elizabethan Essays (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 60, 72, and 75.

³"Chapter VI. The Dead Shepherd," Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 172.

⁴See Alvin B. Kernan, "Alchemy and Acting: The Major Comedies of Ben Jonson," SLI 6 (April 1973): 8; Philip P. Brockbank, "From Introduction to Volpone (1968)," in Jonson: "Volpone": A Casebook, ed. Jonas A. Barish (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 208; David Cook, ed., "Introduction: Style," in Volpone, A University Paperback (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 36.

⁵The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 236.

⁶See Frank P. Wilson, "III. The Jew of Malta: Doctor Faustus," in Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare, The Clark Lectures, Trinity College, Cambridge, 1951 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 120, 57-58; J.B. Steane, "A Note on 'The Massacre at Paris,'" in Marlowe: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1965), p. 239; A. L. Rowse, "Chapter X: Personality and Fate," in Christopher Marlowe: A Biography (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 206; William Leigh Godschalk, "IV. Coda," The Marlovian World Picture (Mouton: The Hague, 1974), p. 226; Charles G. Masinton, Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), p. 9; Michael Hattaway, "Marlowe and Brecht," in Christopher Marlowe, ed. Brian Morris, Mermaid Critical Commentaries (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), p. 100.

⁷Wilson, pp. 57-58.

⁸G. R. Hibbard, "Goodness and Greatness: An Essay on the Tragedies of Ben Jonson and George Chapman," RMS 11 (1967): 13.

⁹OED, s.v. no. 3; dates from 1370.

¹⁰Levin, pp. 41 and 43.

¹¹Eliot, pp. 64 and 66. Eliot detects the "newer style" in Aeneas' speech on the sack of Troy in Dido, Queen of Carthage.

¹²Eliot, pp. 80-81.

¹³Eliot, p. 81.

¹⁴Huxley, "Ben Jonson," in On the Margin (1923; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), p. 202.

¹⁵Levin, "Chapter I. The End of Scholarism," p. 42.

¹⁶George Puttenham, "Chapter XVIII. The Third Booke of Ornament," The Arte of English Poesie, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Univ. P., 1936; rpt. 1970), p. 191.

¹⁷Puttenham, p. 192. The long "s" of the original passage has been changed to "s".

¹⁸Levin, "Chapter I, " p. 41.

¹⁹The information on Hercules is drawn from the first two chapters, "1. Demigod" and "2. Heroic Man" of Waith's The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare, and Dryden (New York: Columbia Univ. P., 1962).

²⁰Waith, "3. Marlowe," p. 65.

²¹The phrase, from Sophocles' The Woman of Trachis, is cited by Waith in "1. Demigod," p. 23.

²²Godschalk takes the opposing view. Noting that Hercules had a reputation as a liberator rather than a conqueror he maintains that "In the Renaissance sense, Marlowe's Tamburlaine is not a Herculean hero." Instead,

Implacable, he presents the voracious and insatiable lust to consume the world, and his greater capacity for evil should not blind us to the fact that he is no better than the more petty Gaveston, Mortimer, or Guise.

See "V. 1 Tamburlaine," Picture, p. 117.

²³While he does not deny Marlowe's share in the general debt of Elizabethan tragic drama to Seneca, Douglas Cole argues against the extensive influence of Seneca in Marlowe's plays:

In the most "classical" and academically oriented of his plays, Dido Queen of Carthage, there is little Senecan flavor, except perhaps in the lurid quality of Aeneas' narration of the fall of Troy; Virgil and Ovid provide the predominant themes and bases of expression. Tamburlaine remains the most Senecan of Marlowe's works, but only in occasional parallels of character conception and expression, such as the physiological description of physical pain, the Stoicism of Agdas and Olympia, and the Herculean fury of the stricken Tamburlaine.

See Cole, "Chapter VI," Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1962), p. 251.

²⁴ M. C. Bradbrook makes this point:

...[Jonson] prided himself on his translations and appropriations and made no effort to disguise them. Very often a passage which is a direct translation from the classics will also show the influence of an English writer. In Sejanus, 5. 1, the lines

My roof receives me not: 'tis air I tread
And at each step I feel my advanced head
Knock out a star in Heaven. . .

may be Jonson's version of Seneca:

Aequalis astris gradior et cunctos super
Altum superbo vertice attingens polum--
(Thyestes, 11. 888-9)

but they are not unaffected by the hyperboles of Tamburlaine.

See "Chapter IV. Elizabethan Habits of Reading, Writing and Listening," Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge: Univ. P., 1950), pp. 81-82.

²⁵ Hermann Frankel provides a useful exploration and discussion of Ovid's life and works in Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds, Sather Classical Lectures 18 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1945; rpt. 1969).

²⁶ Alvin B. Kernan, "Chapter 4. The Satirist in the Theater," The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. P., 1959). See also Kernan's "Alchemy and Acting", 1-22'.

²⁷ Bradbrook continues:

Disguise ranges from the simple fun of the quick-change artist (The Blind Beggar of Alexandria) to the antic disposition of Edgar or Hamlet: it may need a cloak and false beard, or it may be better translated for the modern age by such terms as 'alternating personality'.

See "Shakespeare and the Use of Disguise in Elizabethan Drama," Essays in Criticism 2 (1952): 160.

28

Volpone finds that he acquires many symptoms associated with old age and illness when he feigns sickness before the Avocatori (V.i.1-17).

29

MND, III: i. 118-19. The Riverside Shakespeare, Textual Editor G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

30

William Baldwin, "William Baldwin to the Reader," The Mirror for Magistrates, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge, 1938; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), p. 68.

31

Campbell, "Introduction," pp. 51, 52. Aside from Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio (and its various editions), Campbell does not mention any other work about the "fall of princes" before the Mirror. See her "Introduction," pp. 5-8.

32

David M. Bevington, From "Mankind" to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

33

See M. Jones on Mammon as Anti-Christ in "Sir Epicure Mammon: A Study in 'Spiritual Fornication,'" Ren Q 22 (1969): 242; A. C. Dessen on Volpone as the Vice in "Volpone and the Late Morality Tradition," MLQ 25 (1964): 383-99; and H. W. Matalene III on Faustus and Wit in "Marlowe's Faustus and the Comforts of Academicism," ELH 39 (Dec. 1972): 518-19.

34

Cicero never directly states that the orator must be a good man, but his major speakers in De Oratore, Crassus and Marcus Antonius the "orator," assign so many duties and responsibilities to the orator's lot that it seems impossible for any one but a good man to be one. Like Cicero, Quintilian sets out the program for the perfect orator: however, he is more specific about the link between the good man and the good speaker:

My aim, then, is the education of the perfect orator. The first essential for such an one is that he should be a good man, and consequently we demand of him not merely the possession of exceptional gifts of speech, but of all the excellences of character as well. For I will admit that the principles of upright and honourable living should, as some have held, be regarded as the peculiar concern of philosophy. The man who can really play his part as a citizen and is capable of meeting the demands both of public and private business, the man who can guide a state by his counsels, give it a firm basis by his legislation and purge its vices by his decisions as a judge, is assuredly no other than the orator of our quest.

See The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, tr. H. E. Butler, The Loeb

Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1921). 1 of 4 vols., Book I, "Preface," pp. 9-11.

35

Cicero explores the subject of moral goodness in an earlier work, "Discussions at Tusculum (V)," in On the Good Life, tr. and introd. Michael Grant (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 75.

36

Erasmus' colloquy Alcumista provides some of the inspiration for The Alchemist. Jonson draws on The Praise of Folly throughout much of his comic work for the occasional bon mot.

37

Clarence Valentine Boyer accepts that "Tamburlaine is a Machiavellian" but "he is all lion and no fox; he does not illustrate the subtlety and treachery associated with Machiavellism as does Barabas." See "VI. The Ambitious Villain-Hero," The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1914), p. 60. On the other hand, Antonio D'Andrea assigns many of Tamburlaine's apparently conflicting traits to a reading of Machiavelli:

The terror [Tamburlaine] inspires, his inhuman cruelty, his attitude towards his sons, his disdain for the effeminate and cowardly Calyphas, his incredible virtue devoid of common moral scruples, his extraordinary enterprises, can easily be traced to Machiavelli's assertion that "nothing gives a prince so much respect as great undertakings and unusual examples of his own ability."

See Antonio D'Andrea, "The Aspiring Mind: A Study of the Machiavellian Element in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," YIS (1972), p. 58. D'Andrea quotes Principe xxi in Tutte le opera di Niccolò Machiavelli, ed. F. Flora and C. Cordiè, Milano, 1949-50. I, 28, English transl. A.H. Gilbert (New York, 1946), p. 120.

38

Juniper calls Rachel "sweet Machauell" (4.8.29); Cordatus mentions Machiavelli as an unadmirable statesman (II.vi.168), in Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1925-53), III. Hereafter referred to as H and S.

39

H and S, VIII, 598-603 (ll. 1127-96).

40

Tiberius' apparent humility earns the ironic and anachronistic commendation, "Princelike, to the life," from Arruntius (Sejanus, ed. Jonas A. Barish, The Yale Ben Jonson [Yale: Univ. Press, 1965], I, 395).

41

Godschalk, "I. Considerations and Reconsiderations," Picture, p. 29.

42

Godschalk, "I. Considerations," Picture, p. 36.

43

Godschalk, "I. Considerations," Picture; pp. 36-37.

44

Steane, p. 215.

45

Steane, p. 217. On the other hand, Levin maintains that Mortimer's last lines foreshadow Hamlet (The Overreacher, p. 122).

46

Steane, pp. 207 and 209.

47

Steane, p. 212.

48

See Irving Ribner's "Introduction" to his edition of The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963) and John Cutts' The Left Hand of God: A Critical Interpretation of the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Haddonfield, N. J.: Haddonfield House, 1973.). The remaining critics maintain their views in the works mentioned above. Quotations from Marlowe will be from Ribner's edition; reference material will be included in the body of the text.

49

Wolfgang Clemen points out the change in the set speech before and after Tamburlaine:

What had been straightforward
self-introduction becomes on
[Tamburlaine's] lips self-glorification
on the grand scale; what had
been the mere statement of purposes
becomes the daring anticipation of
all future contingencies; and the
disclosures of wishes for the future
becomes a voluptuous surrender to
wishful thinking.

See "8. Marlowe: I," English Tragedy Before Shakespeare: The Development of Dramatic Speech, tr. T.S. Dorsch, University Paperback (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 115.

50

The sub-plot complements Tamburlaine's experiences. Although he imitates his leader and sings his praises, Theridamas fails to win Olympia, who tricks him into killing her.

51

Tamburlaine, Part I (Ribner ed.), p. 50.

52

Edgar Rosenberg traces the history of the stage character of the "Jew-villain," including Marlowe's Barabas, in From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction (Stanford: Univ. Press, 1960).

53

Edward Meyer, Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama (Weimar, 1897; New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), p. 49.

54

It seems preferable to use the earlier edition, printed before most of Jonson's best works, instead of the later one, which appears after Bartholomew Fair (1614). For the quotation see Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, 1604-1616, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1950), p. 281.

55

Judith Weil, Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet (Cambridge: Univ. P., 1977), p. 53. Weil draws parallels between passages in Doctor Faustus and passages in Erasmus' Enchiridion and The Praise of Folly. She also emphasizes the value of The Song of Solomon in her interpretation.

56

Weil, pp. 55, 57, 59, and 60.

57

Weil, pp. 71, 64, and 68. Weil argues that the comic episodes move from direct to indirect resemblance to Faustus' career (pp. 66-67).

58

Weil, pp. 72, 77, 75, and 79-80.

59

The range of possible dates for these plays may be found in S. Schoenbaum's revision of Alfred Harbage's Annals of English Drama 975-1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Author, Title, Dramatic Companies, etc. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn., 1964). For Marlowe's plays see pp. 52-57.

60

Peele's Battle of Alcazar, Greene's Alphonsus, King of Aragon and his parody Orlando Furioso, and Thomas Lodge's The Wounds of Civil War are among the better known of these possible imitations of Tamburlaine.

61

The term "comic history" is used by A.P. Rossiter in "Angel with Horns: The Unity of 'Richard III'," in Richard III, ed. Mark Eccles, Signet Classic (New York: New American Library, 1954), p. 250. The article is drawn from Rossiter's Angels With Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures (London: Longmans, Green, 1961). In Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy Irving Ribner maintains that "Shakespeare for the first time accomplished in a single play the ends of tragedy and of history." See Patterns, University Paperback (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 23.

62

Mark Eccles mentions Richard's share of the lines in his "Introduction" to his edition of Richard III, p. xxiii.

63

In this context Rossiter observes:
Here Richard is a middle-term between Barabas, the Jew of Malta (c. 1590) and Volpone (1606). He inhabits a world where everyone deserves everything he can do to them; and in his murderous practical joking he is inclusively the comic exposé of the mental shortcomings (the intellectual and moral deformities) of this world of beings depraved and besotted.

See "Angels with Horns," p. 243.

64

D.A. Traversi argues that Richard's last soliloquy "is perhaps the Shakespearean equivalent, more human and less 'metaphysical,' of the vision of hell which haunted Faustus in Marlowe's great play, where it also produces a last great speech confessing to irreparable loss." See Traversi's An Approach to Shakespeare: Volume I: From "Henry VI" to "Twelfth Night", 3rd ed., rev. and expanded, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 43.

65

The similarity to Macbeth is noted by both Rossiter, "Angel with Horns," p. 240, and Traversi, Approach, pp. 43-44. Eliot hints at a distinction between Faustus and Macbeth ("Ben Jonson (1919)," p. 79), a relationship explored at greater length by Irving Ribner in "Marlowe and Shakespeare," SQ 15(1964): 49-51. See also Kristian Smidt, "Two Aspects of Ambition in Elizabethan Tragedy: Doctor Faustus and Macbeth," ES 50(1969): 235-48.

66

Alfred Harbage finds Edmund the least repulsive of the "workers of evil," saying that Shakespeare might have loved him as a character "a little". On the other hand, George Wilson Knight considers Edmund to be "the most villainous of all," but adds that he "is given a noble, essentially tragic end." Harbage's comments are from "King Lear: An Introduction" in his edition of Shakespeare: The Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views, Spectrum (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 116. Knight's observations are from The Wheel of Fire (London: Methuen, 1949), also in Harbage, p. 131.

67

The Plays of George Chapman, ed. with introd. and notes by Thomas Marc Parrott; The Tragedies, vol. II (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 343.

68

A sound introduction to Marston is provided by Anthony Caputi's John Marston, Satirist (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1961).

69

L.C. Knights, "Appendix B: Seventeenth-Century Melancholy," Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937; rpt. 1962), pp. 325-28.

⁷⁰ The phrase is from Discoveries, Herford and Simpson, vol. XI. 138-39, p.567. Jonson is translating a passage from Vives' In Libros de Disciplinis Praefatio. While there is no character equivalent to a tragic hero in Jonson's comedies, material which appears somewhat out of place in a comedy is included: the ending of Volpone is an example which Jonson recognized, also the wrath of Augustus and the following exile of Ovid in The Poetaster; and the indifferent dismissal of Morose and the potential mutilation of Jack Daw in Epicoene nearly go beyond the pale of comedy.

⁷¹ Herford and Simpson, I, 321.

⁷² Levin observes:

[Marlowe] could not have selected two Roman exemplars more unlike each other than Lucan, the clangorous laureate of civil war, and Ovid, the mellifluous singer of the loves of the gods. His own strain would modulate back and forth between those two registers, lyric seduction and epic conquest, between the respective modes of Venus and Mars.

See "The End of Scholarism," Overreacher, pp. 27-28.

⁷³

Crites refers to "Father Ben" and Neander examines the "perfect play." "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," Selected Works of John Dryden, ed., introd., and commentaries by William Frost (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), pp. 333 and 363.

⁷⁴ Epicoene, ed. L. A. Beaurline (Lincoln: Univ. of Neb. P., 1966), II. v. 103-26.

⁷⁵ All references to the late plays will be to Herford and Simpson, VI and VII. Act, scene, and line references will be included within parentheses in the body of the text.

II

"Nothing but emperor": Sejanus and Tamburlaine

In Sejanus¹ Jonson attacked the misuse of language on several levels. Sejanus is the ruthless overreacher with the characteristic eloquence. On a lower scale, Afer acts as a foil to his rhetoric, while Macro reflects his ruthlessness. Neither is on a par with Sejanus, but Jonson implies that there is little difference between the towering ambition and grandiose speech of a Sejanus and the methods and goals of Afer and Macro, or, for that matter, Natta and Satrius. As Emperor, Tiberius exploits language in the full knowledge of his power and his people. His oratory is the verbose double talk of a master hypocrite. The comments of the Germanicans often serve to instruct the audience in this regard. In addition, Jonson supplies examples of the proper use of emotional rhetoric in the speeches of Silius, Arruntius, and Cordus. He maintains a balance between the two groups usually at the expense of the tension and the action; beneficially, however, this technique emphasizes his disapproval of the overreacher's ideals and the reduction of his stature to that of a social climbing spy and parasite. Occasionally Sejanus does display the talents of a Tamburlaine, but Jonson ensures that the triumph of his performance is short-lived. After each of Sejanus' best

moments, the audience has to re-examine its outlook in view of comments by the Germanicans or by Tiberius.²

While Jonson is famous for his recreation of London in his city comedies such as The Alchemist and Bartholomew Fair, his Rome in the two tragedies and his Venice in Volpone are equally authentic. The Elizabethan playwrights usually strove for accuracy when their subject was ancient Rome. T. J. B. Spencer comments on the early praise for veracity accorded Shakespeare's portrayal of the city. Although eighteenth-century editors discovered many anachronisms, Spencer points out that "The very reason they noticed the blunders was that they jarred against the pervading sense of authenticity everywhere else in the Roman plays." According to Spencer, the topic which fascinated Renaissance writers and for which Imperial Rome supplied the material was the "problem of the difference between a benevolent monarchy and an odious tyranny, and the gradations by which the one may merge into the other." In part, Sejanus examines this subject. When he compares Shakespeare's Roman plays to Jonson's, Spencer comes out in favour of Shakespeare because he finds Jonson's tragedies lack "sophistication

There is a certain naïvety about Ben Jonson's understanding of Roman history. Of course, in a way, there is more obvious learning about Catiline and Sejanus than about Shakespeare's Roman plays. There must have been a great deal of note-book work, a great deal of mosaic work. . . . But the defect of Jonson's Sejanus is lack of homogeneity of style and material: Jonson mixes the gossip of Suetonius with the gloomily penetrating and disillusioned comments on men and their motives by Tacitus.³

On the other hand, Robert Ornstein maintains that "No other contemporary sought or achieved so authentic a reproduction in the art of the classical world" as Jonson did.⁴ Jonas A. Barish takes the same view when he states that Sejanus "offers something like an archaeological reconstruction of the epoch it deals with, and a fully worked out interpretation of its subject, arrived at through a consideration of all relevant evidence."⁵ All the background in Jonson's Rome therefore rings true, from the religious service worshipping Fortune, with the Praecones, Tubicines, Tibicines, and the Flamen (V.171-201), to the story of Sabinus' body on the Gemonies (IV.283-87).⁶

In addition to being factually correct, Jonson's Rome in Sejanus is a city of spies, informers, and hired assassins, whose activities are condoned and even praised as a service to the state. The Senate is the tool of Tiberius and Sejanus; led by a public prosecutor like Afer, its members, such as Haterius and Gallus, applaud and hiss on cue. Virtuous men are excluded from important positions. At the most they can perform small tasks, as Lepidus does. Any criticism of the running of the government leads to sudden and unjust accusation, condemnation, and punishment.

From the beginning Jonson describes overreaching as a despicable practice. It is not restricted to the exceptional individual, such as Sejanus or Tamburlaine; instead, it is the common pastime of the lowest at the court. The conversation of two respectable old men, Silius and Sabinus, conditions the audience against such ambition at the start of the play. Sabinus bitterly observes that he and Silius are not "enginers" (I.4) or plotters, and continues:

We have no shift of faces, no cleft tongues,
No soft and glutinous bodies, that can stick
Like snails on painted walls; or, on our breasts
Creep up, to fall from that proud height to which
We did, by slavery, not by service, climb.
We are no guilty men, and then no great.

(I.7-12)

The aspiring courtier is compared to a snail and then a snake, and possibly, for a Christian audience, Satan. Corruption, crime, and fabricated "black secrets" (I.15) make up the order of the day. When Satrius and Natta appear, Silius agrees with Sabinus and uses the "great Sejanus' clients" (I.23) as examples:

. . . These can lie,
Flatter, and swear, forswear, deprave, inform,
Smile and betray; make guilty men; then beg
The forfeit lives, to get the livings; cut
Men's throats with whisp'rings; sell to gaping suitors
The empty smoke that flies about the palace.

(I.27-32)

Satrius and Natta are protean parasites who can "change every mood, / Habit and garb, as often as [their patron] varies" (I.34-35). Sabinus expands the scope of the conversation to the "filthier flatteries" (I.43) which affect the authorities as well as the gentry. The servility of the consuls, the praetors, and the senate are such that Tiberius has often cried, "Oh race of men, / Prepared for servitude!" (I.52-53). Both Sejanus and Tiberius are first mentioned as thriving in this "vile" and "sordid" atmosphere (I.42 and 45). Although free men are now the slaves to the lusts of many, rather than the tyrant's alone, Silius blames the citizens, not Tiberius (I.59-64), for failing to resist Sejanus' machinations. Tamburlaine overwhelms all his foes, but he does face a seemingly endless number of armies, each stronger than the last. Sejanus proceeds undefeated principally because he is unopposed. The speed with which Natta pumps Latiaris for the facts about Cordus (I.74-85) testifies to the trustworthiness of Sabinus and Silius.

Arruntius takes up Silius' idea that Romans are not what they were. He recalls the great defenders of the republic, Cato, Brutus, and Cassius. In contrast to "their eternal fire" (I.99), "All's but blaze, / Flashes and smoke, wherewith we labor so" (I.100-101). To be "Roman" is to be good, gallant, and great (I.102-103); Arruntius argues that no present citizen can be called

Roman. Hope flares up when Drusus walks by. Although Arruntius considers him a "riotous youth" (I.106), Sabinus likes him "chiefly for opposing to Sejanus" (I.112). Drusus serves as a bridge to the memory of Germanicus. Silius admires the prince's treatment of Germanicus' sons (I.112-13). Arruntius and Silius launch into an eulogy of Germanicus, who possessed some of the "old virtue" (I.119) at least. The personal experience of the follower, Silius, is verified by the support of the historian, Cordus. Sabinus corroborates Silius and corrects Cordus. Silius says that he was "nearer to the gods / Than men in nature" (I.125-26); Cordus compares him to Alexander (I.139-42), the paragon of conqueror and emperor in the Renaissance; Sabinus caps his friends by comparing Germanicus both to the great Roman conquerors, Pompey and Caesar, and to the great republicans, Brutus and Cassius (I.149-52). This man, "the soul of goodness" (I.154), was secretly poisoned by order of Tiberius, who knows every "trick in state" (I.160). As soon as poison is mentioned, Sejanus appears.

Throughout the play both Tiberius and Sejanus are measured against this verbal pantheon of the illustrious dead. Their success against the survivors of the Germanican party and their struggle with each other takes second place to the larger issue of the shared responsibility of the ruler and the ruled. Ideally the overreacher has no place in this relationship. If he appears, and he almost always does, restraining him falls to the prince, not the subjects.

The career of Sejanus shows how wide the gap is between Tiberius and the Roman people.

Although his aims and his energy are like Tamburlaine's, Sejanus does not begin with a magnificent speech or a bold and daring deed.⁷ Instead, as soon as he enters he interrogates Satrius about Eudemus in the same way that Natta questioned Latiaris about Cordus (I.176-95). From the start, even though he is at his peak, Sejanus is revealed to be different only in degree, not kind, from the "minist'ring" spies he employs (I.64). The remarks by Silius and Arruntius, "Now observe the stoops, / The bendings, and the falls" and "Most creeping base!" (I.175-76), are the first of many stage directions to Sejanus' followers. Sejanus has no shame or fear about selling a tribune's position. Selling offices is a cut and dried business, summed up by the statement, "Well, let him bring his money, and his name" (I.189).

After Sejanus leaves, Silius, Sabinus, and Arruntius bring up the characteristics associated with the Marlovian overreacher for the first time. Before Sejanus has a chance to give his outlook, their criticism and irony portray the overreacher's ruthless ambition and desire to be an emperor or a god as signs of decay in a society. While Arruntius talks of the "grov'ling honor" of the buyer (I.197), Silius sarcastically attacks Sejanus:

Sejanus can repair if Jove should ruin.
 He is the now court god, and well applied
 With sacrifice of knees, of crooks, and cringe,
 He will do more than all the house of heav'n
 Can for a thousand hecatombs. 'Tis he
 Makes us our day or night. Hell and Elysium
 Are in his look. We talk of Rhadamanth,
 Furies, and firebrands, but 'tis his frown
 That is all these, . . .

(I.202-210)

The phrases reminiscent of Marlowe's overreachers stress the height which Sejanus has already attained. He can negate Jove, with whom Tamburlaine characteristically equates himself (Part I.II.vii.12-17; IV.iv.71-72; V.ii.389-90), but only within the corrupt court. According to Silius, the overreacher is a fake, and the fawning "sacrifice" (I.204) to him contemptible. Sejanus is the sun, a comparison again often used by Tamburlaine (Part I.I.ii.39-40; 175-76; II.iii.22-24; IV.ii.36-40).

Not only is Sejanus the sun, says Silius: "Hell and Elysium / Are in his look" (I.207-208). Tamburlaine tells Zenocrate's father the Soldan, that

Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men
 That I have sent from sundry foughten fields
 To spread my fame through hell and up to heaven.

(Part I.V.ii.402-404)

Faustus boasts to Mephistophilis, "I confound hell in Elysium" (I.iii.60).⁸ Tamburlaine ranges easily between heaven and hell in his imagery. While he rarely refers to the Furies or Rhadamanth, Theridamas, courting Olympia, describes him as one "By whose proud side the ugly Furies

run, / Harkening when he shall bid them plague the world"
 (Part II.III.iv.59-60). Tamburlaine's hellish "frown" or
 "look" of death is one of his outstanding features. Before
 hearing him speak, Theridamas reacts to the sight of
 Tamburlaine:

His looks do menace heaven and dare the gods.
 His fiery eyes are fixed upon the earth
 As if he now devised some stratagem,
 Or meant to pierce Avernus' darksome vaults
 Or pull the triple-headed dog from hell.

(Part I.I.ii.156-
 60)

Agydas stands "aghast" after Tamburlaine looks "wrathfully"
 on him (Part I.III.ii.69; s.d. after 65). He realizes that
 the "late-felt frowns" and "killing frowns of jealousy and
 love" foreshadow his own death (Part I.III.ii.85 and 91).
 Tamburlaine's frown is most impressive on the third day of
 a siege when it is complemented by the black tents, black
 standards, and black armour. Before he outlines this pro-
 cedure the Soldan's Messenger refers to

The frowning looks of fiery Tamburlaine,
 That with his terror and imperious eyes
 Commands the hearts of his associates,

(Part I.IV.i. 13-
 15)

The disgusted Soldan supplies the allusions to "Gorgon,
 prince of hell," the "devil," and "Erebus" (Part I.IV.i.18,
 43,46). Tamburlaine's looks play their role in Part II as
 well. Tamburlaine says to Almeda, "See'st thou not death
 within my wrathful looks?" (III.v.119); and later, "My looks

shall make [Callapine's forces] fly" (V.iii.107). Sejanus stirs terror in the heart as convincingly as Tamburlaine does; however, Sejanus triumphs in the court, not on the battle-field, over sycophants and flatterers, not kings and soldiers.⁹ On the other hand, on the "adverse part" (I.210), Sejanus' smile of "bliss" and "nectar" (I.212) recalls Zenocrate's attraction to Tamburlaine: "His talk much sweeter than the Muses' song / They sung for honor 'gainst Pierides" (Part I.III.ii.50-51).

The juxtaposition of Arruntius' caustic description of Sejanus as "the noted pathic" of the past (I.216) and Sabinus' wry comment, "now, the second face of the whole world" (I.217), leads to the discussion of his recent operations and of what remains for him to take. Sabinus suggests that Sejanus, the "partner of the empire" (I.218), spoils the empire like a conqueror. In Rome "every dignity" is for sale at the hands of the man "equal with Tiberius" (I.220 and 219). Gathering his forces together, like any commander before a campaign, Sejanus can only intend to make war on Rome. His ability to win followers by his eloquent language is hinted at when Sabinus says that he is "heard to court the soldier by his name, / Woos, feasts the chiefest men of action" (I.235-36). When Arruntius questions how Sejanus can be "anything he is, but less?" (I.243), Silius has the answer, "Nothing but emperor" (I.244). The Germanicans briefly sketch in the line of succession to Tiberius, and finish in indignation at the thought that

Sejanus might try to remove them all (I.247-60).

Before Sejanus has a soliloquy or even a major appearance on stage, his character, goals, and plan of action have been dissected by his most exacting critics and bitterest enemies. He has nothing new left to say; he has only to confirm anything the Germanicans have said about him to become a despicable villain whose ruin the audience eagerly awaits. Jonson leaves nothing to chance. The fascination of a Tamburlaine or a Faustus who can initially overwhelm an audience with a vision of grandeur and glamour is beyond the grasp of Sejanus. Jonson sees the overreacher as persuasive and dangerous, but never admirable or worthy of sympathy.

Sejanus' first move in the play, the acquisition of Eudemus, contains parallels to Tamburlaine's winning of Theridamas. Even before Sejanus says anything, his own follower, Satrius, lessens his impact on the audience by warning Eudemus, "Do but observe his humor" (I.267). Sejanus prefers to be addressed as a lord (I.278). Once styled "my lord," Sejanus quickly but carefully establishes a jovial, good-natured male fellowship with Eudemus on the subject of his female patients (I.281-321). When Eudemus balks at the revelation of Livia's secrets, Sejanus states Tamburlaine's credo bare of any flowery rhetoric of classical mythology. He also echoes what Silius said of him:

Sir, you can lose no honor
 By trusting aught to me. The coarsest act
 Done to my service I can so requite,
 As all the world shall style it honorable.
 Your idle, virtuous definitions
 Keep honor poor, and are as scorned as vain.
 Those deeds breathe honor that do suck in gain.
 (I.326-32)

In contrast to Tamburlaine, Sejanus evidently accepts his greatness without question or demonstration. If a definition does not suit Sejanus, he will rewrite it. Like Sejanus, Tamburlaine deems any act done by him or in his interest to be honorable. His "name and honor" (Part I.I.ii.204) will spread simultaneously with the gain of "martial spoil" of "conquered kingdoms and of cities sacked" (Part I.I.ii.190-91). The meaning is clear in Usumcasane's remark: "And kingdoms at the least we all expect, / Besides the honor in assured conquests" (Part I.I.ii.217-18).

Tamburlaine's seductive language cannot completely hide the barefaced act of betrayal. Dumping the treasure where the Persians can see it, he says to Theridamas:

I see the folly of thy emperor.
 Art thou, but captain of a thousand horse,

 Forsake thy king and do but join with me,
 And we will triumph over all the world.
 I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
 And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about.

 Both we will walk upon the lofty cliffs,

 Both we will reign as consuls of the earth,
 (Part I.I.ii.166-67;
 171-74; 192; 196)

Tamburlaine praises Theridamas for being a good soldier, a "valiant man" with a "martial face and stout aspect" (I.ii.165 and 169). When Theridamas asks, "shall I prove a traitor to my king?", Tamburlaine replies, "No, but the trusty friend of Tamburlaine" (I.ii.226). Tamburlaine then seals the agreement in a godlike manner:

Theridamas, my friend, take here my hand,
Which is as much as if I swore by heaven
And called the gods to witness of my vow.
(Part I.I.ii.231-33)

In winning Eudemus, Sejanus employs a strategy similar to Tamburlaine's with Theridamas. After he establishes his superiority, as "my lord" (I.278), Sejanus graciously condescends to equality and flattery. He soon applauds Eudemus both for his skill as a physician and for arranging a rendezvous with Livia:

Let me adore my Æsculapius!
...
... Begone, my friend,
Not barely stylèd, but created so.
Expect things greater than thy largest hope,
To overtake thee. Fortune shall be taught
To know how ill she hath deserved, thus long
To come behind thy wishes.

(I.355; 360-65)

Sejanus takes on the manner of a god, who can create friends and manage Fortune. Both Eudemus and Theridamas are "Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks" (I.ii.227). The accomplishment is similar in each case, but the significance is different.

Eudemus is only a physician who buys a tribune's office.

Theridamas is the trusted commander of a thousand cavalry.

Alone, Sejanus comments on Eudemus, but his statement ironically reflects on his own association with Tiberius:

Ambition makes more trusty slaves than need.
These fellows, by the flavor of their act,
Have still the means to tempt, oftentimes the power.
(I.366-68)

As a manipulator, Sejanus is somewhat like Barabas, who says of his "trusty Turk" (IV.i.129): "Thus every villain ambles after wealth, / Although he ne'er be richer than in hope" (III.iv.50-51). The black humour which is prominent in the relationship of Barabas and Ithamore surfaces in the dealings of Sejanus and Eudemus.¹⁰ In spite of their plot, both Sejanus and Eudemus appear ridiculous at times. Sejanus reveals his contempt for Livia also when he says, "Prosper it, Pallas, thou that better'st wit: / For Venus hath the smallest share in it" (I.373-74).

In public the team of Tiberius and Sejanus turn out to be smoothly proficient in trampling the rights of Roman citizens while ostensibly bowing to the wishes of the Senate. Tiberius makes the speeches; Sejanus leads the applause. Jonson takes pains to show the audience that Tiberius is putting on an act. The emperor decries "these flatteries" (I.374; a man kneels to him); Sejanus follows with "How like a god speaks Caesar!" (I.379). Arruntius

promptly observes, in an aside, "Oh, what is it proud slime will not believe / Of his own worth" (I.381-82). As soon as he enters, Tiberius is equated not with the gods but, with "proud slime" (I.381). Arruntius goes on to set Cotta straight and describes the "confederacy" (I.385) or conspiracy which Tiberius and Sejanus have formed. They are masters of deception:

'Tis your most courtly, known confederacy,
To have your private parasite redeem
What [Tiberius] in public subtlety, will lose
To making him a name.
(I.385-88)

Cordus and Sabinus fall in line with Arruntius. Cordus says, "Rarely dissembled!" and Arruntius immediately adds, "Princelike, to the life" (I.395). Jonson is likely using an anachronism to draw a parallel between Machiavelli and Tiberius. Sejanus too may be regarded as a student of Machiavelli, but he is no match for the emperor.

Jonson employs the same technique to undercut Tiberius as he did with Sejanus. Before Tiberius begins his first major address, Silius delivers a critique of twenty-four lines which enshrines "our old liberty" (I.404) and the "virtuous prince" (I.408) and which proceeds to demolish Tiberius:

But when his grace is merely but lip-good,
And that, no longer than he airs himself
Abroad in public, there to seem to shun
The strokes and stripes of flatterers, which within
Are lechery unto him, and so feed

His brutish sense with their afflicting sound,
 As, dead to virtue, he permits himself
 Be carried like a pitcher, by the ears,
 To every act of vice: this is a case
 Deserves our fear, . . .

(I.410-19)

Arruntius is in favour of action and hunting the "palace rats" (I.427), but Sabinus restrains him. In doing so, he places the responsibility (and therefore the blame) on Tiberius: "It is not safe t'enforce a sovereign's ear. / Princes hear well, if they at all will hear" (I.433-34).

The audience would expect a speech of superb hypocrisy from Tiberius and he does not disappoint them. Ironically his subject is the rejection of monuments and temples to himself in favour of being remembered in the hearts of his people (I.454-468; 479-90). His remarks not only rebound on him, because his reputation is that of a tyrant; they also criticize Sejanus and overreachers in general:

But as, t'have received [a temple] once, may deserve
 The gain of pardon, so to be adored
 With the continued style and note of gods,
 Through all the provinces, were wild ambition,
 And no less pride. Yes, ev'n Augustus' name
 Would early vanish, should it be profaned
 With such promiscuous flatteries.

(I.469-75)

The status of a god on earth or throughout an empire is the goal of most overreachers, whether it is Faustus or Tamburlaine, Sejanus or Mammon. Sabinus, Silius, and Arruntius have repeatedly accused Sejanus of wild ambition

and pride. Sejanus has already indulged in "promiscuous flatteries" (I.475) with Eudemus in his pursuit of Livia. At this point Tiberius may not realize how right he is. Natta and Satrius prepare for Sejanus' obsequious reaction: "The oracles are ceased, / That only Caesar, with their tongue, might speak" (I. 503-504). Tiberius continually denies any desire to be treated like a god; Sejanus then compares him to a god; and Arruntius always exposes the show.

In the second half of his speech Tiberius approves the honour voted to Sejanus, the "great aid of Rome" (I.528), and employs the "hyperboles" (I.533) he earlier refused for himself. He finishes by stating that princes are a race apart from other men, a commonplace accepted by the Germanicans (and by Jonson):

Nor let [men] ask the causes of our praise.
Princes have still their grounds reared with themselves,
Above the poor low flats of common men,
And who will search the reasons of their acts
Must stand on equal bases.

(I.536-40)

The Germanicans will complain, but they will not revolt. As a result, one by one, they are murdered.

Drusus agrees with Arruntius and the rest, instantly earning Arruntius' approval. He refers to Sejanus as "th'aspirer" (I.556), calls him "Colossus" (I.564) to his face, and strikes him. Seconded in voice by Arruntius, Drusus draws his sword, but Sejanus will not fight and says nothing. Drusus vows to nail his pride to a cross and exits

with the crowd. Sejanus' brief soliloquy ending the first act displays his gift for intrigue and ability to bide his time. He can control his wild ambition, pride, "Wrath," and "hate" (I.579 and 578).

Having closed Act I, Sejanus opens Act II, moving at full speed to his revenge. He and Livia unite in praising Eudemus. Apparently she was so quickly persuaded to betray Drusus that the scene is not worth showing. Sejanus directs his words towards a princess who is already won, and too easily won to increase his stature. Tamburlaine has to be patient with Zenocrate and be the gentleman in conduct as well as the courtier in language. Sejanus' affair with Livia resembles Faustus pouring his golden words before a devil disguised as Helen, or Ithamore needlessly glorifying Bellamira. Sejanus and Livia talk together like conspirators as much as lovers. Even in seduction Sejanus remains pragmatic. Only after he has settled on the way to poison Drusus does he celebrate Livia's qualities. In the same line he instructs Eudemus, "Send [Lygdus] to me, I'll work him" and turns to Livia, "Royal lady" (II.24).

As a man actually in love might do, he maintains that she has turned him to fire, the element most congenial to overreaching imagery. His speech, well ordered and coolly arranged, contains signs of Tamburlaine's intensity; Sejanus knows the lure of being an empress as well as does Tamburlaine. Just as Tamburlaine paints a picture of luxury surrounded by whiteness and purity for the virgin

Zenocrate (Part.I.I.ii.87-97), so Sejanus plays upon Livia's pride and jealousy. The difference between Zenocrate and Livia emphasizes Jonson's view that the society in which the overreacher flourishes does not suit the "good man," either as poet or orator.

Sejanus finds himself in somewhat the same situation as Tamburlaine. In each case the princess makes the aspirations legitimate. Sejanus is only a knight, Tamburlaine is only a shepherd. In contrast, Livia is the wife of the emperor's son, Drusus, and the sister of the legendary Germanicus. Zenocrate is the betrothed of the Prince of Arabia and the Soldan's daughter, a point which Tamburlaine promptly uses to his advantage in persuading Theridamas (Part I.I.ii.185-86). Each woman must betray her husband or fiancé in favour of an unsanctioned union with an unscrupulous upstart. The fire which Sejanus attributes to Livia is usually associated with war by Tamburlaine:

Though I have loved you long, and with that height
Of zeal and duty--like the fire, which more
It mounts, it trembles--thinking nought could add
Unto the fervor which your eye had kindled;
.
. . . I protest
Myself through-rarefied, and turned all flame
In your affection.

(II.25-28; 31-33)

Tamburlaine often compares himself to the sun or the "chiefest lamp" of heaven and earth (IV.ii.36) or other forms of fire. He

Will send up fire to [his stars'] turning spheres
 And cause the sun to borrow light of you.
 My sword struck fire from his coat of steel,
 Even in Bithynia, when I took this Turk,
 As when a fiery exhalation,
 Wrapped in the bowels of a freezing cloud,
 Fighting for passage, makes the welkin crack
 And casts a flash of lightning to the earth.

So shall our swords, our lances, and our shot
 Fill all the air with fiery meteors.
 Then, when the sky shall wax as red as blood,
 It shall be said I made it red myself,
 To make me think of naught but blood and war.

(Part I.IV.ii.39-
 46; 51-55)

Like Zenocrate, Livia might reasonably hope to be an empress, but she would never expect an offer from such a source as Sejanus (or Tamburlaine). Each wooer elevates his princess to the throne of a goddess and confidently includes himself as a god. Sejanus moves swiftly from dividing the name of Caesar with Livia to Livia's revenge on Augusta and Agrippina:

Such a spirit as yours
 Was not created for the idle second
 To a poor flash as Drusus, but to shine
 Bright as the moon among the lesser lights,
 And share the sov'reignty of all the world.
 Then Livia triumphs in her proper sphere,
 When she and her Sejanus shall divide
 The name of Caesar and Augusta's star
 Be dimmed with glory of a brighter beam;

(II.33-41)

If Livia is to be the moon, then Sejanus, like Tamburlaine, will be the sun. His offer to "share the sov'reignty of all the world" (II.37) recalls Tamburlaine's offer to Zenocrate to "invest you empress of the East" (Part I.I.ii.46). Tamburlaine flatters Zenocrate by saying that she

surpasses Juno:

Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills,
Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine
Than the possession of the Persian crown,
Which gracious stars have promised at my birth.

Shall all we offer to Zenocrate
And then myself to fair Zenocrate.

(Part I.I.iii.87-92;
104-105)

For all his talk, Sejanus still must go when Tiberius calls. Making his "rude departure," he urges the "Glory of ladies" to be "resolute in our plot" and gives final instruction to the "wise physician" (II.104; 112; 106; 108). Eudemus is left to praise Livia's beauty, something Sejanus never mentions. Ironically he does so while preparing new cosmetics and continuing the discussion of poison. He begins by extolling his new master. Jonson satirizes this kind of rhetoric by making Eudemus as vocally gifted as Sejanus:

Fortunate princess!
How are you blest in the fruition
Of this unequalled man, this soul of Rome,
The empire's life, and voice of Caesar's world!

Sejanus, whose high name doth strike the stars,
And rings about the concave, great Sejanus,
Whose glories, style, and titles are himself--
The often iterating of Sejanus.

(II.53-56; 98-101)

Such adulation seems to make Sejanus the rival of Tamburlaine and equal of the gods, but, spoken by Eudemus, a sycophant, unprincipled chemist, and pander, it has just the opposite effect.¹¹ Eudemus' praise is as damaging to Sejanus

as Silius' criticism in the first act. Tamburlaine's trio of Techelles, Usumcasane, and Theridamas usually echoes the leader. Provided they do not detract from his image, he is determined to make them emperors. His worthy opponents such as Cosroe and Bajazeth have something of his talent for oratory; however, unworthy opponents such as Mycetes do not. Cosroe and Bajazeth act as foils in increasing the glory of Tamburlaine. Jonson makes what should be a gain for Sejanus into another loss of credibility and prestige.

Eudemus uses cosmetics to try to make Livia beautiful in order to deceive Sejanus. In different ways she is false to her husband and to Sejanus. For his part, Eudemus' praise is as superficial as his make-up. He mixes references to Sejanus with his advice on the "fucus" and unites the two by inferring that the "study" of cosmetics will "preserve" the love of so rare a man as Sejanus (II.60; 76). As Eudemus' commendation is hollow, Jonson may be suggesting that Sejanus is anything but "a man, that comes not every hour / To greet the world" (II.77-78).

After Eudemus and Livia leave, Sejanus exposes his feelings in soliloquy. His view of himself as one of a kind is the key-stone of the speech. He will have a "perfect" revenge (II.140); Drusus will learn "what kind of man" (II.146) he has annoyed; finally Sejanus calls on his soul to confront Jove (II.160-62). The bombastic rather than daring tone suggests the fallacies inherent in this line of reasoning.

The brevity of the speech increases its intensity. Jonson does not give Sejanus the time to build up to an emotional peak. Instead, Sejanus is agitated from the start and too sure of success; thus he makes a reckless proposition:

If this be not revenge, when I have done
And made it perfect, let Egyptian slaves,
Parthians, and barefoot Hebrews brand my face,
And print my body full of injuries.

(II.139-42)

Tamburlaine's confidence seldom allows the thought of any injury to himself; he is hardest hit by Calyphas, the "traitor to my name and majesty" (Part II.IV.ii.15) who is the "Image of sloth and picture of a slave, / The obloquy and scorn of my renown!" (Part II.IV.ii.16-17). Sejanus is determined to wreak vengeance on Tiberius' son, "child Drusus" (II.143), but Drusus was already on the list (I.580-81). Tamburlaine likely uses his emotional language to overwhelm any objections to his murder of Calyphas. He refuses to hear any entreaty, and even calls his three brave and faithful followers "ye base, unworthy soldiers!" (Part II.IV.ii.24) for even thinking of mercy. Tamburlaine previously threatened Calyphas when Calyphas was apathetic to his father's code of blood and war (Part II.I.iv.102-104). To remain unquestioned emperor, Tamburlaine cannot permit disapproval from any source, even from a prince and his own son. In contrast to the rhetoric employed by both Tamburlaine and his enemies, Calyphas relies on dry wit and indifference

to belittle the honour and virtue of war. Tamburlaine marshals all his speaking skills, including references to Jove and Mahomet, to rid himself permanently of this menace. Even though his heart is "Wounded with shame and killed with discontent" (Part II.IV.ii.19) he cannot ignore disobedience. As an adult male heir, son of the emperor, Drusus is the greatest obstacle between Sejanus and the throne, apart from Tiberius. Thinking of Drusus, Sejanus boasts of "The power I had to crush thee into air" (II.145) and continues:

Thy follies now shall taste what kind of man
They have provoked, and this thy father's house
Crack in the flame of my incensed rage,
Whose fury shall admit no shame or mean.

(II.146-49)

Tamburlaine elaborates on the difference between himself and Calyphas. Immediately before stabbing Calyphas, he declares that his

. . . matter is the flesh of Tamburlaine,
Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves,
Made of the mould where of thyself consists, [Jove]
Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious,
Ready to levy power against thy throne,

(Part II.IV.ii.
38-42)

After stabbing Calyphas, Tamburlaine describes his son's soul as

Created of the massy dregs of earth,
The scum and tartar of the elements,
Wherein was neither courage, strength, or wit,
But folly, sloth, and damned idleness,

(Part II.IV.ii.
48-51)

Sejanus reaches a state of emotion as intense as Tamburlaine's only because he has to perform so minor an offense as adultery to effect his vengeance:

Adultery? It is the lightest ill
I will commit. A race of wicked acts
Shall flow out of my anger, and o'erspread
The world's wide face, which no posterity
Shall e'er approve, nor yet keep silent--things
That for their cunning, close and cruel mark,
Thy father would wish his, and shall, perhaps
Carry the empty name, but we the prize.
(II.150-57)

The thought of his world-famous "race of wicked acts" pleases Sejanus, but he has to admit that Tiberius will probably get the credit for them. Tamburlaine's concern for his fame during and after his life is obsessive. As the "scourge of God," he boasts that

The ages that shall talk of Tamburlaine,
Even from this day to Plato's wondrous year,
Shall talk how I have handled Bajazeth.
(Part I.IV.ii.95-97)

He is proud that two of his sons wish to succeed him as "the scourge and terror of the world" (Part II.I.iv.60). Having murdered Calyphas, Tamburlaine delivers a long justification of his deeds. The instrument of a nameless, faceless God that is not Christ, Jove, or Mahomet, Tamburlaine declares that he is enjoined

To scourge the pride of such as heaven abhors;
Nor am I made arch-monarch of the world,
Crowned and invested by the hand of Jove,
For deeds of bounty or nobility;

But since I exercise a greater name,
 The scourge of God and terror of the world,
 I must apply myself to fit those terms,
 In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,
 And plague such peasants as resist in me.
 The power of heaven's eternal majesty.

(Part II.IV.ii.
 74-83)

Through his lengthy descriptions of what he is and what he will do, Tamburlaine creates and sustains his magnetism for his followers and for the audience. Sejanus does not get that opportunity. The only crime he names is adultery, the one he would forget if he could. Just as he might expand on his assault of the gods, Jonson cuts him off with the entrance of Tiberius. He sketches in the familiar figure of the cunning and cruel "aspirer" (I.556) intent on gaining fame and the world; however, he denies Sejanus the chance to dazzle the audience with rhetoric. Sejanus has no sooner started his challenge to the gods than he is stopped:

On, then, my soul, and start not in thy course.
 Though heav'n drop sulphur and hell belch out fire,
 Laugh at the idle terrors. Tell proud Jove,
 Between his power and thine there is no odds,
 'Twas only fear first in the world made gods.

(II.158-62)

Tamburlaine repeatedly scorns the limitations of heaven and hell, and braves and berates Jove. To instill awe in his listeners, he requires the long speech which crushes most objection like a steam-roller. When he sends Calpurnas' "fainting soul" (Part II.IV.ii.36) back to Jove, he exclaims that his own "incorporeal spirit" (Part II.IV.i.79) prompts

him to attack Jove

That I might move the turning spheres of heaven
For earth and all this airy region
Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine.

(Part II.IV.ii.43-
45)

Tamburlaine uses this rhetoric to keep his troops and his prisoners in line and murders Calyphas with no resistance from his followers. Without interruption he continues to mock Jove and finishes with a word for his royal captives:

Thou [Jove] hast procured a greater enemy
Than he that darted mountains at thy head,
Shaking the burden mighty Atlas bears,
Whereat thou trembling hidd'st thee in the air,
Clothed with a pitchy cloud for being seen.
And now, ye cankered curs of Asia,
That will not see the strength of Tamburlaine,
Although it shine as brightly as the sun,
Now you shall feel the strength of Tamburlaine,

(Part II.IV.ii.52-
60)

After his arrogant boast about Jove, Sejanus must quickly dissemble and address Tiberius as "dread Caesar" (II.163). Tiberius takes entirely the wrong meaning because he hears only the last words: "When the master prince / Of all the world, Sejanus, saith he fears, / Is it not fatal?" (II. 165-67). This contradictory reaction offsets whatever force Sejanus' speech has.

In their dialogue Tiberius plays the devil's advocate to test the loyalty of his "comfort" (II.165). Sejanus matches him point for point as he argues for the theory of "policy and state" (II.171), or, as Marlowe's Machiavel

says, "laws writ in blood" (Jew of Malta. Prologue 21). In doing so he unwittingly reveals his own ambitions. His advice would suit an overreacher such as Tamburlaine as much as a legitimate emperor like Tiberius:

All for a crown.
The prince who shames a tyrant's name to bear,
Shall never dare do anything but fear.
All the command of scepters quite doth perish
If it begin religious thoughts to cherish.
Whole empires fall, swayed by those nice respects.
It is the license of dark deeds protects
Ev'n states most hated, . . .

(II.177-84)

Tamburlaine's rejection of "deeds of bounty or nobility" (Part II.IV.ii.77) and defence of "these terrors and these tyrannies" (Part II.IV.ii.71) have their counterparts in Sejanus' disdain for "nice respects" and justification by "the license of dark deeds" (II.182-83). Sejanus and Tamburlaine also share the preoccupation with the possession of a crown. Tamburlaine's fascination is sparked by Theridamas:

A god is not so glorious as a king.
I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven
Can not compare with kingly joys in 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 gain the prize,
Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes.

(Part I.II.v.57-64)

Both Sejanus and Tamburlaine believe that a crown makes its owner a god on earth who can "ask and have, command and be obeyed" (Part I.II.v.62).

Submitting his accusations against Agrippina, her sons, and the Germanicans, Sejanus actually condemns his own attitude and tactics. He makes a devastating attack on the

. . . puffy hopes of [Agrippina's] aspiring sons;
 Who, with these hourly ticklings, grow so pleased
 And wantonly conceited of themselves,
 As now they stick not to believe they're such
 As these do give 'em out; and would be thought
 More than competitors, immediate heirs.
 Whilst to their thirst of rule they win the rout
 That's still the friend of novelty, with hope
 Of future freedom, which on every change
 That greedily, though emptily, expects.
 (II.229-38)

Sejanus courts the "rout" like Eudemus, Satrius, and Natta, who supply "windy praise" (II.228).

Tiberius is no one's fool. His brief and quick reaction to the mention of Germanicus' murder proves that, while Sejanus does most of the talking, Tiberius does not miss a word: "The act's not known" (II.194). Given carte blanche, Sejanus sets Posthumus on Augusta. His instructions to his agent show that he can direct intrigue and that he does not tell Caesar everything (II.363-75). Sejanus plans to use Tiberius to make a road to the crown; Tiberius knows that Sejanus is carrying out measures he endorsed. In his schemes and his agents Sejanus is similar to the Duke of Guise. Jonson's Rome and Marlowe's Paris are both capitals of an empire or a kingdom turned into a police state by the overreacher. As Sejanus intends to use Tiberius, the

Guise uses Charles IX. Sejanus says:

... This have I made my rule,
To thrust Tiberius into tyranny,
And make him toil to turn aside those blocks
Which I alone could not remove with safety.
(II.390-93)

Like Tiberius, Charles IX indulges his taste for sensuality
and seems to be the perfect tool for an overreacher:

The gentle king, whose pleasure uncontrolled
Weakeneth his body and will waste his realm
If I repair not what he ruins,
Him, as a child, I daily win with words,
So that for proof he barely bears the name.
I execute, and he sustains the blame.
(ii.70-75)

The Guise associates his ambition with fire, uses religion
for his political ends, and aims at a crown:

Now, Guise, begins those deep-engendered thoughts
To burst abroad those never-dying flames
Which cannot be extinguished but by blood.
...
For [the diadem] hath heaven engendered me of earth;
For this, this earth sustains my body's weight,
And with this weight I'll counterpoise a crown,
Or with seditions weary all the world;
...
My policy hath framed religion.
Religion! O Diabole!
Fie, I am ashamed, however that I seem,
To think a word of such a simple sound
Of so great a matter should be made the ground.
(ii.34-36; 56-59;
65-69)

Like Sejanus, the Guise has a number of heirs to remove:
"But first let's follow those in France / That hinder our
possession to the crown" (ii.98-99). The Protestants, like
the Germanicans, know their enemy, are helpless against him,

and are murdered one after the other. As Sejanus uses the threat of civil war to push Tiberius into false arrests and unjust trial (II.369-70), the Guise urges "your country's good" (ii.19) to Charles IX to excuse the massacre.

Prior to the interview with Tiberius, Sejanus called on his "soul" to defy Jove (II.158-60). After it he appeals to his "art" to bring down "Caesar" (II.399-402):

Work then, my art, on Caesar's fears, as they
On those they fear, till all my lets be clear'd.
And he in ruins of his house, and hate
Of all his subjects, bury his own state;
When, with my peace and safety, I will rise,
By making him the public sacrifice.

(II.399-404)

Sejanus' target changes from Jove to Caesar, from reliance on his "soul" to dependence on his "art." Even though the goal remains the same, he loses stature by his choice of language.

While Sejanus' "beagles" prowl about Agrippina's house (II.410-11), Arruntius furnishes a sarcastic character sketch of Afer. The bitterness may strike the reader as exaggerated, but it proves the authenticity of Arruntius' (and Jonson's) concern about the abuse of rhetoric. The description applies not only to Afer's oratory but also to the styles of Tiberius and the overreacher:

Aye, there's a man, Afer the orator!
One that hath phrases, figures, and fine flow'rs
To strew his rhetoric with, and doth make haste
To get him note or name by any offer
Where blood or gain be objects; steeps his words,

When he would kill, in artificial tears--
 The crocodile of Tiber! Him I love;
 That man is mine. He hath my heart and voice,
 When I would curse: he, he!

(II.418-26)

Sejanus demonstrates his talent for phrases and figures in discussing current affairs with Tiberius. He then gives Posthumus a lesson on how to talk to Augusta:

Caesar is too secure; he must be told;
 And best he'll take it from a mother's tongue.
 Alas, what is't for us to sound, t'explore,
 To watch, oppose, plot, practice, or prevent,
 If he, for whom it is so strongly labored,
 Shall, out of greatness and free spirit, be
 Supinely negligent?

(II.363-69)

Sejanus closes with "You can best enlarge it / As you find audience" (II.374-75).

The accuracy of Sejanus' analysis of the political situation is proved by the conversation between Silius and Agrippina (II.428-500). As Sejanus observes (II.285-95), Silius is indeed his most dangerous critic. The former general sees through the assassination of Drusus and warns that Sejanus "hath plots on all. / No tree that stops his prospect but must fall" (II.499-500).

In Act III the carefully orchestrated disposal of Germanicus' sons, Silius, and Cordus, goes off without a hitch. Even so, the legally sanctioned miscarriage of justice does not escape the comments of Arruntius or Sabinus. Moreover, Silius and Cordus exemplify in their defences the proper use of language. The collusion of Afer and Varro

added to the advantage of surprise and the blanket charge of treason ensure that the outcome is never in doubt. Tiberius catches the Senate off guard by attending so soon after Drusus' death. He lulls his listeners with his care for Drusus Junior and Nero to prepare for the accusations against Silius. In presenting this corrupt government, Jonson chooses to create a sense of the inevitable instead of a mood of suspense. Sejanus' orders to Varro and Afer (III.1-12) and the perceptive remarks of Arruntius and Sabinus (III.112-24) underline the impossibility of acquittal. To be charged is to be sentenced. Despite the hopelessness of their situation, both Silius and Cordus stand up to the indictment. Each provides a strong contrast to the overreacher.

Silius is an old soldier, a retired general who fought under Germanicus and who won victories. He is genuine in contrast to Sejanus, a "pseudo-Tamburlaine," and to Tamburlaine who has never suffered a wound and whose strategy is straight from the textbook.¹² Silius has none of the grandiosity of Tamburlaine. His blunt manner combines with an accurate assessment of his plight. He blames Tiberius, not the gods:

O, you equal gods,
Whose justice not a world of wolf-turned men
Shall make me to accuse, howe'er provoked,
Have I for this so oft engaged myself?
Stood in the heat and fervor of a fight,
When Phoebus sooner hath fors^{ook} the day
Than I the field, against the blue-eyed Gauls,
And crispèd Germans?

(III.250-57)

Afer immediately treats this defence as if it were an "intemperate vaunt" from a raging Tamburlaine and is backed at once by the "minion" Sejanus and the "servile" Senate (III.272,243,329). The audience is guided by Arruntius' scornful praise of the professional mouthpiece: "Well-worded, and most like an orator" (III.284). Genuine admiration for Silius follows; Arruntius calls him an "Excellent Roman" and Sabinus says, "He doth answer stoutly" (III.286). In his defence Silius turns the tables on Tiberius: He exposes and condemns the emperor's devious crimes so that, in effect, Tiberius is placed on trial and found guilty. By committing suicide, Silius dies in the tradition of noble Romans such as Brutus and Cassius.

The censure against Cordus the historian is that he honoured historical figures such as Brutus at the expense of the current rulers. Silius' straightforward denunciation of Tiberius and his "slaves" (III.309) is verified by their determination to silence Cordus and any reminder of Rome's great past. Analogies between plays and current political events were often made in Jonson's day. Sejanus in its original form may have been among the plays accused of libel or sedition. Accordingly, Cordus is given full rein to state the case for history and literature in general. Arruntius and Sabinus persist in praising him and castigating Tiberius in asides. Both Silius and Cordus deliver spirited and well-organized arguments. All told, each statement equals or surpasses in length most of the speeches by

Sejanus.

The trial is the first public action carried out by either side. On the surface Sejanus and Tiberius triumph easily. At this point, encouraged by Tiberius' satisfaction at the success of the "business" (III.488), Sejanus goes too far and asks for Livia in marriage. Taken by surprise, Tiberius recovers quickly. He says that he would condone an affair, but he cannot permit a legal connection between his favourite and the throne. Before he leaves, Tiberius is reassuring:

Believe, our loved Sejanus, we not know
That height in blood or honor, which thy virtue
And mind to us may not aspire with merit.
And this we'll publish on all watched occasion
The Senate or the people shall present.

(III.572-76)

Confident of his position and his control, Sejanus forgets Tiberius' self-centered motto, "When I am dead, let fire overwhelm the earth" (translated from the Greek, II. 330). Sejanus lets himself go with an enthusiastic Marlovian soliloquy:

Dull, heavy Caesar!..
Would'st thou tell me thy favors were made crimes?
And that my fortunes were esteemed thy faults?
That thou, for me, wert hated? And not think
I would with winged haste prevent that change,
When thou might'st win all to thyself again
By forfeiture of me? Did those fond words
Fly swifter from thy lips than this my brain,
This sparkling forge, created me an armor
T'encounter chance and thee?

(III.586-95)

Sejanus underestimates Tiberius and overvalues himself. His unfounded vanity resembles the attitude of the Guise

immediately before he is murdered by Henry III's agents:

So;
 Now sues the king for favor to the Guise,
 And all his minions stoop when I command.
 Why, this 'tis 'tis to have an army in the field.
 Now by the holy sacrament I swear,
 As ancient Romans o'er their captive lords,
 So will I triumph o'er this wanton king
 And he shall follow my proud chariot's wheels.
 (xx.47-54)

Both Sejanus and the Guise rely on the ruler's known taste for sensuality. Sejanus says, "Sleep, / Voluptuous Caesar" and wishes that Tiberius will be "awake but to thy lusts" (III.599, 601). The Guise scorns Henry III for his "minions" and tells him to "Dote on them yourself!" (xvi.21). Soon after, he arranges Mugeroun's murder. The contempt felt by each overreacher for his prince's tendency to debauchery partly accounts for the failure to perceive the dissembling of both Tiberius and Henry III.¹³ The disdain is augmented by the equality which each overreacher has enjoyed with his prince. Tiberius and Sejanus have worked hand in hand until now. The Guise led the massacre when Henry III, then the Duke of Anjou, was a helper. At this crucial moment both Sejanus and the Guise are mastered by their own conceit. Sejanus looks forward to his power with Tiberius safely out of the way:

And these that hate me now, wanting access
 To him, will make their envy none or less.
 For when they see me arbiter of all,
 They must observe, or else with Caesar fall.
 (III.619-22)

The Guise too expects to gain ascendancy over Henry III
with ease:

Now do I but begin to look about,
And all my former time was spent in vain.
Hold, sword,
For in thee is the Duke of Guise's hope.
(xx.55-58)

The ruler's reaction is swift and decisive in each case. Sejanus has no sooner finished his longest soliloquy than Tiberius appears to bring Macro into play. Sejanus' assumptions crumble in the face of Tiberius' penetrating analysis of the "ascender":

But 'tis the favorite hath the power to strike.
And fury ever boils more high and strong,
Heat' with ambition, than revenge of wrong.
'Tis then a part of supreme skill, to grace
No man too much, but hold a certain space
Between the ascender's rise and thine own flat,
Lest, when all rounds be reached, his aim be that.
(III.640-46)

Tiberius does not consider Sejanus a remarkable man. He believes that Sejanus must be countered by a similar "poison" (III.654). The introduction of Macro emphasizes how common Sejanus is. Tiberius has no difficulty finding a replacement who soon reveals that he is as ruthless and dedicated to his own advancement as Sejanus.

With Tiberius in Capreae, one would expect Sejanus to dominate the stage. The opposite is true. Act IV is given over to the reactions of the Germanicans. Jonson removes the possibility of Sejanus following his soliloquy

with an impressive display of sovereignty and rhetoric. Instead, Sejanus appears to work effectively behind the scenes. Through his agents and soldiers, he has Sabinus killed for treason, Drusus Junior placed under arrest within the palace, and Nero and Agrippina imprisoned on islands outside Italy. The rescue of Tiberius at Spelunca strengthens Sejanus' position, but the series of conflicting letters from the emperor leaves the issue in suspense until the last act. Sabinus outlines Sejanus' diabolical methods of arousing ambition in Nero and Drusus Junior (IV.192-215); on stage, however, Macro skilfully persuades Caligula to join Tiberius and proves as adept at the task as Sejanus (IV.233-58).

Balancing the efforts of Sejanus' agents and Macro sustains the tense and uncertain atmosphere of the police state, but the two remaining virtuous men, Arruntius and Lepidus, are neither frightened nor reluctant to speak out. Their piercing comments seriously diminish the image of Sejanus as a magnificent and daring "Colossus" (I.564). Alone, Arruntius caustically takes heaven to task for its sluggishness in the face of "impiety" (IV.262). Heaven is

Patient, while vice doth make an antic face
 At thy dread power, and blow dust and smoke
 Into thy nostrils? Jove, will nothing wake thee?
 Must vile Sejanus pull thee by the beard
 Ere thou wilt open thy black-lidded eye,
 And look him dead? Well, snore on, dreaming gods,
 And let this last of that proud giant race
 Heave mountain upon mountain 'gainst your state.

(IV.264-71)

Arruntius uses the overreacher's diction and mythological imagery to describe Sejanus. Far from admiring such a man, Arruntius gives him credit for nothing and, instead, expresses disgust at the complacent gods who permit Sejanus to exist. As Tamburlaine so often does, Sejanus is challenging Jove; according to Arruntius, however, he never threatens the god. Jove has only to open an eye and "look him dead" (IV.268). The overreacher is a nuisance, a beard puller, not a deity on earth. Arruntius compares Sejanus to the giants who revolted against Jove, an ideal image for the ambitious man; yet the tone of "Well, snore on, dreaming gods" (IV.269) is one of resignation, not of fear for himself or the gods. When Tamburlaine makes his "jest to win the Persian crown" (Part I.II.v.98), Cosroe is both surprised and alarmed:

What means this devilish shepherd to aspire
 With such a giantly presumption,
 To cast up hills against the face of heaven,
 And dare the force of angry Jupiter?

(Part I.II.vi.1-4)

After killing Calyphas, Tamburlaine declares that he is Jove's enemy for "sending to my issue such a soul" (Part II. IV.ii.47):

Thou hast procured a greater enemy
 Then he that darted mountains at thy head,
 Shaking the burden mighty Atlas bears,
 Whereat thou trembling hidd'st thee in the air,
 Clothed with a pitchy cloud for being seen.¹⁴

(Part II.IV.ii.52-56)

Arruntius uses the Marlovian image, but his Jove has no need to hide from Sejanus.

When Arruntius meets Lepidus on the street, they debate the choice between action and fortitude under an unjust prince. Although Arruntius usually acts as Jonson's spokesman, Lepidus, a calm Senator who manages to work within the system, wins the arguments. He has no "arts" for survival (IV.293),

None but the plain and passive fortitude
To suffer and be silent; never stretch
These arms against the torrent; live at home,
With my own thoughts and innocence about me,
(IV.294-97)

Lepidus' philosophy spurs Arruntius' outburst against Tiberius, which reveals the seamer activities of the emperor; even so, he remains prominent in the minds of the audience. Lepidus amends Arruntius' low estimate of Tiberius' intelligence, but he says nothing about the portrait of Sejanus:

[Tiberius] is, with all his craft, become the ward
To his own vassal, a stale catamite,
Whom he, upon our low and suffering necks,
Hath raised from excrement to side the gods,
And have his proper sacrifice in Rome;
Which Jove beholds, and yet will sooner rive
A senseless oak with thunder than his trunk.
(IV.403-409)

Sejanus is only "excrement" masquerading as a god (IV.406); he is endured not for any matchless talent or drive of his own, but for the sake of Tiberius, "our monster" but "our prince" (IV.373 and 372).

Off stage for the entire act, Sejanus loses ground in other respects. In regard to the action, Macro's success with Caligula and the sequence of confusing letters from Tiberius indicate that he has not removed the emperor from "thought / And knowledge of his own most dear affairs" (III.613-14). For his character, Arruntius and Lepidus have painted a damning but convincing portrait of "a stale catamite" (IV.404). Even with his Marlovian soliloquy, which opens Act V, Sejanus can scarcely regain whatever standing he had. More probably, the speech will strike the audience as ironical. Sejanus menaces the world with Tamburlaine's "high astounding terms" (Part I. "Prologue," 5), but he is no conqueror. He is only a "mongrel" (IV.366) making an "antic face" at the gods; (IV.264):

Swell, swell, my joys, and faint not to declare
 Yourselves as ample as your causes are.
 I did not live till now, this my first hour
 Wherein I see my thoughts reached by my power.
 But this, and gripe my wishes. Great and high,
 The world knows only two, that's Rome and I.
 My roof receives me not; 'tis air I tread;
 And at each step, I feel my' advanced head
 Knock out a star in heav'n! Reared to this height,
 All my desires seem modest, poor and slight,
 That did before sound impudent. 'Tis place,
 Not blood, discerns the noble and the base.
 Is there not something more than to be Caesar?¹⁵
 (V.1-13)

From the viewpoint of the audience, Sejanus has no reason to relax. The opinions expressed are those of Tamburlaine, but he never permits self-adulation or the sense of security to dull his constant readiness. Sejanus does, and consequently fails to react to several warning signs. As the

act progresses, his position worsens and, simultaneously, his language becomes more strident. The less he resembles Tamburlaine the more he sounds like him. Sejanus puts "place" above "blood" (V.11-12). Tamburlaine values "virtue" before birth (Part I.I.ii.34-35; IV.iv.124-26), but the symbol of "virtue" is the possession of a crown, the equivalent of Sejanus' "place."

In his elation Sejanus dismisses Caligula too quickly (IV.15-16) and thinks of himself as Caesar already. To be Caesar is not enough. Like "Winds" or "great fires" (V.17-18), Sejanus is concerned that he may run out of material, namely people, to destroy. To nourish his "strength" (V.17), he turns for new opponents to the gods:

It is our grief, and will be our loss, to know
 Our power shall want opposites, unless
 The gods, by mixing in the cause, would bless
 Our fortune with their conquest. That were worth
 Sejanus' strife, 'durst fates but bring it forth.
(V.20-24)

The desire to strive with the gods is worthy of Marlowe, but the combination of insolence and nonchalance exceeds even Tamburlaine's arrogance. Sejanus languidly taunts the fates without a touch of Tamburlaine's energy and aggression. At a similar point in his career Tamburlaine refers to defeating the gods, but he does so only after he has soundly beaten the Soldan:

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 grisly Death, by running to and fro
 To do their ceaseless homage to my sword.

(Part I.V.ii.387-93)

Sejanus lacks the imagination to describe in lurid detail what he intends to do. His swelling oratory is exactly what he insists it is not, "impudent" (V.11). The fates are only too willing to answer his dare, yet Sejanus casually laughs off the bad omens (V.25-57).

Exclaiming "What excellent fools / Religion makes of men!" (V.69-70), Sejanus rejects the idea that the gods can affect fate (V.72) and urges Terentius to think

Their power as cheap as I esteem it small.
 Of all the throng that fill th'Olympian hall,
 And without pity lade poor Atlas' back,
 I know not that one deity, but Fortune,
 To whom I would throw up in begging smoke
 One grain of incense, or whose ear I'd buy
 With thus much oil -

(V.78-84)

Sejanus discounts religion in the manner of Tamburlaine and the Guise. The Guise boasts that his "policy hath framed religion" (ii.65). Tamburlaine treats the gods as it pleases him at the time. He informs Theridamas that

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,
 And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about,
 And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere
 Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.

(Part I.I.ii.173-76)

Sejanus sacrifices to Fortune as long as the interpretations prove favourable. When the statue "averts her face!" (V.186), Sejanus, conscious of his followers' superstitions, overturns the statue, calls religion a "juggling mystery" (V.193), and claims to be Fortune's equal as a god:

I, the slave

And mock of fools? Scorn on my worthy head!
 That have been titled and adored a god--
 Yea, sacrificed unto myself in Rome,
 No less than Jove--and I be brought to do
 A peevish giglot rites? Perhaps the thought
 And shame of that made Fortune turn her face,
 Knowing herself the lesser deity,
 And but my servant. Bashful queen, if so,
 Sejanus thanks thy modesty.

(V.201-10)

Sejanus twists the meaning with the dexterity of Tamburlaine, but he has lost the self-control which he had when facing Drusus. Tamburlaine believes himself "No less than Jove" (V.205) as well as the "emperor of the world, and earthly god" (Part II.III.v.22). The difference between them is not in their beliefs but in their reactions to unnerving circumstances. Faced with the escape of Callapine, the death of Zenocrate, or the disobedience of Calyphas, Tamburlaine never makes a fool of himself.¹⁶ At the worst, he is dangerous, almost impossible to control, and possibly mad, but never ridiculous. Sejanus is stupefied and so sounds absurd, "Scorn on my worthy head!" (V.202).

Sejanus tries to recover from this set-back and the news of Macro's arrival with a review of his past accomplishments. As he concedes that these dangers are "worthy

my fates" (V.235), his tone is not one of defiance but of surrender, as if all were already lost:

Fortune, I see thy worst. Let doubtful states
And things uncertain hang upon thy will.
Me surest death shall render certain still.
Yet, why is now my thought turnèd toward death,
Whom fates have let go on so far in breath,
Unchecked or unreprieved?

(V.236-41)

Sejanus is beginning to feel twinges of anxiety and doubt. He lists the major figures whom he has killed or ruined, but this fails to lift his spirits. Continuing, he sounds defeated but satisfied with what he has done:

If you will, destinies, that after all,
I faint now ere I touch my period,
You are but cruel; and I already 'have done
Things great enough. All Rome hath been my slave.
The Senate sat an idle looker-on
And witness of my power, when I have blushed
More to command, than it to suffer. All
The fathers have sat ready and prepared
To give me empire, temples, or their throats,
When I would ask 'em. And what crowns the top,
Rome, Senate, people, all the world have seen
Jove but my equal, Caesar but my second.
'Tis then your malice, fates, who, but your own,
Envy and fear t'have any power long known.

(V.253-66)

In contrast, Tamburlaine never gives up. He ignores the first aches because "Sickness or death can never conquer me" (Part II.V.ii.220). Even when he cannot stand, he calls on his friends to "carry me to war against the gods, / That thus envy the health of Tamburlaine" (Part II.V.iii.51-53). His physician advises him that he has burned himself out. In spite of death Tamburlaine defeats

Callapine's armies merely by appearing on the field. Forced to admit "my martial strength is spent" (Part II.V.iii.119), he turns death to his advantage, saying the powers "mean t'invest me in a higher throne" (Part II.V.iii.121). As he surveys his unbroken string of victories on the map, he expresses regret only when he says, "And shall I die, and this unconquerèd?" (Part II.V.iii.140 and 158). Having passed the chariot on to his son and given him a lengthy set of instructions, Tamburlaine states only with his last words that "Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die" (Part II.V.iii.248).

Sejanus stages a small come-back by easily winning the affections of the tribunes. He seems to recover completely after he is deceived by Macro about the "tribunical dignity" (V.363). For the audience, the long-drawn-out ending has the effect of dramatic irony and anticlimax. Sejanus is duped by his own underhanded methods and looks only foolish when his overreaching rhetoric reasserts itself at length:

How vain and vile a passion is this fear!
 What base, uncomely things it makes men do!
 Suspect their noblest friends, as I did this,
 Flatter poor enemies, entreat their servants,
 Stoop, court, and catch at the benevolence
 Of creatures, unto whom, within this hour,
 I would not have vouchsafed a quarter-look,
 Or piece of face. By you that fools call gods,
 Hang all the sky with your prodigious signs,
 Fill earth with monsters, drop the scorpion down
 Out of the zodiac, or the fiercer lion!
 Shake off the loosened globe from her long hinge,

Roll all the world in darkness, and let loose
 Th' enraged winds to turn up groves and towns!
 When I do fear again, let me be struck
 With forked fire, and unpitied die!
 Who fears, is worthy of calamity.

(V.383-399)

Much of this thunderous challenge to the gods could be uttered by Tamburlaine, but, in the context, it can do nothing for Sejanus. He is shocked to silence when he learns the truth in the Senate and can muster little more than "Why, Macro, / It hath been otherwise between you and I" (V.669-70).

Jonson wrings every didactic sentiment possible out of Sejanus' fate. Lepidus, Arruntius, and Terentius take turns in drawing morals as they hear the news of Sejanus and his family. The future of Rome, with Tiberius still ^a emperor and Caligula to come, is another matter.

Throughout the play, Jonson is determined to nullify whatever appeal the aspiring overreacher might have. Although Sejanus occasionally attains the soaring Marlovian rhetoric, he never escapes immediate and valid critical comment. By slanting everything against him, Jonson ensures that Sejanus is taken for what he is, a scurrilous villain, and thus exposes the ambition of a Sejanus, a Guise, or a Tamburlaine, as dangerous and pretentious.

Notes

1

Jonson seems to have drawn on every historical source available to him. He made extensive use of the accounts by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius. The much shorter versions by Juvenal and Velleius Paterculus are used in spots. Generally the passages and details selected are those favourable to the Germanicans and unfavourable to Sejanus and Tiberius.

2

All quotations from Sejanus are from Ben Jonson, Sejanus, ed. Jonas A. Barish, The Yale Ben Jonson, vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965). All quotations from Marlowe's plays are from Christopher Marlowe, The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963). Act, scene, and line references will be included within parentheses in the body of the text.

3

T. J. B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," ShS 10 (1957): 28, 31, 35.

4

Robert Ornstein, "The Moral Vision of Ben Jonson's Tragedy," in Ralph J. Kaufmann, ed., Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford Univ. P., 1961), p. 205.

5

Jonas A. Barish, "Introduction" to his edition of Sejanus, The Yale Ben Jonson (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. P., 1965), p. 4.

6

Jonson did not hesitate to alter his play when he erred in depicting Roman customs. A case in point is Arruntius' aside when Pomponius reacts to the rumour of the latest letters from Tiberius. Pomponius says, "By Pollux, that's the worst" (IV.438). Arruntius originally said, "By Castor, best!" When Jonson learned that only women used Castor as an oath, he changed Castor to Hercules, although Castor is a better choice from the dramatic point of view.

7

Several critics have compared Sejanus to Tamburlaine or another or all of Marlowe's overreachers. Writing on Jonson, Robert E. Knoll calls Sejanus a "Roman Tamburlaine," in Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction (Lincoln: Univ. of Neb. Press, 1964), p. 73. Calling Sejanus a "pseudo-Tamburlaine," K. W. Evans argues that "Both Sejanus and Marlowe's base-born overreachers oppose the aristocracy of birth, but Sejanus lacks the aristocracy of merit to put in its place," in "Sejanus and the Ideal Prince Tradition," SEL 11 (1971): 260. Lionel Charles Knights finds a resemblance to Tamburlaine in Sejanus' soliloquy on Drusus (II. 139-62):

In the sentiments, and in the vigorous development of a single dominant impulse, there is an obvious resemblance to Tamburlaine. But the attitude of sophisticated detachment towards the words, present in those words, suggests what Jonson had learnt from The Jew of Malta (a relationship first stated in [T. S. Eliot's] The Sacred Wood); with that play in mind we are not likely to accept Coleridge's verdict of 'absurd rant and ventriloquism'--or not as he intended it. It is equally obvious that the speech is not by Marlowe, that in its combination of weight and vigour it looks forward to the finer poetry of Volpone and The Alchemist.

See "Tradition and Ben Jonson," in Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ralph J. Kaufmann, A Galaxy Book (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 156. More generally, Geoffrey Hill argues that Sejanus "blends

some of the characteristics of 'Scourge'--bringing torment to a corrupt world--with all the attributes of the arriviste, the supposedly amoral disrupter of society's settled decency," in "The World's Proportion: Jonson's Dramatic Poetry in Sejanus and Catiline," in Jacobean Theatre, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies I (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. 120. The question of Jonson's rhetoric is discussed by G. R. Hibbard, who maintains that Jonson gained from the Marlovian hero but never fell under his spell:

Jonson learned how to write blank verse that was hard and firm in texture, assured in its forward march, resonant of sound, and pregnant with meaning. But, with his unremitting critical judgment, Jonson always seems to have been aware of Marlowe's tendency to self-indulgence, which he puts to dramatic use. When soaring rhetoric like that of Tamburlaine issues from the lips of Sejanus, Volpone, Sir Epicure Mammon, or Catiline, it is a pointer to self-indulgence by the deluded character who speaks it, not by the author. Jonson was never taken in by the Marlovian hero.

See "Goodness and Greatness: An Essay on the Tragedies of Ben Jonson and George Chapman," RMS 11 (1967): 13. None of these critics undertakes a detailed study of the relationship between Sejanus and the Marlovian overreacher.

8

After Olympia tricks him into killing her, Theridamas exclaims

Now hell is fairer than Elysium;

And now the damnèd souls are free from pain,

For every Fury gazeth on her looks.

Infernal Dis is courting of my love,

Inventing masks and stately shows for her,

(Part II.IV.iii.

87;91-94)

9

In The Massacre at Paris, the Guise wishes for such a look:

Give me a look that, when I bend the brows,

Pale death may walk in furrows of my face,

A hand that with a grasp may gripe the world,

An ear to hear what my detractors say,

A royal seat, a scepter, and a crown.

(ii.102-106)

10

In general, Herford and Simpson argue that the gap between Jonsonian comedy and Jonsonian tragedy is not that wide:

The temper of Jonson's comedy is, in truth, not so remote from the temper of such tragedy as his that the transition from the one to the other is difficult or startling. . . . there runs through both a vein of cruelty, of scorn, vindictive and retributive, inflicting upon follies and upon crimes a Nemesis which only differs in degree.

(II.127)

In regard to Sejanus, Daniel C. Boughner believes that "The play seems to take a course, in spite of the refractory materials of history, radically transforming it from a 'tragedy' about the 'fall' of Sejanus into a vulpine comedy of wits engaged in deadly opposition." See The Devil's Disciple: Ben Jonson's Debt to Machiavelli (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968), p. 95. On the same plane, Evans maintains that "Sejanus is a brilliant satire on the struggle for power and the trends towards despotism in Jacobean England, constantly shifting in tone from the macabre comedy played out by Sejanus and Tiberius to the misery of Rome's civic tragedy" (p. 264). Alexander H. Sackton finds a resemblance to comedy in the fifth act of Sejanus and a similarity to The Jew of Malta:

The last act of Sejanus has the tone and effect of Jonsonian comedy. Although Jonson had apparently set out to create characters of dignity, most of them become ridiculous in the last act. A parallel with The Jew of Malta suggests itself The situations which the plots present seem to lead both Marlowe and Jonson from an original tragic intention to writing something like comedy.

See Rhetoric as a Dramatic Language in Ben Jonson (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1948), p. 136. In "Marlowe's Humor," Clifford Leech comments on The Jew of Malta and The Massacre at Paris in terms that apply to Sejanus as well: "What is presented is a wry picture of little men, dreaming of greatness and playing out their atrocities but--whether in Barabas or the Guise--exposing their puniness even in the moments of highest ambition." See Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech, A Spectrum Book, Twentieth-Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 168.

11

John J. Enck cites II. 96-101 and comments:

The tone, a wonder of complexity beneath a surface simplicity, superficially resembles a Marlovian

hero's when he dreams of world conquest. What Jonson christened Marlowe's mighty line here inverts itself for a dictatorial absurdity. Whereas the conquering mania of the Elizabethan paranoiac generally soars outward, the narcissistic temperament, akin to the courtiers' in Cynthia's Revels, sees its own image encompassing the heavens, a sardonic adumbration of an Emersonian concept of history and nature.

See Jonson and the comic truth (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1957), p. 93.

¹² Marlowe draws his information chiefly from Paul Ive, The Practice of Fortification (1589). See T. M. Pearce, "Tamburlaine's 'Discipline to his Three Sonnes': the Interpretation of Tamburlaine, Part II," MLQ 15 (1954): 21.

¹³ Tamburlaine is equally disdainful of Orcanes and his kings with their concubines: "Live continent, then, ye slaves, and meet not me / With troops of harlots at your slothful heels" (Part II.IV.iv.81-82).

¹⁴ At the end of Part I, when crowning Zenocrate, Tamburlaine assumes the role of Jove in this legend and invents a role for Juno-Zenocrate:

As Juno, when the giants were suppressed,
That darted mountains at her brother Jove,
So looks my love, shadowing in her brows
Triumphs and trophies for my victories;

(Part I.V.ii.447-50)

¹⁵ Herford and Simpson document passages from Statius, Seneca, and Lucan, which Jonson drew on to compose the soliloquy (IX.625). The result is not a translation, but, in Knights' words, "a complete transmutation of idiom," p. 164.

¹⁶ Tamburlaine may be the victim of Marlowe's subtle irony, but his unchecked material and military success in both parts and the lack of any objective criticism by a virtuous character make a definitive judgement in this respect impossible. As Douglas Cole observes, "One finds in Marlowian tragedy a clearly defineable vision of evil, but little vision of good." See Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1962), p. 264. Both Cole and Charles Masinton take the position that Tamburlaine exploits magniloquent rhetoric to cover his actual pedestrian goals. Cole offers several perceptive

comments on Marlowe's "rhetoric of language":

Marlowe stresses above all the human habit of cloaking "ideals" and high-sounding language. . . . For Marlowe, the tragedy lies, not in the inevitable falling off of human achievement from the ideal, but in the travesty of the ideal that the deeds of man so often represent, and in the illusory aura of nobility with which man persistently invests his base desires. (p. 263)

Masinton's line of reasoning is much the same:

Marlowe's ironic handling of pastoral, romantic, and heroic devices invites us to compare the ideal world they are normally taken to represent with the world of violence and misery depicted on stage. This technique not only works to disengage our sympathies from the protagonist, but reveals as well Marlowe's own skeptical, sardonic attitude toward what the Scythian stands for--uncontrolled ambition. . . . [Tamburlaine's] words serve as weapons, as instruments by which he communicates the hypnotic illusion that the heavens have chosen him to topple kings and rule supreme on earth.

See Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 16 and 18. Jonson may or may not have appreciated such subtle irony, but in Sejanus he prefers to create an exaggerated version of the overreacher as the villain and to rely on spokesmen to guide the audience.

III

"I must be merry, with a mischief to me:"
Volpone and Barabas

In Volpone Jonson created his first fully drawn overreacher in a comedy. The Marlovian character Volpone most closely resembles is Barabas, the protagonist of The Jew of Malta.¹ He and Barabas share the "desire of gold" and a love of dissembling for its own sake. On these two subjects neither can control his emotions or restrain himself from acting impulsively. The obsession with deceit leads to the downfall of both. Volpone and Barabas have many character traits in common and often face similar situations. Each has the aspirations and the command of rhetoric of the overreacher; each also has a talent for sharply satiric repartee. Further, both Volpone and Barabas rely on an assistant, servant or slave, to help them perform their crimes. Mosca proves indispensable to Volpone, Ithamore nearly so to Barabas. The two master-servant relationships correspond in nature and, to a lesser extent, in development. Each servant picks up a touch of his master's language as well as his aspirations. While Mosca and Ithamore are alike, Volpone emerges as a blend of Barabas and Ithamore.

The differences between Volpone and Barabas can be as revealing as the points of affinity. Barabas begins

with dignity and some justification in his desire for revenge. Volpone has no motive beyond the need to gratify his wishes. He is the "true voluptuary" (IV.ii.37). His inclination to excess in thought and action is evident from his opening hymn to gold to his closing revelation of himself before the court. Unlike Barabas, Volpone has to be entertained either as audience or actor.²

Jonson bears out the reputation of Venice as a thriving commercial trade centre with exotic tastes and behaviour. The details of city life from the coinage to the location of landmarks to the manner of a mountebank are, for the most part, meticulously accurate. Volpone's way of life as a Magnifico complete with dwarf, eunuch, and hermaphrodite exemplifies the bizarre sensuality which Elizabethans associated with Venice. On a larger scale, the judiciary of the republic and most of its citizens view money and the law as closely linked. During the interrogation in the last scene, the fourth member of the Avocatori immediately finds Mosca, as Volpone's heir, to be a "fit match" for his daughter (V.vii.51). In the **sub-plot**, Sir Politic Would-be's interest in spies, plots, and "ragion del stato"

(IV.i.141) comically indicates the Elizabethan fascination for Italian political intrigue.

Following the prologue, both plays open with a speech in praise of wealth by the principal character. Volpone's lengthy morning hymn to gold has much in common with Barabas' opening soliloquy, but parts of it also resemble Barabas' later statements, notably the midnight soliloquy (II.i.1-19; 24-30). Volpone's excesses and weaknesses are exposed as well as his appealing mirth, energy and facility with language. He displays his love of applause and amusement, which later result in an excessive confidence in Mosca. Volpone sounds like a blasphemer worshipping his riches, but he is just performing for himself and his parasite; he enjoys making the speech as much as he relishes possessing the gold.³

Volpone begins at an emotional peak, absorbed in his rhetoric and in the evidence of his success:

Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!
 Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.
[Mosca draws a curtain and reveals piles of gold, plate
 jewels, etc.]

Hail, the world's soul, and mine! More glad than is
 The teeming earth to see the longed-for sun
 Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram,
 Am I, to view thy splendour, darkening his;
 That, lying here amongst my other hoards,
 Show'st like a flame by night, or like the day
 Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled
 Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol
 (But brighter than thy father), let me kiss,
 With adoration, thee, and every relic
 Of sacred treasure in this blessed room.

(I.i.1-13)

Volpone's "blessed room" (I.i.13) has its counterpart in Barabas' "little room" (I.i.37), but the development of emotion in Barabas is a more gradual process.⁴ In his first soliloquy he is in control of his finances and himself; his discerning mind wants only the best. The elevation of gold to the equivalent of a god occurs after he is deprived of his wealth and thus is most vulnerable. Barabas is not the first to refer to "policy" (I.i.138), nor is he the one to state the theme of avarice. Volpone loudly proclaims the world's devotion to gold in the first three lines. In The Jew of Malta, late in Act III, Selim Calymath's Bashaw unemotionally states what has been apparent from Act I:

Ferneze. Welcome, great Bashaw. How fares Calymath?
 What wind drives you thus into Malta road?
Bashaw. The wind that bloweth all the world besides,
 Desire of gold.

(III.v.1-4)

The statement is the same in each play, but Jonson uses it to lessen the attraction of the overreacher for the audience.

From the start Volpone's fervent pitch in his worship of gold marks him as a man of excessive temperament

instead of the hero which he is to himself. Barabas falls prey to similar vehemence only after he has been unjustly stripped of his goods and his home. On his way to meet Abigail to recover his hidden treasure, he mingles his faith and his fortune as dexterously as Volpone. "Vexed and tormented" (II.i.5), Barabas prays for Abigail's success:

O thou that with a fiery pillar led'st
The sons of Israel through the dismal shades,
Light Abraham's offspring, and direct the hand
Of Abigail this night or let the day
Turn to eternal darkness after this.

(II.i.12-16)

Volpone's "flame by night" (I.i.8) and Barabas' "fiery pillar . . . through the dismal shades" (II.i.12-13) refer to the same biblical event (Exod.13.21). Volpone's "day / Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled" (I.i.8-9) is comparable to Barabas' wish that "the day / Turn to eternal darkness" if Abigail fails (II.i.15-16). Barabas makes the transition from God to gold through old wives' tales. Recalling these "winter's tales" (II.i.25), he identifies with the ghosts who hover about hidden wealth:

And now methinks that I am one of those,
For whilst I live, here lives my soul's sole hope,
And when I die, here shall my spirit walk.

(II.i.28-30)

Barabas' prayer is answered, but as soon as he gets his bags he forgets God and unites Abigail and gold in his gratitude:

O my girl,
 My gold, my fortune, my felicity,
 Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy,
 Welcome, the first beginner of my bliss.
 O Abigail, Abigail, that I had thee here too,
 Then my desires were fully satisfied.
 But I will practice thy enlargement thence.
 O girl! O gold! O beauty! O my bliss!
 (II.i.47-54)

Volpone and Barabas share a common "adoration" of gold (I.i.12). The difference is that Volpone's enthusiasm is unrestrained from the outset. Barabas exemplifies Volpone's description of his "Dear saint" (I.i.21) with his casual and mocking allusions to the Prime Mover of Aristotle and the host of the mass:

Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues;
 That canst do nought and yet mak'st men do all things;
 The prize of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
 Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame,
 Honour, and all things else.
 (I.i.22-26)

Volpone's "virtue, fame, / Honour, and all things else" (I.i.25-26) are an expanded version of Barabas' "bliss" (II.ii.50 and 54). Volpone recognizes that riches do nothing in themselves. Gathering his gold, Barabas believes that gold can do anything and proves the second part of Volpone's definition. Although it is not even midnight (II.i.55), he is inspired by the yellow gold to wish for the dawn and calls on Phoebus Apollo, the blond sun-god:

Now, Phoebus, ope the eyelids of the day,
 And for the raven wake the morning lark,
 That I may hover with her in the air,
 Singing o'er these as she does o'er her young.
Hermoso placer de los dineros.

(II.i.60-64)

Thanks to the restorative power of gold, Barabas has moved from the "sad" raven foretelling death (II.i.1) to the lark, from Morpheus (mentioned by Abigail, II.i.36) to Phoebus, from the night to the dawn, the symbol of rebirth. Volpone reduces the sun, the primary representative of nature and a symbol of God, to an image of his god, gold. He inverts the order of things only to satisfy his sense of humour. As Volpone raises a gold coin to match the sun and parody the host, so Barabas fingers his coins in his counting-house.⁵ When he evokes the memory of the poets' Golden Age, Volpone declares that gold is the "best of things" (I.i.16) and, again drawing on the religious term, maintains that it transcends "All style of joy in children, parents, friends, / Or any other waking dream on earth" (I.i.17-18). Whether or not Volpone has actual experience of parenthood or friendship, the actions of Corbaccio against Bonario and of Corvino against Celia later in the play tend to substantiate his statement. Barabas thoroughly confuses the gold and his daughter and indirectly refers to the gold as his "young" (II.i.63). Abigail is replaced by gold at the moment of her greatest assistance to Barabas

Interrupted by Mosca, Volpone turns to the subject of himself. As they recite the catalogue of ways and means

to wealth in which Volpone refuses to engage, the scene is reminiscent both of Barabas' first soliloquy and of the parade of crimes which Barabas and Ithamore blithely confess to each other (II.iii.164-214). Volpone rejects trade, the principal source of capital and commerce for the seaport of Venice; his comments could serve as a portrait of Barabas, a merchant on the grand scale. Claiming proudly that he gains his wealth in "No common way" (I.i.33), Volpone continues:

I use no trade, no venture;
I wound no earth with ploughshares; fat no beasts
To feed the shambles; have no mills for iron,
Oil, corn, or men, to grind them into powder;
I blow no subtle glass; expose no ships
To threatenings of the furrow-faced sea;
(I.i.33-38)

Volpone views industry as an activity which destroys the earth, the beasts, and man. A source of Venetian pride, the occupation of glass-blowing, follows the image of men being ground to powder and, in this context, sounds absurd. Going over his accounts, Barabas is a picture of the merchant Volpone despises:

So that of thus much that return was made;
And of the third part of the Persian ship
There was the venture summed and satisfied.
(I.i.1-3)

Barabas deals in "Spanish oils and wines of Greece" (I.i.5), in "spice and silks" (I.i.45), and in Persian silks, gold, and orient pearl (I.i.87). Having exposed his ships to the

sea, he anxiously worries about the weather:

But now how stands the wind?
 Into what corner peers my halcyon's bill?
 Ha! to the east? Yes; see how stands the vanes!
 (I.i.38-40)

Finally reassured about his argosy, Barabas sets out the creed of the merchant. The idea of destruction, noted ironically by Volpone, becomes the theory of man's control of nature:

What more may heaven do for earthly man
 Than thus to pour out plenty in their laps,
 Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
 Making the sea their servants, and the winds
 To drive their substance with successful blasts?
 (I.i.105-109)

Only moments before, Barabas' hopes were at the mercy of the winds. Jews were associated with trade and usury.⁶ Volpone, having dismissed trade, now turns to usury. Mosca again interrupts him with a list of crimes by money-lenders that resembles the usurer stage of Barabas' career which he itemizes for Ithamore. Volpone talks about legal enterprises, about public banks and private usury (I.i.39-40), but Mosca seizes on the more suspect side of usury. In his words, Volpone does not devour

Soft prodigals. You shall have some will swallow
 A melting heir as glibly as your Dutch
 Will pills of butter, and ne'er purge for it;
 Tear forth the fathers of poor families
 Out of their beds, and coffin them alive
 In some kind, claspings prison, where their bones
 May be forth-coming when the flesh is rotten:

But your sweet nature doth abhor these courses;
 You loathe the widow's or the orphan's tears
 Should wash your pavements, or their piteous cries
 Ring in your roofs, and beat the air for vengeance.
 (I.i.41-51)

Using the same imagery, Barabas depicts his success as a usurer, the last and the most profitable of his many and varied occupations:

Then after that I was an usurer,
 And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,
 And tricks belonging unto brokery,
 I filled the jails with bankrouths in a year,
 And with young orphans planted hospitals,
 And every moon made some or other mad;
 And now and then one hang himself for grief,
 Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,
 How I with interest tormented him.
 But mark how I am blessed for plaguing them:
 I have as much coin as will buy the town.
 (II.iii.187-97)

In both passages the usurer oppresses the weak and the defenceless, whether the victims are "Soft prodigals," "the fathers of poor families," the widow and the orphan (I.41; 44;49), "bankrouths" or "young orphans" (II.iii.190;191).

The prison is the usurer's weapon and driving people to the point of madness in grief ("piteous cries" in Jonson) an expected occurrence in his profession. Mosca compliments Volpone for abhorring and loathing "these courses" (I.i.48-49); Barabas admits that he plagues his victims, but points out that he is "blessed" by wealth (II.iii.146)..

Volpone is first defined by contrast with what he is not, instead of being revealed for what he is, a highly

skilled confidence man. Although Mosca may be ironic in his choice of "sweet nature" (I.i.48), Volpone accepts his observations in complete agreement. He does not see that a difference in technique is not necessarily a difference in kind. He asserts that he glories

More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way:

(I.i.31-33)

In his first soliloquy, Barabas also draws the line between other merchants and himself:

And thus methinks should men of judgment frame
Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,
And as their wealth increaseth, so enclose
Infinite riches in a little room.

(I.i.34-37)

Volpone's method is different but his attitude and the result are the same.⁷ Neither Volpone nor Barabas is a miser in the sense of a grasping, tight-fisted skinflint. Each considers himself a connoisseur of wealth. When Mosca broadly hints for money, he praises Volpone for living in style. In his words, Volpone is not like the hungry thresher who will not taste his corn,

Nor like the merchant who hath filled his vaults
With Romagna and rich Candian wines,
Yet drinks the lees of Lombard's vinegar.
You will not lie in straw whilst moths and worms
Feed on your sumptuous hangings and soft beds:
You know the use of riches, and dare give now,
From that bright heap, to me, your poor observer,
(I.i.57-63)

Barabas scorns the silver "trash" (I.i.6-7) in favour of the rare and the exotic. In contrast to the ordinary miser, he is tired of counting his money. From the goods mentioned by Mosca, Barabas ~~could~~ be the merchant who supplied them. Having talked of his "Spanish oils and wines of Greece" (I.i.5), he goes on to describe

Mine argosy from Alexandria,
Loaden with spice and silks, now under sail,
Are smoothly gliding down by Candy shore
To Malta, through our Mediterranean sea.

(I.i.44-47)

Much later, disguised as a "French musician" (IV.vi.28), Barabas indignantly denies, in asides, Ithamore's comments on his way of life:

Ithamore. 'Tis a strange thing of that Jew: he lives
upon pickled grasshoppers and sauced mushrums.
Barabas. What a slave's this! The governor feeds not as
I do.

Ithamore. He never put on clean shirt since he was
circumcised. Aside.
Barabas. O rascal! I change myself twice a day.

Ithamore. The hat he wears, Judas left under the elder
when he hanged himself. Aside.
Barabas. 'Twas sent me for a present from the great Cham.
Aside. (IV.vi.59-66)

The history of the passage of Pythagoras' soul to the body of a fool recalls Volpone's opening lines; if gold is the world's soul, the world and Volpone are fools. As Volpone expects his legacy-hunters, so Barabas expects his Messengers.

From the moment Voltore knocks, Volpone and Mosca show their enthusiasm for deception. Excited but confident,

they joke between themselves. By the end of the act it is evident that their success depends upon teamwork and paying attention to detail. When Mosca describes Voltore's engraved plate, Volpone exclaims:

Good! and not a fox
Stretched on the earth, with fine delusive
sleights,
Mocking a gaping crow--ha, Mosca?

Mosca. Sharp, sir.
Volpone. Give me my furs. (Puts on his sick dress.) Why
dost thou laugh so, man?

Mosca. I cannot choose, sir, when I apprehend
What thoughts he has without now, as he walks:
That this might be the last gift he should give;
(I.i.184-90)

Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino, so he describes Celia in terms that would attract Volpone. His sensual and enticing imagery smacks of Tamburlaine, Faustus, and, later, Volpone himself:

Whose skin is whiter than a swan all over,
 Than silver, snow, or lilies; a soft lip,
 Would tempt you to eternity of kissing!
 And flesh that melteth in the touch to blood---
 Bright as your gold, and lovely as your gold!
 (I.i.571-75)

Through the use of the beast-fable Jonson effects the metamorphosis of men into beasts and caricatures as well. Jonson then proceeds to explore the theme of metamorphosis on several levels. Greed prompts the abrupt reversals of Corvino on honour and chastity (II.iii.1-29; 180-92) and Voltore on Volpone's condition (V.v.16-19; V.vii.20-21). The thought of gaining Volpone's wealth after his death rejuvenates Corbaccio (I.i.354-55). In the sub-plot Sir Politic proves as variable as a weather-vane in his desire to be "ignorant of nothing" (II.i.99). Lady Would-Be's "changes" startle Peregrine (IV.ii.234).

While the changes in these characters are extreme, none of them match the ease and eagerness with which Volpone and Mosca alter their appearance and outlook to suit their audience. Even Mosca's smoothness pales before the intensity of Volpone; for the fox metamorphosis, both the thought and the pretense through disguise, is a fixation and a contributor to his downfall. Starting with the comic song on the metamorphosis of Pythagoras' soul (I.i.91-152), Volpone must have diversions, "music, dances, banquets, all delights" (I.i.548). No single state of mind or suit of clothing satisfies him for long. His last rash choice is the uniform of the commandator.

By the end of the first act it is plain that Jonson's Venice bears a strong resemblance to Marlowe's

Malta. Greed, hypocrisy, corruption, and a love of the exotic control the citizens of both societies. In Venice lawyers, merchants, doctors, fathers and magnificoes have been judged and found wanting. In Malta the Christian (Roman Catholic) authorities, the Governor, and the Knights of Malta, are hypocrites and double-crossers who use their religion to justify their actions (much as Barabas does with his religion). Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences associated far off and foreign places such as Venice and Malta with the unusual, the bizarre, licentiousness and unheard of crime. Murders by forgery, by strangling and by poisoning occur regularly in Malta. In Volpone both Corbaccio and Corvino would like to be accomplices in murdering Volpone as long as they can avoid being implicated. Corbaccio offers an opiate in a vial (I.i.310-12), certainly poison as Mosca says; Corvino would not object if Mosca smothered Volpone, but he refuses to stay.

In Act II, Volpone's masterful portrayal of Scoto of Mantua is balanced by his admission to Mosca that he has fallen in love. The speech immediately follows Corvino's dispersal of the crowd. Absurd and ludicrous as he appears, Volpone foreshadows his later wooing of Celia:

Volpone. O, I am wounded!

Mosca.

Volpone.

Where, sir?

Not without;

Those blows were nothing: I could bear them ever.
But angry Cupid, bolting from her eyes,
Hath shot himself into me like a flame,
Where now he flings about his burning heat--

As in a furnace an ambitious fire
Whose vent is stopped. The fight is all within
me.

(II.ii.1-7)

Always the actor, Volpone is largely in love with love, but he is beginning to sound somewhat like Faustus talking to Helen or Ithamore praising Bellamira. Volpone will do anything to satisfy his desires, a fact which neither the audience nor Mosca can fail to observe:

Volpone.

O, there spoke
My better angel. Mosca, take my keys:
Gold, plate, jewels, all's at thy devotion;
Employ them how thou wilt. Nay, coin me too,
So thou in this but crown my longings, Mosca.

(II.ii.20-24)

Mosca quickly grasps the opportunity offered to him in Volpone's surrender to desire. In his first soliloquy, which opens Act III, he praises the true parasite in terms which foreshadow Volpone's praise of himself to Celia. Mosca senses the start of a process in himself which has reached its maturity in Volpone:

I fear I shall begin to grow in love
With my dear self and my most prosperous parts,
They do so spring and burgeon. I can feel
A whimsy in my blood. I know not how,
Success hath made me wanton.

(III.i.1-5)

Volpone's courting of Celia is preceded by two similar episodes, a comic one with Lady Politic Would-be and Volpone and a serious one with Corvino and Celia. Many parallels between them and the attempted seduction of Celia

occur, but, for the most part, they lessen the force of Volpone's overreaching oratory. Volpone is the butt of ridicule when Lady Would-be visits him. Waiting for Mosca to return is too much for Volpone to endure without entertainment. Calling on the dwarf, the hermaphrodite, and the eunuch to amuse him, he is suddenly interrupted by the arrival of Lady Would-be. Nothing stops her endless babble as she proclaims herself an authority on any subject which arises. Her range includes dreams, medicine, poetry, philosophy, and her past. To the discomfort of Volpone and the merriment of the audience, she proves misinformed, confused, and longwinded on them all. Her discourse is a preamble and parody of Volpone's attempt to seduce Celia. Her topics turn out to be his, her habit of making allusions and comparisons a ridiculous version of Volpone's.

The preparation continues in a more serious vein with the early arrival of Corvino and Celia, the first unforeseen event and the first check to the plan. This bolt from the blue happens not because Volpone and Mosca overreach themselves, but because they underestimate Corvino's suspicion of all rivals. As an extremely jealous husband, Corvino behaves true to type. His threats, accusations, and entreaties to Celia ("thou shalt have jewels, gowns, attires," III.ii.309) are forerunners of the appeals which Volpone will try as soon as Corvino leaves. Volpone's theatrical tour de force easily surpasses both Lady Would-be's and Corvino's speeches, but her lack of success with

Volpone and Corvino's inability to move Celia are precursors of Volpone's failure to persuade Celia.

After the false starts thanks to Lady Pol and Corvino, Volpone finally has the opportunity for his coup de théâtre. He joyfully leaps from his couch in a surprising resurrection which is anything but the answer to Celia's prayers. Volpone begins at the point where his last major oration (the hymn to gold) left off. Expressing his contempt for "Corvino and such earth-fed minds" (III.ii.348), he launches his aspirations of fire and air on a burst of religious and classical allusions. For Volpone and for Barabas, the boundless imagination of the overreacher, characteristic of Tamburlaine and Doctor Faustus, is restricted to the compass of a little room. Within that room their imagination takes command. Volpone, like Barabas, has no desire to rule or gain power.⁸

Starting with the "true heaven of love" (III.ii.349), Volpone places Celia above "gain" or "ready money" and indirectly compares her to Paradise (III.ii.340-43). He continues in the same manner, using her astonishment at his recovery by declaring that her beauty revived him, a "miracle" (III.ii.344-45). Caught up in his own rhetoric, Volpone is scarcely aware if Celia is listening or not. He sweeps on, regardless. At this moment he reaches his first mythological reference, which ironically recoils upon him:

Aye, before
 I would have left my practice for thy love,
 In varying figures I would have contended
 With the blue Proteus, or the horned flood.
 (III.ii.349-52)

Volpone's love for disguise and "shapes" makes his assertion less than impressive. He may not even be thinking of a physical struggle but of a contest of changing shapes. Both Proteus and Achelous were water-gods; each could assume various forms including the snake and the bull. Ironically both Achelous, who fought Hercules for Deianira and lost, and "Old Proteus" could take the figure of an appealing young man, something old Volpone cannot do. All he can do is rhetorically bring back the triumph of his youth, when he "acted young Antinous" and won the attention of all the ladies (III.ii.361-63). His presentation of a carpe diem song from Catullus underlines the fact that his youth is past. Apparently Volpone has spent time's gifts in vain in the same aimless diversions that he describes in the song. Mildly surprised that his performance is not applauded, Volpone advises Celia to accept her "worthy lover" and use her fortune with "secrecy and pleasure" (III.ii.385-86). Secrecy and pleasure is the formula which both Volpone and Barabas employ in their little rooms. As a lover of wealth, the overreacher is more withdrawn from society and somewhat restricted in spatial scope, but his ambitions can be as grandiose and extravagant as anything conceived by Tamburlaine or Doctor Faustus.

Volpone recites a catalogue of riches which would dazzle the mind of either of them or, as Celia says, "a mind affected / With such delights" (III.ii.404-405). Barabas, and Sir Epicure Mammon too, would be attracted by much or all of this life of luxury. Volpone's exclusiveness in regard to gems meets Barabas' refined and exacting standards. After the love-song, Volpone tries a different tack, instructing Celia on the proper way to use a fortune:

Than See, here, a rope of pearl; and each more orient
 that the brave Egyptian queen caroused:
 Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle
 May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark;
 A diamond would have bought Lollia Paulina
 When she came in like star-light, hid with jewels
 That were the spoils of provinces. Take these
 And wear, and lose them; yet remains an earring
 To purchase them again, and this whole state.
 A gem but worth a private patrimony,
 Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal.
 (III.ii.389-99)

In his first soliloquy Barabas spurns the silver "trash" (I.i.7) before him in favour of rare and exotic jewels:

Give me the merchants of the Indian mines
 That trade in metal of the purest mold,
 The wealthy Moor that in the eastern rocks
 Without control can pick his riches up
 And in his house heap pearl like pebble-stones,
 Receive them free and sell them by the weight.
 Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,
 And seld-seen costly stones of so great price
 As one of them, indifferently rated
 And of a carat of this quantity,
 May serve in peril of calamity
 To ransom great kings from captivity--
 This is the ware wherein consists my wealth.
 (I.i.19-33)

Both Barabas and Volpone stress the spectacle of riches as well as the possession. Volpone's "See. . . See. . . Take" (III.ii.389;391;395) is designed to satiate the imagination of a Barabas, who says, "Give me" (I.i.19). Now in full stride, Volpone perseveres with a menu of delicacies which would satisfy the discriminating taste of Mammon. When Celia proves unresponsive to these "sensual baits" (III.ii.409), Volpone can only continue with more of the same. From the outset Jonson has taken care to show that these fantasies enchant Volpone more than anyone else. Volpone propels himself to a crescendo that combines echoes of Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Ithamore. Jonson gives his character the reins and Volpone promptly exposes his dreams. The irony lies in the fact that their scope is so limited. If Volpone's wishes were granted, the world would remain the same. He would rather act the part of an overreacher or a god than actually be one. The riches and exotic dishes are only props for his performance. Volpone has carried out his plots, disguises and manipulations so that he can re-enact the lives of the gods according to Ovid, as he once acted Antinous. He thinks that he can recapture his youth through gold and be as convincing as Mars as he was as "young Antinous" (III.ii.361). Of course he does nothing to make himself like Mars.

Volpone's grandest desire is little more than the life he already leads with his fool, eunuch, and dwarf to entertain him and the opportunity to put on disguises or

"shapes" as frequently as possible. Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Ithamore all share the same idea; each thinks that he can live the life of a god and none completely escapes the consequences of his delusion. Tamburlaine and Faustus accept the challenge on a more literal level than Ithamore or Volpone. Tamburlaine's only military setbacks are his inability to attack the gods on Zenocrate's death and his reluctant admission that he is mortal and can conquer no more. He has made the claim to immortality so often that in his grief he almost believes it. Faustus pays the ultimate price for the chance to live like a god on earth; while he fails utterly, and comically, he lives as close to a god's life as he can imagine it. In both portrayals Marlowe uses irony to undercut the potential tragedy of the hero. Ithamore is at a lower level still. He is quite content to let his wine-inspired mind chatter on to Bellamira about a god's life with the Jew's wealth. Volpone is closest to Ithamore.

Like the slave, Volpone pictures an existence tailored to his taste. He is not trying to appeal to Celia's interests any more than Ithamore ever thinks of Bellamira's opinion. His allusions to Jove's rape of Europa and the adultery of Mars and Venus obviously excite him, but few women would find them attractive. A young wife known for her chastity and seclusion from the world would likely consider them repulsive.

In addition to offending Celia, Volpone's choices from the myths ironically undermine his argument. Volpone resembles the gods only in that he wants to commit adultery and is ready to resort to rape. The discrepancy between Volpone and Celia as lovers and Mars and "Erycine" is made all the more obvious and Volpone absurd by the possible allusion to Hero and Leander. Volpone says:

Whilst we, in changed shapes, act Ovid's tales:
Thou like Europa now and I like Jove,
Then I like Mars and thou like Erycine;
So of the rest, till we have quite run through
And wearied all the fables of the gods.

(III.ii.419-23)

As soon as Marlowe has described Hero's yielding to Leander, he proceeds to her regret at the inevitable return of the day:

And now she wished this night were never done,
And sighed to think upon th'approaching sun,
For much it grieved her that the bright daylight
Should know the pleasure of this blessed night,
And them like Mars and Erycine displayed,
Both in each other's arms chained as they laid.⁹

(III.301-306)

As well as the comparison with Hero and Leander, Volpone's proposal to Celia strongly resembles Marlowe's parody of his most famous poem, "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love."¹⁰ In The Jew of Malta, Marlowe makes fun of his earlier work when Ithamore courts Bellamira. Drunk and deluded, the Turk fabricates a rosy future for himself and the courtesan, which echoes "The Passionate Shepherd":

Content but we will leave this paltry land.
 And sail from hence to Greece, to lovely Greece.
 I'll be thy Jason, thou my golden fleece.
 Where painted carpets o'er the meads are hurled,
 And Bacchus' vineyards overspread the world,
 Where woods and forests go in goodly green,
 I'll be Adonis; thou shalt be Love's queen.
 The meads, the orchards, and the primrose lanes,
 Instead of sedge and reed, bear sugar canes.
 Thou in those groves, by Dis above,
 Shalt live with me, and be my love.

(IV.iv.84-94)

The image of Volpone as Jove or Mars drinking gold and amber and dining on parrots' heads and nightingales' tongues is as overdrawn and ludicrous as the image of Ithamore as Jason or Adonis in groves of sugar canes surrounded by vineyards. Volpone may be attracted by the idea of Jove changing into a bull to carry off Europa. Volpone's fancy of Celia bathing in the juice of "July-flowers," roses and violets, unicorns' milk, panthers' breath and Cretan wines (III.ii.411-14) has a parallel in the sexual innuendo of Ithamore's golden fleece amid "painted carpets" of flowers (IV.iv.87). Both Volpone and Ithamore visualize their ladies as Venus, the goddess of love, but their preposterous choices for themselves rebound upon them with comical results. At his best Volpone played Antinous, the chief suitor to Penelope, a villain, neither the hero nor a god. Now, much older, he aspires to pretend to be the ruler of Olympus or the god of war, two of the most infamous lovers among the gods. He would be farcical as either; he is perfect as a decrepit old man or a mountebank or what he really is, an aging voluptuary with time hanging heavy on

his hands. Far from the youthful Jason, Ithamore, the skinny Turk, is even more removed from Adonis, the beautiful young hunter. Ithamore's "lovely Greece" (IV.iv.85) is made complete by the addition of "Dis above"; the elevation of Pluto, the god of Hades, to heaven symbolizes the inversion of Ithamore's interpretation of classical antiquity. A similar inversion exists in Volpone's vision. He sees himself and Celia drinking gold and amber until their normal senses are overwhelmed to the point that the roof seems to "whirl round" (III.ii.15-17). In that condition they will perform all the fables of the gods, stimulated by their own nectar and ambrosia.

The historical and mythological figures compared to Celia decline in moral stature, though not in regard to wealth, from Paradise (Eve or an angel?) to Penelope to Cleopatra, to Lollia Paulina to Europa (bestiality?) and lastly to Venus, the promiscuous pagan goddess of love. But even aping the gods is not enough for Volpone. He must encompass the modern range of costumes; however, the concentration is now solely on Celia in the form of exotic dress. The references decline in respect from the "spritely dame of France" to the "Persian Sophy's wife" to the "Grand Signor's mistress." The allusions to the rulers of Persia and Turkey carry the suggestion of a harem. The next step is to the status of "one of our most artful courtesans" done only "for change" (III.ii.429-30). Venetian courtesans were famous, but here the important fact is that Volpone

would reduce Celia to copying a whore only "for change."¹¹
 The remark shows how fascinated he is with the idea of a Protean life and change for change's sake. Volpone would really be satisfied as Faustus apparently is by Mephostophilis' offer of compromise on a wife:

I'll cull thee out the fairest courtesans
 And bring them every morning to thy bed.
 She whom thine eye shall like, thy heart shall have,
 Were she as chaste as was Penelope,
 As wise as Saba, or as beautiful
 As was bright Lucifer before his fall.

(II. i.151-56)

Volpone would find appealing both the variety of courtesans and their delivery to his bed. His reference to the "quick Negro, or cold Russian" (III.ii.430) shows that his desire for change is all that matters; passionate or frigid, black or white, the personality or kind of woman is irrelevant to Volpone as long as she is different from the last. He finishes the speech proper in words echoing Faustus as he kisses Helen:

Where we may, so, transfuse our wandering souls
 Out at our lips, and score up sums of pleasures,
 (III.ii.432-33)

Faustus addresses the silent devil in Helen's shape:

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

(V.i.101-105)

Faustus follows with his fantasy of himself as Paris (V.i. 106-111), exchanging Troy for Wittenberg. The image is as absurd as Volpone's comparison of himself to Jove, although the circumstances are far more serious for Faustus.

Much of the dissatisfaction of the audience and the reader with Celia may lie in her repeated standard response in any predicament.¹² Her appeal to Volpone is much the same as her appeal to her husband, Corvino. She sounds as if she has not heard a word he has said, nor does she approach him differently when her method of virtue has already failed with Corvino. Her staunch negative attitude and desire for physical suffering in place of her loss of honour lead Corvino and Volpone to the same decision: "Yield" and "Yield, or I'll force thee" (III.ii.299 and 464).

Celia's steadfast fidelity acts as a *Nemesis* to Volpone's infidelity and love of change. She repeatedly offers to endure excessive torture to preserve her chastity. The wish for martyrdom, in place of an imposed and untested virtue, may represent her dream-world. In that event, Celia is just as extreme in her ambition as Volpone or her husband; the only difference is that she is heading in the opposite direction. Thus the overreacher's craving for wealth, sensuality, and pleasure is balanced by the would-be martyr's need for a test of strength. Celia's resistance defeats Volpone's verbal persistence. By the time he echoes Faustus, Volpone has poured out his soul to her. He has no more to offer or to say, which is why he tries to rape her.

For the moment he has stopped thinking. His whole act is based on his being considered "cold, / Frozen, and impotent" (III.ii.458-59).

Bonario's rescue of Celia and the subsequent collapse of Volpone border on farce and melodrama. From the moment Bonario cries, "Forbear, foul ravisher" (III.ii.465), the tone is exaggerated to the point of asininity. The mutual despair of Mosca and Volpone stops abruptly upon the arrival of Corbaccio and then Voltore. Mosca and Volpone quickly recover their composure; however, each delivers a sententious tag which contrasts acutely with their previous gleeful adages.¹³ To himself Mosca says of Volpone, "Guilty men / Suspect what they deserve still" (III.ii.497-98). At the end of the scene and of the act Volpone says to Mosca, "Need makes devotion. Heaven your labour bless!" (III.ii.561). This piety is coincidental with Voltore's first suspicion of Mosca.

The more the fox emerges from his hole, the more reliant he is on the fly for his safety. The shift of control from Volpone to Mosca is simultaneous with the disappearance of classical mythological images from Volpone's speeches and their increasing frequency in Mosca's lines. The hint of what is to come begins with the visit of Lady Would-be, the one legacy-hunter from whom no financial gain can be expected. Volpone is truly uncomfortable and welcomes Mosca as his saviour. Following his successful court room charade, Volpone is actually shaken, as he says in soliloquy

and admits to Mosca, when pressed. After Celia's rescue, Mosca's remark that they should die like Romans since they have lived like Grecians is the first of several references (III.ii.491-92).

Mosca's masterful handling of the legacy-hunters before the avocatori hinges on Voltore, the lawyer. He bolsters him in this fashion:

Worshipful sir,
Mercury sit upon your thundering tongue,
Or the French Hercules, and make your language
As conquering as his clubs to beat along,
As with a tempest; flat our adversaries--
(Aside) But much more yours, sir.

(IV.ii.20-25)

The obsequiousness is the same as before, but Mosca fashions his allusions more eloquently than before. Once Volpone has divulged his plan to make Mosca his heir, Mosca pictures its effects in language as fawning and highflown as he used before with Voltore:

And sweat, sir. Why, your gold
Is such another medicine: it dries up
All those offensive savours; it transforms
The most deformed, and restores them lovely,
As 'twere the strange poetical girdle. Jove
Could not invent to himself a shroud more subtle
To pass Acrisius' guards. It is the thing
Makes all the world her grace, her youth, her beauty.

(V.i.115-22)

The indirect allusions to Venus (the girdle) and to Danae (Acrisius) are more suited to Volpone than to Mosca; despite his elation and anticipation of his plan, Volpone makes none of his characteristic references or comparisons.

Disguised as a commandator, the fox reaches a peak of ecstatic glee, possibly because he is finally able to taunt Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore to their faces. For some reason he never draws on the myths to mock them. Instead, saved by Mosca's sudden appearance, Volpone, in an aside, praises the well-dressed parasite as a "basilisk". (V.iv.78) for silencing the raven and the crow.

As Volpone extends himself first as a mountebank before Celia's window, then as the invalid before the court, and finally as a commandator before Voltore and Corvino, he has less and less ability to direct events. Corvino turns up early. Voltore recants his former testimony, and Mosca makes his move to have it all. Barabas experiences a similar course of action.¹⁴ As in Volpone's case, the defection of the servant is concurrent with a diminishing capacity to govern the movements of his victims. With Ithamore's assistance, Barabas adroitly guides Don Lodowick, Don Mathias, Abigail (and the nuns), Friar Jacomo, and Friar Barnardine to their doom. That Ithamore would fall in love is the one occurrence that not even Barabas could be expected to foresee; however, it forces him to initiate a new series of crimes. By sending the money, Barabas buys the time he needs to plan his strategy. Ithamore seriously threatens Barabas' freedom from suspicion, as Mosca does Volpone's. Like Volpone, Barabas uses a disguise in a comical episode and succeeds in his main purpose. When the poisoned flower is a little slow in taking effect, Barabas

is caught off guard and is seized by Ferneze. He recovers magnificently, staging his own death and resurrection, but, from this moment, he is reacting to events instead of directing them. The betrayal of Malta and the planned destruction of Calymath are Barabas' attempts to insure his safety beyond question.

In Volpone's opinion his best performance would be as a motionless, nearly dead old man in court; there he has to act before a crowd of former visitors, judges, and strangers instead of one greedy person at a time. Following his successful appearance, Volpone undergoes a type of resurrection, an occurrence which is emphasized both by the previous religious imagery and by his first fearful sense of actual sickness and suffering. He tries to revive his spirits with wine, a common practice which may have religious implications in this context. Ironically Volpone feels threatened at the thought of really being an invalid and at the thought of it being discovered that he is not an invalid:

'Fore God, my left leg 'gan to have the cramp,
And I apprehended straight some power had struck me
With a dead palsy. Well, I must be merry
And shake it off.

(V.i.5-8)

Volpone has an inner compulsion to be merry. The wine makes him bolder, confident that "I shall conquer" (V.i.13). He casts about for any device "of rare, ingenious knavery" which would fill him with "violent laughter" (V.i.14-15). Adhering to his policy of change for its own sake has

brought Volpone to the point where he lacks any definite goal. Barabas is highly amused by his own crimes.

After tantalizing the Friars with descriptions of his wealth, he says in soliloquy:

But are not both these wise men to suppose
That I will leave my house, my goods, and all,
To fast and be well whipped? I'll none of that.
(IV.ii.124-26)

The passage resembles Barabas' earlier speech to Ithamore except that, for his revenge, Barabas will go to the extreme of risking his goods and lands (V.i.64).

Alone, Volpone talks of his need for rare and ingenious knavery; he must always be in the centre of activity. To stop or rest is antithetical to his temperament. He ignores Mosca's emphatic warning:

Why, now you speak, sir. We must be fixed:
Here we must rest; this is our masterpiece:
We cannot think to go beyond this.
(V.i.29-31)

Forgetting that his greatest triumph was also a close shave, Volpone has to go one better and decides to pretend that he has died and that Mosca is his heir. Perhaps Volpone cannot accept the thought that he is at his peak, or possibly the thought never occurs to him. By nature the overreacher cannot stop whether his purpose is power, wealth, or further scheming; the idea that he might actually get as far as he can go never figures in his outlook. He takes up his new plot with no thought for the consequences, in contrast to

the carefully staged act which has deceived the legacy-hunters for three years.

Barabas faces a similar situation and reacts in somewhat the same way. After Don Lodowick and Don Mathias have killed each other, Ithamore, alone, stresses the success of the intrigue as a superb achievement:

Why, was there ever seen such villainy,
 So neatly plotted, and so well performed?
 Both held in hand, and flatly both beguil'd?
 (III.iii.1-3)

This crime stands out from the others because Barabas cannot be charged directly for the deaths. Although he is unaware of Ithamore's disclosure of the faked challenge to Abigail, Barabas senses that she must know about it when she rejoins the nuns. Like Volpone, Barabas, in an emotional moment, pretends to name Ithamore his heir. Both Volpone and Barabas ignite flames of aspiration in their assistants that cannot be easily quenched. For a second Barabas really does deny Abigail in favour of Ithamore, but he quickly regains his composure. A sign of his self-control is that he retains his keys:

Barabas. O trusty Ithamore, no servant, but my friend,
 I here adopt thee for mine only heir.
 All that I have is thine when I am dead,
 And whilst I live use half. Spend as myself.
 Here take my keys--I'll give'em thee anon.
 Go buy thee garments, but thou shalt not want.
 Only know this, that thus thou art to do.
 But first go fetch me in the pot of rice
 That for our supper stands, upon the fire.
Ithamore. I hold my head my master's hungry.
 I go sir.

Barabas. Thus every villain ambles after wealth,
Although he ne'er be richer than in hope.
(III.iv.39-51)

As Mosca parallels Barabas in his dark asides on his gulls, so Volpone resembles Ithamore in eagerness, enthusiasm, and unpracticality. The new plan proves that Volpone has no interest in power. He would be just as uncomfortable as the Doge of Venice as Barabas is when he becomes the Governor of Malta. Previously he offered his keys to Mosca if he could get Celia (II.ii.21); he even metaphorically switched places with the visitors by telling Mosca to "coin me too" (II.ii.23), which recalls his own words, "[I] am content to coin [the visitors] into profit" (I.i.86). For his new trick to work Volpone has to surrender the keys to Mosca, a fact whose significance Mosca quickly grasps:

So, now I have the keys, and am possessed.
Since he will needs be dead afore his time,
I'll bury him, or gain by him. I'm his heir,
And so will keep me till he share at least.
To cozen him of all were but a cheat
Well placed: no man would construe it a sin:
Let his sport pay for it. This is called the Fox-trap.
(V.iii.12-18)

Whether or not Volpone will go halves becomes the crux in the court between Volpone and Mosca (V.vii.63-70). Barabas, on the contrary, offers Ithamore half of all he has. Later, egged on by Bellamira and by Pilia-Borza, Ithamore asserts that he will demand half: "I'll make him send me half he has and glad he 'scapes so too. Pen and ink. I'll write

unto him. We'll have money straight" (IV.iv.63-65).

Ithamore arrives at the same conclusion as Mosca does about Volpone: "To undo a Jew is charity, and not sin" (IV.vi.76).

The change in Mosca from devoted and flattering parasite to overweening blackmailer has its precedent in Ithamore. Each master underestimates his servant, whether it is "My better angel" (Volpone, II.ii.21) or "my trusty Turk" (Barabas in soliloquy, IV.ii.129).

Like Volpone, Barabas attempts one "device" too many. He has adopted his opponents' tool of "policy," and its application leads him to trust, temporarily, his greatest enemy. Barabas may intend to poison Ferneze as well as to destroy Selim Calymath because he cannot trust anyone in Malta. His wording of his plan is ambiguous, but this interpretation is possible:

And thus far roundly goes the business.
 Thus, loving neither, will I live with both,
 Making a profit of my policy,
 And he from whom my most advantage comes
 Shall be my friend.
 This is the life we Jews are used to lead--
 And reason too, for Christians do the like.
 Well, now about effecting this device:
 First to surprise great Selim's soldiers;
 And then to make provision for the feast,
 That at one instant all things may be done.
 My policy detests prevention,
 To what event my secret purpose drives
 I know--and they shall witness with their lives.
 (V.ii.110-23)

Barabas' familiarity with poison lends suspicion to what "provision" he will make for his feast that will get all things done at once. What is obvious is his fascination

with "policy." Volpone shares this preoccupation from first to last; it is most obvious after his initial appearance in court:

Mosca. You are not taken with it enough, methinks.
Volpone. O, more than if I had enjoyed the wench:
 The pleasure of all woman-kind's not like it.
 (V.i.26-28)

As Volpone miscalculates in regard to Voltore, so Barabas underestimates Ferneze. Each overreacher is too caught up in his own brilliance to take account of the desires of others. Barabas asks rhetorically:

Why, is not this
 A kingly kind of trade, to purchase towns
 By treachery and sell'em by deceit?
 Now tell me, worldlings, underneath the sun,
 If greater falsehood ever has been done?
 (V.v.46-50)

The passage recalls Barabas' fondness for dealing on the grand scale, symbolized by the rare jewel that can "ransom great kings from captivity" (I.i.32). Volpone also appreciates the magnificent and wealthy gesture, boasting to Celia that "A gem but worth a private patrimony, / Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal" (III.ii.398-99).

Both Volpone and Barabas face the inevitable with "resolution" (Barabas, V.v.80). Neither repents nor fears death. The "mortifying of a Fox" (V.vii.125) is matched by the actual death of the Jew. Volpone calls for judgment:

I am Volpone and this (to Mosca) is my knave;
 This (to Voltore), his own knave; this (to Corbac.),
 avarice's fool:
 This (to Corvino), a chimera of wittol, fool, and knave,
 And, reverend fathers, since we all can hope
 Nought but a sentence, let's not now despair it.
 You hear me brief.

(V.vii.89-94)

Volpone gains a certain satisfaction by proclaiming his identity and exposing Mosca and the gulls. Like Volpone, Barabas makes the rounds of those he has deceived and displays his contempt for them all:

Then Barabas, breathe forth thy latest fate,
 And in the fury of thy torments strive
 To end thy life with resolution.
 Know, governor, 'twas I that slew thy son.
 I framed the challenge that did make them meet.
 Know Calymath, I aimed thy overthrow,
 And had I but escaped this stratagem,
 I would have brought confusion on you all,
 Damned Christians, dogs, and Turkish infidels!

(V.v.78-86)

The defeat of the overreacher does not mark a victory for law and order in either work. In Venice the first of the Avocatori delivers a pronouncement which, because of its hypocritically pious and moralizing tone, could be written by Malta's Ferneze. He neatly sums things up from the judicial viewpoint:

. . . Now you begin,
 When crimes are done and past and to be punished,
 To think what your crimes are. Away with them.
 Let all that see these vices thus rewarded
 Take heart, and love to study them. Mischiefs feed
 Like beasts till they be fat, and then they bleed.

(V.vii.146-51)

In like manner, after killing Barabas on stage and the Turkish forces off stage, Ferneze resumes command as Governor:

Content thee, Calymath; here thou must stay
And live in Malta prisoner, for come all the world
To rescue thee, so will we guard us now,
As sooner shall they drink the ocean dry
Than conquer Malta or endanger us.
So, march away, and let due praise be given
Neither to fate nor fortune, but to heaven.

(V.v.118-24)

The law triumphs in both plays by "miracle," whether it is Volpone's wholly unexpected revelation of himself in court or Barabas' equally unforeseen alliance with Ferneze. In each case the authorities are quick to take the credit and align themselves with the supernatural but inconspicuous powers that be. Jonson differs from Marlowe in that he does not leave the last word to the authorities but gives it instead to Volpone in the Epilogue. Through Volpone's appeal for applause, Jonson places the decision squarely in the audience's hands.

Volpone's field of vision is not as broad as Tamburlaine's, but, like Barabas, he can focus intensely on anything that interests him. The dizzying variety of his proposals to Celia, buoyed by his confident and grandiose oratory, combine to create a picture of wealth, extravagance, rare delights, and sensuality. Volpone can keep pace with Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus in this regard; however, the context of his speech and its ironic results show that

Volpone is more comparable to Ithamore wooing Bellamira. The partnership with Mosca is vital to Volpone's success. The relationship parallels the informality and close working harmony of Barabas and Ithamore. In both cases master and servant or slave are equals in committing crime. The overreacher in Jonson or Marlowe rarely requires this kind of kindred spirit to assist him. Usually there is a marked distance between them, such as that between Tamburlaine and Theridamas, or Sejanus and Eudemus. In presenting the overreacher, interested in wealth and scheming, both Jonson and Marlowe saw fit to provide him with an assistant who holds a similar outlook.

Volpone's background includes the fox, the devil, and the figure of the Vice in the morality play. The Jew, from the character of Herod on stage, was also linked with the fox, the devil, and the Vice. The audience would immediately recognize Barabas, with his hat, nose, and furs as a comic villain; the opportunities for black comedy and farce are present from Machiavel's prologue. Like Barabas, Volpone begins strongly in the first act and then gradually loses momentum and stature as he falls in love and the game gets away from him. Venice is no more attractive than Malta, but Jonson does not condone Volpone's actions, which injure the innocent as well as the guilty. The overreacher is satirized for his grandiose aspirations and his folly exposed.

Notes

¹All quotations from Volpone will be from Ben Jonson, Volpone or the Fox, ed. David Cook, A University Paperback (London: Methuen, 1967). All quotations from The Jew of Malta and Marlowe's other plays will be from Christopher Marlowe, The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963). Act, scene, and line references will be included within parentheses in the body of the text.

²T. S. Eliot may have been the first to note the affinity between the two plays. As a critic of both Jonson and Marlowe, he made the point twice in the same year (1919). In his essay on Marlowe, Eliot wrote:

If one takes The Jew of Malta not as a tragedy, or as a 'tragedy of blood', but as a farce, the concluding act becomes intelligible; and if we attend with a careful ear to the versification, we find that Marlowe develops a tone to suit this farce, and even perhaps that this tone is his most powerful and mature tone. I say farce, but with the enfeebled humour of our times the word is a misnomer; it is the farce of the old English humour, the terribly serious, even savage, comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath in the decadent genius of Dickens. It has nothing in common with J. M. Barrie, Captain Bairnsfather, or Punch. It is the humour of that very serious (but very different) play Volpone.

See "Christopher Marlowe (1919)," Elizabethan Dramatists (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 63-64. Writing on Jonson, Eliot added: "If one reads Volpone, and after that re-reads The Jew of Malta; then returns to Jonson and reads Bartholomew Fair, The Alchemist, Epicoene and The Devil is an Ass, and finally Catiline, it is possible to arrive at a fair opinion of the poet and the dramatist" ("Ben Jonson (1919)," Elizabethan Dramatists, pp. 73-74). Also in 1919 George Gregory Smith made several accurate observations on Volpone, frequently taken up by later critics: "Everything is drawn to exaggeration: the scene is laid in Venice, the mother-city of splendid vice; there is one continuous suggestion of luxury, in Volpone's surroundings, in his wooing of Celia in terms out-Marlowing Marlowe." See

Ben Jonson, English Men of Letters (London: Macmillan, 1919; rpt. St. Clair Shores, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1972), p. 110. Both Jonson and Marlowe scholars have made brief comments on the relationship between the two plays.

The Jonson scholars include Alexander H. Sackton, Rhetoric as a Dramatic Language in Ben Jonson (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 139-40; Edward Partridge, The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), pp. 77 and 235; Douglas Duncan, "Audience--Manipulation in Volpone," Wascana Review 5 (1970): 24. Among Marlowe scholars there are F. P. Wilson, "III. The Jew of Malta: Doctor Faustus," Marlowe and the Early Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 62, and Harry Levin, "Chapter III. More of the Serpent," The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 101. Several Jonson critics have made somewhat more detailed studies and observations. See Leslie A. Beaurline, "Volpone and the Power of Gorgeous Speech," SLI 6 (April 1973): 61-75; Philip Brockbank, "From Introduction to Volpone (1968)," (from his ed. of Volpone, New Mermaid Series, 1968) in Jonas A. Barish, ed., "Volpone": A Casebook (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 201-204; David Cook, "Introduction: Volpone," p. 36; Simone Dorangeon, "A Propos de Volpone: Ben Jonson et le Motif de l'Invitation," Etudes Anglaises 29, no 2 (1976): 144-51; Stephen J. Greenblatt, "The False Ending in Volpone," JEGP 75 (January-April 1976): 92-93. Marlowe scholars who have made lengthier comments are G. K. Hunter, "The Theology of Marlowe's The Jew of Malta," JWCI 27 (1964): 211-40; J. B. Steane, "5. 'The Jew of Malta'," Marlowe: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 167-68; John P. Cutts, "V. The Jew of Malta: in a little room," The Left Hand of God: A Critical Interpretation of the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Haddonfield, N.J.: Haddonfield House, 1973), pp. 167 and 169. Cutts' observations on Volpone are both wrong in interpretation and factually incorrect; however, other comments on The Jew of Malta are perceptive and shed light on Volpone as well, although Cutts does not develop them.

³ Several critics have commented upon Volpone's love of acting, including Alvin B. Kernan, "Introduction to Volpone" in Volpone, ed. Alvin B. Kernan, The Yale Ben Jonson (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 7-11; Alexander Leggatt, "The Suicide of Volpone," UTQ 39 (1969): 22 and 24; John Creaser, "Volpone: The Mortifying of the Fox," EIC 25 (July 1975): 334. Both Kernan and Creaser note the resemblance between Volpone and Marlowe's heroes (Kernan 14; Creaser 338 and 342). On the other hand, Charles Masinton argues that Barabas is "nearly always acting a part" and in this regard resembles Mosca, in "Chapter IV. Desire of Gold: Barabas and the Politics of Greed," in Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study

in Damnation (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), p. 60. Eric Rothstein sees Barabas as the "supreme poseur" as well as an agent who exposes others, in "Structure as Meaning in The Jew of Malta," JEGP 65 (April 1966): 266.

⁴ Steane comments on the similarity between the opening speeches and the rooms, pp. 167-68; 176. He argues that Volpone views gold "impersonally" in contrast to Barabas, who is "egotistically involved in it" (p. 177).

⁵ Kernan believes that Volpone holds up a coin to replace the sun and the host (p. 1.).

⁶ See Brian Gibbons, "Chapter 2: A Fountain Stirr'd," Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), pp. 32-35; and Edgar Rosenberg, "II. The Rise of the Jew-Villain," From Shylock to Svengali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 21-36.

⁷ As Volpone scorns other seekers after wealth, so Barabas is contemptuous of his fellow Jews. They are "base slaves" who never knew real riches, but Barabas is no "senseless lump of clay" (I.ii.215;217):

No, Barabas is born to better chance
And framed of finer mold than common men
That measure nought but by the present time.
(I.ii.219-21)

Volpone believes precisely the same about himself.

⁸ Barabas admits that "we come not to be kings" (I.i.127), but he accepts it, saying, "Give us a peaceful rule; make Christians kings" (I.i.132). Although rule under Christians proves anything but peaceful, Barabas has no personal desire for power at the end of the play.

⁹ Hero and Leander in The Complete Poems and Translations, ed. Stephen Orgel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 39.

¹⁰ Robert S. Forsythe traces the many writers who followed Marlowe in this kind of invitation by recital. See "The Passionate Shepherd and English Poetry," PMLA 40 (1925):

629-742. Both Beaurline and Dorangeon note the similarity between Volpone and Ithamore (Beaurline 64-68; 73; Dorangeon 144-46). Beaurline observes the similarity to Faustus (69). Dorangeon mentions Barabas, but does not develop her observation (144). Presenting Volpone as the antithesis of the shepherd, she examines the history of the pastoral invitation. She does not seem to be aware of Beaurline's article.

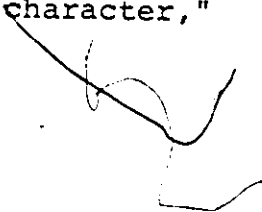
¹¹Charles A. Hallett observes, "She would, with Volpone, move down the chain of being," in "Jonson's Celia: A Reinterpretation of 'Volpone'," SP 68 (January 1971): 62.

¹²Although many critics dismiss Celia as dull and one-dimensional, several others have offered better interpretations of her role. Generally she is viewed in a religious light. Hallett discusses her as "the Heavenly One" in "Jonson's Celia," 50-69; Gerald H. Cox III aligns Celia and Bonario with the quiet Jesus of the medieval cycles, in "Celia, Bonario, and Jonson's Indebtedness to the Medieval Cycles," Etudes Critiques 25 (1972): 506-11; Alan C. Dessen prefers the late Elizabethan Morality tradition (Celia and Bonario are like Heavenly Man or Just or Faithful Few), in "Volpone and the Late Morality Tradition," MLQ 25 (1964): 383-99; W. Speed Hill compares Celia to Griselda as a martyr in "Biography, Autobiography, and Volpone," SEL (Spring 1972): 325. The best interpretation is likely Douglas Duncan's. He says, "... Celia is a woman of inflammatory sex-appeal." In other words, she does not have to do or say anything to be effective. As Duncan says, "... it is she who is the sensual bait." See Duncan, pp. 30-31. Brian F. Tyson argues that Volpone contains "parodic overtones" of Othello. If so, Celia becomes a distant imitation of Desdemona. See "Ben Jonson's Black Comedy: A Connection Between Othello and Volpone," SQ 29 (Winter 1978): 61-64. In The Jew of Malta Abigail plays a role to Duncan's interpretation. Barabas uses her as "sensual bait" for Don Lodowick and Don Mathias, and, like Celia, she is obedient and dutiful, almost beyond belief. Rosenberg notes that "It became customary after Marlowe to invest the Jew with a daughter, a girl sufficiently good and beautiful to serve as foil to the wicked father. . . . an object of lust" (p. 34).

¹³Ithamore and Barabas are also given to proverbs and wise sayings. For example, Barabas tells Abigail, "Things past recovery / Are hardly cured with exclamations" (I.ii.237-38). When Ithamore brings the ladle with the pot of porridge, he says, "The proverb says he that eats with

the devil had / need of a long spoon" (III.iv.54-55).

¹⁴William Leigh Godschalk comments on Barabas' increasing involvement in "VIII. The Jew of Malta," The Marlovian World Picture (Paris: Mouton, 1974), pp. 209-10. Godschalk considers Barabas "the ultimate Marlovian character," p. 202.



IV

"A Perpetuity / Of 'Life, and Lust:"Sir
Epicure Mammon and Doctor Faustus

From Jonson's own day to the present, critics have rated The Alchemist as the perfect play. Theme, plot, and characters combine to create a fast-paced, hilarious, and satirically didactic comedy which punctures the vanity and the hypocrisy of Jacobean society wherever they occur, in the Puritans, the charlatans, or the roaring boys. Perhaps the most memorable character is Sir Epicure Mammon, whose hyperbolical speeches have been praised, copied, and censored for over three hundred years. Mammon's impressiveness derives substantially from his major predecessor in reliance on fantasy through magic, Marlowe's Doctor Faustus.¹ In Faustus Marlowe portrays a complex and ambiguous figure who voices Renaissance aspirations but who consistently misuses his knowledge to choose folly over wisdom. By the last scenes Faustus has become a tragic individual as well as a kind of Everyman. In contrast, Jonson distrusted such aspirations, had no faith in magic, and held in contempt any who misused knowledge. Accordingly, in The Alchemist, he satirizes Faustian dreams in Sir Epicure Mammon and Faustian magic in the fake alchemist, Subtle.

While Subtle has his jargon pat, he likely believes none of it. Mammon, however, genuinely believes in the stone, as Faustus believes in his books. Surly calls Mammon "a wise sir that has no need" of wealth or magic or anything in particular, a phrase that applies also to Faustus, whose success is recognized throughout many cities, who wins debates with "Sic probo", and who has just commenced.

Critics of each author have noted similarities between the two works. Among the most perceptive interpretations is Robert E. Knoll's comment in "How to Read The Alchemist" that "like Faustus [Mammon] is drunk with the idea of power and like Faustus the power to which he aspires is directed to no service but his appetite".² In his later book Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction, Knoll compares Faustus and Subtle and finds The Alchemist to be a Christian play; he regards Faustus as an admirable magic hero and argues that "the ultimate difference between Jonson and Marlowe is that Jonson sees such high aspiration as ludicrous, and Marlowe sees it as nearly noble".³ John J. Enck observes, in Jonson and the Comic Truth, that Mammon's ambition "links with the Faustian one of soaring beyond the possible;" further, he believes that "the late medieval magician who prefigured twentieth-century man receives a contemptuous rebuke" in The Alchemist but adds that, even so, "once admitted, Faustus has a way of being unanswerable and ubiquitous."⁴ In "Magic and Poetry in Doctor Faustus (1964)," D. J. Palmer maintains that "even Jonson's Alchemist pays homage to Marlowe's play,

reducing the theme to comic terms by presenting the illusion of magic power as a series of delusions: Sir Epicure Mammon's luxurious fantasies suggest a parody of the rhapsodic poetry of Faustus."⁵

Whether taking the position that Doctor Faustus is a Satanic tragedy or a Christian play, critics writing until the early 1960s usually accept the positive interpretation of Doctor Faustus as a Renaissance challenger of mortal limitations who surrenders even his soul in the quest for knowledge. Una Ellis Fermor, in The Frontiers of Drama, Harry Levin, in The Overreacher, and Irving Ribner, in his "Introduction" to The Plays of Christopher Marlowe, are among the supporters of the Satanic theory.⁶ Leo Kirschbaum, in "Marlowe's Faustus: A Reconsideration," Douglas Cole, in Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe, Lily B. Campbell, in "Doctor Faustus: A Case of Conscience," and Paul H. Kocher, in Christopher Marlowe, consider Doctor Faustus to be a Christian play.⁷

Several critics writing from the mid-1960s to the present day question this approach and instead view Doctor Faustus as a voluptuous and possibly poorly educated scholar. The debate on Faustus' character continues with strong adherents on both sides. Writers sceptical about Faustus' erudition include H.W. Matalene III (who prefers the A-text), in "Marlowe's Faustus and the Comforts of Academicism," John P. Cutts, in The Left Hand of God, Sara Munson Deats, in "Doctor Faustus: From Chapbook to Tragedy," William Leigh Godschalk, in The Marlovian World Picture, Michael

Hattaway, in "The Theology of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus", and William Blackburn, in "'Heavenly Words': Marlowe's Faustus as a Renaissance Magician."⁸ In the eyes of the critics, Faustus runs the gamut from Renaissance superman to Lucifer's fool. I am more in agreement with the latter view than the former, but the genuine character of Faustus likely lies between the two extremes.

Before we examine the career of Faustus, we should briefly consider the dramatic world of Wittenberg, which is the setting of the opening scenes and the final scenes, the parts of the play usually ascribed to Marlowe. The home of Luther's Ninety-five Theses emerges as a place of faith, tolerance, and debate.⁹ The university permits the presence of Valdes and Cornelius although they have an "infamous" reputation (II.236). Wagner's jocular manner highlights the serious concern of the scholars on hearing that Faustus is with these conjurers. Innocent compared to Faustus, the scholars are later enchanted with Helen and their reaction likely arouses Faustus' desire for her. Appalled when they learn of the bargain with the devil, they do not abandon him. Instead, they promise to pray for him, and one even offers to stay with Faustus through the night.

To choose magic above all, including divinity, Faustus has to abuse his knowledge, signified by his recent graduation or commencement. He refuses to accept warning signs, even miracles such as "Homo fuge", resists his own feelings of repentance, and gives himself to horseplay and Mephistophilis' distractions. In the opening scenes Mephistophilis' frank replies show that Faustus is foolish to be resolute. During the middle scenes Faustus wastes his time baiting the pope, entertaining the emperor, and accomplishing none of his goals. The comic mood of these episodes is tempered by Faustus' occasional twinges of remorse. Until the final scenes Faustus remains capable of salvation in spite of all his previous sins. At this point the Old Man tries to save his soul. Faustus gains his tragic stature through his preference for Helen, the succuba, and his illusion about the Old Man and repentance. His speech to the shadow, which remains silent, is enchanting, but Faustus is trying to reassure himself more than he is trying to seduce "Helen." The speech is a fitting preparation for his last soliloquy. As a sinner convinced of being beyond salvation, Faustus is a strikingly tragic figure. His "knowledge in the

blacke Arte" (x.1041. A-1604) seems far less important than his own despair.

In my interpretation the comic irony directed against Faustus does not lessen his tragedy, but it does imply greater and more points of contact between Faustus and Sir Epicure Mammon.

Of all Marlowe's overreachers Faustus stands out as the most memorable and the most impressive. He surpasses his predecessors in every extreme. Unlike Tamburlaine, Barabas, or the Duc de Guise, however, Faustus emerges as the victim of his desires instead of the conqueror of others. Although Mephistophilis later claims to have turned the pages of Faustus' books (B1616.198894), Faustus actually mesmerizes himself with his persuasive language. In his fantasy he sees no end to what he will achieve and he pictures himself as a man of wealth who could outweigh Barabas and a champion who could outmanoeuvre Tamburlaine. Going beyond Olympus, the mosque, and the synagogue, Faustus challenges the authority of the true Christian God. He must fail, and Marlowe takes advantage of the audience's knowledge of the fatal outcome in portraying Faustus' uneven career. The moments of fear, reflection, and hesitation blend with those of grimly comic irony. Marlowe indicates that anyone whose ambitions are as uncontrolled and extreme as Faustus' are will appear foolish as well as tragic.

To strip the grandeur from these aspirations, Jonson withdraws the tragic awareness of Faustus and creates an enormous caricature of the already limitless desires. The seeds of Sir

Epicure Mammon are in Sejanus and Volpone. He towers over them in Jonson's plays as the culmination of the Jonsonian overreacher. Like Faustus, he is the gull of his own talents in language, fantasy, and ambition, but, without Faustus' sensitivity to his situation, Mammon becomes a colossal comic caricature.

Faustus and Mammon share a preoccupation with metamorphosis through magic. Although not badly off, neither is satisfied, and each imagines himself as the supreme ruler of a world remade to his liking. In regard to these visions, available only in the words of each overreacher, Mammon surpasses Volpone and Sejanus just as Faustus leaves behind Barabas and Tamburlaine. The colossal grandeur of each in his own mind is only equalled by the intensity of his final disillusionment. For a precedent both will latch on to anything, including nature, religion, or the classical gods. Only the latter come close to meeting their standards.

Metamorphosis is a fundamental theme of both plays. In a way, what Mephistophilis and Lucifer seem to offer Faustus, a magical change in himself and the power to change everything else, Face and Subtle seem to offer to every one of their clients. Act I of The Alchemist establishes Face and Subtle as accomplished "coz'ners" ("The Argument," 1.6). Although they are on the verge of brawling in the first scene, neither denies the portrait of himself as a recent down and out ne'er-

do-well, but each claims that he transformed the other. All Subtle's art has gone to make Face a "translated suburb-captain" (I. i. 19), and Face asserts that he made Subtle (I. i. 43-47). Once Doll has forcefully reunited the "venture tripartite" (I. i. 135), the "Sovereign" and the "General" (I. i. 5) demonstrate how well they work as a team.

Their easy manipulation of Dapper, the law clerk, and Drugger, the tobacconist, displays their talent for deceit and prompts the audience to anticipate a greater challenge to their craft. The "masters" (I. i. 100) are so flexible that they can choose their roles at a moment's notice (I. i. 189-97). From the start one of their "props" is the promise of the philosopher's stone. Subtle drops the hint that Drugger

Will come, in time, to be a great distiller,
And give a say (I will not say directly,
But very fair) at the philosopher's stone.
Why, how now, Abel! Is this true?

Face.
Drugger.

Good Captain,

What must I give?

Face.

Nay, I'll not counsel thee.
(I. iii. 78-82)

In the last speech in Act I, Subtle, the proven "cunning-man" (I. ii. 8), delivers a jeering profile of Mammon and his obsession with "the stone" (I. iv. 14). This speech serves the same purpose for Mammon as the Prologue does for Faustus. Before either overreacher gets started on his lengthy hyperbolical speeches, the author prefaces his initial appearance with a few guiding comments. Lines such as "swolne with cunning of a selfe conceit" (Prol. 21. A-1604) and "falling to a diuelish exercise" (Prol. 24. A-1604) prepare the audience for Faustus' sophisticated

reasoning with himself. According to Subtle, Mammon "has, this month, talk'd, as he were possess'd" of the stone already (I. iv. 16). As "Nothing so sweete as magicke is to" Faustus (Prol. 27. A-1604), so Mammon's mind is taken up with this single concept to the exclusion of almost everything else, and "This is the day" (I. iv. 13).

Although Mammon rarely, if ever, rises above a comic caricature, he shares Faustus' intense eagerness and excitement on the threshold of magic. But where Marlowe permits Faustus to speak for himself and describe his plans for ostentatious and philanthropic deeds, Jonson torpedoes Mammon, before he appears, through Subtle's ridicule. Subtle derisively imagines Mammon curing the ills of the world:

And now, he's dealing pieces on't away.
Methinks I see him, entering ordinaries,
Dispensing for the pox and plaguy houses,
Reaching his dose; walking Moorfields for lepers;
And off'ring citizens' wives pomander-bracelets,
As his preservative, made of the elixir;
Searching the spittle, to make old bawds young;
And the highways for beggars, to make rich:
I see no end of his labours.

(I. iv. 17-25)

Faustus' good intentions, being nationalistic and concerned with the welfare of scholars, reflect the Renaissance spirit, but his desire "to raigne sole king of all our prouinces" (A-1604. i. 126) casts a long and ironical shadow on all that he said before:

Ile haue [spirits] wall all Iermany with brasse,
And make swift Rhine circle faire Wertenberge,
Ile haue them fill the publike schooles with skill.
Wherewith the students shal be brauely clad:
Ile leuy souldiers with the coyne they bring,
And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
And raigne sole king of all our prouinces:

(A-1604. i. 120-26)

As a "studious Artizan" (A-1604. i. 85), Faustus believes that he will control the forces of nature, an idea encouraged by the Evil Angel:

Go forward Faustus in that famous art,
Wherein all natures treasure is containd:
Be thou on earth as Ioue is in the skie,
Lord and commaunder of these Elements.

(A-1604. i. 106-109)

Through "art," Mammon "will make / Nature asham'd of her long sleep" (I. iv. 25-26) and will rival "her best love to mankind" (I. iv. 28). Subtle adds the finishing touch to his sketch of Mammon by saying, "If his dream last, he'll turn the age to gold" (I. iv. 29). The intriguing mystery of metamorphosis and its symbolism in classical legend are reduced to a single change for what may be the lowest motive in Jonson's system of values, greed. The reminder of the Golden Age draws attention to the difference between its values and Mammon's, and its values and those of Jacobean society. After Subtle's speech, the audience expects to see another unforgettable fool like King Midas and is not disappointed.¹⁰

"Slow of his feet, but earnest of his tongue" (I. iv. 8), Mammon bubbles over in his enthusiasm:

Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore
In novo orbe; here's the rich Peru:
And there within, sir, are the golden mines,
Great Solomon's Ophir! He was sailing to't
Three years, but we have reach'd it in ten months.
This is the day, wherein, to all my friends,
I will pronounce the happy word 'be rich'.

(II. i. 1-7)

Faustus also believes that the preliminary preparations are completed and that the moment of fulfilment is close at hand:

Settle thy studies Faustus, and beginne
 To sound the deapth of that thou wilt professe:
 Hauing commencde, be a Diuine in shew,
 Yet leuell at the end of euery Art,
 And liue and die in Aristotles workes:

(A-1604. i. 31-35)

Aristotle is only the beginning. Faustus possesses a grasp sufficient to find unanswerable paradoxes or contradictions in each of the traditional professions, philosophy, medicine, and law. What he demands from them, however, is more suprising than any problem inherent in them. Faustus expects a "miracle" (A-1604. i. 39) from philosophy, the power to raise the dead from medicine (A-1604. i. 55), and something far above the "illiberal" "externall trash" (A-1604. i. 65-66) offered by the law. Having dismissed these three vocations, Faustus turns to divinity. The "best" profession (A-1604. i. 67), divinity poses the greatest challenge to Faustus' logic because it represents a miracle, the power of salvation. The mention of divinity reminds the audience that God can raise the soul from the dead far above earthly concerns. To reject divinity Faustus must choose his quotations carefully to manufacture a fatalistic doctrine out of the New Testament. By deliberately ignoring the hope offered by the second half of Romans 6.8 and by I John 1.7 and 9, Faustus proves that "we must die an euer-lasting death" (A-1604. i. 76).

On a more comic plane, Mammon displays a similar talent for analysis only after he has rhapsodized about his "novo orbe" (II. i. 2). Where Faustus builds up to his "Metaphisickes of Magicians" (A-1604. i. 79), Mammon starts with his full-fledged

vision proving Subtle correct in every detail. He even says, "This is the day" (II. i. 6), and handily fuses the new world's wealth with the Old Testament's, the newly discovered Peru and Solomon's legendary Ophir. Such a juxtaposition is not unworthy of Faustus, and it is only the beginning for Mammon. But the remnant of the "wise sir" later recalled by Surly (II. iii. 280) has no difficulty in giving an incisive and devastating criticism of Surly's life as a gambler. Mammon's accuracy is borne out by Surly's silence on the subjects of Madam Augusta and the "livery-punk" (II. i. 17 and 11).

Both Mammon and Faustus soon assert their faith in magic and metamorphosis. Faustus' expectations from magic far exceed the inconsistencies he discovered in the professions. Having bid divinity adieu (A-1604. i. 78), Faustus declares that the magicians' metaphysical works "And Negromantike bookes are heauenly / Lines, circles, sceanes, letters and characters" (A-1604. i. 80-81). The linking and balance of black magic and heaven in the same line in "Negromantike" and "heauenly" (A-1604. i. 80) suggests that Faustus blurs the truth to excuse sacrilege and study what "Faustus most desires" (A-1604. i. 82).

Equally confident, Mammon mocks Surly's doubt and proclaims that he will begin "This night":

You are not faithful, sir. This night, I'll change
 All that is metal in thy house, to gold.
 And early in the morning, will I send
 To all the plumbers, and the pewterers,
 And buy their tin, and lead up; and to Lothbury,
 For all the copper.

(II. i. 29-34)

Although Mammon is sure that Surly will be converted, "You will believe me" (II. i. 42), Surly's presence prevents Mammon from soaring uninterrupted, as Faustus does, "Yes, when I see't, I will" (II. i. 42). The blunt scepticism has no effect on Mammon, but he has to exaggerate more and more to defend his dream. Surly's cynical barbs repeatedly puncture his bursts of oratory. Mammon usually begins from genuine alchemical terms and theory, but he persistently draws the most extravagant conclusions:

Mammon. Do you think I fable with you? I assure you,
He that has once the flower of the sun,
The perfect ruby, which we call elixir,
Not only can do that, but by its virtue,
Can confer honour, love, respect, long life,
Give safety, valour: yea, and victory,
To whom he will. In eight and twenty days,
I'll make an old man of fourscore, a child.
Surly. No doubt, he's that already.

(II. i. 46-54)

Faustus makes similar claims for magic:

O what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honor, of omnipotence
Is promised to the studious Artizan?
All things that mooue betweene the quiet poles
Shalbe at my commaund, Emperours and Kings,
Are but obeyd in their seuerall prouinces:
Nor can they raise the winde, or rend the cloudes:
But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretcheth as farre as doth the minde of man.
A sound Magician is a mighty god:
Heere Faustus trie thy braines to gaine a deitie.

(A-1604. i. 83-93)

There is little to choose between Mammon's honour, love, respect, long life, safety, valour, and victory (II. i. 50-51) and Faustus' profit, delight, power, honour, and omnipotence. The difference lies in the grandeur and vastness of Faustus' vision, which encompasses "All things that mooue betweene the quiet poles" (A-1604.

i. 86), and Mammon's specific instructions for every small detail. Far from overstating the case, Subtle may have underrated Mammon's faith in the stone. One has only to copy the biblical Patriarchs who have, as Mammon says,

But taking, once a week, on a knife's point,
The quantity of a grain of mustard, of it:
Become stout Morses and beget young Cupids.
Surly. The decay'd Vestals of Pict-hatch would thank you,
That keep the fire alive there. (II. i. 89-93)

Mammon would work miracles in medicine too, driving the plague out of the kingdom (II. i. 69-70), as Faustus claims to have done for "whole Citties" (A-1604. i. 51) and maintaining London's health with weekly treatments.¹¹

Surly's most telling hit, his "humour" that "Your stone / Cannot transmute me" (II. i. 77-79), goes unheard. To answer such sarcasm, Mammon simply resorts to antiquity and promptly changes all the "Records" of riches (II. i. 80) into "abstract riddles of our stone" (II. i. 104). Mammon's interest in learning extends only so far as it will support the existence of the stone. The wisdom of Solomon, even the Ten Commandments of Moses, and Adam's fall lose their religious significance and are turned, instead, into corroborative detail for the stone.

A promising potential churchman, Faustus too manipulates his classical and religious knowledge at first to argue in favour of studying magic and later to reject repentance. Like Mammon he indiscriminately mixes biblical and mythical references to back up his choice of magic over faith and then boasts about it to a devil:

This word damnation terrifies not him,
 For he confounds hell in Elizium,
 His ghost be with the olde Philosophers,

(A-1604. iii. 303-305)

The shades of "the olde Philosophers" are as close as Faustus can come. The only relationship possible with the classical world of history and myth is that of a spectator, as devils take the shapes of the ancients. Two scenes after he signs the contract, Faustus struggles towards repentance. He debates with Mephistophilis about heaven and receives a visit from the Good Angel and the Evil Angel. What finally strengthens his resolve against both repentance and suicide is the recollection of his entertainment from the classical past:

Haue not I made blinde Homer sing to me,
 Of Alexanders loue, and Enons death,
 And hath not he that built the walles of Thebes,
 With rauishing sound of his melodious harp
 Made musicke with my Mephastophilis,
 Why should I dye then, or basely dispaire?

(A-1604. vi. 655-60)

The audience will later realize that "blinde Homer" and Orpheus are really disguised demons, like those of Alexander the Great and Thaïs (A-1604. x. 1080-90). Mephistophilis makes music with his own kind. As for the present, whether he is exploring hell or all the spheres under heaven, Faustus remains a tourist, a sightseer, not the promised "Ioue" on earth (A-1604. i. 108). The "secrets" which he was determined to discover (A-1604. i. 119) elude him. His reputation is built on feats performed by Mephistophilis, a point which stresses the temporary and delusive nature of his power. Even the visit to hell fails to open

his eyes. Apparently all he gains is the knack to swear by hell's rivers:

Now by the kingdomes of infernall rule,
Of Styx, Acheron, and the fiery lake
of euer-burning Phlegiton I sweare,

(A-1604. vii. 862-64)

Faustus' internal torment is foreign to Mammon's shallow personality; however, his twisting of the Bible and classical mythology, in which he is likely schooled by Subtle, is a comical exaggeration of Faustus' method of reasoning. Once more Surly takes Mammon's assertions with a particle of salt:

Mammon. I'll shew you a book where Moses and his sister,
And Solomon have written, of the art;
Ay, and a treatise penn'd by Adam--

Surly.

How!

Mammon. O' the philosopher's stone, and in High Dutch.

Surly. Did Adam write, sir, in High Dutch?

Mammon.

He did;

Which proves it was the primitive tongue.

(II. i. 81-86)

Although alchemists seriously claimed that all these figures of the Old Testament were early and skilled practitioners, Jonson saw the potential for fraud in their obscure and pretentious jargon. Both the Bible and the ancient myths lose their significance for mankind when they are metamorphosed to little more than stories of the "stone". Through Mammon's soaring hyperboles and Surly's sardonic responses, Jonson satirizes both Faustian aspirations and the extravagant claims of alchemy.

Mammon "confounds hell in Elizium" on a colossal and comic scale. Having called on Moses and his sister, Solomon, and Adam for support, he turns to classical mythology and boldly declares that he has a piece of Jason's golden fleece,

Which was no other, than a book of alchemy,
 Writ in large sheepskin, a good fat ram-vellum.
 Such was Pythagoras' thigh, Pandora's tub,
 And all that fable of Medea's charms,
 The manner of our work; the bulls, our furnace,
 Still breathing fire; our argent-vive, the dragon;
 The dragon's teeth, mercury sublimate,
 That keeps the whiteness, hardness, and the biting;
 And they are gather'd into Jason's helm,
 (Th'alembic) and then sow'd in Mars his field,
 And thence, sublim'd so often till they are fix'd.
 (II. i. 90-100)

The transformation of the golden fleece, a symbol of the quest, into "a good fat ram-vellum" (II. i. 91)¹², is the basis for placing every component of the legend into an alchemical framework. But such elaborate associations were not always required. The alchemists would adapt almost any tale to suit the stone, a flaw which Jonson takes pains to emphasize. If the myth deals with gold or the pursuit of someone or something, such as the stories of Pythagoras, the garden of the Hesperides, Danae, Midas, or Argus, all the better; however, the standards are flexible enough to drag in Cadmus, Pandora, and Demogorgon. Mammon can breezily sandwich the explanation of the fleece between Pythagoras and Pandora at one end, and the Hesperian garden, Cadmus, and the rest at the other. That the result seems confused is irrelevant, because the reason for every myth has become the stone. Faustus turns all his education to the service of magic and achieves the same outcome; the logic is contradictory and confusing, but he finds excuses and magic wins over divinity, philosophy, and medicine.

Through Subtle's mocking description, Surly's derisive comments, and his own initial impact, Mammon is established as

a comically preposterous gull. When Face as "Lungs" replaces Surly, Mammon soars into his most hyperbolical oratory, a Marlovian extravaganza of sloth, sex, and gluttony.

Breathless and excited, Mammon fires off a series of short questions as soon as Face appears: "How now? / Do we succeed? Is our day come? And holds it?" (II. i. 104; II. ii. 1). Face quickly reassures him that "projection" is only three hours away (II. ii. 4-5). As his confidence builds, Mammon's speeches gradually get longer and his questions infrequent. He begins by repeating a favourite phrase to Surly, "Again, I say to thee aloud, 'be rich'" (II. ii. 6). Surly's silence and Face's helpful suggestions sustain Mammon's buoyancy:

Mammon. Excellent witty Lungs! My only care is,
Where to get stuff enough, now, to project on,
This town will not half serve me.

Face. No, sir? Buy
The coverings off o' churches.
(II. ii. 11-14)

Mammon cannot concentrate on any subject for long. Anything, even the thought of "master" at his prayers (II. ii. 29), takes him back to his fantasy:

Mammon. Where's master?

Face. At's prayers, sir; he,
Good man, he's doing his devotions,
For the success.

Mammon. Lungs, I will set a
period,
To all thy labours: thou shalt be the master
Of my seraglio.

(II. ii. 29-33)

Mammon has little time for thoughts of the pious alchemist; instead, he launches upon a thorough description of his fantasy world. His speeches, unbroken save for "Lungs" occasional confirmation of the success, reveal both the similarities and differ-

ences between Mammon's vision and that of Faustus. As Mammon proceeds, he gradually focusses more and more upon himself. Picturing himself among his succubae, he then considers himself surrounded by his flatterers, fools and eunuchs, and finally concentrates on what he will eat and wear.

The satisfaction of his "appetite" (A-1604. v. 448), Mammon's sole desire, is what Faustus has to settle for, but his initial aspirations are marked by grandeur and philanthropy. To arrive at the point where Mammon begins, Faustus experiences disenchantment and temptation. His curiosity and hunger for knowledge are diverted first by his conversation with the "infamous" Valdes and Cornelius (A-1604. ii. 236). While their experience in magic proves of no value in raising a demon, Faustus absorbs their enticing descriptions into his own "fantasie" (A-1604. i. 136) and uses them to reinforce his resolution. He takes up Valdes' allusion to "women, or vnwedded maides" (A-1604. i. 160) more beautiful than Venus when he asks Mephistophilis for "a wife, the fairest maid" in Germany (A-1604. v. 587). The lions, Almaine rutters, and Lapland Giants (A-1604. i. 157-59; B-1616. I. i. 146-48) find their counterpart in reality when Faustus calls on the devils as soldiers to defend him from Benvolio's ambush (B-1616. IV. iii. 1454-85). Faustus also welcomes the fame pictured by Cornelius and the requests from royalty which it brings (A-1604. i. 174-76).

As Faustus thinks more and more of his resolution and "manly fortitude" (A-1604. iii. 330), he thinks less and less

of others. When he outlines his conditions to Mephistophilis, he sounds little like the beneficent magician who would dress the students in silk and find out the "secrets of all forraine kings" (A-1604. i. 119). Instead, his demands are those of the man who would "Ransacke the Ocean" and "raigne sole king of all our prouinces" (A-1604. i. 115 and 126):

Say, he surrenders vp to him his soule,
 So he will spare him 24. yeeres,
 Letting him liue in all voluptuousnesse,
 Hauing thee euer to attend on me,
 To giue me whatsoever I shal aske,
 To tel me whatsoever I demaund,
 To slay mine enemies, and ayde my friends,
 And alwayes be obedient to my wil:

(A-1604. iii. 335-342)

Mammon could scarcely state his expectations of the stone more succinctly. But Faustus' life of "voluptuousnesse" is punctuated by his moments of anxiety and possible repentance. His disenchantment begins from the start with the discovery that magic is powerless, and that he is not the "Coniurer laureate" (A-1604. iii. 276) who can command Mephistophilis.

For both Mammon and Faustus sexual satisfaction has first priority. To justify his "seraglio" (II. ii. 33), Mammon again uses Solomon as a precedent:

For I do mean
 To have a list of wives, and concubines,
 Equal with Solomon; who had the stone
 Alike, with me: and I will make me a back
 With the elixir, that shall be as tough
 As Hercules, to encounter fifty a night.

(II. ii. 34-39)

As he transforms every myth into the stone, so Mammon changes any suitable historical ruler into a justification for his

own all-devouring intentions. During the Renaissance opinions about Solomon were mixed. He was famous as "the wise man" who sought wisdom and knowledge at all costs. As an offshoot of his reputation, he was regarded as an alchemist and a mysterious and fantastic magician. Renaissance alchemists considered The Song of Solomon to be a treatise in code. On the other hand, Solomon had allowed himself to be drawn from the worship of the true God into idolatry by the charm of women such as the Queen of Sheba. Having sinned, he was supposed to have turned from knowledge, power, and riches to repent and preach, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, that all is vanity. Ignoring all but the tenuous link with the stone enables Mammon to establish his equality with Solomon. The lost Ophir provides the proof, the alchemical "book" (II. i. 81-82) an irrefutable authority, and Solomon's thousand wives and concubines an excuse for a harem of his own.

Although Faustus' first request is for a wife, his first question to Mephistophilis is about hell. Mephistophilis answers honestly and directly, but Faustus does not find the answers reassuring. When he drops the subject, Faustus may be trying to distract himself from these discomfoting thoughts by satisfying his "wanton and lasciuious" nature (A-1604. v. 589). He is in no mood to be denied; however, since marriage is a sacrament, Mephistophilis can only "fetch" a "diuell drest like a woman, with fier workes" (A-1604. v. 594-96). Faustus promptly condemns her, "A plague on her for a hote whore"

(A-1604. v. 598), but the "hote whore" probably embodies what he has in mind. He raises no objection to Mephistophilis' solution:

Tut Faustus, marriage is but a ceremoniall toy,
if/thou louest me, thinke no more of it.
Ile cull thee out the fairest curtezans,
And bring them eu'ry morning to thy bed,
She whome thine eie shall like, thy heart shal haue,
Be she as chaste as was Penelope,
As wise as Saba, or as beautiful
As was bright Lucifer before his fall.

(A-1604. v. 599-606)

Through the stone or through the sale of his soul .
each overreacher believes that he will have women who are otherwise unattainable, but in each case the desire for unlimited sex is expressed in hyperbole that makes the wish ridiculous. As Mammon will enjoy "fifty a night" (II.ii.39), Faustus, according to Mephistophilis, will have "the fairest curtezans" brought to his bed "eu'ry morning" for twenty-four years.¹³ Further, the examples cited for support are not auspicious for either of them. In mentioning Penelope, a famous symbol of fidelity and wifely chastity, Mephistophilis is alluding to the corrupt suitors, such as Antinous, who were slaughtered by Ulysses on his return. Mammon too beguiles himself with the thought of encountering chaste wives:

(Is it arriv'd at ruby?)--Where I spy
A wealthy citizen, or rich lawyer,
Have a sublim'd pure wife, unto that fellow
I'll send a thousand pound, to be my cuckold.

(II.ii.53-56)

Next Mephistophilis links Faustus indirectly to Solomon

when he offers courtesans "As wise as Saba" (A-1604. v. 605). As noted above, Solomon, not Sheba, is reputed for his wisdom, but one of his greatest errors was his infatuation with Sheba.¹⁴ The dangers of such dalliance become more apparent when Mephistophilis finishes with an offer of courtesans as beautiful as "bright Lucifer before his fall" (A-1604. v. 606). The consequences for Solomon, Antinous, and Mephistophilis range from punishment to death to damnation; yet, in spite of his learning, Faustus passes over these warnings when Mephistophilis gives him the book of spells.

The fates of Mammon's historical choices are no more encouraging. The selected incidents from the lives of Solomon and Hercules act as a spring-board to the most decadent emperors of Rome: Elagabalus, Tiberius, and Nero. In his imagination Mammon is insatiable. Thus no one degenerate emperor is sufficient; he will perform all their intemperate acts to attain a new height of dissipation. To flesh out his dream, Mammon draws on them all:

I will have all my beds, blown up; not stuff'd:
Down is too hard. And then, mine oval room,
Fill'd with such pictures, as Tiberius took
From Elephantis, and dull Aretine
But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses.
Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse
And multiply the figures, as I walk
Naked between my succubae. My mists
I'll have of perfume, vapour'd 'bout the room,
To lose ourselves in; and my baths, like pits
To fall into: from whence, we will come forth,
And roll us dry in gossamer and roses.

(II. ii. 41-52)

Faustus never sinks to this exotic and effeminate life of

sloth, although he spends much of his time entertaining and being entertained. But a parallel to Mammon's effusion may occur in Edward II when Gaveston considers what amusements he will provide for the "pliant king" (Ed. II. I. i. 53):

Music and poetry is his delight;
 Therefore I'll have Italian masks by night,
 Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows;
 And in the day, when he shall walk abroad,
 Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad.
 My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns,
 Shall with their goat-feet dance an antic hay.
 Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
 With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
 Crowns of pearl about his naked arms,
 And in his sportful hands an olive tree,
 To hide those parts which men delight to see,
 Shall bathe him in a spring; and there, hard by
 One like Actaeon peeping through the grove,
 Shall by the angry goddess be transformed,
 And running in the likeness of an hart,
 By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die--
 Such things as these best please his majesty. 15
 (I. i. 54-71)

Mammon expands each of the components of this opulent and lethargic existence to an incredible and hilarious extreme. But Gaveston's planned revision of Diana and Actaeon is so well thought out, with its specific alterations to suit Edward's tastes, that it nearly equals the lengths to which Mammon goes. All told, even Gaveston's combination of "Italian masks," comedies, pleasing shows, and mythological presentations cannot keep pace with the mélange of blown-up beds, pornographic pictures, mirrors, perfumed mists, and pit-deep baths. Through the strength of his belief in the stone, Mammon can be as familiar with the unknown as the known. While the pictures in Aretine were a byword in the Renaissance, the lost works of Elephantis lie beyond

Mammon's reach without the stone. In Jonson's view, man's curiosity, if unlimited, would lead him along these paths rather than to the secrets of "forraine kings" which Faustus vows to learn (i. 119).

When Mammon describes his future retinue, Jonson may be adding a touch of general social criticism. Where Gaveston will acquire "wanton poets, pleasant wits" (I. i. 51) and talented musicians for Edward, Mammon seeks the best divines for flatterers, burgesses for fools; and poets possibly more wanton than Edward's. Since Mammon wants the best of everything, his words imply that fathers and mothers would make the finest bawds, that the gravest and purest of divines can be bought, that eloquent burgesses are mere fools, that poets concentrate their subtlety on the least subtle subjects, and that so-called "stallions" (such as Jack Daw and Amorous La Foole in Epicoene) deserve to be eunuchs for ruining ladies' reputations (II. i. 57-68).

Mammon imagines himself at the centre of it all; consuming exquisite delicacies served with equally rare plates and spoons:

And [eunuchs] shall fan me with ten ostrich tails
 Apiece, made in a plume, to gather wind.
 We will be brave, Puff, now we ha' the med'cine.
 My meat shall all come in, in Indian shells,
 Dishes of agate, set in gold, and studded,
 With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths and rubies.
 The tongues of carps, dormice, and camels' heels,
 Boil'd i' the spirit of Sol, and dissolv'd pearl,
 (Apicius' diet, 'gainst the epilepsy)
 And I will eat these broths with spoons of amber,
 Headed with diamond, and carbuncle.
 My foot-boy shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons,
 Knots, godwits, lampreys: I myself will have <

The beards of barbels, serv'd instead of salads;
 Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling unctuous paps
 Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,
 Dress'd with an exquisite, and poignant sauce;
 For which, I'll say unto my cook, 'There's gold,
 Go forth, and be a knight'.

(II. ii. 69-87)

Jonson glances again at his society. No doubt more than one wealthy cook or his social equivalent had bought a knighthood from James I, who apparently dubbed several thirty-pound knights.¹⁶ The fascination of Tamburlaine for a crown, of Barabas for wealth, or of Faustus for magic is surpassed in parody once and for all by Mammon's dedication to gluttony.

For his part, Faustus intends to dispatch his spirits to "search all corners of the new found world / For pleasant fruites and princely delicates" (A-1604. i. 116-17); however, while Faustus is frequently eating, apart from the pope's "daintie dish" (A-1604. vii. 885) he never seeks out gourmet dishes. He is often metaphorically associated with gluttony, which fits in with his curiosity and hunger for knowledge.

The two strands may merge when Faustus carouses with his friends the scholars and feasts them with "belly-cheere" (A-1604. xii. 1272). For all his would-be gluttony, Mammon lacks Faustus' curiosity about the universe and knowledge in general, and he does not possess Faustus' growing awareness of his own condition.

Finally describing himself instead of his surroundings or his servants and concubines, Mammon talks only of his clothing. He might as well be a mannequin:

Mammon.

My shirts
 I'll have of taffeta-sarsnet, soft and light

As cobwebs; and for all my other raiment,
 It shall be such, as might provoke the Persian,
 Were he to teach the world riot, anew.
 My gloves of fishes' and birds' skins, perfum'd
 With gums of paradise, and eastern air--
Surly. And do you think to have the stone, with this?
 (II. ii. 88-95)

Having run out of Roman emperors, Mammon resorts to the "Persian" Sardanapalus. In every case, he conveniently overlooks the violent deaths of his predecessors in sensuality. Jonson stops Mammon because he has run on long enough to expose fully his gaudy and detailed fantasy, but also long enough to show that his is not an investigative nature.

Mammon responds swiftly to Surly's doubt by springing to Subtle's defense, but the audience is already aware of the discrepancy between the supposed "very virgin" (II. ii: 99) and the "cheater" with his "punk" ("The Argument", 4). That the alchemical principles which Face and Subtle spout are authentic would mean nothing to the audience.

While the team of Subtle and Face give a first-class demonstration of fleecing Mammon, Surly's "heresy" forestalls them from completely dominating the stage. His terse cynical comments, such as "What a brave language here is, next to canting!" (II. iii. 42), help the audience to keep Subtle's long and technical orations in perspective. Mammon's hasty if somewhat late deceit about his use of any power which he will receive proves him to be a hypocrite who thinks himself a very clever fellow:

I shall employ it all in pious uses,
 Founding of colleges, and grammar schools,

Marrying young virgins, building hospitals,
And now and then, a church.

(II. iii. 49-52)

Mammon fades in prominence because of the presence of the "father" (II. iii. 1). His fervent support is compressed into brief statements, and he merely chimes in from time to time as Surly and Subtle debate. His remarks reveal how little Mammon understands the theory behind the stone and do as much as Surly's denials to ridicule it. Mammon's fantasy-world is based wholly on something beyond his intellectual comprehension:

Ay, now it heats: stand
Father,

Pound him to dust--

(II. iii. 141-42)

Well said, Father:
Nay, if he take you in hand, sir, with an argument,
He'll bray you in a mortar.

(II. iii. 176-78)

Sir, so I told him,
Because the simple idiot should not learn it,
And make it vulgar.

(II. iii. 200-202)

I urg'd that,
And clear'd to him that Sisyphus was damn'd
To roll the ceaseless stone, only because
He would have made ours common.

(II. iii. 207-10)

Mammon's last word, "common," is a witty cue for Doll's appearance and one which the audience can appreciate; it also makes sense for the deceivers. Subtle is making no more headway against Surly than Mammon did. How long the act can withstand piercing accusations such as "alchemy is a pretty kind

of game, / Somewhat like tricks o' the cards" (II. iii. 180-81) stated by one familiar with the terms is an open question. Jonson has done as much as possible with both sides of the issue; further, the result will be a stalemate no matter how long the debate continues. But, sooner or later, Subtle and Face have to take Mammon's mind off the fact that today is the day (II. i. 6).

Their solution is the mysterious and briefly glimpsed Doll, and it works perfectly. Mephistophilis faces the same problem of providing entertainment to keep Faustus from thinking of repentance. His ultimate diversion is the fake Helen of Troy. The self-willed delusion of Mammon and Faustus climbs to its zenith in regard to the apparently captivating and desirable woman. The appeal of Doll and "Helen" is that both are presented as unavailable, a thought that each overreacher previously found intriguing. Mammon and Faustus share a fixation about obtaining anything that is inaccessible to everyone else, but, in fact, each moves from tantalizing images of "curtezans" (A-1604. v. 601) or a "seraglio" (II. ii. 33) to dalliance with a disguised whore. This involvement marks a turning point for both of them. Doll supplies Face and Subtle with the excuse for failure and the consequent collapse of Mammon's dreams and rhetoric. According to the Old Man, Faustus' affair with "Helen" places him beyond the pale of salvation (A-1604. xiii. 1377-86).

Mammon and Faustus reject the sensible advice offered by Surly and the Old Man. Mammon handles Surly's objections

in his usual fashion. He transforms Doll into a "Bradamante" and Subtle into "an excellent Paracelsian," although he knows nothing about the lord's mad sister:

Mammon. 'Fore-God, a Bradamante, a brave piece.

Surly. Heart, this is a bawdy-house! I'll be burnt else.

Mammon. O, by this light, no. Do not wrong him. He's Too scrupulous, that way. It is his vice. No, he's a rare physician, do him right. An excellent Paracelsian!

(II. iii. 225-30)

Possibly the last brief moment of choice for Faustus, its tragedy stressed by how little Meph̄stophilis has to do with it, becomes, in Jonson's hands, an extremely comic episode with a flustered and impatient Mammon, his appetite whetted, forced to wait for another act. Another difference lies in the discernment of Mammon compared to that of Faustus. Doll would likely fool no one but Mammon, who is predisposed to believe. Surly is not taken in for an instant. On the other hand, Helen's beauty silences and sobers the scholars who have just come from a feast.

Face feeds Mammon enough detail to stir his interest beyond recall. He begins with the mad and "most rare scholar" (II. iii. 237) and complements Doll's character by playing upon Mammon's sensual fantasies:

Face. O, the most affablest creature, sir! So merry! So pleasant! She'll mount you up, like quicksilver, Over the helm; and circulate like oil, A very vegetal: discourse of state, Of mathematics, bawdry, anything--

Mammon. Is she no way accessible? No means, No trick, to give a man a taste of her--wit-- Or so? Ulen.

(II. iii. 253-60)

Previously assured and comfortably superior with "Lungs," Mammon is almost reduced to pleading by his dominant desire. To turn aside Surly's disbelief, Mammon simply transforms him into a person of distinguished "breeding" (II. iii. 261), a highly improbable origin for an impoverished gambler like Surly.¹⁷ Stubbornly Mammon insists on the validity of the story of the lord and his sister even though Surly catches him out three times (II. iii. 269-70; 272; 274). Surly's earnest plea for frankness and good sense saves Mammon from appearing to be no more than an ordinary fool:

'Heart! Can it be,
That a grave sir, a rich, that has no need,
A wise sir, too, at other times, should thus
With his own oaths and arguments, make hard means
To gull himself?

(II.iii.278-82)

This speech ensures that Mammon remains a challenge to Face, Subtle, and Doll and reminds the audience that Mammon is actually gulling himself with "his own oaths and arguments" (II. iii. 281-82).

Far from Jonson's fast moving comic action, Marlowe creates a subdued and slow-paced mood of foreboding, starting with Wagner's soliloquy about Faustus making his will. Ironically, for Faustus, not Mephistophilis or another devil, but his friends awaken his passion for "Helen." After the swilling and "belly-cheere" (A-1604. xi. 1270 and 1271), the first "Scholler" tells Faustus that they have decided that "Helen of Greece" was the "beutifulst in all the world," the "admirablest Lady that ever liyed;" he asks Faustus to let them see "that

peere-/lesse/Dame of Greece whome al the world admires for
 ma - / iesty" (A-1604. xiii. 1278-82). The repeated assertions
 of Helen's beauty make an impression on Faustus. In granting
 the request, he repeats some of their words:

you shall behold that pearelesse / dame of Greece,
 no otherwaies for pompe and maiestie,
 then / when sir Paris crost the seas with her,
 and brought the spoiles / to rich Dardania.
 Be silent then, for danger is in words.

(A-1604. xiii. 1286-90)

The warning is unnecessary. After a few short responses,
 stressing again Helen's beauty, the "Schollers" are rendered
 speechless and leave:

3.Sch. No maruel tho the angry Greekes pursude
 With tènne yeares warre the rape of such a queene,
 Whose heauenly beauty passeth all compare,
 I [Scholler]. Since we haue seene the
 pride
 of natures workes,

And onely Paragon of excellence,
 Let vs depart, and for this glorious deed
 Happy and blest be Faustus euermore.

(A-1604. xiii. 1293-99)

The limited perception of the students serves to indicate
 the vast difference between them and Faustus. Anything but
 "Happy and blest," Faustus may be on the verge of placing him-
 self beyond redemption. Fascinated by the transient appearance
 of a beautiful woman who seems to exist in reality, not only in
 the mind, Mammon and Faustus must have her at any cost.

While Surly fails to make much of a dent on Mammon, Faustus
 can be drawn to repentance by the Old Man, if only for a few
 moments.

The Old Man stresses the "mercie Faustus of thy Sauour

sweete, / Whose blood alone must wash away thy guilt" (A-1604. xiii. 1312-13), but Faustus still falls victim to despair. Sensing failure, the Old Man leaves at Faustus' request, "fearing the ruine of thy hopelesse soule" (A-1604. xiii. 1328). . At the beginning, Faustus picks and chooses scraps of famous scriptural quotations and fuses them to suit his needs. He follows the same procedure now, ignoring the "precious grace" which he can receive (A-1604. xiii. 1321). The Old Man's warning, "call for mercie and auoyd dispaire" (A-1604. xiii. 1323), goes for nothing, because Faustus views himself as being past salvation:

Accursed Faustus, where is mercie now?
 I do repent, and yet I do dispaire:
 Hell striues with grace for conquest in my breast,
 What shal I do to shun the snares of death?
 (A-1604. xiii. 1329-32)

The certainty of Faustus that he cannot expect mercy renders Mephostophilis' threat, short as it is (A-1604. xiii. 1333-35), unnecessary. In a rejection of repentance, Faustus offers to renew his vow, asks that the Old Man be tormented as much as possible, and finishes with a request for Helen.

Between Mammon's first sight of Doll and his conversation with her, Jonson brings in the Puritan brethren. The strict life advocated by Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias is shown to be as hypocritical and absurd as Mammon's mammoth plans. The Puritans are a favourite target of Jonson, who employs subtle to censure them for a range of crimes extending from persuading jealous wives to rob their husbands to living on

aldermen and railing against plays (III. ii. 69-90). What makes the satire more effective is that Tribulation denies none of it. Face's catechism of alchemy (II. v. 18-45) balances Ananias' adherence to the rules. For the brethren Subtle plays the heathen scientist, the obverse of his "holy father" role for Mammon; however, the results are the same--reverence and cash.

As well as the Puritan aspect, more ironic reflections on Mammon's visions occur when Face announces the coming of the Spanish Don. The presentation of Doll to Mammon roughly parallels the approach taken with the Don. That Mammon is only a mark like all the others is comically stressed by the ribald bluntness of Face and Subtle (II. iv. 1-7). Moreover, when Face outlines his plan to deceive the Don, he even echoes Mammon on a small scale:

Face. And thou [Doll] mayst make his ransom, what thou wilt,
 My dousabel: he shall be brought here, fetter'd
 With thy fair looks, before he sees thee; and thrown
 In a down-bed, as dark as any dungeon;
 Where thou shalt keep him waking, with thy drum;
 Thy drum, my Doll; thy drum; till he be tame
 As the poor blackbirds were i' the great frost,
 (III. iii. 40-46)

Whether the purpose is to "twitch" (II. iv. 3) Mammon or the Don, the technique is the same.

While waiting for the Don, the tricksters become so involved with Drugger, Kastril and Dapper that Mammon completely slips their minds:

Subtle. What news, Doll?

Doll.

Yonder's your knight,
Sir Mammon.

Face. God's lid, we never thought of him, till now.
Where is he?

Doll.

Here, hard by. He's at
the door.-
(III. v. 50-52)

Mammon's return indicates that matters are getting out of hand for Face, Subtle, and Doll, but being forgotten reduces Mammon to just another gull. In fact, the preparations are necessarily more elaborate for Dapper's Queen of Fairy than for Mammon's "Bradamante" because Dapper lacks Mammon's imagination.¹⁸ By analogy with these other less grand desires Jonson ridicules Mammon's aspirations. In their respective situations Mammon and Dapper are placed on a par, though Dapper has no wishes that do not originate with Face and Subtle.

Each overreacher faces his greatest challenge to his power of metamorphosis in language with Doll or Helen. In his last-minute instructions, on addressing the "lady" (IV. i. 5), Face supplies Mammon with his subject of conversation:

Face. And you must praise her house, remember that,
And her nobility.

Mammon.

Let me, alone:
No herald, no nor antiquary, Lungs,
Shall do it better. Go.

(IV. i. 19-22)

While the audience frequently sees into Faustus through soliloquy and direct comment, glimpses inside Mammon are rare because he has nothing to hide. But just before meeting Doll he delivers a soliloquy which proves that he really is as shallow and obsessed with gold as he appears. Alone on stage for the

only time in the play (of course, Dapper is in the privy),
Mammon inspires himself for the rendezvous:

Now, Epicure;
Heighten thyself, talk to her, all in gold;
Rain her as many showers, as Jove did drops
Unto his Danae: show the god a miser,
Compar'd with Mammon. What? The stone will do't.
She shall feel gold, taste gold, hear gold, sleep gold:
Nay, we will concumbere gold. I will be puissant,
And mighty in my talk to her!

(IV. i. 24-31)

For Faustus the speech to Helen is crucial. The figure remains silent while, through his eloquent and unbroken rhetoric, Faustus persuades himself (she needs no inducement to be his mistress) to risk damnation. Mammon's soliloquy confirms that he is ready to expand effusively on his favourite topics-- gold, the stone, and himself--to dazzle the lady. But, through Doll's ambiguous replies and Face's derisive asides, Jonson nips in the bud the ornate compliments which Mammon persistently tries to deliver. The constant interruptions slow down his oratorical flow and prevent him from reaching the heights and flourishes prominent in his earlier scenes. Once Mammon warms to his subject, he might crowd everyone else off the stage. Jonson ensures that it does not happen.

Even in this soliloquy, with no one to convince except himself, Mammon adjusts the legend of Jove and Danae to suit his purpose. The shower of gold was not a display of wealth but an exotic means of reaching the beautiful maiden locked in her father's tower. In spite of his determination, Mammon

never manages to be "puissant / And mighty" with Doll (IV: i. 30-31). As soon as he finds a grand subject, the fifth kingdom that he would establish (IV. v. 25-26), Mammon is immediately cut off by Doll, who seizes the chance for her "fit" (II. iii. 240).

For both Mammon and Faustus, the woman renews the over-reacher's faith in the errors of his ways, although she is actually deceiving him. Buoying himself to meet Doll, Mammon repeats "gold" over and over to himself as a religious or magic word. He will easily surpass Jove. Any doubt, expressed by "What?", is dismissed by the confident assertion, "The stone will do't" (IV. i. 28). Accordingly Mammon transforms Doll Common, whose name reveals her profession and her character, into an amalgam of the best features of the princes of Europe. After seeing her for the first time, Faustus believes that "heavenly Helen" will restore his fidelity to Lucifer; her "sweete imbracings" will extinguish "These thoughts that'do dissuade me from my vow,/ And keepe mine oath I made to Lucifer" (A-1604. xiii. 1351-54). Alchemy and Satanic power can no more metamorphose a prostitute or a female devil than they can change Mammon or Faustus.

The vow of fidelity to a special woman, her elevation to a goddess, and the assumption of roles from classical mythology, rebound ironically upon both Mammon and Faustus. Face undercuts Mammon before he begins by forecasting that "(O, we shall have most fierce idolatry!)" (IV. i. 39). Doll spurs him

on in her first remarks, and Mammon responds by praising the moment of birth (IV. i. 44-48), her breeding, blood, virtue, and lack of money (IV. i. 42; 51-53). That Mammon refers to money as a "drug" (IV. i. 53) is an additional touch of irony by Jonson. Through the "Austriac" lip, the Valois nose, and the Medici forehead, Mammon transforms Doll into a princess who combines "the very choice of all their features" (IV. i. 55-60; 63). The transition from princess to goddess poses no problem. Mammon discovers that Doll has an "air" that "sparkles a divinity, beyond / An earthly beauty!" (IV. i. 64-66). As he smoothly moves to the phoenix, Mammon may be building to a grand analogy based on the rebirth of the bird which "never knew a nobler death" than to burn in Doll's "sweet flame" (IV. i. 68-69). Doll quickly brings him to a halt by questioning "This art, sir, i'your words" (IV. i. 71), and Mammon's mythical allusion is left apparently incomplete. He does not regain his composure until Doll deflects him from her to Subtle (IV. i. 84-92).

Faustus fares no better with Helen. He also tends to talk himself out of repentance, and the speech to Helen is the last and most effective of these monologues. Like Mammon's compliments, Faustus' homage to Helen contains several inaccuracies; however, Faustus gains momentum because Helen remains silent and he is able to say it all in one piece. Initially, the speech makes a strong and positive impact, but, on reflection, Faustus' false assumptions and mistakes emerge. As Faustus

in his youth out-argued all debaters with his "Sic probo" (A-1604. ii. 202), he now dulls his fears by concentrating all his talent in oratory on Helen. That Faustus takes the passive role and assigns the active part to Helen indicates how far he has fallen from his original ambitious goals:

Was this the face that lancht a thousand shippes?
 And burnt the toplesse Towres of Ilium?
 Sweete Helen, make me immortall with a kisse:
 Her lips suckes forth my soule, see where it flies:
 Come Helen, come giue mee my soule againe.
 Here wil I dwel, for heauen be in these lips,
 And all is drosse that is not Helena: enter old man
 I will be Pacis, and for loue of thee,
 Insteede of Troy shal Wertenberge be sackt,
 And I wil combate with weake Menelaus,
 And weare thy colours on my plumed Crest:
 Yea I wil wound Achillis in the heele,
 And then returne to Helen for a kisse.
 O thou art fairer then the euening aire,
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand starres,
 Brighter art thou than flaming Iupiter,
 when he appeard to haplesse Semele,
 More louely then the monarke of the skie
 In wanton Arethusaes azurde armes,
 And none but thou shalt be my paramour.

(A-1604. xiii. 1357-76)

Helen fits into the same category as the "shapes" of Alexander and his paramour, Thaïs, who "are but shadowes not substantiall" (B-1616. IV. ii. 1282 and 1304); they are only "such spirites as can liuely resemble Alexander" and his paramour (A-1604. x. 1086-87). Neither the Emperor Carolus nor the students can talk to or touch these spirits, but Faustus will accept one for his mistress. The "hote whore" (A-1604. v. 598) which Mephistophilis originally offered him and Helen are synonymous in all save appearance, an ironic comment on how little Faustus has achieved. The irony is heightened by his association

of Helen with immortality and heaven (A-1604. xiii. 1359 and 1362) and with sucking his soul through a kiss. She is leading him to hell, eternal torment, and the loss of his soul; as he has in the past, Faustus manipulates religious terms to his detriment. Helen is nothing but "drosse". (A-1604. xiii. 1363).

Through words rather than magic Faustus transforms himself into Paris for his Helen. As Paris, his first act will be to sacrifice "Wertemberge" (A-1604. xiii. 1364-65). But Faustus' choice of roles could be better. Although Paris slew Achilles (A-1604. xiii. 1368), he was considered to be an adulterer and coward. Faustus unintentionally suggests Helen's lack of substance when he compares her to the "euening aire" (A-1604. xiii. 1370). Going from night to day, Faustus switches to "flaming Iupiter" and Phoebus Apollo, the "monarke of the skie" (A-1604. xiii. 1372 and 1374). Since both Jove and Apollo can be synonymous with God, Faustus again couples Helen with heaven. These allusions imply his own end, but they also intimate that, in taking Helen, Faustus is seeking an easy reversal of the usual male and female roles. No longer hoping to be a "mighty god" (A-1604. i. 92) or even a "Demi-god" (B-1616. I. i. 88), he prefers to appear "haplesse" and "wanton" in order to set aside his acute awareness of his transgressions.

Mammon finds that even disclosing his secret has little effect on Doll. After he takes her hint and praises Subtle, whose "physic" is "Above the art of Aesculapius" (IV. i. 91-92), Mammon drops an obvious hint with "I know all this, and more"

(IV. i. 94). When Doll falls short of encouraging him, Mammon retreats to praising her, giving her a diamond, and declaring, "Here, by your side, / Doth stand, this hour, the happiest man in Europe" (IV. i. 111-12). Through the remarks of Doll and Face, Jonson has reminded the audience of Mammon's essential foolishness; he can now permit his overreacher to soar and swell for a brief time.

Mammon fuses his praise of Doll with his earlier visions of luxury; he simply refashions his dream-world for his first real succuba. Intent on being "puissant / And mighty" (IV. i. 30-31) in conversation, Mammon starts to sound like a caricature of Tamburlaine. His assurance in his future and his god-like decision to elevate Doll bear a comic resemblance to the Scythian's confidence in his destiny and his courtship of Zenocrate. Mammon grandly proclaims that he is "The envy of princes and the fear of states" (IV. i. 114) and is immediately questioned by Doll:

Doll. Say you so, Sir Epicure?
Mammon.

Yes, and thou shalt
 prove it,

Daughter of honour. I have cast mine eye
 Upon thy form, and I will rear this beauty
 Above all styles.

Doll. You mean no treason, sir?
Mammon. No, I will take away that jealousy.
 I am the lord of the philosopher's stone,
 And thou the lady.

(IV. i. 115-21).

Doll's misgivings make it an uphill struggle for Mammon, but he persists and even employs his image of Jove and Danae:

I am the master of the mastery.

Think therefore, thy first wish, now; let me hear it:
 And it shall rain into thy lap, no shower,
 But floods of gold, whole cataracts, a deluge,
 To get a nation on thee!

(IV. i. 122; 125-28)

Such imperative tones originate with Tamburlaine, who tells Zenocrate that she "Must grace his bed that conquers Asia" and who states as a fact rather than a promise that "A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee" (I. ii. 37 and 93).¹⁹ Doll's observation that Mammon is working on "the ambition of our sex" (IV. i. 129) is a thought that does not occur to Zenocrate, who is placed in a somewhat parallel situation. Jonson rarely misses an opportunity to point out the rhetorical tricks of the overreacher as well as the absurdity of his aspirations.

Now in stride, Mammon is talking as much for himself as for Doll's benefit. He refuses to be checked and requests "the glory of her sex" (IV. i. 130) to come forth,

And taste the air of palaces; eat, drink
 The toils of emp'rics, and their boasted practice;
 Tincture of pearl, and coral, gold, and amber;
 Be seen at feasts, and triumphs; have it ask'd,
 What miracle she is? Set all the eyes
 Of court a-fire, like a burning-glass,
 And work'em into cinders; when the jewels
 Of twenty states adorn thee, and the light
 Strikes out the stars; that, when thy name is mention'd,
 Queens may look pale: and, we but showing our love,
 Nero's Poppaea may be lost in story!

(IV. i. 135-45)

As soon as Doll names ambition, the word alone prompts Mammon to a staggering appeal to her own aspirations. He plays on the senses, such as tasting and drinking exquisite delicacies, and also on Doll's desire to surpass and be envied by all other

women. Having begun with Solomon, Mammon reaches the bottom with Nero. Infamous for his cruelty and destruction as well as excess, Nero nearly wrecked the Roman empire single-handed. Although he had no apparent link with alchemy, he put his faith in a story of limitless gold as unlikely and ridiculous as the philosopher's stone.²⁰ Mammon would probably convert the tale to a version of the stone in a flash of inspiration. The comparison to Poppaea is no more complimentary to Doll. Known for her "immorality and cruelty," she was most famous for her funeral after Nero kicked her to death. As well as the contrast to the scene which Mammon paints up to that point, the comparison of Doll to Poppaea is ironically appropriate because Poppaea, while not a prostitute, behaved like one.²¹ Indirectly Jonson suggests that aspirations which begin with the desire to surpass the achievements of a Solomon will lead to the mania and atrocities of a Nero, even within the limits of the imagination.

The easiness with which Doll derails his train of thought exposes the emptiness of Mammon's rhetoric. Her cold reason brings him back to earth temporarily. The "fear of states" (IV. i. 114) has no appetite for military conflict. When Doll mentions the possibility that the Prince may not approve, the thought that he might end "The remnant of your days in a loath'd prison" (IV. i. 153) startles Mammon, and he has to talk himself out of his alarm:

'Tis no idle fear!
 We'll therefore go with all, my girl, and live
 In a free state; where we will eat our mullets,
 Sous'd in high-country wines, sup pheasants' eggs,
 And have our cockles, boil'd in silver shells,
 Our shrimps to swim again, as when they liv'd,
 In a rare butter, made of dolphin's milk,
 Whose cream does look like opals: and, with these
 Delicate meats, set ourselves high for pleasure,
 And take us down again, and then renew
 Our youth, and strength, with drinking the elixir,
 And so enjoy a perpetuity
 Of life, and lust.

(IV. i. 154-66)

That Doll so suddenly becomes "my life" (IV. i. 151) and the confidante of his secret wishes indicates how Mammon unquestioningly accepts everything and everyone connected with the "holy father" and "Lungs," in the same way that Faustus receives the diversions of the devils. The unnamed "free state" (IV. i. 156) or republic is a convenient and unrealistic solution typical of an idle mind which has distanced itself from all uncongenial thoughts. But it answers Doll's objection; furthermore, describing gourmet delights in detail renews Mammon's credence in the stone and, consequently, gives new validity to "a perpetuity / Of life, and lust" (IV. i. 165-66). By the end of the speech, Mammon has made his way back to the familiar territory of "Art" and "Nature" (IV. i. 167-69).

After Mammon's grand exit with Doll, the pace quickens as Face and Subtle juggle Kastril and the Spanish Don and jostle each other for the widow. Disencumbering themselves of Mammon becomes part of this acceleration in the action. Everything happens so fast that Mammon has no time to react or even think. As soon as she can, Doll seizes the chance to go into her madness

off stage. The audience meets Mammon and Doll again only when her "fit" is a fait accompli.

Her subject, taken out of the Puritan Hugh Broughton's A Concoct of Scripture (1590), is the breakdown of Alexander's empire, a topic ironically suited to Mammon. Doll's opening line, "For after Alexander's death" (IV. v. 1), is the one line of her rambling chatter which the audience is not likely to miss. Of all the emperors Mammon draws on, he never mentions Alexander the Great, even though, throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Alexander was generally recognized as the greatest emperor of all time. Empires are gained and maintained by war, constant travel, and hardship, none of which fits in with Mammon's imagined life of luxury, sex, sloth, and gluttony. Alexander's early death on the march does not suit a "perpetuity / Of life, and lust" (IV. i. 165-66). In general Mammon's favourite exotic potentates presided over the decline and fall of their kingdoms. Even Alexander's empire was an ephemeral creation, collapsing at his death.²² The gap between Alexander and Mammon emphasizes the inanity of Mammon's aspirations.

Although Faustus shares these illusions, he never thinks of Alexander either. In his mind's eye he pictures military accomplishments on a vast scale; after meeting Mephistophilis, he is confident that "By him Ile be great Emprour of the world" (A-1604. iii. 349), and "The Emprour [Carolus] shal not liue but by my leaue" (A-1604. iii. 355). When Faustus does meet the German Emperor, he all but falls to his knees in obeisance. Carolus, not Faustus, is interested in Alexander. A willing and dutiful servant, Faustus

summons the shapes of Alexander and his paramour for Carolus' pleasure, not his own. Faustus compares himself, not to Alexander who created an empire, but to Paris Alexander, who destroyed one.

Brought to ruin, Jonson's overreacher usually collapses in silence. The principal exception is Volpone, who calls at length for sentencing of all concerned. But Sejanus, Catiline, and Mammon, and later Justice Overdo, find themselves speechless in the face of calamity. Marlowe's overreacher, however, greets misfortune with speeches suited to the occasion. Even Barabas, who is boiling at the time, manages a condensed speech of hate and boasting. Tamburlaine at his death still dominates the stage, eclipsing everyone else. But Faustus delivers the most impressive of these speeches.

Mammon goes through two stages of disappointment. The first blow, the loss of the stone, is simply the next step in the scheme of the "venture tripartite" (I. i. 135). The "great crack and noise within" (s.d. IV. v. 55) happens exactly on cue. Face's announcement, "All struck in shivers!" (IV. v. 62), and Subtle's swoon combine to stun Mammon into stupefaction. As Face says, in assumed amazement, "You stand, / As you were readier to depart, than [Subtle]" (IV. v. 64-65). After Mammon comes out of shock, he blames his sensuality, exclaiming, 'O my voluptuous mind! I am justly punish'd" (IV. i. 74). Even so, he still clings to the hope that some "pro-

jection" (IV. v. 89) remains. As Face wryly implies, Mammon's wits have not been restored (IV. v. 87). Face is actually throwing Mammon's words back at him. In his first appearance Mammon declares that he will use the stone to "Restore his years" (II. i. 55) to an eighty year old man, and also that he "will restore thee thy complexion, Puff" (II. ii. 19). After living twenty-four years "in al voluptuousnesse" (A-1604. iii. 337), Faustus sadly condemns "vaine pleasure" (A-1604. xiv. 1426), an attitude which has its comic counterpart in Mammon's remorse for "mine own base affections" (IV. v. 76).

The joy expressed by Face and Subtle at ridding themselves of Mammon, "Let us be light" (IV. v. 98), is soon neutralized by Surly's disclosure of his disguise. The exposure and the beating of Subtle hits its peak in Surly's sarcastic allusion to Faustus:

Then swoons his worship. Or, he is the Faustus,
That casteth figures, and can conjure, cures
Plague, piles, and pox, by the ephemerides,
And holds intelligence with all the bawds
And midwives of three shires!

(IV. vi. 46-50)

Surly's description is a degraded version of part of Faustus' opening soliloquy before he signs the contract. The resourceful Face brings in Kastril, and the other gulls soon rally to rout Surly. Even Lovewit's arrival does not daunt Face, who quickly takes command and gives orders to Doll and Subtle.

Although Lovewit appears only in the last act, he supplies a contrast to all the gulls and, possibly, Jonson's

solution to grand but illusory ambitions. As Jeremy-Face's master, and a gentleman of independent means, Lovewit is closest to Mammon in social rank. In character he is completely the opposite. Good-natured but realistic, Lovewit is not too surprised at the strange goings-on (V. i. 1-15). In keeping with his name, he loves "a teeming wit, as I love my nourishment" (V. i. 16). Even so, he saw fit to leave behind nothing but "my hangings, and my bedding" (V. i. 18). Lovewit knows human nature and is wise enough to cope with it rather than change it.

When Mammon re-appears, he is patiently enduring Surly's "I told you so". They merge into the crowd who roar at the door in series until Mammon enters and discovers that "The whole nest are fled!" (V. v. 58). Having unburdened Surly of the widow, Lovewit confronts Mammon and gains his goods. Faced with public disgrace, Mammon backs down and squirms uncomfortably at Lovewit's sarcasm:

Lovewit. What should [the goods] ha' been, sir, turn'd into gold, all?

Mammon.

No.

I cannot tell. It may be they should. What then?

Lovewit. What a great loss in hope have you sustain'd?
(V. v. 73-75)

Lovewit strikes home, but Mammon manages a defence, only to be shattered by Face:

Mammon. Not I, the commonwealth has.

Face.

Aye, he would ha' built

The city new; and made a ditch about it
Of silver, should have run with cream from Hogsden:
That, every Sunday in Moorfields, the youngers,
And tits, and tom-boys should have fed on, gratis.
(V. v. 76-80)

Clifford Leech believes that Face's remark alludes to Faustus' scheme to "wall all Iernany with brasse, / And make swift Rhine circle fair Wertenberge" (A-1604. i. 120-21).²³ This reductio ad absurdum of his fantasy makes Mammon decide that "[He] will go mount a turnip-cart, and preach / The end o' the world, within these two months" (V. v. 81-82). His last words, addressed to Surly, summarize his own condition until this moment: "What? In a dream?" (V. v. 83).

Lovewit withstands Ananias' rant, beats away Druggier, and makes peace with Kastril by challenging him. His flexibility ensures success, but Jonson's and Lovewit's word for his attitude is "indulgent" (V. iii. 77 and v. 150). At the end Face is directing his master as he did Mammon; Lovewit says, "I will be rul'd by thee in anything, Jeremy" (V. v. 143). Lovewit's apology for his conduct suggests that Jonson believed that even a wise man must always keep an eye on a knave. Impudent to the last, Face throws himself on the mercy of the audience,

On you, that are my country: and this pelf,
Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests
To feast you often, and invite new guests.
(V. v. 163-65)

While Mammon's disappointment temporarily deflates him into silence, Faustus attains tragic greatness in his final speech (A-1604. xiv. 1450-1508). The intense concentration which Faustus previously focussed on his aspirations and on voluptuous living is brought to bear on the salvation

that might have been. The vividness of his first visions in the study appears again, now properly applied to the subject of divinity but too late:

Ah Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hower to live,
And then thou must be damnd perpetually:
Stand stil you euer moouing spheres of heauen,
That time may cease, and midnight neuer come:
Faire Natures eie, rise, rise againe, and make
Perpetuall day, or let this houre be but a yeere,
A moneth, a weeke, a naturall day;
That Faustus may repent, and saue his soule,
O lente lente currite noctis equi:

(A-1604.xiv.1450-59)

The limitations of his powers now are strikingly evident to Faustus. He has no control over time: he cannot stop the planets nor command the sun. The irony of the Latin line from Ovid's lover drives home the actual weakness of magic; "time runs," and "Faustus must be damnd" (A-1604.xiv.1460-61).

In the most famous lines from this speech, Faustus has a vision of Christ, but Lucifer immediately replaces Christ in Faustus' mind:

O Ile leape vp to my God: who pulles me downe?
See see where Christs blood streames in the firmament,
One drop would saue my soule, halfe a drop, ah my Christ,
Ah rend not my heart for naming of my Christ,
Yet wil I call on him, oh spare me Lucifer!
Where is it now? tis gone:

(A-1604.xiv.1462-67)

As soon as the spectacle of a wrathful God follows that of Christ, Faustus finds that he can no more give orders to the earth than he can the sun (A-1604.xiv.1470-73). Desperately he resorts to the slim hope of metamorphosis, and simultaneously tries to blame his stars for his fate:

You starres that raignd at my natiuitie,
 Whose influence hath allotted death and hel,
 Now draw vp Faustus like a foggy mist,
 Into the intrailles of yon labring cloude,
 That when you vomite foorth into the ayre,
 My limbes may issue from your smoaky mouthes,
 So that my soule may but ascend to heauen:

(A-1604.xiv.1474-80)

The thought of the eternity of damnation prompts Faustus to desire a reverse form of metamorphosis. Instead of becoming a god, he seeks to become a beast without an immortal soul (A-1604.xiv.1490-94).

Marlowe maintains the tension to the last moment by keeping Faustus in a confused state of conflicting emotions and thoughts. In cursing himself and Lucifer Faustus accepts the truth, but he still hangs on to the idea of metamorphosis:

No Faustus, curse thyselfe, curse Lucifer,
 That hath depriude thee of the ioyes of heauen:
The clocke striketh twelue.

O it strikes, it strikes, now body turne to ayre,
 Or Lucifer wil beare thee quicke to hel:
Thunder and lightning.

Oh soule, be changde into little water drops,
 And fal into the Ocean, nere be found:
 (A-1604.xiv.1497-1504)

Faustus' belief in his unavoidable damnation turns out to be as inflexible (and wrong) as his previous faith in magic. His determination to confuse hell in Elysium rebounds upon him when he cannot separate an appeal to God from an appeal to the adders and serpents, ugly hell, and Lucifer (A-1604.xiv.1505-1507). Finally, Faustus vainly strives to make one more deal with his "familiar": "Ile burne my bookes, ah Mephastophilis" (A-1604.xiv.1508).

The difference between the tragic hero which Faustus becomes and the comic caricature which Mammon remains is clearest in their final moments on stage. Mammon's proposal for the future, in preaching the end of the world from a turnip-cart, could be a grotesque parallel to the end of Faustus. But the grandeur and eloquence of Faustus, made to bear responsibility for his deeds, finds no echo in the downcast Mammon.

Notes

¹ All quotations from The Alchemist are from The Alchemist, ed. F. H. Marès, The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1967). Act, scene, and line references will be included within parentheses in the body of the chapter. The year that Marlowe wrote Doctor Faustus is still uncertain; it falls between 1589 and 1593. Although Sir Walter Wilson Greg prefers the B-1616 text to the A-1604 text, the date of the changes and additions found in the B-1616 is also a matter of critical conjecture. As Jonson wrote The Alchemist in 1610, it seems wiser to use an edition he was likely to know at the time, the A-1604 text; in those instances in which the B-1616 text contains additional material or significant differences in the passage under consideration, the departures from the A-1604 text are taken into account. Quotations from both the A-1604 and B-1616 texts are from Greg, ed., Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus': 1604-1616 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950). All quotations from the rest of Marlowe's plays are from The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. and intro. Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963). Act; scene, and line references will be included within parentheses in the body of the chapter.

² Knoll, "How to Read The Alchemist," CE 21 (1960): 459.

³ Knoll, Ben Jonson's Plays (Lincoln: Univ. of Neb. Press, 1964), p. 132.

⁴ Enck, "Chapter VIII. The Faustus," Jonson and the Comic Truth (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1957), pp. 164-65.

⁵ Palmer, "Magic and Poetry in Doctor Faustus (1964)," in John D. Jump, ed., Marlowe: "Dr. Faustus", Casebook Series (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 202-203.

6 Ellis-Fermor, Frontiers (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964); Levin, Overreacher (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952); Ribner, "Introduction."

7 Kirschbaum, "Marlowe's Faustus," RES 19(1943): 229; Cole, Suffering and Evil (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1962); Campbell, "Doctor Faustus," PMLA 67 (1952): 219-39; Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of Thought, Learning, and Character (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1946).

8 Matalene, "Marlowe's Faustus," ELH 39, no 4 (Dec. 1972): 459-519; Cutts, The Left Hand (Haddonfield, N.J.: Eaddonfield House, 1973); Deats, "Doctor Faustus," EIL 3, no 1 (Spring 1976): 3-16; Godschalk, World Picture (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1974); Hattaway, "The Theology," RenD, N.S., 3(1970): 52-78; Blackburn, "'Heavenly Words'," English Studies in Canada 4, no 1 (Spring 1978): 1-14.

9 John Dover Wilson mentions the Protestantism of Wittenberg in his edition of Hamlet. See The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, The New Shakespeare (Cambridge: Univ. P., 1968), II and the footnote for 1.2. 113 on p. 151.

10 Jonson likely intended the name "Epicure" to suggest one who is devoted to pleasure, although this meaning twists Epicurus' philosophy, which stressed virtue. One might compare this passage from the "English Faust Book" by P. F.: "Doctor Faustus continued thus in his Epicurian life day and night and beléved not that there was a God, hell, or devil: he thought that bodie and soule died together, and had quite forgotten Divinitie or the immortalitis of his soule, but stooed in his damnable heresie day and night" ("The historie of the damnable life, and deserued death of Doctor John Faustus," tr. P. F., in Philip Mason Palmer and Robert Pattison More, The Sources of the Faust Tradition: From Simon Magus to Lessing [1936; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1965.] p. 146).

11 While religious blasphemy in The Alchemist is often stressed, Richard Levin warns against going to extremes in interpretation and against being too serious. See "'No Laughing Matter': Some New Reading of The Alchemist," SLI 6 (1973): 85-89. A detailed study of Mammon and blasphemy is made by Myrrdin Jones in "Sir Epicure Mammon: A Study in 'Spiritual Fornication,'" Ren Q 22 (1969): 233-42. Whether Mammon is seen as Anti-Christ or the ultimate gull, Jonson's target remains the foolishness of his aspirations. Mammon tempts no one but himself, for all his oratory.

12 This faith in magic's written word is shared by Faustus. He seems nonplussed when one book proves sufficient

to answer all his requests of Mephostophilis (A-1604.v.607-27). After the parade of the Sins, Lucifer gives Faustus a book which enables him to change his shape (A-1604.vi.802-803). Hattaway believes that Faustus asks for Solomon's "lost books" of natural philosophy (p. 53).

¹³ Doctor Faustus enjoys the harem of the Great Turk one woman after another for six days, in the "English Faust Book" (p. 187).

¹⁴ Hattaway argues that Faustus reverses the experience of Solomon in leaving skepticism and the possibility of repentance to pursue knowledge, power, and riches. In addition to Hattaway's article on Faustus and Solomon, see his "Paradoxes of Solomon: Learning in the English Renaissance," JHI 29 (1968): 499-530.

¹⁵ See Ribner, ed. Marlowe, p. 285.

¹⁶ Noted by Gifford and cited by Mares, p. 57.

¹⁷ Surly admits to Dame Pliant that "I am a bachelor, / Worth nought" (IV.vi.12-13).

¹⁸ In turn, Dapper is completely forgotten in the privy for an act and a half, until he cries out, "Master Captain, master Doctor" (V.iii.63).

¹⁹ Tamburlaine, Ribner, ed., Marlowe, pp. 58 and 59.

²⁰ According to Tacitus,

"Addressing Nero, [a lunatic Carthaginian] alleged the discovery on his estate of an immensely deep cave containing masses of gold, not in coin but in ancient, unworked bullion. There were ponderous ingots lying about and standing like columns, he said--all hidden centuries ago. His explanation of this windfall from antiquity was this: after her flight from Troy and foundation

of Carthage, Phoenician Dido had hidden the treasure in case too much wealth might corrupt her young nation, or the already hostile Numidian kings, coveting the gold, might go to war."

See Tacitus, "Chapter 16," Annals of Imperial Rome, tr. and intro. Michael Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 382. Nero accepts the story at face value; in fact, "his imagination exaggerated the report," and he spent money as if he already had the treasure.

21

Tacitus and Suetonius mention Poppaea, but Tacitus gives a more detailed and harsher account. He records:

There was at Rome a woman called Poppaea. Friendship with Sejanus had ruined her father.... Poppaea had every asset except goodness. From her mother, the loveliest woman of her day, she inherited distinction and beauty. Her wealth, too, was equal to her birth. She was clever and pleasant to talk to. She seemed respectable. But her life was depraved....To her, married or bachelor bedfellows were alike. She was indifferent to her reputation--yet insensible to men's love, and herself unloving. Advantage dictated the bestowal of her favours.

See The Annals of Imperial Rome, tr. and intro. Michael Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 306. Besides her funeral "in the manner of foreign potentates," Tacitus notes that "those who remembered her immorality and cruelty welcomed" her death (p. 384). Tacitus includes the search for Dido's gold (pp. 382-83).

22

Alexander died in 323 B.C. The assassination of Seleucus, his last marshal, in 280 B.C., ended all hope of a reunion of the empire under one man.

23

Mares mentions Leech's comment in his note for V. v.76-78, using John D. Jump's edition of Faustus in the Revels series (i.87-88).

V

"I'll look thee dead":
Catiline and Tamburlaine

Why Jonson returned to tragedy in 1611, following his success with Volpone, Epicoene, and The Alchemist, is impossible to establish. As he had in Sejanus, he chose a well-known subject. Cicero's orations against Catiline formed part of the education of every schoolboy. Further, at least two dramatic treatments of the conspiracy preceded Jonson's, namely, one by Stephen Gosson (c. 1578) and another by Henry Chettle and Robert Wilson (1598). That either of these works, now lost, had any bearing on Jonson's interpretation is unlikely. In addition to Cicero, Jonson drew his material from Sallust, Plutarch, and Dio Cassius.

Parallels between the conflicts in Catiline and the rapidly changing social and political situation in Jacobean England do occur; it is more probable, however, that the parallels are of a broad and general nature, rather than a one on one situation, as in the comparison to Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot: Catiline is a member of the impoverished nobility; Cicero is an up-and-coming middle-class new man. Both kinds of men were common in Jonson's England. Nor can we forget that Jonson felt bound by the history of ancient Rome; while he chose his material selectively, he usually stuck to the facts more than his contemporaries such as Shakespeare did.

Following the failure of the first performance, Catiline has received both censure and praise from the critics. Although most of the Restoration authors admired the work, T.S. Eliot provided the most frequently quoted description when he called Catiline "that dreary Pyrrhic victory of tragedy."¹ Later critics examine various aspects of the play at length agreeing or disagreeing with Eliot, but rarely concurring with each other. In "The World's Proportion: Jonson's Dramatic Poetry in 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline,'" Geoffrey Hill maintains that Jonson is "a brilliant satirist of the contemporary political situation."² Attacking the construction of the work, Clarence Valentine Boyer raises several issues still being discussed: these topics include the use of two protagonists in Catiline and Cicero, and the lengthy orations by Cicero. Boyer also brings up the inverse proportion in the roles of Cicero and Catiline.³ Catiline is a major figure until Act III, after which he shrinks to nothing. From his first appearance in Act III Cicero becomes more and more prominent and reaches his peak only in Act V as the saviour of Rome. But his long speeches, drawn from the First Catilinarian, destroy the tension of the scenes in the Senate, principally because all that Cicero says goes unchallenged. A major subject of contention is the balance of virtue, Realpolitik, and opportunism in Cicero. Most critics agree that his virtue is complemented by a firm grasp of the situation and an unquestioning readiness to use any means necessary to preserve the republic. The question is whether his methods make a travesty of his ideals.⁴ Catiline's worth as a

conspirator is open to debate too. Some critics view him as a coward who collapses and flees at the first sign of discovery; others see him as a Machiavellian combination of the lion and the fox who loses only through Providence or Fortune, or through their agents, Fulvia and Curius. As is the case with Sejanus, the city of Rome, or the body politic, is often considered as a character in its own right, and sometimes is taken to be the principal character. But differences arise about the innocence or responsibility of the Roman people who permit such a creature as Catiline to thrive. Through their apathy they may be partly to blame for the conspiracy.⁵

One approach to these problems is through Jonson's use of the Marlovian overreacher in Catiline. Critics who refer to Catiline as a "Tamburlaine" or "pseudo-Tamburlaine" rarely pursue the comparison. From Sylla's Ghost's Prologue to Cicero's first words, Jonson develops Catiline's cunning, conceit, and command of language to convince the audience that Catiline is an aspiring monster who is more than capable of destroying Rome. Catiline can persuade, declaim, and swagger in a manner superficially akin to Tamburlaine's. But a major difference lies in their societies. Tamburlaine captures and wins a pure princess in Zenocrate; he talks a brave and noble captain, Theridamas, into joining him; finally, Tamburlaine is always attacking conceited rulers of corrupt kingdoms. In contrast, Catiline is a part of the decadence of Rome; in

fact, according to Sylla's Ghost, he is largely responsible for the current state of degeneration. In Jonson's eyes, the overreacher could throw order into chaos and succeed in his desires only in an irresponsible and dissolute society. Cicero, Cato, and Catulus stand alone against the onslaught of Catiline. Tamburlaine has Theridamas as his second-in-command. Catiline's equivalent is Cethegus, whose fiery uncontrolled nature can think of nothing but blood and destruction. But Cethegus has moments when he is a pale imitation of Tamburlaine, sounding like him but persuading no one.

Jonson opposes the empty rhetoric of Catiline and his foil, Cethegus, through the example of Cicero, who emerges as the Nemesis of both men. An outsider with no aristocratic background, Cicero rises to a position of authority by the legal process and uses his gift for oratory for the benefit of the state rather than himself. Jonson juxtaposes Catiline and Cethegus, Cicero and Catiline, and Cicero and Cethegus. While Cicero wins all against Catiline, Jonson tempers his admiration through the figure of Caesar, the one conspirator spared by Cicero and the man who will eventually destroy the republic.

Catiline bears the closest resemblance to Tamburlaine among Marlowe's overreachers, but legitimate comparisons may also be made to the Duc de Guise in The Massacre at Paris. Both Catiline and the Guise are aristocrats possessed with tremendous pride in their births and the consequent conviction of being born to rule. Neither has a right to power. Each boasts of a past marked by spectacular crimes and infamy,

and these claims are supported by other characters. Jonson's Rome is on the verge of becoming the chaotic police state which Marlowe's Paris already is, thanks mainly to the protagonist in each case. To create Catiline, Jonson fused the material from his classical sources with the worst characteristics of Tamburlaine and the major traits of the Guise.⁶

In the Prologue, Sylla's Ghost convincingly portrays Catiline as a monstrous villain. The only crime left for Catiline to commit is the demolition of Rome. Jonson is making good use of the standard Senecan device of the ghost. But his ghost has only one function, to introduce Catiline and his first soliloquy. In The Jew of Malta Machiavel serves the same purpose for Barabas. As Machiavel provides credibility for Barabas, Sylla's Ghost performs the same function for Catiline and then is never seen again. While the ghost's catalogue of evil seems beyond the power of any person to perform, Jonson fashions a plausible cold-blooded and pragmatic criminal.

Catiline begins by proclaiming his belief in his destiny and his ability to overcome any obstacle:

It is decreed. Nor shall thy fate, O Rome,
Resist my vow. Though hills were set on hills
And seas met seas to guard thee, I would through;
Ay, plow up rocks steep as the Alps, in dust,
And lave the Tyrrhene waters into clouds,
But I would reach thy head, thy head, proud city.
(I. 73-78)

Both Tamburlaine and the Guise hold a similar conviction, shaken in their cases only in death. Also in soliloquy early in The Massacre at Paris, the Guise expresses his faith in

his destiny and his determination to gain the crown:

For this hath heaven engendered me of earth;
For this, this earth sustains my body's weight,
And with this weight I'll counterpoise a crown,
Or with seditions weary all the world:⁷

Seizing on a shaky excuse, Catiline renounces his "mother," Rome, ironically, because of his immense conceit about his birth and upbringing there:

Was I a man bred great as Rome herself,
One form'd for all her honors, all her glories,
Equal to all her titles, that could stand
Close up with Atlas, and sustain her name
As strong as he doth heaven? And was I
Of all her brood mark'd out for the repulse
By her no-voice when I stood candidate
To be commander in the Pontic War?
I will hereafter call her step-dame ever.
(I. 83-91)

The Guise is similarly driven by the thought of his noble birth in much the same way that Catiline *is*:

What glory is there in a common good
That hangs for every peasant to achieve?
That like I best that flies beyond my reach.
Set me to scale the high pyramidēs
And thereon set the diadem of France;
I'll either rend it with my nails to naught
Or mount the top with my aspiring wings,
Although my downfall be the deepest hell.
(ii. 40-47)

Neither Catiline nor the Guise believes that the potential annihilation of his country is too great a risk to take. Catiline swears that he will be reborn in Rome's womb as a worse prodigy or monster than any since Mars or the beginning of war. If carried out, the Guise's vow will make France "naught" (ii. 45) as well as the diadem. Although Sylla's Ghost has said that Catiline will cause the "ruin of thy country" (I. 45), Catiline, paradoxically, considers himself

the ideal man to run the country. The Guise too says that he must repair what the "gentle" and pleasure-loving Charles "ruinates" (ii. 70 and 72), but his description of himself as king is that of a merciless tyrant.

The first "ill" attempted by Catiline immediately follows his opening soliloquy; it is not in the category of "incests, murders, rapes" or of "lusts, hatreds, slaughters, funerals" (I. 30 and 64). He is not called upon to scale mountains or swim seas; ironically, he must persuade his own wife to support him in his conspiracy. The price she must pay is her honour.⁸ Early in his career Tamburlaine faces a similar situation when Zenocrate tries to maintain her honour and her loyalty to her absent betrothed whom she has never seen, the King of Arabia. Both Catiline and Tamburlaine employ rhetoric and excessive language to overcome the lady's objections.

The principal difference between the two courting maneuvers lies in Tamburlaine's unqualified success and Catiline's rather flat victory. Tamburlaine begins by promising to make Zenocrate "empress of the East" (I.ii.46). Soon, stopping at nothing in flattery and exotic images, he elevates her to the status of a goddess:

Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills,
Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine
Than the possession of the Persian crown,
Which gracious stars have promised at my birth.
A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee,
Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus.

Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,
 Enchased with precious jewels of mine own,
 More rich and valurous than Zenocrate's.
 With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled,
 Thou shalt be drawn amidst the frozen pools,
 And scale the icy mountains' lofty tops,
 Which with thy beauty will be soon resolved.

(Part I. I.ii. 87-101)

Tamburlaine carefully selects his words to suit his listener. While servants (Tartars), horses faster than Pegasus, and Median silks have their place, the majority of the images creates a striking (and for Zenocrate, reassuring) impression of virginity and purity.⁹ Not that Tamburlaine neglects himself: if Zenocrate is going to surpass Juno, then it stands to reason that Tamburlaine will surpass Jove. Although Zenocrate finishes the scene crying "Wretched Zenocrate!" (I. ii. 258), in her next appearance (Part I. III. ii) she is completely won over and from that moment usually serves as a foil for Tamburlaine like Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane.

For his part, Catiline tells Aurelia that she will be queen of "all the world, in place of humbled Rome" (I. 110), but her ears are deaf to such lures. Having neglected her until he needs her, Catiline resorts to flattery. His first compliment compares Aurelia to Aurora, the goddess of the dawn, but the emphasis falls on himself as Apollo, the sun god:

Appear,
 And break like day, my beauty, to this circle;
 Upbraid thy Phoebus that he is so long
 In mounting to that point which should give thee
 Thy proper splendor.

(I. 98-102)

Blunter and coarser than Tamburlaine, Catiline is incapable of conveying sincerity or intensity. Aurelia's terse and cynical replies indicate that she sees through him.

The comparison of the lady to a goddess parallels Petrarch, Spenser, and a host of sonneteers, but neither Tamburlaine nor Catiline resembles the humble and petitioning lover.¹⁰ Each desperately needs the cooperation of the woman for his plans to work, and each tries to conceal that fact with inflated and almost condescending language. Where Tamburlaine succeeds, Catiline does not. The greatest gift Tamburlaine can offer to Zenocrate is himself, and it is the only gift he has at the time: "And then myself to fair Zenocrate" (Part I. I. ii. 105). "Women must be flatterèd," Tamburlaine admits; then he attempts to set Zenocrate apart as "she with whom I am in love" (Part I. I. ii. 107-108). Whatever he may call his technique of persuasion, flattery is an important weapon in Tamburlaine's arsenal, and he uses it with devastating effect on both women and men. Catiline can imitate the style but he does not get the results. Ironically, he can only offer promises to his wife, who does not greet his words with enthusiasm. Aurelia will obey but she is not seduced. The contradictions and weaknesses in his speech alert the audience to the errors in Catiline's calculations.

Even the structure of his major speech to Aurelia (I. 111-85) is a sign. It begins and ends with her; however,

Aurelia.

As I would always, love,
By this ambrosiac kiss, and this of nectar,
Wouldst thou but hear as gladly as I speak.
(I: 111-13)

7

—

life-buoy for Catiline when his state was "sunk" (I. 123) is appropriate in itself, but it grates against the previous image of building. Further, it suggests that, as Catiline used Aurelia's fortune for himself in the past, he is now trying to use her social position. Put together, the images suggest that Catiline is erecting his castle of dreams on the sea. He next says that his fortune shall "hit the stars"

And stick my Orestilla there amongst 'em,
If any tempest can but make the billow,
And any billow can but lift her greatness.
(I. 126-29).

Catiline will raise Aurelia on the "tempest" of conspiracy and civil war (I. 128). Once again the lofty image is sharply brought back to earth and connected with a most risky enterprise.

The purpose of Catiline's speech is to persuade Aurelia to "put on/Like habits with myself" (I. 130-31). After listening his supporters, he gets to the point. He wants her to "hazard honors/A little," to "entertain, and feast, sit up and revel," and to "begin a fashion/Of freedom and community" (I. 170-71; 174; 176-77). Catiline disposes of the certain danger to her reputation by saying:

We must not spare
Or cost or modesty. It can but show
Like one of Juno's or of Jove's disguises
In either thee or me, and will as soon
When things succeed be thrown by or let fall
As a veil put off, a visor chang'd,
Or the scene shifted in our theaters--
(I. 179-85)

Catiline tries to rationalize Aurelia's possible objections with a thought that likely appeals to him, namely, that of metamorphosis. Volpone and Mammon try the same technique and get the same negative results. But the example of Tamburlaine is also worth examining. Tamburlaine is a master of verbal and physical metamorphosis. Before the eyes of the audience and Zenocrate, he changes from a shepherd into a "lord" (I. ii. 34). Later he uses the symbolism of the three colours, white, red, and black, to indicate irreversible changes in his disposition. But Tamburlaine's depiction of Zenocrate and himself as emperor and empress, or Jove and Juno, recalls the relationship of Jove and Juno as brother and sister instead of husband and wife. In his soliloquy Catiline seeks to metamorphose himself into a monster against Rome. His allusion to the disguises of Jove and Juno brings to mind the disguises Jove used, to accomplish his amours on earth. Indirectly it suggests that Catiline may be deceiving Aurelia; it does not convey any sense of mutual confidence. In mentioning disguise Catiline has drawn on the principal subject for argument between Jove and Juno. Catiline apparently believes that, once successful, his past will be forgotten as quickly as a "visor" is changed. Despite Jove and Juno, Catiline is demanding that his wife furnish whores for the conspirators as he does boys.

After dismissing Aurelia, Catiline is ready to meet his followers. Owing to the contempt he has already expressed for

them, the gathering is little more than a show-case for Catiline's talents at manipulation. But, in damning his followers to Aurelia, Catiline is also condemning himself: they are the best he can attract. One might remember Tamburlaine who staunchly defends his shepherd swains to Zenocrate:

And these, that seem but silly country swains,
May have the leading of so great an host
As with their weight shall make the mountains quake,
Even as when windy exhalations,
Fighting for passage, tilt within the earth.
(Part I.I.ii. 47-51)

Tamburlaine uses his followers, and Zenocrate, as reflectors for his own greatness. Jonson manages things so that occasionally Catiline is the foil for his supporters' weaknesses rather than vice versa, and they are just as base a crew as Catiline says they are.

Apart from Curius, Jonson concentrates on the first pair to arrive and ignores the rest. A disgraced Senator, Lentulus is led along by "a vain dream out of the sibyl's books" (I. 135); he believes in his destiny to rule Rome, as Catiline believes in his. Catiline's first words, "It is decreed. Nor shall thy fate, O Rome" (I. 73), are distantly echoed by Lentulus' first line, "It is, methinks, a morning full of fate!" (I. 191). Lentulus is deceived by Catiline but Catiline is deceiving himself. A follower who has a destiny (or even a will) of his own has no place with Tamburlaine.

Lentulus differs from Catiline in being lazy. Over-reaching aspirations push on Catiline, as the thoughts of slaughter and destruction drive Cethegus, the follower most



like him. When Catiline portrays him for Aurelia, he does so in a parody of Cethegus' own style:

Whose valor I have turn'd into his poison
And prais'd so into daring as he would
Go on upon the gods, kiss lightning, wrest
The engine from the Cyclops, and give fire
At face of a full cloud, and stand his ire
When I would bid him move;

(I. 140-46)

At the very least Cethegus listens to Catiline, echoing this passage later in the play (IV. v. 44-51). But Catiline's boast of his control of Cethegus later rebounds on him with disastrous consequences when, for a second, he allows Cethegus to advise him. When he first enters, characteristically early, Cethegus exhibits all the blood and thunder of Tamburlaine. The two share a gift for Senecan rant, a trait which Catiline can claim too. Coleridge commented, "What a strange notion Ben must have formed of a determined, remorseless, all-daring, Fool-hardiness, to have represented it in such a mouthing Tamburlaine, and bombastic tongue-bully as this Cethegus of his!"¹²

Spurred on by Catiline, Cethegus fondly recalls the days of Sylla, the dictator, whose ghost has named Catiline his heir:

Slaughter bestrid the streets and stretch'd himself
To seem more huge, whilst to his stained thighs
The gore he drew flow'd up and carried down
Whole heaps of limbs, and bodies through his arch.
No age was spar'd, no sex.

(I. 235-39)

Cethegus' description of Charon equals many of Tamburlaine's grim assertions:

The rugged Charon fainted
 And ask'd a navy, rather than a boat,
 To ferry over the sad world that came;
 The maws and dens of beasts could not receive
 The bodies that those souls were frightened from,
 - And e'en the graves were fill'd with men yet living
 Whose flight and fear had mixed them with the dead.
 (I. 247-53)

At the peak of his success Tamburlaine boasts to the
 Soldan, Zenocrate's father:

Millions of souls sit on the banks of Styx,
 Waiting the back-return of Charon's boat;
 Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men
 That I have sent from sundry foughten fields
 To spread my fame through hell and up to heaven.
 (Part I. V. ii. 400-404)

Cethegus sounds like Tamburlaine with his "navy" of souls to match Tamburlaine's "Millions of souls" waiting for Charon's boat in hell.¹³ But Cethegus, for all his haste and weapons, talks and moves no one. Tamburlaine describes his own deeds and takes advantage of circumstances. Undoubtedly surprised by the corpses of the "Turk and his great empress," he instantly makes them part of his legend (Part I. V. ii. 405-411). Cethegus can only look to the past. As Coleridge indicated, in Jonson's hands the overreaching rhetoric of Tamburlaine becomes mere bombast in Cethegus.

After the "ominous" signs (I. 322) of the underground groan (I. s.d. 314) and the bloody arm holding the torch above the Capitol (I. 320-21), Catiline addresses his supporters with few interruptions for 165 lines. He mixes flattery and false logic with a gusto worthy of Volpone, Mammon, and Tamburlaine.¹⁴ To arouse envy of the "giants of the state,"

(I. 348), Catiline depicts their excesses in terms tempting to his discontented listeners:

They ha' their change of houses, manors, lordships,
 We scarce a fire or a poor household Lar.
 They buy rare Attic statues, Tyrian hangings,
 Ephesian pictures and Corinthian plate,
 Attalic garments, and now new-found gems
 Since Pompey went for Asia, which they purchase
 At price of provinces. The river Phasis
 Cannot afford 'em fowl, nor Lucrine lake
 Oysters enow; Circei too is search'd
 To please the witty gluttony of a meal.
 (I. 382-91)

Catiline sandwiches this passage between two descriptions of the chaotic, reckless extravagance of those currently in power. The images in his criticism create a mood of instability which looks back to his own plans which he described to Aurelia. Pacing his appeal with provocative rhetorical questions (I. 364; 365-67; 375-76; 408-409), Catiline complains that the rulers are building "i' the sea; planing of the hills with valleys, / And raising valleys above hills" (I. 379-80). He pursues the image of absurd and self-defeating construction:

Their ancient habitations they neglect
 And set up new; then, if the echo like not
 In such a room, they pluck down those, build newer,
 Alter them too,
 (I. 392-95).

Between the depictions of senseless excess in construction, Catiline recites his list of rare items from exotic lands which resembles a Marlovian catalogue of place-names. Jonson tours the Roman Empire in his allusions, making every detail accurate and occasionally inserting a politically appropriate reference.

Catiline tries to mention the best of each Roman domain, including Attic (Greece), Tyrian (Carthage, Africa), Ephesian (Ephesus, Asia Minor), Corinthian (Corinth, Greece), and Attalic (Attalid empire, Pergamum, Asia Minor) goods and treasures. Catiline finishes this half of the catalogue with "and now new-found gems / Since Pompey went for Asia" (I. 386-87). Cicero was a principal supporter of Pompey, who would therefore be Catiline's enemy, one of the "giants" in power.

The second part of the list enumerates the delicacies of the empire. Catiline cites the Asian pheasant (Phasians) from the river Phasis flowing into the Black Sea. He finally reaches Italy through food, in the oysters from Lucrine lake (in Campania) and Circei.

A comparable catalogue from Marlowe appears in Tamburlaine Part II. When Callapine finds himself in a situation like Catiline's, desperate for help but able to give nothing but promises, he resorts to sensual and luxurious descriptions to tempt Almeda, his keeper, to betray Tamburlaine. The riches he offers could well be drawn from Tamburlaine's empire (all Asia and all Africa are "in arms with Tamburlaine" [Part II. I. ii. 72 and 76]):

A thousand galleys, manned with Christian slaves,
I freely give thee, which shall cut the Straits,
And bring armadoes from the coast of Spain,
Fraughted with gold of rich America.
The Grecian virgins shall attend on thee,
Skillful in music and in amorous lays,
As fair as was Pygmalion's ivory girl

Or lovely Iö metamorphosèd.
 With naked negroes shall thy coach be drawn,
 And as thou rid'st in triumph through the streets,
 The pavement underneath thy chariot wheels
 With Turkey carpets shall be coverèd,
 And cloth of Arras hung about the walls,
 Fit objects for thy princely eye to pierce.
 A hundred bassoes, clothed in crimson silk,
 Shall ride before thee on Barbarian steeds;

(Part II. I. iii. 32-47)

A scene of exceptional opulence composed of the riches of Spain, America, Turkey, France, and Barbary is reinforced with the sensual lure of "Grecian virgins" and the thought of countless Christian (white) slaves and black (pagan) slaves. As Almeda is dazzled into treachery, so Catiline's listeners are easily persuaded to betray Rome. Catiline itemizes the possessions and practices of Rome's rulers not to arouse righteous indignation but to stir up envy in his followers and the desire to copy their crimes. The irony of the situation has its humourous side, but the prevailing grim mood returns when Catiline histrionically binds his supporters to the cause with a "solemn sacrament" (I. 423), the wine mixed with slave's blood. This sacrilegious rite is an extension of Catiline's use of religious terms in comparing Aurelia to a goddess. Catiline is more concerned with his role as host than with the act of unholy communion, as the remonstrance and threat of death to the boy who does not respond to an advance by Bestia indicates.

Act II functions as a comic buffer¹⁵ between the instigation of the conspiracy in Act I and the arrival of Cicero in Act III.¹⁶ Jonson satirizes Catiline indirectly through his

comic portrayal of Fulvia and Sempronia, the kind of women that Catiline can attract to his cause: vain and envious social climbers who are as ignorant as Catiline of true virtue and liberty.

The first comparison on stage between Catiline and Cicero occurs in the opening scene of Act III. Cicero's appearance has been heralded by the gossip of Fulvia and Sempronia and by the prayer of the Chorus immediately before his entrance. This prayer serves the same purpose for Cicero that Sylla's Ghost's address serves for Catiline: his character is outlined for the audience. In Cicero's case the Chorus prays to Jove and Mars for a man who will have the sterling qualities of "wisdom, foresight, fortitude," "faith" more than "face," and "virtue, modesty, desert" (II. 376-78 and 382). They hope for a man devoted to "justice" and unaffected by "envy, hatred, gifts or fear" (I. 383 and 386); a true successor to the heroes of the Republic: the Bruti, the Decii, the Curtii, the Camilli, the Fabii, and the Scipios. In the balance of the play Cicero proves that he is equal to Catiline in intelligence and talent, but he emerges as a man whose soul is one with the "public good," a man who is "truly" a magistrate (II. 401 and 403). Cicero takes his place as the next saviour of Rome, an equal of Romulus and the Scipios.

Catiline's defeat in the elections marks the first setback for the conspiracy, and the falling away of his supporters

shows just how spineless they are. Cicero's victory is the one event which could be called the intervention of Fortune for the sake of Rome. For Catiline the actual loss is not as important as his decision, "I will no more dissemble" (III. i. 202). On his entrance, Catiline proves that he is a master at dissembling by completely gulling Catulus:

Catiline. It did not please the gods who instruct
the people,
And their unquestion'd pleasures must be
serv'd.
They know what's fitter for us than ourselves,
And 'twere impiety to think against them.
Catulus. You bear it rightly, Lucius, and it glads me
To find your thoughts so even.
(III. i. 120-25)

Catiline's arrogant vanity is pricked as soon as Catulus piously exalts virtue above recognition:

Catulus. He wants no state or honors, that hath virtue.
[Exeunt Catulus, Antonius, Caesar, Crassus].
Catiline.
[aside]. Did I appear so tame, as this man thinks me?
Look'd I so poor, so dead, so like that nothing
Which he calls virtuous?
(III. i. 148-51)

Being placed on a par with Catulus is more than Catiline can stand, and the gloomy comments by his two disheartened followers only serve to fan the flames:

Catiline.
[aside]. I am
The scorn of bondmen, who are next to beasts.
What can I worse pronounce myself, that's fitter?
(III. i. 155-57)

Inverting the desire to match the gods, Catiline degrades himself to the status of the "wooden god" of the gardens who cannot stop "the least bird from muting on my head" (III. i. 159-61).

Rapidly losing his poise and self-control, Catiline exclaims,
 "I grow mad at my patience" (III. i. 170). He then breaks
 out with the urge to drag the world into chaos with himself:

That I could reach the axle where the pins are
 Which bolt this frame, that I might pull 'em out
 And pluck all into chaos with myself.
 (III. i. 175-77)

The wish for gigantic, earth-shattering power is something
 Tamburlaine would recognize, but he would never turn the
 image against himself:

For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,
 First rising in the east with mild aspect,
 But fixèd now in the meridian line,
 Will send up fires to [his stars'] turning spheres
 And cause the sun to borrow light of you.
 (Part I. IV. ii. 36-40)

Somewhat late for once, Cethegus overhears Catiline's
 last remark and promptly supplies the last straw. Exhorting
 his leader to "Do, and not wish" (III. i. 184), Cethegus would
 surprise even the gods. He proceeds to goad Catiline with a
 sensational speech of "carcasses" and "blood":

It likes me better that you are not Consul.
 I would not go through open doors, but break 'em;
 Swim to my ends through blood; or build a bridge
 Of carcasses; make on upon the heads
 Of men struck down like piles, to reach the lives
 Of those remain, and stand; then is't a prey
 When danger stops and ruin makes the way.
 (III. i. 187-93)

In similar language Tamburlaine admonishes his sons to gain
 a throne:

Tamburlaine. For in a field whose superficies
 Is covered with a liquid purple veil
 And sprinkled with the brains of
 slaughtered men,

My royal chair of state shall be advanced;
 And he that means to place himself therein,
 Must arm'd wade up to the chin in blood.

Amyras. And I would strive to swim through pools of
 blood
 Or make a bridge of murdered carcasses,
 Whose arches should be framed with bones
 of Turks,
 Ere I would lose the title of a king.
 (Part II. I. iv. 79-84; 92-95)

Aroused by Cethegus' bluster, Catiline denounces the necessity
 which makes him "bend / Unto occasion" (III. i. 195-96) and
 bursts into an effusion of his own, likening Cethegus to
 Prometheus:

Lentulus, this man
 If all our fire were out would fetch down new
 Out of the hand of Jove, and rivet him
 To Caucasus, should he but frown, and let
 His own gaunt eagle fly at him, to tire.
 (III. i. 196-200)

Cethegus would rewrite the tale and upset Jove. A speech like
 one of Tamburlaine's draws praise in the same vein. Since
 Prometheus is a prototype of the overreacher, the comparison
 also implies the passing of command out of the hands of
 Catiline into those of his followers. Catiline should be
 making these remarks about himself. Cethegus is not Prometheus,
 but neither is Catiline now.

When Cato returns, Catiline and Cethegus, barely restrained
 by Lentulus and Longinus, confront Cato and almost attack him.
 Calm and unafraid, Cato displays a self-control which stands
 in sharp contrast to Catiline's rashness. Catiline prefers
 action to thought and in fact decides to act without thinking.

Lentulus advises consultation; Cethegus calls for taking up arms (III. i. 231-33). Each remains true to character, but Catiline shows his new recklessness in the scene's last line, "Our objects must be sought with wounds, not words" (III. i. 234). In effect, Catiline loses the initiative before Cicero reacts against him. To an extent Cicero wins by default, although he needs all his knowledge and diplomacy to do so.

Catiline's fall runs parallel to Cicero's ascendancy. From the start Cicero has to react quickly to a difficult situation. Inwardly in turmoil after Fulvia's disclosure of the conspiracy and contemptuous of her to boot, he restrains his emotions to flatter both Fulvia and the traitor Curius in a fashion equal to Catiline's at his best. "Lost" in Fulvia's "fable" (III. ii. 22-23), Cicero opens with a series of rhetorical questions which shows the intensity of his feelings as well as his rhetorical skill:

Is there a heaven, and gods, and can it be
 They should so slowly hear, so slowly see?
 Hath Jove no thunder, or is Jove become
 Stupid as thou art, O near-wretched Rome,
 When both thy Senate and thy gods do sleep
 And neither thine nor their own states do keep?
 What will awake thee, heaven, what can excite
 Thine anger if this practice be too light?
 (III. ii. 1-8)

Taken by surprise, Cicero keeps his self-control as the smoothness of his speech proves. The opening twelve lines are in rhyming couplets. The balance and repetition in "so slowly hear, so slowly see?" and "Hath Jove no thunder, or *is* Jove become / Stupid?" are rhetorical devices which are second

nature to Cicero. He proceeds from the particular, Catiline, to the general, ambition. Cicero's definition could stand as a criticism of nearly all of Jonson's and Marlowe's overreachers:

Ambition, like a torrent, ne'er looks back,
And is a swelling and the last affection
A high mind can put off, being both a rebel
Unto the soul and reason, and enforceth
All laws, all conscience, treads upon religion
And offereth violence to nature's self.
But here is that transcends it; a black purpose
To confound nature and to ruin that
Which never age nor mankind can repair.

(III. ii. 13-21)

Mere ambition is dangerous enough, as the comparison to a flood indicates. This swelling pride and passion threatens the foundations of the individual and of society. In contrast, Sallust, a supporter of Caesar, describes ambition as "a fault which after all comes nearer to being a virtue,"¹⁷ a comment later echoed, although not approvingly, by the Chorus. But in Cicero's eyes Catiline's "black purpose" (III. ii. 19) surpasses ambition and menaces civilization itself. Both Sylla's Ghost and Catiline himself have already stated this idea, but Cicero, as a good man rather than the ghost of a murderous dictator or the would-be perpetrator of the deed, sees and portrays these intentions in their true horror (III. ii. 26-43). Total destruction is as much a part of Tamburlaine's purpose as Catiline's, and Tamburlaine carries it out. Cicero pointedly summarizes the danger posed by the insatiable Catiline: "for unto whom / Rome is too little, what can be enough?" (III. ii. 46-47).¹⁸ The example of Tamburlaine, who

sadly lamented that he left any part of the world unconquered,
gives the answer that nothing is enough.

In managing Fulvia and Curius, Cicero adopts the power
of persuasion abandoned by Catiline and employs it ably and
deviously. In places he lies and borders on hypocrisy.
Cicero's flattery of his informers easily matches Catiline's
ingratiating treatment of Lentulus and Cethegus:

Would you [Curius] of whom the Senate had that hope
As on my knowledge it was in their purpose
Next sitting to restore you, as they ha' done
The stupid and ungrateful Lentulus
(Excuse me that I name you thus together,
For yet you are not such), would you, I say,
A person both of blood and honor, stock'd
In a long race of virtuous ancestors,
Embark yourself for such a hellish action
With parricides and traitors, men turn'd Furies
Out of the waste and ruin of their fortunes
(For 'tis despair that is the mother of madness),
Such as want that which all conspirators,
But they, have first, mere color for their mischief?

Here is a lady that hath got the start,
In piety, of us all, and for whose virtue
I could almost turn lover again, but that
Terentia would be jealous. What an honor
Hath she achieved to herself;

(III. ii. 89-102; 107-11)

Catiline guides his followers with no greater skill:

Why, what can [men] do less? Cinna and Sylla
Are set and gone, and we must turn our eyes
On [Lentulus] that is and shines. Noble Cethegus,
But view him with me here: he looks already
As if he shook a scepter o'er the Senate
And the aw'd purple drop'd their rods and axes.
The statues melt again, and household gods
In groans confess the travail of the city;
The very walls sweat blood before the change,
And stones start out to ruin ere it comes.

(I. 272-81)

Catiline wins Lentulus by picturing him on the throne and

keeps Cethegus glowing by including his favourite topic, destruction. In the same fashion Cicero adroitly turns from praising one only to praise the other, and then back again (Curius, III. ii. 81-106; Fulvia, 107-35; Curius, 165-71).

The surprise of the discovery and the depth of his own emotion do not prevent Cicero from acting swiftly. Knowing the kind of man that Curius is, Cicero soon promises him bribes, such as "titles" and "rewards" from the Senate (III. ii. 166-68). Once "Good Curius" is his, Cicero gives him instructions on espionage which equal any plan of Catiline's (III. ii. 178-93). Cicero is quick to see the potential of Fulvia, ironically termed Curius' "virtuous friend" (III. ii. 195), as a go-between.

As soon as Curius and Fulvia have left, Cicero shows his true feelings (III. ii. 204-30). Fulvia is now a base and "common strumpet, worthless to be nam'd / A hair or part of [Rome]" (III. ii. 217-18). But the message that Antonius is coming interrupts his lamentation to Rome, and he immediately stops his harangue to plan his next steps in buying Antonius and guarding his own safety.

Jonson is true to the historical Cicero's Latin prose style in reproducing its characteristics of circumlocution, complexity of clauses in the period, and parentheses; however, the encouraging, cajoling, tempting, and promising approach is that of Catiline and of the overreacher in general.¹⁹ Possibly Cicero represents Jonson's positive solution to the problem of the overreacher; intelligent, adept in intrigue and oratory, Cicero retains his integrity and his faith in powers

beyond mankind in the face of corruption and adversity.

Unlike the unstable Catiline, who seeks to change himself into the scourge of Rome, Cicero is a monument of stability who seeks no magical metamorphosis. He is from the same mould as Erites in Cynthia's Revels and Horace in The Poetaster; however, righteousness alone is insufficient to withstand the threat of a Catiline or a Sejanus. Accordingly, the basic tools and techniques of the overreacher as opportunist and orator are Cicero's also. Like the overreachers from Tamburlaine to Catiline, he knows the value of suspense and surprise as well as spectacle. He thinks before he acts but he can act decisively and quickly. Although longwinded and conceited, Cicero does not delude himself with dreams of personal wealth and power. Unlike the one apparently successful overreacher, Tamburlaine, he has no desire to "hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains" (Tamb. Part I. I. ii. 173). In fact, Cato praises Cicero as the consul who "Rescu'd us all out of the jaws of fate" (V. iv. 206). Where Tamburlaine, Catiline, and Sejanus, try to make the gods suit their own designs, Cicero is a true believer in the "gods and majesty of Rome" (III. ii. 43).

The decline in Catiline's stature continues in his interview with Caesar (III. iii). Catiline says little in response to Caesar's lecture on Machiavellian tactics. The dominance of Cicero in the previous scene is evident by his lengthy

speeches; in contrast, Catiline's speeches shrink in size. Caesar's grasp of the situation is illustrated not only by what he says but by what he does: he has no intention of staying for the "meeting" of the conspirators and would prefer to depart under cover of darkness (III. iii. 37).

Catiline had no need of these exhortations in Act I; instead, he made such speeches to his supporters. Caesar even caps Catiline's single response:

Caesar. Come, there was never any great thing yet
Aspired, but by violence or fraud,
And he that sticks for folly of a conscience
To reach it--

Catiline. Is a good religious fool.
Caesar. A superstitious slave, and will die beast.
(III. iii. 26-30)

Caesar's words show him to be an embryonic overreacher, waiting for his chance.

Caesar is succeeded by Aurelia, but her attitude has not changed since her last appearance. Her two brief answers, "yes" and "[Sempronia] is [here]" (III. iii. 41-42), suggest no enthusiasm for her part in the conspiracy. In mentioning Sempronia's "sulphurous spirit" (III. iii. 43), Catiline indirectly exposes Aurelia's indifference which will not "take / Light at a spark" (III. iii. 43-44). He has ceded defeat in trying to convince her; Catiline is content that his wife simply follow orders. His last question, "You'll form [the women into supporters]?" (III. iii. 57), goes unanswered. Aurelia just turns and leaves.

As at their first gathering, Aurelia's coolness to the plot casts a shadow over the intended last meeting of the conspirators before it begins. The presence of Curius, now Cicero's spy, strengthens the impression of inevitable defeat. Bad news, the death of Piso, gets the conference off to a bad start. Catiline attempts to stir up his followers with the "silver eagle" (III. iii. 74) introduced by Marius, Sylla's opponent in the civil war. He calls on them to

Pledge then all your hands
To follow it with vows of death and ruin
Struck silently and home. So waters speak
When they run deepest.

(III. iii. 80-83)

The speakers undoubtedly go through the motions of clasping hands, but none of them exuberantly voices a pledge; their ardour has died out, possibly because "Oraculous" Catiline is not the godlike orator he was (I. 530). Although the eagle has been "Fatal to Rome" (III. iii. 76) as a reminder of the Civil War, its dramatic effect falls short of the episode with the slave's blood in Act I.

Catiline is quick to sense the difference; but his attempts to rekindle enthusiasm, while superficially successful, are undermined by the vigorous support of Curius, who mimics Cethegus. Only Cethegus notices the change in Catiline:

Catiline.

Noblest Romans,
Methinks our looks are not so quick and high
As they were wont.

Curius.

Catiline.

No? Whose is not?
We have
No anger in our eyes, no storm, no lightning;

Our hate is spent and fum'd away in vapor
 Before our hands be at work. I can accuse
 Not any one, but all of slackness.

Cethegus.

Yes,

And be yourself such, while you do it.

Catiline.

Ha?

'Tis sharply answered, Caius.

Cethegus.

Truly, truly.

(III. iii. 94-102)

That Catiline has no ready reply for Cethegus shows his gradual loss of leadership. As in Act I, the conspirators try to arouse themselves with thoughts of success and slaughter. Their minds return again to the days of Sylla, but now Curius, not Catiline or Cethegus, refers to the multitudes killed and sent to hell:

Curius.

When husbands, wives,
 Grandsires and nephews, servants and their lords,
 Virgins and priests, the infant and the nurse
 Go all to hell together in a fleet.

(III. iii. 137-40)

Although Curius has the right idea, his speech is noticeably bare of classical or mythological allusions and stands for what it is, a pale imitation of Cethegus or Catiline.

After listening to the broken thoughts and arguments of his followers (III. iii. 118-26; 132-37), Catiline at last seems on the verge of regaining his former rhetorical power. He briskly dispenses orders about the "firing" of Rome (III. iii. 141-49) and controls the conversation to the extent that he can build up to a few classical references:

All else cut off
 As Tarquin did the poppy heads, or mowers
 A field of thistles, or else up, as plows
 Do barren lands; and strike together flints
 And clods, th' ungrateful Senate and the people,
 (III. iii. 155-59)

The allusion to Tarquin is double-edged for Catiline. As Tarquin usurped the throne,²⁰ so Catiline would likely restore the monarchy with himself as King. The crown he dangles before Lentulus he probably intends to set on his own head. Catiline uses the episode with the poppies to advocate ruthless massacre; however, the incident also exemplifies Tarquin's caution. Unlike Catiline, Tarquin kept silent and forced his son, Sextus, to make the decision and take the responsibility for the massacre.

What is routine for Tamburlaine, the sustained thunderous speech studded with mythological allusions, has become increasingly difficult for Catiline, even among friends. Pushing himself, Catiline attempts to instil rage in his followers by describing it:

Till no rage gone before or coming after
 May weigh with yours, though horror leap'd herself
 Into the scale, but in your violent acts
 The fall of torrents and the noise of tempests,
 The boiling of Charybdis, the sea's wildness,
 The eating force of flames and wings of winds,
 Be all outwrought by your transcendent furies.
 (III. iii. 160-66)

During Catiline's temporary recovery of his energy and command of language, the prophecy of Sylla's Ghost, for a moment, appears to have a chance of fulfilment. In balanced pairs (one pair per line), the images of destruction proceed from water (torrents) to wind-storms associated with rain and the sea (tempests) to the sea (the whirlpool Charybdis and the sea) to fire (flames) and wind. The "transcendent furies" of

the conspirators (III. iii. 166) must surpass all these threatening elements. The oratorical effect of the passage is assisted by alliteration such as torrents and tempests and "force of flames", and alliteration and assonance together as in "wings of winds."

Such exhortations are standard for Tamburlaine, who continually buoys up the spirits of his close followers and, in Part II, his sons and his soldiers. Almost every word from Tamburlaine, except in soliloquy, is intended to have a definite impact on Zenocrate, his followers, or his enemies. At Zenocrate's funeral, Tamburlaine's grief is genuine, but his speech, spoken before the burning town of Larissa, creates a striking spectacle. He will never forget this moment, but neither will any of his supporters. Tamburlaine calls on the ominous and deadly agents of nature to fashion a new Hades to equal the island of the Furies:

So, burn the turrets of this cursèd town,
 Flame to the highest region of the air,
 And kindle heaps of exhalations
 That, being fiery meteors, may presage
 Death and destruction to th' inhabitants!
 Over my zenith hang a blazing star,
 That may endure till heaven be dissolved,
 Fed with the fresh supply of earthly dregs,
 Threatening a dearth and famine to this land!
 Flying dragons, lightning, fearful thunder-claps,
 Singe these fair plains, and make them seem as black
 As is the island where the Furies mask,
 Compassed with Lethe, Styx, and Phlegethon,
 Because my dear Zenocrate is dead.

(Tamb. Part II. III. ii. 1-14)

The death and destruction urged by Tamburlaine are not carried out by nature but by his own men in burning the town, and his

speech helps to maintain their determination to perform the deed.

Still in the planning stages of his conflagration, Catiline is incapable of sustaining the mood. He is brought back to earth by Lentulus' question about Antonius and must admit that Cicero has won him (III. iii. 168-71). In Jonson's version, the plan to assassinate Cicero is initiated by Curius; by implication it is doomed from the start. Catiline has remarkably little say or even involvement in the plot. Ill-conceived on the spur of the moment, it is later deserted by Cethegus, the most dangerous conspirator of all, when he cannot do it in his way.²¹ Immediately before Catiline's last soliloquy, Fulvia departs to reveal all to Cicero.

Although he is unaware of it, Catiline no longer has any control over events; his own methods are about to be used against him. His last soliloquy is constructed to destroy any potential sympathy for his fate. It is a declaration to overreach all in cruelty and to spare none. Moreover, this reaffirmation of Catiline's purpose bears out every one of Cicero's fears. Catiline's low estimate of his supporters, "the dregs of mankind" (III. iii. 227), now echoes Cicero's "wretches of lost minds" (III. ii. 32). Catiline's personal rage proves as intense and uncontrollable as the rage he tried to inspire in his supporters. After attacking the men who follow him, Catiline turns to the man who refused, Caesar, and vows that he will make Caesar

Repent his vent'ring counsels to a spirit
 So much his lord in mischief, when all these
 Shall like the brethren sprung of dragons' teeth
 Ruin each other and he fall amongst 'em

(III. iii. 245-48)

Catiline fails to see anything exceptional in Caesar, and dismisses him with the greater rivals, Pompey and Crassus.

In destroying Rome Catiline seeks to surpass, in one night, the efforts of the city's original enemies through the ages, the Gauls, the Moors, and the Carthaginians. Such resolve smacks of Tamburlaine. Catiline's wish that he be reduced to nothing if he does not make all surviving Romans slaves is expressed in vivid and bloody terms:

May my brain
 Resolve to water and my blood turn phlegm,
 My hands drop off unworthy of my sword,
 And that be inspired of itself to rip
 My breast for my lost entrails, when I leave
 A soul that will not serve;

(III. iii. 250-55)

Tamburlaine voices similar determination and employs the same kind of imagery, but he never thinks of his own destruction. Facing the traitor and deserter Almeda, Tamburlaine frightens him from accepting a crown from Callapine with a single speech:

Go, villain, cast thee headlong from a rock,
 Or rip thy bowels and rend out thy heart
 T'appease my wrath; or else I'll torture thee,
 Searing thy hateful flesh with burning irons
 And drops of scalding lead, while all thy joints
 Be racked and beat asunder with the wheel;
 For if thou liv'st, not any element
 Shall shroud thee from the wrath of Tamburlaine.

(Tamb. Part II. III. v. 120-27)

Following Cicero's defeat of the assassination attempt, the Chorus provides a commentary on Catiline's last soliloquy and on ambition. Jonson draws on Sallust, but the result applies more to his and Marlowe's overreachers than to Sallust's Catiline:

But, most, ambition, that near vice
 To virtue, hath the fate of Rome provoked,
 And made that now Rome's self's no price
 To free her from the death wherewith she's yoked,
 That restless ill that still doth build
 Upon success, and ends not in aspiring,
 But there begins, and ne'er is fill'd
 While aught remains that seems but worth desiring,
 Wherein the thought, unlike the eye
 To which things far seem smaller than they are,
 Deems all contentment plac'd on high,
 And thinks there's nothing great but what is far.
 (III. v. 65-76)

That "restless ill" pursues Tamburlaine through all his conquests until his death. As he nears death, he illustrates Jonson's Chorus' statement:

Lo, here, my sons, are all the golden mines,
 Inestimable drugs and precious stones,
 More worth than Asia and the world beside;
 And from th' Antarctic Pole eastward behold
 As much more land, which never was descried,
 Wherein are rocks of pearl that shine as bright
 As all the lamps that beautify the sky;
 And shall I die, and this unconquer'd?
 (Part II. V. iii. 151-58)

Catiline reaches his rhetorical nadir when he meets Cicero in the Senate. Jonson abandons the balance between the two which he has maintained for several scenes in order to reduce Catiline to the condition of a mute while Cicero waxes eloquent in his denunciation.

Catiline's ignorance of the fact that the Senate is meeting shows that he lacks spies in the important places.

Caesar sends for him (IV. ii. 39), but his late arrival enables Cicero to set the Senate against him. Cicero tactfully concedes Catiline's good points and admits his own reluctance:

I profess
It grieves me, Fathers, that I am compell'd
A man, I must confess, of no mean house
Nor no small virtue,

(IV. ii. 54-55; 59-60)

Cicero then proceeds to a savage attack:

Brought up in's sister's prostitution,
Confirm'd in civil slaughter, ent'ring first
The Commonwealth with murder of the gentry;
Since, both by study and custom, conversant
With all licentiousness;

(IV. ii. 64-68)

When Catiline comes in, Catulus follows Cato in refusing to sit beside him. At first Catiline feigns surprise, but he soon loses self-control in favour of his aristocratic arrogance:

Remember who I am, and of what place,
What petty fellow this is that opposes:
One that hath exercis'd his eloquence
Still to the bane of the nobility,
A boasting, insolent tongue-man.

(IV. ii. 98-102)

Catiline's rough attempt to dominate the Senate stands in contrast to Cicero's smooth and gradual approach. The occasional asides of Caesar and Crassus mark the stages of Catiline's reversal before Cicero's oratory:

Caesar.
[aside] Will he sit down?

Caesar. He's lost and gone. His spirits have forsook him.

Crassus. [aside to Caesar]. H'is lost, there is no hope of him.

(IV. ii. 109; 241; 453)

The worst experience for an overreacher in Jonson is to be out-talked and to find himself with nothing to say. No situation silences Tamburlaine, but Catiline collapses totally before the forces of good. The asides of Crassus and Caesar indicate how he forfeits the floor to Cicero, who enjoys an unflawed victory. From the moment of his entrance Catiline is at a disadvantage.

Having allowed Cicero full play, Catiline tries to gain lost ground:

If an oration or high language, Fathers,
 Could make me guilty, here is one hath done it;
 H'as strove to emulate this morning's thunder
 With his prodigious rhetoric.

(IV. ii. 403-406)

Cato does not allow him to speak without constant and derogatory interruptions. Catiline cannot maintain his composure before Cato's comments and soon finds that no one, including Caesar, supports him. Cicero's "high language" has condemned him in the eyes of the Senate (IV. ii. 403).

Cato's remark that Catiline deserves pity "No more than unto Tantalus or Tityus" (IV. ii. 294) strikes home. Both giants, Tantalus, a son of Zeus, and Tityus, a son of Ge, suffer everlasting punishment in Hades for challenging the authority of the gods. Tityus assaulted Latona, the mother of Apollo and Artemis. Tantalus' most famous crime is the murder of his son Pelops, whom he served as food to the gods. Classical accounts usually pair them. In The Metamorphoses and The Odyssey the two are treated together, while, in

The Aeneid, they are in close proximity, within a few lines of each other.²² Further, each bears a distinct if distant resemblance to Prometheus, but neither has his redeeming quality of interest in mankind. Like Prometheus on the Caucasus, Tityus is stretched out on nine acres of Hades, where two vultures tear away at his liver, which continually grows again. As Prometheus stole fire from Olympus for man, Tantalus stole nectar and ambrosia and gave them to mortals... In Jonson's eyes, the overreacher, such as Catiline, acts according to the same lawless and unrestrained desires of Tantalus and Tityus, and has nothing in common with the better points of Prometheus.

In defending himself, Catiline drops all pretense and shows his true colours. Like Tamburlaine, he arrogantly assumes that the gods reflect his own views:

Catiline. The gods would rather twenty Romes should perish
Than have that contumely stuck upon 'em
That he should share with them in the preserving
A shed or sign post.

Cato. Peace, thou prodigy.
Catiline. They would be forc'd themselves again, and lost
In the first rude and indigested heap
Ere such a wretched name as Cicero
Should sound with theirs.

(IV. ii. 422-29)

Cato's reply turns Catiline's vocabulary back on him; his "Peace, thou prodigy" (IV. ii. 425) echoes Catiline's ironic criticism of Cicero's "prodigious rhetoric" (IV. ii. 406). The overreacher's characteristic talent for verbal exchange deserts Catiline at this moment. He may or may not lose all control and almost attack Cicero (the stage direction is

"He turns suddenly on Cicero" [IV. ii. 432] but his best line, "I'll look thee dead" (IV. ii. 442), falls flat. Tamburlaine deals with his enemies through looks as well, but there is a major difference in effect. If a look ~~could~~ kill, Tamburlaine's would. As it is, a single glance sends the chill fear of death to Agydas, Zenocrate's last reminder of her previous betrothal:

I stand aghast; but most astonièd
To see his choler shut in secret thoughts,
And wrapt in silence of his angry soul.
Upon his brows was portrayed ugly death,
And in his eyes the fury of his heart,

(Tamb. Part I. III. ii. 69-73)

In Part II, Tamburlaine, near death, disperses Callapine's entire army just by looking at them:

My looks shall make them fly; and might I follow,
There should not one of all the villain's power
Live to give offer of another fight.

In spite of death, I will go show my face,
Alarm. Tamburlaine goes in, and comes out
again with all the rest.

Thus are the villains, cowards fled for fear,
Like summer's vapors vanished by the sun;
And could I but a while pursue the field,
That Callapine should be my slave again.

(Tamb. Part II. V. iii. 107-109;
114-118)

In contrast, Catiline's look is greeted by the taunts and jeers of Cicero's supporters, Cato, Catulus, and Quintus, who see through him. Cato's contemptuous response, "Will none restrain the monster?" (IV. ii. 442), is one of several in this vein, including "Stop that portentous mouth" and "Still dost thou murmur, monster," (IV. ii. 441; 445).

"The frowning looks of fiery Tamburlaine" (Part I. IV. i. 13) remind his enemies of the Gorgon, whose glance could turn men to stone (Part I. IV. i. 17-19); but Catiline, who strives for the same reaction, is ridiculed as a fake.

Even the impact of Catiline's departing couplet is diminished by the gloomy asides of Crassus and Caesar:

Catiline. The common fire rather than mine own,
For fall I will with all ere fall alone. [Exit.]
Crassus [aside to Caesar]. H'is lost, there is
no hope of him.
Caesar. Unless
He presently take arms and give a blow
Before the Consul's forces can be levied.
(IV. ii. 451-55)

Jonson contrasts the rashness of Catiline, who fails to "carry the lie constantly" (IV. ii. 38), with Cicero's calm diplomacy in handling Caesar and Crassus. In the face of Cato's strident and unthinking honesty, Cicero again shows his capacity for unemotional Machiavellian reasoning:

Not an unprofitable, dangerous act,
To stir too many serpents up at once.
Caesar and Crassus, if they be ill men,
Are mighty ones, and we must so provide
That while we take one head from this foul Hydra
There spring not twenty more.

.....
I'll make
Myself no enemies, nor the state no traitors.
(IV. ii. 469-74; 477-78)

Cicero thinks of the state as well as himself. Jonson portrays his plan to gain letters as evidence through the Allobroges as an act of swift thinking when opportunity knocks. Catiline's departing speech is lacklustre by comparison. Catiline appears downcast by the discovery

of traitors within his own group (IV. iii. 1), and unable to recover his confidence as the leader. Instead of weighing his options, he seems to be pursuing the path of least resistance. Ineffective in the Senate, Catiline is uninspiring to his followers. His last line, "I am all your creature" (IV. iii. 37), suggests the shift of control from himself to Lentulus, the laziest of the conspirators.

As Catiline's voice fades out, Jonson actually shifts the focus to Cethegus, the loudest of the conspirators. For the cause Cethegus apes Tamburlaine as well as he ever has, but his call to arms moves no one:

A thousand such as [Sempronia and the Allobroges] are
 could not make
 One atom of our souls. They should be men
 Worth heaven's fear, that looking up but thus
 Would make Jove stand upon his guard and draw
 Himself ~~within~~ **within** his thunder which amaz'd,
 He should discharge in vain, and they unhurt;
 (IV. v. 43-48)

Jonson employs dramatic irony to deflate Cethegus' bubble of extremism. Still chafing at the waste of time, Cethegus feels that the conspirators could have scattered the stars by now and made the world dependent on their light instead (IV. v. 52-55). The lukewarm reaction of his audience is only part of the humour. No praise from Lentulus is worth much (IV. v. 56-58). Sempronia's statement is somewhat equivocal; an ageing Venus who pays for young lovers, she compliments Cethegus as one of "the right Martian breed" (IV. v. 60). The Allobrogian ambassador, secretly in league with Cicero, caps this remark with "He is a Mars! /Would we had time to live

here and admire him" (IV. v. 60-61). One after another, they praise Cethegus' spirit; however, the audience knows that the Allobroges have already been won over by Cicero. Therefore, the climax of the series is actually a satiric anticlimax which foreshadows the ultimate failure of the conspiracy. The ambassador's comment is even more ironic because it may accurately describe Cethegus' view of himself as a human Mars.

Cethegus' scorn for the others mirrors Catiline's own (III. iii. 225-41), with the difference that Catiline's disdain includes Cethegus. He who would stymie Jove in Tamburlaine's style is closer to his own mythological choice, Capaneus (IV. v. 49-51), who challenged Jove and was dashed by a thunderbolt. In Tamburlaine the assumption of equality with Jove is a mark of his confidence in himself and his followers. In Cethegus it indicates his dissatisfaction and impatience with the tepid nature of his fellows. Catiline and Cethegus can no more transform their associates from unworthy malcontents into valiant rebels than they can change themselves from rebels into gods. On the other hand, Tamburlaine uses language to turn a shepherd into a warrior and a king, and his words make a strong impression on people such as Zenocrate and Theridamas as well as on his "country swains" (Part I. I. ii. 47). They all come to respond in language that echoes his.

Jonson derides Cethegus for the last time when Cicero remains silent during his final tirade:

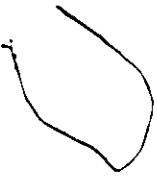
A beast or what is worse,
 A slave, Cethegus. Let that be the name
 For all that's base hereafter, that would let
 This worm pronounce on him and not have trampled
 His body into--ha, art thou not mov'd?
 (V. viii. 3-7)

Cicero calmly replies, "Justice is never angry," a remark which infuriates Cethegus all the more (V. viii. 8).

Throughout the last act Jonson displays the adroitness of Cicero. Even though Catiline has departed, Cicero is in the difficult position of condemning Cethegus, Lentulus, and the others to death while shielding Crassus and Caesar from all harm and any suggestion of involvement. To do so Cicero has to manipulate his own supporters, such as Cato and Catulus, a verbal feat which Jonson (to say nothing of the historical Cicero) may have considered equal to the disposal of Catiline on the battlefield. Catiline's last speech, his address to his troops, is a frank declaration of their hopeless situation. It has nothing of the overreacher's fire, although his "brave bad death" (Cato V. ix. 84), reported by Petreius, is well-suited to the overreacher.

In Catiline Jonson created a credible overreacher and villain who possesses Tamburlaine's worst characteristics but few of his best. Catiline has Tamburlaine's shocking ambition that accepts no boundaries, his rhetorical flair, and his ruthlessness. The difference lies in Jonson's determination to denounce Catiline's "black purpose" at every opportunity. What is ambiguous in Tamburlaine, who usually seems no more wicked than the noble potentates he attacks,

is undoubtedly evil in Catiline, who aims to ruin the Republic. Further, Cicero overshadows all, Catiline included, from the middle of the play. As the Nemesis of the overreacher, Cicero surpasses Catiline in any department, from oratory to bravery to duplicity. He is so much larger than life that he never faces significant opposition. Confronted by this virtuous man's rhetoric, Catiline shrivels up. When he leaves Rome, Cicero lacks even a dummy to fight; Jonson fills in with minor resistance from Caesar, Cethegus, and Lentulus, but none of them is near Cicero in language or authority. Cicero's argument with his own supporters, Cato and Catulus, could have been made much more dramatic. As it stands, their reservations are overcome by their desire to reward the consul properly.



Notes

1

T.S. Eliot, "Ben Jonson (1919)," Elizabethan Dramatists (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 70. All quotations from Catiline will be drawn from Catiline, ed. W.F. Bolton and Jane F. Gardner (London: Edward Arnold, 1973).

2

Geoffrey Hill, "The World's Proportion: Jonson's Dramatic Poetry in 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline,'" Jacobean Theatre, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 1 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. 113.

3

Clarence Valentine Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1914), pp. 178-82.

4

Critics who take the view that Cicero is virtuous but not naive include Ralph Nash, "Ben Jonson's Tragic Poems," SP 55 (1958), pp. 170-72; Anselm Schlösser, "Ben Jonson's Roman Plays," KN VIII, 2 (1961), 149-50; Robert Ornstein, "Chapter III, Ben Jonson," The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy, 1960; Paperback ed. (Madison and Milwaukee: Univ. of Wisconsin P., 1965), p. 100; Michael J. C. Echeruo, "The Conscience of Politics and Jonson's Catiline," SEL VI (1966), 349. Critics who consider Cicero to be a model of virtue contrasted with Catiline's black villainy include T.J.B. Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," Shakespeare Survey 10 (1957), p. 36. Spencer refers to "Jonson's setting up Catiline as an example of unmitigated villainy and Cicero as an example of unmitigated virtue." Another is Jacob I. de Villiers, who says "we are presented undramatically with the decline and fall of an obviously bad man and with the rise of an all-too-obviously good one" in "Ben Jonson's Tragedies," ES, 44 (1964), 441.

5

Nash says we might almost consider "the body politic as a central character in each play--the Polis as Hero, so to speak," p. 168. Echeruo also argues that the main theme is politics and the survival of the state, p. 344. Hill also sees the body politic as a contributor to the tragedy, p. 120.

6

Herford and Simpson call attention to the best and the worst features of Jonson's *Catiline*:

Less terrible, with all his ferocity, than Tiberius, he is also far less profoundly and subtly drawn. He has imagination, and plots out the future disposal of the resources of the world with the magnificent abandon of Sir Epicure Mammon. His speeches are rhetorically powerful, more particularly when they are not paraphrased from Sallust; but, like so much else in Jonson, they only exhibit with great variety and frequent splendour of expression a hard monotony of mood. (II. 123)

7

Christopher Marlowe, The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963), p. 246. All future quotations from The Massacre at Paris and from Tamburlaine Part One and Part Two are from this edition. Act, line, and scene information will be ~~included~~ within parentheses in the body of the text.

8

Jonson does not mention that Aurelia Orestilla was scarcely known for her honour. In effect, Sallust places her on a par with Fulvia and Sempronia when he writes: "[Catiline] ended by falling in love with Aurelia Orestilla, a woman in whom no respectable man ever found anything to praise except her beauty." Jonson permits Aurelia to appear better than she was in order to reveal Catiline's techniques of persuasion. The translation is S.A. Handford's in Sallust, "The Jugurthine War" and "The Conspiracy of Catiline," trans. and intro. S.A. Handford, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 185.

9

C.L. Barber comments on Tamburlaine's "exquisite love-poetry, the most striking of which is literally frigid," in "The Death of Zenocrate: 'Conceiving and subduing both' in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," Lit and Psych 16 (1966): 19.

10

Geoffrey Hill stresses Jonson's use of parody in this regard:

In *Catiline*'s wooing of Aurelia, the satiric method is one of profound parody.... Here is an epicure savouring, a ludicrous distinction between flavours in the kisses, each one mincingly appropriated by the demonstrative. It is the absurdity of over-meticulousness. It is the Spenserian-Petrarchan sexual

reverence employed in a context which makes its very euphuism obscene.

Hill's remarks may be found in "The World's Proportion: Jonson's Dramatic Poetry in Sejanus and Catiline" in Jacobean Theatre, ed. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies I (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. 121. Hill proceeds to note the religious terms used by Catiline such as "pray," "redeem," "accuse"; Catiline also draws on the same terminology in dealing with his conspirators in the ritual of drinking the slave's blood.

11

The idea is developed from a passage in Sallust: ".... how private citizens have often levelled mountains and paved seas for their building operations" ("The Conspiracy of Catiline," Chapter I, p. 183). Sallust puts this image into Catiline's mouth in the second chapter: "[They have] a superfluity of riches to waste in building out into the sea and levelling mountains, while we lack means to buy necessities" (Chapter II, p. 189).

12

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley, intro. Louis I. Bredvold (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 646.

13

One might also compare this speech with one by Zabina, Bajazeth's empress. Agonized by the humiliating treatment of herself and her husband in captivity, she cries:

Gape earth, and let the fiends infernal view
A hell as hopeless and as full of fear
As are the blasted banks of Erebus,
When shaking ghosts with ever-howling groans
Hover about the ugly ferryman
To get a passage to Elysium!

(Part I.V.ii.179-84)

14

In this context Clarence Valentine Boyer comments on the Machiavellian traits of Catiline:

... all the traits of Machiavellism are to be found in his character. He is a political intriguer, with the nature of the lion and the fox. He has a very contemptuous opinion of men.... He uses accomplices, though he does not kill them.... He is an absolute egotist.... [he plans] to let loose such destruction on all Rome as would make Barabas turn in his grave with envy.

See The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Drama (London: George Routledge, 1914), pp. 178-79.

15

G. R. Hibbard maintains that the second act is "no comic intrusion into a play that is intended to be tragic, but rather a wholly successful dramatization of that same depravity in Roman life of which the conspiracy is only another manifestation". Hibbard also states that the end of the second act is also "the end of Catiline as a stage play". The reason is that his sources provided Jonson "far too much for his moralizing and didactic tendencies to latch on to." The result is that "Catiline is a demonstration, rather than a tragedy." See "Goodness and Greatness," pp. 28-29.

16

Ralph Nash comments on the "conscious paralleling of Cicero with Catiline." He observes: "Both men enter the play with declarations of political purpose (I. 73-97; III. 1-45), and both remark upon the craftiness necessary to political action. Even the very manner of these remarks displays striking similarities." Although Nash does not pursue his argument in depth, I agree with his conclusions on Cicero and Catiline:

Thus the third act of the play is, in large measure devoted to showing both Catiline and Cicero engaged in the same kind of political maneuvering. Expediency, dissimulation, bribery, and duplicity, are evidently not evils in themselves, but fitting instruments for the virtuous magistrate vested with duly-constituted authority and working for the good of the state.

Nash uses the Herford and Simpson edition of Catiline (vol. IV). See "Ben Jonson's Tragic Poems," SP 55 (1958), 171 and 173. Michael J. C. Echeruo takes much the same view. Stating that Catiline is "an anatomy of the political conscience," he argues that "Jonson is clearly pointing out the ambiguous nature of 'policy' and the very narrow line that separates the good men who use it from the criminals who need it." See "The Conscience of Politics and Jonson's Catiline," SEL 7 (1966): 349 and 356.

17

"The Conspiracy of Catiline," p. 182.

18

Herford and Simpson (III.281) cite Julius Caesar I.ii.157-58 and the Pharsalia V. 274.

19

Gabriele Jackson examines the relationship of the poet and the orator in Jonson and sees the conflict between Catiline and Cicero as the struggle of two artists:

In Catiline the ultimate polarity between true and false artist takes form as a confrontation between two rhetoricians, one the potential destroyer and one the potential savior of civilization. Catiline and his conspirators, like Ovid and his friends, represent Rome's worst impulses: self-seeking, desire for wealth, contempt of the gods. Catiline is no mean orator; his speeches to his confederates, to his army on the point of battle, and even in the senate chamber do not lack fire or conviction. What they lack are truth and virtue. Despite his rhetorical abilities, he is never called eloquent, a word which Jonson seems to have reserved as a value judgment. Cicero's eloquence is affirmed again and again....

I disagree with Jackson in that I believe Catiline's rhetorical ability declines gradually from the moment of Cicero's election as consul. Thus I do not find "fire or conviction" in his speech to the army. I do accept the rest of her comments. See Vision and Judgement in Ben Jonson's Drama (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 31.

20

Livy, I. 54. A translation of the incident may be found in Livy, The Early History of Rome: Books I-V of "The History of Rome from its Foundation," trans. Aubrey de Selincourt, intro. R. H. Ogilvie, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), pp. 92-94.

21

Dismissing Sempronia as "my gentle enemy," Cicero says, "Would Cethegus / Had no more danger in him" (III.iv. 27-28).

22

See Ovid, The Metamorphoses, tr. and introd. Horace Gregory, Mentor (New York: New American Library, 1960), IV. pp. 124-25; Homer, The Odyssey, tr. Albert Cook (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), XI, ll. 576-92; Virgil, The Aeneid, tr. and introd. W. F. Jackson Knight, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), V, p. 165.

"All is but hinnying sophistry:"

Adam Overdo and Tamburlaine

In the years between Catiline (1611) and Bartholomew Fair (1614) Jonson wrote several masques but no plays.¹ While Bartholomew Fair marks a second return from tragedy to the more successful comedy, it is substantially different from Jonson's last successful comedy, The Alchemist, as well as his other previous comedies. The critical dissection of Bartholomew Fair has produced several methods for dividing the characters and tracing the many small steps in the complex plot. That no one of them is fully satisfactory is more indicative of Jonson's achievement than of any fault in the critics. In Bartholomew Fair Jonson co-ordinates the movements of a large number of individuals who, at best, prove only loosely related to one another (even in marriage) and guides them to a common happy bond of union in a feast. To venture beyond this statement is to tread warily into the maze of entanglements where Jonson both juggles and scrutinizes the themes of law and order, religion, hypocrisy, greed, dissembling, human nature, society--there is no obvious limit to the number of subjects which Jonson manages to treat in this one play.²

One of the principal themes is that of law and order or, more generally, authority. While it seems that no character escapes being ordered about by someone else and that

eventually he or she has his or her chance to direct others, Justice Adam Overdo is the person most concerned with the nature of authority. One of the many threads in the play is Overdo's repeated reassessments of himself and his office. Jonson creates a multiplicity of characters without an obvious central protagonist and manages to involve every major figure, at one time or another, with all the rest; however, Overdo has a major association with each of the other persons in authority. Trouble-all, his former officer, and Quarlous, the gentleman who deceives and replaces Overdo to resolve all at the end, form one of the triangles with Overdo concerned with the law. More conspicuously, Overdo is the chief member of the trio of censors, which includes Rabbi Zeal-of-the-land Busy, the Puritan hypocrite, and Humphrey Wasp, Bartholomew Cokes' tutor.

Overdo is likely the most complicated character in the play, and is the only one whose gradual learning experience is wholly shared by the audience. To create Overdo, Jonson had to go beyond a caricature, like Sir Epicure Mammon, effective as Mammon is. Accordingly, Jonson employs the disguised duke motif (possibly a parody of it), the career of a Lord Mayor of London, the declamatory style of Jehovah in the Old Testament, and echoes of the morality play.³ Although his speeches, including his soliloquy, are in prose, like the speeches of everyone but the puppets, in his grandiose aspirations and his fantasy Overdo resembles the overreacher delineated in Tamburlaine. Equally

important are the differences between the two, especially in respect to their achievements. For example, Overdo and Tamburlaine can visualize the opportunities afforded by metamorphosis, but only Tamburlaine has any success in changing himself into what he wants to be. An obvious difference between Overdo and Tamburlaine and, for that matter, between Overdo and almost any other overreacher, is that Overdo is a legitimate, state-appointed man of law who somehow places his ambitions within the framework of the government. He never has recourse to thoughts of a republic, as Mammon does; instead, he pictures himself having the powers of a god who is stern in judgment but congenial at home and dedicated to the king and the commonwealth. As is the case with other overreachers, the fundamental contradictions in his fantasy never occur to him.

Like Mammon in The Alchemist, Overdo does not appear until the first scene of the second act, but Jonson prepares the audience for him, beginning as soon as "The Induction on the Stage." Listing the attractions of this fair, the Scrivener includes "A wise Justice of Peace meditant, instead of a juggler with an ape" ("Induction," 125-26). The substitution of the Justice for a juggler and his ape implies that the Justice will be a comic target. Later in the "Induction" Jonson strengthens this impression when the Scrivener denies any slanderous intention. One of the disclaimers is that no "Mirror of Magistrates" is meant by the

Justice("Induction," 144-45). While Jonson wants to prevent the identification of Overdo with any particular justice, Overdo does represent magistrates in general. Like the recitals of their lives by the historical personages in A Mirror for Magistrates, Overdo's escapades offer food for thought to anyone appointed to a position of authority.⁴ In any case, the rebuttal suggests that Jonson is going to make fun of the Justice.

Jonson casts more doubts on Overdo's wisdom in the first act. As soon as Dame Overdo enters, she starts arguing with Wasp about authority. Before Overdo has said a word, the audience has heard a sample of his style at second hand from his wife. She quotes her husband, "as Master Overdo says" (I.v.13), to try to establish her own authority, but her petty squabble with Wasp and his accusation that she is too proud of her social position or "dignity" (I.v.27-28) do no credit to Overdo.

Overdo opens Act II with a lengthy soliloquy which permits him to express his principles in detail. Unintentionally, he also reveals his main personality traits. Having disguised himself as mad Arthur of Bradley, Overdo has already yielded to his preoccupation with metamorphosis; in fact, his delight in his own alteration may impair his ability to see through the ruses of others. Overdo is in a unique position and is thus isolated from the other characters. He is neither a Fair visitor nor a "Bartholomew-bird," but he is an integral part of both groups. Unlike any of the band of visitors, the

Littlewit party, the Cokes party, or Winwife and Quarlous, Overdo is first seen already at the Fair. Unlike Busy or Wasp, who are total outsiders, Overdo is a legitimate and important component of the Fair and recognized by the outsiders as such, although their tone can be sardonic.

Overdo imposes a superficial order on his soliloquy by beginning and ending with his formula of justice, king, and commonwealth, but the middle is a discordant jumble of conceit, frankness, and good intentions. His brimming confidence in his costume, which will surpass "all story" (II. i.3), inspires a challenge to Lynceus, the sharp-eyed Argonaut, and a reference in passing to his favourite, Horace. He quickly justifies his masquerade (which does deceive everyone he meets) by falling back on the tradition of the wise magistrate in all ages (II.i.10-11). In particular he describes a recent predecessor in Protean "shapes" (II. i.18) who, as a porter or a car-man or whatever, would personally check weights and measures. The air of grandeur attained by mentioning Lynceus and Horace dissipates at the lengthy description of the fellow who measured puddings, custards, and loaves of bread. There is little doubt that Overdo is much closer to the latter than the former in character as well as in time.

Overdo possesses insight enough to grasp the potential injustice in the court system, and he admits that he has erred in judgment in the past because he had to rely on "other men's

eyes" (II.i.30). That Overdo could mistake "a proper young Bachelor of Music, for a bawd" (II.i.35-36), whatever the circumstances, raises questions about his effectiveness at the fair. Like Mammon, he has decided that this is the "special day" for detecting the "enormities" (II.i.45). Overdo closes with a summons to Junius Brutus, the stern Roman judge who disguised himself only to escape death. The considerable difference between a Justice of Pie-powders and Junius Brutus, or Horace, or Lynceus, leads to the speculation that the distinction between a "fool in the habit of a Justice" and a "Justice in the habit of a fool" (II.i.8-9) will be increasingly difficult to make.

Unlike most overreachers, Overdo rarely resorts to classical mythology; instead, he employs bits of classical philosophy and the Scriptures to place himself in the Christian Stoic tradition. His footing there is anything but solid, because his declarations are more amusing than convincing; however, Overdo complacently pictures himself patiently suffering temporary misfortune and waiting for his personal doomsday; then he will reveal himself as an Old Testament Jehovah and pronounce judgment on all mankind within hearing.

As his name implies, Overdo has the boundless ambition of the overreacher accompanied, as usual in Jonson, with impetuous and unreflective fantasy. The distance between Overdo and Tamburlaine is evident in a passage from Tamburlaine's verbal seduction of Theridamas. At that time Tamburlaine is

still convincing everyone that a change of clothing actually marks a metamorphosis and that he is going to make himself the equal of the gods:

Jove sometimes maskèd in a shepherd's weed,
And by those steps that he hath scaled the heavens,
May we become immortal like the gods.
Join with me now in this my mean estate--
I call it mean because, being yet obscure,
The nations far removed admire me not--

(Part I.I.ii.198-203)

Here Tamburlaine, with only one successful raid, is most vulnerable. As he often does in the future, he has recourse to the precedent set by Jove, although he has to twist the peaceful tale of Baucis and Philemon to support him. The link between Jove and the shepherd's clothes is extremely slight, but Tamburlaine makes the most of it to finish with "Tamburlaine in all his majesty" (I.ii.208).

Most of Overdo's problems stem from his consciousness of his "high place" (II.i.37); yet he wryly recognizes that people often regard magistrates as little better than "arrant fools" (II.i.39). Unfortunately, after his soliloquy, Overdo's asides as a spy and the Fair people's comments about him bear out public opinion.

At the pig booth Overdo exaggerates the minor misdemeanors which he does detect and misses the serious law-breakers altogether. Bickering with Joan Trash, the jaunty and quarrelsome Lantern Leatherhead throws in Overdo as another threat. Both Trash and Leatherhead are more concerned with each other than with Overdo, but the mere men-

tion of his name serves to evoke Overdo's vain reaction: "I am glad to hear my name is their terror, yet; this is doing of Justice" (II.ii.27-28). After showing that Overdo is known at the Fair, Jonson allows Overdo to demonstrate his familiarity with its denizens when his "second enormity" (II.ii.72) turns out to be an old acquaintance, Ursula. Overdo's effectiveness in curbing crime at the Fair has to be questioned when he states that Ursula has been brought before him on various charges for twenty-two years (II.ii.71-74).

After he eavesdrops on Ursula's lecture to her servant, Mooncalf, on "reckoning" (II.ii.88), Overdo promptly overstates the situation:

O tempora! O mores! I would not ha' lost my discovery of this one grievance, for my place, and worship o' the bench. How is the poor subject abus'd, here!
(II.ii.114-16)

Even from a would-be Stoic, the quotation from Cicero, which Jonson previously used in Catiline, is appropriate for a public speech about conspiracy against the state, but scarcely for private thoughts on petty fraud at the Fair. The phrase turns out to be as characteristic of Overdo's imitation of Arthur of Bradley as of Overdo himself. Overdo magnifies the importance of cheating on the scale of beer, ale, and pig because it is the kind of "enormity" that he expects to find. That he might stumble on greater "wonders of enormity" (II.ii.118) does not occur to him.

Overdo performs his role as Bradley extremely well,

perhaps too well. Ursula immediately greets him as a "new roarer" (II.ii.125). Overdo inadvertently draws attention to the small difference between Mooncalf's "mad Arthur of Bradley, that makes the orations" (II.ii.126-27) and himself when he sees that he has succeeded: he declares that he will have the reputation of being "a certain middling thing, between a fool and a madman" (II.ii.147-48). Later, when Overdo makes his oration on tobacco, one questions whether the ale actually has stimulated his eloquence, as he says (II.ii.132-34).

Overdo's reliance on Mooncalf for his information demonstrates the limits of his discretion. Dan Jordan Knockem is not a "cutpurse" but the ranger of Turnbull is a rake, roarer, and bawd. When the "cut purse", Ezekiel Edgworth, does arrive, Overdo takes Mooncalf's word that Edgworth is a "secretary" and decides that he is a "proper penman" in bad company (II.iv.27 and 31). The irony is that Mooncalf supplies hints in each case but Overdo fails to take up any of them. Losing himself in his meditations about Edgworth, Overdo misses the conversation between the rogues, which would open his eyes to all enormities, including Edgworth's. Instead, he drifts to hyperbole and fantasy, combining a biblical allusion with a classical quotation:

If I can, with this day's travel, and all my policy,
but rescue this youth, here, out of the hands of the lewd
man, and the strange woman, I will sit down at night, and
say with my friend Ovid, Jamque opus exegi,
quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignis etc.

(II.iv.60-64)

The "strange woman" refers to a harlot and King Solomon, who loved many strange women. Ovid's lines are from his "Epilogue" to the Metamorphoses, which praises the permanence of poetry:

The work has reached its end; the book is mine,
None shall unwrite these words: nor angry Jove,
Nor war, nor fire, nor flood,
Nor venomous time that eats our lives away.

.....

As long as Rome is the Eternal City
These lines shall echo from the lips of men,
As long as poetry speaks truth on earth,
That immortality is mine to wear.⁵

The passage seems an ironic choice for someone who is as attracted to metamorphosis as Overdo, but it shows his self-centeredness. Rescuing a youth from evil comrades is an admirable deed; however, Overdo loses sight of his purpose when he imagines that his work will withstand Jove's anger, fire, and time. He conveniently ignores the fact that the comparison is uneven and poorly thought out. Overdo is too enchanted with the idea of his own achievement to examine the situation properly or to choose a harmonious quotation.

Tamburlaine has a similar interest in his fame. When wearing a crown he shows his concern for his reputation:

The ages that shall talk of Tamburlaine,
Even from this day to Plato's wondrous year,
Shall talk how I have handled Bajazeth.

(Part I.IV.ii.95-97)

Tamburlaine employs the same tools, hyperbole and fantasy, as Overdo does, and the misuse of mythology is a habit of his too. Further, like Overdo, he discovers the limits of verbal metamorphosis. But when each deliberately plays the orator, the

differences become clear.

After the brawl empties the booth, Overdo seizes his opportunity to address Edgworth. He delivers a speech against ale and tobacco in Arthur of Bradley's style but, in the course of it, he gradually sounds more and more like himself. As he does in soliloquy, Overdo begins well and then becomes enchanted with the sound of his own voice. By the end, he is speaking to hear himself more than to move Edgworth. Through Wasp and Cokes Jonson rules out any soaring rhetoric from Overdo until Wasp has pointed out the foolishness of these "brave words" (II.vi.26). Finally, when Overdo reaches his climax as an evangelist, his wife, and even Cokes, notice Arthur's resemblance to the Justice:

Jus. Hark, O you sons and daughters of Smithfield! and hear what malady [tobacco] doth the mind: it causeth swearing, it causeth swaggering, it causeth snuffling, and snarling, and now and then a hurt.
Mrs. Over. He hath something of Master Overdo, methinks, brother.
Cok. So me thought, sister, very much of my brother Overdo: and 'tis when he speaks.

(II.vi.64-71)

Whether he is Justice or fool (II.ii.140-41), Overdo's rhetoric proves comically insufficient to ward off Wasp:

Jus. Hold thy hand, child of wrath, and heir of anger, make it not Childermass day in thy fury, or the feast of the French Bartholomew, parent of the Massacre.

(II.vi.138-40)

Overdo's "hot fit of preaching" is stopped cold by Wasp's vehemence, which reduces Overdo to one word, "Murther, murther, murther" (II.vi.145-47). He can recover his dignity as a jus-

tice by slowly becoming a wiser and more tolerant man, but his exalted aspirations, as far as the audience is concerned, have been dealt a serious blow.

In contrast, Tamburlaine never loses sight of the effect that he is trying to create on his listener, generally through fear or flattery; further, he never loses control over his rhetoric or himself. Rarely interrupted, Tamburlaine knows when to talk at length and when to be brief. Meeting Theridamas, he begins a long and persuasive speech with flattery:

With what a majesty he rears his looks!
In thee, thou valiant man of Persia,
I see the folly of thy emperor.
Art thou but captain of a thousand horse,

(Part I.I.ii.164-67)

But, at the moment of truth when Theridamas wavers about committing treason, Tamburlaine wins him with a single line, "No, but the trusty friend of Tamburlaine" (I.ii.226).

Although the Irish bawd, Captain Whit, dominates the first two scenes of Act III, he mentions Overdo when he says in an attempt at wit, "I am te vishesht man, but Justish Overdo, in all Bartholomew Fair, now" (III.ii.5-6). In the third scene Overdo delivers his second major soliloquy and meditates on his experiences and his wisdom. Overdo begins in a tone of humility, but his awareness of his purpose soon re-asserts itself, and, with it, his sense of his own importance. In fact, he ends with the same words that he uses to start and finish his first soliloquy, an indication that his outlook has not completely changed. He starts well, making a resolution:

Jus. I will make no more orations, shall draw on these tragical conclusions. And I begin now to think that, by a spice of collateral justice, Adam Overdo deserv'd this beating; for I, the said Adam, was one cause (a by-cause) why the purse was lost:

(III.iii.1-5)

The return to his former arrogance occurs step by step, without Overdo being aware that it is happening. While Littlewit's party gorge themselves on Ursula's pigs, Overdo fondly contemplates the scene to come at supper. His proverbial comment, "To see what bad events may peep out o' the tail of good purposes!" (III.iii.13-14), moves him to trace the results of his "exhortation" to Edgworth (III.iii.16). By the middle of the speech he has forgotten "collateral justice" and revived the image of himself as the wise man who "for no particular disaster ought to abandon a public good design" (III.iii.25-26). The verbose series of analogies which follows and culminates in a line from Virgil is only given to sustain his view that he is a "great part o' the Commonwealth in himself" (III.iii.24-25). At this point his self-esteem turns a blind side to his own folly (the original topic of the soliloquy), and he finishes with a vow of supposedly heroic determination:

These [examples] are certain knocking conclusions; out of which I am resolv'd, come what come can--come beating, come imprisonment, come infamy, come banishment, nay, come the rack, come the hurdle, welcome all--I will not discover who I am till my due time; and yet still all shall be, as I said ever, in Justice' name, and the King's, and for the Commonwealth!

(III.iii.35-41)

Overdo's urge to be tested as a Stoic leads him to the ridiculous decision that, even if threatened with the "rack" or the

"hurdle" (III.iii.38), he will not disclose his true identity. Overdo stubbornly believes that everything will turn out as he wishes. Quarlous and Winwife frame the soliloquy with the phrase, "poor fool," made in regard to their view of Arthur of Bradley, but the repeated description also fits the Justice who talks to himself and acts so seriously (III.ii.144 and III.iii.42-43).

While first Cokes and then Busy become fully a part of the Fair, and the focus of attention, Jonson inserts several comments which point out Overdo's inconsistency and lack of wisdom and perception. After he has trailed Edgworth and Nightingale all over the Fair, the worst he can say about the professional "cutpurse" is that he may be a poet. This kind of jibe at father figures is characteristic of Jonson the poet, but it also reveals Overdo's limited insight into crime. Moreover, Overdo is at a loss for a plan to rescue Edgworth: "I cannot beget a project, with all my political brain, yet" (III.v.1-2). The strictures on poetry sound out of place coming from one who quotes "my Quintus Horace" (II.i.5) and "my friend Ovid" (II.iv.63-64). During the ballad Overdo is taken in like Gokes and the rest because "It doth discover enormity" (III.v.114). So acceptable are rhymes that agree with his outlook that Overdo objects to Cokes' accompaniment: "Indeed he does interrupt [Nightingale], too much" (III.v.145).

Equally damaging for Overdo's image are Grace's cold appraisals of her guardian's intelligence. As Cokes flits

from Trash to Nightingale, Grace names Overdo as one of a kind with his brother-in-law, Wasp, and Dame Overdo:

Grace. Nay, if you saw the Justice her husband, my guardian, you were fitted for the mess; he is such a wise one his way--

Winw. I wonder we see him not here.

Grace. O! he is too serious for this place, and yet better sport than the other three, I assure you, gentlemen: where'er he is, though 't be o' the bench.

(III.v.24-30)

Haggis and Bristle, the Watch, will complete the assessment of Overdo on the bench in Act IV. When Quarlous talks of the "serious ass," who "plays the fool, with the greatest diligence that can be" (III.v. 268-69), he is thinking of Wasp, but Grace quickly joins in:

Grace. Then you would not choose, sir, but love my guardian, Justice Overdo, who is answerable to that description, in every hair of him.

Quar. So I have heard.

(III.v.270-73)

In Act IV Overdo's physical confinement to the stocks has a parallel in his verbal humiliation, an experience which Busy and Wasp, who are also put in the stocks, do not share. When Trouble-all first advocates "Justice Overdo's warrant" (repeating the word four times), (IV.i.18-20), Overdo takes him for a "sober and discreet person" (IV.i.26). From this shaky but still plausible assumption, Overdo jumps to a gratifying conclusion and builds a martyr's reputation for himself in the future:

It is a comfort to a good conscience to be follow'd with a good fame, in his sufferings. The world will have a pretty taste by this, how I can bear adversity: and it

will beget a kind of reverence toward me, hereafter, even from mine enemies, when they shall see I carry my calamity nobly, and that it doth neither break me, nor bend me.

(IV.i.27-32)

Buoyed by his conceit, he enters the stocks "cheerfully," kisses them (IV.i.35-36), and asserts, in an aside,

In the midst of this tumult, I will yet be the author of mine own rest, and, not minding their fury, sit in the stocks in that calm as shall be able to trouble a triumph.

(IV.i.41-43)

When he discovers that Trouble-all is "distracted" and that he is the cause, Overdo drops all thought of unnerving a Roman triumph and, instead, immediately swings to the other extreme of remorse. Overdo's failure to recognize his former officer whom he fired only the year before exposes his lack of perception, but his penitence is a positive indication of his intentions:

If this be true, this is my greatest disaster! How am I bound to satisfy this poor man, that is, of so good a nature to me, out of his wits, where there is no room left for dissembling!

(IV.i.58-61)

Overdo overdoes repentance, however, turning a "comfort" to his smugness into "my greatest disaster".

Thomas R. Frosch points out that Trouble-all substitutes Overdo for God.⁶ It takes the madman to show the audience, if not Overdo himself, the extent to which Overdo's self-adulation can reach. Trouble-all literally states what Overdo, in his most exalted moments, assumes unthinkingly--that he is the omniscient master of all he surveys. Among the

other overreachers, only Tamburlaine demands and receives this unquestioning acceptance and adulation as a god on earth. Zenocrate, Theridamas, Usumcasane, and Techelles venerate Tamburlaine's every word and deed with rarely a negative comment. Jonson portrays such hero-worship as madness and nonsense.

Trouble-all provokes Haggis and Bristle to a comical but devastating evaluation of Overdo's conduct on the bench. Trouble-all seems to be the rule rather than the exception. The most telling remark, by Bristle, strikes home: "and when [Overdo] is angry, be it right or wrong, he has the law on's side, ever" (IV.i.75-76). Overdo resolves to do better in the future, but promises are not enough:

I will be more tender hereafter. I see compassion
may become a Justice, though it be a weakness, I
confess; and nearer a vice, than a virtue.
(IV.i.77-79)

Overdo has yet to correct several faults in his personality which are far more harmful than compassion.

Overdo is off stage for most of Act IV, being hustled around the Fair in a search for "Justice Overdo" so that the court of Pie-powders can begin; however, the almost reverent references of Dame Overdo and the devotional reliance of Trouble-all on his word prevent the audience from forgetting him. Trouble-all epitomizes the arbitrary nature of Overdo's justice, but Dame Overdo's poor but accurate imitation of her husband's manner of speaking diminishes Overdo's ever-lessening

stature even more.

Dame Overdo proves almost as dependent on her husband's name as Trouble-all is. After the game of vapours deteriorates into a scuffle, she invokes first her own authority, then "the king's name, and my husband's" (IV.iv.106-108). The progression places Overdo at the top of the three, and it parodies his trio of justice, king, and commonwealth (III.iii.40-41). Exchanging insults with Wasp again, she permits the watch to take Wasp to the stocks and echoes Overdo's style:

I thank you honest Friends, in the behalf o' the Crown, and the peace, and in Master Overdo's name, for suppressing enormities.

(IV.iv.167-69)

Dame Overdo even blames the enormities, not the ale. Her preference for "men of war, and the sons of the sword" (IV.iv.214) indicates that she has no more discrimination in this regard than Overdo has; she sees such fellows only when they have broken the law and appear in court before Overdo. Her beating at the hands of Punk Alice foreshadows her husband's comedown.

Overdo's conduct on the second trip to the stocks proves that he has changed. He does not resort to grandiose rhetoric, as his companions, Wasp and Busy, do; but he still hangs on to his Stoical pretense:

Wasp. And do you sigh and groan too, or rejoice in your affliction?
Jus. I do not feel it, I do not think of it, it is a thing without me. Adam, thou art above these batt'ries, these contumelies. In te manca ruit fortuna, as thy friend Horace says; thou art one, Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula terrent. And therefore, as another friend of thine says (I

think it be thy friend Persius), Non te quaesiveris extra.
Quar. What's here! A stoic i' the stocks? The fool is turn'd
 philosopher.

(IV.vi.88-97)

Wasp is correct when he wonders if Overdo, like Busy, rejoices in his troubles. Through his philosophical pose he does something which Quarlous is quick to notice. The vanity of this moment is countered by his genuine desire to make "amends" to Trouble-all (IV.vi.151).

Urged by Busy to flee the stocks, Overdo does so, only to return dressed like a porter. This new metamorphosis seems to restore Overdo's pride to its fullest:

This later disguise, I have borrow'd of a porter, shall carry me out to all my great and good ends; which, however interrupted, were never destroyed in me: neither is the hour of my severity yet come, to reveal myself, wherein, cloud-like, I will break out in rain and hail, lightning and thunder, upon the head of enormity.

(V.ii.1-6)

Overdo's confidence in himself reassures him that he can descend upon enormity and that he can remove the sting of Trouble-all by merely offering satisfaction (V.ii.127-28). Overdo uses Stoicism to persuade himself that he is above the normal desires of other men, but this pose blinds him to the excessiveness of his aspirations for power and omnipotence. He wants to be recognized as the god-like person he believes himself to be and would imitate the God of the Old Testament exactly. God concealed himself in a cloud; accordingly, Overdo will be "cloud-like" (V.ii.5) and "break out in rain and hail" (V.ii.6) upon enormity. Such literal insistence calls attention to Overdo's

shallowness, but the humour also stresses his extremism.

As a member of the audience at the puppet-show, Overdo says little, but what he does say shows how much he is just one of the crowd instead of an exceptional intellectual. Like Cokes, he is in the dark about the nature of the puppets until they are brought out. Predictably he denounces plays as yet another "pernicious enormity" which destroys young men (V.iii.67-68). Overdo is naturally surprised to see Grace with a stranger (Winwife), but he does nothing about it. When Edgworth enters, Overdo takes Knockem, Whit, and Win and his wife, dressed in the green gowns, as "good company" and "persons of fashion" (V.iv.36-37). He must be very surprised when Whit offers him either of the ladies for twelvepence (V.iv.51-53). Ironically, Overdo unwittingly predicts the outcome: "Aye? This will prove my chiefest enormity" (V.iv.54).

Jonson constantly employs the aside and the soliloquy to develop Overdo. Unlike Volpone or Mammon, who do not alter in personality, Overdo experiences emotional conflicts which these devices reveal. They also expose Overdo's almost total reliance on overreaching rhetoric to sustain his high opinion of himself. Such language becomes a self-justifying substitute for thoughtful and responsible actions and supplies an excuse to do as one pleases. Overdo is a long way from Tamburlaine, with his single soliloquy and knack for immediate decisions, but the Justice of Piepowders remains a dramatic descendant of the Scythian shepherd. They share colossal

vanity, an obsession to see themselves far advanced from their present status, and the confidence that they can direct their future and the lives of those around them.

Busy's conversion into a beholder (V.v.109-10) by the revelation of Puppet Dionysius strikes Overdo as the moment to declare, "It is time; to take enormity by the forehead, and brand it; for I have discover'd enough" (V.v.118-19). As Quarlous, Purecraft, and Littlewit, who has totally missed his play, file in, Overdo organizes his audience. He is intent on his grand moment, quietly postponing Winwife in one sentence and swelling to his enormities in the next:

If you [Winwife] have, I will examine the possibility of it, at fit leisure.

Now, to my enormities: look upon me, O London! and see me, O Smithfield! the example of justice, and Mirror of Magistrates; the true top of formality, and scourge of enormity. Hearken unto my labours, and but observe my discoveries; and compare Hercules with me, if thou dar'st, of old, or Columbus; Magellan; or our country-man Drake of later times: stand forth you weeds of enormity, and spread

(V.vi.32-40)

That the speech is well prepared, and no doubt well rehearsed, stresses the discrepancy between Overdo's examples and himself.

He resembles a "scourge and wrath of God" like Tamburlaine.

(Part I.III.iii.44) only in that, by tradition, the scourge was eliminated once he had served God's purpose. In the words of John Enck, "As an instance of ranting under rhetorical control, even Jonson had not achieved anything quite like this gradual yielding to self-intoxication."⁷ Overdo is as exultant

in exposing crimes as Volpone and Mosca or Barabas and Ithamore are in committing them. His elation in listing his "enormities" resembles their gleeful recitation of their evil deeds. Even the unexpected entrance of Ursula, Trouble-all, and Nightingale fails to stop Overdo at full tilt. He formally addresses Ursula as "O the sow of enormity" (V.vi.58). When Quarlous is exposed as a fake madman, Overdo promptly uses his favourite word again: "you are the enormity!" (V.vi.64-65). Only the discovery of Mistress Overdo as one of the "twelve penny ladies" (V.vi.47) renders him speechless.

Seizing the chance, Quarlous explains all, lectures Overdo, and finishes with a suggestion which Overdo accepts:

you are but Adam, flesh and blood! You have your frailty, forget your other name of Overdo, and invite us all to supper. There you and I will compare our discoveries; and drown the memory of all enormity in your biggest bowl at home.

(V.vi.100-104)

Overdo is properly chastened, but he will not change over night. In contrast to the comic purgation of Crispinus in The Poetaster or the total downfall of Mammon, Jonson creates a credible route for Overdo's reformation. He accepts Quarlous' suggestion, but a touch of the Stoic is still there in the words "if I be patient" (V.vi.108) and in the quotation from Horace (V.vi.114-16). In keeping with Overdo's store of learning, the reference from Horace rebounds on him ironically. Addressing Maecenas, Horace comes to the conclusion that no one is wise. Quarlous' reminder, "And no enormities" (V.vi.112),

is necessary to keep Adam in check, but Cokes is given the last word: "Yes, and bring the actors along, we'll ha' the rest o' the play at home" (V.vi.117-18).

In conclusion, we can say that Overdo is a unique version of the overreacher. Jonson retains the satiric depiction of the overreacher's faults of fantasy, aspiration, fascination with metamorphosis, and grand delusive rhetoric. These traits appear in the earlier *Sejanus*, *Catiline*, *Volpone*, and *Mammon*, and originate with *Tamburlaine*. Sweeping assertions which have a tone of veracity coming from *Tamburlaine* sound foolish when they are voiced by a justice disguised as a madman. The other major difference between Overdo and the others lies in his potential for change for the better. Through the middle acts (III and IV) Overdo shows that he can feel remorse for his mistakes, but his steps towards repentance are matched by damning revelations and opinions. Of all the overreachers only Overdo achieves a true metamorphosis, but it is a slow and painful alteration in personality. There is none of the ease and instantaneousness so dear to the overreacher. And it is a continuing process, still incomplete by the end of the play.

Notes

¹The masques are A Challenge at Tilt, The Irish Masque, and Love Restored. Inigo Jones did not collaborate with Jonson between 1612 and 1616. All quotations from Bartholomew Fair will be from Ben Jonson, Bartholomew Fair, ed. E. A. Horsman, A University Paperback, The Revels Plays (London: Methuen, 1967). Act, scene, and line references will be included within parentheses within the body of the text. All quotations from Marlowe will be from Ribner's edition, with references in the text.

²J.A. Bryant, Jr. argues that the action of the play is "the ancient game of 'tricking the old one' and getting his marriageable female or money or both." He stresses the importance of metamorphosis, but concentrates on the metamorphoses in Quarlous and in Jonson; according to Bryant, "in Bartholomew Fair Jonson found the metamorphosis of his own anger and replaced criticism with acceptance." See "Chapter 5. Bartholomew Fair: The Metamorphosis of Quarlous," in The Compassionate Satirist: Ben Jonson and His Imperfect World (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1972), pp. 135-36. Thomas R. Frosch examines the theme of feigning or metamorphosis, placing it within the social context: "feigning, as change of form, points to a fluidity in the temperament of the age, an exhilarating sense of multiple possibility in a period of extreme transition and at the same time an anxious detachment of man from his roles." Frosch observes that "In both Shakespeare and Jonson the mask exercises a transformative effect." However, he finds two traditions of "imaginative metamorphosis," the Ovidian for Shakespeare and the Circean for Jonson. See "Bartholomew Fair, or What You Will," Scholia Satyrice, 2, ii (1976): 10-11. Richard Levin maintains that the centre of the play is not the Fair, as often stated, but rather the visitors. For his analysis, he breaks them down into two corresponding groups: one headed by Cokes, and the other by Littlewit. See "The Structure of Bartholomew Fair," PMLA 80 (1965): 173. For Ray L. Heffner, Jr., "The central theme is the problem of what 'warrant' men have or pretend to have for their actions."

See "Unifying Symbols in the Comedy of Ben Jonson," in Ralph J. Kaufmann, ed., Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, Galaxy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 180. Looking back to the morality play and ahead to Vanity Fair, Robert E. Knoll regards Bartholomew Fair as a "sophisticated morality play" whose theme is "the vanity of human wishes," in "Chapter VI. Bartholomew Fair, The Devil is an Ass, and The Staple of News," Ben Jonson's Plays: An Introduction (Lincoln: Univ. of Neb. Press, 1964), p. 147. Jackson I. Cope studies the biblical theme; in part, he takes the view that "what the entangled motifs of money and theft demonstrate is that authority resides in possession, a power as arbitrary as that of the Old Testament Jehovah whose whimsical qualities echo so dangerously in Justice Overdo." See "Bartholomew Fair as Blasphemy," Ren D 8 (1965): 139.

³Brian Gibbons describes Overdo as the "Disguised Duke figure." See "9. Bartholomew Fair and The Devil is an Ass: Final Plays," Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston and Middleton (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 179. John M. Potter looks on Overdo as "the type of Pantaloon, a querulous old fool who represents a corrupt society" ("Old Comedy in 'Bartholomew Fair'", Criticism 10 [1968]: 294). For the Lord Mayor of London in question, E.A. Horsman notes C.S. Alden's opinion that it is Sir Thomas Hayes ("Introduction," p. xviii). Alden edited Bartholomew Fayre, (Yale Studies in English xxv, 1904). But in "The Origins of Overdo: A Study in Jonsonian Invention," David McPherson nominates Hayes' predecessor, Thomas Middleton (no relation to the dramatist). See MLQ 37 (1976): 224-25. Knoll favors the morality play (p. 147).

⁴Horsman maintains that "As mirror can mean 'paragon,' Jonson need not have in mind, as H and S believe, 'Whetstone's A Mirrour for Magistrates of Cities, 1584,'" p. 12, for line 144.

⁵Jonson uses Ovid, Metamorphoses, xv.871-72. The modern translation of quotations from the "Epilogue" is from Ovid, The Metamorphoses, tr. and intro. Horace Gregory, A Mentor Classic (New York and Toronto: New American Library, 1958), p. 441.

⁶See "Bartholomew Fair, or What You Will," Scholia Satyrica 2,ii (1976): 12.

⁷John J. Enck, "Chapter X: Adam, Flesh, and Blood," Jonson and the Comic Truth (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1957), p. 192.

Conclusion

In each of the plays discussed, the overreacher remains true to the concept of excess, in fantasy, in soaring language, and in ambition. With the exception of Faustus; he remains fundamentally a caricature although his similarity to mankind strikes home. Jonson creates his overreachers with an eye on Marlowe's precedents. In no case does a one-to-one correspondence occur, because Jonson forges each of his overreachers from a variety of sources to make a new and original character. But the resemblances to Marlowe's supermen are many and significant; in some instances Jonson seems to have used one of them in particular to fashion a Sejanus, a Volpone, or a Sir Epicure Mammon. Thus, Tamburlaine, and to a much lesser extent, the Duc de Guise, serve as sounding-boards for Sejanus and Catiline. Volpone frequently takes his cue from Barabas, and sometimes from Ithamore. Sir Epicure Mammon swells to a grotesque distortion of Faustus' proudest boasts, grandest aspirations, and most secret desires. Faustus' store of magic and science depreciates to the status of the rest of Subtle's pretentious jargons, along with the science of duelling and the whims of the Queen of Fairy. Overdo owes something to Tamburlaine in his immoveable and immoderate conceit, but he points the way ahead for Jonson, which was somewhat apart from the excessive and irreclaimable overreacher. At

the end Overdo retains his social position and authority, unlike any of his predecessors. Jonson reconciles justice and society by altering the justice rather than reforming the minor miscreants.

The overreacher's characteristic fixation on metamorphosis brings out both the similarities and the differences between Jonson's characters and Marlowe's. The key to metamorphosis for them all is language: in persuading others that he has changed, the overreacher considers himself changed. Although few of the multitude of rhetorical devices are overlooked, hyperbole is the overreacher's favourite and most potent. After Dido, Marlowe begins with a Tamburlaine who can effect metamorphoses and moves to a Tamburlaine who cannot. From that moment in Barabas, in the Guise, in Mortimer, and in Faustus, success is temporary at best and usually ephemeral. From the standpoint of accomplishment alone, Barabas is the most impressive; until his final moment, no situation proves beyond his capability to alter himself to suit it. But from the viewpoint of character Marlowe's greatest achievement is Doctor Faustus, who slowly and unwittingly transforms himself from one who could be redeemed to one who is damned.

Jonson's overreachers believe in metamorphosis and rely on hyperbole too. But Jonson clearly demonstrates that they can only persuade knaves and gulls and would-be knaves. The good and honest man and the good and chaste woman will

never be taken in by their linguistic magic, and, Jonson indicates, neither should the audience. The sympathy which Marlowe can so quickly if temporarily arouse for a Tamburlaine, the fairytale shepherd who becomes a knight, or a Doctor Faustus, the daring, all-risking, scholar-conjurer, or even a Mortimer, the rebel with a just cause, frequently gives rise to ambiguity.

Possibly to avoid such mixed feeling in the audience, Jonson takes care that none of his overreachers gain the audience's sympathy. For this reason, perhaps, he overloads Sejanus with warnings, but his intention is clear and he has much greater success in Volpone. Volpone's only dupes are proud and greedy hypocrites. Celia and Bonario remain above this enticement. While Volpone's words may enchant the audience at the outset, Jonson brings him crashing down when Bonario bursts in. The rescue of Celia is a highly comic moment, possibly one of farce ("Forbear, foul ravisher!") and the target of the joke is Volpone, who promptly collapses. The rogues recover, but Volpone never again carries the audience with him. Sir Epicure Mammon is even farther removed. As a gull he is a knave's dream; as an overreacher he has all the gifts of language at his command and can persuade no one of anything, including the audience.

As Jonson's first known overreaching protagonist, Sejanus marks a considerable advance upon the earlier Ovid and Tucca. Sejanus does not dominate the play by his presence on stage, like Tamburlaine, but his relationship with Tiberius is the subject of almost every conversation. The play does revolve around him in this sense. Jonson stresses to the limit the vast difference between Sejanus' oratory, which often sounds like Tamburlaine's, and his nature, which is almost the opposite from the Scythian's. Nor does Sejanus resemble the other overreaching trendsetter, Barabas. He lacks the Jew's caustic sense of humour. Further, most of Sejanus' wiles and devices are blatantly obvious, not Machiavellian. His spies are known, sudden arrest is common. Legalized murder (Sabinus) comes as no surprise. What is most puzzling and secret about Sejanus for the Germanicans and possibly the people of Rome is the question of where Sejanus actually stands with Tiberius.

Volpone is one of Jonson's greatest knaves. Silent of necessity while Mosca leads on the visitors, Volpone usually breaks out in verse at every opportunity, praising himself, deriding his gulls, and dreaming of new and exotic pleasures. While his resemblance to Barabas is generally accepted, the similarities and differences go beyond what has been noted. In common Volpone and Barabas share a love of metamorphosis and of acting, an apparent obsession with wealth which is stronger and less diluted in Barabas than in Volpone, the overreacher's desire always to go one better, and the conviction, partially borne out in the play, that he is made superior to other men. Each is happiest and most powerful within his little room.

Barabas seems to begin with dignity and degenerate into farce. Volpone is not far from farce. Each is Machiavellian, Barabas by history of the Jewish usurer and by force of situation, and Volpone by choice. Each is aided by a trusty servant who comically betrays him. As for differences, Volpone is still the would-be lover, Barabas the callous sensualist who turned to wealth.

By making Sir Epicure Mammon a gull instead of a knave, Jonson creates a further variation on the overreacher. Mammon is as fixed in his desires as Volpone or Sejanus, but he poses no threat to society. In Mammon Jonson demonstrates that the most excessive aspirations can reside comfortably in the greatest of fools. At times he is a grotesque parody of Faustus, who also deludes and harms only himself. Jonson divides Faustus' two chief traits between his chief gull and a major knave: Mammon receives the aspirations and Subtle, the master Doctor, the scientific knowledge and power to debate. The result is that neither character is admirable or sympathetic but both are richly comic. In Faustus the union of the two qualities eventually produces a tragic resolution.

Unlike Sejanus, Catiline is a noble who is discontented and ambitious. One tends to see the similarities between their two plays more readily than the differences possibly because both are Roman tragedies and, in their day, both failed on the stage. In Catiline, however, the forces

of good have an active role, so active that they soon render the overreacher harmless. Catiline begins as a capable descendant of Tamburlaine, a talented manipulator of men and women. But once Cicero appears, Catiline's star wanes and Jonson makes this fact too obvious by reducing Catiline's appearances and his speeches. Instead of a struggle between good and evil or right and wrong, the play treats the problem of how to deal with traitors who have not yet committed a treasonous act. Cicero finds solutions but the action is limited from the third act and eventually seems to grind to a halt.

In his next play, Bartholomew Fair, Jonson returned to the more familiar ground of comedy and produced a unique comic masterpiece. Instead of a major protagonist, Jonson again employs a crowd of characters as he had done in The Alchemist, and earlier in Every Man In His Humour and Every Man Out. While no visitor remains unaltered by his trip to the Fair, the most changed is likely Justice Adam Overdo. As his name implies, Overdo has overreaching dreams, but he adds to them a gull's nature and the authority of the law. Unlike any previous overreacher in Jonson or Marlowe, Overdo genuinely wants to help his fellow man in addition to elevating himself to the status of a Jehovah. Thus, he can be reclaimed by Quarlous' admonition and preside over his banquet table.

Jonson's development of the overreacher coincides with the period of his greatest plays. Building up to the overreacher in the "humour" plays and the comical satires,

he makes a first stab at the figure in *Sejanus*, creates a unique overreacher in *Volpone*, and may do as much as he could do with the character in comedy in fashioning *Mammon*. As an experiment, *Catiline* makes an interesting overreacher, but ultimately even Jonson could not draw together all the aims that he set for the tragedy and still produce an effective drama. The appearance of Adam Overdo in *Bartholomew Fair* marks Jonson's departure from the usual static nature of the overreacher. Overdo testifies to the fact that, after *Mammon*, Jonson had to vary the character. His later comedies contain overreachers in this vein, aspiring, sometimes lustful, sometimes greedy, but always restrained from going too far.

As Levin points out, the inability to hold back is a fundamental characteristic of Marlowe's overreacher.¹ In the line from *Sejanus* to *Volpone*, *Mammon*, and *Catiline*, Jonson follows this pattern and illustrates the folly of such ambition. When Jonson deviates from the Marlovian formula, the plays are less successful possibly because the overreacher is a less commanding and excessive figure.

From 1603 to 1614 Jonson studies in depth the problems that the overreacher poses for society and for himself. In *Sejanus* he deals with these issues in a tragedy. *Volpone*, an overreacher in a comedy, develops out of *Sejanus*. Each of the works offers an accurate portrayal of the overreacher as a knave and a danger to society, but as yet Jonson has no solution and no need for insight into the character. In

Epicoene Jonson does not depict an overreacher; however, in Morose he creates a comic caricature, who briefly gains the audience's sympathy when Dauphine curtly dismisses him. In contrast to Sejanus and Volpone Morose is a gull, the victim of the plots of Dauphine, Clerimont and Truewit.

With his next comedy, The Alchemist, Jonson brings into being Sir Epicure Mammon, at one and the same time his greatest overreacher and his greatest gull. Enormous as Mammon is in his infinite fantasy and ornate language, he almost necessitates a balance beyond that of the cheaters, Face, Subtle, and Doll. Jonson introduces Lovewit, a gentleman in Mammon's social class who is neither a prude nor a rogue but rather a shrewd and good-natured master who, unlike Mammon, knows enough to be wary of indulgence.²

Lovewit provides a credible alternative to the overreacher for a comedy, but Jonson proves less successful in tragedy. Catiline's Cicero should have all the answers to the perils of overreaching; perhaps he does, but he wins too easily. A well-drawn overreacher and an impressive villain until Cicero appears, Catiline fades completely before the eloquence of this righteous and virtuous man. Historically famous as an orator, Cicero should surpass any effort by Catiline in speaking and possibly any speech by any other overreacher. Instead, his lengthy and almost unbroken speeches harm Cicero's growth as a character and slow the action of the play to a crawl. In spite of these drawbacks Cicero

clearly remains Jonson's Nemesis for the overreacher, and he never tries to improve upon this character.³

When he returns to comedy in Bartholomew Fair, Jonson sets aside the comic caricatures such as Volpone and Mammon and the genuine imitators of Tamburlaine such as Sejanus and Catiline. In their place, he presents Adam Overdo as an overreacher capable of change and examines his personality extensively. As both a well-intentioned justice of the peace and an aspirer, Overdo possesses a complex temperament, but Jonson convincingly traces his gradual education in compassion and his subsequent change for the better. In doing so, Overdo goes beyond the bounds of a caricature, and merits his place in the newly harmonious society. Jonson draws attention to the maturation of Overdo through the lack of change in everyone else from Nightingale to Cokes.⁴

Legitimate comparisons may be drawn between the overreachers in Jonson and Marlowe beyond the specific pairings of Sejanus and Tamburlaine, Volpone and Barabas, Mammon and Faustus, Catiline and Tamburlaine, and Overdo and Tamburlaine. In several instances when a lesser Marlovian overreacher, such as the Duc de Guise or Gaveston, may have contributed to the composition of a Jonsonian figure, the comparison has been included. For the most part, however, establishing and scrutinizing the extent and nature of the relationship between these pairs of overreachers seemed more advisable

than attempting to catalogue and classify every possible comparison. Each Jonsonian member of a pair of overreachers usually complements his Marlovian counterpart considerably more than he does any other figure in the Marlovian canon. For example, one might compare Volpone and Faustus as readily as Mammon and Faustus; however, Mammon and Faustus are always victims of their own fantasy more than menaces to others. In contrast, Volpone presents a definite threat to the innocent Celia and Bonario. His attempted seduction of Celia, for all its enticing language, is the action of a villain, the would-be corrupter of the chaste wife. On the other hand, Faustus' address to Helen and Mammon's temptation of Doll are really speeches made by the dupes of these apparently beautiful women.

Gifted as he always is, the overreacher in Jonson and Marlowe is basically incompatible with his society. It rejects him by the end of the play, if not before, and he usually rejects it in its present form. For the overreacher, society, even the world, exists to be used and remade according to his desires. In order to survive, society must expel him or destroy him, if he does not destroy himself.

While Jonson's primary purpose is to write entertaining drama, a principal target of his satire in the comedies and a main concern of his didactic instruction in the tragedies is the traits usually associated with the Marlovian overreacher. The chief characteristics of this figure are an overwhelming aspiration to power in some form and an almost total self-absorption; consequent upon

these characteristics are a love of intrigue, a belief in fantasy, a dependence on hyperbole, and a lack of self-control. When Marlowe combines these characteristics, he can create a completely ironic caricature of a villain-hero in Barabas, or a tragic hero with an ironic tinge in Doctor Faustus. Although Jonson's overreachers such as Volpone and Mammon are almost always caricatures, Jonson drew on Marlowe as a mine for characteristics and a style of rhetoric familiar to his audience.

The overreacher continues to appear after the first two decades of the seventeenth century, notably in several plays by Middleton and in Massinger's *Sir Giles Overreach* in A New Way to Pay Old Debts. Charles A. Hallett observes that Middleton's creations are less satisfying than Jonson's or Marlowe's,⁵ because they lack the grandeur of a Volpone or a Barabas. For a towering overreacher after Massinger's,⁶ one has to go outside the drama to Milton's Satan in Paradise Lost. One source for Marlowe's character was the miracle play, with Lucifer as the original overreacher. Accordingly, it seems appropriate that the last grand overreacher should be Milton's complex Satan, who displays a kinship to the overreachers in Jonson and Marlowe, in his persuasive rhetoric, love of metamorphosis, boundless ambition, and ironic end.

Notes

1
Levin, "Chapter I. The End of Scholarism," The Overreacher,
p. 41.

2
Lovewit states twice that he is wary of being an indulgent
master (The Alchemist, ed. F. H. Mares, V. iii. 77 and V. v. 150).

3
Jonson's fragments on Mortimer indicate that he might have
produced a history play dealing with the period of Marlowe's Edward II.
Jonson's Mortimer might have been a fitting companion for Sejanus
and Catiline.

4
In the plays that follow Bartholomew Fair Jonson frequently
draws on fantasy, caricature, the various devices of rhetoric, and
metamorphosis to develop his characters; however, he rarely if ever
fuses them together to create an overreacher approaching Mammon or
Volpone. Fabian Fitzdottrell has his strange fantasies; Picklock
modestly styles himself a Vertumnus; Pennyboy Canter proves that
every profession is only ranting; Sir Glorious Tipto parodies
Toby Belch. Although these latter figures can command the audience's
attention for a moment or so, they all fall short of the spell-binding
power of Mammon, Volpone, or even Sejanus.

5

Charles A. Hallett, "Middleton's Overreachers and the Ironic Ending," ISL XVI (1971): 9.

6

Both Eliot and Knights comment on the influence of Jonson and Marlowe on Massinger. Although he is based on Sir Giles Mompesson, the notorious extortioner, Sir Giles Overreach descends from the earlier overreachers as well. While no extensive comparison to anyone of them may be drawn, echoes of Volpone, Catiline, and Barabas occur in his speeches. Knights also observes that lines from The City Madam are drawn from The Alchemist and Sejanus. Like Volpone and Barabas, Overreach is a villain with a servant-accomplice, Marrall; however, their relationship lacks the unrestrained glee in performing evil, which temporarily unites Volpone and Mosca, and Barabas and Ithamore. Overreach's fantasy is limited to his daughter's marriage to Lord Lovell, his speeches boast few classical images, and his power of persuasion is almost non-existent. Rarely called on to dissemble, he has little interest in acting or in metamorphosis outside a rise in social rank for his daughter. Like Volpone, he prefers the dark ways by which he obtains his wealth above everything else, but his means are no more than the methods that Volpone scorns: Overreach gains his money from widows, orphans, and ruined prodigals. The problem is not that Overreach is "the terror of a dozen parishes instead of the conqueror of a world," to use Eliot's words, but rather that he seldom pictures himself as anything greater than "the terror of a dozen parishes." Neither he nor Massinger has the imagination to go farther. Overreach falls short of a fully developed character but he also lacks the vision of a grand caricature like Mammon. While he is less imposing than Overreach, Luke in The City Madam displays a command of mythology and a talent for persuasion which looks back to Volpone and Mammon. See Eliot, "Philip Massinger (1926)," Elizabethan Dramatists (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), pp. 146-50; Knights, "Chapter Ten. The Significance of Massinger's Social Comedies," Drama and Society, pp. 270-72; 276; 285-87.

APPENDIX

Marlowe's success with blank verse led Jonson, in company with Shakespeare, Chapman, Marston, and countless lesser playwrights, to take advantage of his example. Marlowe's basic syntactical unit is the line itself. While he rarely employs run-overs, a verse sentence can contain up to a dozen lines. Marlowe fills out the line with polysyllables, exotic proper names, double predicates, appositional phrases, and conditional clauses; this practice led to Nashe's reference to "the swelling bombast of bragging blanke verse" and later to Eliot's comment that "Marlowe's rhetoric consists in a pretty simple huffe-snuffe bombast."¹ Aided by their audience's familiarity with the form, later dramatists could experiment more than Marlowe could. Even so, he makes impressive progress between Tamburlaine Part I and Doctor Faustus. Occasionally he varies the length of the line and, in Faustus' last soliloquy, breaks up the line. Perhaps equally important in regard to Jonson, Marlowe "developed a new and important conversational tone in the dialogues of Faustus with the devil".²

In the decade between Marlowe's death in 1593 and Sejanus (1603), both the dramatists and their audience became accustomed to standard blank verse. Accordingly, Jonson does not hesitate to experiment with the form. The caesura can come anywhere; the thought rarely ends with the line, as is usual in Marlowe, but

runs over into the middle of the next line or the line after that. Jonson retains Marlowe's catalogue of names and carries it to new extremes. While it might be said that Tamburlaine's style of speaking has much in common with that of his adversaries, such as Cosroe or Bajazeth, Jonson employs blank verse to portray the mannerisms of such unforgettable individuals as Mosca, Corbaccio, Corvino, Tribulation Wholesome, and Subtle. Each of them stands out apart from the rest, largely on the basis of his singular way of speaking, whether deceptive, hypocritical, greedy, or apparently ordered and rational. Jonson effortlessly uses blank verse even in scenes of quarrels and brawls. He breaks the line two or three times between his characters, who rant and roar at each other in a totally credible fashion, but Jonson always stays within the confines of the verse-form. None of these refinements is totally unknown in Marlowe; however, Jonson is in a position to utilize them to the fullest for his particular kind of comedy. Jonson's blank verse in his tragedies seems no less effective in technique, but the serious and openly didactic approach to the subject robs Jonson's verse of its usual vitality and energy.

Notes

1

Nashe's comment appears in his "Preface" to Greene's Menaphon. See Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker, The Renaissance in England: Non-Dramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth Century (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1954), p. 537. For Eliot's observation see "Christopher Marlowe (1919)" in Elizabethan Dramatists (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 59.

2

Eliot, "Christopher Marlowe (1919)," p. 63.

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ABSTRACT

During the English Renaissance no dramatist took a more serious approach to his plays than Ben Jonson. Every line in any one of his "workes" is there for a purpose; in the words of Herford and Simpson, "everything in Jonson is deliberate." While critics have examined in depth Jonson's use of the classics, his relationship to contemporary playwrights, excluding Shakespeare, has received less attention than it deserves. Jonson is usually regarded as an innovator, a master, or an outsider; he was very much a man of his day, a defender as well as a critic of English drama. Among the Elizabethan playwrights, Jonson's greatest affinity is with Christopher Marlowe. The two writers have in common an extensive knowledge of the ancients and a highly developed gift for dark satiric humour. In their best plays these talents unite in the depiction of the principal character, the overreacher. In both authors, the overreacher is an aspiring and skilful orator whose love of excess, delusions, and pretensions is sardonically exposed.

The overreacher does not figure in all of Jonson's plays, but he does appear regularly throughout his career. Hints occur in Cynthia's Revels and The Poetaster, which have elements similar to some in Marlowe's early work, Dido, Queen of Carthage. In Jonson's first tragedy, Sejanus, Sejanus has Tamburlaine's aspirations and a touch of his persuasive

eloquence, but Jonson portrays these characteristics as menacing to society rather than commendable. The black comedies Volpone and The Jew of Malta share the theme of avarice and a sinister foreign atmosphere. On closer examination Volpone emerges as a comical combination of Barabas and Ithamore. In The Alchemist Surly accuses Subtle of being the "Faustus," but it is Sir Epicure Mammon who lives in Faustian visions of being a god on earth through the magic of the philosopher's stone. Catiline, Jonson's second tragedy, sets Catiline, a kindred spirit of Tamburlaine, against Cicero, a talented orator and politician, who uses the overreacher's methods for the public good. Virtuous and pragmatic, Cicero is triumphant. In Bartholomew Fair Justice Overdo is an all-too-human would-be Cicero, who cannot restrain his illusions of grandeur. After Bartholomew Fair the part of the overreacher diminishes in Jonson, as he concentrates on the theme of reconciliation.

Jonson knew that overreaching aspirations can arise in a gull as easily as in a knave; in either case, he exposes the dangers in yielding to ambition, fantasy, and self-intoxication through language. Where Marlowe's overreachers can sometimes seem exceptional and admirable, Jonson concentrates on educating his audience about the delusiveness of the overreacher's appeal. Although Jonson's overreachers such as Volpone and Mammon are almost always caricatures, Jonson drew on Marlowe as a mine for characteristics and a style of rhetoric familiar to his audience.