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John Marston and the decline of the Elizabethan tragedy

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JOHN MARSTON

and

The Decline of the 17th Athan Tragedy

by

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Chairman of Examining Committee

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To Irene
INTRODUCTION

Rupert Brooke, in the chapter, "The Elizabethan Drama," of his Cambridge Fellowship dissertation, John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama, asserts that the stream of serious tragedy of the Elizabethan age "swept straight on from Marston and Tourneur to Webster." He places the blame for the decline of the Elizabethan tragedy on Fletcher and the "silly sweetness" of tragi-comedy.Lazy Lockert, writing in the Sewanee Review, refutes Brooke's arguments. He says that the cause for the decline was inherent in the drama from its inception and was simply that it was a desire "to tell a story on the stage." He finds that Marston, far from presenting serious tragedy, is really to blame for much of the degeneration that Elizabethan tragedy went through. In this paper I should like to examine carefully the arguments of these two critics, to look at other arguments relative to the decline, to consider particularly the tragedies of John Marston, in order to determine whether John Marston is largely responsible for the decline as Lockert suggests, or one of the few standard
bearers for serious tragedies as Rupert Brooke suggests. I should like to show that, although there is some truth in the arguments of both of these critics, both Looker and Brooke are wrong in their final conclusions.

I should like to point out that Rupert Brooke is approaching the truth (though that is a cold word) when he sees in the "silly sweetness of tragi-comedy" the reason for the degeneration of the Elizabethan tragedy, but that he is wrong when he places the beginning of this degeneration as late as the work of Fletcher. I should like to point out that Lacy Looker finds some of the truth when he sees in the desire "to tell a story on the stage" an inherent fault which brought about the degeneration, but that he is wrong when he heaps all of the blame on the weary shoulders of John Marston. I should like to point out that the cause of the decline lies primarily in the mere desire of the dramatists to please their audience, that many of the elements of the decline are present in the tragedies of John Marston and can be seen in his striving for effect -- stage effect, sensationalism, and splendors appealing to the senses.

In this paper I shall use for the most part as
standards of criticism those standards which are to be found in Elizabethan criticism. It is important to remember that the criticism is classical in nature. The English critics of the age were great borrowers; they borrowed from the Greeks and Latins of past ages, from Renaissance critics in France and in Italy, and from each other. All of these sources were classical or stemmed from classical doctrines. Mr. Spingarn points out that in addition to this classical element there is a romantic influence, arising from the new spirit of nationalism, which is important in the discussion of linguistics.

These elements, classic and romantic, combined to make English criticism what it was in the Elizabethan age.

It was the nationalistic view which made it really English; otherwise, with only the other elements it might well have been French or Italian.


2. Ibid.

Roger Ascham and Samuel Daniel are representative of the opposing feelings toward classicism. Ascham finds nothing wrong with the Greeks and Latins and would follow them almost blindly. Daniel finds almost everything wrong and would follow them not at all. In between the two extremes is that most charming of critics, Sir Philip Sidney, who represents quite well the general critical thought of the period. He thought that every dish need not be over-seasoned with the classics. It is Sidney to whom the beginnings of British formal criticism and particularly dramatic criticism are accredited, and Sidney, in spite of his warning against over-seasoning, is a follower of the classics. Mr. Vernon Hall, Jr.


9. Ibid., p. 266.
suggests that most of the Renaissance critics felt that
"given the name of Aristotle, an explanation was
unnecessary, if not impertinent."

The Defence of Poesy and Discoveries are respectively
contemporary with the beginning and the decline of the
Elizabethan drama, and these two critical works mark the
boundaries of the study of dramatic criticism in this
paper. Although much of the criticism was written in
answer to the Puritans, I will not consider, except
incidentally, the attackers, for I should like to evolve
positive dramatic theories of the age. Generally the
attacks were emotional and general, and even Gossen did
not advocate the abolition of poetry (and well he might
have done, using Plato for his authority), but he assailed
the abuses of the art. The attackers and the defenders
of poetry were actually not too far apart; both admitted
and attacked abuses; neither would abolish poetry.

10. Vernon Hall, Jr., Renaissance Literary Criticism:
A Study of Its Social Context (New York: Columbia University


12. Ibid., p. 266.
I have divided the criticism into three parts: 1. The purpose of tragedy, 2. The dramatic structure in which I include plot, character, and setting; and 3. The dramatic technique, in which I have rather broadly included such divergent items as subject matter, imitation, diction, and songs. I have attempted to find in the Elizabethan critical doctrines a middle ground, a point on which most of the critics of the period agreed. On theories in which there was little or no agreement, I have presented some of the variant opinions to show the scope of ideas. I have followed the Elizabethan doctrines quite closely in the application to Marston’s tragedies, not rigidly because there are a few things such as revenge, tragedy and the use of song which I feel are necessary in a discussion of Marston’s work and which the Elizabethan critics have not considered.

By the Elizabethan period, I shall mean in this paper that period of the English Renaissance extending roughly from 1560 to 1640. Miss Ellis-Fermor has divided this same period into three: the Elizabethan proper, “from the beginning” to 1598; the Jacobean, from 1598 to 1610 or 1611; the Caroline, from 1610-11 to the end of the
reign of James I. In her terms I shall be particularly interested in the Jacobean subdivision because that is Marston's tragic period. Very little is known of Marston's life, but it is with some degree of certainty that his career in tragedy began about 1600 and ran until sometime after 1606, not after 1609.

By decline of the Elizabethan tragedy, I shall mean the decay in the quality of the English tragedy, which is increasingly evident in the Jacobean and Caroline drama in the lack of any serious intention, the lack of artistic morality, and the lack of unity of design. I shall use decline interchangeably with degeneration in this paper.


14. Marston was probably born in 1576 at Cropedy; matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, 1591-2; was presented to the living of Christchurch in Hampshire, 1616; resigned the living, 1631; died 1634. Very few other facts can be established. [John Marston, The Plays of John Marston (H. Harvey Wood, editor, 3 vols.; Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1934-1939), Vol. I, pp. XV-XXX. Hereafter cited as Plays.]

15. Theodore Spencer, "John Marston," Criterion, XIII (July, 1934), p. 598. Spencer, however, conjectures that his last literary work was probably a Latin pageant written in 1603 to celebrate "the notorious visit of the King of Denmark to James I."

For the basis for a definition of tragedy, I go to Aristotle who has given this one sentence interpretation:

Tragedy then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. 17

The Elizabethan critics have altered Aristotle's definition.

Webbe says simply that tragedy contains "all dolefull complaining, lamentable chances, and what soever is poetically expressed in sorrow and heaviness;" Lodge, that it sets forth "the sower fortune of many exiles, the miserable fall of many princes, the reuinous decay of many countryes;" Harington, that it represents the cruel and lawless proceeding of Princes, moving nothing but pity and detestation. 19

17. Aristotle, "The Poetics" (Trans. by S. H. Butcher), The Great Critics, p. 34.


There is some of Aristotle's definition in these quotations, but the new note, ("lamentable chances," "miserable fall of hapless princes") standing from the medieval conception of the fall of princes, has been injected. We can, then, derive from these and from other critics, notably from Sidney who endorses Aristotle's theory of catharsis, an Elizabethan definition: tragedy is that poetical form which "deals with the misfortunes of princes, is written in the appropriately lofty style [the doctrine of decorum as applied directly to tragedy], and is staged with the trappings conventionally associated with royalty."

The fall of princes idea is to be found expressed in Marston's work, not in connection with a theory of tragedy, for he never expounds one, but expressed nevertheless. The following quotations from the plays (in addition to the construction of the plays themselves) show that Marston was conscious of this idea. In Antonio and

22. Ibid., p. 210
Kellida, Andru cio, the second Duke of Genoa, looks at his situation in this way:

For God's sake call me not Andrucio,
That I may soon forget what I have bin.
For heaven's name, name not Antonio,
That I may not remember he was mine.
Well, are you soone set, ills show my selfe my selfe,
Worthy my blood. I was a Duke; that's all.
No matter whether, but from whence we fall. 24

Malevole, in The Malcontent, expresses the theory of the wheel of fortune:

25

No king so huge, but fere he die may fall.
Ille give you a simile: did you ere see a well with 2. buckets, whilst one come up
full to be emptied, another goes downe
emptie to be filled; such is the state of
all humaine: why lookes you, I may be the conne
of some Duke, for believe me intemperate
lascivious bastardie makes nobilitie doubtful,
I have a lusty daring hart Seniora. 26

Although the Elizabethan dramatists are notorious for their lack of regard for the dramatic criticism of their day, these words which Marston has put into the mouths of his characters indicate that he was conscious of the fall of princes idea in the Elizabethan idea's conception of tragedy. That the fall of princes idea is embodied in four of his tragedies (the fall of a woman in the fifth) shows that Marston accepted the idea in his theory of tragedy.

24. Marston, Plays, Vol II, p. 84.
25. Ibid., p. 354.
26. Ibid., p. 181.
There are five plays in the Marston collection which I shall consider in this study of tragedy. Four of the five (Antonio and Cleopatra, Antonio’s Revenge, Sophonisba, and The Insatiate Countesse) are "right" tragedies, following the Elizabethan qualifications. The fifth, The Malcontent, is a tragi-comedy, a combination of a tragedy of blood and a satirical comedy and by Elizabethan standards should not be included with tragedies. I include it because it is of the revenge tradition and was an influence on the revenge tragedies of the dramatists who followed Marston’s lead.

Appendix A is a list of the critics and their work which I have used in this study. I have chosen these particular critics because I feel that they are representative of the criticism of the Elizabethan period, covering quite a wide time range up to the end of Marston’s writing for the stage. In addition to the critics themselves I have used several of the modern commentators in criticism such as Vernon Hall’s Renaissance Literary Criticism and J. A. Spingarn’s A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance.


28. Ibid., p. 199.

29. The bibliography contains, of course, a complete list of modern sources used.
TURNO

TRADITIONS OF DRAMATIC

The most commonly held views on the purpose of tragedy were these: to make kings fear to be tyrants and tyrants fear to manifest their tyrannical natures, and by commingling admiration and commiseration, to teach the uncertainty of the world, showing how "guiltless roofs" are built on "weak foundations." The first of these purposes is to be found explicitly expressed by one of the characters in one of Marston's tragedies, Pandulpho in *Antonio's Revenge* in a conversation between him and Hiero.

*Pie.* Tis just that subjects act commands of kings.

*Pan.* Command then just and honorable things.

*Pie.* Then so my selfe then will introduce his will.

*Pan.* Beware take heed least guiltlesse blood be spilt.

*Pie.* Where are honest deeds to kings are free,

*Pan.* Where are more than noble deeds to kings are free,

*Pie.* It is no empire, but a regency.

*Pan.* Where are noble deeds to kings are free,

*Pie.* It is no empire, but a tyranny.

The subsequent fall of Hiero from his high station is a result of tyrannical acts supplies the moral that men should not be tyrannous.

30. This is echoed by Barington, *op. cit.*, p. 510.


Because Marston was an idealist and because he did have a strong notion of moral rectitude, we may say that he carried out the spirit of the ethical precept to teach mankind to fear a tyrannical nature in itself. Marston was intolerant of this or any other deviations from his moral code and attempted to correct them all by applying his satirical lash. He used this lash first in satric poetry where he began his literary career, and carried it on into the field of tragic drama, as in The Malcontent, the supreme example. For his satires he availed the name, Kinseyder, a pun on car-stone; 'Kinsing' was apparently an operation which eradicated unruly doers and locked their tails, and "Marston apparently liked to think that he was performing a similar operation on mankind by writing his satires."

Shelley's second prose text, "to teach the uncertainty of the world" is in evidence, though in a modified form, throughout Marston's tragic writing. I interpret "uncertainty of the world" in the light of the medieval

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34. Spencer, op. cit., p. 597.
concept of the wheel of fortune, which still had force in
the Elizabethan period. I take this interpretation be-
cause Sidney goes on to say "and [to teach] upon how
weake foundations quillen rooves are builded."

The early Elizabethan drama was characterized by
its love of life, almost a worship of life, reflecting the
increasingly prosperous society under a strong and popular
ruler. Nevertheless, uncertainty is to be found as early
as Marlowe in the midst of optimism -- but in his hands
the uncertainty is no longer the accepted fact as in the
wheel of fortune. He probes into the mind of Tamburlaine
and Dr. Faustus to see why there is a change of fortune,
to see what in man brings about uncertainty, misfortune
and despair. This probing, this questioning, this un-
certainty of Marlowe carried over into the Jacobean period,
becoming especially evident from four to five years before
the death of Elizabeth to five or six years after the
accession of James, reaching its peak about 1605. This

period of uncertainty is Marston's period. In tragedy he is the man of the hour, and he is in line with that period. This uncertainty is inherent in both Antonio and Mellida and Antonio's Revenge. In the "Induction" to the first play Alberto says:

... now the vulgar fashion strides as wide,
And stalks as proud upon the weakest stilts
Of the bright'est fortunes, as if Hercules
Or burly Atlas shouldred up their stile. 39

While this is in the spirit of the wheel of fortune, the words, "strides as wide" and "stalks as proud" indicate that Marston carried on the Marlowian pretexting into ambition and pride. In the body of that same play Andrukio answers Lucio, who urges him to have patience, with:

What patience, friend, can ruin'd hopes attend....

Antonio in Antonio's Revenge reflects this uncertainty, too. Andrukio has been murdered and Mellida falsely accused of being false. Antonio ponders:

He thinks I feel the frame of nature shake. 41
Cracks not the joints of earth to beare my woes?

38. Thwndike, Tragedy, p. 154.
40. Ibid., p. 31.
41. Ibid., p. 82.
Later in this play, Sandalphi finds reason for his voice to be hoarse. In answer to Alberto, Act IV, Scene 5:

Why cuz? Why should it not be hoarse & crook, then all the strings of nature's symphony are crook, & jar? Why should his voice keep tune, then there's no music in the breast of man? 42

And then in The Malcontent, Valerio:

Gone, climed not a falling tree Salvo, His will hold desperation, he said: 43
helpless e to strive with fate (peace) temporize.

In addition to these the secular purposes for tragedy, to teach kings to fear to by tyrants and to teach the uncertainty of the world, we find a religious purpose in Lodge. We agree with Donatus, the Grammarian, who has said that the purpose of both tragedies and comedies is to praise God in thanksgiving. Nowhere in Marston's tragedies is this purpose fulfilled. Materialism rather than religion is the motivation. More is his accomplice, Strotzo, of the anterior plays ext. by this materialism. More, to gain political power on fortune, will stop at nothing. The love of God nor parental love tempers his incongrues. His actions are governed solely, as are Strotzo's, by material considerations. This

4. Iib., p. 121.
44. Ibid., op. cit., p. 80.
same materialism is to be seen in *Lustro* in The Instinct.

And in Sophonisba is a clear state out of the materialism.

Asdrubal has been assured of the death of Massinissa and is rejoicing. Hamno warns:

> But yet think Asdruball
> Thy fit at least you bear more outward show,
> What need you more show: what need you more
> To close ill; but void a publick hate. 45

Although there is no professed materialism in *The Instinct*

Countess, neither is there any religious motivation.

Isabella is moved by physical lust. Even the good people in the tragedies, Antonio, Bellinda, Randolph, Valentine, Sophonisba, Massinissa, and Roberto are moved by personal reasons or emotions rather than by any thought of God.

And Andragio goes so far as to make a formal act of denial of one of the principles of the church, the theory of plenitude, an essential part of the cosmological philosophy.


Marston is not out of line with his period in his neglect of religion and his denial of religious doctrines. It is at the time when Marston was writing his tragedies that the dramatists made a conscious break with religious and moral forces. A few years later religion even became a subject for ridicule in *Eastward Hoe*. Marston does not succeed in any large degree in the purposes of tragedy as set forth by the critics of his time. He is a part of the movement to get away from moral purposes and to satisfy the pleasure of the Elizabethan audience. Even though we find serious intention in his desire to reform, we find even more a lack of that intention in his appeal to the baser element of his audience.

PURPOSE OF POETRY

In the Elizabethan period, the critics did not divorce the drama from poetry; it was simply a part of the more encompassing poetry. In addition to those purposes which apply specifically to tragedy are the purposes for all poetry. For these purposes, Gascoigne or Webbe or Sidney or almost any of the Elizabethan critics or even Aristotle (for the Elizabethan view was a classical view) might be quoted. This is a point upon which almost all the critics wrote and the one point upon which, in spite of variations and changes of emphasis, the critics generally agreed. The purpose of poetry is to teach and to delight, "and to delight to move men to take that goodnes in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger." [48]

"... he that can mingle the sweet and the wholesome, the pleasant & the profitable, he is indeed an absolute good writer: and such be Poets, if any be such." [49] With one exception, the critics demand that the dual purpose be one, that poetry both teach and delight. He find the exception

In answer to the attackers who accuse poetry of generalizing
men by bad examples, Lodge asks in turn these rhetorical
questions: "What made Aratus labor in Euripides' tragedies?
Did he move to paint them out of Greek into Latin to
manifest virtue unto us? or to confirm us in goodness?"
Most answers to these questions are to be found in other
of the critic. Sidney says that we may not say "that
poetry abuseth men's wit, but that men abuseth poetry."
Webbe insists that for from being a detriment to man's

50. Puttenham, op. cit., p. 25.
51. Lodge, op. cit., p. 58.
52. Sidney, op. cit., p. 217.
morals, poetry has as one of its purposes to teach man what is right and what is wrong by example.

There are then two chief purposes of all poetry, the two purposes as given in classical criticism, to teach and to delight. And we find in Puttenham an acceptance of that poetry which delights only.

It is evident that in comedy Marston agreed with Puttenham. In the Prologue to The Dutch Courtezean he freely admits that his only purpose is to delight:

Slight haste labour in this ease Play, Present not what you would, but what we may: For this vouchsafe to know the onely end Of our now studie is, not to offend. Yet thinkes not, but like others raile we could, (Best ert Present, not what it can, but should) And if our pen in this seems over slight, we strive not to instruct, but to delight, As for some few, we know of purpose here To take, and scoot: know, firse art cannot live Vaine rage: onely the highest grace we pray Is, you'le not take, untill you judge our play.54

Marston clearly says in this passage that his purpose in this play is to delight only. He implies more. He seems to be saying that at some other time in some other work, he was interested in both instruction and delight. He

53. Webbe, _op.cit._, p. 255.
makes quite an issue of this particular play: "in this
eassic play," "our most studie," and "our min in lit."
In order to inform his reader that he knew there is in
other work (I think it safe to assume that he means
tragedy) a further purpose than to delight, he warns:

Yet think not, but like others relate we could,
(Most art bestrains, not what it can, but should).

Again, in the "To, my eunall Reader" introducing *The
Fawne*, Marston speaks of delight:

I have ever more endeavoured to know my selfe,
than to be knowne of others: and to be everlastingly
beleived of all, that facetiously to be admired
of a few; yet so powerfully have I beene enticed
with the delights of poetry, and (I must in-
seriously confess) above better desert an
Fortunate in these stagg-photos, that (let
my resolutes, to never so fixed to call mine
eyes into my selfe, rivet ye everlastable death of

quemiam numus anniatis.

Beneat, I numus meritur siti.}

But since the ever-vehement pursi of
these delights hath bin the sickness of my youth,
and now it roaste to in the dice of my tender age,
since to satisfy others, I neglect my selfe, let
it be the cursednes of my nature, I must be made
my self-marring labourds, than to satisfy us, and
let this be pleased to be my nature, and not my
intender, since I would faine reserve that
office in my own hands, it being my devle praver ...
Although *The Faire*, like *The Dutch Courtezan*, is a comedy, 
Marston is apparently speaking of more than comedies; he 
appears to be speaking of all of his works, for he says, 
"... since the over-vehement pursue of these delights 
hath bin the sickness of my youth, and now is grown 
to be the vice of my firmer age ..." He makes no qualifi- 
cations; he makes no limitation to comedy of what he has to 
say of delight. He indicates that he regarded the desire 
to please as a fault in himself extending from his youth, 
implying that delight (not instruction and delight) 
motivated his tragedies as well as his comedies. And in 
the phrase, "... so powerfully have I been enticed 
with the delights of poetry, and (I must incoherently 
confesse) above better deserrt so fortunate in these 
stage-pleasings..." he admits that there is more to 
be desired from the drama than delight. In his prefatory 
material to his comedies, there are only these two, 
apparently contradictory, statements on the purpose of 
poetry.

The prefaces of Marston’s tragedies indicate that 
he had a desire to instruct. “Surely a desire to satisfie

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57. Marston probably means “incoherently.” This was 
a common Elizabethan misusage. See The New English Dic- 
tionary.
To the firme spirit, who in all his actions, proposeth to himselfe no more ends than God and vertue do ...” Marston says at the beginning of The Malcontent. Sophonisba begins with this:

TO THE GENERAL READER

Know that I have not labored in this poem, to tie my selfe to relate any thing as an historian but to inure every thing as a poet, to transcribe authors, quote authorities, & translate Latin prose orations into English blank-verse, huch in this subject beene the least aime of my studies. Then (equall Reader) peruse me with no prepared dislike, and if ought shall displease thee thanke thy selfe, if ought shall please thee thanke not me, for I confess in this it was not my enly end.

I.O. MARSTON

That Marston had two acts of purposes -- one for comedy, to delight; a second for tragedy, to teach and to delight -- would seeme so true. Knowing that playwrights do not always act upon present, rich they profess, let us also make such consideration to see if, in fact, ... does him to teach and to delight.


59. Ibid., Vol. II, p. ...

60. Marston himself says, “... it is my custom to speake as I thinke, and write as I speake.” (“To the Reader,” The Malcontent, Marston, Plays, Vol.I, p. 102.”
A review of the words of the critics will tell us perhaps more precisely what the critics intended by "to teach." Sidney: "to move men to take ... goodness in hand." Harrington: to exhibit (along with the "sweet" and the "pleasant") the "wholesome" and the "profitable." Puttenham: to praise virtue, to remove vice, and to instruct in moral doctrine. Lodge: "to confirm us in goodness." And Webbe: "to teach men what is right and what is wrong by example."

Marston dwells too long on "what is wrong," leaves little time for "what is right." He was a twisted and unhappy figure and his tragedies are infected with a spirit of evil. The Antonio plays, The Malcontent, The Insatiate Countesse, Sophonisba --- all are full of unhealthy intrigue. The characters are generally motivated by ignoble, sometimes even sordid, impellents. Antonio's fault, like Hamlet's, is irresolution; but, unlike Hamlet,  

61. Spencer, _op. cit._, p. 562.

62. Professor Bowden in his book, _Puritan and Anglican_ (pp. 2-3), says this of the drama of the latter years of the reign of James I and of the reign of Charles. (C.F. Tucker Brooke, _op. cit._, pp. 443-44.)

63. See Appendix B for synopses of the plays.
Antonio is led to useless cruelties — the unnecessary murders of Piero’s young son, Julie, and the disgusting mutilation of Piero, himself. Piero’s fault is lust for power; Strozzi’s, servile attendance in hope for favor.

Piero, in The Malcontent, is the counterpart of Hier., in Antonio’s Revenge; Mendez is traitorous; Aurelia is base. In Sophonisba are the scheming senators, the vapid Scipio, and the lustful Lyphax. The Insatiate Duchess is built entirely around the inordinate physical lust of Isabella. Rupert Brooke says:

Marston’s chief passion was for truth. He preferred it if it hurt; he loved it anyhow. It comes out in the sneering speculations and harangues of these satirical malcontents he was so fond of. He bequeathed the type to Webster and Webster. For Marston, who was a wit and a scholar and a great poet, was pre-eminently a satirist. It was because he loved truth in that queer, violent way that some men do it, so much to hurt. It fits in with his wild temperament — vivac, snarling, it is for love, to love and for truth’s sake, also for his own. Fierce, horror, and di@ aoe %%gi; it is a splendid one.

I think I am not partial when I say that I cannot agree that filth and horror constitute a splendid legacy.

However, there is much in this quotation from Brooke with.

which I do agree. Marston did love truth. He also
loved dirt. He loved it too much. He was too much
occupied with what is depraved. It is true that there
are glimpses of morality in the tragedies — but only
glimpses. In Antonio and Mellida Feliche answers Piero,
who gloats that public power strengthens his faction:

Pier. Tis horse-like, not for man to know his force.
Fel. Tis god-like, for a man to feel remorse. 65

Pandolpho, too, in Antoina's Revenge, in spite of
pompousness, in spite of his denial of church doctrines
(as cited above), in spite of his participation in the
murder of Piero, exhibits at times worthy thoughts. Celso,
in The Malecontent, is admirably loyal. Sophonisba, par-
ticularly in her death scene, displays unselfish nobility,
as does Roberto at Isabella's execution in The Insatiate
Countess. Other than these there are few examples of

67. Ibid., Vol. III, pp. 73-4.
morality. With the good and the evil so out of balance, Marston cannot stand up to the Elizabethan theory that one of the purposes of poetry is to teach men to take “goodnes in hand.”

69 Earlier in this paper I have alluded to the fact that Marston did delight his audience. I think it is an accepted fact that the sort of thing that Marston wrote was the sort of thing that the Elizabethan audience wanted, even though now much of it seems either of slight significance or disgustingly coarse. As F. T. Bowers has pointed out “... the whole display of the pageantry of terror and the panoply of death ... thrilled an Elizabethan audience ... His [Marston’s] flair for strong scenes produced melodrama, stirring no doubt on the Elizabethan stage...” His desire to delight, to stir

68. See also the speeches of Gelosso and Sophonisba, Marston, Plays, Vol. II, pp. 22-23.

69. In fairness to Marston here is what one of his contemporaries, his bookseller, said of him: “That he was free from all obscene speeches, which is the chief cause that makes plays to be so odious unto most men: that he abhorred such writers and their works, and professed himself an enemy to all such as stuffed their scenes with ribaldry, and larded their lines with scurrilous taunts and jests: so that whatsoever, even in the spring of his years, he presented upon the private and public theatre, in his autumn and declining age, he need-ed not to be ashamed of.” (As quoted from “Marston’s Plays,” op.cit., p. 115).

his audience would seem to outweigh any desire to teach, in spite of some statements to the contrary in his prefaces.
THE DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

PLOT

The action of a tragedy, according to Aristotle, must be a whole. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal connection, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles. 71

Ben Jonson echoes this theory of the whole in his Timber. 72

Of the Elizabethan critics considered in this study, he is the only one to do so. He goes on to say that the action must be of a certain proportion, neither too great nor too little; not so great that the imagination cannot comprehend the whole together, not so little that no pleasure is derived.

71. Aristotle, op. cit., p. 36.
73. Ibid.
The unity of the plot, again according to Aristotle, is an imitation of one action, "and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole." Ben Jonson is again the only Elizabethan to develop this Aristotelian precept fully. He elaborates, showing that one action may be composed of diverse parts so long as they tend toward the same end.

This is Aristotle's one dramatic unity. The unities of time and place were added by Castelvetro and generally accepted as Aristotle's. Sidney is the first Englishman to mention the unities (he mentions three) and it is probable that he derived them directly from Castelvetro. Sidney

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77. Ibid.
Our Tragedies, and Comedies, (not without cause cried out against,) observing rules, neyther of honest civilitie, nor of skil-ful Poetrie, excepting Gorboduck (againe, I say, of those that I have seen,) which notwithstanding, as it is full of stately speeches, and well sounding Phrases, cylving to the height of Seneca his stile, and as full of notable moralitie, which it doth most delightfully teach; and so obtayne the very end of Poesie: yet in troth it is very defectious in the circumstances; which greeveth mee, because It might not remayne as an exact model of all Tragedies. For it is faulty both in place, and time, the two necessary companions of all corporall actions. For where the stage should alwaies represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotles precept, and common reason, but one day; there is both many dayes, and many places, in artificially imagined. But if it be so in Gorboduck, how much more in al the rest? Where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Affrick of the other, and so many other underkingdoms, that the Player, when he commeth in, must ever begin with telling where he is: or els, the tale will not be conceived. Now ye shall have three Ladies, walke to gather flowers, and then we must beleive the stage to be a Garden. By and by, we heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, and then wee are to blame, if we accept it not for a Rock. 78 79

Jonson, too, accepts the three unitiees. With the

78. Sidney, op.cit., p. 225.
exception of Jonson and Sidney, the British Renaissance critics do, as a group, almost neglect entirely the theory of the dramatic unities, which often plays an important part in criticism -- this in spite of their usual dependence on the classic critics. The unities did not become important in England until the neo-classical period in the latter half of the seventeenth century. "The Renaissance critics were interested in subject matter, being concerned with the fall of princes, in the keeping of a decorum fitted to the rank of the characters, and in making the style the 'height of elocution.' "

It is clear that Marston (along with most of the other dramatists of the period) did not care for the theory of the dramatic unities. In the "Induction" to

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What You Will he says:

With the unities of time and place, Marston's pleasure
was not shaped to rules. Appendix C is a breakdown of
the scenes of the tragedies under consideration with the
place locations as given in the Bullen edition. As can
be seen, *Antonio's Revenge* follows the unity of place
quite closely with only one scene *(Act III, Scene 1)*
away from the vicinity of the major part of the action,
and that one scene is at least in the same city. But
for the other tragedies: *The Malcontent* has one scene
outside the city; *Antonio and Mallida*, two; *Sophonisba*
has four scenes at Cirta, four near Cirta, three at
Carthage, and one near Utica; and *The Insextate Countesse*
is almost equally divided between Venice and Pavia.

Only *Antonio and Mallida* of the five tragedies
attends to the rule of the unity of time. *The Malcontent*

83. This was variously printed as "not," "no," and "your" in the various quartos. Wood used "not," but
I accept the Bullen emendation to "know." [The Works of
John Marston (A.H. Bullen, editor; 5 vols.; London: John
C. Nimmo, 1887), p. 223. Hereafter cited as Works.]

is close, and Antonio's Revenge takes less than two days. Both Sophonisba and The Inconstant Countess cover periods of several days. In this Marston errs (if it be to err) less than many of his contemporaries.

Miss Ellis-Fermor has this comment on the unity of action:

...the Jacobean audience, and apparently the dramatist, preferred to experience a succession of striking situations and to carry away a number of such separate images, rather than the memory of a unified and integrated aesthetic experience -- that it had, in short, neither use nor capacity for the Aristotelian "whole."

It is certainly true that Marston preferred a series of "striking situations." He was fond of foreign settings for his plots — each of the five tragedies is located in a then faraway country and the foreign atmosphere gave credence to any striking situation which might have seemed improbable to an Elizabethan audience had it occurred at home. But more of that under "Setting." Let us look to the construction of the plays.

Marston dedicates Antonio and Mellida to "the most honourably renowned Nobody" with these words: "Since it hath flowed with the current of my humorous blood to affect

85. Ellis-Fermor, op. cit., p. 31.
(a little too much) to be seriously fantastical, here take
(most respected Patron) the worthless present of my
slighter idleness." Although the entire dedication is
heavy with irony and although not all of his words can be
taken at face value, those words, "to affect (a little
too much) to be seriously fantastical," are truly applicable
to the tragedy. The play begins with Antonio, disguised
as an Amazon, in a soliloquy, melodramatic in its intensity:

The Comets sound a battle within

Antonio, hast thou seen a fight at sea,
As horrid as the hideous day of doome;
Betwixt thy father, duke of Genoa,
And Piero, the Venetian Prince?
In which the sea hath swolne with Genoa's blood,
And made spring tydes with th' warme reeking gore,
That gusht from out our Gallas scupper holes;
In which thy father, poore Andrunio,
Lyes sunke, or leapt into the armes of chaunce,
Choakt with the laboring Ocean's brackish fome;
Who even, despite Pieros cancred hate,
Would with an armed hand have seiz'd thy love,
And linkt thee to the beautious Bellida. 87

... [The Comets sound a flourish: cease.

There is more of that. But enough to illustrate my point.

Then Piero enters. The stage directions:

The Comets sound a Synnet: Enter Feliche and Alberto.
Castillo and Forobaso, a Page carrying a shield:
Piero in Armour: Gatto and Dildo and Baluerdo: All
These (saving Piero) armed with Patronals: Beeing
entred, they make a stand in divided foyles. 88
Piero offers a reward of twenty thousand double Pistolets for the head of either Andrugio or Antonio and "The Cornets sound a flourish." Galeatzo, prince of Milan, enters and is conducted "royally" to the presence of Piero, and "The Cornets sound a Cynet." Mellida and Rossaline enter on the upper stage, and "the Cornets sound a flourish." Piero and Galeatzo exit. The two women discuss Galeatzo, and "the Cornets sound a Cynet." "Enter Matzagento, Piero meets him, embraces; at which the Cornets sound a flourish." "Exeunt all on the lower stage; at which the Cornets sound a flourish, and a peale of shot is given." The rest of the first act with Mellida, Rossaline, and Antonio continues without so much as a note from the horn. Such is the first act. There are four more.

In addition to these external decorations to the situations -- the melodramatic pomposity of the speech, the ceremonious entrances, the preposterous soundings of the cornets -- there is the composition of the situations. The first act of Antonio and Mellida theatrically consists of only one scene; it is not divided by changes in

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89. Ibid., pp. 13-20.
time, place (except from upper to lower stage), or curtain; but dramatically, there is a series of five scenes plus a dumb show, in which there is no causal connection between the characters of the various episodes. Antonio, in soliloquy, gives the background for the action of the play, tells of the sea battle in which his father is defeated by Piero, and reveals his thwarted love of Mellida. Piero discusses his victory with Feliche and offers the reward. Mellida and Rossaline review first, Galeatzo, as a prospective husband and, then, Matzagine when he enters in a dumb show with Piero. Mellida and Rossaline meet the disguised Antonio.

Act II also consists of only one scene but several episodes. It begins with a comic interlude involving Catzo and Bildo, another with Rossaline, Castilio, Balurdo, and Feliche, and still another with the last three and Alberto. A return to the central theme is evidenced when Mellida meets and rejects her suitors, Galeatzo and Matzagine. Antonio reveals himself to Mellida and they plan their elopement.

The first scene of the third act takes place on the sea shore with Lucio and Andrugio discussing the latter's fall. Two comic scenes at Piero's palace follows. Returning to the central theme, Piero finds the note from Antonio to
Mellida disclosing their plot to elope, and he despatches his men to find them. Feliche aids Antonio to a new disguise Piero encounters Antonio in mariner’s clothes, who pretends to search for Antonio, thereby successfully evading his pursuers. Mellida, too, evades her father by means of a page’s disguise, but she is betrayed by Flavia. Antonio meets his father at the beginning of the fourth act, then meets Mellida. When Antonio leaves her, Mellida is discovered by her father. A brief comic interlude follows. Antonio again encounters Andrugio and learns of the plight of Mellida.

The fifth act at Piero’s palace begins with three comic episodes, the third of which consists of a singing contest, very like a scene from a musical comedy. The rest of the act consists of the denouement, in which Andrugio is restored to a position of honor and Antonio and Mellida are brought together.

An anonymous writer in The Retrospective Review says that “This, upon the whole, is an excellent play — the design is simple — the passions of that description which the author could manage — and the plot conducted without embarrassment or extravagance in situation or language.”

(This criticism, in the light of my analysis of the play and in the light of other criticism, puzzles me.) Mr. Theodore Spencer says, "He [Marston] handles, pretty awkwardly, the trite theme of revenge in Antonio and Mellida ..." Miss Ellis-Fermor:

Time and again, when character, continuity of plot and probability of situation or utterance have all been violated, he imposes on us by some preposterous turn of theatrical brilliance which all but hides the dramatic weakness. 92

Miss Ellis-Fermor cites, as examples of this theatrical brilliance, Mellida's silence on hearing of the reported death in the first act, and Andrugio's bringing his own head to Piero to collect the reward and Antonio's rising out of the coffin in the fifth act. These are interesting as are a few other things — some good individual lines, some vivid images, and at least one noteworthy characterization, which I will discuss in other sections of this paper — but there is still not enough to add up to an "excellent play." One of the chief faults is that Marston includes "too many things with an insufficient technique." There are

91. Spencer, op.cit., p. 593.
92. Ellis-Fermor, op.cit., p. 82.
93. Ibid.
94. Mr. Theodore Spencer attributes this fault to Marston generally. (Spencer, op. cit., pp. 594-95). I apply it specifically here to Antonio and Mellida.
too many scenes, too many irrelevant scenes, too much outward show, too much hide-and-seek in and out of disguise. It is pretty awkward handling. There is little unity of action.

Antonio's Revenge is even worse in some ways, somewhat better in some other ways. There are no scenes which are absolutely irrelevant though there are parts of some scenes which are. The cornets have been somewhat silenced since Antonio and Mellida. However, there is still much outward show, there are still many scenes, and there is still disguise. And there are some unfortunate additions. The traditional device of the revenge play, the ghost, is in full sway; intrigue gallops; and corpses fall freely on and off the stage.

Corpses. There are five murders in Antonio's Revenge. Andrugio is murdered quite peaceably: he is poisoned

95. This play is probably included in the comments by the anonymous writer and by Theodore Spencer quoted in the discussion of Antonio and Mellida, for often the two plays are considered as one since the action is continuous. Miss Ellis-Fermor's remarks, however, were specifically designated to apply to only the first part.

96. See the speeches of Galatzo and Balurdo Act I, Scene 3. (Marston, Plays, Vol.I, pp. 76-7.) Almost any appearance of Balurdo seems to be unnecessary for the evolution of the plot.
and dies in the night; we learn of his death second hand; his body is seen after death only as a ghost. Feliche, too, is murdered off stage, but the appearance of the corpse is quite different than in Andragio’s case. "The curtain’s drawne, and the bodie of Feliche, stabd thick with wounds, appears hung up." In the margin of the particular Bulen edition which I used, a previous reader had annotated, "Powerfully theatrical." I agree, but must add that dramatically it is a little underhanded to beg an audience with such an obvious device. Julio, Piero’s young son, is murdered on stage. As he cries, "So you will love me, doe even what you will," Antonio stabs him, saying:

This blood,
This breast, this heart, Piero all;
Whom thus I mangle. Spirit of Julio,
Forget this was thy trunke, I live thy friend.

As Strotzo aids Piero in his intrigues, he is strangled (in clear view of the audience) by Piero, assisted by Castillo. Again theatrical brilliance, and this time dramatic validity with the exception of the cord which Strotzo wears around his neck. The cord makes the situation too close to per-

98. Ibid., p. 104.
99. Ibid.
fection to be wholly valid. Piero is murdered on stage, almost joyfully by Antonio, Pandulfo, Alberto, and Balurdo, who mutilate his body as Andrugio's ghost looks on approvingly:

Blest be thy hand. I taste the joyes of heaven,
Viewing my sonne tryumph in his blake bloode. 100

Excellent play, simple design, conduct of plot without extravagance? No. Here is the series of striking situations the Elizabethan audience so loved, but even with its excesses Antonio's Revenge is a better play than its predecessor.
The Malcontent is still better.

The Malcontent is probably Marston's best play -- not because of unity of action alone, although that is a contributing factor toward its success. There is little action which is included for the sake of spectacle. There is some that seems to have no purpose other than comedy, but even this is generally tied in with the main action in some way. In the conversation between Malevole and Bilosso in the first act, second scene, for example, the name of the duke is mentioned, so that the audience has the feeling of continuity. The second scene of the second act has less of a tie, but yet the presence of Malevole helps to connect it with the plot. The last part of Act III, Scene 1 was not in the

100. Ibid., p. 129.
first two, the unaugmented, editions. It appeared only
in the third edition. It has no logical connection
with the main action. The first part of Act V, Scene 1
is also supplied from the third edition, but there is a
tie-up with the main plot by mention of some of the main
characters. Other than to these few scenes, my objection
to the plot is general and is directed to the complications,
resulting from the intrigues, in turn resulting from
Marston's employment of the revenge theme. Miss Ellis-
Fermor has this to say:

... in the Malecontent there is a good,
rapid conduct of a close-wound action
... Marston is still liable to give us
a good situation not firmly set into
the plot, such as the dancing scenes
[IV, ii, and V, iii] ... but on the
whole the tragic action is a well-compacted
plot, close and clearly drawn, while
the underplot is a froth and foam of
'humours' made macabre and at times
sinister by the dark shadow that falls
upon it from the main plot. 102

Except for one, there are no scenes or even parts
of scenes in Sophonisba which are not directly aimed at
the main action. The one exception is the Eriotho episode,
which was quite obviously included to satisfy the preference

101. H. Harvey Wood discusses the three editions

102. Ellis-Fermor, op.cit., p. 91.
of the Jacobean audience for "striking situations."
Marston included it probably in part because it was "dirty," in part because it was good theatre to put the lusty Syphax in bed with the repulsive Eriotho. In spite of its coarseness it is a powerful scene; yet there is no causal connection between it and the plot. There are a few other things in the play which are theatrical rather than dramatic. In Act III, Scene 1, Sophonisba places Vangue who is intoxicated in her bed to take her place when Syphax returns. There is no necessity for this action, since an empty bed would have served her purpose as well.
In Act IV, Scene 1, the ghost of Asdruball appears to Syphax. It is probable that this is a carry-over from Antonio's Revenge even though Sophonisba is not in the revenge play tradition. Although the appearance does not detract from the main plot, neither does it add, and, therefore, is not an organic part of the whole. The only other things in this play which I should consider "striking" are the appearances on stage of Carthonal and Massinissa with wounds. Both of the appearances are logically included and have a dramatic part in the play. The murder of Vangue is handled deftly and with a lack of ceremony unlike Marston. Asdruball's suicide occurs off stage. Sophonisba's death
is beautiful, without doubt the best scene of the play.

Chance is more in evidence in Sophonisba than in any other of the five tragedies. Things do happen propitiously. Massinissa on his wedding night is ready to retire -- he has gone so far as to have drawn "a white ribbon forth of the bed as from the waste of Sopho." --when Carthalon enters telling of the Roman approach on Carthage. Massinissa must leave his bride for the battleground. Just as Qisco is about to poison Massinissa in a pretense of attending his wounds, Celosso discloses the plot to Massinissa and he is saved. Sophonisba gives Vangue a drink; fourteen lines (less than a minute's reading time) later Vangue is dead drunk, so that Sophonisba can place him in her bed.

There are the usual Marston complications of plot, but for all that the unity of action is not seriously violated in Sophonisba except for the Krischo scenes.

The plot of The Insatiate Countess is hardly worth bothering about, being in truth nothing but a series of episodes to bring out the lust of Isabella. There are

two sub-plots relentlessly interwoven with the main plot in an unsuccessful attempt at dramatic unity. The *Insatiate Countesse* is Marston's dirt at its worst. It seems to be nothing but a vehicle to which Marston could attach obscene words, obscene thoughts, obscene actions. The main plot, as I have said, is nothing but a series of episodes. One sub-plot, the one involving Rogero, Claridiana, and their wives, is of more careful construction than the main plot, but since it is a comedy, its inclusion with so much importance and space given it is not justifiable in a tragedy. The second sub-plot, involving Lendoza and Lady Lentulus, is serious. The only apparent reason for its inclusion is to complicate things. There is too much action with too little connection; there can be no unity of action. I cannot agree with Mr. Lacy Lockert who says *The Insatiate Countesse* is a

"straightforward story, with a humorous sub-plot juxtaposed solely for comic relief; and its one great defect, a lack of any clear revelation of the character of the heroine at the opening of the play and a meagerness of psychologic analysis of her changes of heart during its course, must be set down to simple inadequacy on the part of the author." 105

104. Bullen includes it in the other sub-plot. See Appendix B.

The existence of a sub-plot, unless there is causal connection between it and the main plot, necessarily takes away from the straightforwardness of a story. Neither of the sub-plots in this play is closely connected to the main plot and the two are not connected to each other except for Mendoza's accident. Mr. Lockert admits that the chief defect of the later Jacobean and Caroline drama is a loose coordination of theme and passion. How can Mr. Lockert overlook the loosely coordinated themes of 

The Insatiate Countess? Nor can the sub-plots be justified as comic relief. Comic relief presupposes pent-up emotions to be released. In this play the action in the larger sub-plot, and a member of the audience or a reader who can be excited by one is not to be relieved by the other. And even if Barston were expert in comic relief, he could not be justified for its overemphasis in

106. Ibid., p. 36.

107. F. T. Powers says he was no artist in this medium. F. T. Bowers, op. cit., p. 120.
The Insatiate Countesse: almost half the lines are given over to the sub-plot. Were it not for the treatment of a theme pregnant with possibilities, I should agree with that anonymous writer in The Retrospective Review who said: "The tragedy of the Insatiate Countesse is not only worthless, but disgusting."

It is here in plot, it is here in Marston's loosely coordinated themes, it is here in his lack of unity of action, that Marston's desire to please his audience comes to the front. He is not interested in story, as such, but only as it affords the opportunity to present striking situations. If the story of the main plot does not give adequate opportunity, he freely includes sub-plots which detract from unity of action.

CHARACTER

Of the faults attributed to Marston, the most common is that of weak characterization. While he might have looked to Marlowe and Shakespeare for examples of character drawing, there is little in the dramatic criticism of the day to aid him in his endeavors. Only in the theories of limitation and decorum are there rules applying to character.

Imitation is a classical doctrine, but it is questionable just how much of the classical spirit the Elizabethans believed in, notwithstanding their lip service to the word. Harington, for example, declares that poetry is "but an imitation" and, although he qualifies this with "as Aristotle calleth it," he apparently apologized that poetry is nothing more than an imitation. Aristotle would not apologize for poetry for any reason, certainly not for imitation, because he and the other classic critics considered imitation as not only desirable but also necessary to the art of poetry. Aschem does not apologize for imitation; indeed he admits the excellency of it, and yet, his view is a rather superficial one:

There be three kinds of it [imitation] in matters of learning.

The whole doctrine of comedies and tragedies is a perfect imitation, a faire livellie painted picture of the life of every degree of man ...

The second kind of imitation is to follow for learning of tongues and sciences the best authors ...

The third kind of imitation belongeth to the second; as ... to know perfectlie, and which way to follow ... in what place; by what means and order; by what tooles and instrumentes ye shall do it; by what skill and judgement ye shall travellie discern whether ye follow rightlie or no. 110

Imitation is a facultie to express lively and perfectlie that example which ye go about to follow. And of it selfe it is large and wide; for all the workes of nature in a manner be examples for arte to follow. 111

The "faire livellie painted picture is the common meaning applied to imitation by the Elizabethans." Sidney says, "Poesie ... is an arte of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfetten, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture ..." Sidney also affirms

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111. Ibid., p. 5.

112. Sidney, op. cit., p. 196.
the Aristotelian theory that by imitation even things which are horrible in themselves are made delightful. It is true that Sidney finds a meaning in imitation, deeper than this and deeper than most of the other critics of the day found. However, his theory that it should be an imitation of "what should be" is not applicable to character and I shall not discuss it.

In "The Arte of English Poesie", Puttenham defines decorum in the meaning most generally accepted by the Elizabethans. He calls it "seemlynesse." His Chapter XXIII is entitled, "What it is That Makes Our Speech Well Pleasing & Commendable, and of That Which the Latines Call Decorum." In this chapter he says:

In all things to use decencie, is it onely that giveth every thing his good grace & without which nothing in mans speech could seeme good or gracious ...

... our owne Saxon English terme is seemlynesse ...

And there is decency to be observed in every mans action aswell as in his speech & writing... 114

113. Ibid., p. 207. See The Poetics of Aristotle, Chapter 4.

By this definition he meant that man's speech and action should be accurately represented, that kings should speak and act as kings, artisans as artisans, and yeomen as yeomen.

Puttenham adds the further meaning of decorum that the "high" style of the "high" subjects (of Gods, Princes, affaire of war and peace) be reserved for hymns, histories, and tragedies; the "meane" style of "meane" matters (of "meane" men--"lawyers, gentlemen, and merchatne, good househoulders and honest Citizens"), for comedies and interludes; and the low style of base and low matters ("the doings of the common artificer, servingmen, yeoman, groome, husbandman, day-labourer, sailor, shepheard"), for eclogues and pastoral poems.

William Webbe demands that words fit the mood of the action: "patheticall" speeches for "Tragicall" exclamations, smoothly running verse for comfortable consolation, "byrge and hoystrous" words for dreadful battles and dreary bickerments, and "the like notes in all partes of his works." He quotes E.K. in praise of Spenser for

115. Ibid., pp. 158 and 173
116. Ibid.
the adherence to decorum in the *Sheepheards Calendar*:

"hys wittiness in deuising, his pithiness in vuttering, his complaintes of love so lovely, his discourses of pleasure so pleasantly, his Pastrall rudenesse, his Morrall wysenesse, his due observing of decorum every where..."  Sidney agrees with Webbe in this. He says:

... the Senate of Poets hath chosen verse as their fittest rayment ... not speaking (table talks fashion or like men in a dreame,) words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peyzing each sylable of each worde by just proportion according to the dignite of the subject. 119

These two critical doctrines, imitation and decorum, gave Marston little enough to work with in the creation of his characters, and most of Marston scholarship points out his deficiency in the field of characterization.

Mr. Theodore Spencer arrives at the usual conclusion when he says that Marston lacked the ability "to create character except in flashes." But he does have one

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118. Ibid., p. 263
living character. Miss Ellis-Fermor finds that "with Malevole of The Malcontent, Marston comes into his own, achieving for the first (and perhaps the last) time a living central figure in a serious play." Other than that one, it is truly, as Mr. Spencer says, the characterization is in flashes. The characters are not "faire livelier painted" pictures. I trust that this point is established in the ensuing arguments of the section.

The malcontent is Marston's own. The first, though rough, drawing is found in Feliche in Antonio and Mellida. The drawing is neither complete nor consistent, but there are glimpses of the malcontent throughout. In the induction, Feliche described the part he has to play:

Tis steedle, and must seeme so impregnably
fortreast with his own content, that no
envious thought could ever invade his spirit:
ever surveying any man so unmeasuredly
happie, whom I thought not justly hate-
full for some true improverishment: never
beholding any favour of Madam Felicity
gracing another, which his well bounded
content persuaded not to hang in the
front of his owne fortune: and therefore as
farre from envying any man, as he valued
all men infinitely distant from accomplish
beatitude. These native adjuncts appropriate
to me the name of Feliche. 122

121. Ellis-Fermor, op. cit., pp. 91-2.
In the second act, Feliche is disgusted with the flattery of Balurdo and Foroboso:

For flattery,
O how I hate that same Egyptian louse:
A rotten maggot, that lives by stinking filth
Of tainted spirits: vengeance to such dogs
That sprout by gnawing senseless carion. 123

In the third act, in a speech which has been compared to Malevole's remarks on sleep (The Malcontent, III, 11) and to the famous ones of King Henry in Shakespeare's Henry IV Part II, Feliche strongly presents his malcontent characteristics:

I cannot sleep: Feliche seldom rests
In these court lodgings. I have walked all night,
To see if the nocturnal court delights
Could force me envy their felicity:
And by plains truth; I will confess plains truthe
I envie nothing, but the Traversie light.
O, how I hate, and ears, and tongues, it might
See sport, hear speche of most strange surquedries.
O, if that candle-light were made a Post,
He would prove a rare firking Satyrist,
And drawe the care forth of impostum'd sin
Well, I thank heaven yet, that my content
Can envy nothing, but poore candle-light.
As for the other glistening copper spang,
That glisten in the tyre of the court,
Praise God, I eyther hate, or pittie them. 125

Feliche, however, is not the finished product. That is, of course, Malevole of The Malcontent. Marston's malcontents

123. Ibid., p. 24.


125. Ibid., p. 34.
are important in the history of the English drama, not only because they are Marston's most effective characters, but also because they had influence on other dramatists. Because the borrowings of the age were extensive, it is often difficult to know who borrowed from whom, but it is quite probable that Shakespeare drew from Marston for this type. "Marston's malcontents are men of virtue and honor 'who hate not man but man's lowd qualities;' in disfavor and out of joint with the world; given to melancholy and a showy pessimism that finds fitting expression only in images of filth and putrefaction." Not all of this definition may be applied to Shakespeare's malcontents, but enough so that the relation between the characters of the two poets is clear.

There are other types, too, that, however awkward in Marston's hands, were an influence on later drama. There is "that class of characters who are open in their profession of villainy and deliberate in their effort to amaze and appal mankind." It is a class originating in Seneca,


127. Thorndike, Tragedy, p. 147.
coming down through Barabas in the Jew of Malta and Lorenzo in The Spanish Tragedy, and reappearing in Piero in Antones Revenge and Mendoza in The Malcontent. From Marston it went on to The Atheist’s Tragedy and perhaps to the Revenger’s 128 Tragedy. Mendoza is an important figure in the history of the Elizabethan stage for other reasons. Though in- consistent, he became the model for the “villainous favorite who intrigues to cast his villain master” — a favorite 129 type in villain plays of later writers. Too, Marston “may have originated the heroine who was wicked or non- moral, fascinating and not a fool.” If he did not originate her, his Isabella, the insatiate countess, at least 130 affected the characters of Cleopatra and Vittoria.

Marston gave to others, though he was not very successful himself. He continually violated the doctrines of decorum and imitation. He makes his kings speak like kings only part of the time, not only violating the rules of decorum, but also leading to a more serious violation — of

130. Rupert Brooke, op.cit., p. 78.
imitation. Some of his characters do not live because they are inconsistent. Others are victims of pomposity, a result of his "straining for effect." Still others are victims of his morbid interest in the abnormal.

The characters of Antonio and Mellida seem as one blur. There are speeches and there is action, but there is little life or individuality or motivation. Marston almost always falls short of characters who live. Miss Ellis-Fermor says that the "uncertainty of his drawing and his lack of control is due partly to the luxuriance of his material, but mainly to that bewilderment to which the whole of his generation was subject." Whatever the cause, the characters of Antonio and Mellida attest to the fact that he had little control. Except for a few, they seem to have been carved from the same stick of wood. Feliche is interesting for the part he has to play in the development of the malcontent type. But he is inconsistent. Only part of the time does he speak and act as a malcontent; part of the time he has no more vitality, no more individuality than Alberto, Forbosco, Galeatzo, or Matzagenth. Fiero is interesting for his part in the history of the Elizabethan villain. But,

like Feliche, he is inconsistent. Here is Piero, the arch villian, calling:

Pursue, pursue, fly run, post, scud away.
Fly, call, run, rowe, ride, cry, shout, hurry, haste:
Haste, hurry, shoute, cry, ride, rowe, run, call, fly
Backward and forward, every way about. 132

Such lines as those might have some little justification coming from the mouth of Balurdo, certainly not from Piero. In addition to such inconsistencies in speech as this, there is a serious fault in Piero's characterization in the fifth act when he changes his feeling toward Andreus's house from hate to love with little real life motivation.

The conception of Balurdo is good, but Marston's execution of the character falls short of the inherent possibilities. Balurdo is quite consistent; almost always he sounds like Balurdo. He has valid comic tag lines: "As I am a true Christian" or "As I am a true knight." "Now there's a word," and "In deed, law." His motivation seems to be legitimate in the preoccupations of a foppish courtier, interest in words for the sake of words and interest in dress. Yet he falls short. It is probable that he falls short because Marston exaggerates the comic characteristics too much.

In the first scene of the fifth act, Balurdo speaks:

If you see one in a yellow taftpeta dubblet, out upon carnation value, a green hat, a blowe paire of velvet hose, a gilt rapier, and an orange tawny paire of worsted silk stockings, thats I, thats I.

Ho, you shall know me easily, I ha bought mee a newe greene feather with a red sprig; you shall see my wrought shirt hang out at my breeches, you shall know me.

Marry in the maske it will be somewhat barde. But if you heare any bodie speake so wittily, that hee makes all the roome laugh; that's I, that's I. 133

Mr. F. T. Bowers has said this of the characterization of Balurdo:

The comic scenes with Balurdo help to fill the action, but Marston was no artist in comic relief. Balurdo's first scene with Antonio undeniably gives body and wit to the play, but after that he is a mere excrescence despite the feeble efforts to link him to the plot. 134

The characterization of Rosaline also has possibilities, but here again Marston fails to come up to them. She is at her best when she is good-naturedly coarse, such

133. Ibid., p. 54.
134. Bowers, op. cit., p. 120.
as in her description of Calemetzo:

Troth, one that will besiege thy maidenhead,
Enter the walls yfaith (sweet Mellida)
If that thy flankers be not canon proof. 135

At her worst she is either too genteel, as in the first
act when she meets Antonio disguised as Florizell, the
Amazon:

Nay faith, sweete creature, weelee not vaile our
names.
It pleasd the font to dip me Rossalize:
That Ladie beares the name of Mellida.
The Duke of Venice daughter. 138

or too commonly coarse, as in her first appearance in the
second act:

Raugh; servant rub out my rheum, it
soiles the presence. 137

The rest of the characters are almost consistent in their
woodenness. Only occasionally can one see a breath of
life in them.

In Antonio's Revenge at least two of the characters,
Antonio and Piero, show improvement since Antonio and Mellida.
At times in the later play, Antonio does come to life;

136. Ibid., p. 18.
137. Ibid., p. 23.
Marston does find in this character the spirit of serious tragedy. One of these times is at Hellida's death. Antonio invokes heaven:

O heaven, thou maist indeede; she was all thine,  
All heavenly, I did but humbly beg  
To borrow her of thee a little time.  
Thou gavest her me, as some weake breasted dame  
Giveth her infant, puts it out to nurse;  
And when it once goes high-lone, takes it back.  
She was my vitall blood, and yet, and yet,  
Ils not blasphemese. 138

Marston improved the characterization of Piero, too, when he wrote the new play. He no longer wrote such lines as the "Haste, hurry, shoute" series, although he sometimes weighs him down with such pompous lines as these:

... the dapple grey coursers of the morn  
beat up the light with their bright silver hooves,  
And chase it through the lines. 139

Nevertheless, the characterization is quite successful and it is probably of the Piero of *Antonio's Revenge* that Mr. Bowers writes:

... in many ways Marston's Piero is the best villain yet exhibited. [Mr. Bowers probably means in the revenge tragedies — his meaning is not wholly clear even in context] He is more human, he has more real blood in his veins; for most of the time he is decidedly not a caricature like Barabas or Aaron, who were abstract villains — Piero's heartiness, his occasional naivete, his bold effrontery are highly interesting. 140

140. *Bowers, op. cit.*, p. 120.
Of the characters who are new to Antonio's Revenge, only Strazzo and Pandulpho are worthy of note. Strazzo, the fawning accomplice, is an effective foil to Piero. A particularly effective scene is in the first act where he replies to Piero with only "yes" or "no." And it was with considerable insight that Marston drew the grief-stricken Pandulpho laughing at the death of his son, Feliche.

Pan. Ha, ha, ha.
Al. Why laugh you uncle? That's my cuz, your son.
Whose breast hangs cased in his cluttered gore.
Pa. True man, true: why, wherefore should I weep?
Come sit, kinde Nephew: come on: thou and I will talke as Chorus to this tragodie.
Intreat the musick straine their instruments,
With a slight touch, whilst we -- say on faire cuz.
Alb. He was the very hope of Italy,
The blooming honour of your drooping age.
Pa. True cuz, true. They say that men of hope are cruak:
Good are suppress by base desertlessse clods,
That stifile gasping vertue. Look sweet youth,
How provident our quick Venetians are,
Least hoves of jades should trample on my boy:
Looke how they lift him up to eminence,
Heave him, bove reach of flesh. Ha, ha, ha.
Alb. Uncle, this laughter ill becomes your griefe.
Pan. Would'st have me cry, run raving up &
down,
For my sons losse? would'st have me turne rack mad,
Or wring my face with mimic action;
Stamp, curse, weape, rage, & then my bosom strike?
Away this apish action, player-like.
If he is guiltless, why should tears be spent? 141

It is a powerful scene and makes one wish that Marston had drawn character like that more often.

I have previously discussed Malevole and Mendoza of The Malcontent in regard to their types. Malevole is a wholly successful characterization and the only one in the five Marston tragedies with which I should not quarrel. Mendoza is relatively successful but he is a victim of the usual Marstonian pomposity of speech, which does not truly befit him as a villain. There is one other character of The Malcontent whom I should like to mention -- Maquerelle, a panders. In scene six of act one when she panders

Farneze in the case of Aurelia, Farneze palms jewels into her hand as he pledges after her. But on the last pledge:

Mag. And that the doore shall not creake --
Far. And that the doore shall not creake.
Mag. Nay but swears --
Far. By this purse: [Gives her his purse.
Mac. Go to, Ile keeps your oaths for you ... 142

No one gets the better of Maquerelle. And when she has what she wants, that is all. In this one scene, Marston has made a complete characterization of an interesting figure, but then again he tries too hard; his straining

142. Ibid., p. 156-57.
for effect detracts from the characterization. Maquerelle
loses when Marston gives her speeches with the obvious
comic device of a long series of manifest absurdities as
those in Act II, Scene 4 and in Act IV, Scene 1. The
interest in Maquerelle lies in obvious chicanery, not in
obvious humour.

In Sophonisba the characters are generally as un-
developed as those in Marston's earliest play, Antioch and
Helida; however, there are flashes of life. Sophonisba,
herself, is anything but a "faire livelie painted picture"
during most of the action, but at times she comes to life.
She seems quite real as she complains to her maid about the
state of women forced upon them by convention. In the
third act when Syphax would force her to submit to him,
she is great and good in the serenity of this one line,

"Can Sophonisba bee infract'd?"  And one can forgive
many faults in Marston because he wrote the following lines.

As Sophonisba dies, she says:

You have beene good to me,
And I doe thankes thee heaven, O my stara,
I blesses your goodnes, that with breast
unstaind,
Faith pure: a Virgin wife, try'de to my

glory,

143. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 11-12.
144. Ibid., p. 32.
I die of female faith, the long liv'de story,
Secure from bondage, and all servile harmses,
But more, most happy in my husbands armes. 145

The nobility of the character "must find favour with the reader. The execution of the portrait is, however, vastly 146 inferior to the conception of it."

At times Syphax is a powerful character. In the scene mentioned above in which he would force Sophonisba, for example:

Must wee intreat? sue to such squeamish lares,
Know Syphax has no knees, his eyes no tears,
Inraged love is senseles of remorse,
Thou shalt, thou must.

... look Ile tack thy head
To the low earth, whilst strength of too blacke knaves
Thy limbs all wide shall straine: prayer fitteth slaves.
Our courtship be our force: rest calme as sleepe,
Els at this quake ...147

There is strength, too, in these lines as he battles Massinissa:

My Gods my armes, my life, my heaven,
my grave
To mee all end. 148

145. Ibid., p. 61.
148. Ibid., p. 55.
At other times Syphax is as lifeless as Massinissa. Marston fails too, in the characterization of Erichtho, to meet all of the possibilities. Erichtho’s one speech after Syphax discovers that it is she with whom he has lain is proof of the failure. The beginning is fine, cruel and powerful and ironic, really exciting:

Why feste of kings, could thy weake
soul imagin
That tis within the grape
of Heaven or Hell
To enforce love?

but fifteen lines later in the same speech Erichtho is

... our love forswell,
Know he that would force love, thus
seeks his Hell. 149

One modern critic suggests that the present age may come to give Sophonisba the honor of being one of the "finest examples of the true 'poetic drama' (King Lear being the

150 supreme example), in which poetry and drama are one."

This critic neglects, probably wisely, the fact that


characters are necessary even in "poetic drama." An attempt at comparison between the characters of Lear and Sophonisba would be meaningless, foolish, in vain.

Isabella is the only noteworthy character in The Insatiate Countess. I have mentioned her previously in this section as an early example of the immoral heroine. 151

The character has great possibilities, a fascinating woman of position, corrupted by an overwhelming lust into a state of utter depravity. What does Marston do with Isabella? He puts her in bed with four different men and sends her to the executioner. And that is truly just about all he does with her. Isabella says that she is lustful; the other characters in the play say she is; but Marston fails to make his reader feel that she is. In the section entitled "Plot," I cited Mr. Iacy Lockert's criticism of The Insatiate Countess. Part of that quotation is apropos at this point and I repeat it:

151. This is in complete disagreement with A.C. Swinburne who says: "The incessant inconstancy of passion which hurries the fantastic heroine through such a miscellaneous multitude of improvised intrigues is rather a comic than a tragic motive for the conduct of the play." [Algernon Charles Swinburne, The Age of Shakespeare (Second impression; London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), pp. 132-33.]
...its one great defect, a lack of any clear revelation of the character of the heroine at the opening of the play and a meagerness of psychological analysis of her changes of heart during its course, must be set down to simple inadequacy on the part of the author. 152

At the beginning of the play, Mizaldus introduces Isabella:

What should we doe in the Countesses darke hole?
She's sullenly retyr'd, as the Turtle:
Every day has beene a blakke day with her since her husband dyed ... 153

A short time later we find Isabella accepting the love of Alberto with these words:

Ifaith my Lord, I had a Months minde unto you,
As tedious as a full rip'd Maidenhed.
And Count of Cypres thinke my love as pure,
As the first opening of the bloomes in May;
You're virtuous, man; 154 nay, let me not blush to say so:
And see for you sake thus I leave to sorrow.
Beginne this subtile conjuration with mee,
And as this Taper, due unto the dead,
I here extinguish, so my late dead Lord
I put out ever from my memory,
That his remembrance may not wrong our love. 155

152. Lockert, op.cit., p.68.
154. I accept the quintern exereation from "Your vertues man."
(She is almost as two-dimensional as Melissa of the Antonio plays.) She marries Roberto. Then at the dance:

(The second change. Isabella falls in love with Massino when the changers speak.

Is. Change is no robbery; yet in this change
Thou rob'st me of my heart: sure
Cupid's here,
Disguis'd like a pretty torch-bearer,
And makes his brand a Torch, that with
more sleight
He may intrap weake women ... 156

After the dance she comes to life somewhat, as she thinks
of her wifely duties:

Sullen Night ...
Mend thy slacke pace, and lend the malecontent,
The hoping lover, and the wishing Bride
Seemes that too long thou shadowest: or
if not
In spight of thy fixt front when my
loath'd Mate
Shall struggle in due pleasure for his right,
Ile think't my love, and die in that
delight. 157

When she has left Roberto, has seduced Massino, and has
begun her conquest of Count Gniace, she exhibits real
passion. It does not last. Even here Marston gives
her lines like these:

His sight and touching wee will recreate,
That his five Sences shall be five-fold happy.
His breath like Roses casts out sweete perfume;
Time now with pleasure shall it selfe consume. 158

156. Ibid., p. 22.
157. Ibid., p. 27.
158. See her speeches, Ibid., p. 44.
159. Ibid., p. 47.
Lines like these last do not belong to Isabella. They would be acceptable if Marston had given them to her as conversation pieces — she is a mature woman, married and widowed though not yet twenty-four years old, and should be expected to be genteel in public. But phrases like "Cupid's here, Disguised like a pretty Torch-bearer" and "breath like Roses" seem out of place in the soliloquies of a wanton. Isabella is often lifeless, and often her speech does not befit her character. In addition to Isabella there are two groups of characters important in the play. The first consists of Mendoza, suitor to Lady Lentulus in one of the sub-plots, and Roberto, Massimo, Oniscus, and Don Sego, all suitors to Isabella. The second consists of the actors in a sub-plot, Rogero and his wife, Thais, and Claridana and his wife, Abigail. Each of these characters is so like the other in his group as to make him indistinguishable, and for that reason I feel justified in ignoring them.

Marston has created several interesting characters and has even contributed several types to the drama. However, his characters are generally weak as a result of his straining for effect. He misses true passion in the overstraining of motives — revenge, physical lust, and lust for power or position or wealth. He loses touch with reality in his emphasis of stage effect over characterization.
Marston consistently turned his back upon England as the setting for his tragedies, four of the five being laid in Italy and the fifth in Libya. Both Antioch and Hellenism and Antioch's Revenge take place in and around Venice. The Insatiate Countesse uses Venice and Pavia for its setting. The Malcontent is laid at Genoa. Sophonisba goes to distant Carthage, Cirta, and Utica in equally distant and mysterious Libya. Mr. Lacy Lockert attributes to Marston the revival of the use of Italy for setting. With so much doubt concerning the exact dates of play production in the first decade of the seventeenth century, it seems highly conjectural to make a definite attribution of this kind. But, as has been pointed out earlier, Marston was an important figure in tragedy at this time and no doubt his use of Italy as setting did influence the other dramatists. Therefore, I think it is safe to assume that, if he did not, in fact, revive this use as Mr. Lockert suggests, he did at least add impetus to the movement.

The attackers of poetry in the Elizabethan age were opposed to the use of foreign elements. "Like the moralists

160. Lockert, op. cit., p. 77.
of all ages, they [say] wickedness in anything which [some]
from beyond the national boundaries." Stephen Gosson

in The School of Abuse said:

We have robbed Greece of gluttony, Italy of
wantonness, Spain of pride, France of deceit,
and Dutchland of quaffing. Compare London
to Rome, and England to Italy; you shall find
the theaters of the one, the abuses of the
other, to be rife among us. 162

In The Scholemaster, Roger Ascham rails at Italianate
Englishmen, concluding with:

These be the enchantements of Circe, brought
out of Italie, to marre mens manner in England;
most by example of ill life, but more by pre-
cepts of fond bookes, of late translated out
of Italian into English, sold in every shop in
London, commended by honest titles the sover to
corrupt honest manners, dedicated over boldlie
to vertuous and honorable personnages the
ersieller to begile simple and innocent wittes
... when the busie and open Papistes abroad
could not, by their contentious bookes, turne
men in England fast enough from troth and
right judgement in doctrine, then the sutile
and scrette Papistes at home procured bawdie
booke to be translated out of the Italian
tonge, whereby ouer many yong willis and
wittes allured to wantonnes do now boldly
contamne all severe bookes that sounde to
honestie and godlines. 163


162. Stephen Gosson, "The School of Abuse," The
Golden Hind; an anthology of Elizabethan prose and poetry
[Ray Lemson and Hallett Smith, editors; New York: "",

These quotations from Gosson and Ascham may seem somewhat removed from the subject of foreign setting in the drama. I include them because of their condemnation of all that is foreign, all that is "Italianate." "In its general tendencies ... and in its fundamental character, this school of drama is no longer English; it is 'Italianate' in the full derogatory sense in which Roger Ascham employs the term, and to a much more harmful degree than any literary force of Ascham's day could possibly have been." It is the foreign setting which gives credence to the wickedness and wantoness so important in the Puritan objection to the stage, to the wickedness and wantoness so strong in Marston's interest, to the wickedness and wantoness so in keeping with the sensationalism which Marston loved.

164. Mr. Brooke includes in this school Webster, Tournear, and Ford. He cites as examples of their drama Vittoria Corombona (The White Devil), The Revenger's Tragedy, and The Broken Heart. How well he might have included Marston, citing Antonio and Mellida, Antonio's Revenge, and The Ineatiate Countess.

THE DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

SUBJECT MATTER

Decorum --- Tragi-Comedy

One of the most important critical doctrines in the Elizabethan age is the doctrine of decorum. Critics condemned plays more for lack of decorum than for any other failure. In the section on characters, we have already seen part of decorum, that the characters should speak and act as the people they represent. There is more to decorum than this. It also means that the dramatist should not mix people of different classes together in the same scene, and that he should not mix jests with serious matter. It is this last which interests me here in a discussion of tragi-comedy.

Gascoigne in his "Certayne Notes of Instruction" gives this advice to a prospective writer concerning subject matter:

Your Invention being once devised, take heed that neither pleasure of rime nor variety of devise do carie you from it:

166. Hall, op. cit., p. 181-82.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid., p. 211.
for to use obscure and dark phrases in
a pleasant Sonet is nothing delectable,
so to entermingle merie ists in a ser-
ious matter is an Indecorum. 169

It is clear that he means that tragi-comedy is a violation
of the doctrine of decorum. Sidney, too, finds it so. In
a criticism of some of the English dramatists, he finds
that they violate the theory of the unities, and then he
continues:

But besides these grosse absurdities [as
occasioned by a disregard of the unitie],
how all their Plays be neither right Tragedies,
nor right Comedies; mingling Kings and Clowns,
not because the matter so arriseth it; but
thrust in Clowns by head and shoulders, to
play a part in majestickall matters, with
neither decency nor discretion. So as
neither the admiration and commiseration,
nor the right spottfulness, is by their mun-
grel Tragy-comedie obtained. 170

It is not only the critics who find it desirous to
separate the tragic from the comic, but also the dramatists.
Marston, himself, in the prologue to Antonio's Revenge
testifies his acceptance of "the clear separation of tragedy
from other forms of drama, which he and other poets were
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trying to force upon the theatre."

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169. George Gascoigne, "Certayne Notes of Instruction
concerning the Making of Verse and Ryme in English, Written
at the Request of Master Edouardi Donati," Elizabethan


171. Thorndike, Tragedy, p. 150.
If any spirit breathes within this round,
Uncapable of weightie passion
(As from his birth, being hugg'd in the arms,
And nuzzled twixt the breasts of happiness)
Who winkes, and shuts his apprehension up
From common sense of what men were, and are,
Who would not knowe what men must be;
let such
Hurre amaine from our black visag'd showes:
We shall affright their eyes.

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O that our power
Could lackie, or keepe wing with our desires;
That with unused paize of stile and sense
We might weigh massy in judolous scale -- 172

Then looking ahead a few years from Marston to a time when
tragi-comedy had found an important place on the English
stage, we find a definition of this form. John Fletcher
in the "To the Reader," prefacing The Faithful Shepherdess:

A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of
mirth and killing, but in respect it wants
deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy,
yet brings some near it, which is enough to
make it no comedy, which must be a representa-
tion of familiar people, with such kind of
trouble as no life be question'd; so that
a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy,
and mean people as in a comedy." 173

By Fletcher's definition, two of the five plays which
I have considered in the study of tragedy are tragi-comedies.


173. John Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess in The
Chief Elizabethan Dramatists excluding Shakespeare [William
Allan Neilson, editor; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company,
(1911)], p. 598.
Because they "want deaths," **Antonio and Mellida** and **The Malcontent** cannot be "right" tragedies. By Sidney's more stringent requirements, only **Sophonisba** is a "right" tragedy. The others, because they mix jests with serious matter, are tragi-comedies. By modern standards, probably only **The Malcontent** would be considered a tragi-comedy. Mr. Lockert says that it was Marston who produced, in this play, "what was the first genuine tragi-comedy in every requisite of the type save the presence of a dominating love-story."

It is little wonder that Marston adopted this form in which there could be a wide range of scenes, passions, and motives, for it gave him free rein in his striving for effect.

**REVENGE TRAGEDY**

One of the things for which Marston is best remembered is his use of the revenge theme as subject for his tragedies. Until the year 1936 it had become almost traditional in discussions of the history of the revenge tragedy to acredit him with the revival of this form at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Ashley M. Thorndike made an

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elaborate chronological history of the revenge tragedy, in which he placed the plays in this order:

1. Kyd's *The First Part of Jeronimo, The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet*, "all probably acted within two or three years before 1589."

2. *Antonio and Mellida*, 1599.


4. Revival of the revenge plays, 1599-1600. From the induction to *Cynthia's Revels* (acted in 1600 by the Chapel Children): "They say the ghosts of some three or four plays departed a dozen years since have been seen walking on your stage here..."

5. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. "Probably, indeed, as is now somewhat generally agreed, it was not put on the stage earlier than 1601."


9. *Hamlet* (Shakespeare's final version), probably 1603.


12. *Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy*, before 1607. 175

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Thomdike definitely attributes the revival to Marston, as does Mr. Lacy Lockert; and Felix E. Schelling says that the revival "seems" referable to Marston.

In 1938 Donald J. McGinn published a new theory on the revival of the revenge tragedy. He places the date for the production of *Antonio's Revenge* in the late winter or early spring of 1591, and concludes:

> If we rely upon this evidence, we must assume that Marston had already seen Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which probably appeared in a more or less complete form by the opening weeks of 1591. This, of course, would account not only for the masked resemblance between *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet* but also for the evident change in plan between *Antonio* and *Mistress* and *Antonio's Revenge*. Most important of

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177. Lockert, op. cit., p. 76.

178. Felix E. Schelling, *English Drama*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1914), p. 128. However, such scholars as A. Ward and E. K. Chambers fail to mention a revival at all.

179. This point is based on faulty reasoning, for if Shakespeare had seen Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* "in a more or less complete form" in the winter of 1589-1590, this, too, would account for "The marked resemblance between *Antonio's Revenge* and *Hamlet*." E. A. Stoll has said, "That in *Hamlet* Shakespeare was imitating and emulating the revenge plays of Marston (and the Malcontent is to be included in their number) appears likely even from external circumstantial evidence." (Stoll, op. cit., p. 289.) (I include this statement of Stoll's, not as evidence, but to show what critics believed when they assumed Marston was responsible for the revival.)
all, it would make Shakespeare responsible for the revival of interest in the tragedy of revenge. 180

I do not know if we can rely upon this evidence. To me, with a limited knowledge of the bibliographical process, Mr. McGinn’s arguments appear to be logical enough and conclusive enough to cast doubt on Marston’s responsibility for the revival. I am not ready at this point, however, to say definitely that Shakespeare was responsible.

If Marston did not revive the revenge tragedy, still he had an influence on later tragedies, and (to employ a phrase I have used before) he added impetus to the movement. Mr. F.T. Bowers in his book, *Elizabethan Revenge tragedy*, says:

> Granted the whole central situation of *Antonio’s Revenge* parallels *Hamlet*. .. Grant the extreme borrowings of incident from Kyd and Shakespeare ... Yet Marston added much that was new to the form. 181

Ashley H. Thorndike makes repeated references to Marston’s influence on later dramatists in the revenge tragedy:

> ... the revenge tragedy received a remarkable development by Marston 182

> *Antonio’s Revenge* ... is not wanting in inventiveness; its abundant horrors and its melodramatically ingenious stage effects were

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181. *Bowers, op. cit.*, p. 120.

probably recognized as an advance upon the old favorites, and they excited the emulation of succeeding dramatists. 183

The four plays [The Revenger's Tragedy, The Second Maiden's Tragedy, The White Devil, and The Duchess of Malfi] may be said to constitute a new species whose differences from the old type seem clearly unconnected with Shakespeare's Hamlet but directly traceable to Marston's plays, especially his Malcontent. 184

I think it matters little which of the two poets revived the revenge tragedy. Without doubt the two plays, Antonio's Revenge and Hamlet, were produced not too far apart; the two poets, Marston and Shakespeare, were both influential in the revival and on later revenge plays. The use of the revenge theme, with its traditional blood and thunder, is further evidence of Marston's bid for the sensational.

**SONGS**

The only discussion of the songs in Marston's plays which I have found is "The Songs of the Public Theaters in the Time of Shakespeare" by John Robert Moore. I am indebted to it for the historical background in this section.

According to Mr. Moore, the singers of the morality plays and the interludes were mere clowns and the songs

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irrelevant to the production. This type of song was not to be found much after Greene, that is after about 1590, except in the plays of Marston and other writers for the children's companies. Then after 1616 the tendency toward irrelevancy of song again became evident with the result, mere singers again in the Caroline and Restoration drama.

Mr. Moore gives examples of a number of Jacobean and early Caroline dramas in which songs had a structural part, and he points out that it was quite otherwise with Marston, that many of the songs in Marston's plays -- like those in Lyly's -- were "mere bits of irrelevant entertainment."

He says:

"...the plays of Lyly and Marston (written for the children, and containing many blank directions for singing of an indefinite character) are almost wholly lacking in words of the songs, although they were issued fairly soon after dramatic presentation and with a strong presumption of literary ambition on the part of the authors."

Even in The Malcontent with six songs "(four rather elaborate ones and two short passages)" which, according to Mr. Moore,


186. Ibid., p. 167.

187. Ibid., p. 175.
are structural parts of the play, the songs are blank—
that is, the words are not given — except for four lines
sung by malevole and haquerelle and one line sung by malevole
in derision of ietro who awaits the discovery of ferneze in
the Duchess's chamber. I cannot agree entirely with Mr.
moore's analysis of the songs in the Malcontent. I find
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four songs, designated as such in the play. The stage
directions for a fifth song, which is noted by Mr. Moore,
are confusing — "Cornets. The song to the Cornets which
playing, the maske enters." — (Act V, Scene 4). No
singer is designated and further stage directions indicate
that the "song to the cornets" is actually musical accompan-
iment for the dancing — "...the Cornets sound the measure,
one change and rest" and "Cornets sound the measure over
again: which danced, they unmaske." I yield to Mr. Moore's
expert knowledge on the line, "When Arthur first in court

188. Ibid., p. 194.
190. Ibid., p. 212.
191. Ibid.
192. Ibid., p. 213.
began ..." (Act II, Scene 3). However, though this line be from an Elizabethan song, there is no evidence in The Malcontent (in either the Bullen or the Wood edition) that the line is to be sung. It would seem to be an exaggeration to call this line a song. I should also take exception to Mr. Moore's words "four rather elaborate ones." Just how songs without words can be called elaborate is beyond my comprehension. And as for "structural parts of the play" -- Mr. Moore does not take into consideration the construction of the plays, understandably, since he is primarily interested in the songs, not in Marston's work. For me "structural part of the play" indicates a part which cannot be taken away without loss of meaning. All of the songs, except the one line (Act II, Scene 3) -- if it is a song -- and the four lines of doggerel sung by Malevole and Maquerelle (Act V, Scene 1), may be left out without loss of meaning.

Mr. Moore summarizes the part of the songs in Marston's plays in relation to those in the work of the other dramatists:

... very commonly in plays by Marston and others for the Children, but rarely in popular plays, the dramatist was quite unconcerned about the songs, and left

193. Ibid., p. 165.
them wholly to the caprice of the singers. For the children of the Queen’s Revels, so late a play as The Insatiate Countess could still contain the direction “After some short song, enter ...”; but in the popular plays, such uncertainty in regard to dramatic songs can hardly be found later than the time of Greene a score of years earlier. 194

In the discussion of plot earlier in this paper 195 I have shown Marston’s interest in incidental music. I should now like to review all of the tragedies for evidences of the irrelevancy of the songs.

In the first act of Antonio and Mellida there are no songs, structural parts or no, but in the second act there is a song by Flavia. Catzo and Dildo are on stage when Flavia enters.

Fla. My sweete Dildo, I am not for you at this time ... sweete away.
Dil. Twill not be so put off ...
Catz. The breefe and the semiquaver is, wee must have the descant you made upon our names, ere you depart.
Fla. Faith, the song will seeme to come off hardly.
Catz. Truth not a whit, if you seeme to come off quickly.
Fla. Peart Catzo, knock it lustily then. 196

CANTANT

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195. See the discussion of the first act of Antonio and Mellida, supra, pp. 35-36.
This song is a structural part of the scene. The scene, however, is not relevant to the play and would seem to have been included solely as a means of introducing the song, the words of which are not given. Immediately after the song, the stage directions direct Castilio to enter "singing fantastically." Again there are no words and the reason for Castilio's singing is not clear to me unless "singing fantastically" indicated to the Elizabethan audience a gay courtier.

There are three songs in the third act; none seem to add to the development of the plot or to the delineation of character, although there is an attempt at justification for two. The first song comes in the midst of gloom when Andrugio learns of the price on his head. Andrugio introduces the song with these lines:

... boy let's have a song: Wee to sing yet, faith, even despite of fate. 198

The second song is sung by Castilio for no apparent reason. Near the end of this act in the middle of Piero's "Haste, hurry, shouts" speech, is this stage direction and this one line of a song: "Feliche sing. And was not good king

197. Ibid.
198. Ibid., p. 34.
199. Ibid., p. 35.
Salomon [sic].” It took me some time to figure out the connection between the song and the text of the play. But coming as it does in the midst of Hiero’s orders to his attendants, the song probably refers to the slave labor employed by Solomon in building the temple. Perhaps the reference to Solomon would have more immediacy to an Elizabethan audience than to a reader today, particularly since the audience could hear the entire song and the reader must rely on only one line. But though the connection be valid, still, the relevancy of the song is questionable, for it seems to detract from the attempted urgency of Hiero’s speech.

The grief-stricken Antonio of the fourth act bids his page to sing a song, "The sad extracture of extremest grief,"

a song might be theatrically effective and even dramatically valid in this place, but again the song is blank. The effectiveness and the validity would come to the song through its power to create mood. It is strange that a playwright should leave so important a function to the discretion of an actor.

In the painter scene, Act V, Balurdo sings a two line song (the words are given) which has a structural part in

200. Ibid., p. 42.
201. Ibid., p. 47.
the scene. I question the relevancy of the scene to the play. Following this is the singing contest, which is obviously nothing more than a device for introducing three songs, all of which are blank.

There are six songs in *Antonio's Revenge*. Five of the six are blank. Four of the five are used merely to end scenes, including the last scene of the play. The fifth blank song is used as a device to awaken Bellida. The words to the sixth song are given in full. Balurdo is sent by Piero to sing to Maria:

My mistress's eye doth oyle my joints, and makes my fingers nimble;
O love, come on, untruss your points, By fiddlestok wants Rozzon.
My ladies dugs are all so smooth, That no flesh must them handle;
Her eyes do shine, for to say sooth Like a newe snuffed candle. 204

Almost the only justification the scene has in the play is the inclusion of this song.

In *Sophonisba* there are five blank songs and indications of perhaps a sixth, these stage directions preface

Act IV: "Organ Violls and Voices play for this Act."

None of the songs are structural, but most of them are theatrically effective. For example: in the first scene of the third act Sophonisba prepares for a prayer: "Cornets and Organs playing full musick. Enters the solemnity of a sacrifice, which being entred whilst the attendance furnish the Altar Sopho. Songs: which done she speaks."

In addition to the songs in Sophonisba, there is an extensive use of musical accompaniment with details as to the type of music and the kinds of instruments to be used.

There is only one song, blank, and there are no stage directions for musical accompaniment in The Insatiate Countesse. The one song is structural, but, like one of the songs in Antonio's Revenge used as a device to awaken Mellida, the song in The Insatiate Countesse is used as a device to arouse Lady Lentulus. Although there are no stage directions for other music, it may certainly be safely assumed that there is music for the dance, Act II, Scene 1.

206. Ibid., p. 43.
207. Ibid., p. 36.
208. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 36.
In regard to tragi-comedy, Sidney warned against thrusting in clowns by head and shoulders. It might have been well for someone to have warned Marston against thrusting in songs by head and shoulders. Marston's use of song clearly indicates his interest in stage effect and in splendors appealing to the senses. He continually thrusts in songs which have no connection to plot or to character. He thrusts them in merely to please his audience.

DICTION

Of the poetry of Marston's drama, Bullen has said:

... he had at his command abundance of striking imagery. But we are never sure of him; from tragic solemnity he passes to noisy rhodomontade; at one moment he gives us a passage Aeschylean in its subtle picturesqueness, at another he feebly reproduces the flaccid verbosity of Seneca's tragedies. 210

Scholarship is full of contradiction. Sometimes there is contradiction in the criticism of several critics. Sometimes a critic finds contradictions within a poet's work, as Bullen has done in the poetry of Marston. Too often, however, the critics are not as fair as Bullen has been; there is either too much praise or too much censure. For the most part it has generally been the latter in Marston's case, probably at least partly occasioned by the Jonson attacks

on Marston's diction. Actually he is a dramatist of "greater originality and significance than is always admitted. His early work was experimental, ill-disciplined and irregular, but it was at least original and fertile in invention."

And what is true of Marston as a dramatist is also true of him as a poet. Although his work may be described at times as a "great battering ram of tearmes," at other times it may be called strong and daring.

In many of the passages from the tragedies which I have quoted in other sections of this paper, we have seen some of the atrocities of Marston's vocabulary and diction. With even a casual look at the plays one could see many more examples of the eccentricities of his language. Marston's critics almost always write about them.

On the other hand, there are a few images, a few passages, and a few scenes which have been singled out for praise. The opening scene of Act III of Antonio and Bellida with Andrugio and Lucio on the beach is a notable example. This scene contains the passage,

... thou liest, Philosophy,
    Nature formes things unperfect, useless, vaine.

which I have previously quoted. Lamb quotes this scene in his Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets, and Bullen says

211. Ellis-Fermor, op.cit., p. 77.
213. Ellis-Fermor, op.cit., p. 78.
that it is deserving of the "eloquent praise that it received from the hands of Lamb." And since the publication of Lamb's book, it has accumulated quite an array of adjectives, such as "noble," "princely," "earnest." I don't mean to infer that this passage alone is noteworthy. Miss Ellis-Fermor cites a number of individual images which she says are interesting and of great beauty. "Upon all of these there is the stamp of the great Jacobean coinage; the shock and stir of fine and sudden images, the majestic march of the music." Mr. H. Harvey Wood, Marston's latest editor, points out the "abrupt originality of Marston's style" in the Antonio soliloquy, *Antonio's Revenge*, Act II, Scene 3. And there are others.

Marston did not happen onto his rare and brilliant successes. He tried hard. He was an experimenter, as I have previously mentioned. His strained and inflated style in *Sophonisba* came as a result of experimentation. He was attempting to match language to the dignity and importance of his subject. He failed, failed through speeches "couched in terms so lofty and gnomic that the reader inclines to agree with old Gelosso (the worst offender) when he says:

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I fear Gods onely know what
Poets meane." 217

Mr. Theodore Spencer sees that the atrocities of vocabulary which resulted from Marston's experimentation prevented other dramatists from making the same mistake. "Marston's style was an object lesson, and Shakespeare, among others, probably benefitted by it ... A man who, like Marston, is continually experimenting with words is bound to have a stimulating effect on his poetic contemporaries, even though his experiments are rarely successful." Miss Ellis-Fermor affirms this and even goes farther:

... he did notable service to the subsequent drama in the very department in which at first he made himself most notorious, his diction. For it is Marston who, when the spasmodic and undisciplined hyperbole of his early vocabulary is reduced (whether by the ministrations of Ben Jonson or by the milder operations of time and natural development), maintains by the strength and daring of his imagery the tragic tradition of Marlowe and Shakespeare's early work, conferring imagery as a vital and integral part of dramatic expression, conferring upon it a function which no major dramatist of the succeeding decade disregarded, that of supplying the essential indications of mood and underlying thought without which neither plot, character, nor the true aesthetic values of the play could be rightly apprehended. 219

218. _Spencer, op.cit._, p. 584.
219. _Ellis-Fermor, op.cit._, p. 78.
Miss Ellis-Permor points out that it is because he led the way in many parts of the technique of tragedy that he was "more erratic and wildly experimental" than those playwrights who followed. She compares his work to a flash of lightning which illuminates the road to Shakespeare, Webster, and Ford. Rupert Brooke sums up Marston's legacy in this way: "He was more famous for what he lent than what he had, but what he had is superb."

220. Ibid., p. 77.
221. Ibid., p. 79.
222. Rupert Brooke, op. cit., p. 78.
THE DECLINE OF THE ELIZABETHAN TRAGEDY

Rupert Brooke has said that what Marston had "is superb" and that "the main current of strength in the drama... is that which ran through Marston and Tourneur to Webster."

Marston is one of the most sinister, least understood, figures in Elizabethan literature. More than anybody else, he determined the channels in which the great flood of those ten years ["... there was a period -- 1600-1610 are the rough inside limits -- that stood out an infinity above the rest. Nearly all the good stuff of Elizabethan drama was in it or of it." 224] was to flow... To us he seems nearly always just not to bring his effects off; but his contemporaries, whatever they thought, could not escape him.

He started the movement of this period by resuscitating the old blood-and-thunder revenge tragedy. It was precisely what was needed... The horror and inhuman violence of his laughter lit up those years like a vivid flash of lightning. 225

... ...

... ...

Marston is more famous for what he lent than what he had, but what he had is superb. 226

Such is the evaluation of Marston by Brooke as nearly as I am able to present it without quoting the entire discussion.

223. Ibid., p. 75.
224. Ibid., p. 70.
225. Ibid., p. 76-77.
226. Ibid., p. 78.
from his John Webster and the Elizabethan Drama.

Continuing his discussion of the Elizabethan drama, Brooke finds that there was no gap, as has been suggested, during the Civil War; that the gap is much earlier; that

...its presence is obvious about the year 1611. Five years before that, England was thunderous with the most glorious tragedy and the strangest passion. Five years after that, Fletcher and the silly sweetness of tragi-comedy were all-powerful. 227

Brooke blames Fletcher that "heart supplanted brain, senses sense," and that wit was succeeded by court humor," born of the fancy, touched with softness, feeble-winged." He recognizes the possibility that the reason for the degeneration of the Elizabethan tragedy may lie deeper and that Fletcher is only a figurehead for abuse. At any rate the degeneracy was there.

It was in this sinking to prettiness and to absence of serious intention that the "degeneration" of the Elizabethan drama lies, not, as some modern critics say, in the selection of such admirable subjects as incest for their dramas ... It is the absence of serious intention, the only desire to please, the lack of artistic morality, that make such plays [as Bondva], with their mild jokes, their co-ordinate double plots, and their unreality, so ultimately dreary and fifth-rate to a sensible reader. But such stuff overwhelmed England. 228

227. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

228. Ibid., pp. 61-82.
Mr. Lacy Lockert, writing in the Sewannee Review on Marston and Webster and the decline of the tragedy, takes issue with Brooke's arguments. I think he pretty well explodes Brooke's theory that the cause of the decline lies in the "silly sweetness of tragi-comedy." "Brooke ... seems to be alone in his diagnosis of exactly what was the evil, inaugurated by Fletcher, which the Elizabethan drama fell sick and died of. And his view that it was an emasculated prettiness, a cloying sweetness, does not square with the facts." Certainly these characteristics are evident in Fletcher's work and somewhat in Beaumont's. They are not evident in any of their contemporaries or successors except Shirley. "The beauty of Ford's verse is not warm and 'sirupy,' but cold — like carved marble." And Massinger, Middleton, and Rowley are not of that "sea of saccharine" that Brooke speaks of. None of the last of the Elizabethans, except Shirley, had many of the mannerisms most characteristic of Fletcher.

No — the facts should be clearly recognized. Fletcher is not responsible for any great share of the shortcomings of those who followed him; his sins of artistry, which were many and grievous enough in all sooth, for the most part died with him. 230


230. Ibid.
Not only does Mr. Lockert explode Rupert Brooke's theory on the decline; he also sets up a theory of his own:

... the degeneration of the Elizabethan drama was to be expected from its very inception, for the seeds of that degeneration were present at, and from, the beginning. The Elizabethan drama was founded upon a false artistic aim, merely to tell a story on the stage, and, save in the hands of genius or by sheer happy accident, it never achieved that effect of totality, never attained to that underlying unity of design, which Aristotle once and for all had pointed out as essential to drama. Accident, of course, may accomplish anything, and the intuition of genius not infrequently demanded some sort of organizing artistic unity. 231

... Given the conception which the Elizabethans had, of a play as a story presented on the stage, it was inevitable that whenever such story-presentation reached a point of improvement where intricate plots could be set forth and by their intricacy alone hold the theatregoers, every other consideration would be cast aside in the endeavor to tell the most interesting and exciting stories. 232

It was Marston ... who revived the tragedy of revenge, with its inevitable development of those very features which, given the then current conception of a play, must lead to

231. Ibid., p. 70.
232. Ibid., p. 74.
literary insolvency. It was Marston who with hitherto unexampled boldness made
of dramatic incident a mere bid for sen-
sationalism. It was Marston who woke
the fevered imagination of his contem-
poraries to brood upon the traditional
vices of Italy. It was Marston, who ...
produced in The Malcontent what was the
first genuine tragi-comedy in every re-
quisite of the type save the presence
of a dominating love-story, — the first
unmistakable outcropping of that tendency
which utterly debouched Elizabethan drama:
namely the exaltation of intricate plot-
structure, with tense vicissitudes and
wearing interests, over every considera-
tion of character-drawing and unity of
design. 233

Mr. Lookert's theory is interesting. It is more
than that. It seems to be bullet-proof. But there are
holes, which have been plugged with phrases, phrases like
"save in the hands of genius or by sheer happy accident,"
"a point of improvement where intricate plots could be
set forth and by their intricacy alone hold the theatre-
goers," and "tense vicissitudes and veering interests."

Mr. Lockert liked phrases. Mr. Lockert became enamored of
a phrase, and he let it get the better of his judgment.
He knew what caused the decline, but he liked too well
that phrase, "to tell a story on the stage."

If I ask Mr. Lockert about the effect of totality

233. Ibid., pp. 77-78.
of a Shakespearean play before Marston, the answer is, of course, "genius." I presume the answer is the same with Tamburlaine. What of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay? "Happy accident"? For The Spanish Tragedy the answer would almost have to be "happy accident," for it is certainly not "genius," and the play does have a complicated plot. The answer for Corboduc is as easy as for a Shakespearean play. Coming very early in the period, it simply had not reached that "point of improvement where intricate plots could be set forth and by their intricacy alone hold the theatre-goers."

The argument is too easy. The plugs are too elastic.

To show just how absurd in its facility this argument is, I ask these questions: What happened during the first forty years of the Elizabethan drama? Did not the playwrights of those years tell stories? (or were they all geniuses or fortunate in happy accident?) did not the history and chronicle plays tell stories? did not Kyd introduce the revenge tragedy? did not he tell a story? Why is it that during those forty years plotting did not reach the "point of improvement where intricate plots could be set forth and by their intricacy alone hold the theatre-goers? why did that point wait for John Marston, forty years after the inception of the Elizabethan drama? The answers to these
question are to be found in the false facility of that phrase, "to tell a story on the stage." "No -- the facts should be clearly recognized." The cause of the decline is not in the facile argument.

The cause of the decline is to be found in Brooke's argument; it is to be found in Lockert's argument. The cause is the "absence of serious intention, the only desire to please, the lack of artistic morality," and the "mere bid for sensationalism." Mr. Lockert knew this. He, himself, uses Mr. P. A. Mora's argument that it is by a loose coordination of themes and passions that a play loses consistency and "appears no longer as merely non-moral, but too often as completely wanton." Mr. Lockert says that "Rupert Brooke himself seems to have some comprehension of this when he speaks of 'the absence of any serious intention, the only desire to please, the lack of artistic morality.'"

In his own discussion of *Antonio's Revenge*, Lockert says, "Warston for his part, was very clearly aiming at stage effect, not at setting forth a realistic story."

Thus, Rupert Brooke is wrong in attributing the decline to Fletcher and tragi-comedy, although he approaches

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the truth and swerves away; Lacy Lockert is wrong when he attributes the decline to a phrase, although he has much of the truth in his own arguments. Both Rupert Brooke and Lacy Lockert are, I think, alone in their arguments. In point of view of time, I have, what they could not have, the advantage of later scholarship. But even Rupert Brooke might have seen The Tudor Drama, published the year in which he began work on John Webster.

In The Tudor Drama, Tucker Brooke finds as underlying causes for the decline of the drama the "break with forces of religion and morality" and "the divorce from the serious concerns of contemporary life."

During the interval between 1603 and 1642 the drama underwent a sort of desiccation; it lost its sap and freshness. The milk of human kindness and catholic sympathy, which keeps the work of Elizabeth's reign sweet in spite of all its outspoken coarseness, was soured first into cynicism and at length completely evaporated, leaving nothing behind but a dried and hollow shell. The first stage of the change is found in the plays of Webster, Tourneur, and Ford. [It is to be found earlier in the plays of Marston.] Here is as yet no coldness or lack of vitality, surely; but the warmth is that of fever rather than health. The connection with genuine English life and feeling has been broken, once for all. Neither in the individual characters nor

238. Ibid., p. 444.
in the general spirit which informs such plays as "Vittoria Corombona" [or The Insatiata Countesse], "The Revenger's Tragedy" [or Antonio's Revenge], and "The Broken Heart." [or Antonio and Kellida], is there much suggestion of the real seventeenth-century England. Throughout, one finds the stale and acid flavor of decadent Italianism, consciously imported and morbidly emphasized. 239

And Mr. Brooke quotes from Professor Edward Dowden's book.

Puritan and Anglican:

The chief glory of Elizabethan literature was the drama, with the deepest passion and the most heroic actions of humanity for its theme. It had its basis in what is most real in the life of man, and what is real was interpreted into the highest meanings by imagination. During the latter years of the reign of James I and during the reign of Charles the drama lost touch with reality; it was cut off from its true basis of supply. It advanced with a showy gallantry, but its strength and solidity of movement were gone. It relied too often, as with Kassinger and Fletcher, on overstrained, fantastic motives. It deserted the substantial ground of national history. It endeavoured to excite a jaded imagination with extravagances of romantic passion or even of unnatural lust. It sought for curiosities of prettiness in sentiment and imagery. It supported its decline by splendors appealing to the senses. It grew shallow in true passion and meditative wisdom. It grew rhetorical ... 240

Miss Ellis-Fermor expresses some of this idea in this statement:

239. Ibid., p. 445.

... tragedy, the form of drama responsible for interpreting to man the conditions of his own being, becomes satanic, revealing a world-order of evil power or, if it attempts excursions beyond man's immediate experience, bewildered and confused. 241

And in praise of Marston she finds that his strength often is merely in the theatrical, the splendors appealing to the senses:

Time and again, when character, continuity of plot and probability of situation of utterance have all been violated, he imposes on us by some preposterous turn of theatrical brilliance which all but hides the dramatic weakness. 242

Mr. F.T. Davies in his Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy sees, too, that in that form Marston was so fond of, the revenge tragedy, is the weakness of theatrical brilliance over dramatic validity, of the mere bid for sensationalism, of the only desire to please:

The tragedy of revenge has been classified as a definite, small subdivision of the Elizabethan tragedy of blood; and obviously, plays like The Spanish Tragedy, Antonio's Revenge, and Hamlet should be set apart as a specific type from Shakespeare's Lear, Marston's Sophonisba, and Nabbe's Unfortunate Lether. These represent the two extremes of the tragedy of blood: on the one hand a cluster of plays which treat, according to a moderately rigid dramatic formula, blood-revenge for murder as the central tragic fact; on the other, an amorphous group with no definite characteristic, linked

242. Ibid., p. 82.
only by a delight in blood and sensationalism. 243

And Mr. Bowers sees that it is a weakness not only of the form but also of an individual writer:

It was this straining for effect which was at once Marston's strength and his weakness. It produced the grisly scenes, the eeriness of the night episodes, the horror of the blood-spattered Antonio, the whole display of the pageantry of death which thrilled an Elizabethan audience. At its worst, Marston's bent led him to futile extravagances of passion and the empty inflation of character so marked in the later Iliro. His flair for strong scenes produced melodrama, stirring no doubt on the Elizabethan stage but cold in study. 244

Let us now take up the desire to please, which is precisely what the Elizabethan tragedy died of. Let us look at the individual elements that make up and result from that desire and see how many are evident as early as the work of Marston. Let us see what part Marston had in the degeneration of the tragedy in England in the early years of the seventeenth century. I shall take up the individual elements under their most appropriate headings, headings, which I have used earlier in this paper.

Purpose

"The absence of serious intention, the only desire


244. Ibid., p. 123.
to please, the lack of artistic morality." Marston is guilty. We have seen in the section entitled "Purpose" that, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, Marston's primary purpose was to please the Elizabethan audience. He had a more serious purpose than this when he lashed with his satires, but generally his desire to please was uppermost.

"Loss of catholic sympathy." Again Marston is guilty. Nearly everything he wrote in his short literary career ... is bitter, coarse, and cruel..." We will remember that Rupert Brooke made the observation that Marston loved truth, preferring it if it hurt.

Plot

"To tell a story on the stage." No, this is not prominent among Marston's weaknesses. Marston cared not a whit for story, as such. Only story as a vehicle for presenting a series of striking episodes and scenes interested Marston. He was continually making a "bid for sensationalism," evident in his employment of on-stage murders; and he was continually striving for "stage effect," to be seen in his elaborate stage directions. This strain­ing for effect resulted in a "loss of coordination of themes,"

and a "loss of strength and solidity of movement."

"Tragi-comedy." The Insatiate Countess with its elaborate comic sub-plot attests to the fact that Marston was guilty of the worst features of this form. He so equally divides the play between the main plot and the sub-plots that he may be said to be guilty, also, of employing "co-ordinate double plots," resulting in a "lack of unity of design." In most of his tragedies he lacks unity, but in at least one, Seophonissa, he is rather successful in achieving unity of action.

Character

"Unreality." This is one of Marston's worst faults. In the section on character I cited examples of his characters who do not live. Some of them do not live because they are inconsistent, "shallow in true passions." Others do not live because they are pompous, victims of "overstrained, fantastic motives." Although there are no characters in Marston's tragedies who are guilty of "extravagances of romantic passion," there is one, Isabella, in The Insatiate Countess, who has "unnatural lust."

"Mild Jokes." I think Marston could never be accused of anything mild. He might have unsuccessful and strained jokes, never mild. In all things he is almost always strenuous.
Setting

"Italianism." Marston may have instigated the use of Italy for setting, along with the vices that were associated with that country. At any rate, he did use Italy for four of his tragedies and likely influenced his contemporaries and successors in this usage.

Subject Matter

"Sinking to prettiness." No, Marston could never be accused of this. Rising to pomposity, yes. Straining for effect, yes. Sinking to coarseness, yes. But sinking to prettiness, no. Nor is there "coldness, lack of vitality," in him. Rather, we find that warmth of fever, which Tucker Brooke found in Webster, Tourneur, and Ford.

"Tragedy of revenge." He gloried in it for its blood, its lust, its spectacle. Shakespeare probably revived the form, but Marston was influential in its development.

Songs

"Splendors appealing to the senses," "Stage effect." In no other element is Marston's love of show exhibited so clearly as in song. He used many songs, as we have seen, for nothing more than stage effect. And it is not only in song, but also in the elaborate directions for musical accompaniment, that we have seen this love.
Diction

"Lack of artistic morality." That Marston recognized the existence of a duty to his art is clearly recognizable in his experimentations in diction. He has been rebuked often for his failures which made his speeches pompous and "rhetorical." Nevertheless, he was an influence on others, if only to show them how not to write. The mere facts that he did show individuality and that he did experiment are to his credit.

It would seem that Marston had in his work most of the elements which led to or resulted from the desire to please, the desire which led to the degeneration of the Elizabethan tragedy. Surely he had a part in this decline. His interest in Italy, his use of the revenge tragedy, and, more important, his successes in spectacle and theatrical brilliance must have influenced others toward a desire to please. Yet there is another side. For even where Marston erred most, he gave. In diction his contribution may have been negative, but in character, it was no mean gift (Malevole, the malcontent type, and Piero, the Machiavellian villain). Although he influenced his contemporaries and successors, although he had a part in and was an influence on the decline of the Elizabethan tragedy, I do not blame John Marston. There
are too many elements, too many influences in the decline; there was too much borrowing, too much complexity in the drama to allow one to place the blame on one man. No one man is accredited with the rise of the Elizabethan drama, and it is folly with accumulated complexities to blame one man for the decline.
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Keightley, T., See under W. B. C.


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 (The Tannenbaum bibliography attributes this article to T. Keightley).


Appendix A

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Appendix B

Synopses of the Tragedies (From the Sullen edition)

Antonio and Mellida

Antonio, Duke of Genoa, being utterly defeated in a
sea-fight by Piero Sforza, Duke of Venice, and banished by the
Genoese, conceals himself, with Lucio (an old courtier) and
a page among the marshes round Venice. Piero proclaims through­
out Italy that whoever brings the head of Andrugio or of An­
drugio's son, Antonio (who is in love with Piero's daughter,
Mellida), shall receive a reward of twenty thousand pistolets.
Antonio disguises himself as an Amazon, and, obtaining an
interview with Mellida, announces that her lover has been
drowned at sea. The pretended Amazon is received as a guest
in Piero's palace, and there quickly discovers himself to
Mellida. Arrangements are made by the lovers to escape to
England; but Piero gaining intelligence (through a letter
that Mellida has dropped) of the intended flight, the plot
is frustrated and Mellida escapes to the marshes in the dis­
guise of a page. While Piero is giving orders for Antonio's
arrest, a sailor rushes forward, pretending to be in hot pur­
suit of Antonio towards the marshes. The pursuer is Antonio
himself, who had assumed the disguise of a sailor at the in­
stance of Feliche, a high-minded gentleman of the Venetian
court. Piero gives the pretended sailor his signet-ring that
he may pass the watch and not be hindered in the pursuit.
Arrived at the marshes, Antonio, distracted with grief for
the fall of his father and the loss of Mellida, flings himself
prostrate on the ground. Presently Andrugio approaches with
Lucio and the page, and the joyful meeting ensues between
father and son. Andrugio and Lucio retire to a cave which they
have fitted up as a dwelling, and Antonio, promising to quickly
rejoin them, stays to hear a song from Andrugio's page. Mean­
while Mellida disguised as a page, approaches unobserved, and
hearing her name passionately pronounced recognises the sailor
as Antonio. She discovers herself to her lover, and after a brief
 colloquy dispatches him across the marsh to observe whether any
pursuers are in sight. Hardly has Antonio departed when Piero
and his followers come up, and Mellida is drawn from a thicket
where she had concealed herself. Piero hastens back to the
court with his daughter, whom he resolves to marry out of hand
to Galeazzo, son of the Duke of Florence. Antonio, returning in
company with Andrugio and Lucio to the spot where he had left
Mellida, learns from Andrugio's page that she has been carried
away. Andrugio now separates himself from Antonio and Lucio; proceeds, clad in a complete suit of armour, to the court of Piero, and announces that he has come to claim the reward offered for Andrugio's head. Piero declares his willingness to pay the reward; and then Andrugio, raising his beaver, discovers himself to Piero and the assembled courtiers. Piero affects to be struck with admiration for his adversary's magnanimity, and professes friendship for the future. A funeral procession now enters, followed by Lucio, who announces that he has brought the body of Antonio. Andrugio mourns for the death of his son and Piero affects to share his grief, protesting that he would give his own life or his daughter's hand to purchase breath for the dead man. Thereupon Antonio, who had died only in conceit, rises from the bier and claims the hand of Mellida. Piero assents, and the First Part of Antonio and Mellida closes joyfully.

Antonio's Revenge

Piero had been a suitor for the hand of Maria, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara, but his addresses had been rejected and Maria had married Andrugio, the offspring of the union being Antonio. When Piero, dissembling his hatred, affects to be reconciled to Andrugio, Lucio is despatched to bring Maria to the Venetian Court. Piero, at a banquet given on the even of his daughter's marriage with Antonio, instils in Andrugio's cup a poison which has no immediate effect but works fatally after a few hours. With the help of a base creature, Strotzo, he proceeds in the night to murder Antonio's friend, Feliche, whose body is carried by Strotzo to Mellida's chamber. At sunrise Maria and Lucio arrive at Venice. Antonio, whose sleep has been troubled by hideous dreams, is abroad early, and is met by his mother as he paces disquietly in front of Mellida's chamber. Presently the window-curtain is drawn aside and there is exposed the body of Feliche, stabbed thick with wounds. While Antonio is distractedly calling upon Mellida to rise, Piero advances and proclaims himself the author of Feliche's death, protesting that he had found his daughter in the embraces of the murdered man. The scene of confusion is heightened by the entrance of Strotzo, who announces that Andrugio has died from excess of joy at his sudden change of fortunes. Mellida is put in close confinement, and a day is appointed for her trial. Strotzo is instructed by Piero to come forward at the trial and accuse Antonio of having instigated the murders of Andrugio and
Feliche. But before the trial Andrugio's ghost appears to Antonio, discloses Piero's villainy, and bids Antonio take vengeance on the murderer. Antonio stabs Piero's young son Julio at Andrugio's shrine; he then disguises himself as Maria's fool and watches his opportunity for further vengeance. The trial of Mellida is held: Strotzo enters the court with a cord round his neck, declaring that he had been suborned by Antonio to commit the crimes; and officers are despatched to arrest Antonio, who in his fool's habit is watching the proceedings. It had been part of the plot that Strotzo, after making his confession, should break into passionate outbursts of sorrow and implore Piero to rid him of a dishonourable life; whereupon Piero was to spring forward, grasp the cord round Strotzo's neck as with intent to strangle him, then suddenly to relax his hold, moved by Strotzo's penitent conduct. Strotzo goes through his part of the performance; but Piero, grasping one end of the cord while Castilio (a courtier) grasps the other, is careful not to lose his hold before the victim is strangled. Presently word is brought that Antonio in a fit of distraction has flung himself from a high tower into the sea. At this news Mellida falls into a deep swoon and is conveyed to her chamber, wither Antonio after a short delay contrives to follow her, but arrives only in time to see her expire. Piero, notwithstanding his daughter's untoward death, determines that his marriage with Maria (who affects to acquiesce in the arrangement) shall take place without delay. A scheme of vengeance is contrived 'tween Antonio, Pandulfo (Feliche's father) and Alberto (Feliche's friend). The conspirators attire themselves as maskers and appear at a banquet given by Piero on the eve of his marriage. On the appearance of the maskers Piero enquires for his son, Julio, and sends an attendant to fetch him to see the dances. After dancing a measure the maskers request Piero to have the hall cleared while they sit unmasked at the banquet. Thereupon the guests and retainers withdraw, but Piero at the masker's request remains. He takes a seat at the banquet; the conspirators, unmasking themselves, spring forward and bind him with cords to the chair; insult over him, cut out his tongue, produce in a dish the limbs of his murdered son, and finally hack him to death with their swords. The tyrants death is welcomed with universal joy. The conspirators are hailed as savours of their country, and are offered high offices of state; but prefer to spend the rest of their lives in the seclusion of a religious house.
The Malcontent

Giovanni Altofronto, Duke of Genoa, driven from power by the plots of Pietro Jaexmo, disguises himself and lives under the name of Malevole at the usurper's court, assuming the character of a malcontent. His identity is known only to his faithful friend Celse. A crafty courtier, Mendoza, who had assisted in dethroning Altofronto, has adulterous intercourse with Pietro's wife, Aurelia. Malevole exposes the intrigue to Pietro; but meanwhile Aurelia, induced by an old procuress, Maquerelle, to believe that her lover is faithless, discards Mendoza and engages in an intrigue with another courtier, Ferneze. Pietro, sword in hand, seeks Mendoza, who makes passionate protestations of his own innocence, and declares that the guilty person is Ferneze. On that very night Ferneze has an appointment with the Duchess; and it is agreed that Pietro with some of the guard shall break into the Duchess' chamber, while Mendoza waits with his drawn sword at the door. Ferneze is to be allowed to escape from the chamber, only to be received on the sword of Mendoza, who is then to stand over the body and pretend that he is guarding it from assault. Thus Mendoza will not only serve Pietro, but by his seeming generosity towards Ferneze will earn the gratitude of Aurelia, who, should she attempt to take vengeance on her husband, will not fail to make Mendoza acquainted with her plots, which he will incessantly reveal to Pietro. At the hour appointed, Pietro and the guard invade the Duchess' chamber; the flying gallant is stabbed by Mendoza and left for dead (though he afterwards recovers from the wound); Aurelia receives Mendoza again into her favour, and practises with him to murder Pietro. Mendoza, selecting a time when Pietro had gone a-hunting, bribes Malevole to commit the murder. Malevole undertakes to kill Pietro by stealth in the forest, fling his body into the sea, and then return to announce that Pietro, distracted by grief at the dishonour brought on him by his wife, has made away with himself by leaping into the sea from a high rock. To the forest goes Malevole, finds Pietro, and exposes to him the plot; presently Celse appears bringing a hermit's weeds, into which Pietro shifts. They return to the court, and the pretended hermit described with much detail how he saw Pietro perish, the narrative being substantiated by Malevole. Mendoza is proclaimed Duke, and his first act is to pronounce a sentence of perpetual banishment on Aurelia. He then commissions Malevole to bring from the citadel (where she is confined) the wife of the banished Altofronto, the virtuous Maria, whom he intends to make his Duchess. His brain is now exercised to procure the
destruction of the supposed murderers. Malevole is instructed to poison the hermit at a supper given in the citadel, and the hermit on the same occasion is to poison Malevole; thus two awkward agents will be removed, and the suspicion will fall on Maria, whose fears will drive her to submit to Mendoza. Pietro informs Malevole of the instructions he had received, and learns that similar instructions have been given to Malevole. Weighted down with sorrow at his own dishonour, and disgusted with Mendoza's villainy, Pietro declares his determination to dedicate his life to religious solitude, and make it one care that the banished Altofronto shall be restored to the dukedom. Thereupon Malevole puts off his disguise, and Pietro beholds the banished Duke. Ferneze now approaches with Calso, and receives pardon from Pietro, who had supposed him to be dead. The four then take counsel how they shall depose Mendoza. Malevole goes to the usurper and announces that he has poisoned the hermit; he then produces a box of poison, which, he declares, will cause instant death on being opened and held to the nostrils. Mendoza opens the box and tries its effects on Malevole, who feigns to fall dead. A masque is ordered by Mendoza to be given in honour of Maria, who shows herself indifferent both to the tyrant's flatteries and threats. At the entertainment Malevole, Pietro, and Ferneze appear masked; Malevole chooses Maria as his partner in the dance, and Pietro is marshalled with Aurelia, who has deeply repented of her misconduct. At the close of the dance, during which Malevole and Pietro have discovered themselves to their partners, the maskers environ Mendoza, level their pistols at his head, and unmask. Altofronto is received with joyful acclamations by the assembled company, and Mendoza—whose life the restored Duke disdains to take—is banished with shameful ignominy.

Sophonisba

Syphonisba and Massinissa, princes of Libya, are rivals for the hand of Sophonisba, daughter of Asdrubal, a powerful Carthaginian nobleman. Massinissa's suit is accepted; whereupon Syphonisba enters into a league with Scipio, who is advancing against Carthage. On Sophonisba's marriage-night news is brought that the Carthaginian forces stationed at Utica have been defeated by the United Armies of Scipio and Syphonisba. Massinissa is ordered by the Senate to march without delay against the enemy; he loyally obeys the command, and takes leave of his virgin-wife. While he is serving Carthage in the field, the Carthaginian senators proceed to plot against
his life. They determine to gain Syphax to their side by giving him Sophonisba to wife; and Cisco, a physician and skilful imposer, is sent to the Carthaginian camp to dispatch Massinissa. Among the senators there is an honest old man, Gelosso, who disguises himself, follows Cisco to the camp, and hands Massinissa a letter containing a disclosure of the plot. Massinissa has no sooner dismissed the imposer (whom he scorns to punish) than Jugurth, Massinissa's nephew, enters, to announce that Syphax has been seen riding in the direction of Cirta, and that his horsemen are coming at a leisurely pace towards the camp as if to fraternise with Massinissa's forces. By advice of Gelosso, who lays aside his disguise, Massinissa scatters the horsemen by a sudden onslaught, and hastens to make a league with Scipio. Meanwhile Sophonisba has been sent by the Carthaginian senators to the palace of Syphax at Cirta. She escapes by a subterranean passage that led from a palace to a forest, but through the treachery of her attendant, Zanthia, falls again into the hands of Syphax. In despair of effecting his purpose by persuasion, Syphax applies for help to a powerful enchantress, Srichthe, who engages to force Sophonisba by magic to his arms, on condition that he shall speak no word, and have no lights burning, while he embraces her. On the appointed night Syphax discovers to his horror that his embraces have been given to Srichthe. While he is cursing his fortunes, a messenger arrives to announce that Scipio and Massinissa are advancing against Cirta. He marches out to meet them; the troops on either side withdraw, while Syphax and Massinissa engage in single combat; Massinissa vanquishes his opponent, but spares his life on receiving assurance that Sophonisba has not suffered outrage. Leaving his prisoner in Scipio's hands Massinissa hastens to Cirta. He enters the palace with his beaver down, unrecognised by Sophonisba, who throws herself at his feet, and implores him to save her from falling into the hands of the Romans, or grant her instant death. Pledging this oath that he will protect her, he doffs his helmet. The joyful reunion is presently interrupted by the entrance of the Roman general, Laelius, who orders Massinissa to deliver Sophonisba into Scipio's custody (Syphax having represented to Scipio that Sophonisba would quickly induce Massinissa to revolt from Rome). Laelius departs with Massinissa's assurance that the command shall be obeyed. Massinissa is distracted; he must either break the oath he had pledged to Sophonisba, or he must be faithless in the allegiance that he had sworn to Rome. Sophonisba's heroism rescues him from his dilemma. She declares her willingness to die; he infuses poison...
in a bowl of wine, and the dauntless woman drinks, speaking words of comfort to her husband as the poison courses through her veins. The lifeless body, laid on a bier, is presented to Scipio by Massinissa.

The Insatiate Countess

Isabella, Countess of Suevia, being left a widow, proceeds with indecent haste to take a second husband, Roberto, Count of Cyprus. At a masquer dance given by the bridegroom's friends on the day of the wedding, Isabella falls in love with one of the masquers, whom she discovers to be the Count of Massino (Massina?). She sends him a letter in which she proffers her love and summons him to her presence. With her paramour she flies to Favia, where she meets Massino's friend Gniaca, Count of Gaza or Gadia (Gaeta?). The Insatiate Countess immediately falls in love with Gniaca, who -- though at first unwilling to wrong his friend -- quickly yields to her blandishments. Returning from a hunting expedition Massino is denied admittance by Isabella. He gives vent to his indignation by penning bitter satirical verses, in which he proclaims to the world her inordinate lust. Enraged at this exposure, Isabella incites Gniaca to slay Massino. An encounter ensues between Gniaca and Massino, but after a few passes the combatants put up their weapons, hold a friendly colloquy, and part in peace. Isabella is furious and resolves to destroy both Gniaca and Massino. She employs the services of a Spanish colonel, Don Diego, who at first sight of her has been violently inflamed with passion. The colonel shoots Massino dead, is arrested, and, being brought before the Duke of Medina, makes full confession. Isabella is condemned to be beheaded. At the place of execution a strange friar requests that he may have private speech with her. The friar is Count Roberto, who has come to pronounce forgiveness, and bid a last farewell, to his erring wife.

There is also an underplot to the play. Rogero and Claridiana, between whom an hereditary feud exists, celebrate their marriage on the same day. As they return from the church an altercation arises between the bridegrooms, but by the intervention of friends they are at length induced to declare that they will lay aside their hatred. These professions are marked with little sincerity, for the new-made friends are intent upon cornuting one another. The wives, who are excellent friends, take counsel together and devise a scheme by which the husbands, while taking their lawful
pleasure, imagine that they are tasting the sweets of adultery. Claridiana, announcing that he has gone to his farm in the country, repairs by appointment to the house of Rogero, where, under the impression that he is enjoying Rogero's wife Thais, he lies with his own wife Abigail; and Rogero, under Claridiana's roof lies with Thais in the belief that he is clipping Abigail. While these night-sports are in progress, Lendoza, nephew of the Duke Amago, holds a clandestine interview with the widow-ed Lady Lentulus. As he is mounting to her chamber, the rope-ladder breaks. Injured by the fall, he drags himself some distance from the house to a spot where he is discovered by the watch. It is supposed that he has met with foul play; a search is instituted; Rogero is discovered by the watch in the house of Claridiana, and Claridiana in the house of Rogero. Charged before the Duke Amago with the murder of Lendoza they declare themselves guilty—preferring to be hanged as murderers rather than to be derided as cuckolds. Lendoza, recovering from the effects of his fall, asserts (in order to save the honour of the Lady Lentulus) that he met his injuries in trying to steal some jewels from her house. The Duke, who is in a maze of wonder at the strange statements and confessions, condemns the three prisoners to be executed, hoping by this means to extort from them the truth. On the day fixed for the execution Thais and Abigail make an explanation to the Duke; and their husbands — finding that they have not been cuckolded — are glad to spare the hangman his labour. How Lendoza fares is not stated.
Appendix C

Settings of the Tragedies by Scenes

Antonio and Mellida

Act I
Scene 1 - Neighbourhood of Venice

Act II
Scene 1 - Palace of the Duke of Venice

Act III
Scene 1 - The sea-shore
Scene 2 - Palace of the Duke of Venice

Act IV
Scene 1 - Sea-shore near Venice

Act V
Scene 1 - Palace of the Duke of Venice

Antonio’s Revenge

Act I
Scene 1 - A corridor in the palace of Piero
Scene 2 - Precincts of the palace of Piero

Act II
Scene 1 - [Precincts of the palace of Piero]
Scene 2 - Before the palace of Piero

Act III
Scene 1 - [Saint Mark’s Church]
Scene 2 - Chamber of Maria

Act IV
Scene 1 - [The Great Hall in the palace of Piero]
Scene 2 - [Precincts of the palace of Piero]

Act V
Scene 1 - [Precincts of the palace of Piero]
Scene 2 - A Banqueting hall
### The Malcontent

**Act I**
- Scene 1 - Palace of the Duke of Genoa
- Scene 2 - Palace of the Duke of Genoa
- Scene 3 - Palace of the Duke of Genoa

**Act II**
- Scene 1 - Chamber in the Duke's Palace
- Scene 2 - Chamber in the Duke's Palace
- Scene 3 - A chamber in the Duke's Palace

**Act III**
- Scene 1 - A room in the Duke's palace
- Scene 2 - A forest near the sea

**Act IV**
- Scene 1 - Palace of the Duke
- Scene 2 - Court of the Palace

**Act V**
- Scene 1 - A room in the Palace
- Scene 2 - Before the Citadel
- Scene 3 - The Presence-Chamber

### Sophonisba

**Act I**
- Scene 1 - The palace of Syphax at Cirta
- Scene 2 - Sophonisba's bed-chamber.

**Act II**
- Scene 1 - The Senate-house at Carthage
- Scene 2 - Near Cirta
- Scene 3 - Carthage

**Act III**
- Scene 1 - The Palace of Syphax at Cirta
- Scene 2 - Neighbourhood of Utica

**Act IV**
- Scene 1 - Near Cirta

**Act V**
- Scene 1 - Bed-chamber in the palace of Syphax
- Scene 2 - Neighbourhood of Cirta
- Scene 3 - Cirta
- Scene 4 - Neighbourhood of Cirta
The Insatiate Countess

Act I
Scene 1 - Venice -- Room in Isabella's house

Act II
Scene 1 - Venice -- Hall in Roberto's house
Scene 2 - Venice -- a street
Scene 3 - Venice -- Roberto's house

Act III
Scene 1 - Venice -- Outside Lady Lentulus' house
Scene 2 - Favia
Scene 3 - Venice -- a street
Scene 4 - Isabella's house at Favia

Act IV
Scene 1 - Venice -- The Senate-house
Scene 2 - Favia -- Isabella's house
Scene 3 - The balcony of Isabella's house at Favia
Scene 4 - Venice -- A Street
Scene 5 - Favia -- A Street

Act V
Scene 1 - Favia -- The place of execution
Scene 2 - Venice -- The Senate-house