



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare: A Study of the Connection and the Influence in the Plays

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Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare are the most important and prominent dramatists of English Literature. They have followed the prominent features of the tragedy. They have both composed the tragedies accrediting to the rules and regulations of Greek tragedy as well as Aristotelian tragedy.

Marlowe's first and most important service to drama was the improvement of blank verse. Greene had condemned its use as being unscholarly; Sackville and Norton had used it, but were not able to lift it above common place. Marlowe invented numberless variations while still keeping the satisfying rhythm within a recurring pattern. Thus, blank verse became a living organism, plastic, brilliant, and finished.

There is sometimes a touch of the extravagant or bombastic, or even of the puerile in his plays, for he had no sense of humor; nor had he the ability to portray a woman. It has been remarked, "in Marlowe's superb verse there is very little to indicate that the writer had ever encountered any human beings." In spite of this, he was great, as both a dramatist and poet. His short life, the haste of his work, the irregularities of his habits -- these things combined to keep him from perfecting the creations of his imagination. Taken together, his plays imposed a standard upon all succeeding theatrical compositions. Before him, in England, there was no play of great importance; but after him, and based upon his work as a model, rose the greatest drama of English history.

Marlowe's Tragic Hero

One of the greatest achievements of Marlowe was that he broke away from the medieval conception of tragedy. In medieval dramas, tragedy was a thing of the prince's only dealing with the rise and fall of kings or royal personalities. But it was left to Marlowe to evolve and create the real tragic hero.

Almost all the heroes of Marlowe's great tragedies *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus* or *The Jew of Malta* are of humble parentage, but they are endowed with great heroic qualities. His tragedy is in fact the tragic hero. His heroes are titanic characters afire with some indomitable passion or inordinate ambition.

Marlowe himself was saturates with all its robust and fascinating characteristics so much so that his towering heroes became the true embodiments of the Renaissance dreams, desires and ideals. And this is powerfully revealed in Tamburlaine's pursuit of military and political power in *The Jew of Malta* aspiration toward wealth as an ultimate end in the most captivating way is Faustus supreme quest for the ultimate power through knowledge infinite.

Influence of Marlowe: Marlowe's work and achievement guided and inspired Shakespeare. And J.A. Symonds justly remarks: "what Shakespeare would have been without Marlowe, cannot even be surmised. What alone is obvious to every student is that Shakespeare designed from the first to tread in Marlow's footsteps that Shakespeare at the last completed and developed to the utmost that national embryo of art which Marlowe drew forth from the womb of darkness, anarchy and incoherence."

It is quite evident that in the beginning of his career Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare was quite considerable. Shakespeare's *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *Merchant of Venice* reveal notable similarity to Marlowe's *Edward II* and *The Jew of Malta*. Shakespeare must have remembered Barabas of *The Jew of Malta* while creating the unforgettable character of Shylock the Jew.

Really, Christopher Marlowe has deep influence on Shakespearian plays. According to Stanley Wells "When Marlowe is writing like this [in *Tamburlaine*] he bears comparison with Shakespeare in his finest flights of rhetoric – the battle speeches of Henry V, the eloquence of Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* or of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*."^[1]

There is no doubt that Marlowe had deep impression on Shakespeare. It is also clear that in his earliest plays Shakespeare copied some of his lines, parodied him, and generally competed with him. Marlowe was the contemporary writer that most exercised him. . . . He haunts Shakespeare's expression, like a figure standing by his shoulder. Stephen Green Blatt also views, "Shakespeare almost certainly saw [*Tamburlaine*], and he probably went back again and again . . . from its effect upon his early work, it appears to have had upon him an intense, visceral, indeed life-transforming impact."^[2]

The player [Shakespeare] seems to have acted in the Cambridge poet's *The Jew of Malta*-a work Shakespeare recalled in his own plays and which was not in print. According to some critics, Marlowe was great genius and rival of Shakespeare. Thomas Meriam has similar views as, "Shakespeare may have become the genius he was as a result of defining his talents and values in relation to those of a rival genius, Marlowe."^[3]

It is viewed that Shakespeare was very much aware of t Marlowe's choice regarding plot. Marlowe and Shakespeare were good and their friendly relations were well acquainted. According to James Shapiro, "The two men may have been acquainted; certainly Shakespeare knew Marlowe's work and responded to it in his own first efforts. Schoenbaum, Samuel. 1977."^[4]

Marlowe's historic achievement was to marry great poetry to the drama; his was the originating genius. William Shakespeare never forgot him: in his penultimate, valedictory play, *The Tempest*, he is still echoing Marlowe's phrases. Similarly, Marlowe's imagery here is very like Shakespeare. Indeed literary work of both dramatists is similar and base of each other. According to F.E. Halliday, "Shakespeare, .University Wits."^[5]

This is the play [Edward II] that shows how Marlowe, if he had lived, would have matured; this is the book with which Shakespeare went to school. Only 5 years had elapsed since Tamburlaine, but there is here a development as impressive as Shakespeare's was to be perhaps it was more impressive. According to Charles Normay, "Much that Shakespeare was to do is found in Edward II in epitome and all of it is shadowed forth in verse not even he surpassed."^[6]

In *Edward II* [Marlowe] shows the dramatic taste that is similar to Hamlet in many aspects. Since he uses all gently, suiting the action to the word, the word to the action, with special observance that his actors o'erstep not the modesty of nature. In real, Christopher Marlowe has been proved Shakespeare's guide. The critic, Algernon Swinburne also proves it by viewing, "The father of English tragedy and the creator of English blank verse were therefore also the teacher and the guide of Shakespeare."^[7]

Christopher Marlowe guided Shakespeare into the right way of work. Before him, there was neither genuine blank verse, nor genuine tragedy in our language. Rightly, the critic, Routledge & Kengan Paul has exposed Christopher Marlowe and Shakespeare connection viewing, "But of all those illustrious dead, the greatest is Christopher Marlowe. He was the first, the only, herald of Shakespeare."^[8]

Edward III is indeed so good that we are forced to think of Shakespeare and of Marlowe, of Shakespeare in his period of lyrism, or of Shakespeare following the track of Marlowe. According to Heillman, "But it isdrama."^[9]

It is viewed that Shakespeare belonged to the school of Marlowe. Rightly the critic, Algerman gives an open challenge and asserts, "This only [Richard III] of all Shakespeare's plays belongs absolutely in the school of Marlowe. The influence of the elder master, and that influence alone, is perceptible from end to end."^[10]

William Shakespeare 'S Tragic Vision

The Following Fourteen Points Are A Summation Of A Typical Shakespearean Tragic Vision:

- 1) Tragedy is concerned primarily with one person – The tragic hero.
- 2) The story is essentially one of exceptional suffering and calamity leading to the death of the hero. The suffering and calamity are, as a rule, unexpected and contrasted with previous happiness and glory.
- 3) The tragedy involves a person of high estate. Therefore, his or her fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire.
- 4) The hero undergoes a sudden reversal of fortune.
- 5) This reversal excites and arouses the emotions of pity and fear within the audience. The reversal may frighten and awe, making viewers or readers of the play feels that man is blind and helpless.
- 6) The tragic fate of the hero is often triggered by a tragic flaw in the hero's character. The hero contributes in some way, shape, or form to the disaster in which he perishes.
- 7) Shakespeare often introduces abnormal conditions of the mind (such as insanity, somnambulism, or hallucinations).
- 8) Supernatural elements are often introduced as well.
- 9) Much of the plot seems to hinge on "chance" or "accident".
- 10) Besides the outward conflict between individuals or groups of individuals, there is also an inner conflict(s) and torment(s) within the soul of the tragic hero.
- 11) The tragic hero need not be an overwhelmingly "good" person; however, it is necessary that he/she should contain so much greatness. Therefore, a Shakespearean tragedy is never depressing because the audience can understand where the hero went wrong.
- 12) The central impression of the tragedy is one of waste.
- 13) The tragic world is one of action. Action is created when thoughts turn into reality. Unfortunately, for the tragic hero, their plans do not materialize as they may have hoped and their actions ultimately lead to their own destruction.
- 14) The ultimate power in the tragic world is a moral order; more specifically, the struggle between good and evil.

Shakespearean Tragedy: A tragedy is essentially a tale of death or suffering. However, the Shakespearean tragedy is something more than this. In the words of Dowden “Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is struggle of good and evil in the world.”

A Shakespearean tragedy is the story of a man of noble and high rank who meets his doom because of certain flaws in his character. Shakespeare has left behind four great tragedies – *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. All Shakespeare heroes are held in high esteem. Macbeth is brave hamlet is a prince. Lear is a king. All these people are great but they have certain flaws also and it is this flaw that makes their death tragic. At the end of the story, we ask. “Why should a man of nobility and greatness suffers Macbeth is over ambitions, Hamlet is over thought full and Lear is over – credulous.

‘King Lear’ is chiefly the tragedy of Lear the king of Britain. He is well Known honored and well-loved figure in Britain “He is every inch a King” The play depicts the mental suffering and torture which he endures as a result his lack of judgment and love for flattery Cordelia refuses to Blatter him and gives a cold reply-

“I love your Mystic According to my bond, near more carless.”

It impels him to punish Cordelia by depriving her to Kingdom.

Fate and chance plays an important role in the tragedy, *King Lear*. There is mysterious power working in the universe and this power upsets human, plans and calculations. It is chance that Edgar arrived too late to prison to save Cordelia from hanging. In this way Shakespeare creates the impression of fate operating on mankind. Thus, Fate is hostile to human happiness.

Tragic Hero And Characterization: After a close and critical study of Marlowe’s dramas we are convinced that his true conception of tragic hero along with his art of characterization was of greatest significance for the development of drama on right lines. It was he who was the first playwright in England to realize that tragic action must issue form and be reflected in character. In fact, before Marlowe there was no hero in the conventional sense in the pre-Elizabethan days.

The first similarity that strikes us is that both Marlowe and Shakespeare created their tragic heroes mainly following the Aristotelian conception of a tragic hero. Thus, we find that Shakespeare’s tragic heroes, like those of Marlovian heroes have some inherent tragic flaw in their character the flaw that ultimately brings about their fall. Like Marlowe’s Tamburlaine, Faustus, Barabas and Edward II, Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Macbeth and Lear also have their inherent defects that bring about the fall, and the fall also produces mingled feelings of pity and fear.

In his conclusion of the plays, Waswo observes, “Faustus and Macbeth are "two great and compelling characters..., presented by playwrights who dramatize damnation as moral reality.” This comment provokes the insight that, in addition to dramatizing the tragic dummies of individual heroes, Marlowe and Shakespeare

dramatized the human potential for evil. Waswo also cites Kenneth Myrick's claim, "Shakespeare's audience would have seen themselves reflected in Macbeth's ruinous crime, which, but for the grace of Gad, could be Theydon."^[11]

Myrick's point, which is even truer of the crime depicted in Doctor Faustus, prompts a reassessment of the qualities. It makes the two heroes ideal for the dramatization the audience's fears. Whaley identifies "Aristocratic flair for action, and the heroic virtues of excellence, moral gravity, courage, decision, [and] endurance, qualities which he attributes to "Men of Action Inaction". In the Iliad, Homer achieves his effect by portraying a man who is, on the one hand, blessed and on the other, harbors fear and desires common to all people. For all of it is viewed, "His power and excellence ...his own unique situation".^[12]

Like Faustus, Macbeth is confronted with the temptation to exceed his allotted station, by committing an unspeakable act. The witch's prophecy, in 1.3, initially reinforces the hero's perception of limits, since at that point "to be King / Stands not within the prospect of belief".

Although performed by an aristocrat, a man of unusual daring and resolve, it draws its representative value from a pattern all too familiar to Western culture, "A shortsighted, self-promoting act of violence causes widespread suffering and, ultimately, ignites an internecine conflict which engulfs the offender, commending the ingenious of the poisoned chalice to his own lips."^[13]

The Marlowe - Shakespeare Connection: The story is one with which we are all very familiar. On 18 May 1593 the Privy Council issued a "warrant to Henry Maunder one of the Messengers of her Majesty's Chamber to repair to the house of Mr. Thomas Walsingham in Kent, or to any other place where he shall understand Christopher Marlowe to be remaining, and by virtue hereof to apprehend and bring him to the Court in his Company.

However, they do assume that this warrant had been issued at a meeting of the Council itself, and as a result of the members having been told of Thomas Kyd's arrest and the "vile heretical conceits" which he claimed to be Marlowe's found in his dwelling.

Castrating The Body Politic: Power And Gender In Marlowe's Edward II And Shakespeare's Henry, II Plays: These first lines of Edward II echo and respond to an array of interconnected social and political practices current in late sixteenth-century England. They elude to the question of succession, a dangerous topic in the 80s and 90s, but one the dramatists' nevertheless broach. The lines also refer to a father-son conflict over the inheritance and dispersal of property, that is, the kingdom. According to Lawrence Stone, during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries "it was exceptionally easy and exceptionally tempting to sell property or grant it away from the heir male."^[14]

This was also a period when large estates were squandered by sons alienating their patrimonies to pay outstanding debts and to consume conspicuously as courtiers, or to settle property on their own daughters and younger sons; thus heirs general and widows "dismembered" the estates of existing peers. These first lines also refer to Edward's conflict with his noble families and remind the audience that the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were also the time when "The crucial victories of the Crown over the nobility were won. . . It was then that the great territorial empires were at last broken up."

Edward II opens and closes with the death of an old king and the making of a new one, but the transition is fraught with perils. The first character on stage, Pierce of Gaveston, a Frenchman, is historically the son of a Gasconknight. In *Edward II*, however, he lacks breeding, he woos the monarch, and for his labors he attains high honors and titles. Like an unfaithful daughter or wife who has changed loyalties and who threatens to dismember an estate or, one could suggest, like Elizabeth, Edward has been seduced.

Soon the three men enter who hope to woo Gaveston and raise themselves by his status, but, he will lead them on and then reject them because they cannot help him woo Edward with pageants of such spectacles as Diana and Actaeon (the glance at Elizabeth seems clear). In II.i, the flatterers who replace Gaveston describe how to go about getting the king's favor: by aggressively wooing him. By the end of the play, the process seems invidious when the patron is a woman.

The noblemen see themselves opposed to Gaveston by birth, deriving their power simply from their blood and control over land, not from wooing the monarch--they are not passively obedient, and they suggest a pre-Elizabethan power structure (whether it is pre-Tudor is debatable). The Earl of Lancaster acknowledges in the earldoms he can sell the source of his right to oppose the king and Gaveston: his power equals his property.

Similarities And Dissimilarities: There are many similarities and Dissimilarities between the tragic vision of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. He has left deep influence on William Shakespeare regarding tragedy. There are Similarities of Character, Incidents and Style to present the tragedy on the stage. Both have exposed deeply feelings, emotions hopes and desires of their characters.

Marlowe has been proved a base for Shakespeare, but we can say that William Shakespeare seems more romantic and optimistic. On the other hand Christopher Marlowe is serious, silent and pessimistic regarding his plays. There is dissimilarity of character depiction. And we can find that Shakespeare has portrayed more characters in compare of William Shakespeare.

With it both dramatists have similarities on the base of themes, Style and languages. There are many tragedies having the same theme presented by them. As we can say a Macbeth very desires like to Dr. Faustus. Both the characters have to suffer a lot and have to become victims of horrible death.

According to Northrop Frye, “Aristotle’s ideas on tragedy are based on Oedipus Tyrannus while Hegel drew his by reading Antigone (127-8) A.C. Bradley, in the first part of his Shakespearean Tragedy states, “Tragedy “would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery”.

In the five tragedies to be analyzed in this essay -Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra- I hope to reach certain conclusions about the nature of Shakespearean tragedy.

(I) The Structure: (A) usually the play opens with what could be considered a stable situation, but soon the characters reveal through their comments their surprise, insecurity or misgivings about it.

(B) There is an evil character -or characters - that through ambition or malice destroys -Iago, Lear’s daughters, Edmund, Macbeth -or has destroyed -Claudius -the once stable situation.

(C) There is some character (Iago, Cordelia) or spirit (Ghost, Weird Sisters) whose words push the hero into tragic action. In Antony’s case it is Cleopatra’s charm that leads him to tragic inaction.

(D) All the tragedies we are going to analyze, with the exception of Antony and Cleopatra, are tragedies concerned with an individual, that is, they are about a single tragic hero. I conceive the tragic hero as endowed with a tragic sense of life in spite of his jesting, as would be the case of Hamlet.

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