Chapter: IV

MARLOWE'S DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

The general opinion among the critics regarding Marlowe's dramatic technique has always not been very favourable. Marlowe was primarily a poet. His University education coupled with the spirit of the Renaissance enabled Marlowe to write his poem 'Hero and Leander'. He started his dramatic career, probably because of the popular appeal for drama and he also might have taken the cue from his fellow poets. At that time the fashion of drama was primarily of Seneca. Gorboduc and The Spanish Tragedy already laid the way to attract the popular applause. The set characters, theme of revenge, bloodshed and sentiments of love and honour ruled the day. In comedy, the realistic dramas and even romances were the current vogue. Under such circumstances the young adventurer, a friend of Sir Walter Raleigh and the sincere student of Machiavelli decided to discard not only the current fashions in the drama but also his poetic career. The rapid growth of theatre and the popular attraction and enthusiasm of the public for dramas, stirred Marlowe to jump headlong into the career of a dramatist.

It is the irony that English drama, at that time, did not show the influence of the Greek drama though the revival of the Greek spirit was the most predominant during the English literary renaissance. Plato and Aristotle were paid lip-sympathy but the great Greek dramatists were not seriously thought about as models. Marlowe conceived his dramas of mighty individuals is really admirable and even creditable on such a
background. Marlowe imbibed humanism and also visualised a mighty individual aspiring to gauze the heavens and to demolish the monopoly of Gods. This particular aspect of his, needs special attention, when his dramatic technique is studied. His first three dramas Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus and the Jew of Malta intend to project the individuals as gigantic personalities with all others around as dwarfs. This is the novel innovation of Marlowe, as earlier drama in England did not present any living individuals, leave apart the mighty and gigantic. Such an intention of the dramatist naturally redefines the role of plot in a drama. The purpose of grouping his plays in two, helps us to show how the dramatist viewed the structure of drama. The remaining three dramas Edward II, the Massacre at Paris and Dido, the Queen of Carthage display the sense of plot construction, when compared to the other three dramas mentioned earlier. While working on the first three dramas Marlowe was driven with desire and spirit to present the protagonist on a gigantic scale. Here he was comparatively free to select, to arrange and organise incidents and situations. But in case of other dramas, he was under a restraint. He had to work with the facts, the real dates in actual incident and situations from the history.

A review of the Elizabethan theatre and the Elizabethan audience, also provide clues to know the reasons for the special characteristics of his dramas. At that time the stage was moulded not only by the intellectual factors but also by the material factors like the actors and the audience. We have already seen the miracle plays had been acted primarily by Amateurs in the streets and squares of towns. Moralties and Interludes were performed by guilds and they were also patronised mostly by the Aristocracy and
the performances were given generally in the halls of the nobles or well to do persons.
Thus a professional class of performers was gradually developed. When these companies
were not performing at the houses, patrons presented their skill in inn yards. In the year
1576 the corporation of London issued an order that no theatrical performances should be
given in public within the boundaries of the city. In the same year Leicester's men
erected the first play house in. The Rose, The Globe, The Fortune, The Swan, had all to
be built either in the Shoreditch area or else on the bank side, to the south of the Thames.
The only theatre inside the city was the Black Friars, which had been built for the child
actors who became extremely popular towards the end of the 16th century. The
government of that time did not look favourably on the companies of the actors, so,
unless they were attached to the services of some Lord of the Realm. They were treated
as Vagabonds. The peers, however, had little objection to patronising of the players, if
while earning their own living, they wore regular liveries of the retainers. Thus came
into existence the Queen's men, the Lord Admiral's men, and a host of other companies
of players. The public theatres were open to the sky. Performances were given in the
afternoon in broad daylight. The theatres were round or octagonal with a stage set in the
middle of a bench-less open yard and tiers of galleries, running round the entire house.
Over the stage was a small roof supported by pillars and on top of all appeared a tiny
turret, on which flew a flag to indicate that a play was in progress and from which a
trumpeter announced to all the commencement of a performance. The 'groundlings'
stood on all sides of the stage while the gallant who could pay for this privilege were
given seats on the stage itself. The use of scenery on the stage had not yet come into
vogue and the stage, which was without a front curtain remained constantly to the view of the spectators.

A curtain was used to divide the stage into two parts, front and rear. So, while a scene was in progress on the front stage, arrangements for a propertied scene could be made behind the curtain. There was a back wall with two or more doors through which the actors entered or left the stage. The third part of the stage was the balcony above, with served for a sleeping room, the wall of a town, or the battlement of a castle. The stage devices were crude and simple. A tree in a tub would stand for forest. A bed wheeled in would suggest a chamber and a flaming torch would denote the warmth of a June sun.

Marlowe wrote his plays not for the court but for the public theatres where the audience was the common class called the ‘groundlings’. The other ‘University wits’, except Kyd, wrote their dramas for the court. The Elizabethan drama was the drama of the spoken word. In the absence of any scenic setting and other types of the stage material, the dramatist depended on the words to stir up the imagination of the audience and ‘to create the willing suspension of disbelief’. Besides dramatists wrote plays having the actors in view and Marlowe had Alleyn in view while creating his heroes.

The critics as mentioned above have different opinions about Marlowe’s dramatic technique as reflected in his plays. To understand Marlowe’s dramatic technique it is necessary to understand what dramatic technique means. Dramatic technique is to select
and arrange the materials in such a way that the dramatist’s purpose is fulfilled and the
delight and satisfaction of audience is also achieved. According to Aristotle a drama must
have ‘a beginning, a middle and an end’. Plot is the means of reaching the dramatist’s
goal, and the dramatist feels that this goal is reached when he delights and satisfies the
audience. In a plot, the most important thing is to arrange the situations and incidents in
such a way that the story is gradually unravelled and at the same time the characters are
revealed by their dialogues and actions. So the conceptual ingredients of a drama are plot,
character, dialogue, action and scenic setting. When the dramatist effectively employs
these instruments and presents a drama to the full enjoyment of an audience, then that
dramatist is said to have mastered the dramatic technique. This is the common conception
of dramatic technique as is understood now. But it is not a strict rule, because there were
and are dramatists who adopted and experimented different methods and yet delighted the
audience. It is the usual practice to apply these criteria.

So in order to stand at a proper appreciation of Marlowe’s dramatic technique,
one should take into consideration the peculiarities of the contemporary stage
(Elizabethan Stage), in order to judge his dramatic technique appropriately. His
technique could not be judged in the light of the requirements of the modern mind. His
dramatic technique must be observed in the context of English historical and theatrical
conditions during 1580’s and 90’s. He wrote his plays for a single stage without a drop
curtain. While writing the plays the dramatists had a particular actor in view. The
audiences were from the lower strata of society. They understood and enjoyed a low
spoken word and action. For this Marlowe very skilfully made some innovations in his dramatic technique.

Before Marlowe, as said earlier, English drama was in the tradition of Seneca or the moralities. Marlowe broke that tradition by giving a new direction. His first and the foremost intention was to impress upon the audience. So he selected extraordinary themes that would captivate the attention of the audience.

The skill of constructing a well-knit plot is a concept, was discussed by Aristotle in his Poetics. According to him a drama must have a beginning, middle and an end. These terms are also elaborated by John Butcher in his commentary to the Aristotle's 'Poetics'. The essence of this concept of a plot is its end. By the time the audience leave the theatre or the readers finish reading of a play, they must have satisfaction and also delight. If this is achieved, then that play has a well-knit plot. When Marlowe was writing his dramas the foremost aim was to entertain the audience and to provide them with satisfaction and delight. In spite of the fact that his plays provided immense delight to the audience, it becomes necessary to see whether Marlowe in his plays could construct good plots or not has to be considered.

Critics have expressed their dissatisfaction over Marlowe's ability to construct well-knit plot. For example, Tamburlaine Part I and Part II are described as 'episodic' in nature. It means that these plays contained different episodes, bound together by the hero. Of course, critics like Wynne have attempted to defend Marlowe. To describe
Tamburlaine as merely a play of episodes is not fully correct. If we start from the opening scenes, there is continuity rather a scene giving birth to the other scene, or a dialogue anticipating some incident would be clearly visible. In the opening scene Mycetes describes Tamburlaine’s cruel and ambitious military adventures, which are endangering his own state and safety. He asks Theridamas to go and face Tamburlaine. Instead of fighting with Tamburlaine, Theridamas falls a victim to his praise and becomes his friend and follower. Slowly Cosroe also follows a similar line. Mycetes loses his crown, which is given to Cosroe and again is taken away by Tamburlaine and Cosroe is killed.

At this juncture, in Act III Sc.2 Agydas meets and tries to convince Zenocrate secretly that Tamburlaine is not worthy of her and he wants her love for himself. In this scene the dramatist presents a human situation rather than an episode for plot. Even if Agydas’ sympathy for Zenocrate is born in selfishness, it is an appealing scene. His words were heard by Tamburlaine who spreads a wrathful glance on him, and goes away with Zenocrate. For this he is forced to commit suicide.

Tamburlaine proceeds from exploit to exploit and battle to battle accumulating victory over the Kings of Europe and the kings of the East. In the next step he defeats Bajazeth, who mocks him and threatens him to make an eunuch. Tamburlaine selects Bajazeth for his severe revenge. He is carried in a cage as an exhibit of his victory. Interestingly, Tamburlaine puts the queen also in his train. Sometimes it is questioned whether Tamburlaine’s merciless revenge and cruel humiliation are appropriate or not.
The next victim of Tamburlaine is the King of Egypt, who is also the father of Zenocrate. Tamburlaine boasts that he would crown Zenocrate only after defeating Egypt. Tamburlaine's glory reaches its meridian after defeating the King of Egypt and after crowning Zenocrate. The drama ends with a note of immense satisfaction and indescribable delight due to marriage between Tamburlaine and Zenocrate.

In a drama plot is the structural shape, which intends to communicate dramatist's intention or purpose. On the aesthetic level it is the form which conveys the meaning. The discussion of a plot naturally involves the meaning of the play, and it also decides the amount of success the dramatist achieves to convey his intentions. In Tamburlaine Marlowe intends to present the protagonist,

"Who threatens the world with high astounding terms
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering swords".

So the purpose of the drama is two-fold. It is better to see whether the dramatist has succeeded in achieving this two-fold goal, through his plot construction.

The first part of the purpose is threatening the world with high astounding terms. Tamburlaine threatens the world, but his exploits and victories are to be presented to the audience not by showing them on the stage. If this interpretation is sound, then Marlowe is absolutely justified because, he wants to compensate for the deficiencies on the Elizabethan stage (it was unlike the modern cinema), the great and hair raising battle scenes and blood curdling cruelties, were not possible on the Elizabethan stage. So the dramatist wants to use the spoken word, to recreate the cataclysm of Tamburlaine's victories and atrocities before his audience. The drama was written with alien in his
view. The passages of Tamburlaine are high sounding, passionate imaginations, lengthy names of countries and kings and the Greek and Roman illusions. Such a grand and pleasant Indian was more than enough to achieve the willing suspension of disbelief in the minds of the groundlings. But this is not enough because the dramatist is not giving a pageant show nor a grand masque. Hence it is threatening the world. The war cry, the massacre and bloody victories or the subjects, and naturally it is through language that Tamburlaine threatens the world. From this, it can be gathered that the first purpose of the drama is achieved. It can be seen that in Tamburlaine I, the hero also floats on a high level of harangue and his speeches presents only cruelty, bloodshed and war victories. The analysis of the drama satisfies us that the dramatist’s purpose is achieved. In every scene either violence is reported or cruelty proposed or victories narrated. The dramatist weaves a web of horror and victory in the minds of the audience by a continuous sound of war with words.

The second purpose is Tamburlaine scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword. The word scourge is used right at the beginning and the same is repeated many times in the drama. He describes himself as a ‘scourge of God’. So it is a cruel thrashing and bloody lashing of kingdoms, in a metaphorical sense. The dramatist wants to raise the conquering sword of Tamburlaine to a symbolic level. Every part of the play is associated with this sword of Tamburlaine. This type of thinking judges the plot construction as simply superb.
It is pointed out in Tamburlaine Part I, the plot is merely episodic. It means that the play is an arrangement of independent episodes. The binding factor or the connecting of these disparate episodes is the protagonist. If that is the case, there is no reason why anybody should take objection to that description, ‘Episodic Plot’. The plot construction in Tamburlaine Part I is scrupulously done by Marlowe. He had said a target and prepared a plan, and achieved it most successfully. If there is any difference of opinion on this score, it can be due to two reasons – Marlowe’s intention behind the statement, ‘Astounding Terms’ is not taken in their real spirit. Secondly, the dialect of plot construction of the later times is applied in retrospective way, by ignoring the Elizabethan stage and audience. Marlowe’s Tamburlaine Part II provides more light and more proof for the interpretation given above. Actually Tamburlaine Part II has received more attention from critics. It is staged that the theme of part I is the hero’s victory and glory, whereas the theme of part II is the hero’s more exploits and his death. Some critics opined that part II was written due to the success and popular admiration for the part I. It is also stated that Marlowe exhausted to resources. Such opinions naturally imply that the plot construction of Tamburlaine part II is comparatively weaker. However, with her excellent analysis Helen Gardner showed that part II is equally great. The dramatist had a well-led plan, and he executed it with a greater grief and control. According to Helen Gardner, “The theme of the second part is very different. Man’s desires and aspirations may be limitless, but their fulfilment is limited by forces outside the control of the will.”¹ She proceeds to show the inherent order and the deliberate plan in this play, and she also illustrates the successful achievements of dramatist’s intention.
If it is fancy that the two parts of Tamburlaine form into a single drama, then we find 'the hourglass technique' seems to be have been employed by Marlowe. In that case the whole drama takes the shape of a triangle. The most glorious moment of Tamburlaine's life presented at the end of the part I, becomes the climax. The first part is the rising side to the peak and the second part is the descending line, culminating into the death of Tamburlaine. Viewed from this point of view. The fist part cannot be termed as a 'tragedy' inspite of the fact that many consider it so. Now coming to hourglass technique the intensity of the ascent in the first part can be balancedly calculated with the intensity of descent in the second part. The analysis and interpretation provide by Helen Gardner is of utmost use in this direction.

Tamburlaine Part II opens with the enemies, as the first part does. Here his opponents seem not only dignified, but also more spirited. There is a strong desire for unity, to fight against Tamburlaine. There is a truce between Orches and his allies to form the united front against Tamburlaine. Then the escape of Callapine, the son of Bajazeth, is affected with the help of Almeda. This treachery on the part of Almeda reveals that Tamburlaine is losing spirit. Similarly, Tamburlaine's attempt to make his three sons as his inheritors of command receives a setback. His son Calyphas is not ready for a soldier's career. Zenocrate also exhorts Tamburlaine to put an end to his warlike career. In a way nothing is going well with Tamburlaine. But in the first part every idea materialised and every action brought victory to Tamburlaine. Then comes Zenocrate's death, which shattered the mental and spiritual courage of Tamburlaine. His anger coupled with desperateness turns him into a megalomaniac. In a fit of anger he
kills his son Calyphas. His language, though still the same, becomes a shallow rage and rant, in the end he falls sick, and dies with these words, “For Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die.”

The second part, according to its author is the continuation of the first part. In the prologue, in the title the dramatist explicitly tells that the second part is about Tamburlaine’s more victories, the death of his wife and his death. But neither in the title nor in the prologue of part ii, Marlowe speaks about any change in the style of presentation. Hence there should not be any objection for continuing the dramatist’s purpose as explain in the prologue of the first part. Resultantly the purpose of the drama is the continuation of the hero’s story till his death. This is to say that the method of presentation and purpose of drama would still be covered with the ‘threatening the world in astounding terms’.

Compare to the first part in the second part different situations regarding Tamburlaine’s life and his family is presented. Marlowe adopts the same method. For example, the emotion of sorrow in the death of Zenocrate, the emotion of horror in the murder of Calyphas, and the emotion of grief at Tamburlaine’s eminent death or the changed trends in the drama. Objections were raised by critics, for Marlowe’s use of rant and harangue on such occasions. However, it is to be understood that the audience was the same.
Arnold Wynne very ably illustrated by his analysis of the three sins in the play. Regarding Act II, scene IV, where the death of Zenocrine is presented, Wynne says, “For modern taste he (Tamburlaine) rants, but Marlowe was trying to express the excessive grief of an unusual and extreme temperament”. He adds, “give an actor who understood declamation and an audience, which makes small distinction between rant richly coloured by the actor’s voice and exact emotional phrasing.” Similarly in Act IV, scene ii, Tamburlaine murders his son Calyphas. Wynne finds this scene sound. He says, “Uninterrupted and unexpected successes have made Tamburlaine a complete megalomaniac. He is so drunk with success that he is on the verge of a mental breakdown, madly seeking expression of his overwhelming confidence in himself, unable to think and deal into concrete, he boastfully, heartlessly kills his son. It is true that the speech is too much for modern taste, yet Marlowe aims at what is right.”

In Act V, scene iii, Tamburlaine falls ill, though his doctors assure him of recovery, he does not hope for it. For modern readers Tamburlaine’s speech may sound strange or even absurd. But the Elizabethan audience must have found this speech as natural. “Tamburlaine’s speech from his chariot is not more rant, it is if given properly a masterly depicting of a man in extreme physical misery”. To understand its propriety and naturalness, one has to feel two things, Tamburlaine’s psychology and secondly, the Elizabethan audience. Tamburlaine who conquered the world wished his sons to take over his mantle. Contrarily, his sons did not come to that stature. This was definitely a matter of Tamburlaine’s desperation. Besides after the death of Zenocrine Tamburlaine was a defeated man. Her absence has added to his despair. It is possible that at the last
moments of his life a kind of a violent delirious attack might be there, because man of his type often gets it. If we consider it from these point of views, his speech does not look aberrant verse.

Secondly, it must be understood that the physical condition, facial expressions or mental state, the Elizabethan audience had no means to grasp them, accept with the help of his spoken words. That is why there is no reason to consider such scenes or situations as improper or even 'quaint'. Lastly, plot is a means of organising the necessary dramatic material to achieve the dramatist's purpose and to provide delight and satisfaction to the audience. It is enough to say, "Marlowe gave his audience what it wanted."

There is no doubt that Doctor Faustus is the greatest play of Marlowe, in which the plot construction probably claims very little credit. Primarily the drama was the work of different dramatists and reflects touches of the different hands. It contains the most tragic scenes, the flimsy light clownish scene, some scenes based on historical incidents. That is why it is desirable that the play may be enjoyed taking the whole impression into consideration. The plot of Doctor Faustus is neither episodic like Tamburlaine, nor is it perfectly woven as Edward II is. The protagonist Doctor Faustus is the predominant attraction in it and all the remaining parts only to contribute to enhance his effect. A detailed account of the plot and characterisation is provided in Chapter IV.
Though it has a similar hero, on a different ground. Here the hero is not a Scythian shepherd but a scholar of divinity from Whittenburg, who exhausted the study of all the subjects and also enjoyed the golden benefits out of their professional application. But the doubts about the authenticity of the text have made the critics with hold their final judgement.

But the question of plot construction takes a new direction, in relation to Doctor Faustus. If the plot in Tamburlaine is described as episodic, it is in positive sense, but in Doctor Faustus in a negative sense. At the outset it may be asserted that the greatness of the play Doctor Faustus is not due to its plot construction. In Tamburlaine and Doctor Faustus it is the central figure the hero, who is the point of attraction and attention. All other characters and incidents and situations are only secondary but where Tamburlaine projects his dazzling personality, Herculean stature and his violent and cruel victories make the audience dumb. Doctor Faustus by his superhuman ambition, the vastness of his imagination and immeasurable demand make the audience spellbound. In this two plays the heroes and their personalities mould the unity of the play. Plot is only a subservient follower.

It also is interesting to compare the prologue in Tamburlaine and the chorus in Doctor Faustus both provide us details of the protagonist whereas the former does not hint at the ending, the later provide the rise and fall of Faustus:

"Till swollen with cunning, of a self conceit, his wax’n wings,
And melting heavens conspired is overthrown".
In a way the speech of chorus has the quality and the grandeur of an epic. The complete life story is sketched here as the moral of the play is given in the epilogue. Faustus is a typical medieval scholar, and his study of all-important subjects was complete. He also is a Paracelsian who aspires to knowledge infinite. It appears that Faustus is not content with the profit and delight, resulting from the other subjects. To satisfy his thirst for more knowledge he decides to pursue magic and necromancy,

"These metaphysics of magicians,
And the necromantic books are heavenly;
Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence."

He exclaims, "A sound magician is a mighty god". These words of Faustus remind us the words of Theridamas, "A god is not so glorious as a King." He invites Mephistophilis and consequently signs a bond with Lucifer. As per the bond, Faustus would be entitled to infinite knowledge, power and unlimited sensual pleasure for twenty-four years, after which the soul of Faustus would be taken away by the devils. From then onwards Faustus indulges in adventurous activities. He travels into the universe, and visits the premium mobile and he goes round the world. In the meantime he became very famous for his magic and he visits royal courts, to please kings and emperors by his magic. After the expiry of twenty-four years, his soul is taken away by the devils.

This short prosaic summary cannot substitute for the grand universal drama in the play. Even though it is doubted whether the present text is authentic or not, it is enough to measure the depth of this drama. Some people think that it has all the traits of a morality play. It is also contended that it is a battle between the good and the bad. Some
opined that Faustus is every man. But the plot is a typical mixture of scenes and episodes. The opening scene provides a kind of ethos and pathos of Faustus. His bent of mind, his ambition and the crucial decision he takes in consultation with Valdes and Cornelius are presented in the first part the drama.

While discussing the plot construction of the Doctor Faustus it is interesting to view it from a different angle. Aristotle defined drama as an imitation of a single action, and it is clear that "action" is not any external action merely. The Aristotle's conception of action as "consisting of ethos, pathos and praxis" may be applied here. The emotional personality and the major qualities of Faustus are clearly indicated. Similarly the parting moods and the mental makeup also are provided. Then the third part 'praxis' is also presented. The psychic energy born in the depth of the mind and the same slowly emerging out to manifest itself in the form of a physical action - this process of praxis is well depicted when Faustus ultimately signs the bond. The remaining drama is the presentation of the consequences. From this point of view Faustus stands to the test of Aristotle's dictum, "A drama is an imitation of a single action".

(Aristotle's Poetics Ed. by Butcher Chapter IV - 5 page no. 123)

Butcher states, "By ethos are meant the characteristic moral qualities, the permanent disposition of the mind, which reveal a certain condition of the will: pathos are the more transient emotions, the passing of feeling: praxis are actions in their proper and inward sense. An act viewed merely as an external process or result, one of a series of outward phenomena, is not the true object of aesthetic imitation. The praxis that art
seeks to reproduce is mainly an inward process, --a physical energy working outwards, deeds, incidents, events, situations, being included under it, so far as these spring from an inward act of will, or elicit some activity of thought or feeling."

In the first act Marlowe presented these three aspects of ‘action’, which culminated in the Act I scene v, in Faustus words ‘consummaum est: the bill is ended’. Aristotle, defined plot as "the imitation of the action, the artistic equivalent of ‘action’ in real life."^5

(Aristotle’s ‘Poetics’, Ed. by Butcher, Chapter VI, sec vi, pg. no. 334)

From this it can be seen that the play Doctor Faustus properly fits into Aristotle’s conception of plot. Now the following incidents and situations naturally shall manifest the effects of the ‘action’. It is a kind of follow up of the ‘action’. But the interesting part of this drama is the internal conflict in Faustus’s mind. This adds a new dimension to the drama, which becomes the vital point of attraction and attention. Even before the contract this moral conflict between the good and the bad was inherent in Faustus. In the opening scene, Faustus asks Wagner to request Valdes and Cornelius to visit him. The incident of good angel and evil angel immediately follows. In scene iii Faustus is still in hesitation. He says,

"Then fear not Faustus, but be resolute
And try the uttermost magic can perform"^6

This hesitation of Faustus is the greatest differentiating factor between him and the other heroes. As a matter of fact Faustus falters from holding fast to his will, where
as Tamburlaine is unshakeable in his will. As far as ambition and aspiration are concerned Faustus stands far higher than Tamburlaine, because his ambition is only to become the conqueror of the world but Faustus aspires to attain the godhood.

As the drama progresses, Faustus continues to enjoy the fruits of his sinful contract, and yet the hesitation, the internal conflict continues to be with him. In the early stages, his ambition for worldly power and pleasures is overwhelming and his moral conflict makes him very weak. Ironically when Faustus is satiated with the worldly pleasure and when he faced imminent damnation, this moral conflict assumes universal proportion. The tragedy turns upon his ambivalence between intellectual rejection of Christianity and its emotional attachment to it. The judgement on the plot construction in Doctor Faustus is very difficult to pronounce. Because any opinion can be given only after taking one side of this issue - intellectual rejection of Christianity or emotional attachment to Christianity. Those who favoured the first, call it a great tragedy, and who those who favoured the later call it a play of atheism. For example, Ellis Fermor described this as a loss of harmony between his mind and the universal forces surrounding him. She states that the purpose of Doctor Faustus is to record this loss of harmony. She concluded that the central idea of the play is an idea of loss.

Tamburlaine started with a conviction and he is convinced that it is the only truth. The plot construction, the incidents and situations proved that his conviction, for him was correct. He does not waver from that and he does not face any opposition. On the other hand he paints his god with his own conviction. But Faustus wavers, he is frightened,
and he could not achieve a unity between his world and the universe. The last scene where Faustus is shown in his anguish, pain and fear is admired universally. The last scenes of Doctor Faustus are among the most pathetic and most grandiose in Renaissance's drama. They are unsurpassable even by Shakespeare. The reason is clear. This hesitation is that of every human being, who is perennially wavering between worldly pleasures and salvation of the soul. It is the secret behind the appeal of this play inspite of its structural and other deficiencies.

It is difficult to correctly evaluate Marlowe's skill of plot construction in Doctor Faustus because of the confirmed research that different hands worked upon it. The most important reason for this was probably to make this play more entertaining and stageworthy in changing time. The clownage scenes fall down to a bathos, when Faustus's speeches touch the lyrical heights.

Marlowe learned new lessons of how to turn history into drama by taking liberties with facts stated in history, by dealing with ideas, by disposing characters in groups, by distributing interest among a number of characters, by toning down the extravagance of speech to a level with common intercourse, by gathering together images from nature as well as from classical mythology to enforce dramatic ideas and sentiments and above all by making history a mirror for contemporary experience.

First comes Marlowe's remaking of history into a new manageable pattern. For the events of history his principal source was Holinshed's Chronicles, though he used for
certain episodes Stowe's Annals and Fabian's Chronicle. Edward's reign stretches across twenty years, 1307 to 1327. It is a hotchpotch of events, least promising for a two-hours' traffic upon the stage. Marlowe manipulates events, transposing characters and telescoping rebellions to give the illusion of a compelling drama of conflicts of interests, sentiments and dispositions. The more significant of the changes and their dramatic value may be listed:

The events of the drama Edward II may be roughly arranged for our convenience. The First revolt of the barons, Lancaster, Warwick and Pembroke, took place between 1307, when Gaveston was first recalled from exile, and the murder of Gaveston in 1312. The Mortimers had no role in this. Between 1320 and 1322 two rebellions led by the Mortimers took place, in which a favourite of the king named Spencer was involved, and, after a see-saw of fortunes, the king triumphed over the barons, executing most of them and imprisoning the younger Mortimer who later escaped from prison and fled to France where he joined the queen, where she had gone to negotiate with the French King. The revolt of the queen and the younger Mortimer took place after 1324. The king was defeated, imprisoned and tortured to death in 1327. For three years after this the queen and Mortimer ruled the realm as protectors to Edward III. In 1330 Edward III avenged his father's murder by executing Mortimer and sending his mother to the Tower.

The struggle of the barons against the king gets a dramatic focus. Especially significant is the advancing of Mortimer in time to be the great counterpoint of the king from the very beginning. In Holinshed there is a hint that Mortimer did nothing without
the queen's wish. This is taken up and from the opening the impression is made to gain upon us to see Mortimer as a competitor for the crown and the queen. The liaison with the queen gradually develops with the political conflicts, and the love of power and the woman are fused when Mortimer throws off his dissembling idealism and comes out as a Machiavellian seeker of absolute power.

The transformation of the relationship between Edward and Gaveston is very important. Gaveston was indeed the leader of the French party in the court. While his extravagant and outlandish habits are true to history, Marlowe gives a psychological depth to his relationship with the king, something that borders on homosexuality. The Machiavellian schemer becomes something of a male tart and without whom the king finds life unbearable. To deepen the impression as an essential mental aberration of the king, 'Spencer is brought forward in time and is recommended as a new favourite by Gaveston. The psychological need becomes a thread that connects personalities separated by a decade in history. In history Isabella does not appear as a character before 1324. Marlowe advances her role to the beginning to make her Gaveston’s competitor for the king’s heart. The unhistorical stretching of her role entails a certain inconsistency in characterisation. The roles of the queen in the first and second parts of the play suggest a sense of human probability.

Kent is made a very engaging character driven by selfless ideals. He fights against evil consistently, now against Gaveston, now against the barons; so much so he becomes a moral point of reference in the play. With him our sympathy swings.
The other major changes are for example: Warwick lives three years after Gaveston’s murder in 1312; but in the play his execution follows soon after as a sign of the king’s revenge. The elder Mortimer had nothing to do with the revolt against Gaveston. In the play he plays a serious role, and soon after is sent off to Scotland as though Marlowe wants to drop an inconvenient character, and of course to throw the younger Mortimer into greater relief.

“The intrusion of contemporary ideas and sentiments is part of the anachronistic structure of chronicle plays”. At the very opening Gaveston’s reference to Italian masques with which he hopes to seduce the king could not have any relevance in Edward’s England. The king’s anti-papal outburst is clearly meant to appeal to Elizabethan prejudice. The elaborate accounts of Elizabethan fashions in dress, the ironic reference to the humiliating pursuits of young scholars, the blood-chilling methods of murder of which Lightborn boasts, the reference to the great nurseries (Universities) where Plato and Aristotle are taught are all of contemporary validity. Even the contempt in Gaveston's bravado of speech against the barons before his eclipse has the ring of the contemptuous words of an Elizabethan courtier directed against a country gentleman. What Marlowe achieves is the contemporaneity of history, what T. S. Eliot calls ‘the presentness of the past’. The play moves on two simultaneous levels- the medieval and the Elizabethan, - making the past interpret the present. But it is significant to remark that Marlowe does not bring in the divine right theory, so much characteristic of Shakespeare.
Critics are puzzled about whether there is a central point of view for all the elements of events and characters and ideas. Is there a 'theme' for the play, which can hold all together? Some think that the play seriously tries to attract the attention of the audience to general truths about the behaviour of individuals or social groups. The best way to resolve the issue is to watch the progress of events as they are unfolded scene after scene, and as characters react to events. It is true that in the Henry VI plays, from which Marlowe takes his cue, the political problem of order in a chaotic world of warring feudal elements and the weakness of the king to hold the centre dominate. With Marlowe it is the deeper rhythms of the human heart that usher in politics. Gaveston opens the play and we are seized of the strange image of an Actaeon-like king hunted by his passion for a favourite. There is a persistent insistence on the 'love-sick', 'brain-sick' king, against whom the barons are in righteous revolt, to save the country from ruin and kingship from the corroding influence of a base-born minion. The image of flood, which in Shakespeare suggests disorder in nature, is for Marlowe the image of the king's desire on which Gaveston's ship is floated. In the second scene the impression deepens with the queen's grief, while the political issue widens with the Church joining hands with the barons. Edward and Gaveston are on one side, the barons and the Church on the other. The former are tied by bonds of unnatural-seeming affection, while the motives of the latter are a vague union of interests against a foreigner and low-born man, whose struttings manners are intolerable for the traditional pride of feudal forces. The impression is not personal weakness dominating politics, but characters reacting to situations inviting the
spectators to judge them for themselves. Any judgement is valid; we have the freedom of choice between the king’s personal weakness and the political struggles.

The king is fixed in his love for Gaveston; the barons in their opposition to the minion. Fortunes ebb and flow. Gaveston is banished; Gaveston is recalled. The king is now in despair, now in delight. The barons now ride high, now lie low, waiting for the crafty killing of the king’s minion. The queen struggles to get into the king’s affection, if not as his wife, at least as the woman who rescues his minion from exile. The barons are not united in their attitudes to the king’s despicable longing for Gaveston. At one point the elder Mortimer even condones it as a fault in great men to have minions, which age and maturity will correct. It is true that Marlowe presses into service allusions from legends and history to enforce the intensity of the king’s longing and dwells upon its physical aspects. But this does not make him necessarily a weak king; for he acts with vengeance when Gaveston is killed; he takes a new favourite and avenges Gaveston’s death. He reacts spontaneously to situations, and that is all we know in the play, whatever our private assessments may be.

Edward puts to death most of Gaveston’s enemies; but reveals an unexplained softness towards Mortimer by sending him to prison. Apparently he is the master of the situation; but only for a while. The union of Mortimer and Isabella proves to be too strong for Edward, who flees. In flight he changes with surprising rapidity: he hopes for a contemplative life and stoically resigns himself to his tragic doom. The spark of royalty is extinguished in him. His capture imprisonment, torture and death are situations, which
open up for the dramatist new avenues to poetic experiments. The spectators have no single cue for response. Edward’s gimmicks with the crown as he is forced to abdicate might provoke responses ranging from a sardonic smile to sentimental pity musing upon the ‘reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty’. The horror of Edward’s murder shocked Charles Lamb in the 19th century into saying that ‘the death scene of Marlowe’s king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted.’ Power calls for new reactions from Mortimer and Isabella. If we look for a consistent development of character, we may not see it. It is only a new way of responding to a changed situation. Mortimer and Isabella are united to love and hunger for authority. Prince Edward is completely within their grasp. But the play has to end. Hence the miraculous change in King Edward II I, the lamb turned into a lion. At one stroke Mortimer is undone and he leaves the stage with a stylised requiem on his coming death. The queen is sent off to the cold loneliness of the Tower.

The situations and the characters’ reactions to them are no logically connected, nor do they show any ‘dramatic’ development in the sense in which the word ‘dramatic’ is conventionally understood. Only one character remains fixed in the flux of circumstances and shuffling of reaction. It is Kent, who is largely a creation of Marlowe’s imagination. Kent alone remains loyal to principles. He is with the King initially; he joins the barons to save the country from Gaveston’s misrule. He is exiled. When he discovers the dissembling craftiness of Mortimer and Isabella, he makes a last bid to rescue the king. He fails. He tries to insulate Edward II against the infesting influence of Mortimer. He fails and perished in the effort.
The spectators' final response to the play is likely to be a spectacle of wasted human endeavours, the impotence of power and the absurdity of life in general. Everything tends to destruction. By the end of third Act all the barons, except Mortimer, perish. In the succeeding Acts Edward is murdered; Mortimer is sent off to execution and the queen to the Tower. If we are romantically inclined, like Bradley, we may take comfort in the thought that King Edward survives to vindicate the lost moral order. There are other equally valid conclusions to be drawn. The earlier plays of Marlowe have taught us to look for the absurdity of all life. If we are politically motivated in our response we might choose as the play's motto: 'Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wreck.' In a more sentimental mood, we may lament Edward's fall with his own words: 'Yet how have I transgressed/Unless it be with too much clemency?' Or perhaps Gaveston's ironic utterance is the best of all:

"then I perceive
That heading is one, and hanging is the other
And death is all." 7

It is safer, not to apply the Aristotelian concept of unity of plot to Marlowe who wrote his plays in the manner of 'the epic theatre' which Brecht in our own day has made popular. Edward II follows the method of Shakespeare's Henry VI plays, taking England as a whole as the scene of action, with France coming in a scene and Scotland and Ireland brought into the scheme through dialogue. Schematic unity may be perceived in the use of emblems also. Professor Moeiwyn Merchant has pointed out the wider relevance the play gains through emblematic technique. The three anonymous men who meet Gaveston at the beginning show what values he represents: when Edward meets a mower
(emblem of death) he gains insight into his own pitiful state; Lightborn’s suggestion of a hot spit as the instrument of murder recalls Edward’s fleshly appetite. Imagery also helps. The central image is the Wheel of Fortune, which men seek to turn with varying degrees of success, only to discover that it is the Wheel that, turns them. Allusions to the classical deities, with their amorous frenzies and escapades. - Juno, Hercules, Danae, Actaon-enrich and reinforce the motives of characters. Especially noteworthy is the new naturalism in Marlowe’s imagery with trees, birds, breasts and fish pressed into service to enlarge our understanding of the reactions of characters to social and political issues.

Of the characters, Edward, Mortimer, Gaveston and Isabella stand out to claim our attention even as they turn on the wheel of Fortune. The question is often asked as to whom we would designate the title of the hero-Edward or Mortimer. The answer devolves upon how we define Marlowe’s tragic hero-a man of strength seeking power or a man of weakness struggling against superior forces only to be crushed in the end? The opening scenes are crucial. Gaveston’s speech at once gives the impression that Edward is a man preyed upon by dubious desires that weaken his responsibilities as a king. His artistic sensibility unnerves him as a ruler; his strange fondness for a favourite throws this manliness into doubt. The sudden elevation of Gaveston to the highest positions of power and the imprisonment stilt. Mortimer, on the contrary, appears as a strong man who is more than a match for the ‘brain-sick’ king; he would rather ‘parley with our naked swords’. The king’s attitude to his wife deepens our impression that he is wicked enough to violate even the sacrament of marriage. The younger Mortimer takes up the
injured woman's cause. His words are ominous: 'The king shall lose his crown,' 'The name of Mortimer shall fright the king.' When Gaveston is seized by the barons, Edward is reduced to self-pity: 'Was ever king thus over-ruled?' Mortimer, on the contrary, is 'resolute', ever ready to 'Depose him and elect another king'. The king only wants a 'nook or corner left, To frolic with my dearest Gaveston.' Mortimer has only contempt for the 'love-sick' king. Edward's anti-papal speech is empty rhetoric.

The king's weakness is psychological. His pathetic longing for Gaveston evokes a sense of muted pity in us. Even the hurt queen pities him and pleads with the barons to spare Gaveston. The dramatist cannot name the frenzied nature of Edward's fondness: 'What passions call you these?' The elder Mortimer is moved to sympathy for Edward who 'by nature' is mild can calm', and whose doting is not without legendary and historical precedents; Edward's flexible youth would change with riper years. It is psychopathy: for Edward needs someone to lean upon, if not Gaveston, Spencer. He is heart-broken when Gaveston is dead; and his resolute victory over the barons is a momentary flash of will that the dead man's spirit has roused in him. When powerless, haunted down by barons and tortured, the treasured memory of Gaveston is the only sustenance for his soul.

This deeply moving nameless passion for a favourite is set against Edward's unkind attitude to his wife, which dulls the edge of pity that we might feel for him in the initial stages. The queen appears to be a devoted wife, compelled to cringe for her husband's heart, which is lost to a male companion. The sacrament of marriage is
violated, even as, through misrule, the sacrament of kingship is violated. Edward has broken faith with God by slighting two sacraments, private and public. The sacrament idea is echoed twice in Edward’s words. Gaveston’s recall managed by the queen is celebrated as ‘A second marriage ‘twixt thy self and me’; the victory over the barons: ‘Edward this day hath crowned him king anew’. The irony is that these joyous assertions are the prelude to more pitiable violations. The country and the queen are victims of Edward’s unpremeditated sins.

It has been argued that Edward’s decline has the inevitability of Fate, which reinforces our impression that his downfall is the unavoidable effect of his political and moral failings. He is betrayed by a mowing, the emblem of death; his beard is shaved off in ditch water, as a visual statement that he is not a man; he is finally killed in a manner recalling his life-long perversion, and his assassin’s name is English for Lucifer.

This sounds a harsh judgement on a man whose fall from power transforms him into a thing of object pity. Self-knowledge never dawns on him: ‘Yet how have I transgressed Unless it be with too much clemency?’, is the self-justifying query of a quaint innocent. His longing for a contemplative life, ‘the reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty’, the savage brutality of the tortures, his piteous eloquence under duress are capable of rousing pity and terror in us. The sudden changes that appear in the queen as a willing accomplice of Mortimer’s machinations reinforce our pity for the suffering king. The king’s agonised words—‘Tell Isabel the queen, I look’d not thus, /When for her sake I ran at tilt in France’,—find sympathetic echoes in our hearts.
The king's decline from power to suffering awakens our sympathy for him; Mortimer's ascent to power hardens our attitude to him. He is a study in Machiavellianism. He is a villain without the violent barbarities of Barabas. In the early stages he is the spokesman of just causes. Among the barons he is upright and inflexible in his opposition to Gaveston, and it is he who pities the flight of the queen most vigorously. His motives, however, are not very clear. His threatening hint to depose the king alternates with the detached concern for the suffering country; his contempt for base Gaveston whose outlandish ways hurt his English pride alternates with a concealed affinity for the queen. When once the queen is within his grasp and he is the master of the situation, he shakes off his pretensions for selfless objectivity. He is the 'remorseless, treacherous, lecherous villain 'who contrives the murder of the king with typical Machiavellian cunning. Prince Edward under his protection is a lamb under wolf's care. He sees himself as Jove's huge tree and others as shrubs under him: 'All tremble at my name, and I fear none'. And yet his end is ironically sudden, inconsistently unexpected. He scorns the world, and as a traveller goes to discover countries yet unknown. That is an exit fit for a tragic hero, though Edward takes the wind of pity out of Mortimer's sails.

The inconsistency in the character of Queen Isabella is often pointed out as a critical puzzle. Marlowe seems to be never happy with his women characters: his feminine interests are slight. His Zenocrate, Abigail and Helen are shadowy characters, if not simple shadows. With Isabella he seems at last to be more deliberate in the delineation of a feminine character, though he registers no signal success. The chronicles
make no mention of any liaison between Isabella and Mortimer before Edward’s murder. Hence Isabella’s role is more or less an invention of the dramatist for the purpose of deepening the psychological interest in the king. In the first two acts of the play we hear much about the intrigue between the queen and Mortimer from Edward and Gaveston, and we suspect them to be inventing a motive for their unnatural alliance. Neither in word nor in deed does the queen suggest that she has anything at stake except her husband’s affection. She reveals herself in soliloquies that she is frantic like Juno with jealousy—and by Elizabethan convention a character tells the truth when most alone. She goes to the extent of persuading the barons to repeal Gaveston’s banishment of persuading the barons to repeal Gaveston’s banishment so that she might steal her way into her husband’s perverted heart. Unless of course we interpret the stage direction of her whispering to Mortimer aside, as her instructing him to dispose of Gaveston more deviously. What is said, as yet, openly does not warrant such guesswork. Only when the king is proved incorrigible does she break into a wish that she could live with Mortimer forever. At any rate the queen’s motive are not thrown into serious suspicious in the first part of the play.

Her volt-face is effected definitely only after her return from France with Mortimer, now in the role of rebel. We see her two faces—the public face still softly sympathetic to her suffering husband and the private face hushing and blessing itself in the bosom of Mortimer. Kent’s comment keeps us aware of the dissembler in Isabella. From now on she is the she-Machiavelli. The suggestion of Edward’s murder partly
comes from this 'she-wolf of France'. And then Marlowe hurries to fold up his inquiry into feminine villainy she is sent off to the Tower.

Edward II is a mellowed Marlowan play. If we judge him by traditional standards we can still find in Marlowe all the merits and defects characteristic of him—though subdued in quality. His ideas are not clearly spelled out; the political implications are not fully worked out; his people do not grow through suffering; his humour is cruel; his feminine interests are slight; his revelations or truths are not transmuted into a tragic vision or catharsis; his titanic reach exceeds his grasp; his only saving grace is the unremitting energy of poetic utterance; even this poetic utterance is subdued for the sake of a more manageable drama in Edward II. All these may be true in their way. If we are to enjoy and understand Marlowe we have to watch him as the father of the Epic Theatre, the initiator of the absurd and the cruel upon the stage.

While considering the plot construction of 'The Jew of Malta' it is difficult to set it aside easily. Marlowe exhibits a greater seriousness, and a system in it. Sometimes the plot of The Jew of Malta is compared with that of Tamburlaine because in both these plays it is the central character who dominates and all incidents and situations contribute only to his actions. But in The Jew of Malta the incidents and situations are not separate pieces to be hung to the thread of the protagonist. In the plot of Tamburlaine some incidents like that of Agydas can be deleted without any great effect to the drama. But in The Jew of Malta the incidents and situations are not only connected, but they also arise out of the developing nature of the play. As it already mentioned that Marlowe's
intention is not only to show sympathy for Barabas against the Christian hatred, but also to display and justify Barabas revengeful rebuff. In the opening scene Barabas has accumulated unimaginable wealth, and he also suggests that it would help him in some perilous condition or probably to ransom something. Faustus describes Barabas as starting from the naught, accumulating great wealth and from the greater to the greatest as the quality of Barabas. He also ironically taunts Barabas after implying him of his wealth, that he would follow the same process to become the richest once again. According to these statements, Barabas builds his empire of wealth. So in the first part of the drama the utility of wealth is only hinted at. Because as a person belonging to minority and there to being a single individual, to fight against the vast structure policy, Barabas has nothing except wealth to help him in this fight.

Barabas is left a pauper, humiliated and even threatened. He does not take all these things lying he fights back. He slowly progresses on the path of his revenge. He isolates his enemies and hits them with immaculate accuracy. While taking to Ithamore he gives a long list of fatal methods, which he must have acquired from the ghost of Machiavelli. First to go were Lodowick and Mathias. They are killed with letter of intrigue. Then he kills all the nuns including his daughter with poisoned porridge, on St. Jaques’ Even. Next Friar Barnadine is killed by strangling. Father Jacomo goes to the Gallows by the cunning plot of Barabas. Bellamira, Pilia Borza and Ithamore die of poisoned flowers. Lastly, Ferneze, Calymath, other Christians and Turks would have died of different means but it could be because Barabas accidentally dies in a caldron.
But these incidents are not independently separate events — for example Mathias and Lodowick were good friends, and Abigail was in love with Mathias. There was no anticipation of their death. But Barabbas meets them in the market and then works out the scheme, which kills both of them. Barabbas's anger was not directed against the nun's in the beginning. But the capture of his house, transferring it to nunnery, and Abigail's conversation together incited to decide to kill all of them with a poisoned porridge. In the same way, the death of the two friars cannot be expected. But as the conditions changed, as the dangers spread around him, he plots to kill them cunningly and cruelly. It is clear from this, Marlowe emerges as a conscious artist of plot construction. The progress of events, and the need for vengeance opens up new murders.

The theme of ‘The Jew of Malta’ is the revenge of a weak minority man against the selfish majority establishment. In the ultimate point he also is killed, ironically by falling into caldron, which was placed by him for others. It is worth remembering the lines of Barabbas uttered to Ferneze in Act V scene ii,

"Thou seest thy life and Malta's happiness  
Are at my arbitrement, and Barabbas  
At his discretion may dispose of both."8

They stand in his gigantic stature, personifying authority and power. Before him all others like Ferneze, Calymath are pigmies. He plays with them as a magician fooling and befuddling as he likes. He also says:

"  
why, is not this  
A kingely kind of trade, to purchase towns  
By treachery, and sale them by deceit."9  
(Act V, scene iv, lines 46-48)
At last when others cannot deceive him he probably decided to be deceived by his own self by falling into caldron. That is why the plot construction The Jew of Malta is more organic and also self-driving. The scenes come out one from the other and overall in these changing situations, Barabas appears like a majestic murderer. Death comes to all, and it has come to Barabas but he has displayed what even a worthless man can do, when driven by humiliation to the dark corner of obscurity. In ‘The Jew of Malta’, Marlowe definitely displays his creative skill in providing us an organic plot, in the sense that the purpose and means are harmoniously conceived and effectively executed.

In the first four plays of Marlowe, it is difficult to study plot and character as separate from each other. On the other hand it is seen that it is more profitable to study them together. In the other plays, Edward II, The Massacre at Paris and Dido The Queen of Carthage, the plot and character may be separated for convenience. Marlowe’s greatest contribution to the Elizabethan drama was the creation of the gigantic heroes. Each play present a superhuman character endowed with ambition and aspiration beyond his conditions. Tamburlaine a ‘Scythian shepherd’ aspires to become the conqueror of the whole world. Doctor Faustus, a peasant’s son desires infinite knowledge and invincible power and authority. Barabas, a merchant sets out to destroy all his Christian enemies, and established the super utility of wealth for achieving his goals. Naturally, the heroes or the centre point and the plot of such dramas are bound to be secondary to characterisation. We have already studied in the detailed analysis and in our study of plot construction above, how the dramas and their plots present these aspects. Here let us
study the exclusive qualities of his heroes and other characters and find out Marlowe’s art of characterisation.

Marlowe’s heroes are human beings, but driven by superhuman ideas. The stature and the strength of Tamburlaine is suggested by Mycetes and Theridamas in the opening scene, even before Tamburlaine physically appears on the stage. Tamburlaine’s declamations are full of high sounding words, and he talks about high things.

“Nature, that framed us of four elements
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring mind:
Our souls, whose facilities can comprehend
The wonderful architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet’s course
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving us the restless spheres
Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole facility,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.”

The huge barbaric figure of Tamburlaine is always before our eyes, and Marlowe’s idea of a tragic hero is superbly reflected in the character of this oriental hero. The motto of his heroes is, “To know everything and to possess everything.” To be human it is to climb always, ‘after knowledge infinite’. Tamburlaine’s appeal manifest itself in his mesmerising abilities to win followers, in his serene self-consistency in the art of war or wooing in his utter loyalty to those who serve him, in his vision of greatness. One can never have doubted that Marlowe displays in a high degree the imaginative sympathy with his heroes, which is required for successful dramatic presentation. From the outside, Tamburlaine refuses to acknowledge limitation. Elizabethan social hierarchy
held that the upper classes were born to their rank and wealth because they were natural leaders. Tamburlaine discards this convention, proclaiming at his appearance on stage,

"I am a Lord, for so my deeds shall prove,
And yet a shepherd by my parentage." 10

He was a true conqueror of the sixteenth century, avid and drunk with his own arrogance and ambition. Throughout the play he is characterised as a man whose words, however, extravagant, are never empty, vainglorious delusions but firm prophecies. His love for Zenocrate is also extraordinary, and he lays down the whole world at the feet of Zenocrate. This first creation of Marlowe is an incarnation of the spirit of the English literary Renaissance. The soaring passion and limitless ambition of Tamburlaine are found everywhere in the play. It is inhuman or superhuman ambition, which is the offshoot of the new movement. Tamburlaine’s love of beauty is supreme and his poetic outburst on the physical graces of Zenocrate must have startled even the Elizabethans.

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

(Act V, scene ii, lines 98-110)
The high ambition, the love of beauty, the declamatory harangues of the cruel tyrant forms the towering personality of Tamburlaine.

Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane are projected as the loyal to Tamburlaine. In the beginning Theridamas appears to be a very small character but as the play progresses, Theridamas emerges as one of the pillars of Tamburlaine’s empire and he proves his worth in the context of the drama. Cosroe, brother of Mycetes is sketched as a conspiring man, who for the sake of crown, murders his own brother but subsequently he is also killed. Among Tamburlaine’s three sons – Calyphas, Amyras and Celebinus, Calyphas is coward and hence is killed by Tamburlaine Celebinus and Amyras are worthy to be called brave as the qualities of soldiers are reflected through their actions. Of all the three sons of Tamburlaine, Amyras is much significant, as he succeeds Tamburlaine and becomes the emperor after his father’s death.

Focusing at Tamburlaine’s enemies, the King’s of the various countries, captain, and many others appear and leave the stage, performing the role entrusted to them. Of all his enemies Callapine is major character as he forms a kind of united front against Tamburlaine. All these minor characters are so carefully and skilfully sketched and fitted into the dramatic mosaic ‘Tamburlaine’ by the dramatist.

Doctor Faustus is a typical Marlowian hero. Just as Tamburlaine represents conquering power and Barabas the power of wealth, Faustus embodies the power of boundless knowledge, which was considered as an ideal of the medieval scholar. He is
greater than Tamburlaine is as far as ambition is concerned. He soars high beyond the boundaries of human knowledge and wants to explore the secrets of the universe even at the cost of his soul. As a university scholar he masters every subject, but still he is not satisfied and he takes up necromancy. By means of magic he wants to attain power and honour. In the midst of luxurious life his conscience pricks him. The picture of God and Beelzebub flash through his mind like a lightning. There is a powerful conflict in his mind and to get rid of it Faustus visualises the apparition of dead Helen. His outburst at the appearance of Helen reveals his sensuousness:

"Was this the face that launch a thousand ships,
And burn the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!"

In Faustus passion for beauty is thus comes out. Marlowe sketched every man's character in Doctor Faustus.

Mephistophilis when compared with the tragic hero occupies an equally important place in the plot of the drama. He is a sole conspirator in the play. Without his help the scourge of God could not have fallen on Doctor Faustus. He provokes Faustus to study necromancy and gain unlimited and boundless power. Mephistophilis in a way creates a trap in which the mighty hero is caught. He is responsible for the action of the play and tragedy of Doctor Faustus. Similarly, Lucifer, Wagner, Valdes, Cornelius and other characters are not the gap fillers but important means to the development of the plot of Doctor Faustus.
Marlowe's Barabas, The Jew of Malta is equally ambitious, aspirant and hence a powerful character. He is sketched a typical Machiavellian hero, who considers the policies of Machiavelli as a perfect road to success. His aim is to build an empire of power with wealth. His tyranny and cruelty is born out of the humiliating treatment given to him by the Christians. Barabas could not have developed a revengeful attitude, but for the wealth, which is forcibly taken away from him. Marlowe has presented as a crafty conspirator and it is illustrated by the manner in which he side tracts Lodowick and Mathias. Merciless father is also sketched by the dramatist, as he does not hesitate to poison his own daughter to take revenge on the Christians. Consequently he is caught in the same track which he led for others and dies. The Characters in the play like Ithamore, Lodowick, Mathias, the friars, Ferneze and others have a due share in the development of the plot, and in the tragedy of the Jew.

Edward II is Marlowe's new experiment in the field of tragedy. In the early plays he projects his heroes as an embodiment of boundless ambitions and aspirations. Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus and Barabas all of them are labelled as mighty heroes, but Edward II lacks all Marlowian qualities. He is projected as a weak and inefficient ruler. Tamburlaine, Faustus and Barabas are dazzling and shining, Edward II is pale and dull. He is a kind of coward who fled from the battlefield and let his enemies to win over his kingdom. He could not satisfy his wife as a husband, for, he cares for his friend Gaveston. He is imprisoned by his own wife and finally is killed.
Gaveston is the second important character along with Mortimer. Gaveston is banished by Edward I and as his intimate friend of Edward II, he is recalled from the exile. The King is asked to choose either Gaveston or the Lords and Barons, the King chooses Gaveston and the conflict starts and ends in the execution of Gaveston. So Gaveston stands the sole cause of the conflict and the tragedy of Edward II. Mortimer cannot be ignored, as his role shapes the play. He is King's strong opponent and wants to marry Isabella the Queen. In collaboration with Isabella he plans and succeeds to overthrow the King and then to kill Edward II. Finally he is executed on the order of Edward I.

Other characters such as Warwick, The Earl of Leicester, The Bishop of Winchester, Sir William, Gurney, Thomas, Lightborn, Kent, Spencer and other perform their roles in the course of the drama.

The study of Marlowe's plays reveals that he did not have much inclination to introduce woman characters in a large number. This meagre presentation of the female sex in his plays has given birth to different speculations. It is stated that he was not capable of creating a woman character compare with Portia. It is also felt that Marlowe could not depict delicate emotion of love, affection. Actually, his character Agudas described this inability to Zenocrate:

"Who, when he shall embrac'd you in his arms,
Will tell how many thousand men he slew,
And when you look for Amorous discourse,
Will rattle forth his facts of war and blood-
Too harsh a subject for your dainty ears."

(Tamburlaine I, Act III, scene ii, lines 42-46)
These words also apply to Marlowe. There are women in his dramas, Zenocrate and Zubina, Abigail, Isabella, Queen Dido, Queen Navarre etc. Marlowe presents these women only to that extent. But he does not pay more attention than needed. Tamburlaine’s love for Zenocrate lacks the soft touch and amorous delicacy. It is an egoist passion rather than a lover’s attention. Marlowe’s admiration for female beauty of course has no limit. He finds Zenocrate “Lovelier than the love of Jove, brighter than is the silver Rhedope, fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills”. To admire Zenocrate’s beauty, Tamburlaine finds the word ‘fair’ to be ugly. Faustus admires Helen—

“O thou art fairer than evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless semele,
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa’s azured arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour”.  

For Faustus ‘And all is dross that is not Helena’. Marlowe’s admiration for physical beauty is an abstract feeling, and it is not directed to any living woman. That’s why the passages admiring beauty from Tamburlaine and Faustus sound and sight similar. For Tamburlaine, Zenocrate is ‘The loveliest maid alive’, fairer than rocks of pearl and precious stone. Sometimes, Marlowe’s hero seems to be the model.

Marlowe’s characterisation in regarding the creation of women characters is always criticised. Critics are of the opinion that Marlowe could not give justice to women in his plays. His plays revolve round the characters of the heroes and no space is left for the heroines or other women characters. It is true when Marlowe is compared with Shakespeare in creating women characters, he stands short in this regard. This point
should be viewed from different angles. Firstly, the number of women in his dramas, secondly the position of women in his plays and finally his attitude towards womankind. Definitely Marlowe did not pay much attention towards women characters. It is difficult to say whether Marlowe viewed woman as a living individual or not. When he admires a women’s beauty it appears that his admiration is towards an ideal woman and not any living one.

Zenocrate and Abigail are created delicate women. They are ready to face sufferings for others sake. They are virtuous. Their desires and aspirations are not as high as the other group to which Isabella and Catharine belong.

Zenocrate is presented a beautiful. Tamburlaine falls in love with Zenocrate at first sight because of her feminine qualities. She had been an inspiring force for Tamburlaine in his conquest. Even in the midst of warfare he remembers her and receives a kind of strength. Tamburlaine wants to capture the whole world only for Zenocrate. She has been praised for her beauty by Tamburlaine throughout the play. Marlowe has given a proper attention in sketching Zenocrate’s character. Olympia though appears on the stage for a little time, her loyalty to her husband, and her unyielding nature makes her character memorable. In similar fashion Marlowe has beautifully presented amiable and gentle Abigail. She seems to be a girl with common traits of head and heart. She is in love with a Christian youth, whom Barabas kills craftily. In repentance she confesses and becomes a nun. This reflects her humane quality. In the end Barabas kills all the nuns in the nunnery including Abigail.
Queen Isabella is the first major women character of Marlowe she belongs to the group of woman characters taken from history. Though she occupies a major role in the play, yet her character stands secondary. Marlowe presents her as a loveable wife in the beginning, but a kind of transformation is seen in her character. Gaveston seems to have brought about this estrangement between the husband and wife by his remarks at her. Queen patiently bears the King's insult and Gaveston's remarks and repeatedly protest her fidelity to her Lord. The only man to sympathise with her and console her in her grief is Mortimer, the King constantly spurns her, and so for kindness, sympathy and even protection. She goes to Mortimer. Neglected by her husband she clings more and more to Mortimer till at last she becomes his mistress. Even Mortimer who has changed a lot could be responsible for her second role for scheming adulteress. In the end after Mortimer's execution she is send to the Tower.

Another dominating character presented by Marlowe is Queen Catharine in his play 'The Massacre at Paris'. Marlowe has scrupulously delineated the character of Catharine who is a staunch Catholic and a great conspirator. She works as a motivating force for the Duke of Guise. She got a setback because of the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant. She is introduced to us with her 'aside', which conveys her intentions and her role in the play. Queen Catharine provokes the Duke of Guise to start the massacre of the Protestants. She also manages the King to favour her in the massacre. The main action of the play is massacre, and is dominated by Catharine. Soon we realise that it is not for the sake of religion that she instigates the Guise for massacre but to gain political strength.
In Catharine Marlowe has presented a kind of harsh ruler. She wants the ruler of the country to play the role of a puppet. Every decision would be taken by her behind the curtain. She says:

"Catharine must have her will in France".

Queen Dido is a woman character, which has been powerfully drawn by the dramatist. She reflects mythological quality. The play is named after the heroine and deals with her tragedy. There are similarities between Dido, Catharine and Isabella. She is introduced to us as a widow. She falls in love with Aeneas. It is doubtful whether she really loves him. In the earlier scene Venus and Juno conspire to create passions in the heart of Dido for Aeneas. This is done with the help of Dido. Soon we see 'Love - ridden' Dido. She neglects Iarbas who really loves her. She wants Aeneas to stay in Carthage. She offers him a power over her Kingdom. Aeneas is also impressed by her beauty and decides to stay in Carthage. But Carthage got a setback. Aeneas is warned to leave Carthage. Aeneas to save himself from the scourge of God leaves her kingdom leaving behind Dido grief stricken. She becomes insane. Marlowe has beautifully presented Dido lamenting at the separation of Aeneas. In the end she regains her sanity and sacrifices her life for the sake Aeneas. The presentation of Helen on the stage reveals Marlowe's sense of beauty.
Critics have different opinions about Marlowe’s art of characterisation. His characters do not grow in the process of the drama. They also do not develop on the basis of reaction to a situation, for instance, the character of Faustus is clearly described in the first scene. The dilemma in his heart whether to submit to God or to the devil is exposed there itself. And we do not get any more knowledge about Faustus in the process of the play. In an ideal drama a character is developed by its interaction with the different situations arranged in a plot. But here we see the same hero, talking and raving in different manners. That is why critics say that Marlowe’s plays lack characterisation.

In addition he creates minor characters as shadows to the hero. All the minor characters appeared to be pigmies. This problem must be viewed from a different angle. Marlowe’s idea is to shock the audience with something unusual. He wants to provide surprises of a sublime nature. Hence he provided passionate and mighty protagonists like Tamburlaine and Doctor Faustus. If he tried to give importance to the minor characters, probably his heroes would be diluted.

Marlowe was no doubt the greatest dramatist before Shakespeare. He freed English drama from the shackles of morality plays. He created real native hero on the English stage for the first time. He definitely shaped English drama. Marlowe had his own technique with which he created the plays, which were highly enjoyed and appreciated by the audience.
For instance let us take the three scenes, which are usually criticised. Tamburlaine at the death of Zenocrate (Act II, scene IV), his murder of his son (Act IV, scene ii), at his entry in his chariot crying out on his enemy death (Act V, scene iii).

The first of the three, the scene at the death of the Zenocrate is wordy undoubtedly, but reduced to its general plan in the light of Elizabethan stage, it is thoroughly dramatic. Tamburlaine, sitting by the bedside of his sick wife, half-communes with himself in lines that with their refrain - like, “To entertain divine Zenocrate”, are really lyric. When this lyric speech has put the audience in a sympathetic mood, the succeeding ‘grief and fury’ of Tamburlaine, and anguish of Zenocrate, lead to music, which in turn increases the emotional response till we rise to the great cry. ‘Why, is she dead?’ it is then that Tamburlaine in his grief breaks all bounds. Of course, for modern taste he rants, but Marlowe was trying to express the excessive grief of an unusual and extreme temperament. Give an actor who understood declamation and an audience, which makes small distinction between rant richly coloured by the actor’s voice and exact emotional phrasing, this whole scene is well planned. Which reflects his dramatic technique.

The murder of his son, Calyphas, is also in conception sound. Uninterrupted and unexpected successes have made Tamburlaine a complete megalomaniac. He is so drunk with success that he is on the verge of a mental breakdown. Absorbed in his own emotion, madly seeking expression of his overwhelming confidence in himself, able to think and deal in the concrete, he boastfully, heartlessly, kills his son. It is true that the
speech is too much for modern taste, yet Marlowe aims at what is right, makes dramatic scene, and provides an effective part of the clearly conceived character of Tamburlaine.

In the scene where Tamburlaine in his chariot drawn by captive kings, and crying out on his enemy, Death (Act V, scene iii), this monarch seems to be quaint to the readers the present time, but for most of the Elizabethan audience there was no quaintness in this at all. The miracle plays were full of just such quaintness, and the Englishman did not wake to this sense of the quaint, till well into Eighteenth Century. Marlowe simply adjusted this method to the mood of his audience. Tamburlaine’s speech from his chariot is no more rant, it is, if given properly, as masterly depicting of a man, in extreme physical misery. Half created with disease and pain, Tamburlaine’s mind shows for a moment its old vigour and then suddenly, all his confusion and utter darkness. The variety and contrast of characterisation of this scene could be obtained only by the dramatist who saw his central figure living on the stage for which he was writing.

Marlowe’s feeling for dramatic technique is best revealed in Edward II. The subject is the veracious history of a king who is dominated by his favourites, first Gaveston and then young Mortimer. Mortimer reaches an understanding with Queen Isabella, who becomes his mistress. The betrayed king is cast into prison and put to death by the order of the two accomplices, who are in their turn executed by their victim’s son.

Edward II stands for sentimental weakness, the royal baseness which cowardice can make bloodthirsty. In Mortimer, with his unbridled ambition, Marlowe returned to
one of his favourite types, and it is Mortimer who connects this play with its predecessors.

Here in order to hasten the movements of the play, he constantly condenses by playing false with history. For instance, in scene ii of Act III, he deals with the death of Gaveston, which occurred in 1312 and the incident of the lands of Lord William de Bruse, which book place in 1321. This scene also shows his care for motivation. By making the king Leap honours on Lord Spencer and in his natural anger take the young Spencer take once into Gaveston’s place. Marlowe though playing fast and loose with historical time, motivates the prompt transferred of the hatred of the Barons from Gaveston to Spencer.

Edward II plot and character. Summarising, in one short paragraph the advance in tragedy inaugurated by Kyd and Marlowe we record the progress made in characterisation, plot, structure, and verse, and in the treatment of history. A play has now become interesting for its delineation of character, not merely for its events or ‘story’. One or two figures monopolise the attention by their lofty passions, their sufferings, and their fate. We look on at a tremendous conflict waged between will and circumstance, between right and wrong, or we watch the gradual decay of goodness by the action of a poisonous though introduced into the mind. The plot has undergone a similar intensification. A drive bears the chief characters along to the fatal hour of decision or action, then drags them down the descent which the wrong choice or the universe deed suddenly places: their feet. Our sympathies are drawn out, we take sides in
the cause, and demand that at least justice shall prevail at the end. There is an art, too, in this evolution, a close interweaving of events, a chain of cause and effect; a certain harmony and balance are maintained, so that our feelings are neither jerked to extremes nor worn out by strain. Even the history play has freed itself to some extent from the leading strings of chronology, claiming the right to make the same appeal to our common instincts as any other play. Verse has taken a mighty bound from formalism to the free intoxicating air of poetry and nature. Men and women no longer exchange dull speeches; they converse with easy spontaneity and delight us by the beauty of their language. A poet may be a dramatist at last without feeling that his imagination must be held back like a restive horse lest the decorum of human speech be violated.

Whether because Marlowe’s genius had developed, or because the exigencies of historical drama obliged him to self-effacement, this play has qualities, which are properly dramatic and are found in none of its predecessors. The lyrical declamation is under a new restraint. The tirades are shorter and the dialogue is better distributed in speeches. The blank verse is less strained and more pliable, nearer to the tones of the human voice. Progress in character-study is also evinced, over a numerous and diversified cast.

The most marked instance of technique in Edward II is that, Marlowe, his desire to unify his material, attains to plot. He completely changes history in order to attain unification, real plotting and naturalness of conduct. He has also shown great skill in his treatment of the Isabella – Mortimer story. Moreover, the play at last for its own
audience does not lack climax. The hideous tortured death of Edward II is followed immediately by a scene of swift general retribution. Even today, this sequence when acted should mean good climax.

The dialogues in Marlowe’s plays are nothing but the long poetic utterances of the hero himself, and they reflect the hero’s ambition in a high fashion. This daring poetry of Marlowe has been considered to be his greatest merit. With this poetry Marlowe successfully created a tragic hero of a very sublime stature. He also provided a very effective instrument to the English drama.

Referring to Marlowe’s dramatic technique and its development, Baker has made the following observation, which is worth quoting:

“Marlowe is no mere transferor to the stage of historical scenes. Even in Tamburlaine he passes from unifying episodes to treating episodes. Unified into a keen study of character. In Edward II by rousing interest promptly, by re-massing his materials so as to maintain interest, by creating and developing a contrasting sub-plot, by motivation of character he reveals himself a genuine technician. That is, he wrote vividly aware of the stage on which plays would be given and of its audience. Consequently, he allowed himself methods and effects for which we may not care today, but which, nevertheless, proved him a good technician in his own time. More than that, seeking to shape his material for that stage and for that audience he passed beyond mere dramatic persuasion of the hour and discovered for himself many of the principles of technique, which held permanently for good drama at any time and in any language.”
Tamburlaine’s words are literally irresistible, for character on stage and for the audience in the theatre. Those who do not succumb to this seduction are summarily despatched, so there is small wonder that Elizabethan audiences fell for this hero. A play, which seemed to offer ultimate moral judgement to the intellectually-engaged spectators of the play turns out to countermand this offer within minutes: perhaps the prologue, rather than inviting us to judge as we please was issuing a challenge, daring us not to yield to its supremey powerful charismatic hero. There is no room for us to dissent from this dramatisation of absolutism, and indeed, we may be excited by its representation of power, wealth and excess. The characteristically Marlowian tension between revulsion and admiration, between identifying with and distancing from the major protagonist, is established. This is undoubtedly Marlowe’s device to prove his dramatic technique.

For a dramatic artist, plot is the arrangement of incidents and situations, which would develop the theme towards a convincing end. In this process, the characters display themselves by their actions and dialogues, by proving their existence and relevance to the progress of the drama. In this aspect Doctor Faustus suffers the most, in the sense that it fails to maintain an organic unity of various incidents and situations.

Doctor Faustus’s character is in fact not one of fixed determination, as he constantly wavers and his purposes change. Sometimes he sounds immovable:

“This night I’ll conjure, though I die therefore…
Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I’d give them all for Mephistophilis.”

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Yet he has continually to screw up his courage. Before he begins the conjuring, he says, half apprehensively:

"Then fear not, Faustus, to be resolute"

And this soliloquy at the opening of Act II, is full of twists and doublings of his mind:

"Now, Faustus, must
Thou needs be damned and thou not be saved
What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies and despair.
Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub:
Now go not backward: no, Faustus, be resolute."

Faustus’s mind is reveal in the first two acts. It is seen swinging constantly between repentance and damnation. Wavering remorse and fixed pride. In the second scene of the second Act, there is repentance; the two angels appear symbolising the conflict. But their speeches are shorter and sharper, and the passage ends with the victory of the bad angel:

"Faustus never shall repent."
Immediately Faustus falls into ‘despair’ –
"My heart is hardened, I cannot repent."

At the end of this scene there occurs the fourth and final conflict. Faustus goes further than before. He calls upon Christ, and the devils appear to attack him, and Faustus finally repents:

"O Christ, my saviour, my saviour,
Help to save distressed Faustus’s soul!"

This dilemma in Faustus’s mind makes his character a bit difficult to understand to the audience. But we can see in his later plays he comes out absolutely a changed man in this regard.
It is said that Edward II is the greatest structural creation of Marlowe. In fact, it is the first well-planned and well-constructed history play in English literature. The chronicle plays written prior to Edward II are episodic in nature, are concerned with the presentation of more or less disconnected scenes, and are, therefore, frequently dull, flat and wearisome. There are no striking scenes and fine characterisation in those plays.

Structurally, Edward II stands far better, where really well knit plot and a dramatic conflict is seen. There are two antagonistic forces in the play. The King and his favourites and the Barons headed by Mortimer, and he develops the conflict between these two hostile forces. For the first time, Marlowe gives up his interest in superhuman heroes. King Edward is an inefficient and erring ruler, who has neither the will nor the power, to subdue his Barons. That is why there is a contest for power, a sort of trial of strength between the two groups. The conflict between the two hostile groups proceeds with varying results. In the beginning the Barons succeed in banishing and then executing Gaveston. Upto this point Mortimer’s group stands stronger. But now for a time the situation changes and it goes against his group, which is defeated by the King at Borough Bridge. But this victory is for a short time. The King’s enemies gather strength and give him a crushing and final defeat. On the whole, the conflict is between two unequal forces.

Marlowe has shown great competence in choosing material for his plot. In choosing the most important incidents and situations. His skill lies in the successful presentation of the events of some twenty-seven years within the compass of the play. To
achieve this end, he makes history move with long strides and much faster. The events in Edward II are foreshortened and detailed and scenes are entertaining. The opening scenes of the play give us an idea about the real taste of a dramatist’s skill. The scenes make us familiar with the events to be followed. We see Gaveston giving an introduction at the opening of the play. He is the sole cause of the conflict between the King and his Barons. Then rapidly his character is revealed. All his inhuman qualities are put forward in the early part of the play. Then we see the King entering with his Barons on the stage and conflict between them over the issue of Gaveston’s recall from exile is shown. These basic events occurred so early that the dramatist gives us an idea about the situation of the play. After that the action takes place. Gaveston declares his return to England publicly. He humiliates the Bishop of Coventry. The hostility between the King and his Barons threatens to take the shape of civil war and almost with baited breath we wait for the final issue.

A succession of important and exciting events develops between the crisis and the catastrophe, so that our interest in this part of the play remains constant. Once again it is a taste of the dramatist’s skill to keep the spectator interested in this section of the play. Marlowe no doubt succeeds in doing so. Queen Isabella succeeds in getting foreign aid against her husband. She lands in England with her allies. The King is defeated and put under arrest by the order of the Queen and her lover, Mortimer.

Marlowe’s play ‘The Jew of Malta’ must have been written after the death of the Duke of Guise in December 1588, mentioned in the prologue, which is put into the mouth
of ‘Machiavelli’, whose spirit is spread over the tragedy. In Barabas, the Jew, Marlowe witnessed another of the flamboyant types to which his genius was specially sketched. The play opens with the Jew sitting in his counting house, with heaps of gold before him, is undoubtedly effective as it gives the clear cut idea about the character of Barabas. Here we can firmly state that ‘the lust for wealth’ reflects through the Jew’s character. As Barabas fingers the glittering coins, the passion for infinite is released through this play in general and through the character of Barabas in particular.

When at one blow he loses his whole wealth, which is taken forcibly by the governor of Malta to pay a tribute due the Turks, his fortunes excite compassion, we certainly fell sympathise for him when he utters that theft is worst of all sins and furiously asks his persecutors whether they are satisfied:

"You have my goods; my money, and my wealth.
My ships, my store, and all that I enjoyed:
And, having all, you can request no more,
Unless your unrelenting flinty hearts,
Suppress all pity in your stony breasts,
And now shall move you to bereave my life."

(Act I, scene ii, lines 139-144)

We feel sorry for him as he considers himself as a part of his treasure. His house has been converted into a nunnery, and he asks his daughter Abigail to join a nunnery so that he could get back his wealth. When he gets the bags full of gold he expresses his feelings:

"O my girl,
My gold, my fortune, my felicity!
Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy,
O girl, o gold, o beauty, o my bliss!"

(Act II, scene i, lines 47-50)
Abigail is in love with a Christian, but Barabas craftily procures his death at the hands of a rival. From this point the play takes a fine twist and degenerates into melodramatic villainies. Here, we find that the plot is developed and Barabas himself becomes the cause of his own destruction.

Critics have different opinions about Marlowe's art of plot construction. Goethe remarks:

"How greatly it is all planned".

Whereas Robertson does not agree with Goethe's remark. He states, "The student, then, is in duty bound to examine Faustus with an eye not merely for inserted comic prose but for all perceptible differences of hand. And he will find ground for inferring much reckless remoulding of the whole central part of the play. While much of the matter, both verse and prose, reveals itself as alien, there is no clear ground for thinking that even as it left Marlowe's third and fourth act were of high quality. For the centre of the play is not planned at all. With a strong beginning and a strong ending it has a nugatory centre."

Ellis Fermor remarks: "The battle is in two parts, with the triumph of evil sealed in each case by the signing of a bond. In the first, Faustus is brought at length to throw in his lot with the evil forces and looses his on the good: in the second, he is brought to despair of the good and so give himself over wholly to the evil. When the first has been
accomplished the downward action sets in, the catastrophe follows immediately upon the second."

Marlowe's the two-part Tamburlaine the Great raises the question of his attitude towards his creations. No one can ever have doubted that Marlowe displays in a high degree the imaginative sympathy with his hero which is required for successful dramatic presentation, but beyond that most critics have felt impelled to raise the question: 'Is Marlowe for or against Tamburlaine?' More exactly, romantic critics have tended to take it for granted that he embodies his own aspirations in his hero. Reaction against this began by claiming a greater degree of objectivity for him, but finished by suggesting to us a Marlowe equally committed on the other side, % the dramatic apologist of traditional ethics against the titanism depicted in the figure of Tamburlaine. It seems possible that Marlowe may have been more detached than has been admitted on either side.

The huge barbaric figure of Tamburlaine is always before our eyes, and the action of the play is only a series of his triumphs. Marlowe's idea of a tragic hero is superbly reflected in the character of this oriental hero. The motto of his heroes is "To know everything and to possess everything". From the outside, Tamburlaine refuses to acknowledge limitations. Elizabethan social hierarchy held that the upper classes were born to their rank and wealth because they were natural leaders. Tamburlaine discards this convention, proclaiming at his appearance on stage,

"I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove, and yet a shepherd by my parentage."
Drawing on the mythic iconography of Joe, the king of the gods, who took the form of shepherd on earth. Tamburlaine follows the concept of Nature, in fact to bolster his contention that it is natural to aspir:

"Nature, that framed us of four elements,  
Warring within our breast of regiment,  
doth teach us all to have aspiring minds."

(Act II, line 18-20)

To be human is to climb always 'after knowledge infinite', restlessly exerting ourselves:

"Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,  
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,  
The sweet fruition of an earth crown".

Tamburlaine’s appeal manifests itself in his mesmerising abilities to win followers, in his serene self-consistency in the art of war or wooing in his utter loyalty to those who serve him, in his vision of greatness.

He was a true conqueror of the sixteenth century, avid and drunk with his own arrogance and ambition. Throughout the play he is characterised as a man whose words, however, extravagant, are never empty, vainglorious delusions but firm prophecies. His love for Zenocrate is also extraordinary, and he lays down the whole world at the feet of Zenocrate. This first creation of Marlowe is an incarnation of the spirit of the English literary Renaissance. The soaring passion and limitless ambition of Tamburlaine are found everywhere in the play. It is inhuman or superhuman ambition, which is the offshoot of the new movement. Tamburlaine’s love of beauty is supreme and his poetic outburst on the physical graces of Zenocrate must have startled even the Elizabethans.

"If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their master's thoughts
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least
Which into words, no virtue can digest."

(Tamburlaine Act V, scene ii, lines 1942-1954)

The high ambition, the love of beauty, the declamatory harangues of the cruel tyrant forms the towering personality of Tamburlaine. Inspite of these dazzling qualities of this play, it seemed doubtful if it is a good work of dramatic art. Because it is only a juxtaposition of different scenes and they are bound only by the personality of the protagonist. It is opined that apart from him, all those scenes would fall asunder like a pack of cards. It is also felt that there is no external unity in the sense that a situation gives birth to another situation and in this process plot becomes visible, and it consequently evolves a character. Another glaring deficiency is that Marlowe cannot create a female character with doing full justice to the subtle and delicate emotions and feelings. The beauty and grace, the feminine sensibility and womanliness of Zenocrate are only suggested through Tamburlaine’s robust and bombastie phraseology. Even the poetic utterances are of sprouting force rather than of touchy and sensitive emotions and feelings. Such observations were made and objections were raised about Marlowe’s plays. But while assessing Marlowe’s plays, it is necessary to consider the time and context in which they were written.

(The Works of Christopher Marlowe Ed. By Tucker Brook)

The tragedy of Dido, the Queen of Carthage is a mythological play. The play was written when he was in the University and so Marlowe as a young Renaissance scholar presented this play. But in this play also Marlowe gives preference to Fate instead of God. The manner in which the gods of heaven fall low and flirt suggest that nothing could be expected from them for the prosperity of humanity.
Reference Chapter: IV

2. Arnold Wynn: The Growth of English Drama (Chapter VI, Tragedy)
3. Doctor Faustus (Act I, scene I, lines 48-53)
6. Doctor Faustus (Act I, scene iii, lines 14-15)
7. Edward II (Act II, scene V, lines 29-31)
8. The Jew of Malta (Act V, scene II, lines 50-52)
9. The Jew of Malta (Act V, scene IV, lines 46-48)
10. Tamburlaine Part I (Act I, scene II, lines 34-35)
11. Tamburlaine (Act V, scene II, lines 98-110)
14. The Jew of Malta (Act I, scene II, lines 139-144)
15. The Jew of Malta (Act II, scene I, lines 47-50)