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**CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE AS "OVERPEERER":
ESPIONAGE, VISION, AND THE ACTAEON MYTH**

by

CHRISTOPHER WESSMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

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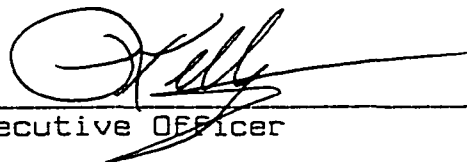
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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract:

**CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE AS "OVERPEERER":
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by

Christopher Wessman

Adviser: Prof. Patrick Cullen

As both playwright and spy, Christopher Marlowe was an "overpeerer." This unusual term, which the dramatist appropriates from Golding's translation of Ovid's Actaeon in the *Metamorphoses*, initially describes one who stands above and looks over or down upon. However, "overpeering" in Marlowe comes to entail visual competition for sexual pleasure, political power, and theatrical display. The playwright passionately engages this charged realm of the eye, and his fascination with spying and forbidden vision helps to account for the very nature of his drama. To understand the importance of secret sight in Marlowe's work, it is necessary to examine his career in Elizabethan espionage, to consider the dynamics of illicit gazing, and to appreciate the myth of Diana and Actaeon that he uses as a paradigm of "overpeering." These visual aspects are pervasive components of the self-conscious, metatheatrical drama that Marlowe forged.

The first chapter of this dissertation describes

Marlowe's professional life as a spy within the fledgling institution of Elizabethan espionage. The second connects espionage to the sexual and voyeuristic aspects of overpeering, the pleasures and dangers that comprise the forbidden gaze. Chapter Three explores the dynamics of surveillance and Baconian "simulation" within *The Massacre at Paris*, while Chapter Four considers voyeurism and exhibitionism in *Dido Queen of Carthage* and *Hero and Leander*. Finally, the last two chapters scrutinize the use of the Diana and Actaeon myth amid the veritable orgies of spying and viewing that take place in *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*. The former play demonstrates the workings of what Sartre has called an "Actaeon complex," while the latter is an experiment in what might be termed "Actaeonesque history." Throughout, "seeing" of this sort leads to "making" for Marlowe -- "making" in both its sexual sense, and also in the respect of creating and constructing drama. The theatrical thrills of espionage and vision are crucial to the work of this pioneering playwright.

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I dedicate this to Ines, Kate, and Steven, who daily delight and fortify me.

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Introduction: Christopher Marlowe as "Overpeerer"

One of the most influential reflections upon Christopher Marlowe remains Harry Levin's landmark study *The Overreacher*. A varied and diverse examination of Marlowe's poetics, stagecraft, and psyche, the work is unified by the author's focus upon the supreme desire and grasping of both the playwright and his protagonists. Levin summarizes these appetites as different types of *libido*, violent desire or longing.¹ They are all encapsulated in the mythological figure of Icarus, whose woodcut by Geoffrey Whitney appears on the book's title page. Alluded to by Marlowe several times, Icarus "overreaches" himself by flying too close to the sun and melting his wings of wax, crashing down into the sea over which he flies. This pattern of spectacular but presumptuous desire and achievement, followed by catastrophic failure, Levin finds replicated by many of the characters and by the playwright himself. He even speculates about an "Icarus complex" driving Marlowe's life and work.²

Although the figure of Icarus provides a compelling framework for contemplating Christopher Marlowe, his life and work may be examined from an alternative perspective by

 1. Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952). Levin distinguishes *libido dominandi*, *libido sentiendi*, and *libido sciendi*, pp. 33-36.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

using a different myth, one that is insinuated just as strongly as the figure of Icarus, if not more so. The myth of Actaeon -- the hapless hunter who sees the goddess Diana naked, is transformed into a stag, and torn apart by his own hounds -- is likewise associated with presumption and intrusion. But his defining act differs; and in terms of the nuances of interpretation, this makes for some profound changes. With this myth, Marlowe's concerns are those of vision and transformation: spying, eyesight, forbidden scenes, and ultimately the meta-theatrical, all ubiquitous in his work. It is no surprise that the verbs "to see" and "to make," inter-related as they are, dominate the Marlowe lexicon.³ I will be investigating spying, watching, and seeing, rather than the soaring that Harry Levin noted. This is not to argue with his masterful study, but -- employing visual metaphors -- to re-set the sights and shift the focus in order to consider Marlowe from a different vantage point. It is a vantage point that has not yet received a cohesive treatment, as well as one that incorporates much of what has been learned recently of Marlowe's other career, that of Elizabethan spy. Marlowe is

 3. Robert J. Fehrenbach, Lea Ann Boone, and Mario A. di Cesare, eds., *A Concordance to the Plays, Poems, and Translations of Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). Other than "shall," "will," "have," and "be" -- indicative of the assertiveness and grasping so associated with Marlowe -- the two most common verbs are "see" and "make," used 373 and 304 times respectively. Their preponderance suggests two related things: the importance of the visual, and the impulse to form, shape, and create.

not just an overreacher, but more specifically an "overpeerer," a term of his arguably borrowed from the Golding translation of Ovid's viewer Actaeon.⁴ I use the word to show the extent to which Marlowe and his characters live and transgress in the realm of the eye -- in the observation and the replication of the visually forbidden. The complex dynamics of watching permeate his life and work.

The first two chapters of this dissertation provide a historical and critical context for Marlovian overpeering, considering its formation and its multiple manifestations. The first chapter describes Marlowe's professional life as a spy within the fledgling institution of Elizabethan espionage. The second connects espionage to the sexual and voyeuristic aspects of overpeering, the pleasures and dangers that comprise the forbidden gaze. Chapter Three explores the dynamics of surveillance and Baconian "simulation" within *The Massacre at Paris*, while Chapter Four considers voyeurism and exhibitionism in *Dido Queen of Carthage* and *Hero and Leander*. Finally, the last two chapters scrutinize the use of the Diana and Actaeon myth amid the veritable orgies of spying and viewing that take place in *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*. The former play

 4. In *Edward II*, Mortimer Junior, trying to protect the realm and himself from an intruder, declares his refusal to be "overpeered" (I.iv.19); *Edward II*, ed. Charles Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). In Golding's Ovid, the naked Diana, shielded by her nymphs, nevertheless "overpeered them all." *The XV Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis*, London, 1567 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), p. 32.

demonstrates the workings of what Sartre has called an "Actaeon complex," while the latter is an experiment in what might be termed "Actaeonesque history." Throughout, "seeing" of this sort leads to "making" for Marlowe -- "making" in both its sexual sense, and in the respect of creating and constructing drama. The theatrical thrills of espionage and vision are crucial to the work of this pioneering playwright.

Chapter I. Marlowe and Elizabethan Espionage

Spying and clandestine watching are rife within the work of Marlowe. The gods in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* assume altered forms covertly to gather information about their rivals and their favorites. In *Tamburlaine*, enemies of the protagonist rely upon professional "spials" and speak to an unnamed "Spy" who, "Scouting abroad upon these champion plains, / [Has] view'd the army of the Scythians."¹ Even in the *Elegies*, Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores*, the withdrawn lover spies in secret upon the object of his affections.² *The Massacre at Paris* abounds with surveillance and intelligence, scraps of knowledge upon which the plotting of the Guise depends. Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* does his own spying, standing to the side or above and secretly observing others.³ The experience of *Doctor*

 1. In *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, both Venus and Cupid disguise and hide themselves for purposes of intelligence and intrigue, esp. I.i.139-200, beginning "Here in this bush disguised will I stand," and III.i.1-80, with Cupid as Ascanius; in *Tamburlaine*, II.ii.35-50, Meander relies upon the reports of spies. *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane (New York: Penguin, 1969).

2. In *Elegy* I.iv.3-4, the poet covertly watches his mistress with her husband: "Shall I sit gazing as a bashfull guest, / While others touch the damsell I loue best?" *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, Vol I, ed. Roma Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

3. The Guise in *The Massacre at Paris* states his aspirations as well as his *modus operandi*: "policy," "plot," and "an ear to hear what my detractors say" (II.ii.34-108). In *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas similarly relies upon spying: his sinister servant Ithamore praises his "secret, subtle . . . knave" of a master, who has plotted and secretly watched the deaths of his daughter's suitors (III.iii.9-10).

Faustus, specifically the protagonist's invisibility in Rome, has been referred to as "an intelligencer's fantasy."⁴ On the other hand, court life in *Edward II* might be considered an "intelligencer's nightmare," an irreversible and destructive orgy of watching and counter-watching.

Marlowe's intelligence career

Christopher Marlowe's preoccupation with viewing the forbidden was reflected in his life's activities, not only as a playwright but in his involvement in literal acts of espionage. It is of no small significance that his life revolved around seeing what was not supposed to be seen. No retiring writer, academic, and divine, he rejected the clerical life for which his Archbishop Parker scholarship and his studies at Cambridge had trained him.⁵ He appears to have been so energized by the idea of viewing the forbidden that it spurred him to action. He saw illicit sights for himself, rather than being content with imagined visions of them. His experience with clandestine watching was thus first-hand; he was exposed to its dangers, uncertainties, and pleasures. To an extent, he fashioned himself in the mode of the spy in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*,

4. John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 73.

5. John Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe*, Vol. I (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1964), pp. 31-85.

who hides himself behind a cloak covered with eyes, ears, and tongues that "signify the instruments with which spies exercise [their] arts".⁶ For Marlowe, the "arts" of spying and of theater ultimately overlap.

As was the case with his prodigious dramatic talent, his predilection for espionage appears to have developed early. While he was a master's student at Cambridge in 1587, his degree was withheld because he had been away at Rheims, a suspicious site known as a hotbed of Catholic plotting and a refuge for English Catholics. This was also where English spies and agents were routinely sent to pose as recusants, to infiltrate the Catholic network and report back. It is entirely possible that Marlowe was one such agent, even in his early twenties, for the Privy Council itself intervened on Marlowe's behalf to secure his degree. It declared that "Christopher Morley," this truant student in suspect territory, "had done her majestie good service" in "matters touching the benefitt of his Countrie." The Privy Council went so far as to concern itself with Marlowe's reputation: "it was not her majestie's pleasure that anie one employed as he had been ... should be defamed by those that are ignorant in th'affaires he went about."⁷ Such affairs seem to have continued. There are records of "Morley" and "Marlin" that with reasonable accuracy can be

6. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, Vol. III (Padua: Donato Pasquardi, 1630), pp. 90-91.

7. Bakeless, pp. 75-78.

identified as the playwright going back and forth between England and the continent in capacities of messenger, courier, envoy -- common occupations for those involved in the gleaning and trafficking of intelligence -- in Utrecht, Rouen, and Dieppe, for Burghley and Cecil, two courtiers associated with surveillance.⁸

But these last and other ventures did not garner the sort of unambiguous praise from the Privy Council that "Morley" had earned to secure his master's degree. Understandably so: as Jonathan Goldberg argues, Marlowe seems to have entered into an ambiguous world of duplicity, assuming a "counteridentity" in an alternative, subversive realm.⁹ Conyers Read and Laurence Stone have shown how "double agency" was characteristic of the world of Elizabethan intelligence. An English spy in the service of a patron "spy-master," often recruited out of prison to begin with, would head for Europe, be again imprisoned by Catholic authorities, and would "turn" or appear to shift allegiances, only to be sent back to England as a Catholic agent.¹⁰ Thus, despite their usefulness and their associations with men of power and position, spies were

8. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

9. Jonathan Goldberg, "Sodomy and Society," *Southwest Review* 69 (1984), p. 373.

10. Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Halsingham and the Policy of Queen Elizabeth I*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), pp. 322-335; Laurence Stone, *An Elizabethan: Sir Horatio Palavicino* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), pp. 234-35.

distrusted -- "lights of state," Ben Jonson would write, "but of base stuff."¹¹ They were lowly born, kept bad company in dangerous places, and were suspect, tempted as they were out of self-interest and moral drift by the possibility of putting themselves first, becoming in fact agents for no one but themselves.

Marlowe's scent of scandal -- a "taint" he seems "never to have lost" -- was related to his espionage activities for Burghley, Cecil, Sir Francis Walsingham (the preeminent intelligence-gatherer of the era) and his cousin Thomas Walsingham, as much as for his reported atheism and violent temperament.¹² In his case, as in Read's and Stone's profiles of the career of spy in the sixteenth century, imprisonment was a distinct aspect of his life. He was jailed and interrogated several times under ambiguous circumstances: in late 1587 when his opponent in a street fight was killed, although not by Marlowe but a friend of his; by Sir Robert Sidney in January 1592 on the charge of counterfeiting, which he may have learned at Newgate prison five years earlier (the charges appear to have been dropped because of his connections to Cecil and Walsingham); and in May 1593 when the same Privy Council that had spoken up for him six years earlier wanted to question him about religious heresy and atheism.¹³ J. M. Archer conjectures that "he

 11. *Ben Jonson: Works*, Vol. VIII, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), p. 45.

12. Archer, p. 70.

probably had other prison experiences as well," and believes, as does Charles Nicholl, that Marlowe "somehow fell prey to the intelligence apparatus he had served on the continent."¹⁴

His death in a Deptford tavern in 1593 at age twenty-nine resulted from a stab wound in or near the eye -- ironic for an author/spy obsessed with vision -- ostensibly after a disagreement over the "reckoning," or bill. Whether or not the event was accident or assassination has been the subject of fascinating debate, but it can be said with certainty that Marlowe's three companions that day were intimately connected to the spying networks of the time. Although there was a considerable degree of change and jostling in terms of their affiliations, there are surprisingly large numbers of documents that link these individuals to particular intelligence "house-holds." Ingram Friser, the man who killed Marlowe, had long-standing relationships with both Walsinghams; Robert Poley with the Cecils; and Nicholas Skeres with the Earl of Essex, who was "trying to establish secret contacts with James VI of Scotland as the most likely successor to the English throne." Citing the "rival espionage networks" of Essex and Cecil, Archer suggests that "in some obscure way Marlowe may have been a minor casualty in the struggle for Elizabeth's intelligence patronage in

13. Bakeless, pp. 86-106.

14. Archer, p. 70; see also Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Harcourt

the wake of Francis Walsingham's death in 1590."¹⁵

Elizabethan spying in context; Halsingham's network

Marlowe's killing may be the great "*whydunnit*" rather than "*whodunnit*" of English literary history, spawning conspiracy theories of wide range and mixed credibility.¹⁶ But what can safely be surmised about the espionage activities of Marlowe and his acquaintances provides illumination enough about the nature of these practices. The paper trails of these four men yield much regarding spying in the time of Elizabeth. Too informal to be deemed a profession proper, it was an employment that was varied, at times interesting, and with luck, potentially rewarding. There are records of Marlowe, Friser, Poley, and Skeres travelling frequently throughout England and western Europe to sites of intrigue, power, and privilege. Through their intelligence patrons and the courts that they surveyed, their spying was a means of coming into contact with men and settings that would otherwise have been above their station. If spies were fortunate, such contacts could be parlayed into success and wealth. Ingram Friser benefitted both

Brace, 1992), pp. 324-29.

15. Bakeless, pp. 159-184; Archer, p. 72.

16. Charles Nicholl's well-researched claims carry more weight than such contentions as that the death was a hoax and Marlowe went to Italy to write the plays of Shakespeare. See Calvin Hoffman, *The Murder of the Man Who Has Shakespeare* (London: Messner, 1955); A. D. Wraight, *In Search of Christopher Marlowe* (London: Macdonald, 1965); Della Hilton, *Who Has Kit Marlowe?* (London: Weidenfeld and

socially and financially over a number of years as his patron Lady Audrey Walsingham rose spectacularly by her ties to the future King James.¹⁷

However, Elizabethan espionage could also be low, uncertain, and dangerous. A spy's companions were more likely to be prisoners or rabble than they were to be courtiers. In the murky world of intelligence, employers regarded their messenger/spies with suspicion and treated them inconsistently. The nobles who utilized Robert Poley as an informant in the Babington plot, the 1586 Catholic conspiracy against the Queen, expressed doubts about whether he was to be trusted -- doubts echoed, incidentally, by those he actually did betray. After his heyday in the 1580's and '90's, there were letters from Poley indicating his frustrating lack of intelligence work and support from his former patron Cecil.¹⁸ Not only failure but danger and death were distinct possibilities. The sketchy biographies of Marlowe, Friser, Poley, and Skeres are rife with brawls, imprisonment, interrogation, legal entanglements, and even murder.

Marlowe and his colleagues tended to have personalities that were violent, daring, dishonest, and disrespectful, at least in private. Although contemporary opinion was divided -- with a solid contingent eulogizing "kynde Kit" -- there

Nicolson, 1977).

17. Bakeless, pp. 163-166.

is corroborating testimony that speaks of Marlowe's "cruel and intemperate hart" and his capacity for striking out and delivering "sudden privy injuries to men."¹⁷ The questionable character of Ingram Friser is revealed in records that reveal what can only be described today as credit and real-estate swindles.²⁰ Finally, there is a sort of proud shamelessness that runs through the accounts of these men. Marlowe boasted of his ability to "coin" or counterfeit, learned in prison. Poley bragged to the husband of a woman with whom he was having an affair, that Sir Francis Walsingham -- despite having just gotten him out of the Tower of London -- should be grateful to him, Poley, "for there are further matters between hym & me then all the world shall knowe of." In fact, "his commytting to the Tower was but to *blynd the world*," done for appearances to cover his role in exposing the Babington plot, according to a "Secret Intelligence" document dated 1586.²¹

This last detail points to one of the most significant characteristics of spying in the time of Elizabeth -- its pervasive visual component. If the intelligencer has a

18. Ibid., 171-180.

19. "J. M." in *The New Metamorphosis* (1615) speaks well of Marlowe, as do publishers Edward Blount and Thomas Thorpe, and writers Chapman, Nashe, Peele, Dekker, and somewhat cryptically, Shakespeare. However, his former roommate Thomas Kyd criticizes him, as does Richard Baines in his so-called "libel"; Robert Greene and Gabriel Harvey have harsh words, and are echoed by the Puritans Beard, Rudierd, and Vaughan. See Bakeless, pp. 109-187.

20. Bakeless, pp. 166-169.

power "to blynd the world," to restrict or hinder its capacities of sight, this presupposes that the spy has a view or vision of a secret truth, unknown to all but a few others, that he has the power to manipulate. It implies an aspect of visual control, and of sight and seen things as commodoties that can be bought and sold as well as altered. It also implies that control over the visual is the essence of power.

The vignette from the mysterious life of Robert Poley reflects upon the larger institution of Elizabethan espionage in which Christopher Marlowe participated, a general "court culture of observation and surveillance."²² By Marlowe's time, espionage was depended upon increasingly to safeguard a realm that was threatened both internally and externally. There was much about which to be insecure: military and political rivalries with France and Spain; religious uncertainty, since the continued presence and infiltration of Catholics created an on-going "enemy within"; and not least important, an aging, unmarried female monarch without an heir.²³ In such an environment, success and stability depended largely upon the Queen's discretion and her intelligence, in both the sense of "wit" and "information." It is no surprise that her motto was "*video et taceo*," "I see and remain silent."²⁴ Advance knowledge

21. Ibid., 174, 177.

22. Archer, p. 6.

23. Read, pp. 322-335.

of one's rivals, enemies, or even friends was a form of power that provided a degree of security. Francis Bacon's fictional intelligence-gathering service, the rigorous and far-reaching "Solomona" of the *New Atlantis* (1621) was but a fantasy that systematized and extended the techniques of two or three decades earlier.²⁵

Functioning for this Renaissance version of "national security" and survival, Elizabethan espionage was practiced for the purposes of political favor and patronage. It was a complex, multi-tiered system involving a wide cast of characters, from the high to the humble. The Queen not included, the highest of the high was the Secretary of State, Francis Walsingham, with whom Marlowe and some of the spies present at his murder had been associated. Though by no means the only intelligence-gathering system of the period, Walsingham's was the most extensive. The man and his network provide a profile of the institution he was instrumental in solidifying. Walsingham followed the principle that "knowledge is never too dear," and spent his own money in addition to Elizabeth's allocations for espionage -- "with her Majestie's allowance and his owne purse." Contemporary reports attest to his skills and interests: "dexterous ... in finding a secret," this "most subtle searcher of hidden secrets" had "wayes of

24. Archer, p. 42.

25. Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in *Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works*, ed. Sidney Warhaft (Indianapolis:

intelligence above the rest."²⁶

In the 1580's, Secretary Walsingham was said to have had seventy or more agents strategically placed throughout the courts of Europe and even Asia Minor, relaying information through a system of codes and ciphers, and buying intelligence and loyalties: "With moneye he corrupted Preists, Jesuits and Traytors to bewraye the practices against this Realme." He had access to

all the private papers of Europe: few letters escaped his hands, whose contents he could read and not touch the seals.... He would cherish a plot some years together, admitting the conspirators to his own and the queen's presence familiarly, but dogging them out watchfully: his spies waited on some men every hour, for three years.²⁷

Such descriptions capture the desire for a self-protective omniscience that was the goal of Elizabethan espionage; they also connect knowing all with seeing all and viewing secrets.

Furthermore, the spy-master Walsingham operated like a cagey, suspicious puppet-master. To prevent his agents from creating "toyes and matters of their owne invencion," he had constant checks to verify their information. To keep them honest, he regularly reassigned and shuffled them throughout the courts and places of intrigue in Europe. This was the case with Robert Poley, who worked for Walsingham variously in London, Holland, Brussels, Scotland, and Denmark. A

Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), p. 437.

26. Bakeless, pp. 159-160.

27. John William Burgon, *The Life and Times of Sir Tomas*

picture develops of Walsingham and Elizabethan espionage in general: cautious, distrustful, and virtually obsessed with the power and potential danger of secrets and secret sights. Christopher Marlowe appears to have functioned within this intense but murky world which Walsingham took part in making. Marlowe was in many ways its product and, according to Nicholl and Archer, perhaps one of its casualties. The connections between Walsingham, Marlowe, and Poley illuminate the class dynamics of the espionage system, and the ways in which the unpredictable world of intelligence provided a chance at something akin to upward mobility:

[Walsingham's] messengers seem to have been of two sorts -- young gentlemen of good family with their ways to make and men of humbler birth who by breeding and education could be regarded as gentlemen. Thomas Walsingham, Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh, Richard Hakluyt, and Robert Cecil were of the first class. In the second were men like Marlowe, Poley, and Skeres.

Eugenie de Kalb observes more bluntly that the system created "many secrets in common between men of position and gentlemen blackguards."²⁸

Surveillance, display, and theater

Espionage and secret intelligence had far-reaching effects upon court culture and the society at large. The sociologist Georg Simmel stresses in general "the significance of the secret for the structure of human interaction."²⁷ The structure of Elizabeth's court

Gresham; in *Bakeless*, p. 160.

28. Eugenie de Kalb, "Robert Poley's Movements as a

reflected the ongoing watching that was its salient component. This chronic watching had related though seemingly opposite effects: secrecy and showing, two sides of the same coin. The era produced elaborate variations upon what would be concealed and what would be revealed. The same impulse that refines the "arts" of intrigue -- to use Cesare Ripa's term -- also creates and refines the arts of public spectacles and statements, including pageants, shows, "devices," emblems, tilts, tournaments, and masques. In many of these, the intended audience, with varying levels of sophistication, could read the direct or subtly coded messages that reinforced the monarch's power. In others, there was a degree of sometimes risky give-and-take between sovereign and subjects, where nobles would stage entertainments that might obliquely advise the ruler.³⁰

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault emphasizes the degree to which royal display was the means of maintaining power in the Renaissance. Yet, he downplays the spying and secrecy of the period. In his view, only in the Enlightenment did surveillance become the dominant method of control in a modern state, one that avoided the exposure characteristic of royal display.³¹ This view is by no means

 Messenger of the Court," *RES* 9 (1933), 13-18; cited in Bakeless, 160.

29. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950), p. 331.

30. See, for example, Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 38-60; Axton discusses the advice to marry obliquely given Elizabeth by

unanimous. Georg Simmel too acknowledges the crucial place of display and what he calls "adornment," which "intensifies or enlarges the impression of the personality by operating as a sort of radiation emanating from it." Apparently the "antagonist of secrecy," adornment works in a similar way in the sense of "emphasizing" a person and his or her power. It is "the means by which ... social power or dignity is transformed into visible, personal excellence."³² But Simmel correctly points out the social and psychological interdependence of display and secrecy. He locates espionage in English political history in a way that relates specifically to Marlowe:

... the real court cabal, the secret whisperings, the organizations of intrigue, did not occur under despotism, but only once the King had constitutional counselors, that is, when the government was, to this extent, an openly revealed system. Only then, the King began ... particularly since Edward II ... to form, against these co-rulers ... an inofficial quasi-subterranean circle of advisers, which in itself as well as through the efforts to enter it, created a chain of concealments and conspiracies.³³

We will see that Marlowe exploits the same dynamics noted by Simmel, particularly the "concealments and conspiracies" that come about as a result of Gaveston's "efforts to enter" the inner circle of Edward II.

John Michael Archer also criticizes Foucault's minimi-

the Inns of Court plays in the 1560's.

31. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 187-209.

32. Simmel, pp. 338-343.

33. *Ibid.*, 336.

zation of Renaissance secrecy. He argues in *Sovereignty and Intelligence* that Foucault's Renaissance culture of display was "supplemented by a corresponding culture of observation and surveillance." Archer makes a convincing case for the Elizabethan "practical conjunction of power as sovereignty with knowledge as intelligence." It is a case with abundant evidence, beginning with the fact that the motifs of Cesare Ripa's spy -- the eyes, ears, and tongues -- appear on the mantle of Elizabeth, the Queen of *video et taceo*, in the so-called "Rainbow" portrait.³⁴

Archer's predecessor in this argument is Norbert Elias, who contends in *The Civilizing Process* that even in the late middle ages, royal power was a balancing of the realm's conflicting interests that was achieved through constant monitoring. Watchfulness and sensitivity to secrets often replaced or sublimated what had previously erupted into violence:

If the sword no longer plays so great a role as the means of decision, it is replaced by intrigue, conflicts in which careers and social success are contested with words.

Elias believes that courtiers developed their own "compulsion to display" as a response to the watching they perceived. This created an increasing "psychologization" within the Renaissance court, as competing nobles attributed psychological depth to each others' maneuvers. For Elias,

34. Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 159.

this rivalry produced a mutual observation that led to a new and specific individual consciousness within the period.³⁵ My study of Christopher Marlowe as "overpeerer" examines him in terms of this new consciousness, as both a product of the world of watching, and one who extends and comments upon it. Marlowe puts spying on display, and in so doing, self-consciously plays with the words that, as Elias suggests, were the new weaponry and tools of power. He dramatizes and interrogates the theatricality of a court culture and a society shaped by the tensions and ambiguities of mutual observation.

As the idea and practice of spying developed, espionage was not just about ascertaining information regarding an external foreign enemy, but instead became a way of life, a means of *self*-monitoring that was part of the courtly world. Courtiers "performed" for their monarch, for each other, and for themselves; simultaneously, they viewed the performances of others. Archer suggests that at times this monitoring verged on paranoia, that the new subjectivity that was taking shape was "also threatened with annihilation by the gaze -- not its own gaze, but a gaze that [was] outside of it."³⁶ He uses Jacques Lacan's formulation of "the gaze" to sum up the tenuous position of the Renaissance courtier: "I

 35. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. 2, *Power and Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 271-274. On display, see *Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1983), pp. 63-64.

36. Archer, p. 10.

see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides."³⁷ The ambiguities of watching and being watched lead to multi-level, perspectival irony -- an irony exemplified by Holbein's much-analyzed *The Ambassadors*. In this double portrait, the apparently sturdy world of two watchful courtiers is undercut by the distorted but dominating figure of a skull in the foreground at the feet of the men, visible only from a sideways view of the painting but not head on. For Archer, this clandestine *memento mori*

signifies that only a second observer, someone or something who can gaze upon both the picture and its viewer, is in a position to understand the portrait's real, bleakly ironic relation to its viewer.³⁸

Marlovian theater operates with a similar viewpoint and from a similar distance, engendered at least in part by the ambiguities of chronic courtly watching and self-spying that loomed large in Marlowe's life. The theater has the inherent capacity for multiple voices, dialectical conflict, partial viewing and incomplete disclosure -- myriad levels of seeing, watching, and knowing. Such a theater and its audience can be exploited to function as the necessary "second observer" of whom Archer speaks. Judith Weil has argued powerfully for Marlowe as a grand ironist in the Erasmian tradition; Lawrence Danson has used the rhetorical

37. Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 72.

38. Archer, p. 10.

trope of "the Questioner" to illuminate the playwright's ironies; and Marjorie Garber, Edward Snow, and Arthur Lindley have all stressed the ironic Marlowe as they examined themes of enclosure, desire, and genre.³⁹ But no other single issue offers as much insight into the character of Marlowe's works as his connection to Elizabethan espionage, a world as "opaque" and "improvisatory" as the drama that Marlowe would pioneer.⁴⁰

Although drawn to it by his own personality, Marlowe was also a product of the prevailing culture of espionage. Yet he was active rather than passive in his response to it, transforming into public spectacle a great deal of what spying *was* -- the mutual, obsessive, hidden watching that for the court of Elizabeth increasingly came to equal power. He pleases his audience by partially revealing himself and the practices of the court which through his patrons he serves. Though his plays take place in Malta, France, Germany, or the England of 250 years earlier, they are very much commentaries upon the practices of the Elizabethan world in the 1580's and '90's. If Elizabeth's motto was

 39. See Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Lawrence Danson, "Christopher Marlowe: The Questioner," *ELR* 12 (1982) 3-29; Marjorie Garber, "'Infinite Riches in a Little Room': Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe," and Edward A. Snow, "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the Ends of Desire" in Alvin Kernan, ed., *Two Renaissance Mythmakers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); and Arthur Lindley, "The Unbeing of the Overreacher: Proteanism and the Marlovian Hero," *MLR* 84:1 (1989), pp. 1-17.

40. Archer, p. 12.

video et taceo, "I see and remain silent," Marlowe's peculiar habit (peculiar for an intelligencer) might have had the motto "I see and I speak" -- at least in an altered venue -- or, "I see, and I *stage*." And in staging, Marlowe gave his plays' viewers the vicarious, if not completely safe, experience of the spy. He has them enter the hall of mirrors that is the continual observation of others and of the self. Montaigne, another product of this age of burgeoning surveillance, declared, "I turn my gaze inward, . . . I observe myself," and "spy on myself."⁴¹ In the same era but in a different forum, Marlowe's public productions amounted to a related sort of self-spying, a minute but ironic examination of both himself and his times.

 41. Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, ed. Pierre Villey (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1965). See "De la praesumption," p. 657, and "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," p. 565; trans. by Archer, pp. 23-24.

Chapter II. Spying and Seeing: Envisioning the "Overpeerer"

The *Tamerlanes* and *Tamer-chans* of the late Age ... had nothing in them but ... scenically strutting and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers.
-- Ben Jonson¹

Spectacle is part of Marlowe's obliquely ironic style. ... Sight becomes a problem for the audience as well as for the characters.

-- Judith Weil²

Marlowe's propensity for visual spectacle has been questioned and criticized for almost four hundred years. *To see* is not only a favorite verb, but a favorite action, judging from his spying career as well as the behavior of his characters. The official espionage discussed in the previous chapter spills over into a less formal but still voracious hunger for the visual, for sights of all sorts. Marlowe's plays celebrate and interrogate seeing; they concern themselves with the workings and ramifications of vision.

From espionage to vision

The focused watching of the professional intelligencer leads towards the overarching lust to see that is evident in the plays. Marlowe's dual careers of playwright and spy

1. Ben Jonson, from *Timber, or, Discoveries*; in *Ben Jonson: Works*, Vol. VIII, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), p. 587.

2. Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 20.

involved similar skills and predilections. The ubiquitous "peeping" in his drama reflects and comments upon that which he did for Walsingham and others. Spying's importance for the playwright and his era has been noted in Chapter I. Espionage engendered a court environment that has been likened to a hall of mirrors, in which both self-monitoring and the surveillance of others is chronic and nearly compulsive.³ Norbert Elias has suggested that the dynamics of espionage were critical in forming both the individual sense of self and the psychology of the time.⁴ For Marlowe, spying served as a defining action of the self. It was a creative catalyst as well as an integral part of his exploration of the larger, related field of vision.

All sorts of vision appear constantly within his work, from court pageantry to clandestine watching, and lustful gazing to visions of nightmarish violence. Harry Levin observes that metaphor alone is never enough for Marlowe. The "mighty lines" and "high astounding terms" for which he is famous are reinforced by viewed spectacles seen on stage. "Above all others, he exercises the faculty of vision," Levin declares; and "eyesight is involved ... organically."⁵ This is the case in *The Massacre at Paris*, from Guise's

 3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Reading Montaigne," in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 204.

4. Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 271-74.

5. Levin, p. 148.

court spying to King Henry's final display for a mysterious "English Agent." *Dido* also begins with a visual revelation -- the erotic tableaux of Jupiter and Ganymede -- and continues with scenes of Cupid's secret spying and the old Nurse's visually-inspired ardor. *Hero and Leander* extends the intense "visuality" of the dramas into the genre of Ovidian amatory poetry; it is an orgy of "sights ... rare," "yielding eyes," "jewels ... spied," and "frame[d] look[s]" (II.47, 238-40, 307).

In a related manner, *Tamburlaine* is a "picture in [a] tragic glass" that the Prologue directs the audience to "view"; its protagonist sees and savors with his "piercing instruments of sight" (II.i.14) and self-consciously creates spectacles of triumph "Wherein, as in a mirror, may be seen / His honor" (V.ii.410). Similarly, Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* initially prizes elaborate, private spectacles of wealth, but after adopting the role of "spy" who can "enter and surprise the town" (V.i.68) he stages complex, public scenes of revenge. This dissertation does not specifically address these two plays because they do not fall as directly as the others within the lines of spying and forbidden sexual, religious, and political vision. Yet in them the power dynamics of sight and the metatheatrical potential of the gazing eye are essential.

Doctor Faustus and *Edward II* depict secret seeing and peering even more copiously. Faustus gazes and visually intrudes into the realms of the divine, staging spectacles

of forbidden vision and spying upon inner sancta in order to know about supernatural realms. Edward lives in a court world of watching that has rules he cannot abide; he is drawn instead to sights of erotic pleasure. Both protagonists make vision an integral part of their delight as well as a cause of their downfall, epitomizing Marlowe's visual and self-referential theater.

The erotics of vision; literary voyeurism

Camille Paglia writes of the "roving eye" and the "inflammation of the eye" within western culture, calling it "the avenue of eros."⁶ She locates the source of this visual erotic vitality in the ever-present forces of paganism and "decadence," defined as a reaction against Humanist, Enlightenment, and Romantic fantasies of benevolent nature, control, and progress. For her, pagan "decadence" is the counterstatement, the return of the repressed: a Dionysian, chthonic, earthly force. The decadent, inflamed eye is vital and ferocious; it rejects repression, artificiality, and sentiment. Above all, this force is visual. "Paganism is eye-intense," Paglia argues, a power that "Judaeo-Christianity has failed to control." Decadence is a "disease of the eye, a sexual intensification of artistic voyeurism."⁷

6. Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 32-33.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 36.

Christopher Marlowe's works display supreme examples of the "eye-intense" and the "inflamed eye," and in many cases are elaborately constructed upon the "sexual intensification of artistic voyeurism." Paglia's thesis is supported in Marlowe's case by the fact that the playwright's passion to see is so often connected to the explicitly pagan. The ancient myths of Hero, Dido, Icarus, and Actaeon suffuse his work, drawn from the pagan Ovid, Vergil, Musaeus, and others. This takes Paglia more literally than she intends. Her argument delineates the absorption of a "pagan" spirit into western culture in an abstract sense; she uses the term impressionistically.⁸ And yet in Marlowe, as the vision of the spy broadens into the "roving eye" of an explicitly sexual gaze, the author exploits materials that are literally pagan. In the development of Renaissance humanism, Marlowe was an "eye" in the right place at the right time. Hundreds of years of Christian shackling of the pagan eye, in the form of religious allegorical readings, were being modified. Ovid and others were being reconsidered.⁹ For Marlowe, as for Paglia, "the power of

 8. Paglia considers Coleridge and Dickinson pagan or "decadent" for their reactions against Wordsworthian Romanticism, although they are not in general strictly pagan or mythological *per se*. *Sexual Personae*, Chaps. 11, 12, 24.

9. For delineations of the Ovidian tradition, see Clark Hulse, *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 243-51, and Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 103-17.

the eye" leads inexorably to "spectacle," which she deems the "pagan cult of the eye."¹⁰ Pagan theatrical spectacle is the summation of Marlowe's overpeering, epitomizing it and creating out of it a theatrical monument.

The visual pleasure that Paglia observes on a cultural plane was most likely created by the psychological dynamics of vision operating on the personal level. Sigmund Freud has discussed the phenomenon of "scopophilia," love of looking, pleasure in seeing. Scopophilia is the "fixation of the sexual aim" on the visual. The eye becomes an "erotogenic zone," a realm of intense sexual pleasure.¹¹ Paglia's description of the eye as the "avenue of eros" for western culture is an expansion of Freud's clinical observation that "visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused." For Freud, scopophilia becomes a "perversion" when "instead of being preparatory to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it" -- when the looking becomes the highest end in itself.¹² Although the erotic gazing in Marlowe sometimes leads to physical consummation, the latter often seems incidental in comparison to the erotic heat generated by the initial seeing. Although the Victorian pejorative

10. Paglia, p. 33.

11. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 21-23, 35.

12. Ibid., p. 23.

"perversion" seems moralistic in describing scopophilia -- something Paglia would reject -- Freud's assessment of the viewing as an end in itself captures the essence of Marlovian overpeering.

Two other aspects of Freud's observations on visual pleasure provide insight into Marlowe's peering. Freud links scopophilia and art, and connects voyeurism and exhibitionism. Regarding the first, Freud noted that

The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts. It can, however, be diverted ("sublimated") in the direction of art.¹³

Here is a precursor to Camille Paglia's idea of the "sexual intensification of artistic voyeurism." Freud does not add that "scopophilic art" might self-consciously reflect the process of gazing that inspired it in the first place. It might be an inherently visual medium steeped in its own predilections. It follows from Freud that Marlowe's art -- that of a delighted, compulsive looker -- engages complex scenes of viewing.

The "scopophilic art" Marlowe produced also bears out another of Freud's observations regarding the mutuality of voyeuristic and exhibitionistic pleasures:

Whenever we find in the unconscious an instinct ... which is capable of being paired off with an opposite one, the second instinct will regularly be found in operation as well Every active perversion is thus accompanied by its passive counterpart: anyone who is an exhibitionist in his unconscious is at the same time a voyeur....¹⁴

13. Ibid., p. 22.

The spy is on some level equally obsessed with being spied upon; the gazer, with being gazed at. Freud's insight helps to explain the extreme frequency of scenes in Marlowe in which the beholder's position is reversed, and he or she becomes the object beheld. Sometimes this is unintentional, as when Leander with his own "inflamed eye" becomes the object of Neptune's desiring view. At other times, objectification by the gaze, utter exhibitionism, is courted by those who have previously delighted in looking -- as in the extravagantly flamboyant theatrical gestures of Barabas, Faustus, Gaveston, and Edward. The pleasures of seeing invite speculation about being seen, and actively showing. Are the pleasures of the beheld, the voyeur wonders, perhaps even greater than his or her own? What is it like to be watched, to be on the other side? Marlowe's characters, and the playwright himself, are impelled by such questions. For many of his gazers, exhibition and display are irresistible. They represent the farthest possible extension of the voyeur's obsession: what does the beheld experience? Exhibition answers that question and allows for that identification. It shatters boundaries in ways most characteristic of Marlowe, who as Charles Lamb observed, always "delighted to dally with interdicted subjects."¹⁵

14. Ibid., p. 33.

15. Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808), in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. IV, ed. E. V. Lucas (New York: Putnam, 1903-05), p. 24.

In addition to Freud, others have considered the consuming experience of viewing from vantage points that stress its potency. Jacques Lacan locates within the watchful and erotic "gaze" the rudimentary building blocks of identity and selfhood. He describes its workings -- "I see from only one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides" -- in ways that shed light on the compulsive, sometimes paranoiac quality of Marlovian peering.¹⁶ Lacan emphasizes viewing as integral to the formation of human subjectivity, and the notion of being viewed and "looked at from all sides" creates multiple levels of meaning and a slippery identity dependent upon others. Lacan's formulation of the gaze intimates the sort of theatrical self-consciousness exhibited by Marlowe. Similarly, Georg Simmel considers sight in ways that lead to both subjectivity and creativity. Discussing secrets and their relation to viewing and exposure, he observes that they "produce an immense enlargement of life, ... the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world"; they "intensify the unknown through imagination."¹⁷ Secret vision points toward an imaginary alternative world, larger

 16. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 72, 86-92; and "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 1-7. Also, see Archer, pp. 9-11, on paranoia, espionage, and the Lacanian subject.

17. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), pp. 330-33.

than life. Marlowe's theater of overpeering would certainly qualify in this regard.

The riveting quality of vision makes it transmutable into "second worlds" of imagination. Roland Barthes notes the gaze's "haptic" function -- its "power to seize, to take."¹⁸ This seizure or taking of visual self-image is intimately connected to identity. Viewing or being viewed can be an invasion, a theft or loss, depending upon where one is situated. As is often seen in Marlowe, Barthes' interpretation of the gaze as a form of power suggests that intricate struggles take place around it. The art critic Norman Bryson, too, describes the gaze as a "penetrating, piercing, fixing" form of vision. It has the power -- the "logic," he calls it -- to lacerate, and also to seize or freeze moments in time. Bryson distinguishes between the "vigilant, masterful, spiritual" gaze and the "subversive, random, disorderly" glance in the world of Renaissance painting, and maps out the relationship between the two. In Marlowe's case, both "masterful" and "subversive" vision are components of his overpeering.¹⁹

The arresting power of vision also concerns Lee Patterson, who considers the "entranced gaze" from classical to Renaissance epic. This is a gaze of "stupefaction" that

18. Roland Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 238.

19. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 93.

is occasionally erotic but often spiritual: Dante's sight of Beatrice, Petrarch's of Laura. This awed and overwhelmed gaze is a first step towards self-knowledge on the part of the viewer.²⁰ In this and other treatments of visual experience, viewing provides power and pleasure in extremely concentrated form. Furthermore, it is integrally connected to identity, especially in its reflexive capability of turning itself inward as well as projecting outward. That seeing can become showing is part of the latent power of the gaze, not always readily apparent but lurking beneath the surface. Spectator becomes spectacle with surprising, sometimes terrifying ease. Barabas starts by spying upon others, but in the end constructs a public stage upon which he dies, the beheld. Edward II, the "peeping" voyeur at Gaveston's titillating shows, finishes as a spectacle for all to see; his assassin describes him as "o'erwatched," with the double sense of "exhausted" and "thoroughly viewed." This shifting and double-edged quality of viewing has been found in one of the most momentous "stupefied" gazes of western culture. The "arrested gaze" of the Virgin Mary at Jesus transfixes not Christ, Sarah Stanbury argues, but Mary "as a spectator," thus demonstrating the suppleness and mystery of vision.²¹

 20. Lee W. Patterson, "'Rapt with Pleasaunce': Vision and Narration in the Epic," *ELH* 48 (1981) 455-475.

21. Sarah Stanbury, "The Virgin's Gaze: Spectacle and Transgression in Middle English Lyrics of the Passion," *PMLA* 106 (1991), pp. 183-93.

The literary depiction of vision is fraught with the ambiguity that Theresa Krier calls "the conflict or tension of seeing hidden things." A "literary voyeur" -- her term for Spenser can be used for Marlowe -- recognizes that "peeping is a morally laden issue" and a deeply complex one. The literary voyeur returns to scenes of "hiddenness in the secrecy of secluded places [that] accompan[ly] ... acts of vision." These scenes articulate

both a profound human wish to see and an equally profound wish to remain in a condition of invisibility, to remain a subject to oneself rather than to become an object of another.²²

In Krier's formulation, being seen is almost entirely negative and dangerous, a "fundamental intrusion on the vulnerable self from which other violations follow." She delineates "the relationship of vision to violence."²³ On the other hand, many of Marlowe's characters crave such exposure despite or because of its dangers; they exemplify Freud's notion of complementary voyeurism and exhibitionism. But in either case, Camille Paglia's "inflamed eye" of paganism makes a very specific appearance. According to Krier, the literary voyeur Spenser also "builds scenes on multiple subtexts" by testing Vergilian and Ovidian moments of forbidden vision.²⁴

22. Theresa Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 8-11.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

The theater of visual transgression and punishment

In Marlowe, the most characteristic watching that goes on is invited watching. The protagonists see and savor, and are in turn seen; often they willingly display themselves. Are they voluntarily giving themselves away, flirting with danger and destruction? They are literally "playing" with such possibilities. Georg Simmel's insights into the dynamics of secrecy illuminate the workings of vision. The secret, he posits,

is full of the consciousness that it *can* be betrayed; that one holds the power of surprises, turns of fate, joy, destruction -- if only, perhaps, of self-destruction. For this reason, the secret is surrounded by the possibility and temptation of betrayal; and the external danger of being discovered is interwoven with the internal danger, which is like the fascination of the abyss, of giving oneself away.²⁵

Marlowe's characters play with "being discovered" and giving themselves away through sight, as objects beheld in other people's eyes. Furthermore, they dramatize this process by creating theaters of viewing, spectacles of vision. This gives them not only power and pleasure, but also the "fascination of the abyss," a self-defining sense of pain and punishment heightened by display. Gaveston knows that it is not just the visual lust for the "lovely boy in Dian's shape" that excites his lover Edward II (I.i.61). It is the theatricality of the entire packaged event: the anger of the goddess, the yelping of the hounds, the chase, the

25. Simmel, pp. 333-34.

terror and death that "best please" him. In displaying himself, Edward is embracing the pleasure and the ensuing pain of the gaze that he knows to be its component thrills.

The ideal forum for such sights is, not surprisingly, the theater. There is poetic justice and vertiginous irony in this. Marlowe's dramas are public, visual spectacles of the transgressing eye and its punishments, in which the transgression is exposing the private and making it public. Marlowe plays with a potent and dizzying circularity here. Merleau-Ponty's metaphor for court life in the era, the hall of mirrors, is appropriate. Marlowe's overpeering leads directly to the theater, and comments continuously upon itself as it recreates itself.

Karen Cunningham apprehends this self-reflexive quality in her study of Elizabethan execution and Marlovian scene-making. She argues that the playwright utilizes the visual spectacle of Tudor punishment and capitalizes upon its theatrical qualities. But, she contends, he does so ambiguously, and ends up questioning the initial aims of such spectacles -- the "official version" driven home by elaborate staged torture, quartering, decapitation, heads on poles -- which were meant to control and repress:

Using the resources of his stage, Marlowe turns theatricality against itself to expose the fraud at the core of public punishments. [He] exaggerates ... the profound ambiguity of artifice, ... undermin[es] the persuasiveness of the moralizing that accompanies spectacles of torture, and transform[s] a theater of pain into a drama of subversion.²⁶

26. Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105:2 (1990), 209-10.

Cunningham's account is fascinating for its awareness of the self-conscious nature of Marlovian drama, and its linkage of vision and public violence -- her intimation that the works are based largely upon sight and punishment.

Marlowe's plays are comprised of many small meta-theatrical units, fleeting scenes and moments of spying, seeing, and gazing. As Cunningham contends, these are often informed by and comment back upon such sights as Renaissance execution and espionage, royal entertainments, and morality plays. Tamburlaine's pomp, Barabas's manipulations, Faustus' shows, and Edward's erotic pageants are theatrical displays steeped in sight that are both delightful and dangerous. As works of art, they captivate because they invite the audience in. They share the intense pleasure and pain of forbidden sight, albeit in a safe-space, a protected imaginative realm.

Film critics four centuries after Marlowe have discussed the work of art into which the audience becomes visually drawn, partaking in its "eye-intense" experience and becoming temporarily a part of it. Laura Mulvey, in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, describes the moment where the lustful gaze of the watchers inside of the work melds, through the facility and technical skill of the artists, into a sort of seamless gaze and lust shared by and at one with the audience.²⁷ Other commentators have likewise

27. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 19-24.

delineated moments of "suture" that tie together the gaze of characters and viewers.²⁸ In similar instances of savoring and suffering sight, there is throughout Marlowe an erotic energy and danger that blurs character and audience boundaries. To link Marlowe's techniques to aspects of twentieth-century cinema is not so far-fetched. Camille Paglia has extensively traced the threads of paganism throughout western culture, and made related connections. To her, "cinema is sexual showing, a pagan flaunting," and such spectacles as the movies are pinnacles of the "pagan cult of the eye."²⁹ Within early modern poetry, she has found much that prefigures film.

And yet, for all the intense sharing of sight that takes place within Marlowe, the moments of complete "suture" through visual ravishment are fleeting. This is not only because of the brevity of all-consuming sights, but because total visual wonderment would destroy the distancing irony that is crucial to his theater. The best studies of Marlowe speak directly to his ambiguity, his alienating and disorienting effects. Judith Weil, Arthur Lindley, Laurence Danson, and others focus upon his riddling and equivocal authorial stance.³⁰ Karen Cunningham has observed the

28. Jacques-Alain Miller, "Suture," *Screen* 18:4 (1977).

29. Paglia, pp. 33-35.

30. Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Arthur Lindley, "The Unbeing of the Overreacher: Proteanism and the Marlovian Hero," *Modern Language Review* 84:1 (1989) 1-17; Laurence Danson, "Christopher Marlowe: The

extent to which levels of ambiguity exist in Marlowe's treatment of publicly viewed punishments. In his supremely visual art, the playwright manipulates his audience members by drawing them in and then pushing them away, providing visual feasts which they will soak up appreciatively one moment, and then making them self-consciously view their own watching the next. This pattern occurs in one of Marlowe's most multivalent sights, the Ovidian myth of forbidden vision, Diana and Actaeon.

Marlowe capitalizes on a myth that is steeped in sight and self-consciousness, delight and danger, action and ambiguity. Hunter goddess and transgressing mortal appear conspicuously in *Doctor Faustus* and *Edward II*. In each case the myth provides plays within plays, manipulative tools, courtly entertainment, and cues for the dramas' structures -- but above all, ruminations upon seeing. In Ovid, Actaeon spies the naked Diana accidentally (through *error*, not *crimen*), and receives bestial transformation and slaughter as brutal punishment, deemed undeserved by many.³¹ By the Renaissance, commentators such as Whitney and Sandys not only emphasized the visual nature of his transgressive peering, but interpreted it as gluttony of the eye and visual invasion into "the secret cabinets of princes" and the divine.³² The myth also deeply interrogates personal

 Questioner," *ELR* 12 (1982) 3-29.

31. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. F. J. Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916; 1939), III.130-260, 142.

identity, and Marlowe utilizes the ways in which it functions as an examination of selfhood. As Leonard Barkan observes, Actaeon has the unique and shattering opportunity to see three "versions" of himself: the mortal hunter, the numinous hunter (Diana), and the bestial hunted (the stag he becomes).³³

This "pagan spectacle of the eye," to borrow Paglia's concept, serves ideally for theatrical self-dramatization and irony, for shows and shows-within-shows. In Marlowe, the myth of Actaeon suggests the irresistibility and danger of vision. It also intimates the voyeuristic eye's awesome power to possess and to fashion self-conscious scenes out of that which it beholds. Marlowe's use of Actaeon makes sense for a playwright who was also a spy in an Elizabethan "hall of mirrors," as discussed above. It epitomizes the ways in which, according to Judith Weil, "spectacle is part of Marlowe's obliquely ironic style" -- I am arguing, the most salient part -- and "sight becomes a problem for the audience as well as for the characters."³⁴ The chapters that follow will investigate the varied dynamics of such problematic, pervasive overpeering.

 32. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (London, 1586), p. 15. George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis* (1632), ed. Karl Hulley and Stanley Vandersall (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), pp. 151-2.

33. Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *ELR* 10:3 (1980), p. 320-22.

34. Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 20.

Chapter III. Secrecy and Show in The Massacre at Paris

In *The Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe examines espionage within court culture at a moment of tear or rupture. Surveillance and display, two related but seemingly opposed forces, clash in this play. The spy and the courtier both desire "to blynd the world" and to trade in "further matters than all the world shall know of," to quote Marlowe's associate Robert Poley.¹ They desire secrets and secrecy, practicing the constant watchfulness and "monitoring" described by Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process*.² However, in a court climate of competition and one-upmanship, the codes of espionage -- with its hiddenness, secret knowledge, and blinding of the eye -- both cause and clash with the courtier's desire to show: in Georg Simmel's phrase, to "adorn," to transform "social power or dignity ... into visible, personal excellence."³

Blinding and showing -- secrecy and display -- are both social constructions designed to codify and control power. According to Elias, "intrigue" replaces "the sword"; and both espionage and Simmel's "adornment" or display

1. See John Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1964), pp. 166-69.

2. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, vol. 2, *Power and Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), pp. 71-74).

3. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Georg Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 338-43.

ostensibly prevent and contain violence.⁴ Even though Michel Foucault incorrectly downplays the role of surveillance in the Renaissance, as argued in Chapter Two, his hypothesis that "power is war, a war continued by other means" is useful.⁵ It helps to illuminate Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, where the twin powers of secrecy and display (which according to Simmel are fundamental to the formation of society⁶) fail in their task of yoking violence, redirecting or stylizing war, and keeping murderous hostility beneath the surface. Rather, Marlowe reveals how the nature of spying and showing -- as proxies for violent aggression -- virtually assures an explosion. Violence will erupt periodically as the direct consequence of peering and display. Court is a brutal, albeit seductively thrilling place where vision and violence are inextricably linked.

For Marlowe, it is as if a chemical reaction exists whereby a super-saturation of surveillance and display, in the presence of some catalyst (the Guise, sixteenth-century religious controversy), yields explosive violence. Furthermore, one feature remains constant on both sides of the equation: that of theater and theatricality. Marlowe's

4. Norbert Elias, *Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 63-64.

5. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), p.

6. *The Philosophy of Georg Simmel* (New York: The Free Press, 1950), p. 331.

Massacre is both unrelentingly violent and self-consciously theatrical about this violence, in a manner that mirrors and extends the metatheatricality of court spying and display that are its subjects in the first place. Karen Cunningham has noted Marlowe's ubiquitous "spectacles of torture, and ... theater of pain," but does not consider the relationship between such scenes of violence and the similarly theatrical spying and showing that precede and cause them.⁷ Marlowe's characters battle for supremacy through the eye, through secret peering and conversely, through creating self-aggrandizing shows of power. This self-conscious yet covert battle erupts into an all-out war, a theater of violence.

Multiple secrecies; concealments and conspiracies

What did it mean for Marlowe's fellow spy Robert Poley to "blynd the world"? Judging from early modern accounts, there were various ways for a spy or courtier (sometimes one and the same) to blind the world and cozen the eye. Poley did so through a mask of invisibility, by being unseen or behind the scenes in the Babington plot. He assumed an alternate identity and set of motives -- in effect, hiding behind a created character.⁸ (That Poley is recorded as

7. Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105:2 (1990), 209-10.

8. John Bakeless' recounting of Poley's career (cited above, note 1) is further augmented by Charles Nicholl's discussion of his slipperiness and his multiple masks and roles, in *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Harcourt Brace Co., 1992), pp. 132-65.

later bragging about his role, telling the cuckolded husband of his mistress that the spy-master Walsingham somehow "owes" him, is another, related aspect of the "intelligence sensibility" shared by Marlowe, to be discussed later.⁹) Jonathan Goldberg sees the creation of character as essential for the spy, and observes in Marlowe what he calls a "counter-identity" that society conferred and the playwright embraced: it entailed a reputation for sexual transgression, religious heresy, and treason.¹⁰ Although Goldberg is writing about Marlowe, these descriptions could also apply to Poley. In his shadowy but surprisingly well-documented life, Poley was as notorious in his way as was Marlowe, with illicit sexual entanglements, hints of forbidden Catholicism, and the taint of suspected plotting to overthrow the Queen. His example adds to Goldberg's theory of counter-identity, an assumed role that the spy must put on like Cesare Ripa's iconic spy cloak, or Queen Elizabeth's "mantle" of eyes, ears, and tongues, both discussed above.¹¹

The assumed role of intelligencer contains the paradox of trading in secrets and valuing hiddenness, but also

 9. Poley reportedly declared, "There are further matters between hym and me then all the world shall knowe of"; in *Bakeless*, 169.

10. Jonathan Goldberg, "Sodomy and Society: The Case of Christopher Marlowe," *Southwest Review* 69 (1984), 371-78.

11. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Padua: Donato Pasquardi, 1630), 3: 90-91; Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 159.

depending upon appearance and display. Francis Bacon describes this dual quality in the intelligence-gathering of utopian "Salomon's House," and also anatomizes the visual tricks of seeming one way and not seeming another.¹² These were "arts" (Ripa's term) that were possessed not only by the lowly spy, but also by the aspiring courtier for whom he worked. To begin with, hiddenness has its own dynamics and codes, ones that operate pervasively throughout *The Massacre at Paris*. This is a drama in which the word "secret" predominates, with all of the machinations that it entails. Jealously guarded commodities, information and scraps of intelligence are "in secrecy ... told" (III.ii.54). Characters have clandestine counsels and parlies, and strategic maneuvers in which they "muster up an army secretly" (III.i.37). There are abundant disguises, hidden identities, and secret entrances and exits from Paris and court. The prevalence of phrases such as "as by our scouts we understand" and "as report doth go" (IV.ii.27, 36) indicates the primacy of secrecy and the spying eye in a world where "eyes and looks sow seeds of perjury," and "looks engender fear" (IV.i.40; V.ii.74).

What do these multiple secrecies signify? In Marlowe's play and his life, in the example of Poley, and in the most astute assessments of the issue, the secret means power, a

 12. See *New Atlantis* and "Of Simulation and Dissimulation," in *Francis Bacon: A Selection*, ed. Sidney Warhaft (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), pp. 58-60, 437-39.

defining and shaping power. Simmel emphasizes "the significance of the secret for the structure of human interaction," accurately describing both the configurations and the motivations of court society and those who take part in it.¹³ Secrets and their shaping power go beyond Renaissance court culture, of course: Sissela Bok has demonstrated how they also affect the culture of contemporary institutions and corporations.¹⁴ For the Elizabethan Poley, the secret was what he could see that others could not, and it elevated him to a new place of power, in reality and even more so in his own mind. (Ben Jonson, who scornfully refers to Poley by name in "Inviting a Friend to Supper," elsewhere delights in the way spies are ultimately discarded, an "end faire enough."¹⁵) Using invisibility to "blynd the world," while simultaneously seeing the things that were hidden from others: this was the "job description," such as it was, of Poley and Marlowe, as well as a magnet for them. From all accounts, the power of possessing a secret was for them a source of personal excitement in addition to employment. Perhaps they too "did

13. Simmel, p. 331.

14. Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

15. Jonson contrasts the trust of home to the constant surveillance and suspicion of prison: he and his friend "will have no Pooley by." In "Of Spies," secret agents are "lights of state, but of base stuff" who burn down, "stinke, and are thrown away" deservedly. See *Ben Jonson: Works*, Vol. 8, ed. Kerford and Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947).

make love to [their] employment," as Shakespeare's Hamlet says of another pair of young intelligencers at court.¹⁶ Marlowe's *Guise* reveals a similar pleasure in secrets: he locates his power in their trade and control, and attaches his success or failure squarely upon his ability to manipulate the eye, to keep secrets from the view of others while simultaneously blinding and dazzling them like the sun (I.ii.105-06).

This is not just that knowledge is power, but that secret knowledge of a visual nature is a particular kind of power. Foucault argues that knowledge and power are reciprocal and mutually self-generating. For him, knowledge comprises and creates power, and vice-versa: their relationship is one of "correlative constitution" or complementarity and increase.¹⁷ Although Foucault downplays early modern surveillance, the correlative constitution of secret knowledge and political power is manifest within the period, especially in such a work as *The Massacre at Paris*. In it, Marlowe portrays the world of secrecy and surveillance, Simmel's "chain of concealments and conspiracies," with an almost clinical precision. The *Guise* epitomizes the chronic covert watching within the French court. When he privately reveals himself in a monologue, he voices not only

16. *Hamlet*, V.ii.57; in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

17. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979) pp. 187-209.

appetite for more power. Even though he clandestinely controls the realm through a puppet king, he craves greater power and paradoxically, the decreased anonymity that comes with that. Part of the inherent instability and volatility of the secret is that it pushes to be betrayed: Simmel notes the secret's charge and potency in this paradox, calling it the attraction of "the abyss," of giving oneself away.¹⁸

The Machiavellian Guise; "simulation" and "dissimulation"

Simmel also argues that secrecy and power, the "court cabal," are by-products of the competing interests of the nobles and factions close to the monarch.¹⁹ Such competition in its more benign forms conjures up images out of Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier*, where nobles strive for "grace," a balanced appearance, a display of lightness and ease, lacking in excess: *sprezzatura*, translated poorly by Thomas Hoby as "recklessness," is a quality to strive for despite that fact that it "cover[s] art withal."²⁰ But *sprezzatura* is itself secretive, in the sense that its smooth surface conceals much more than it reveals. Nicolo Machiavelli, with greater concern for the

18. Simmel, pp. 333-34.

19. Ibid., 336.

20. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby (1561), ed. Walter Raleigh (London: Tudor Translations, 1900), Book I.

attainment of power than the niceties of courtly grace, prefigures Simmel's "court cabal" with his candid *realpolitik*. In his view the nobles "make a prince, so that under his shadow they can give vent to their ambitions."²¹ This is the Guise's initial strategy of hiddenness and power-producing secrecy: to be in the king's shadow in order to "execute" while the king bears the blame."

Machiavelli, acutely aware of appearance, manipulation, and "shadows" at court, serves as a point of departure for Marlowe's Guise. The dedication of *The Prince* to Lorenzo de Medici begins with the notion of delighting the eye of a ruler, and ends with a request to redirect the gaze ("turn the eyes") of Lorenzo to Machiavelli himself.²² The manual contains instructions for secrecy and deceit, false appearance and covert action. A Prince should be a lion, but also a fox "to defend himself against snares":

It is necessary to know well how to disguise..., and to be a great pretender and dissembler It is unnecessary for a prince to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them.... Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, because it belongs to everybody to see you, to few to come in touch with you.... Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are.... (25)

A prince must "counterfeit" and "imitate" (28). And to succeed at court, Machiavelli advises, one must not only master secrets and appearance, but be an adept reader of the

21. Nicolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W. K. Marriott (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), p. 14.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

appearances of others.

Little wonder that Marlowe equates the Guise with Machiavelli. The prologue to *The Jew of Malta* brings in "Machevill" as a speaking character who denies that he has died. His soul was "but flown beyond the Alps," residing in France in none other than the Guise's body during his life (Prol. 1-7). Even the spelling of "Machevill" suggests "make evil," which this character advocates through secrecy and deceit -- recalling the Marlovian prevalence of the verbs "to see" and "to make" noted in the Introduction. Machevill himself has become a secret, a weapon in the arsenal of the powerful: "Though some speak openly against my books,/ Yet will they read me, and thereby attain / To Peter's chair" (10-12).

For Marlowe, the use of religion -- "Peter's chair" of Catholicism specifically but also religion in general -- is the strongest link between Machiavelli and the Guise. His Machevill in *The Jew of Malta* declares, "I count religion but a childish toy," something simple, but something that can be played with and used to manipulate (14). Except for its usefulness, religion in its "ignorance" would be a mere embarrassment: "I am asham'd to hear such fooleries!" (17). Even though a named connection is not made in *The Massacre*, the Guise has a Machiavellian soul and expresses virtually identical sentiments regarding secrecy, deceit, and religion. For his own personal ambitions for the "diadem of France,"

have I a largess from the Pope,
 A pension, and a dispensation, too;
 And by that privilege to work upon,
 My policy hath fram'd religion.
 Religion! *O Diabole!*
 Fie, I am asham'd, howe'er that I seem,
 To think a word of such a simple sound
 Of so great matter to be made the ground. (I.ii.62-69)

The disbelief and scorn, the near-shame, the utilization of religion as a tool to attain power and a cloak to shield secret ambition: all of these imply Machiavellian motivations and methods. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli counseled such strategies using King Ferdinand of Spain as an "admirable example:

always using religion as a plea, so as to undertake greater schemes, he devoted himself with a pious cruelty to driving out ... the Moors.... Under this same cloak he assailed Africa,... Italy,... France.
 (32)

The cloak of religion, similar to the disguises of the spy, "kept the minds of his people in suspense" and contributed to Ferdinand's military victories.

What Simmel called the "court cabal" and Machiavelli portrays as schemes, cloaks, and mental suspense, create an environment that Marlowe depicts as rife with chronic surveillance and mutual observation, with the compulsion to display as a defense against them. In the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson will insist that men erroneously inflate the number of spying eyes that gaze upon them,²³ but

 23. Samuel Johnson, *Essays from the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler*, ed. W. J. Bate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. xx. "He that has not yet remarked, how little attention his contemporaries can spare from themselves, conceives all eyes turned upon himself, and imagines

in the Renaissance court world that Marlowe takes as his subject, the assessment of constant viewing is accurate. In the judgement of Francis Bacon, for instance, there is an assumption of virtually chronic watching, both from the viewpoint of subject and object, spy and spied-upon.²⁴ Surveillance is a given, and Bacon takes for granted a need to move and negotiate within this visually-charged environment. To gaze well at court, and to meet the surveying eyes of others in the most advantageous manner possible, are skills that can be honed and refined. We see from Bacon that despite the relative novelty of Elizabethan spying, courtly practices of secrecy had achieved a high level of sophistication, with multiple layers and techniques that could be reflected upon and even savored: "These properties ... are habits and faculties several, and to be distinguished." Bacon anatomizes the practice and relative advantages of "three degrees of this hiding and veiling of a man's self": *secrecy*, *dissimulation*, and *simulation* (58-59). All of these degrees abound within *The Massacre at Paris*.

Bacon calls *secrecy* "closeness" or "reservation," and defines it as "when a man leaveth himself without observation or without hold to be taken, what he is" (59). It is an apartness or aloofness that Bacon deems a decided

 everyone that approaches him to be an enemy or a follower, an admirer or a spy."

24. Francis Bacon, "Of Simulation and Dissimulation," in

"virtue": "Therefore set it down, *that an habit of secrecy is both politic and moral.*" Associating it with trustworthiness and restraint, he views it in a specific social context, a courtly milieu. The secretive man -- as opposed to the "blab or babblers," the "talkers and futile persons" -- will gain respect that can in turn be translated into power; trusted, he will hear the confessions of others. "If a man be thought secret, it invited discovery" -- that is, disclosures, confidences -- "so secret men come to the knowledge of many things" (59). Bacon admires this Renaissance version of a "poker face," and in fact Marlowe's Guise often uses playing card metaphors. In *The Massacre*, the attractive quality of "closeness" and unreadability helps to explain the intense loyalty and attraction of the Queen Mother to the Guise, above and beyond their shared Catholicism. Secretive men create a vacuum for secrets, argues Bacon, "as the more close air sucketh in the more open." "To whom shall I bewray my secrets now?" laments the Queen Mother upon hearing of the Guise's death (V.ii.162).

Dissimulation for Bacon is a type of denial, "when a man lets fall signs and arguments that he is not that he is"; and "it followeth many times upon secrecy by necessity, so that he that will be secret must be a dissembler in some degree" (59). This is because once the secret has been committed to, it involves a high level of maintenance. Fellow humans in general, courtiers specifically, will pump their secretive colleagues for information. Did you see?

did you note? do you know? -- versions of these questions are constant refrains in *The Massacre*. Simply to keep a secret inviolate requires negation, a denial of true knowledge or intent. Secrecy is impossible without "a little scope of dissimulation, which is, as it were, but the skirts or train of secrecy" (60). Dissimulation as part of the courtly wardrobe: the image is apt not only for the Guise, but for the entire royal network that circulates around the kings Charles and then Henry. They deny their true feelings, motivations, and alliances. The drama opens with a courtly show, a surface appearance of nuptial love and amity, which is immediately undercut by Marlowe's revealed dissimulation and secrecy. The Queen Mother's declared affection for her new protestant daughter-in-law ("You see we love you well," I.i.13) is shown to be a sham. Aside, she reveals that she personally "will dissolve with blood and cruelty" this union (26). The court *milieu* is rife with mutual observation and surveillance, a place of mistrust and paranoia. If the Queen Mother's flattering, lying tongue represents one third of the spy's arsenal of eyes, ears, and tongues, the other two are not far away. "Have you not heard of late" (32) -- Navarre tests the ears of two of his allies -- of Guise's most recent plotting? The eyes have also learned things of note. "Did you mark ... / How they did storm at these your nuptial rites?" observes the Admiral, "That's the cause the Guise so frowns at us" (47-52). Observing and reading others, penetrating

secrets through the use of the senses: these are survival techniques for dangerous times.

In the opening scene and throughout the play dissimulation and simulation go hand in hand. If in Francis Bacon's view the former comprises public denial and covering up of true motivations and alliances, then the latter takes another tack. *Simulation* is "when a man industriously and expressly feigns and pretends to be that he is not" (59). This "false profession" earns Bacon's censure more than secrecy and dissimulation, which he writes of as necessary evils at worst, and often as decided virtues. The constant dishonest feigning of simulation springs from a "natural falseness, . . . fearfulness," or vice which "a man must needs disguise" (60). The disguising process, theatrical in nature, becomes ongoing, self-generating, and ultimately destructive: it overtakes identity, and overruns the self.

A contemporary adept of Elizabethan court life, Bacon acutely lays out the strategies and textures of surveillance as practiced in Marlowe's time. His accounts of its advantages and disadvantages illuminate the dynamics within *The Massacre*, and within Marlowe's works and life as a whole -- bringing to mind Charles Nicholl's observation that "Marlowe's political career . . . touches on so much in his life," including "the very tone and temper of his plays."²⁵ According to Bacon, the virtues of simulation and

Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works, ed. Sidney Warhaft (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1984), pp. 58-60.

dissimulation are as follows: they "surprise" and "lay asleep opposition"; they "reserve to a man's self a fair retreat"; and they "discover the mind of another." The drawbacks are equally potent: they "carry with them a show of fearfulness" that can "spoil ... any business"; they "puzzleth and perplexeth ... many that perhaps would otherwise cooperate," which "makes a man walk almost alone to his own ends"; and they "depriveth a man of ... trust and belief" (60). Marlowe presents this array of positive and negative effects as he demonstrates the volatility of secrecy, and its direct connection to violence. Furthermore, in the matter of "walking almost alone to his own ends," he connects Guise's practice of simulation to his profound aloneness. Ultimately this characterization may have aspects of self-portrayal, for as Charles Nicholl suggests, Marlowe's profession as spy fostered not only resourcefulness and self-sufficiency, but isolation and alienation.²⁶

Bacon and Machiavelli both posit views of a secrecy that not only affects but in essence stems from the character of a ruler or monarch. Bacon appears less cynical than Machiavelli, but nonetheless for his court too a certain disguising is an absolute necessity:

25. Nicholl, p. 265.

26. The "'secret theatre' of Elizabethan espionage" was "a political no-man's land" where one may be "hired by all and belong to none." There is a "draining sense of the meaninglessness of it all.... They live in and by the confusion they create. That is really their only

The best composition ... is to have openness in fame and opinion, secrecy in habit, dissimulation in seasonable use, and a power to feign, if there be no remedy. (60)

It seems unlikely that Bacon would echo Machiavelli celebrating Ferdinand of Spain's "pious cruelty" under the "cloak of religion." Yet he does quote approvingly the "good shrewd proverb of the Spaniard, *Tell a lie and find a troth*" (60).

Vision and violence at court

Bacon's wary appreciation of secrecy and show shares an important similarity with Norbert Elias's twentieth-century assessment: both are optimistic about the potential good of secrecy. For Elias, intrigue replaces the sword; secrecy can be a prophylactic or a safety valve that replaces or diffuses old-style confrontation.²⁷ Bacon works in this vein, too: "politic and moral" secrecy are attributes of a good ruler and help to keep the peace. More like Machiavelli expounding upon Ferdinand's violent triumphs, Marlowe challenges this. He depicts and develops the destructive capabilities of surveillance. Perhaps this is an aspect of what Robert Greene noted in his personal reproaches to Marlowe, when he criticized "that pestilent Machiavellian policy that thou hast studied."²⁸ Here secret

allegiance." See Nicholl, pp. 234, 255.

27. Norbert Elias, *Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 63-64.

28. Robert Greene, *Greene's Groatsworth of Witte* (London:

vision, circular in nature, accelerates and becomes unstoppable. This is inescapable -- an inherent quality of looking and feigning that engenders more of the same. It begins in the drama's opening display of Charles' wedding, with the Queen Mother's dissimulation and feigning and the courtier's surveillance and plotting. It continues in Guise's secrecy and disguise of the Huguenot's slaughter; the Queen Mother's "simulation" at the murder of her eldest son; Guise and Henry's dissembling as their alliance unravels; right down to the very end, a friar's role-playing and subsequent assassination of the King. Two factors pervade this play, spurring each other on: secrecy, the tool of spies and courtiers; and its adjunct, violence. In Marlowe's court world, secretive vision not only leads to, but in essence *is* violence.

Perhaps because this vision and violence are mutual and self-generating, they are also self-reflexive and integrally theatrical. This theatricality stems from the nature of the espionage profession to which it is related, which Charles Nicholl has deemed "self-perpetuating, self-referring."²⁹ There are many examples of the Marlovian link between secrecy, simulation, violence, and metatheater. Like Karen Cunningham, I find that Marlowe's drama virtually overflows with "simulated violence" and abundant "notion[s] of theatrical violence."³⁰ However, unlike her,

William Wright, 1592), F1.

29. Nicholl, p. 255.

I attribute a major source of this violence to the playwright's espionage career, and his reflections upon it. Secrecy, slaughter, and the stage are repeatedly interwoven in *The Massacre*. "Play thy tragic part," the Guise in theatrical parlance tells a hired assassin, "Perform his death" (II.i.28-31). A murderer is simply a simulator/spy taking his role to a new extreme, in self-conscious theatrical fashion. Violence and killing, the furthest extensions of the self-preservation inherent in surveillance, are created spectacles here that must be "performed." Guise is both star and director in his own dangerous production; he considers "They that shall be actors in this massacre" as if blocking a script, and supervises the details from *mis-en-scene* right down to their costumes (I.iv.29-40). "Make a show as if all were well," suggests the Queen Mother, adopting the theatrical language (I.iv.49). Marlowe and his Guise know well that the Baconian "simulations" not only "surprise" and "lay asleep opposition," but are inherently murderous and theatrical:

I am disguised, and none knows who I am,
And therefore mean to murder all I meet. (I.v.5-6)

Although Henry speaks this line and not Guise, the idea of being "dis-Guised" -- other than what he really is, blinding the world, to repeat Poley's phrase -- is a potent, punning

30. See Cunningham, pp. 214-15. In her view, Marlowe's engagement with official public spectacles of torture is at the root of this "simulated violence"; I find it instead to be a suggestive part of the larger picture, in which Marlowe's career as a spy pervades his drama.

metaphor. (It is surprising that it does not recur more often, considering the multiple puns upon Piers Gaveston's name in *Edward II*, discussed later.) Dissimulation and murder lead directly to spectacle in the case of the protestant Admiral, whose corpse is hung in a tree for all to view. Guise and the Queen Mother stroll by and appreciate the sight's entertainment value, its worth as show: "Now, madam, how like you our lusty Admiral?" (II.ii.14).

The murders of the two rivals, Guise and King Henry, exemplify the interconnections of dissimulation, violence, and theater. The two men compete for supremacy as actors, courtly deceivers who cloak their murderous intentions. "I must dissemble," Guise observes privately, in the midst of a grand public show of friendship and "true humility" between the two enemies (IV.v.61-62). Henry too learns to "convey myself secretly" (91), and he specifically uses the language of theatrical role-playing in explaining to an ally the part he must master in order to survive:

though I seem mild and calm,
Think not but I am tragical within. (IV.v.89-90)

"Tragical" on a primary level signifies murderous intent, but also connotes forms and conventions for the stage. Finally wise to the theatrical and performative aspects of violence, Henry sees through the Guise's assumed masks and cloaks of secrecy to realize what lay underneath: "a life wherein my death was hid" (V.ii.26). Like Guise's earlier

"stage-command" regarding the Admiral -- "perform his death" -- Henry now envisions the dissimulative violence of the murder of Guise in theatrical terms. Guise will "perish in the pit," a "sweet sight" of which Henry is so proud that he must have Guise's son as the proper audience to "behold" the scene (V.ii.34, 99-130.).

Karen Cunningham has observed that throughout Marlowe's plays, murder "invites [a] metadramatic response" (215). In *The Massacre* we see how closely linked in the writer's mind are the arts of drama and espionage. Again, I am arguing that the latter serves as a font or well-spring for the former. The playwright and spy merge more explicitly here than they do in any other Marlowe work. The intelligencer / spy is both presence and audience in the final scenes of murder. When the Guise is killed, Henry takes the opportunity to review the Duke's infamous espionage career, one of the highlights of which was his involvement in the 1586 "Babington Plot" to assassinate Queen Elizabeth:

Did he not draw a sort of English priests
From Douai to the seminary at Rheims,
To hatch forth treason 'gainst their natural queen?
(V.ii.109-11)

Christopher Marlowe himself was at Rheims around the time of this treason's "hatching," perhaps as one of the "sort of English priests" working as a double agent and informer, judging from the Privy Council's praise of him to suspicious Cambridge authorities (discussed in Chapter One). So too was his fellow spy Robert Poley, who we know was

instrumental in exposing and thwarting that attempt, and who also, records show, could not resist a little veiled boasting about his role in this regard. Marlowe's oblique self-insertion at this moment of murder smacks somewhat of Poley's pride -- the spy's little secret. It is both an ironic and self-aggrandizing touch; and it certainly toys with what Simmel pointed to as the power of the secret: giving oneself away, self-betrayal, the "abyss." It also intimates the circular, interrelated nature of espionage, violence, and theater.

Marlowe yokes violence and self-reflexiveness again in the play's conclusion. Not completely surprisingly, an "English Agent" -- who speaks not a line but sees and hears all -- is called in to witness and learn from the final scene, the stabbing and ensuing death of King Henry. Regarding the metadramatic, surveillance-steeped conclusion, John Michael Archer observes that "the public theater has become the forum for the display of secret intelligence."³¹ Having consolidated power and triumphed through dissimulation and violence, Henry should know better than to trust the Jacobin friar who approaches him, especially after an aide questions his "looks" and recommends searching him (V.v.21-22). Henry's assertion that friars "will not offer violence to their king" (24) flies in the face of so much

 31. John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 91.

accumulated slaughter and deceit, Machiavellian and Baconian life lessons in court power and surveillance. When the friar slashes him with a poisoned knife, dying himself in the murder attempt, Henry's slow death becomes a final opportunity for intelligence-gathering, a scene of a spy's making where the importance of court surveillance is brought center-stage:

Henry. ... all rebels under heaven
 Shall take example by his punishment,
 How they bear arms against their sovereign.
 Go call the English Agent hither straight!....
Enter the ENGLISH AGENT
 Agent for England, send thy mistress word
 What this detested Jacobin hath done.
 Tell her, for all this, that I hope to live.
 Which if I do, the papal monarch goes
 To wrack
 [I] here protest eternal love...
 ...to the Queen of England specially,
 Whom God hath blessed for hating papistry. (V.v.47-70)

On one level, this farewell scene is unabashed religious and nationalist propaganda. Henry has seen the light, and it leads away from Rome and towards England. Protestantism and especially the person of Elizabeth are virtuous; and her spies are not only respectable, but central to her survival. Archer has called the invisibility scene at the papal chambers in *Doctor Faustus* an "intelligencer's fantasy," but it seems to me that a spy's imagination and ego would be more fired by the scene at hand.³² On stage, the Agent would dominate, a silent but palpable presence. The drama before his eyes and its explicit lessons are "produced" for

 32. Archer, p. 73.

and addressed to him, "words" for his "mistress" that he can dutifully report back to her. The final utterances of the dying king are directed to this shadowy but crucial character:

Salute the Queen of England in my name,
And tell her, Henry dies her faithful friend. (106-07)

The historical identity of this "English Agent" has been the subject of speculation. H. J. Oliver connects it to spy-master Walsingham, which has a symbolic satisfaction to it; while Archer discusses how one William Lyly, the spy present during Henry's 1589 assassination, wrote accounts that are remarkably similar to Marlowe's staging. However, Archer surmises that in a larger sense,

the agent is also a figure for Marlowe, or rather for the playwright-spy who must warn Elizabeth and her subjects of regicidal Catholic plotters, making public what he claims covertly to have witnessed.³³

This is the most cogent assessment. The "English Agent," whoever he actually might have been, springs from Marlowe's own espionage experience and sensibility, the "shadow world" and "secret theater" that Charles Nicholl observes creating "the very tone and temper of his plays."³⁴ Furthermore, in making the spy so clearly an audience, he only mirrors and formalizes the process involved throughout *The Massacre* -- that of transforming the play's audience into spies themselves. Marlowe's viewers steal glimpses of court

33. H. J. Oliver, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Massacre at Paris* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 94; Archer, p. 92.

34. Nicholl, pp. 265-67.

secrecy and simulation, and feel the fascination and fear of their dangers. Stephen Greenblatt has noted how Elizabethan drama "fostered in its audience *observation*, the close reading of gesture and speech as manifestations of character and intention."³⁵ At its furthest extension, this "observation" is intensified by Marlowe to the point that his viewers practice a controlled theatrical surveillance. They get caught up in its excitement and intrigue, as well as its turbulence and confusion. According to John Michael Archer,

The representation of mutual observation at court in the theater of the period rendered it imitable, extending it outside the circle of court culture to the common spectator.... Display becomes public spectacle and observation the grounds for a generalized paranoia. (93-94)

The audience of Marlowe's *Massacre* partakes vicariously in a strange, subterranean power, one that is Marlowe's uneasy home terrain but that for his viewers offers the exoticism and "spectacular strangeness" that Emily Bartels remarks upon as constants in his work.³⁶

In Marlowe's French court, the practice of secrecy and surveillance -- what Norbert Elias calls "intrigue" -- combines with Baconian "simulation," a cousin to Georg Simmel's "display" or outward show of power. Guise lurks, with "deep-engendered" and hidden thoughts, yet he would

35. Stephen Greenblatt, "The Cultivation of Anxiety: King Lear and His Heirs," *Raritan* 2 (1982), p. 103.

36. Emily Bartels, *Spectacles of Strangeness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

also be like the sun that men gaze upon. To be simultaneously brilliant and blinding is a treacherously difficult act -- and Marlowe draws attention to the fact that it is just that, an act, an inherently theatrical performance. Its contradictions and clashes are volatile and violent, due to the enormous tension between those stylized proxies of power, observation and display. *The Massacre at Paris* examines and to some extent explains the slaughter as a consequence of the forces at work, forces with which the playwright has an intimate involvement personally and professionally. They are at the root of Marlowe's "seeing" and his "making." In this play, he reveals an important layer of himself -- but still through a veil or spy's cloak, protected and mysterious, exposed yet oddly shielded by the theater.

Chapter IV. *Sexual Spying on Stage and Page: Dido Queen of Carthage and Hero and Leander*

In the previous chapter I argued that Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* exploits the inherent and interrelated tensions of court observation and display. In *Dido Queen of Carthage* and *Hero and Leander*, the playwright explores similar anxieties and pleasures involving the visual. Rather than the eyes of actual espionage -- surveillance at court and its ensuing shows -- these two works depict a peering that mingles the habits of Machiavellian court watching with a new and voracious erotic energy.

What I would call "sexual spying," then, with a sense of its likeness and even debt to Marlowe's other career, is rife within *Dido* and *Hero*. Voyeurism and what Freud called its "active counterpart," exhibitionism, here function analogously to Simmel and Elias' "observation" and "display" in *The Massacre*: they incite and produce each other in a process of "correlative constitution," to borrow Foucault's phrase.¹ Marlowe's sexual peering and showing in these works not only represent a Freudian "scopophilia" -- pleasure in looking -- and a Lacanian exercise of the visual self's "imaginary" capacity,² but also demonstrate what

1. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 33; on "scopophilia," see pp. 21-23.

2. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1988), pp. 87-94.

Camille Paglia calls the "chthonic" and "decadent" forces involved in the "sexual intensification of artistic voyeurism."³

As with espionage, *sexual* spying for Marlowe leads to theater. The by-products of so much voyeurism and exhibitionism are self-conscious theatrical scenes. This "theatricalizing" comprises one possible manifestation of Paglia's notion of "artistic voyeurism" and "sexual intensification." It also embodies Freud's principle of sublimation, in which erotic drives become the generative force behind certain types of art.⁴ Georg Simmel contemplates how secrecy (and I would argue by extension, secret viewing) creates the possibility of an alternative world existing alongside the supposedly "real" one.⁵ On the stage in *Dido* and the page in *Hero*, Marlowe fleshes out enormously complex visions of the alternative realms engendered by voyeurism and exhibitionism.

It is not by accident that Marlowe's "imaginary" erotic worlds (melding Lacan's and Simmel's notions of the term) resound with ancient mythology. Paglia insistently links the art inspired by eros to a figurative "pagan cult of the eye."⁶ Marlowe embodies this connection very literally, in

3. Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 32-33.

4. Freud, p. 22.

5. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), pp. 330-333.

6. Paglia, p. 33.

a way that I will show becomes even more charged in *Edward II* and *Doctor Faustus*. He develops the emotionally charged dynamics of voyeurism and exhibitionism in a classical milieu. Again, I suggest that for the dramatist espionage in the Renaissance court played a similar role to sexual spying in the ancient, mythological world of his (re)creation. Theresa Krier, an astute critic of classical voyeurism, notes the prevalence of such peering, its permutations in Virgil and Ovid, and the enthusiasm of early modern writers to engage its vital complexity within their own work.⁷ For her, paganism is a text that Renaissance poets not only read but continue to write themselves, and use to contemplate the power and range of the erotic eye.

But lest this visual eroticism sound like unalloyed pleasure, its darker aspects in both theory and practice should be noted. Freud carefully delineates the point of excess at which the eye becomes not only a "pathway" to "libidinal excitation" but also to "perversion"⁸; and Paglia emphasizes the subterranean destructiveness of the pagan eye as an adjunct to its pleasures.⁹ And although she overlooks the enormous issue (for Marlowe) of exhibitionism, Theresa Krier correctly stresses the extent to which voyeurism is a

7. Theresa Krier, *Gazing on Secret Sights* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 8-11.

8. Freud, pp. 21-23.

9. See, for example, the concluding chapter of *Sexual Personae*, which celebrates the "pagan," visual violence of Dickinson.

threat -- not merely an intrusion but an actual invasion upon the self. She highlights peering's complexity, and the ways in which "peeping," as she puts it, is a "morally laden issue."¹⁰ It is this intense, fundamental ambivalence towards sexual spying that energizes both *Dido* and *Hero*. For although Marlowe's characters often find (and define) themselves through the erotic eye -- as either subject or object, viewer or observed -- they just as certainly lose themselves, and compromise their identities through the same erotic, visual "pathway," to use Freud's term.

Dido: pleasing the eye, inflaming the self

General critical consensus places *Dido Queen of Carthage* as early, perhaps even undergraduate Marlowe, and minimizes the contributions of Thomas Nashe, whose name appears in smaller lettering on the 1594 quarto.¹¹ It was written for and performed by a "professional" boys' company, the Children of Paul's. Two influential Marlowe scholars suggest ways in which *Dido* may be considered most profitably. Constance Brown Kuriyama, commenting upon the "hard glitter of surface gaiety and sensuousness" within the play, proposes that "Marlowe's departures from the *Aeneid*

10. Krier, pp. 8-11.

11. For a representative sampling, see the discussions of C. F. Tucker Brooke, in *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910, 1966); and J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

serve to adapt the source to the characteristic modalities of his imagination."¹² And Judith Weil advises that an "understanding of how his 'spectacles' function can bring us closer to an understanding of his basic subjects and style."¹³ I am arguing that the *visual* "departures" from the *Aeneid*, the playwright's explorations of voyeurism and exhibitionism, involve Marlowe's most "characteristic modality" and his "basic subject and style." Literal espionage and sexual spying are building blocks of his identity, his imagination, and his art. His surveying eye is sometimes political and sometimes sexual, but it is always theatrical and always touches the self in a profound manner. To "alter" somewhat the phrase of William Blake, Marlowe's eye invariably alters the "I."¹⁴

Erotic spying and showing pervade *Dido* at every level. Freud describes voyeurism as an excessive form of "scopophilia," pleasure in looking, where the eye becomes an "erotogenic zone" and a charged "pathway" of pleasure. Exhibitionism, he says, covertly accompanies such a desire as an unconscious urge of one who thrills to this sort of pleasure.¹⁵ A voyeuristic sensibility -- at the very least

12. Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer or Anvil* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), p. 62, 66.

13. Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 2, 15-19.

14. William Blake, "The Mental Traveller," *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Nonesuch, 1957), ln. 62.

15. Freud, pp. 21-23, 33.

a passionate appeal to the eye -- has been noted by many of *Dido's* commentators. Harry Levin refers to the play's unmistakable "sexual climate," and attributes this largely to the amatory scenes that delight the eyes of both the characters and audience.¹⁶ Jackson Cope describes these sights as visually "titillating," asserting that such excitation is not just a component, but the ultimate goal of the play.¹⁷ Joining Cope are a host of critics who note the ways in which the work's comic elements involve an Ovidian influence that entails a scenic, specifically sexual gorgeousness. Douglas Cole and Judith Weil agree that Marlowe's images of Dido owe a great debt to the *Heroides'* seventh epistle¹⁸; and Mary Smith and Brian Gibbons both advocate connections to Ovid that directly involve titillating the eye.¹⁹

Kuriyama states the central conflict of Marlowe's *Dido* in visual terms: whether Aeneas will follow, in his shipmate Achates' words, "the wanton motions of alluring

16. Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 32.

17. Jackson I. Cope, "Marlowe's *Dido* and the Titillating Children," *ELR* 4 (1974), pp. 315-25.

18. Douglas Cole, *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995) pp. 46, 53-55; Weil, p. 17.

19. Mary Elizabeth Smith, *Love Kindling Fire: A Study of Dido Queen of Carthage* (Salzburg: Univ. Salzburg, 1977); Brian Gibbons, "Unstable Proteus: Marlowe's *The Tragedy of Dido Queen of Carthage*," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 34-36.

eyes," or the "foreseeing stars" to fulfill his epic, prophetic destiny (IV.iii.31-36).²⁰ Here two worlds clash, represented in the classical literary sphere by the amatory Ovid and the dynastic, duty-bound Virgil. Marlowe's repeated insertion of erotic eye-pleasing via Ovid, however, indicates the triumph of sexual spying in this contest. Such privileged viewing of the forbidden is every bit as "enticing" (for Levin the defining word of the play²¹) as the surveillance and observation within the *Massacre*, discussed above.

Throughout *Dido*, secretive "scopophilic" pleasures abound. Marlowe establishes this tendency immediately in the lavish descriptions of the secluded visual pleasures savored by Jupiter and Ganymede. In this most un-Virgilian scene, excitation of the eye amounts to a privileged treat for the king of the gods. He and "the darling of [his] thoughts" engage in a controlled mutual showing of and spying upon sights of sexual pleasure -- a pastime later taken up by Edward II and Piers Gaveston, as well as Doctor Faustus. Jupiter and Ganymede express themselves in terms of visual delight and sexual surveillance:

Gan.: Might I but see that pretty sport a-foot,
 O, how would I with Helen's brother laugh,
 And bring the gods to wonder at the game!
 Sweet Jupiter, if e'er I pleas'd thine eye,
 Or seemed fair, wall'd-in with eagle's wings,
 Grace my immortal beauty with this boon,
 And I will spend my time in thy bright arms.

 20. Kuriyama, pp. 63-65.

21. Levin, p. 32.

Jup.: What is't, sweet wag, I should deny thy youth?
 Whose face reflects such pleasure to mine eyes,
 As I exhal'd with thy fire-darting beams,
 Have oft driven back the horses of the Night,
 Whenas they would have hal'd thee from my sight.
 (I.i.16-28)

Pleasing the eye, seeming fair, savoring erotic visual games: Marlowe emphasizes these concerns at the outset. He also intimates the surveillance aspects of sexual spying by bringing up notions of exclusivity and theft. Jupiter has delayed the horses of the night (as Faustus later wishes to) so that the stolen sight of the stolen boy will be his alone. He envisions enhancing his visual pleasure through aphrodisiacs of the eye, in this case by "accessorizing" Ganymede: the feathers of Hermes, Juno's peacocks, and Venus' swans, as well as his wife's wedding jewels will "trick thy arms and shoulders with my theft" (I.i.30-45). Here sight and theft overlap, seeping from one to the other.

If sexual seeing and stealing are neighbors, then seeing and showing -- the sort of exhibitionism that this scene fosters -- are close kin. Freud posits the interconnection of voyeuristic and exhibitionistic impulses,²² but Marlowe even exceeds him in demonstrating the interrelatedness of such desires. More often than not, to want to see sexually is to want to be seen in the same manner: the boundaries are blurred to the point of being indistinguishable. Jupiter is the predominant private audience, the main viewer in this first scene, but he also

 22. Freud, p. 33.

thrills to display himself as part of the picture. In his "dandling" and hugging "an hundred times" (I.i.stage directions; 48), he completes the erotic "eyescape" in which the beauty of Ganymede is the centerpiece.

Scopophilic spying and ambiguous seeing and showing continue throughout. Queen Dido possesses what art critic Norman Bryson has characterized as the free-ranging power of the subversive "glance,"²³ as a result of her eyesight's "infection" through close proximity to Cupid. She is in command, visually speaking, and does much more secretive lustful gazing than her lover Aeneas. And yet she too displays herself and exhibits her passion. Her voyeurism -- a sexual pleasure long dormant in her widowhood -- triggers and unlocks her exhibitionism. Cupid begins the process:

Venus: Now, Cupid, cause the Carthaginian Queen
To be enamour'd of Aeneas' looks. (III.i.1-2)

Dido's attraction begins with a visual ravishment that yearns for exclusive sight of her beloved. Marlowe exploits their secluded encounter in a cave as an opportunity for secret viewing pleasure. Juno, who has set up this meeting, knows that Aeneas "feeds his eyes with favors of [Dido's] court," and that "she, likewise, in admiring spends her time" (III.ii.71-72). Camille Paglia has emphasized the hunger of the "pagan" erotic eye, and the ways in which it must be continually "fed"²⁴; here, the strategy of Juno and

23. Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 93.

24. Paglia, pp. 32-33.

Venus is to sharpen that hunger and increase the eye's appetite. Visual hunger will be incited by "stolen," private viewing. In the cave, Dido and Aeneas voice complimentary notions of amatory seeing and spying. Dido, attempting to explain her confusion, laments that "eyes do pierce"; while the unsuspecting Aeneas wonders who has "detained [her] eye" (III.iv.12-17). Both images smack of surveillance; and what Roland Barthes called the gaze's "haptic" or grasping powers to seize and arrest, even to puncture, are evident in this focused erotic arena of the cave.²⁵ The queen finally confesses her passion for the Trojan in terms of visual appreciation for the "sight" upon which she has spied: she loves

The man that I do eye where'er I am,
Whose amorous face, like Paeon, sparkles fire,
Whenas he butts his beams on Flora's bed.
Prometheus hath put on Cupid's shape,
And I must perish in his burning arms.
Aeneas, O Aeneas, quench these flames! (IV.iii.18-23)

Part of the value of what Dido sees lies in its exclusivity: she would keep it for her eyes only. She jealously guards the sight of him, and would control and minimize how much and in what ways he would be seen. Tellingly, she views Aeneas' epic quest in terms of a rival set of eyes:

I follow one that loveth fame 'fore me,
And rather had seem fair in Sirens' eyes,
Than to the Carthage queen that dies for him.
(III.iv.38-40)

This only adds to her previously stated desire for exclusive

25. Roland Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 238.

benefit of the visual pleasure Aeneas provides: "None shall gaze on him but I, / Lest their gross eye-beams taint my lover's cheek" (III.i.73-74).

Yet, in the same way that the *Massacre's* cloaked spy-vision of the Guise paradoxically leads to his desire to display, Dido's scopophilic delights go hand in hand with exhibitionistic yearnings. There is a profound and ultimately destructive ambivalence in valuing private erotic espial and then "going public" with it in some form. But that is what Dido consistently does; she makes shows of herself as well as the lover whose image she guards so jealously. We see the inevitability of Freud's remark regarding complementary voyeurism and exhibitionism: "the second instinct will regularly be found in operation as well."²⁶ For the royal hunt Dido conspicuously attires and announces herself in the manner of a goddess: "My princely robes, thou seest, are laid aside, / Whose glittering pomp Diana's shrouds supplies" (III.iii.3-4). In the cave, she "makes over" Aeneas for all to see, giving him abundant jewelry that can only attract the eyes of the world (III.iv.61-64). This augmentation mirrors the visual dynamics of love initially exposed (Marlowe uses the word "discovered") in the play's opening scene, the divine "dandling" of Ganymede by Jupiter. Marlowe makes that connection even more explicit when Dido later gives Aeneas

26. Freud, p. 33.

the crown and scepter of Carthage:

... let me gaze my fill!
 Now looks Aeneas like immortal Jove:
 O where is Ganymede, to hold his cup,
 And Mercury, to fly for what he calls?
 Ten thousand Cupids hover in the air,
 And fan it in Aeneas' lovely face! (IV.iv.44-49)

In both the divine and mortal realms, erotic love makes the transition from private scene to public spectacle.

Momentarily, Dido's vision is a private one: "O that the clouds were here ... / That thou and I unseen might sport ourselves" (51-52). But immediately after these lines she can not resist a massive public demonstration of her affection. "To make experience of my love," she declares -- ocular proof, as it were (and also a "made experience" in much the same way that the theater is) -- Aeneas will be "led forth, ... seated on my jennet, to ride through the Punic streets" with her "guard ... to wait upon him as their sovereign lord, ... as Carthaginian king" (IV.iv.64-78). In this exhibition of her beloved, she practices a grand, omnipotent voyeurism: "and from a turret I'll behold my love" (86), gazing from the heights upon a scene of her own creation.

Such fabricated sights as these indicate how voyeurism and exhibitionism in *Dido* manifest themselves in deeply theatrical ways. The play's complex, staged spectacles have been noted by many critics. One of the best, Brian Gibbons, considers *Dido* in relation to "the conventions of court drama" and "the astonishing richness and sensuousness ... of

the early Elizabethan court masques." Because of such traditions, Gibbons suggests, "Marlowe can take for granted the spectacular impact of costume and tableau."²⁷ Mary Smith too is struck by the work's "stylized movement," Marlowe's "keen eye for the visual," and the fully exploited "opportunities for spectacle."²⁸ To Jocelyn Powell, *Dido's* plentiful iconography and pageantry invite allegorical interpretation, which to me suggests a theatrical self-consciousness and complexity, a multiplicity of voices and meanings engendered by the visual.²⁹ Regarding this connection of eye-pleasing spectacle to the meta-theatrical, Judith Weil notes the play's prevalence of "ceremonies, processions, costumes and costume-changes, portraits and other visual properties," along with "spectacularly ceremonious types of behavior." The reason for all this display, she offers, is that Marlowe's "method encourages the spectators to compare what they see with what the characters see."³⁰ This "method" of creating highly self-conscious theatrical spectacle creates distance for Weil, an opportunity for the theater audience to develop a sense of irony, and to see that, as Achates puts it, the "mind ... deludes eyesight" and eyesight can delude the mind (II.i.31-

27. Gibbons, p. 34.

28. Smith, p. 170.

29. Jocelyn Powell, "Marlowe's Spectacle," *Tulane Drama Review* 8 (1964).

30. Weil, p. 19.

32). Weil quotes Bacon's provocative, ambiguous assessment that poetry "accommodates the shows of things to the desires of the mind" -- suggesting the complex relationship between what we want to see, what we do see, and what we create to be seen in a fictive space.³¹ I generally concur with Weil's overarching theory of Marlowe as a grand Erasmian ironist. However, there are important aspects of Marlowe's method that Weil does not adequately weigh, particularly the issues of visual "ravishment" and "suture," to use the terms of critic Michael Goldman and film theorist Laura Mulvey. Goldman argues that in the desire for the *sine qua non* of overwhelming intellectual and sensual stimulation or "ravishment," Marlowe ravishes his viewers' minds and senses -- foremost, I contend, the sense of sight.³² Mulvey describes a related phenomenon in the cinema, where the gaze of the director and camera, the actors on screen, and the audience all meld in one erotic moment.³³ Camille Paglia touches upon this when she talks about the cinematic and "pagan" radiance of Spenser.³⁴ Following these suggestions, I believe that Marlowe shifts between ironic detachment and appealing, even overwhelming sensationalism, within very

31. Ibid., p. 15.

32. Michael Goldman, "Marlowe and the Histrionics of Ravishment," in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

33. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 19-24.

34. Paglia, pp. 31-35.

short spans of time. His scenes of voyeuristic and exhibitionistic ecstasy are not just candies for the eye, mere surface window-dressing, but an integral part of a dazzling world of pleasure and pain through sight that draws in and deeply involves the theatrical spectator.

The dramatization of sight occurs time and again in *Dido*. In the passage quoted above, when the queen envisions a triumphant pageant for her lover, she also imaginatively sees its audience and her ability to be the scene's supreme gazer, to "behold ... from a turret" (IV.iv.86). Ganymede and Jupiter, who are "discovered" for the eyes of the theater audience, in turn envision scenes for themselves and other divine viewers, by implication sharing more "discoveries" with a still larger audience. The process is replicated by Dido when she theatrically "transforms" Aeneas into Jupiter, and imagines those who watch him. Douglas Cole comments upon the scene in which the eighty-year-old Nurse "dandles" -- again! -- Ascanius, who is really the disguised Cupid: "he delights in her absurd flush of lustiness and *invites us to enjoy it too.*"³⁵ This scene is also interesting not only because of the meta-theatrical "inviting" that takes place, but because it shows the integral role of the eye in such a process. I would go Cole one better: not only are we invited to delight in the absurdity, but to savor the sensuality of the moment through

35. Cole, p. 48, italics mine.

a scene created for the eye:

Nurse: ... thou shalt go with me unto my house.
 I have an orchard that hath store of plums,
 Brown almonds, services, ripe figs and dates,
 Dewberries, apples, yellow oranges;
 Musk-roses, and a thousand sort of flowers;
 And in the midst doth run a silver stream,
 Where thou shalt see the red-gill'd fishes leap,
 White swans, and many lovely water-fowls. (IV.v.3-11)

"Where thou shalt see": in such an appeal, designed to satisfy her reawakened lust, the Nurse negotiates through the eye. Using Paglia's "avenue of eros," Marlowe creates a miniature scene of comic and erotic theater in which, as Cole notes, we are invited to partake, as initiates and viewers. It is the same sort of multi-layered visual seduction that exists in the appeals to the beautiful boy Ganymede and the surprisingly naive and boyish Aeneas in the cave. The objects of affection are loved because of their effect upon the eye of another, and in turn won over or wooed by appeals to their eyes. The entire process also comprises a visual seduction of the theater audience, filled with sometimes smirking, sometimes "ravished" viewers.

However, for all the pleasures that such scenes afford, Marlowe stages voyeuristic and exhibitionist shows that consistently compromise and endanger the self. As Chris Cullens reminds us, "To play with the prying gaze ... runs the risk of inciting it," in ways that are disruptive and even destructive.³⁶ Judith Weil's observation that Marlowe

 36. Chris Cullens, "Mrs. Robinson and the Masquerade of Womanliness," *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. Von Mücke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 281.

has a "flexible attitude towards sight" is an understatement.³⁷ Though he practices and celebrates theatrical self-display much more than does Edmund Spenser -- whom Theresa Krier calls a notable "literary voyeur" -- Marlowe nonetheless shares Spenser's portrayal of secret gazing as a fundamental intrusion upon the self, a violation that engenders other "invasions."³⁸ Throughout *Dido*, the relationship between sight and self is problematic, uneasy and unpredictable. The imagery Marlowe uses consistently underscores this fact, be it ever so laced with flash and "enticing" allure, Kuriyama's "hard glitter of surface gaiety."³⁹

If the characters in *Dido* gain an unparalleled pleasure seeing through and showing to the eye, it comes at a great cost. Self in Marlowe exists through sight; and characters spend it, exhaust or dilute it, through prodigal "visibility." The potential for loss of self through the eye is always there, even if it is coated with sensual pleasure. In the Ovidian erotic tableaux of the play's opening, the purpose is succinctly summed up in Ganymede's desire to "please the eye." Yet in the midst of such sensory lavishness, Jupiter refers to himself as "exhal'd" from the eyes of his beloved, taken in and let out, in an

37. Weil, p. 185.

38. Krier, pp. 16-17.

39. Kuriyama, p. 62.

image of visual respiration that leads to weakness and servitude (I.i.25-28). We have already mentioned how eyesight "deludes" and "taints" the self (Achates, II.i.31-32; Dido, III.i.74), but more potent images of actual enslavement pervade the play. "The time hath been / When Dido's beauty *chained thine eyes to her*," the queen reproaches her departing lover (V.i.113-14, emphasis mine). This compounds the notion of self-annihilating thralldom already voiced by Aeneas, lamenting his state of "female drudgery" as a result of "amorous looks." "Alluring eyes / Effeminate our minds," warns Achates (IV.iii.35-37, 55).

Aeneas' loss of strong masculine self through viewing and being viewed is clarified in the cave where Dido first reveals her love. Through clothing and accoutrement, she transforms Aeneas into an image of her first husband, in effect annihilating the man that he was:

Sichaeus, not Aeneas, be thou called;
The King of Carthage, not Anchises' son. (III.iv.59-60)

This transformation would obliterate self, paternity, inheritance, and epic duty. But not only is Aeneas' identity threatened; there is double jeopardy here. In giving the Trojan the jewels and even the wedding-ring of her late spouse, Dido emphatically echoes the divine monarch of the play's opening. Jupiter similarly weakened himself through the temptations of sight by giving to his minion the wedding treasures of his wife.

Ultimately, perhaps because the pleasures of sight

(fires fanned by Venus and Cupid) are even greater for Dido, the encroachments upon and eventual loss of self are even more dire for her -- and more spectacular. One could argue that if for Paglia the eye is the "avenue of eros," for Marlowe it also becomes the exit-ramp for identity. Dido's eyes receive and produce pleasure, but they betray and draw her away from herself. In attempting to "gaze [her] fill" and glut her eye (IV.iv.45), she becomes "entangled by a stranger's looks" (V.i.145), and ultimately drained of self. Attuned to the "entanglements" of love in this play, Mary Smith refers to the all-consuming "love world" of Dido, without properly appreciating its visual nature.⁴⁰ The queen desires to make public show of her passion, yet at the same time fears to do so, "Lest I become a wonder to the world" (III.i.95). She simultaneously celebrates and shuns the tyranny of the erotic eye. When she declares of Aeneas,

His glistering eyes shall be my looking-glass,...
His looks shall be my only library, (III.i.85-89)

exaltation mingles with self-abnegation. Dido looks at her beloved, and his eyes returning her gaze are now her sole source of identity. There is a dangerous exclusivity in making another's "looks" one's "*only* library" or source of knowledge and meaning. When the eyes depart for Italy, looking glass and library -- self-image and intellect -- are gone.

Dido's death is her final created spectacle -- self-

40. Smith, pp. 44-45.

immolation as theatrical last rites. Those who live by the eye die by the eye. There is no mistaking the way in which Marlowe draws attention to this, either. In the lovers' final, painful farewell the playwright quotes Virgil directly, in a moment that contains both a strange intimacy and an epic resonance:

*Aeneas: Desine neque tuis incendere teque querelis;
Italia non sponte sequor.* (V.i.139-40)

"Cease to inflame me and yourself by your lamentations; it is not of my own free will that I make for Italy."⁴¹ Aeneas manages to escape *incendere* -- an inflammation, I believe, that results from the burning eyes of love. Dido on the other hand succumbs to *incendere*; for Marlowe she is its physical embodiment, the flaming proof of the gaze's incendiary, self-immolating capacity. She is an all-too-literal by-product of the pagan "inflamed eye."

Many of those who have commented upon Marlowe's rich intertextualities within *Dido* have noted the playwright's complex and challenging use of the Virgilian source, sometimes doing so in ways that recognize his engagement of the eye. Barbara Bono discusses the work's "prismatic ironies," a fine image that gives a strong visual sense of the original source being refracted through a Renaissance glass that enlarges its possibilities and increases its color. For her, the end result is an eye-pleasing spectacle

41. *Aeneid* IV.360-61, trans. J. B. Steane, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (New York: Penguin, 1969), 93.

of "amoral virtuosity."⁴² In fact, with a few notable exceptions such as D. C. Allen, who considers the play's gods unambiguous ("they lend their ears and then their hearts to the advice and direction of their mortal creations"⁴³), *Dido's* best critics find the play a spectacle that alters and inverts Virgil's world of empire. The prefix "trans-" keeps appearing: Bono applies the insightful term "transvaluation"; Smith calls the play a "radical transfiguration" of its source; and Roma Gill deems "Marlowe's control over Virgilian material" a complete "transformation."⁴⁴ For Richard A. Martin, "the dialectic between a strict, epic view of Aeneas' duty and a more lyrical sense of Dido as a victim" lead the play "beyond Elizabethan moralism to *a world where paradox destroys absolutism*."⁴⁵

This leads us back to spying, self, and the eye. Martin contends that murkiness, paradox, and doubt are injected into the once-secure terrain of epic: this greatly

42. Barbara J. Bono, *Literary Transvaluation: From Vergilian Epic to Shakespearean Tragicomedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

43. D. C. Allen, "Marlowe's *Dido* and the Tradition," in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 68.

44. Barbara Bono, *Literary Transvaluation*; Mary Smith, *Love Kindling Fire*, pp. i-vii; Roma Gill, "Marlowe's Virgil: *Dido Queen of Carthage*, *RES* 28 (1977), pp. 144-55.

45. Richard A. Martin, "Fate, Seneca, and Marlowe's *Dido Queen of Carthage*," *RenD* 11 (1980), pp. 45-66, ital. mine.

resembles Charles Nicholl's assertions that espionage and secret agency produce paradox and destroy certainty.⁴⁶ Marlowe undermines what Lee Patterson has called the noble, "entranced gaze" of the epic,⁴⁷ by mingling it with the surreptitious but inescapable erotic glance. Brian Gibbons, perhaps the most thorough student of the play's means of appealing to the eye, finds that through the radical engagement of Virgil and "the conventions of court drama," Marlowe "creates a dramatic language through which he explores the Protean nature of personality and identity under the stress of passion." In such extremes, Gibbons notes, "paranoia is the appropriate and usual condition."⁴⁸ Marlowe's sexual spying, with its roving "pagan" eye, is as paranoid and dangerous as its political cousin, espionage. It "entices" and inflames with titillating scopophilic pleasure; but too close, it scorches, immolates, and ultimately eradicates the self.

Hero: spying and "glutting the eye," sans stage

How does Marlowe achieve in a poem, *Hero and Leander*, what he does on the stage in *Dido*, in terms of vision and sexual spying? The question is asked because he again

 46. Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning: The Murder of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1992), p. 255.

47. Lee W. Patterson, "'Rapt with Pleasance': Vision and Narration in the Epic," *ELH* 48 (1981), pp. 455-75.

48. Brian Gibbons, pp. 37-46.

manages a new version of his brilliant "overpeering," the constant, supercharged engagement of the eye for purposes of espionage, eros, and theater. Many of the components in the two works are similar, including mythology and paganism; sensually appealing voyeurism and exhibitionism; self-conscious spectacle; and in both, rare Marlovian female protagonists who endanger and ultimately lose themselves through vision -- by viewing and allowing the gaze. A poem poses problems and limitations: Marlowe cannot show costumes, sets, props, physical objects and human beings moved around on a stage, pleasing the eye and making spectacles of themselves. And yet, a poem also has distinct advantages and opportunities that he exploits to the fullest. Narrative poetry -- specifically the Ovidian erotic vein of the 1590's that Marlowe masters here⁴⁹ -- affords unique means to explore visual intensity and the flashing eye. In many ways, Marlowe engages sight to the utmost in *Hero*, meeting the challenges of "glutting the eye" in a non-dramatic context. He is gorgeously pictorial, especially in the use of blazon and ekphrasis; he develops psychological inwardness regarding sight, in ways that are difficult for the drama to achieve; and he uses a host of narrative strategies, including digression and sententiousness, that create an "authorial invitation" to

 49. For discussions of Marlowe within the genre, see Clarke Hulse, *Metamorphic Verse* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981); and William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1976).

the eyes of the reader. I do not give a "full-dress" reading of *Hero*, then, because it would be redundant: much of the "eye-intensity" here works in ways resembling that within *Dido*. Rather, I will make a brief, pointed analysis, concentrating on the techniques Marlowe adapts to achieve similar visual ends in a different genre.

According to C. S. Lewis, Marlowe "is our great master of the material imagination." Part of this mastery is found in the pictorial vividness which serves to enliven his creations. *Hero and Leander*, which Arnold Davenport has called a work of "Botticellian sensuousness,"⁵⁰ makes word pictures for the eye through poetry. J. B. Steane discusses its "medallion-like techniques of showing,"⁵¹ while Millar Maclure calls it a "decorated affair" full of "mythological ornament" in which "the lovers appear like figures in a tapestry, or mural painting."⁵² Brian Morris observes how the eye in *Hero* is tantalized through "Byzantine ingenuity"; Marlowe engages "the gorgeous outside, the panoply, the pageant of Art."⁵³

The opening descriptions of the two lovers appeal to

50. Lewis and Davenport are cited in Millar Maclure, ed., *The Poems: Christopher Marlowe* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. xxviii.

51. Steane, p. 328.

52. Maclure, p. xxviii.

53. Brian Morris, "Comic Method in *Hero and Leander*," *Christopher Marlowe: Collected Essays*, ed. Brian Morris (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), p. 116.

all the senses, but stimulate sight foremost. David Lee Miller asserts that this "matched pair of blazons ... position[s] the lovers for spectacle."⁵⁴ Marlowe begins such positioning immediately. In line six and following, we are told how Apollo, courting "Hero the fair, ... offered as a dower his burning throne, / Where she should sit for men to gaze upon." Marlowe, also in effect "positioning" or placing her, shares the fervid details of this gaze in a "Botticellian" blazon that includes the poem's first brief ekphrasis:

The outside of her garments were of lawn,
The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn;
Her wide sleeves green, and border'd with a grove,
Where Venus in her naked glory strove
To please the careless and disdainful eyes
Of proud Adonis that before her lies. (I.9-14)

The penultimate line echoes the opening of *Dido*: "pleasing the eye" is a priority of the author's agenda. Jupiter's "dandling" is analogous to Venus in her "naked glory" in the sense that they are both erotic eye-catchers. But in *Hero* Marlowe cannot show living, three-dimensional human beings acting amorously; he must rely upon poetic devices to convey the visual enticement and thrill. The titillating ekphrasis of the nude, striving Venus is a technique of poetic self-consciousness -- meta-poetry -- in the same way that the stage spectacles in Marlowe's plays are examples of theatrical self-consciousness, meta-theater. Both

54. David Lee Miller, "Gender and Desire in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*," *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Emily Bartels (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), p. 75.

accomplish their goal of a visual excitation that verges on prurience.

The extended blazons of the lovers illustrate the pleasures and the complexities of sight. "My rude pen can hardly blazon forth the loves of men," Marlowe's narrator disclaims; but "let it suffice / That my slack muse sings of Leander's eyes" (70-72). This is a telling, characteristic maneuver: sing *of* the eye, *for* the eye, *through* the eye. The imagery must sparkle and persuade through Davenport's "Botticellian sensuousness": "chains of pebble-stone, / ...lightened by [Hero's] neck, like diamonds shone";

Buskins of shells all silver'd used she,
And branch'd with blushing coral to the knee,
Where sparrows perch'd, of hollow pearl and gold,
Such as the world would wonder to behold. (31-34)

Creating world-wide wonder through sight remains the goal.

The wonder and excitement are so intense that they engender not only lust and awe, but confusion that registers itself visually. The sensual blazons of both characters also cause mistaken identity, gender and role uncertainty, and jealousy. "Some say" that love-god Cupid, "looking in [Hero's] face, was strooken blind" (37-38); the narrator, however, affirms that Cupid would often think Hero his mother Venus, and fly into her naked arms and gently panting breasts. Such universally admired loveliness makes personified Nature resentful, thinking she is "of such wondrous beauty bereft" (46-48).

In Leander's case, his blazoned beauty manifests itself

through his "speaking eye" (85) -- but what that pleasing, vocal eye articulates, besides a ripeness for "amorous play," is not always clear: "Some swore he was a maid in man's attire, / For in his looks were all that men desire" (83-84). Indeed, Leander's blazon -- entirely Marlowe's invention, found neither in Musaeus nor Ovid⁵⁵ -- is distinctly homoerotic:

Had wild Hippolytus Leander seen,
Enamour'd of his beauty had he been. (77-78)

The "rudest peasant" or most "barbarous Thracian soldier" would "melt" or be "moved with him" (79-82); his "dangling tresses ... / Would have allur'd the vent'rous youth of Greece" (55-57). An overwhelming, androgynous appeal runs through these pictorial tributes and, for the poem's characters and its audience, results in a passionately inflamed gaze that desires to see more:

But far above the loveliest Hero shin'd,
And stole away th' enchanted gazer's mind. (103-04)

So ran the people forth to gaze upon her,
And all that view'd her were enamour'd on her. (117-18)

Millar Maclure compares such descriptions to scenes of Aeneas being "swarmed" and "gazed in the face."⁵⁶ In doing so, he anticipates what I am arguing: the poetic deployment of Marlowe's dramatic "overpeering". To use David Lee Miller's insightful phrasing, the lovers are most certainly

55. Maclure, p. 8., note to lns. 61-90.

56. Ibid., p. 9, note to lns. 79-84.

"positioned for spectacle."⁵⁷

If the pictoriality of blazon is roughly equivalent to the eye-grabbing charisma of actor and character, then ekphrasis serves much as "set" would in the theater. How do you "place" Hero within a background, or against a backdrop? Indeed, because it appeals directly to the inner imagination rather than relying upon the physical conventions of court drama (such as those in *Dido* delineated by Brian Gibbons⁵⁸), poetry in some respects may be even more evocative. It would be virtually impossible for any stage set to surpass the word-pictures with which Marlowe gives life and thematic heft to "Venus' temple" where Hero acts as "nun," with its walls "of discolour'd jasper stone, / Wherein was Proteus carv'd" and Bacchus too, each surrounded by the "lively" trappings of their mythological existence (136-39). The floor alone is a visual masterpiece with a lusty pagan life of its own:

Of crystal shining fair the pavement was;
 The town of Sestos call'd it Venus' glass.
 There might you see the gods in sundry shapes,
 Committing heady riots, incest, rapes:
 For know, that underneath this radiant floor
 Was Danae's statue in a brazen tower,
 Jove slyly stealing from his sister's bed,
 To dally with Idalian Ganymede,
 Or for his love Europa bellowing loud,
 Or tumbling with the Rainbow in a cloud;
 Blood-quaffing Mars, heaving the iron net
 Which limping Vulcan and his Cyclops set;
 Love kindling fire, to burn such towns as Troy;

 57. Miller, p. 75.

58. Gibbons, pp. 33-46.

Sylvanus weeping for the lovely boy
 That now is turn'd into a cypress tree,
 Under whose shade the wood-gods love to be.
 (I.141-56)

Here is "Byzantine ingenuity, the gorgeous outside,... the panoply of Art," to quote Brian Morris.⁵⁹ This bustling mythological pageant flows more freely and evocatively -- sans sets, costumes, and "machinery" -- than anything the theater would be capable of creating for the eye. The connections and allusions range too far, the images are too abundant. But there is some overlap: a theatrical sensibility has envisioned Hero set against the backdrop of this "pretty picture," as J. B. Steane calls it, noting in theatrical terminology that the "passage is wonderfully lit."⁶⁰

It is within this erotically charged "set" that the pair first encounter each other in an instant of intense poetic sexual spying. Marlowe treats the moment in terms of espionage -- "they did each other spy" (134) -- as if the codes of surveillance within *The Massacre at Paris* had been transferred to an erotic arena. The secret sight of Hero at prayer and sacrifice, first with "eyelids close" and then "modestly open'd" to spark that first contact (158-65), overwhelms both of them:

Stone still he stood, and evermore he gaz'd,
 Till with the fire that from his count'nance blaz'd
 Relenting Hero's gentle heart was strook:
Such force and virtue hath an amorous look. (163-66)

 59. Brian Morris, p. 116.

60. Steane, p. 313.

The lover's contact leads to a second major component of Marlowe's poetic sexual spying. Although *Hero and Leander* is a work of shimmering pictorial surfaces, it is also a study in "internality," the capacity of poetic narrative to render inner psychological turmoil in ways in which the drama might have more limited resources with which to deal with it, such as monologue or aside.⁶¹ The internal ambivalence expressed most notably within the psyche of Hero concerns the fundamental rift between her desire to expose herself fully to her lover's gaze, and to hide from it. William Keach notes the "strains generated by these opposing impulses"⁶²; and David Lee Miller considers the "contradictory energies" of looking and the "inherent conflict in gazing."⁶³ J. B. Steane concurs, finding a "tension between Hero's official and private selves" and ultimately concluding that she is "divided, betrayed by herself" -- betrayed, I would specify, through the eyes.⁶⁴

Hero has mixed feelings about her desire for, as Miller puts it, "universal cynosure" -- being that sight which

61. For the ways in which the drama can (or must) stretch itself to depict inward depth and "subjectivity effects," see Phillip Mirabelli, "Silence, Wit, and Wisdom in *The Silent Woman*," *SEL* 29:2 (1989), 309-36.

62. William Keach, "Marlowe's Hero as 'Venus' Nun,'" *ELR* 2 (1972), pp. 307-20.

63. Miller, pp. 74-77.

64. Steane, p. 331.

attracts and excites the gaze of all.⁶⁵ This too is Queen Dido's dilemma: wanting to create celebratory scenes of love and triumph, yet fearing lest she become "a wonder to the world" (III.i.96). Though verbally fending off Leander's advances, her eyes give mixed signals, and finally win over her tongue to invite the young man to "the chamber where I lie" (I.354):

Come thither! As she spake this, her tongue tripp'd,
For unawares 'Come thither' from her slipp'd,
And suddenly her former colour chang'd,
And here and there her eyes through anger rang'd.
And like a planet, moving several ways
At one self instant, she poor soul assays,
Loving, not to love at all, and every part
Strove to resist the motions of her heart. (I.357-64)

A moment like this can be rendered on stage, but Marlowe's treatment of it here gives a sense of liberation from the confines of drama. Poetic conventions allow fuller range, depth, and extended metaphor to display Hero's internal states -- Keach's "strains generated by opposing impulses."⁶⁶ The eyes that have just gazed longingly run through a course of angry flashes; imagistically, she is a planet whose Ptolomaic orbit has been jarred and pulled in different directions.⁶⁷ It is not that drama is incapable of depicting such flashings and jarrings, but that Marlowe capitalizes upon a different freedom here to heap disparate images and conceits without having to rely solely upon the

65. Miller, p. 76.

66. William Keach, p. 320.

67. Maclure, p. 21, note 1n. 361.

voices of characters themselves. Viewing and describing them from the outside -- especially their loving or angry flashing eyes -- ironically gives Marlowe a better chance to develop a narrative voice that apprehends them internally.

The erotic grappling between the two lovers in the poem's last half is poetic visual comedy of the eye and for the eye, linking Hero's confusion to her display as a seen erotic object. One moment, she "willingly requite[s]," and then "this sudden rashness repent[s]" (II.27-36). Within the poem, even the god Cupid views such fits and starts as erotic comic theater: "The mirthful god of amorous pleasure smil'd / To see how he this captive nymph beguil'd" (II.39-40). When Hero fears that her harsh looks have too greatly repulsed Leander, "with yielding eyes / She offers up herself a sacrifice, / To slake his anger, if he were displeas'd" (47-50).

Yielding eyes lead to the self-betrayal that J. B. Steane notes as a salient characteristic of the poem.⁶⁸ Invariably this ambivalent giving away of the self is linked to spying, in a work saturated in erotic espionage. Personified "Morning" spies upon her lover the sun (II.87-90); Leander's father spies upon him:

The light of hidden fire itself discovers,
And love that is conceal'd betrays poor lovers.
His secret flame apparently was seen,
Leander's father knew where he had been. (II.133-36)

And Hero spies upon the naked Leander -- "such sights as

68. Steane, pp. 310-33.

this to tender maids are rare" (II.238). But it is spying upon Hero, who by convention should be most chaste, guarded, and unseen, that is the real focus, perhaps because it is the most taboo. As Steane puts it, *Hero and Leander* focuses upon "a woman exposed"⁶⁹; David Lee Miller refers to its process of "appropriating the spectacle of feminine pleasure" into a "tableau" of viewing.⁷⁰ Hero, running "into the dark herself to hide," becomes the unhidable cynosure, a sparkling gem that the text has prepared us to equate with her virginity, a jewel once lost never found again (II.51, 83-86):

[She] ran into the dark herself to hide;
 Rich jewels in the dark are soonest spied.
 Unto her was he led, or rather drawn,
 By those white limbs, which sparkled through the lawn.
 (II.239-42)

What Marlowe takes as the great myth of spying -- Diana and Actaeon, discussed more fully in Chapters 5 and 6 -- becomes a metaphor for Hero's loss of self through sight:

She, overcome with shame and sallow fear,
 Like chaste Diana when Actaeon spied her,
 Being suddenly betrayed, div'd down to hide her.
 (II.260-62)

Yet Hero is a sporadically willing Diana, inviting the gaze at least in part: "Treason was in her thought, / And cunningly to yield herself she sought" (293-4). Marlowe heightens the Diana comparison and contrast in the conclusion, where visual consummation -- unimpeded sight of

 69. Ibid., p. 332.

70. Miller, p. 85.

the naked girl -- finally follows sexual consummation, crowning it as erotic fulfillment. Of the scene, David Lee Miller remarks, "the action does not, in fact, climax with the long-delayed penetration of Hero, but with the complete exposure of Hero to the lover's gaze."⁷¹ Freud was right to suggest that with intense scopophilia, sight supplants sex as the ultimate pleasure.⁷² Indebted to Book III of Ovid and Golding, Marlowe describes the dawn-like "twilight break" (319) of Hero's blush, in terms reminiscent of Diana's reddening.⁷³ However, whereas both are temporarily half-seen, the goddess blushes in shame and anger, and remains half hidden. Hero, on the other hand, "blushing stood upright" (317); and she colors as much out of desire as modesty:

So Hero's ruddy cheek Hero betray'd,
And her all naked to his sight display'd,
Whence his admiring eyes more pleasure took
Than Dis, on heaps of gold fixing his look. (323-26)

Hero's allowing herself to become "fixed" by his "look," an object of "display" for the "pleasure" of his "admiring eyes," amounts to a self-betrayal utterly foreign to Ovid's vengeful huntress. However, it is not without its gratifications; it delights and inflames. Hero's opening-up

71. Ibid., p. 75.

72. Freud, p. 23.

73. Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. F. J. Miller (Cambridge Harvard Univ. Press, 1916; 1939), III.130-160; *The XV Bookes of P. Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis*, trans. Arthur Golding, 1567 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977).

to the eye is a mild, comic self-immolation -- a readiness to be burned by sight -- yet one that is no less confusing for its sufferer than is Dido's high tragic one.

This pleasurable burning is a warmth that Marlowe intends the reader to share. Pamela Royston has argued that in *Hero* the author "seduces the reader into voyeurism."⁷⁴ In suggesting that Marlowe adapts his dramatic overpeering sensibilities to the genre of poetry, I would highlight several prominent techniques that accomplish such a seduction: visual digression, narrative knowingness, and authorial invitation to the eyes of the reader. *Hero's* two great digressions, episodes with Mercury and Neptune that take up almost a third of the poem, are visual erotic idylls whose very subject is sexual spying: Mercury "spie[ls] a country maid" (I.388), and "stray[ls] / Beyond the bounds of shame, in being bold / To eye those parts which no eye should behold" (I.406-08); and the sea god, mistaking the swimming Leander for Ganymede, watches, steals kisses, "cast[ls] many a lustful glance, / And thr[ows] him gaudy toys to please his eye" (II.183-87).

Eye-pleasing and vision are also often the subjects of the many *sententiae*, the epigrammatic pearls of knowing wisdom that are a distinct part of the narrative style. A few of these maxims are even italicized, as if to assist memorization: "*Love deeply groupded hardly is dissembled*"

74. Pamela Royston, "*Hero and Leander* and the Eavesdropping Reader," *John Donne Journal* 2:1 (1983), pp. 31-53.

(I.184); "*Such force and virtue hath an amorous look*" (166). Often the topics are the ambivalence of sexual seeing, and its power to please or punish. The best known of these sight-spawned sententiae many not be in italics, but it makes an indelible impression:

... let it suffice,
 What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.
 Where both deliberate, the love is slight;
 Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight? (173-76)

It is no surprise that one of Shakespeare's most direct and insightful homages to his fellow playwright and Ovidian poet takes up the power of the eye:

Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:
 Who ever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?
 (*As You Like It*, III.v.81-82)

Shakespeare and other readers have been successfully "invited in" by Marlowe's visually enticing narrative. David Lee Miller notes the poet's manipulations of "what we see" and the directions in which "we are asked to look"; Miller asserts that ultimately "the narrative point of view seeks to identify our gaze with his."⁷⁵ This is found even in small instances, such as the apparently tossed-off phrases that embrace and direct the reader's gaze. Marlowe draws us into the erotic ekphrasis of "Venus' glass" and its sexually transgressive god-world with a "there might you see" (I.143). We envision (with more than a hint of narrative self-mockery) the loveliness of Leander's flesh:

75. Miller, p. 75.

"I could tell ye / How smooth his breast was and how white his belly" (I.65-66), rhyming "tell ye" and "belly" with a satiric touch that prefigures Byron's *Don Juan*. In the long Diana-like blazon that finally apprehends Hero in her radiant nakedness, the reader again becomes a viewer: "behold ye might," we are instructed, as she is "display'd" not only for Leander's "admiring eyes," but for our own (II.318-26).

In discussing *Hero*, J. B. Steane uses the wonderful phrase "the poet's-eye-camera" to indicate the work's multiple pictures and perspectives.⁷⁶ Royston's idea of the poet "seducing the reader into voyeurism" and Miller's assertion that Marlowe's "narrative point of view seeks to identify our gaze with his" both touch upon Marlowe's deepest strategies. Such seduction and identification are poetic versions of the theatrical "suture" of sight that I have already delineated within *Dido*: aspired-to moments of melding, through the eye, the erotic heat of creator, characters, and viewers.⁷⁷ Regarding *Hero*, M. C. Bradbrook has written of Marlowe's characteristic "insolence" in taking "a notorious tragedy as basis for a comedy."⁷⁸ Interestingly enough, of course, the remark could apply to *Dido* as well. I have been arguing that in both cases --

76. Steane, pp. 323-24.

77. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Hampshire: MacMillan, 1989), pp. 19-24.

78. Bradbrook is cited in Steane, p. 332.

through different, genre-specific techniques -- Marlowe displays an "insolent" and irrepressible eye that seeks to share with its audience the ambiguous experience of sexual spying.

**Chapter 4. "I'll play Diana": Doctor Faustus and the
"Actaeon Complex"**

Actaeon has become virtually overburdened with significances; yet being a figure of paradox and synthesis, he is never more alive than when he fully bridges the gap between the lowest and the highest things.

-- Leonard Barkan¹

But why may not this fable receive a double construction? Those being the best that admit of most senses.

-- George Sandys²

Within what one nineteenth-century commentator has called its "burning whirlpool" where "fragments of Christian dogma are tossed ... with scraps of heathen history and mythology,"³ *Doctor Faustus* includes many of the central concerns previously discussed in *The Massacre*, *Dido*, and *Hero*. Actual espionage and scopophilic sexual spying loom large; and here too pagan myth often operates as a vehicle for the exploration of such issues. In fact, the figures of Diana and Actaeon, used suggestively in both *Dido* and *Hero*, recur resoundingly throughout *Doctor Faustus*. However, this play not only goes further in the nature of its engagement with myth in general and Actaeon in particular; it also takes the tale in different directions, with deeper

1. Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *ELR* 10:3 (1980), p. 359.

2. George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis: Englished, Mythologized, and Represented in Pictures*, 1632, ed. Karl Hulley and Stanley Vandersall (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), p. 151.

3. Henry Arthur Jones, from the "Nineteenth Century" (January, 1885), xvii, p. 162; reprinted in Millar Maclure, *Marlowe: The Critical Heritage, 1588-1896* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 152.

ramifications. Following the cues of Marlowe himself, the "overpeering" in *Faustus* can be profitably examined by focusing upon the Diana and Actaeon myth. Playing with this multivalent text, Marlowe connects Diana's divine power (and Actaeon's transgression) to necromantic and theatrical prowess, interrogating and ultimately problematizing divinity, magic, and theater.

At one point Faustus declares that he will "play Diana" (IV.ii.53)⁴; this chapter asks, what does it mean to be a "play Diana?" And, in a work in which the eye is teased, titillated, and finally trapped by ubiquitous metatheatrical displays, the chapter echoes the protagonist's query, "What means this show?" (I.v.82). To consider such questions, first it will be necessary to look not only at Marlowe's abundant and highly-charged "Actaeonesque" language and imagery, but to see it with and against Ovid, Golding, and its mythographic history from George Sandys in the 1630's to Leonard Barkan in the 1980's.⁵ This first step includes the

 4. Quotations are from *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane (New York: Penguin, 1969). *Doctor Faustus* has a complicated textual history, with two vastly different quartos: a 1,517-line version from 1604; and a 2,121-line version from 1616. Steane's edition is based upon the longer text. For a good overview, see Leah S. Marcus, "Textual Indeterminacy and Ideological Difference: The Case of *Doctor Faustus*", in *Critical Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Emily C. Bartels (New York: G. K. Hall, 1997), pp. 15-21.

5. Though he comes a generation after Marlowe, Sandys in *Ovid's Metamorphosis* encapsulates a large body of Renaissance mythography. Barkan, three and a half centuries later, in "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," brings a twentieth-century perspective to early modern paganism.

application and assessment of Jean-Paul Sartre's "Actaeon complex," involving the visual possession of knowledge, a "violation by sight" in which "to know is to devour with the eyes."⁶ Then I will demonstrate Marlowe's linking of myth to magic, using Bruno, Agrippa, and Mirandola to show the connections between "Cynthian" conjuring and metamorphosis.⁷ Finally, the inescapable connotations of theater will be added to the mix: Marlowe's magical displays, including those of Actaeonesque vision and vengeance, serve for delight, then distraction, and at last fatal self-deception. Somewhat mysteriously, the myth leads the playwright to reflect -- often harshly -- upon his own form.

Actaeon's multiple meanings

It is puzzling to witness *Faustus* scholars' near-neglect of the Actaeon myth. With a few notable exceptions to be discussed later, they have been captivated by other, more conspicuous patterns of pagan allusion and imagery. Icarus, Daedalus, Phaeton, and even Proteus have all received their due.⁸ On several occasions, *Faustus* draws

 6. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existential Psychoanalysis*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1962), pp. 67-68.

7. Cogent summaries of these sixteenth-century figures can be found in James Robinson Howe, *Marlowe, Tamburlaine, and Magic* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 15-85; and Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

8. The examples are numerous; some of the best include Harry Levin, *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 163-64, 168; Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Gordian Press, 1972), pp.

attention to its Icarian overtones: the "form of Faustus' fortunes" delineated by the Prologue (ln. 8) suggests the myth of soaring presumption and disastrous descent:

swol'n with cunning of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
And melting, heavens conspired his overthrow.
(Prol. 20-22)

Faustus "fall[s] to a devilish exercise" (23). Little wonder that Harry Levin entitled his seminal study of Marlowe *The Overreacher*, and used as its frontispiece Geoffrey Whitney's 1586 woodcut of an inverted, crashing Icarus with wax wings disintegrating.⁹ Allusions to Icarus continue throughout this play, in much of Marlowe's other work,¹⁰ and arguably in the poet's life as well.¹¹ Without a

196-97, 253; Marjorie Garber, "Closure and Enclosure in Marlowe," in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 16-21; and A. Bartlett Giamatti, "Marlowe: The Arts of Illusion," in *Christopher Marlowe: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986).

9. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (London, 1586), p. 28.

10. For example, the bereft Dido states, "I'll frame me wings of wax, like Icarus / And, o'er his ships, will soar unto the sun, / That they may melt, and I fall into his arms" (*Dido*, V.i.243-45). And Guise will "mount the top with my aspiring wings, / Although my downfall be the deepest hell" (*Massacre*, I.ii.46-47). *Hero's* Actaeon allusions were discussed in Chapter Four.

11. Levin deems it "appropriate to borrow a phrase which Dr. Henry A. Murray has introduced into clinical psychology, and classify Marlowe's case as an 'Icarus complex.'" This entails among other things "the disposition to isolate one's self on a higher plane, while attracting the admiration of others"; competitiveness; exhibitionism; self-love; fantasies of flight; and anxious dread of falling; p. 159.

doubt, it is an important and illuminating paradigm.

However, the use of Icarus (as well as Phaeton and to a lesser extent Proteus) is only part of a larger picture. As Sara Munson Deats asserts in her study of *Edward II*, Marlowe engages multiple myths, often simultaneously, in complex and "elusive" ways that "defy rigid categorization."¹² Thus, while granting the value of the Icarus myth in *Faustus*, I find that another pagan paradigm, used simultaneously, appears even more central. The story of Diana and Actaeon repeatedly manifests itself, in implicit and explicit guises. And one of the primary things that it allows Marlowe to do is to link to a larger matrix of meanings the themes of political and sexual spying that dominate his other work. The "Actaeonesque" in *Faustus* begins, then, with ties to espionage, court peering, and what Cesare Ripa referred to as the "arts" of surveillance.¹³ One of Faustus' wishes for his "concealed arts" (I.i.101) is that they open up "the secrets of all foreign kings" (I.i.86). John Michael Archer describes this as an "intelligencer's fantasy," particularly the scene in which Faustus puts on a cloak of "invisibility" to spy upon the Pope, "unseen of any" (III.iii.13).¹⁴ Mephistopheles' promise -- "no eye may

12. Sara Munson Deats, "Myth and Metamorphosis in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *TSL* 22 (1980), p. 306.

13. Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, Vol. 3 (Padua: Donato Pasquardi, 1630), pp. 90-91.

14. John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 73.

thy body see" (III.iii.23) -- proves irresistible. The desire to depict such hidden seeing leads Marlowe ineluctably to a "fable [that] was invented," in the words of Renaissance translator and mythographer George Sandys, to show the "dangerous ... search into the secrets of princes."¹⁵

But Sandys' worldly political reading is just one of the interpretations that he puts forth, and is certainly only one of the available options among the many that Marlowe utilizes. At this point, before exploring his rich redaction, it is necessary to gauge the myth's range. In the version of it that Marlowe knew best (perhaps exclusively), from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Golding's 1567 translation, the Actaeon story's basic elements were brilliantly displayed: the shaded and secret sacred grotto of Gargaphie, where "Nature by her own cunning had imitated art" (*simulaverat artem ingenio natura suo*, III.158-59¹⁶); the disrobing and bath of the virgin goddess and her attendant nymphs (163-72); the mortal hunter Actaeon's accidental intrusion upon the spot, and the ensuing panic (173-85); the blushing, angry goddess' desire for revenge and her flinging of the *ultricibus undis* or "avenging drops" of water (190); the terrifying transformation of Actaeon into a stag, fear planted within him by the goddess (*additus*

15. Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis*, p. 151.

16. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. F. J. Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939).

et pavor est, 198); his self-discovery in a pool, and resulting confusion; the flight through the woods, pursued as prey by his more than three dozen hounds, catalogued individually (208-225); their brutal ripping and rending of his flesh and limbs, with every drop of irony and pathos wrung out of the scene in which the voiceless Actaeon, unable to call out to his hounds or comrades, moans and supplicates himself in his agony (226-51); and finally, the diverse opinions upon the justice of his punishment, the wavering of "common talk" (*Rumor in ambiguo est*, 253).

The translation of Arthur Golding not only captures, but accentuates the intensely visual nature of this myth even above the original Ovid, which is one of the reasons why Marlowe was almost indisputably drawn to it. Golding's translation of Book III stresses sight and spying. *Quod enim scelus error habebat?* ("For what crime had mere mischance?", 142) becomes "For who could doe with oversight?"¹⁷ -- that is, how could the goddess tolerate being seen? In Golding, Actaeon and his men are "ranging in the wayless woods some further game *to spie*," and later as a stag "his houndes *espyde* him where he was" (pp. 32-33, emphasis mine); in Ovid such "spies" are mere "comrades of the chase" (146). The eye-intensifying of the translations occurs in several instances, but is crowned in Golding's rendering of *tamen altior illis / ipsa dea est colloque*

 17. Publius Ovidius Naso, *The XV Bookes Entytuled Metamorphosis*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1567), p. 32.

tenus supereminet omnis ("but the goddess stood head and shoulders above the rest," 181-82, emphasis mine). In contrast, Golding's Diana "*overpeerd* them all" (p. 33); according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, this is the first recorded use of the term by about fifteen years, until the early 1580's when the same author repeats it in a tract on Calvin. Within a decade, fellow and rival dramatists had picked up the phrase -- interestingly, Marlowe's roommate Kyd (1586), Greene (1589), Shakespeare (1591, '96), and Nashe (1599) -- investing in it the multiple senses of rising above, looking over, and looking down upon. When Marlowe uses "overpeerd" in *Edward II* (c. 1593), the nobles, like Diana's nymphs, are angrily trying to rally around and protect their monarch from his own foolish self-exposure (I.iv.19). From Golding then, through Ovid's Actaeon myth, Marlowe acquired a vocabulary for expressing different aspects of the visual, in all their ambiguity: spying, sexual titillation, divine vision, even artistic spectacle. In calling my study *The Overpeerer*, I am attempting to draw attention to the source of this acquisition.

But the Actaeon myth is still more complicated than the Ovid to Golding to Marlowe transaction. In terms of the original sources of the myth, Marlowe and his age knew primarily Ovid, but the ancients had versions by Stesichorus, Apollodorus, and others in which the Actaeons had different motivations and shadings. The ideas of the ancient mythographers, who drew varied insights from the

alternative treatments, reappeared and developed through the ensuing centuries, accumulating new and often contradictory layers of meaning. Leonard Barkan explains the process as follows:

... by a complicated system of almost Mendelian genetics, we have in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance versions of classical myths whose narratives remain Ovidian but whose interpretation involves an enormous range of possibilities, some based on versions of the story no longer current or even extant. The effect is not of alternative explanations but of simultaneous ones.¹⁸

For instance, the issue of Actaeon's culpability receives vastly different consideration. Ovid attributes his fault to mere *error* or accident, but in other tellings Actaeon transgresses against Zeus by desiring his paramour Semele; threatens Diana's supremacy in hunting (a la Arachne and Minerva); kills a sacred stag of Diana; or finally, and most obvious, actively lusts after the virgin goddess. The effect of all of these, Barkan says, is to "multiply the myth's possibilities." Through mythography, Actaeon came to represent not only the spy, but also "the voyeur, the purveyor of multiple identities, the victim of love, the visionary, the gelding, the buffoon, the holy fool."¹⁹ Furthermore, by the late Renaissance, a distinct part of the tradition lay in Actaeon's ability to encompass simultaneously the high and the low, as "a figure of paradox

18. Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," p. 323.

19. Barkan, pp. 323-26, 359.

and synthesis" who "bridges the gap": "At the heart of Actaeon's experience is a synthesis of voyeurism and holiness."²⁰

Looking at the myth from this perspective helps us to understand how in 1632 George Sandys, in ways that would have been congenial to the Elizabethans a generation earlier, jumps from one interpretation of Actaeon to the next with barely a pause. Interestingly, Sandys seems to be resisting Ovid even as he translates him; his moral observations draw from mythographic sources that range far beyond the *Metamorphoses*. Even though he acknowledges how Ovid in the *Tristia* identifies with Actaeon as a chance victim,²¹ Sandys uses Stesichorus, Scaliger, and Plutarch to assign Actaeon more blame:

This fable was invented to shew us how dangerous a curiosity it is to search into the secrets of princes Guard we therefore our eyes; nor desire to see, or know, more then concerns us
But why may not this fable receive a double construction? Those being the best that admit of most senses. That Actaeon, neglecting the pursuit of virtue and heroicall actions, puts off the minde of a man, and degenerates into a beast.²²

Different strands meet here, especially the sensual and political, with the implication that the Actaeon story is capable of connecting or sustaining still others.

At its most elevated, the Actaeon myth is about

20. Ibid., pp. 347, 359.

21. Ovid, *Tristia*, I.2.103-08, cited in Sandys, p. 151.

22. Sandys, 151-52.

knowledge -- as Sandys suggests, seeing and knowing. For Barkan, the tale concerns a self-knowledge and self-consciousness that destroy. Mortal and divine hunters who go into the forest to avoid the heat of the sun, Actaeon sees in Diana a "transfigured form" and "numinous version" of himself, one that effectively "shatters his identity and multiplies it." This "inexorably brings out the complementary equation of Actaeon with the beastly form of himself as hunter, the stag." Such shape-changing is not only external and physical, but a profound internal and psychological transformation:

We begin to see that the secret he witnessed when he saw Diana bathing is the secret of self-consciousness. Metamorphosis becomes a means of creating self-consciousness because it creates a tension between identity and form, and through this tension the individual is compelled to look in the mirror Actaeon experiences the full vision, but he pays with his life.²³

For Jean-Paul Sartre, Actaeon remains a figure emblematic of knowledge, although less in Barkan's mode of self-knowledge and more in the manner of the modern scientist. Yet central to his conception -- and quite applicable to Christopher Marlowe and *Doctor Faustus* -- are issues of sight and sexuality. For Sartre, "discovery" always involves what he calls "appropriative enjoyment": "what is seen is possessed; to see is to deflower."²⁴ The

23. Barkan, p. 322.

24. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existential Psychoanalysis*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1962), pp. 67-68.

relationship between "the knower and the known" takes place through a "violation by sight," in the same way that a "passer-by spies on a woman unaware at her bath." Inviolable Nature is covered by a veil that man needs to remove in order to see and know it:

Every investigation implies the idea of a nudity which one brings out into the open by clearing away the obstacles which cover it, just as Actaeon clears away the branches so that he can have a better view of Diana at her bath. More than this, knowledge is a hunt. Bacon called it the hunt of Pan. The scientist is the hunter who surprises a white nudity and who violates by looking at it. Thus the totality of these images reveals something which we shall call the *Actaeon complex*.²⁵

Interestingly, Sartre's "complex" relies upon the image of an active, branch-clearing Actaeon (as opposed to Ovid's victim) -- twentieth-century proof of the myth's interpretive twists and multiple readings.

Faustus as Diana and Actaeon

In *Doctor Faustus*, Marlowe anticipates both Barkan's Actaeon, an ambiguous parable of shattering self-knowledge, and Sartre's "Actaeon complex," the hunt to unveil and visually possess the secrets of God's pristine Nature. Not surprisingly, he does so by employing many different strategies. Often, a great deal of humor is involved. This is Actaeon the buffoon, wearing "the horns" of the cuckold or harmless sexual transgressor -- the butt of a joke, a figure of merriment in the manner of Spenser's Faunus or Shakespeare's Falstaff.²⁶ Diana and Actaeon's most explicit

25. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

appearance in *Faustus* comes in Act IV. The court of Emperor Carolus waits breathless and respectful for the "wonder of the world for magic art" to "perform such rare exploits ... as never yet were seen in Germany" (IV.i.11, 31-33). However, the drunken "knight" Benvolio -- a term that seems out of place until connected with Golding's "unluckie knight" Actaeon (p. 32) -- remains skeptical, sarcastic, and loud, looking down from "*above at a window*":

Benv.: I do not greatly believe him. He looks as like
a conjuror as the Pope to a coster-monger.
(IV.ii.25-26)

Faustus promises a pageant of Alexander the Great; and while even the Emperor anticipates the "shapes and state majestic" with hopes to "wonder at their excellence" (IV.ii.30-31), Benvolio scoffs. Like Actaeon, he transgresses in being too forward or close -- and behaving without proper decorum and awe in the presence of power. He counters Faustus' key word, "solemn" (33), by mimicking the command "Mephistophilis, away!" (34):

Benv.: Well, Master Doctor, an your devils come not
away quickly, you shall have me asleep presently.
Zounds, I could eat myself for anger, to think I have
been such an ass all this while, to stand gaping after
the devil's governor, and see nothing.

Faust.: I'll make you feel something anon, if my art

26. Spenser's Faunus "longed foolishly / To see [Diana] naked mongst her Nymphes in privity" (VII.6.42). Barkan observes that Spenser "offers a rather straightforward condemnation of Actaeon's blasphemy" (342). Falstaff, as Herne the Hunter in the last act of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, becomes a "Windsor stag, and the fattest ... in the forest" (V.v.1-13). See John Steadman, "Diana and Actaeon: A Dramatic Emblem," *SQ* XIV (1963), 231-44. In both, the treatment is basically light-hearted, the punishment mild, the dogs de-fanged.

Fail me not.

....
Benv.: And thou bring Alexander and his paramour
 before the Emperor, I'll be Actaeon and turn myself to
 a stag.

Faust.: And I'll play Diana, and send you the horns
 presently. (IV.ii.38-54)

The notion of being "eaten for anger," although it is still quite parodic here, foreshadows Actaeon's fate.

Furthermore, the connection between "seeing" and "feeling something" is one that Ovid makes explicit and ironic, as the tormented Actaeon wishes that like his comrades, he could see the hunt, rather than feel it.²⁷

The dumbshow of Alexander's triumphs affirms Faustus' seemingly divine power. The Emperor is "ravished with sight," so much so that with Faustus' sanction he has an Actaeonesque moment of his own, though without the punishment. He "boldly" approaches and views a mole upon the naked neck of Alexander's lover: "this sight better pleaseth me / Than if I gained another monarchy" (IV.ii.56-68). What Carolus "knows" here, he has "devoured with the eyes," to use Sartre's phrase.²⁸ Yet while the Emperor has been fulfilling his visual appetite and sexually spying, it is the sleeping Benvolio whose punishment is Faustus' *coup de grace* (really, a *coup de theatre*). He produces another "wondrous sight," in the words of the Emperor: "Two

 27. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, tr. Miller, III.245-50: "Well indeed might he wish to be absent, but he is here; and well might he wish to see, not to feel, the fierce doings of his hounds."

28. Sartre, p. 68.

spreading horns most strangely fastened / Upon the head of young Benvolio!" (IV.ii.71-73).

As Benvolio is awakened and mercilessly teased, Faustus drives home the moral of the punishing power of wronged demi-divinity, clearly casting himself in the role of the avenging Diana:

Benv.: Zounds, Doctor, is this your villainy?
Faust.: Oh, say not so, sir. The Doctor has no skill,
 No art, no cunning, to present these lords
 Or bring before this royal Emperor
 The mighty monarch, warlike Alexander.
 If Faustus do it, you are straight resolved
 In bold Actaeon's shape to turn a stag.
 And therefore, my lord, so please your majesty,
 I'll raise a kennel of hounds shall hunt him so
 As all his footmanship shall scarce prevail
 To keep his carcass from their bloody fangs.
 (IV.ii.90-100)

Benvolio fears "he'll raise up a kennel of devils," and is temporarily chastened; Faustus "transforms" him to his previous shape (IV.ii.102,113). The episode is a gambol, "excellent sport" as the Emperor puts it, yet it contains the serious and even deadly aspects of the Actaeon myth in parodic form -- quite literally, without the bite. Judith Weil correctly notes the "serious undertones" of the farce, asserting that through this "version of the Actaeon myth, Marlowe hints that Faustus uses power unjustly."²⁹

Significant here too is what Leonard Barkan describes as one of the myth's most salient characteristics: slipperiness or flexibility of identification.³⁰ It is easy to see Benvolio

 29. Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe: Merlin's Prophet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 71.

30. Barkan, pp. 320-22.

as exclusively an Actaeon, but what of the Emperor, who shares in the Cynthian privilege of the show's creator but like an Actaeon "boldly" goes forth to see? For that matter, what of Faustus himself, who seems so obviously the moment's Diana but who -- like the Emperor -- ultimately relies upon the power of another, Mephistophilis, to work the transformation? Barkan's suggestion of Actaeon's divine, mortal, and bestial levels or "mirrors" is intimated here.

In Benvolio's attempted revenge, Marlowe increases the myth's mirroring power as well as its potential for inflicting punishment, cruelty, and havoc. To even the score for the prior humiliation, Benvolio and two associates become hunters of sorts, trying to surprise Faustus while he reposes, like Diana, in a grove (IV.iii.17-20). However, upon hewing off his head, they envision a scenario that metes out Actaeon's debasement: "on his head, in quittance of my wrongs, / I'll nail huge forked horns, and let them hang / Within the window where he yoked me first" (IV.iii.56-59). Furthermore, they too take their turn as the "play Diana" by planning Faustus' dismemberment; they have plans not only for the head, but the beard, eyes, and limbs as well (60-68) -- unbeknownedst to them, foreshadowing his actual end. When Faustus rises and reasserts himself, his wrath amounts to a serio-comic staging of Book III of Ovid. The offenders are again horned (this time permanently) and hunted, terrorized by devils who

by no means unique in mingling the serious and comic, the pleasurable, awe-inspiring, and cruel aspects of the Actaeon myth. It is merely the most explicit, and in so being, focuses the mythic overtones and strongly suggests (even directs) ways in which to view other scenes within the play. Certainly this is the case with the comic sub-plot, where Wagner, the Clown Robin, and Dick steal books from Faustus and ludicrously try their own hands at conjuring. As a result of Act IV's "play Diana" and Actaeon, Marlowe heightens the invitation to see the rest of the play in terms of that myth. Richard Levin has correctly defended the often-maligned comic sections by asserting that they are parodic "assimilations" of the main plot³¹; however, he fails to identify the shaping role of myth amidst all the slapstick. Constance Kuriyama notes in passing that the low comic sections grotesquely mirror Faustus' scopophilia -- the only other Marlowe critic, to my knowledge, to capitalize upon Freud's term -- but she too neglects the Actaeonesque.³² This is strange, for the passage she treats is one part of a larger, unmistakably mythological picture. The enthused Robin, with stolen conjuring books, declares,

Now will I make all the maidens in our parish dance
stark naked before me. And so by that means I shall
see more than ere I felt or saw yet. (III.iv.3-4)

31. Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

32. Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Hammer or Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1980), pp. 119-20.

After this imagined "violation by sight" (though without Sartre's high-mindedness), Robin and Dick are transformed by Mephistophilis into a dog and an ape (III.iv.83-90). This does not come about strictly as a consequence of their intended visual transgression; however, the proximity between the forbidden view and the bestial transformation is so great that the suggestion of the punished Theban hunter seems unavoidable.

Furthermore, from the outset, the low characters have spoken an odd, Actaeonesque dialect:

Hagner: I'll turn all the lice about thee into familiars, and make them tear thee in pieces.

I will teach thee to turn thyself to anything, to a dog, or a cat, or a mouse, or a rat, or anything.
(I.iv.22-23, 53-54)

A petty Diana, Wagner links the power of transformation to dismemberment, and voices its bestial potential as well. His partner Robin, reversing the Cynthian process of punishment, sees metamorphosis as an opportunity for sexual penetration:

Robin: ... turn me into ... the likeness of a little pretty frisking flea, that I may be here and there and everywhere. Oh, I'll tickle the pretty wenches' plackets! I'll be amongst them, i'faith. (I.iv.57-60)

Being "amongst them" connotes the sort of violation for which Actaeon was torn apart. Even Wagner's insistent pressing of Robin to "serve" him -- the word is used four times in I.iv, echoing Faustus' desire of service from Mephistophilis -- hints at a major theme in the myth, one that Renaissance mythographer Giovanni del Virgilio puns

upon while noting the irony of the *servus* (slaves or servants) slaying the *cervus* (stag).³³ In II.ii., the Actaeon inference is even more direct:

Robin: I'll tell thee what, an my master come here,
I'll clap as fair a pair of horns on's head as e'er
thou sawest in thy life. (II.ii.18-20)

This surpasses the standard cuckold insult of "the horns" because it prefigures the specifically Actaeonesque "horning" of Benvolio to come.

In one of the few insightful critical comments regarding Marlowe's use of the myth, Charles Masinton suggests that "comical reference to the metamorphosis of the mythical Actaeon not only puts us in mind of the spiritual disintegration Faustus is undergoing, but it also helps to prepare us for the devils who tear him to pieces in the Fifth act."³⁴ Masinton's interpretation of the Marlovian Actaeon as a metaphor for Faustus' "psychic fragmentation" suggestively complements Leonard Barkan's reading of the myth as a "shattering" and destructive "multiplying" of the self.³⁵ I would suggest, extending the Masinton / Barkan line of reasoning, that Doctor Faustus is nowhere more of an Actaeon than he is in the last act; and that this under-

33. *Actheon cervus dominus prius et modo servus*, "Actaeon the stag was first a lord and then soon afterwards a slave": "Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle 'Metamorfosi,'" *Giornale Dantesco*, XXXIV, n.s. IV (1931-32), p. 52; cited and translated in Barkan, pp. 327-28.

34. Charles Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1972), p. 133.

35. Barkan, p. 322.

appreciated way of seeing him layers the ambiguities of a pagan crisis onto an already complex Christian one.

Marlowe's text has prepared us for this layering. In the same way that the comic characters have an Actaeonesque discourse embedded within their scenes, the first four acts' descriptions of the protagonist are sprinkled (to borrow Golding's term³⁶) with related references. Through these, the murkiness and interchangeability of Diana and Actaeon identification, noted by Barkan, have been intimated. Often Faustus is a self-fashioning Diana, as in the Benvolio episode. In Act I he starts off aspiring to "conjure in some bushy grove" (I.i.149); his greatest ambition in becoming a "conjuror laureate" (I.iii.32) is to make himself a "demi-god" or "deity" (I.i.61-62). Just which deity becomes clearer even before the "play Diana" episode, when in Rome he expresses the desire "to clap huge horns upon the Cardinals' heads" (III.ii.86). Yet the frolics at Rome exemplify the simultaneity of Diana and Actaeon identifications. It is Faustus who is the spying intruder in this scene, the one who will gaze upon the Pope's forbidden inner sanctum and "be bold with his venison" (III.ii.30). Even this association with deer meat aligns Faustus with the mythical hunter / viewer, as does the adjective "bold."

 36. "Besprinckled all the heade and face of this unluckie knight"; "hornes upon his sprinckled head": see Golding, p. 33.

Furthermore, in the larger sense of wanting to see and know through the eyes -- to remove the veil from Nature -- he is an embodiment of Sartre's "Actaeon complex," in which "to know is to *devour* with the eyes."³⁷ Faustus' goal at the outset is a visual penetration and consumption of divine secrets; his language expresses this voracious hunger. "The miracles that magic will perform" afford his eyes access to a realm "wherein all nature's treasure is contained" (I.i.74, 135), "all that is fair and gorgeous to the eye" (III.ii.10). He will "take with pleasure the view of rarest things" (III.iii.109):

We viewed the face of heaven, of earth and hell.
 So high our dragons soared into the air,
 That looking down, the earth appeared to me
 No bigger than my hand in quantity.
 There did we view the kingdoms of the world,
 And what might please mine eye, I there beheld.
(III.ii.70-75)

In the so-called "American Renaissance," Ralph Waldo Emerson has a dream of the world as an apple which he sees and then eats.³⁸ This alimentary, digestive component, which Sartre associates with the Actaeon complex,³⁹ does not occur in Faustus' description here, but does have a place in later

 37. Sartre, p. 68.

38. Paul, *Emerson's Angle of Vision* (Harvard, 1952), 71ff.

39. "Taking this idea of the hunt as a guiding thread, we shall discover another symbol of appropriation, perhaps still more primitive: a person hunts for the sake of eating. Curiosity in an animal is always either sexual or alimentary. To know is to devour with the eyes.... Knowledge is assimilation. The writings of French epistemologists swarm with alimentary metaphors (absorption, digestion, assimilation)." Sartre, p. 68.

privileged visions within the play: From the Duchess of Anholt eating the grapes that have been conjured, to Faustus touching with his mouth the visually spectacular Helen of Troy (IV.vii.1-35; V.ii.88-117).

At the climax of the play, Marlowe exploits the rich potential of the Actaeon myth as delineated by Leonard Barkan: a vehicle for the tragic shattering effect of total self-consciousness, through sight of numinous and bestial forms of the mortal self, the high and the low. Actaeon is a powerful emblem for conflicting aspects of Faustus' self: the godly, Cynthian part (or what aspires to this, at least) clashing with the bestial (both the stag-like and the demonic). Again, I applaud Masinton's idea of Faustus' "psychic fragmentation" as Marlowe's motivation for building the myth into the foundations of this drama. However, Masinton misses some of the most meaningful Actaeonesque "cues" in the finale.

Starting with Mephistophilis' Act V threat, "I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh" (V.i.74), Marlowe constructs Faustus' last moments in an Actaeonesque mirror. Those who appeared to have served him, like the hunter's dogs, are baring their teeth: "the devil threatened to tear me in pieces if I named God," Faustus reiterates (V.ii.77). Hound-like, the "jaws of hell open to receive" him (V.ii.125). Faustus, who the Evil Angel predicts will "tumble in confusion" (V.ii.142) much as his mythical antecedent did, begins to lose not only bodily control but

the power of speech. He cannot name God, or lift his hands to pray (V.ii.57-62). In Ovid, *verba animo desunt*, which Golding translates, "No kinde of speech out of his lippes could passe" (p. 33). And, like Actaeon, who would rather see than feel the punishment from his former servants, Faustus too will experience his torment with all his senses:

Faust.: Oh, I have seen enough to torture me.
Evil Ang.: Nay, thou must feel them, taste the smart
of all:
He that loves pleasure must for pleasure fall.
(V.ii.138-140)

This last line was the moral of numerous mythographical and allegorical Actaeons -- not the blameless hunter but a profligate, a spendthrift sensualist whose appetites and desires, as Sandys and Golding suggest, are the "riotous" and ravenous forces of excess that drag him down.⁴⁰

It is indeed time to be dragged down and torn apart according to the mythic paradigm. Unsuccessfully trying to "leap up to his God," Faustus asks, "Who pulls me down?" (V.ii.155). Being pulled down is a signature of the Actaeon experience: "by yelping hounds pulled down," Marlowe's *Gaveston* describes Actaeon in *Edward II* (I.i.70), perhaps echoing Golding's

whose own hounds in the wood
Did pull their master to the ground and fill them with

40. Sandys, p. 152; Whitney, p. 15. In Golding's "Epistle," p. 3: "All such as doo in flattring freaks, and hawks and hownds delygth, / And dyce, and cards, and for to spend the tyme both day and nyght / In foule excesse of chamberworke, or too much meate and drinke: / Uppon the piteous storie of Acteon ought too think, / For theis and theyr adherents usde excessive are in deede / The dogs that dayly doo devour theyr followers on with speede."

his blood. (p.32)

From this Ovidian perspective, Marlowe's next line, "See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament" (156) also takes on a pagan hue. When he exclaims, "One drop would save my soul, half a drop" (157), it is as if the Christian "drop" would cancel out the nightmare set in motion by the Cynthian vengeful water drops. Ovid is unmistakably present within this scene. Trying to stretch out his last hour, Faustus slightly misquotes the *Amores* (I.xiii.40) in latin, as a last-minute attempt at conjuration: *O lente, lente currite noctis equi* ["O slowly, slowly run, horses of the night"], transforming a moment of amatory bliss into the evening's horror (152). He would slow down not only the horses of the night, but the devils that dog and pursue him. "Rend not my heart," he protests (158), trying to avoid precisely what it is his fate to become: a rent and bloody symbolic Actaeonesque "hart."

Faustus' diction betrays the mythological trappings of his end. He imagines being absorbed by the clouds so that "My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths" (172), as if dismemberment and ingestion are inevitable. When he envisions being transformed, "changed unto some brutish beast" (185), that "brutish" is the same adjective used to describe Benvolio in his altered stag state (IV.iv.27). Faustus' cry "Cursed be the parents that engendered me!" (190) and the supplications to "adders and serpents" (198) may recollect Actaeon's accursed ancestor Cadmus, the

founder of Thebes who was "a serpent for men to gaze on" and whose story precedes Actaeon's in *The Metamorphoses*.⁴¹ And his last request, for a Pythagorean metempsychosis, "Oh Soul, be changed into little water drops" (195), again ironically mirrors the agents of Actaeon's undoing, the *ultricibus undis* or vengeful drops (Golding's "sprinkles") flung by angry, offended divinity. Approaching the scene of the carnage the next morning, the scholars recall Ovid's pathetically groaning stag in the line "Such shrieks and cries were never heard" (V.iii.4); and they drive home the Faustus / Actaeon ties quite explicitly when looking at, "All torn asunder by the hand of death," his "mangled limbs":

The devils whom Faustus served have torn him thus.
(V.iii.6-8, 17)

Noting, as did Giovanni del Virgilio, the conflict between *servus* and *cervus* (servant and stag), even the syntax of this line is ambiguous. Did Faustus serve the devils or the devils serve him? The negative connotations of "serving" arise here. To put forth one of this chapter's opening questions again: who is the Diana and who is the Actaeon?

Marlowe suggests that Faustus is both, in ways consistent with Leonard Barkan's description of a myth full of "paradox and synthesis, . . . never more alive than when

 41. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, III.97-98: *Quid, Agenore nate, peremptum / serpentem spectas? et tu spectabere serpens* ["Why, O son of Agenor, dost thou gaze on the serpent thou hast slain? Thou too shalt be a serpent for men to gaze on"].

[it] fully bridges the gap between the lowest and the highest things." Barkan argues that the Actaeon myth at its deepest level concerns the vexing, destructive secret of self-consciousness.⁴² If the metamorphosed Actaeon sees himself for the first time, so too does Faustus, if only to realize the truth in his early premonition and self-reproach that "the god thou servest is thine own appetite" (I.v.11). In the formulation of Charles Masinton, the myth is a metaphor for Faustus' "psychic fragmentation."⁴³ Nowhere is this fragmentation more powerfully depicted than in the protagonist's last hour, when his life, his universe, his mind and body, even the stage upon which he stands, all seem to break into pieces. As the mortal hunter Actaeon, in Barkan's view, "pays with his life" for his transgressive vision,⁴⁴ so does Faustus. Marlowe's brilliance here is that he melds the Actaeon myth so thoroughly and thrillingly into a diversity of structures: a Christian scheme, a medieval mystery, a Renaissance hunt for knowledge, and other pagan paradigms like the Icarus story. The "form of Faustus' fortunes" is superbly, integrally heightened and shaded by the paradoxes of Marlowe's "play" *Diana and Actaeon*.

Cynthian conjuring; metamorphic theatrical magic

42. Barkan, pp. 320-22, 359.

43. Masinton, pp. 125, 133-34, 140-42.

44. Barkan, p. 322.

While Marlowe's involvement with Actaeon in *Doctor Faustus* has been underappreciated, there have been many fine studies of the role of magic within the play. What I have to add to this discussion is the notion of an overlap between Diana-like divinity and specifically *metamorphic* magic. "A sound magician is a demi-god," and "necromantic books are heavenly" (I.i.49, 61), gushes Faustus, mingling divinity and magic. In addition to seeing the forbidden, what a "conjurer laureate" does that most excites Faustus is wield the power to transform:

Faust.: I charge thee to return and change thy shape...
 Who would not be proficient in this art?...
 Such is the force of magic and my spells. (I.iii.23-32)

When Faustus almost escapes from the clutches of Mephistophilis early on, Lucifer himself, sensing an emergency, comes up from hell to cement the deal and present the clincher:

Luc.: ... peruse this book and view it throughly, and
 thou shalt turn thyself into what shape thou wilt.
Faust.: Thanks, mighty Lucifer. This will I keep as
 chary as my life. (II.i.182-84)

Metamorphic power becomes almost synonymous with magic, and because of the ubiquitous presence of the goddess Diana, mythical and specifically Cynthian overtones are unmistakable.

Marlowe's sixteenth-century contemporaries led the way in equating magic with heavenly power, and their influence pervades *Doctor Faustus*. The character Cornelius, arguably a reflection of the early sixteenth-century magus Cornelius

Agrippa, introduces Faustus to and facilitates "the miracles that magic will perform" (I.i.135). And though an anachronism within the play, the character Bruno, whom Faustus rescues from Rome, intimates the celebrated mystic Giordano Bruno, well-known to 1580's London and perhaps even heard by the undergraduate Marlowe.⁴⁵ The writings of the historical Agrippa propound a god-like vision that prefigures Faustus' aspirations:

... the magicians believe that we are easily able to ascend [to the stars and beyond], to penetrate successively into each of these same worlds and to go as far as to the animating archetype of the world, the first cause on which all things depend and from which they proceed.⁴⁶

With these types of ideals in the air, it is little wonder that Marlowe creates a character who uses magic to ascend "Even to the height of the *Primum Mobile*" (III.i.10), the first planetary sphere to move and begin motion in all others.⁴⁷ It is also interesting to note how Sartre's "Actaeon complex," in which the eye "violates" and denudes a pristine Nature in almost sexual terms, is seen in bud form

 45. On the historical Bruno's residence in London, his intellectual influence there, and Marlowe's connections to a mystical "School of Night," see Frances Yates, *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 109; and James Howe, *Marlowe, Tamburlaine, and Magic* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 24-26.

46. Enrico Cornelio Agrippa, *La Filosofia Occulta*, trans. Alberto Fidi (Milano, 1926), Vol. I, p. 3; translated by Howe, p. 10.

47. In *Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane; note 38, p. 592.

in Agrippa's desire to "penetrate successively into each of these same worlds."

Giordano Bruno's work self-consciously touches upon Actaeon's connection to the magical. *Gl' Eroici Furori* is unusual in that it views the hunter's punishment as a Platonic reward, a human ascent towards the mystical, magical, and divine:

I say very few are the Actaeons to whom destiny gives the power to contemplate Diana naked, and the power to become so enamored of the beautiful harmony of the body of nature, so fallen beneath the gaze of those two lights of the dual splendor of goodness and beauty, that they are transformed into deer.... Therefore, from the vulgar, civil and ordinary man he was, he becomes as free as a deer,....; he lives like a god under the protection of the woods,... where he contemplates ... and converses most freely with the divinity, to which so many men have aspired.⁴⁸

And in a related vein the philosopher Pico della Mirandola, exalting the magician's Protean power, describes an Actaeonesque ability to encompass the high and the low, the divine and the "brutish":

... as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayst fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power ... to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.... Who would not admire this our chameleon?⁴⁹

A similar rhetorical question is echoed by Faustus, also

48. Giordano Bruno, *The Heroic Frenzies*, trans. P. E. Menno, Jr. (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), pp. 224-25.

49. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," trans. Paul O. Kristeller, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, eds. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 225.

contemplating magic: "Who would not be proficient in this art?" (I.iii.27).

Despite such audacious and ecstatic claims, the metamorphic magic within *Faustus* is highly problematic. This is not simply because the protagonist practices the wrong kind, black magic, but because what Robert H. West has called "demonology as self-aggrandizement" exhausts itself.⁵⁰ Barbara Traister sees the magician figure as a "symbol of Renaissance ambivalence about the power and limits of man," and notes Faustus' "ironic enslavement to magic."⁵¹ By the end, the shape-changing texts that gave him such power are sources of pain -- "oh would I had never seen Wittenberg, never read book" (V.ii.48-49) -- and his very final line is "I'll burn my books" (V.ii.200). Andrew Ettin has noted this ambivalence about magic -- a movement from initial enthrallment to ultimate exhaustion, repudiation, or disgust -- not only in *Faustus* but in other Renaissance texts as well.⁵² For A. Bartlett Giamatti, who considers Faustus as a late Renaissance magus, the central struggle of magic in the play involves a complex wrestling with the angelic and demonic powers of language.⁵³

50. Robert H. West, "The Impatient Magic of *Doctor Faustus*," *ELR* 4 (1974), pp. 218-40.

51. Barbara Howard Traister, *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1984).

52. Andrew V. Ettin, "Magic into Art: The Magician's Renunciation of Magic in English Renaissance Drama," *TSL* XIX (1977), 268-93.

Giamatti's comments are helpful because they lead from the magic of Cynthian conjuring to the magic of self-conscious performances and productions made of words: from metamorphosis to metatheater. *Doctor Faustus* is a veritable feast for the overpeering eye; all manner of conjuring and the Actaeonesque lead to an almost dizzying abundance of display. I have catalogued almost two dozen sites (and sights) of metatheater: scenes of pageantry, display, dumbshow, spying, plays-within-plays, spectacles, conjuring, and sight-gags. A plethora of variations in staging and audience exists. A sampling includes the following: Faustus turning Benvolio into a stag for the Emperor, and the dumbshow of Alexander the Great; spying upon the Pope; famously, twice conjuring up Helen of Troy; getting grapes for the Duchess, a magic trick at court like his erecting a castle in the air (IV.vii); Mephistophilis "choreographing" a dance of devils bearing gifts, and displaying a "devil-wife" for Faustus (I.v.81-83, 141-52); Lucifer and Beelzebub putting on a pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins (II.i.104-77), and later sitting above and watching as an audience at Faustus' last night (V.ii.1-20). The list also includes descriptions of off-stage shows, such as Komer and Amphion's command performances for Faustus and Mephistophilis, and Lucifer's private showing of Hell at the

 53. A. Bartlett Giamatti, "Christopher Marlowe: The Arts of Illusion," *Christopher Marlowe: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986).

request of the inquisitive Faustus (II.i.26-30, 178-182). There is an almost compulsive quality to the constant spectacle.

Faustus' question, "What means this show?" (I.v.82), is not only one that the play addresses to the audience, but one that is crucial to the playwright. Mephistophilis' answer points in the right direction: the shows mean "Nothing, but to delight thy mind / And let thee see what magic can perform":

Faust.: But may I raise such spirits when I please?
Meph.: Ay, Faustus, and do greater things than these.
Faust.: Then there's enough for a thousand souls.
 (I.v.81-87)

Faustus signs away his soul to be an impresario, a diabolical theater director. As David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen contend, he is "an artist"⁵⁴; and his enthusiasm for "demonstrations magical" (I.i.149) can be observed in the prevalence of the word that Mephistophilis uses above -- "perform": "the miracles that magic will perform" (I.i.135); "the utmost magic can perform" (I.iv.15); "I'll perform it, Faustus" (III.ii.88); "see / This conjuror perform such rare exploits" (IV.i.32); "what my Faustus shall desire / Shall be performed in twinkling of an eye" (V.i.95-96).

Furthermore, especially as the play progresses, Faustus goes from watching performances to participating in them, much as other Marlowe characters like Guise and Dido made inevitable

 54. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *Doctor Faustus: A- and B-texts (1604, 1616)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 32.

steps from voyeurism to exhibitionism. When he goes to Rome, he starts off as an invisible spy, but cannot resist changing his role and donning a new costume:

In this show let me an actor be. (III.ii.76)

"Are we not fitted well?" asks Mephistophilis in delight at their disguises as Cardinals (164). By the next act, Faustus has taken his place as Cynthian cynosure, a sight of divine power attracting all eyes, while staging and acting in elaborate, privileged theater-pieces.

In his enthusiasm for theatrical production and display, Faustus comes to realize only gradually the dishonesty and danger of Cynthian theatrical conjuring, the limits of playing Diana. Early on, he is easily swayed by the manipulations of spectacle. He allows himself to be not only diverted but tricked by Mephistophilis' heady shows of magical, artistic power. When the thrills of being merely an audience exhaust themselves, the pleasures of writing and directing temporarily replace them -- as seen in Faustus' delight in Act IV's scenes of horn-conferring mastery. Yet after a short while, this excitement too wanes. It fails to satisfy both because it has grown old and because it is by nature illusory and false. His created scenes become pathetic gambols, meaningless sophomoric pranks upon Horse-Couriers and the like, to while away the hours.⁵⁵ At this

55. Masinton, p. 134, on the Horse-Courser scene: Faustus "has been deluded into thinking that he can transcend his limits as a man by giving himself to childish diversions."

point of growing disenchantment and despair, he becomes like a drug user who requires an ever-greater dosage to achieve the same sensations he once enjoyed. Interestingly too, he has learned to use magical theater to trick himself as Mephistophilis once did:

Faust.: One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
To glut the longing of my heart's desire,
That I may have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen which I saw of late,
Whose sweet embraces may extinguish clear
Those thoughts that do dissuade me from my vow,
And keep my vow I made to Lucifer. (V.i.88-94)

In the soaring twenty-line encomium to Helen, Faustus momentarily revives the raptures of viewing and participating in visual spectacle; but as "Her lips suck forth [his] soul" (V.i.100) it is clear that the pleasure is not only fleeting, but comes at a high price. W. W. Greg has argued that at this point the protagonist's damnation and self-deception intersect: as the text has repeatedly insisted, the conjured spectacles are not the real Alexander or Helen, but devilish displays. Faustus kisses and makes love to a demon.⁵⁶ Mephistophilis, the magical theater director with greatest control, proudly analyzes the process of theatrical deception:

Meph.: I do confess it, Faustus, and rejoice....
... when thou took'st the book
To view the scriptures, then I turned the leaves
And led thine eye. (V.ii.100-04)

56. On the sin of "demonality," coition with a devil, see W. W. Greg, "Faustus' Damnation," *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 103-07.

As Marlowe makes the journey from metamorphosis to metatheater, "leading the eye" is something that is done not only by the "play Diana" but by the playwright himself. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen assert the connections between the creator and the creation:

Faustus' magic shows ... do what dramatic presentations regularly do: call up shadows from the past, entertain audiences with spectacle, and "eternise" beauty, honor, and achievement.... In this power to bestow fame, Faustus is also Marlowe.⁵⁷

These critics wonder whether "Marlowe's view of his own art take[s] shape in the play's ambiguous exploration of forbidden magic and its relation to poetry and drama"; and they suggest that "the question does not encourage a happy view of Marlowe's self-examination as an artist":

...the parallel of magician and playwright bespeaks the artist's disappointment at having created beautiful but unreal spectacles,.... the dramatist chafes at the necessity of creating his magical dreams out of crude sideshow effects.⁵⁸

But Marlowe's self-examination does not wholly yield the conclusion that all theater is merely unreal, crude, and tawdry: Bevington and Rasmussen are right to call Marlowe's an "*ambiguous* exploration." For with the dismay and disgust, there is also exhilaration. The best treatments of *Faustus* take into account both extremes. Equating Marlowe and Faustus, Neil Forsyth argues that "magic and art [are] the Cleopatra for whom this wretched Antony loses the world

57. Bevington and Rasmussen, p. 32-33.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

in order that he may be subsumed, even immolated, into the apocalypse of his own self-destructive vision."⁵⁹ Like J. B. Steane, who observes that Faustus' "magical-demonstration episodes" provide "the thrill of playing with fire,"⁶⁰ Forsyth appreciates in *Faustus* the allure of immolation -- as it has been seen previously in *Dido* and *Hero*. For David Palmer, *Faustus* is "itself a kind of enchantment, one in which Marlowe's ability to transform theatrical chicanery into moments of poetic rapture and tragic grandeur constitute his supreme achievement.... [*Faustus*] holds the spectators, as literally as possible, spellbound."⁶¹ Michael Goldman finely articulates the ambiguous dynamics of magic's spell-binding power. Marlowe's protagonists stand, he says, "in desperately ambivalent and volatile relation to the world"; as they "construct spectacles to bring them the release they seek," magic is the key, an overwhelming but ambiguous force:

For those obsessed by magic -- as indeed for the secret agent or the hunter of forbidden sexual delights -- the world is both strangely present and absent. There is a feeling for hidden concentrations of significance.... Certain objects are all-important. Bliss can be wrung from them by art. The rest is dross. All this is equally true, of course, of those who have been ravished by the theater. For them, everything becomes theatrical; and everything in the theater is either magic or tinsel.⁶²

59. Neil Forsyth, "Heavenly Helen," *Etudes de Lettres*, IV (1987), pp. 11-21.

60. J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 124.

61. David Palmer, "Magic and Poetry in *Doctor Faustus*," *CQ*, VI (1964), pp. 56-67.

Goldman captures what for me is the defining Marlovian formula of spying, sex, and the stage, with only one ingredient missing.

That ingredient is the Actaeonesque, which encompasses all three things: espionage, eros, and theater. It is entirely appropriate that a myth involving the secrets of knowledge and self-consciousness, according to Jean-Paul Sartre and Leonard Barkan, should be used as a vehicle for self-examination. In the same way that Actaeon is mirrored by the divine huntress Diana and the bestial hunted stag as alternate versions of himself, so Marlowe is mirrored by his creation Faustus in crucial respects: as a scholar and university man; a spy in forbidden realms; an atheist, or at the very least a scoffer; and most importantly, as someone who makes scenes, and stages sights and spectacles. If, as Barkan suggests, this mythological "figure of paradox and synthesis . . . bridges the gap between the lowest and the highest things," all the better: the more adequately will he serve to stand for Marlowe as artist and individual, in all his ambiguity regarding himself and his art. Harry Levin posits for his "overreacher" an "Icarus complex." Judging from the preponderance here of a different myth with so many significant ramifications, I would add that Doctor

62. Michael Goldman, "Marlowe and the Histrionics of Ravishment," *Two Renaissance Mythmakers*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 38-39.

Faustus and his creator are also "overpeerers" suffering from, yet celebrating, an "Actaeon complex."

*Chapter VI. Cynthia's Two Bodies, the Pierced Hart, and
"Actaeonesque History" in Edward II*

Edward II combines many of the varied nuances of sight developed in Marlowe's other plays: *The Massacre's* espionage, *Dido's* sexual spying, and *Faustus'* transgressive vision. Of these three, *Edward's* setting most closely resembles that of *The Massacre*, with its milieu of court observation, display, and competition through the eye. Yet in its use of myth, this historical tragedy shares the pervasive and virtuosic engagement found in *Faustus*. Remarkably, the drama again takes as a central motif the versatile Actaeon tale, reworking it to serve ends that are this time more political than religious. As George Sandys suggested in 1632, the myth can be read to show

how dangerous a curiosity it is to search into the secrets of Princes, or by chance to discover their nakednesse: who thereby incurring their hatred, ever after live the life of a Hart, full of feare and suspicion.¹

In ways only partially intimated by earlier scholars, the key to Marlowe's Diana and Actaeon in *Edward II* is the multiple and simultaneous identification between the characters of myth and those of history.² Edward and the

1. George Sandys, *Ovid's Metamorphosis*, 1632, ed. Karl Hulley and Stanley Vandersall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), p. 151.

2. Significant studies include Bent Sunesen, "Marlowe and the Dumb Show," *ES* 35 (1954), pp. 241-53; Sara Munson Deats, "Myth and Metamorphosis in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *TSL* 22:3 (1980), pp. 304-21; and Judith Weil, *Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 162-69.

intruding minion Gaveston are not only reflections of each other, but are both types of Diana *and* Actaeon, often at the same time. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is a crucial component of the original myth, as Leonard Barkan asserts.³ Marlowe skillfully exploits the inherent doublings and multiplicity throughout the drama.

In this chapter, the mythological multivalence is considered in several ways. First, I argue that Marlowe engages the interpretive openness of a specifically *Elizabethan* Diana, with its attendant notion of the monarch's "two bodies."⁴ Then, I assert that the drama's seeing, spying, and showing culminate in two related motifs that dominate the play, both allied to the myth: the hunted hart and the damaged heart; and the punning, inescapable link between peering and piercing. Finally, I suggest a new approach to the long-standing dispute over *Edward II's* success or failure in terms of its "history play" genre. Siding against those who believe that Marlowe presents an essentially personal tragedy unconcerned with larger political forces, I refine the argument that the playwright was instead intensely -- perhaps even primarily --

 3. On the two as "transfigured forms" or mortal and "numinous versions" of each other, see Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis", *ELR* 10:3 (1980), p. 322.

4. Though not addressing Marlowe, Marie Axton's *The Queen's Two Bodies* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977) is helpful. Treating the double body but not fully considering the Cynthian overtones is Gregory Bredbeck's *Sodomy and Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

interested in the political.⁵ Marlowe, I contend, wrote "Actaeonesque history," involving an amoral, dismembering competition for visual preeminence and transformative mastery.

Edward as Elizabethan Diana; the double body

When Edward II's formerly banished favorite Pierce of Gaveston returns to England, his once "exiled eyes" are not only eager to "view my lord the King" (I.i.10,45), but his excited imagination immediately envisions "pleasing shows" which serve to captivate his royal lover and enhance his own power:

Gav.: Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,
 With hair that gilds the water as it glides,
 Crowns of pearl about his naked arms,
 And in his sportful hands an olive-tree,
 To hide those parts which men delight to see,
 Shall bathe him in a spring; and there, hard by,
 One like Actaeon peeping through the grove,
 Shall by the angry goddess be transformed,
 And running in the likeness of an hart
 By yelping hounds pulled down, and seem to die --
 Such things as these best please his majesty.
 (I.i.61-71)

Following the study of Doctor Faustus as a self-fashioning Diana in the Benvolio scene, it is striking to see the same

 5. Slighting Marlowe's interest in politics are E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1944); Clifford Leech, "Marlowe's *Edward II*: Power and Suffering," *CQ* 1 (1959), pp. 181-96; and Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1968). Opposing these include Paul Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1946); Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965); and James Voss, "Edward II: Marlowe's Historical Tragedy," *ES* 63 (1982).

myth again offered up as court entertainment. And although the basic plot elements are covered in both -- forbidden vision, bestial transformation, dismembering punishment -- the differences draw attention. In *Faustus*, the skeptical Benvolio is the butt of a cruel joke; the horns are not only the stag's, but the cuckold's. And what is stressed is the terror of the potential punishment. The initial transgressive vision is barely mentioned. In *Edward*, that moment of forbidden vision looms larger. Gaveston lingers over the near-nakedness of the goddess at Gargaphie, and his and Edward's projected eyesight caresses the "lovely boy in Dian's shape" in much the same way as the child's hair melds into the water. The initial impulse of Gaveston's masque is voyeurism and exhibitionism, an eroticizing of privilege and power with a distinct homoerotic touch. Attendant upon this and spicing it are the goddess' anger, the chase, and the simulated death or "seeming to die" -- echoing the sexually suggestive desire of Gaveston some fifty lines earlier to "die" upon the "bosom" of the King (I.i.17).

The impact of Gaveston's pageant has not been lost upon commentators. Harry Levin calls Gaveston's envisioned spectacle a "portent" in its themes of forbidden gazing and hunting down.⁶ Bent Sunesen goes even further, describing the myth as particularly "apt" and praising Marlowe's "lively sense ... [of] symbolical power":

6. Levin, p. 114.

the essential significance of the play presses upon us with peculiar force through Gaveston's soliloquy.... These lines seem to grow in the tragedy and with the tragedy.... The soliloquy appears to make an extraordinarily expressive gesture toward the very center of the dramatic structure.⁷

In fact, in some ways that Sunesen does not consider regarding the myth, I will stress the extent to which "the tragedy is like a plant growing from its seed."⁸ Later critics have qualified Sunesen's initial observations, and corrected some of the oversimplifications, such as an overreliance upon a one-to-one Actaeon / Edward correspondence. Sara Munson Deats subtly warns, "because of their elusive quality, many of Marlowe's mythological figures defy rigid categorization." She does not deny Sunesen's claims, but correctly insists upon expanding their possible range of meanings. For her, Actaeon's "multivalent image elicits contradictory responses," and the myth's "dual symbolism [and] complexity" must be appreciated in order to understand the ways in which "the Actaeon parallel incites sympathy as well as condemnation."⁹ John Cutts too notes a dual symbolism and identification in the early soliloquy, observing that "'One like Actaeon peeping through the grove' at first look would seem to be a possible alter ego for Gaveston," but also "represents Gaveston's projection of the

7. Sunesen, "Marlowe and the Dumb Show," *English Studies* 35 (1954), pp. 241, 245.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

9. Deats, pp. 311, 313.

King into that role."¹⁰ In a similar vein, Judith Weil approaches with caution, declaring that "Marlowe's tragedy upsets all exact identifications between his characters and the characters of the myth."¹¹ And Charles Masinton broadly interprets "this slightly salacious version of the myth," contending that it "provides the metaphor of psychological change, or metamorphosis, by which we can understand the transformation of the King's character" and other major figures as well.¹²

The versatility of the Actaeon tale and its capacity to sustain multiple meanings -- integral to this myth, Leonard Barkan argues¹³ -- is evidenced in the astute observations of the above critics. I would add to this complexity by considering the somewhat neglected figure of Diana in the opening soliloquy, and what she represents. Virtually all of the critics focus on Edward and Gaveston as Actaeons, gazing upon the forbidden and courting dismemberative disaster. But as Barkan suggests, the original myth (especially in its Ovidian form) equates the mortal and

10. John Cutts, *The Left Hand of God* (Haddonfield, New Jersey: Haddonfield House, 1973), p. 207.

11. Weil, p. 162.

12. Charles Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1972), pp. 88, 90-91.

13. Barkan notes the myth's "enormous range of possibilities," "simultaneous" interpretations, and Actaeon's representation as not only spy but "voyeur, purveyor of multiple identities, victim of love, visionary, gelding, buffoon, holy fool"; pp. 323-26, 359.

divine hunter as alternative, "mirrored" versions of each other.¹⁴ In *Doctor Faustus*, the protagonist as stage manager of the Actaeonesque show declared himself a "play Diana" because he controlled vision and metamorphosis; in the opening of *Edward II*, Gaveston fulfills this Cynthian role as dreamer and impresario. Similarly, King Edward is not solely an Actaeon. As the monarch who will be spied upon by Gaveston and whose inviolability is called into question, he also stands as a type of Diana -- although *what* type is an issue that the play calls into question.

To assess accurately the image of Diana in the contexts of court and show, one must consider the historical and specifically Elizabethan Diana. The Cynthian presence in *Edward II* bears a debt to the Tudor Queen. Gaveston, drawing attention to London as an "Elizium" within the play's first dozen lines,¹⁵ goes on to appropriate a set of signifiers long associated with Marlowe's actual monarch Elizabeth I. "The myth," Leonard Barkan observes, "takes on considerable vitality within her reign."¹⁶ As Bruce Smith notes, George Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* at Kenilworth, written expressly for the Queen in 1575, contains the parts of "a boy dressed up as Diana" and retainers "decked out as

14. Ibid., p. 322.

15. "Elizium" is the spelling in the 1594 quarto; see C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).

16. Barkan, p. 332, relies upon E. C. Wilson's *England's Eliza* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1939), pp. 167-229.

nymphs and satyrs,"¹⁷ prefiguring Gaveston's

Like sylvan nymphs my pages shall be clad,
My men, like satyrs grazing on the lawns. (I.i.57-58)

The goddess appears in this era because symbolically and often dramatically, Elizabeth had *become* Diana, the Virgin Queen. Marie Axton traces this vein of court iconography in the 1570's, '80's and '90's through Inns of Court plays and other pageants, demonstrating the ways that both Elizabeth and her nobles relied upon "Diana or Cynthia as public image."¹⁸ Regarding Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* -- in which advice to Elizabeth was offered through the veil of allegory -- Axton stresses its multiple options for Diana / Elizabeth, and its flexibility as an interpretive and instructional tool:

The complexity of her situation called for multiple images, so that she is figured as impervious goddess, jealous tyrant who does not wish anyone to marry or beget heirs, enchantress, and helpless nymph pursued by would-be ravishers.¹⁹

As Axton shows, the early court allusions to Diana questioned the wisdom of prolonged virginity, as nobles gingerly nudged the Queen towards proper consort, political alliance, and heir to the throne. But as Elizabeth cagily co-opted this mythical persona, she managed to associate Cynthian chastity with national inviolability. Her words to

17. Bruce Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 99.

18. Marie Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 60.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 66.

the troops at Tilbury in 1588 provide a sense of the dynamics involved:

I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman;
but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a
king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or
Spain or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the
borders of my realm; to which, rather than any dishonor
should grow by me, I myself will take up arms.²⁰

The Queen attempted to include her subjects in the fierce guardianship of mingled sexual and geographical boundaries. This mode became so solidified that Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revel's*, which Leonard Barkan deems "a great contemporary celebration of Elizabeth as Diana,"²¹ depicts a divinity -- "her god-head put off" temporarily to "descend" among the mortals -- who hammers home her triumph over the Earl of Essex and other potential rebels:

Cynthia: For so *ACTAEON*, by presuming farre,
Did (to our grief) incurre a fatal doome;...
But are we therefore judged too extreme?
Seemes it no crime, to enter sacred bowers,
And hallowed places, with impure aspect,
Most lewdly to pollute? Seemes it no crime,
To brave a *deitie*? Let mortals learne
To make religion of offending heaven.²²

Protecting the body *and the nation* from "lewd pollution" brings up a uniquely Renaissance notion that has on occasion been associated with *Edward II*, but never properly connected to the Diana and Actaeon myth in the

20. George P. Rice, ed. *The Public Speaking of Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 96.

21. Barkan, p. 333.

22. I.i.93; V.ii.14-23; in *Ben Jonson: Works* Vol. IV, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932).

play. The idea of "the King's Two Bodies," as Ernst Kantorowicz delineates it,²³ was first legally postulated in the 1560's:

The King has in him two Bodies, viz. a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident,.... But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the publick-weal; and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities which the Body natural is subject to.²⁴

In this formulation, touches of the divine and transcendent connect with the mortal, in ways that are quite amenable to the Cynthian power and privilege that Marlowe alludes to in *Edward II*. Gregory Bredbeck calls "the King's Two Bodies" a "hybridization" of medieval and Renaissance thought, an "Elizabethan inheritance" that is "most central to an understanding of the representation of *Edward II*."²⁵ And although Axton cautions that the legal theory would "never attain the status of fact or orthodoxy," it nonetheless was widely known, and carried with it a set of visual cues and meanings.²⁶ According to one early-seventeenth century

23. Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

24. Edmund Plowden, *The Commentaries and Reports of Edmund Plowden* (London, 1797), p. 213.

25. Bredbeck, p. 131.

26. Axton, p. x.

description,

the resplendence and power of soveraigntie in the royall person of a Soveraigne, showing itself both in so great maiestie as dazleth the eyes of all beholders, and in so admirable effects, as to transforme savagenesse into civilities, repugnance into concords, vices into virtues, . . . doth (by such the conversion of the body naturall, into a body political) beget thereunto a more admired glory.²⁷

Eye-dazzling, miraculous transformation, and admired glory: it is little wonder that the royal double body attracts Christopher Marlowe. It sounds here as if it has already acquired an Ovidian sheen and potency. It attracts for another reason too -- its flexibility. Bredbeck describes the King's Two Bodies as "a metaphor that conveniently mutates according to the exigencies of the moment."²⁸ And with great insight, Axton asserts that in particular, "dramatists were equipped to express its subtle complexity."²⁹

In *Edward II*, there is a meaningful and explosive overlap between the goddess Diana and, as Axton phrases it, the "*Queen's* Two Bodies": the two subjects are indeed ripe for "dramatic expression" of their "subtle complexities." Marlowe was understandably affected by the mythological iconography and the legal theory of his day. With the dramatist's prerogative, he exploits both in his play,

27. Edward Forset, *A Comparative Discourse of the Bodies Natural and Politique* (London, 1606), p. 34; Axton, p. 143.

28. Bredbeck, p. 132.

29. Axton, p. 60.

making them interact and jar with each other, interrogating them singly and together. Edward, although an Actaeon, is simultaneously a Diana. He repeatedly expresses himself in a Cynthian parlance of exclusive, privileged sight; symbolic displays of power; metamorphic reprisal; and dismembering punishment. These rarefied Cynthian privileges become linked to the supposedly pristine bodies natural and politic of the ruler. However, Edward's actions undercut the aspirations of his Diana-like language. Ironically, his behavior heightens the gulf between divine rhetoric and worldly reality. Furthermore, his actions betray and "pollute" the double body. Bent Sunesen is correct when he senses in Gaveston's soliloquy a reversal of the inviolate Diana, barely hiding the parts men delight to see: "this is the 'divine huntress chaste and fair' engaged in something very much like strip-tease."³⁰ This image of a Diana playing against type, of Edward as a sporadic, ineffectual, ultimately failed Diana, connects to the ways in which he foolishly exposes his bodies natural and politic.

Edward's opening himself to sight and touch -- anathema to Ovid's goddess -- is tantamount to opening up the realm itself, and is equally dangerous. His invitation to Gaveston and his proximity to the lowly-born outsider undermine royal and divine privilege, according to the mythic paradigm:

30. Sunesen, p. 244.

Ed.: Embrace me, Gaveston, as I do thee.
 Why shouldst thou kneel? Knowst thou not who I am?
 Thy friend, thy self, another Gaveston! (I.i.141-43)

This scene is dominated symbolically by the imagined Actaeon pageant coming to life, as Gaveston "stands aside" and spies on the court (I.i.73-139). Marlowe immediately suggests the identification -- the interchangeable quality -- between the high and the low character, the Diana and the Actaeon type. However, the physical embrace of the intruder in the inner sanctum of court completely contrasts with Diana's rightful ire upon being discovered at Gargaphie. Edward's is an allowed embrace -- an invited invasion and giving away -- of the body politic:

Ed.: I here create thee Lord High Chamberlain,
 Chief Secretary to the state and me,
 Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man.....
 I'll give thee more; for but to honor thee
 Is Edward pleased with kingly regiment.
 Fears't thou thy person? Thou shalt have a guard.
 Wantst thou gold? Go to my treasury.
 Wouldst thou be loved and feared? Receive my seal.
 (I.i.154-68)

Edward as a failed Diana displays and gives away through sight the bodies natural and politic -- his own physical / sexual solitariness and the realm's wealth and power.

Allowed Actaeonesque vision is a form of spying that invades not just Edward, but the realm, the more abstract half of the double body. And while the King invites it, the nobles abhor and resist it. One of the play's strongest images involves their response to Gaveston's spying. Privately counseling patience, the elder Mortimer attempts to excuse the King's irresponsible behavior by citing

historical precedent for the sort of male love they are witnessing. "The mightiest kings have had their minions" as well as "the wisest men," he says, offering up a list of gay worthies from Alexander, Hercules, and Achilles to Cicero and Socrates (I.iv.390-400). However, his irate nephew Mortimer Junior, Edward's nemesis and the most vocal of the nobles, responds that male love is not the issue.³¹ Rather, three things, listed in ascending order, obsess him at this moment of candor. First, "that one so basely born / Should ... riot it with the treasure of the realm" (I.iv.402-04), which hits directly upon the social and economic implications of Gaveston's Actaeonesque intruding and Edward's un-Cynthian embrace. Related to this but closer to the emotional core of the issue is the younger Mortimer's intense antipathy to the way Gaveston and his followers "make such show" and "jet it in the court" (I.iv.406-14). Making "show" or display is a court privilege conferred by birth; it should be neither garish nor totally exposing, and it comes with rules and responsibilities -- a decorum which Edward and Gaveston have not observed. (Interestingly,

 31. Critical opinion is divided over the importance of Edward's sexual predilections in angering the nobles. Emphasizing his homosexuality are Purvis Boyette, "Wanton Humors and Wanton Poets: Homosexuality in Marlowe's *Edward II*," *Tulane Studies in English* 22 (1977); Claude Summers, "Sex, Politics, and Self-Realization in *Edward II*," in Friedenreich, ed., *A Poet and a Filthy Play-maker* (New York: AMS Press, 1988); and Derek Jarman, *Queer Edward II* (London: British Film Institute, 1991). Arguing class, not sexuality, are Steane; Cutts, p. 215; and Weil, p. 163.

according to Mortimer, in the spectacle that Gaveston makes of himself *he* has acquired the pearls that characterized the envisioned Diana in the first scene's pageant [I.iv.413].) Finally, Mortimer's deepest animosity is engendered by the intruder's visual supremacy that is almost an emasculation through sight. Gaveston has achieved the power to spy and look down upon them and the entire realm that Edward has placed at his disposal:

Mort.: Whiles others walk below, the King and he
From out a window laugh at such as we,
And flout our train, and jest at our attire.
Uncle, 'tis this that makes me impatient. (I.iv.415-20)

Here again are shades of *Faustus'* Benvolio as a scornful Actaeon looking down from a window and laughing. The intrusive spying combined with the disrespect -- the failure to revere authority (or divinity) -- cry out for punishment.

Mortimer, as a defender and avenger of the body politic, hates and fears being secretly looked at and down upon. In a moment of great anger, he tells the King, "We will not thus be faced and *overpeered*" (I.iv.19, ital. mine). This not only gives the sense of competition through sight, and the primacy of the visual in the power struggle that is taking place; it also connects these contentions regarding view to the Actaeon myth. In Golding's Ovid the unusual verb "overpeerd" makes one of its first appearances in English: it is what the statuesque, blushing Diana does despite her nymph's attempts to hide her from Actaeon's

gaze.³² Golding's original context is rich because both his setting and his use of the term are ambiguous and double-edged. Diana "overpeers" as her privilege and a source of her power; however, her height and her own overpeering ability are also the reasons she is peered *at*. Her power to see is directly connected to her being seen, and the ensuing vulnerability this causes. Marlowe capitalizes upon such ambiguity as he experiments with role-reversals of the myth. What does it mean to have the attendant "nymphs" -- the nobles trying to guard their monarch's inviolability -- declaring themselves unwilling to be weakened in the face of intrusive spying? Why does their master the King refuse to accept their protection, for himself and the realm? The Diana myth and the monarch's roles are opened up, profoundly unsettled and destabilized by Marlowe.

The nobles' outrage at Edward stems from his exposure of the court, a dangerous accessibility that is expressed in different ways. Many of these are deeply symbolic of Gaveston's (and later Spenser's) proximity to the natural and political bodies of the monarch. When Edward defiantly seats his minion next to him upon the throne, declaring "It is our pleasure; we will have it so" (I.iv.8-14), the disgusted nobles ironically quote Ovid on the incompatibility of love and majesty, and draw their

 32. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites Golding's 1567 "overpeerd them all" as the first recorded usage. Arthur Golding, trans., *The XV Bookes Entytuled Metamorphosis* (London, 1567), p. 33.

swords.³³ Charles Forker stresses how the King's gesture here is both "emblematic and shocking," in that it "signifies that Edward has made his lover politically equal with himself."³⁴ But more than this, it represents a yoking of physical and political contact, a threatening nearness that is despicable and dangerous. The nobles attempt to fight back not only with swords, but with symbols of their own. Sarcastically welcoming Gaveston back from exile, they design "devices" that depict the intruder's effect upon the realm: among others, a canker creeping up to the top of a tree where "kingly eagles perch."³⁵ Such symbolism, which Edward reads correctly as "private libelling" (II.ii.34), resembles the barely veiled advice of the Elizabethan Cynthia pageants of Gascoigne, Jonson, and others described by Marie Axton.³⁶

When they do not have the desired effect and their advice regarding protection of the body politic goes unheeded, the nobles resort to more direct means of

 33. "*Quam male conveniunt!*" declares Mortimer Senior: how badly Edward and Gaveston suit each other. He alludes to Ovid: *None bene conveniunt, nec in una sede morantur, / maiestas et amor*, "Majesty and love do not go well together, nor tarry long in the same dwelling place." *Metamorphoses*, trans. Miller, II.846-47.

34. Charles Forker, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: Edward II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 160.

35. The device has the motto *aeque tandem*, "equally at length": the canker has achieved the same stature as the lofty cedar and kingly eagles, threatening to destroy them; II.ii.11-46.

36. Axton, pp. 60-66.

persuasion: "Look for rebellion, look to be deposed," threatens Lancaster; to which arch-rival Mortimer adds, encapsulating the crisis of this failed Diana figure, "Thy court is naked" (II.ii.158,171). The court is indeed naked -- the consequence of a ruler whose desire for voyeuristic pleasure with and through his minions is as great as his own need to exhibit himself. In this, he is like so many other Marlowe characters whose glee in watching turns into a histrionic zest for showing. Edward's theatrical "carnivalizing" of martial endeavor stands as one instance out of many:

Mort.: When wert thou in the field with banner spread?
 But once, and then thy soldiers marched like players,
 With garish robes, not armor, and thyself,
 Bedaubed with gold, rode laughing at the rest,
 Nodding and shaking of thy spangled crest,
 Where women's favors hung like labels down.
 (II.ii.179-84)

Such inappropriate role-playing -- indifference to or ineptitude with fitting displays of power, as Edward turns war into festive theater -- have led to national shame, "England's high disgrace" before the "fleering Scots" (II.ii.185-86). In sum, says Mortimer, "The idle triumphs, masks, lascivious shows ... / Have drawn thy treasure dry, and made thee weak" (II.ii.154-56).

Incompetent as he is with exhibitions that should enhance the prestige of England's King -- a symbolic Diana protecting the pristine body politic -- Edward nonetheless verbalizes his wrath in ways that threaten Cynthia's mutilation and dismemberment. The sword shall "hew these

knees that now are grown so stiff," he tells the contentious Mortimer in the first scene. He will decapitate his enemies, making examples of them as they "preach upon poles" (I.i.94,118). He revenges himself like a true Diana upon the Bishop of Coventry, "christening him anew" in gutter water -- a foul version of the Ovidian *ultracibus undis* or "avenging drops" that come back to haunt him later -- and "rending" his garments (I.i.187-88). Edward's resolve, "I'll tread upon their heads, / That think with *high looks* thus to tread me down" (II.ii.96-97, ital. mine), has Ovidian overtones. And when he triumphs temporarily in Act III, his desire "To be avenged on you for all your braves" means decapitation. "Thy head shall overlook the rest" he tells Warwick, the beheader of Gaveston -- with a macabre echo of the notion of "overpeering" (III.iii.40-57).

However, more often than not these threats appear empty and unacted-upon, a marked contrast to Ben Jonson's Cynthia / Elizabeth who taught mortals "religion" by displaying the dire consequences of "braving a deitie" and "offending heaven."³⁷ When Edward no longer has his power, he feebly and metaphorically attempts the former Cynthian tearing as he grabs hold of the decree of deposition:

[*The KING takes the paper.*]

Ed.: By Mortimer, whose name is written here.
Well may I rent his name that rends my heart!

[*Tears it..*]

This poor revenge hath something eased my mind.
So may his limbs be torn, as is this paper.

37. Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, V.ii.14-23.

Hear me, immortal Jove, and grant it too.

(V.i.139-144)

The might of Diana is gone, so another pagan god is invoked to wreak dismembering vengeance. Karen Cunningham observes that although "Edward adopts the language" and the promise to "bridle tongues and chop off heads, ... his acts of mutilation are displaced from flesh to paper."³⁸ He is a lame, powerless Diana whose punishments are instead inflicted upon himself and his realm.

The nobles, as if to fill the Cynthian vacuum made empty by Edward's inadequacies, take up the language and the deeds of dismemberment with much greater effectiveness. Furthermore, they do so in ways that link the transgression of Edward's body natural to the damage sustained by the body politic, the realm. As unity breaks apart, Mortimer describes England in its dissolution as "maim'd" (III.iii.68). He decries "the open wrongs and injuries / Edward hath done to us, his queen, and land" (IV.iv.21-22). This "openness" not only has the sense of "apparent" or "obvious," but also hints at Edward's real transgression, the wrong kind of accessibility, and the ways in which it exposed the body politic, the "land." The result of such access is a Cynthian dismemberment of the body politic, which Edward's very language self-destructively has invited:

Ed.: Make several kingdoms of this monarchy,
And share it equally amongst you all,

38. Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105.2 (1990), p. 133.

So I may have some nook or corner left,
To frolic with my dearest Gaveston. (I.iv.70-73)

Ed.: ... rather than thus be braved,
Make England's civil towns huge heaps of stones.
(III.iii.30-31)

The rending apart is physical as well as political, personal as well as national. This is the essence of the Elizabethan double body, and in Marlowe's depiction the Cynthian overtones resound.

In the same way that Edward's speech has held from the beginning the promise of dismemberment, the words of the nobles from early on have responded in kind. In the first scene, the irate Lancaster connects the King's physical self and the symbol of monarchy to decapitation:

Lanc.: Look to see the throne, where you should sit,
To float in blood, and at thy wanton head
The glozing head of thy base minion thrown.
(I.i.131-33)

This threat, unlike so many of Edward's rending vaunts, is later followed to the letter:

Warwick: ... by my sword,
His head shall off. Gaveston, ...
... it is our country's cause
That here severely we will execute
Upon thy person.
....
Mort.: Thus we'll gratify the King:
We'll send his head... Let him bestow
His tears on that, for that is all he gets
Of Gaveston, or else his senseless trunk.
(II.v.21-25, 55-58)

There is a triumphant lingering over these scattered body parts. Mortimer's gloating resembles the temporary victories of Benvolio and his men in *Faustus*, when they think they have achieved Cynthian victory and are dividing

up their victim's remains (IV.ii.38-67).

Towards the end of the play, there is similar sadistic pleasure in ripping apart, and it connects with tragic irony to Edward's role as a failed Diana. The two final scenes of the deposed King grotesquely invert Gaveston's initial fantasy of a theatrical Diana displaying himself in the shimmering waters of a gorgeous Gargaphie. The waters of these last two scenes become progressively more foul; the recollection of the opening titillation, with the boy's hair "gilding the water as it glides" (I.i.62), is a cruel memory. Matrevis and Gurney are gleefully sadistic versions of Diana's nymphs. Instead of delicately assisting with the refinements of the monarch's sacred bath, they profanely and brutally "bathe" him in "puddle water." Marlowe goes outside of his primary source Holinshed to add this iconographically appropriate scene from the historian John Stowe.³⁹ And, like *Faustus'* Benvolio as Diana, envisioning a broom out of the decapitated Doctor's beard, Matrevis and Gurney "shave away" -- the phrase is used twice -- Edward's beard in the foul water (V.iv.27-38). In Marlowe's treatment, the act symbolically prefigures the more literal ripping apart that comes next.

The water in Edward's death scene is completely excremental, "the sink / Wherein the filth of all the castle

 39. John Stowe, *The Chronicles of England* (1580), pp. 355-56; quoted in Forker, 360. "Wherefore comming by a little Water whiche ranne in a ditche, they commaunded him to alighte from his horsse to be shauen...."

Falls," "stifling with [its] savor." In a "vault" or "dungeon," the former King is "up to the knees" in it (V.v.2,9,58-60). His "attendants" Matrevis and Gurney have become even further removed from Ovid's nymphs. They are torturers who feed the fallen monarch scraps, bang a drum to keep him awake for days and "assail his mind," and wonder laconically why he has not yet died (V.v.1,8,61-64).

Referred to as a "lake" (28) and visited by the assassin Lightborn -- identified by Harry Levin as a Lucifer to whom Edward gives his last "jewel"⁴⁰ -- this filthy "sink" has been called by Douglas Cole a "Cocytus," the frozen lake of hell.⁴¹ And so it is; but Marlowe, whose Faustus can "confound hell in Elysium" (I.iv.62), also mingles the waters of Cocytus and Gargaphie. In an uncanny echo of Golding's Diana (and Marlowe's Edward) "overpeering" and being "overpeered," Lightborn tells the sleepless Edward, "You're overwatched, my lord" (V.v.91). In this lake, a failed Diana becomes a suffering Actaeon:

Ed.: My mind's distempered and my body's numbed,
 And whether I have limbs or no I know not.
 O would my blood dropp'd out from every vein,
 As doth the water from my tatter'd robes. (V.v.66-69)

Edward exhibits Actaeon's confusion, his uncertainty over his own limbs, and the presentiment that his own blood will shortly fall. Also, in this scene -- in ways that will be

 40. Levin, p. 101.

41. Douglas Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962) pp. 184-85.

considered more fully in the next section -- the language of the "heart" and the "hart" resounds. In thus intimating Actaeon's punishment, Marlowe engages audience sympathy as well as taps into a profound ambiguity. Edward's murder -- an anal penetration by a fiery hot spit, designed to leave no mark -- has long been discussed as a parodic gay rape, emblematic of his transgression. It is indeed, as Gregory Bredbeck suggests, an act of "writing" his crime onto him, literally "branding" him with it.⁴² However, it is also the mythologically appropriate Cynthian tearing of one who has failed to understand the necessary inviolability of the Elizabethan double body.

The King's two "harts"

Related to the intersection of Diana and the Queen's two bodies in *Edward II* is a matrix of meanings and effects that have been touched upon by a few critics, but not fully elucidated. Two distinct strands are interwoven throughout the play: the first regards the Actaeonesque image of the hunted hart; the second involves the many dimensions of "peering" and "piercing." In both cases, Marlowe develops complex layers of ambiguity through multiply-mirrored images, reverberant puns, and double-, sometimes triple-entendres.

While I have just finished arguing that Edward has been

42. Bredbeck, p. 149.

underappreciated as a Diana, it is in keeping with the nature of the myth's multiple identifications to say within the next breath that he is simultaneously very much an Actaeon as well. The duality that I am stressing gives Marlowe's mythologizing a great deal of its charge within this drama. It also supports and refines Charles Forker's observation that "mysterious dualities of conduct and attitude pervade nearly all the central figures of *Edward II*."⁴³ The Actaeon association is unmistakable; in fact, its specific manifestation in the motif of the hart has been well-documented. Bent Sunesen begins to assess the ways in which "the pattern of the hunt is reproduced" in the play, and "the tragic fate of the 'hart' is inevitable":

... the royal 'hart' has been finally tracked down and is now moving aimlessly from side to side, exhausted, beset with the furious pack.⁴⁴

Sunesen concentrates on the "images of pursuit by merciless punishers," as well as the flight of Edward, who considers the sufferings of the "forest deer" without actually calling himself one (V.i.8-10). Sunesen also cites lines and scenes where the nobles "appear as hounds in various contexts": "they barked apace a month ago" (IV.iii.11-12); "how oft have I been baited by these peers?" (II.ii.198); "Edward's head ... [is] encompassed by wolves, / Which in a moment

43. Forker, p. 81.

44. Sunesen, pp. 246-47.

will abridge his life" (V.i.41-42).⁴⁵

Other scholars have extended Sunesen's observations regarding the King as Actaeonesque hunted hart. Sara Munson Deats appreciates the myth's allegorical history when she suggests that symbolically the noble "hounds" represent Actaeon / Edward's "own devouring desires."⁴⁶ Regarding the revolt of the nobles, Judith Weil sees the myth as essential:

We may surmise that the watchdogs of the realm are deliberately failing to recognize their old master.... If Edward is Actaeon, then his noble hounds have glimpsed the man beneath the deerskin, and have chased him all the faster for it. They will only kill him when the skin drops away altogether. The hunting of Edward by Mortimer would be quite obvious during a performance.⁴⁷

Weil is right. There are abundant examples of this hunt in such lines as "Shall I be haunted thus?" (II.ii.154); "Was I born to fly and run away?" (IV.v.4); "we, alas, are chased" (IV.vi.22); the Prince's "I think King Edward will outrun us all" (IV.ii.69); and the Queen's "we'll ride a-hunting in the park" (V.iv.112).

Still other scholars have attributed the poignancy of Edward's death to the slaughter and mangling of the hart. Charles Masinton stresses that "the tragic fate ... is

45. Ibid., p. 246.

46. Deats, p. 311; the hounds are Actaeon's excessive appetites in Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises*, 1586 (Amsterdam: Da Capo Press, 1969), p. 15.

47. Weil, p. 164.

influenced by the ancient myth of metamorphosis"⁴⁸; and John Cutts deems the pathos of *Doctor Faustus* almost

inconsequential compared with Edward's pleas for warmth, understanding, and love, and his being physically torn apart and dismembered.⁴⁹

Both Weil and Deats partially accept Martha Golden's thesis that the deposed Edward is a Christ-like, suffering hart whose agonies inspire a degree of pity and sympathy, and who is symbolically "resurrected" in the person of the new King, Edward III.⁵⁰ Tellingly, for my argument about the myth's powers of multiple identification, Weil prefers to see the new King less as a revived Actaeon/ Christ, and more as a "finally ... just Diana to Mortimer's proud, conceited Actaeon."⁵¹ Finally, Deats notes the subtleties of the hunted hart image and the ways in which Marlowe skillfully uses it:

the dual symbolism of the myth adds a complexity to the Actaeon exemplum: ... Actaeon, like Edward, is victim as well as agent.⁵²

To the fine work already done on this particular image, I have to add the idea that Marlowe *internalizes* the hart icon for Edward, and makes it work on yet another, more

48. Charles Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1972), p. 109.

49. Cutts, p. 237.

50. Martha Hester Golden, "The Iconography of the English History Play," Ph. D. dissertation (Columbia, 1967), p. 215; cited in Weil, p. 205, and Deats, p. 311.

51. Weil, p. 164.

52. Deats, p. 311.

personal level. He manages this by equating the animal "hart" -- self-consciously and with punning linguistic playfulness -- to Edward's individual, human "heart." In fact, in the 1594 quarto and in C. F. Tucker Brooke's old-spelling edition, the human organ was spelled identically to the pursued animal.⁵³ The sheer preponderance of both kinds of "hart" calls attention to itself: there are dozens of references.⁵⁴ And what happens to the human "heart" oddly mirrors what happens to the animal "hart": it is lacerated, punished, possessed, and finally broken. Edward himself unwittingly engages in this tragic punning even early on, as he reproaches Gaveston's complaints about banishment, "Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words" (I.iv.117), a foreshadowing of the literal piercing to come. Even the lesser characters speak this language of the heart in ways that seem to be applicable to Edward. During a temporary amity, Canterbury intones, "Now is my heart at ease"; Isabella laments her sighing, breaking heart; Pembroke describes the King's unkindness, "Hard is the heart that injures such a saint"; and Mortimer declares, with double-edged defiance, "What we have done, our heart-blood shall maintain" (I.iv.91,115,165,190).

 53. C. F. Tucker Brooke, ed., *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910).

54. Robert J. Fehrenbach, Lea Ann Boone, and Mario A. di Cesare, eds., *A Concordance to the Plays, Poems, and Translations of Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982).

The human heart is not only a way of expressing passion, anger and grief; emblematically and linguistically, it also becomes the "human *hart*" Edward who is chased back and forth in a deadly political pursuit. At key moments the symbolic "heart to hart talk" grows extreme. In the pun-crammed Act I, scene iv of Gaveston's banishment and repeal, the distraught Edward pictures himself as a battered heart:

Ed.: He's gone, and for his absence thus I mourn.
Did never sorrow go so near my heart
As doth the want of my sweet Gaveston.

....
My heart is as an anvil unto sorrow,
Which beats upon it like the Cyclops' hammers.
(I.iv.304-312)

Russell Fraser notes that Virgil "makes the Cyclops assistants to Vulcan"⁵⁵; the image here of underworld powers ravaging the heart also prefigures Lightborn / Lucifer's doing so at Edward's death. When Gaveston's banishment is repealed, the heavily-laden symbol lightens: "this salutation overjoys my heart"; "ne'er was my heart so light" (I.iv.343,367).

Such references continue throughout the drama. In Edward's worst moments they are most prevalent and potent: his hunting down, deposition, imprisonment, and slaughter. These are not merely the sufferings of a human heart, but the mirrored images of a pursued and ultimately mangled Actaeonesque hart. "Chased from England's bounds" (IV.v.71)

55. See *Georgics* IV.170 ff., and *Aeneid* VIII.418 ff.; cited in Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin, *Drama of the English Renaissance*, Vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p. 331.

and "pursued with deadly hate" (IV.vi.5), Edward takes refuge in a monastery and seeks comfort from the abbot:

Ed.: Oh, hadst thou ever been a king, *thy heart,*
Pierced deeply with sense of my distress,
 Could not but take compassion of my state.

....

Oh, might I never ope these eyes again,
 Never again lift up this drooping head,
 Oh, *never more lift up this dying heart!*

(IV.vi.8-43, ital. mine)

When an agent of Mortimer's captures the King and his new favorites, Edward's surrender comes with similar imagery:

Ed.: Here, man, rip up this panting breast of mine,
 And take my heart in rescue of my friends!

(IV.vi.66-67)

Edward's concern for his comrades and acceptance of his slaughter, as well as his rhetorical response to the stripping of his crown -- with shades of Jesus and the stone-wielding crowd -- give some weight to Martha Golden's reading of Edward as a Christ-like hart⁵⁶:

Ed.: He of you all that most desires my blood,
 And will be called the murderer of a King,
 Take it. What, are you moved? Pity you me?

(V.i.100-02)

However, sympathetic as it is, this Christian mode (and mood) is variable. Edward's "heart with sad laments / That bleeds within me for this strange exchange" (V.i.34-35) -- the handing over of his crown -- can just as readily cry out for vengeance, from the perspective of the "forest deer" or wounded stag: "Well may I rent his name that rends my heart!" (V.i.9,140).

 56. Golden, p. 215.

In his imprisonment and assassination, the "King's Two Harts" move even closer together. Images of destruction, dismemberment, and even disembowelment permeate the characters' speech. Edward wonders when the hound-like Mortimer will be "satisfied with blood":

Ed.: If mine will serve, unbowel straight this breast,
And give my heart to Isabel and him.

My daily diet is heart-breaking sobs,
That almost rents the closet of my heart.
(V.iii.10-11,21-22)

The human heart sounds increasingly like the torn animal, as the images of ripping intensify. When Lightborn appears, hunter and prey refer to the "heart" five times in forty lines. These include figurative language of possession ("here's a place indeed, with all my heart"); dissolution ("thy heart ... will melt"); dismemberment ("this breaks my heart"); and slaughter ("murder in thy heart," V.v.40,52-54,70,86). The details of the sadistic murder are taken straight from Holinshed,⁵⁷ but Marlowe's complex mythological and linguistic overlays suggest other reverberations. Edward, it seems, has been transformed into a hart ripped apart from the inside -- closer to the core that was his human heart to begin with. English chronicle matches and illuminates the essential horror of Ovidian metamorphosis.

57. Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 2nd ed. (London, 1587), III.341-42; cited in Forker, 355-56.

The peering / piercing perplex

Like the hart / heart configuration, Marlowe unleashes another "family" of loaded puns that is also integrally involved with Diana, Actaeon, and English history. Strangely, scholars have failed to say much about the playwright's skillful and highly self-conscious inter-connection of the following: Pierce of Gaveston; the noble peers; "peers," as in looking; and "pierce," as in penetrating. Marlowe resoundingly engages these terms and all that they represent. They hold keys to the play's most central concerns, from court politics and espionage to theatrical display and visual / sexual transgression. To put the relationship into a tongue-twisting, verbally palindromic nutshell: *Pierce peers; the peers pierce*. Sara Munson Deats has found a "fearful symmetry" in the structure of *Edward II*⁵⁸; perhaps this palindromic piercing helps to account for it. Pierce Gaveston peers like "one through a grove"; he spies and gazes greedily upon secret sights. As a consequence, the resentful, visually violated noble peers avenge themselves by "piercing" and lacerating the offender and those party to the offense. The tragedy's action develops out of the jealousy and competitiveness ensuing from the ironic displacement of the peers by Pierce.

 58. Sara Munson Deats, "Marlowe's Fearful Symmetry in *Edward II*," in Kenneth Friedenreich et. al., eds., *"A Poet and a filthy Play-maker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe* (New York: AMS Press, 1988), pp. 241-62. Deats charts seven scenarios that begin the play, reach the center, and then in mirror image or reverse order, conclude it; p. 242.

Marlowe is not normally associated with what could be called the Shakespearean compulsion to pun. The latter engages in complex wordplay that ranges from petty quibbles -- the type denigrated by Samuel Johnson⁵⁹ -- to rich, evocative verbal repetitions that can best be described using musical metaphors and analogies. Shakespeare's deepest punning is not humorous at all: it involves theme and variations, symphonic conceptions of motivic development, and contrapuntal polyphonies.⁶⁰ But the opportunity for such loaded word-play -- thorough, symbolic, and musically developed -- practically forces itself upon Marlowe, from the first name of the minion to the manner of the protagonist's murder, both historical facts waiting to be capitalized upon. Marlowe revels in the reverberations, and has grotesque fun with them; they provide part of the play's unique power. He cannot resist them for yet another reason: they come so close to the tragedy's Actaeonesque "heart."

A brief catalogue of these multiple peerings and

 59. "A quibble is to Shakespeare what luminous vapors are to the traveller: he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire." Samuel Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare*, in Abrams et al., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1, 6th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), p. 2398.

60. The music of Shakespeare's extended word-play can be seen in the use of "nothing" in *King Lear*, or the ideas of "time" and "equivocation" in *Macbeth*, to name just a couple. See Frank Kermode's essays in G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974) pp. 1253, 1310-11.

piercings will give some idea of their nature and range. To Edward, Gaveston is "my lovely Pierce" (III.i.8), "Good Pierce, my sweet favorite" (III.ii.43), and finally, "Poor Pierce, headed against law of arms" (III.ii.53) -- that is, beheaded in spite of the nobles' promise of safe-passage. It is this Pierce who within the play's opening scene sets the parameters of the alternate peerings and piercings within the drama. First, after reading the King's letter inviting him home, he declares, "Farewell base stooping to *the lordly peers*" (I.i.18, ital. mine); this designation of the nobles is reinforced by the irate Lancaster ("My lord, why do you thus incense your peers?", I.i.98). Then, in Gaveston's description of a play-Actaeon peering and "*peeping through the grove*" (I.i.67, ital. mine), he dramatizes his desires to provide pleasurable "sight" for his "exiled eyes," to "view my lord the King," and to "stand aside" and spy on the proceedings at court (I.i.10,45,73 ff.). Finally, he also includes the sense of piercing as laceration: dismissing the ill-wishing soldier he has just insulted, he declares,

Gav.: ... these words of his move me as much
 As if a goose should play the porpentine,
 And dart her plumes, *thinking to pierce my breast.*
(I.i.41-43, ital. mine)

With what we have seen above of the dual "hart" motif, the pierced "breast" here may even be a sly prefiguration of the lacerated "hart / By yelping hounds pulled down," which follows so closely after it (I.i.69-70). In any event, in

under a hundred lines Marlowe manages to crystallize the play's essential dynamic of peering vision and its piercing punishments. He sets forth the puns and double-entendres through which they will contend. To return to the musical analogy of the previous paragraph, Gaveston's "exposure" is the musical "exposition," the opening statement of the peering / piercing theme.

The development of this motif throughout the play is lively and varied. Gaveston, hunted and Actaeon-like, yokes the notions of chase, vision, and piercing:

Enter GAVESTON, pursued.

Gav.: Yet, lusty lords, I have escaped your hands,
Your threats, your 'larums, and your hot pursuits;
And though divorced from King King Edward's eyes,
Yet liveth Pierce of Gaveston unsurprised. (II.v.1-4)

However, this triumph is temporary: Pierce himself is pierced, as the ambushing Warwick "in a trench / Str[ikes] off his head" (III.i.119-120). The play consistently depicts the consequences of what Roland Barthes calls the "haptic" gaze, an intrusive vision that penetrates and possesses its object.⁶¹ In Marlowe's version of the haptic gaze, peering and piercing become one. The noble peers are aware of this dimension of sight, jealously protective of its power, and angry and fearful when its privilege has been unwisely granted to an undeserving outsider. The use of the noun "peers" -- the nobles -- reinforces the sense of their

61. On the "haptic gaze" and its "power to seize, to take," see Roland Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 238.

visual function. Noble peers are a necessary presence in a successful tableaux of court power. In a moment of accord, the Queen approvingly draws attention to the visual picture the monarch and the surrounding nobles present:

Queen: Now is the King of England rich and strong,
Having the love of his renowned peers. (I.iv.355-56)

When the amity breaks down, Mortimer uses similar imagery of the peerage to show what Edward lacks, with overtones of the goddess Diana at the bath:

Mort.: Thy court is naked, being bereft of those
That make a king seem glorious to the world;
I mean the peers, whom thou shouldst dearly love.
(II.ii.171-73)

Marlowe engages more than just abundant references to "these peers" (I.iv.212) and "the proudest peer in Brittany" (II.ii.42). He shows how the nobles understand that their power and privilege consists of being *peered at* in limited and proper ways -- as opposed to being spied on, visually pierced by Pierce of Gaveston. Mortimer's absolute refusal to be "overpeered" (I.iv.119) -- out-ranked, looked down and spied upon -- makes him for Edward the transgressive leader of the "proud overdaring peers" (I.iv.47); but it is the King who has failed to observe social and visual decorum.

As Edward's own speech has foreshadowed -- "Rend not my heart with thy too-piercing words," he tells Gaveston early on (I.iv.117) -- metaphorical piercing through vision leads inescapably to bodily piercing with weapons. It is not such a far distance from the hunted Edward's "heart, / Pierced deeply with a sense of ... distress" (IV.vi.9-10), which is

figurative, to the literal piercing embodied by the assassin Lightborn. The latter has learned

Light.: *To pierce the windpipe* with a needle's point;
Or whilst one is asleep, to take a quill
And blow a little powder in his ears;
Or open his mouth and pour quicksilver down.
But yet I have a braver way than these. (V.iv.33-37)

All of these "brave ways" are piercings or penetrations of sorts, entries into the body. The "braver way," in which Lightborn takes professional pride, is alluded to by the tools it requires: "a spit, and let it be red-hot, . . . a table and a feather-bed" (V.v.30-32). Actually performed onstage here, its details are well known from Holinshed:

with heaue feather beddes, (or a table as some write) being cast upon him, they kept him downe, and withall put into his fundament an horne, and through the same they thrust up into his bodie a hote spitte . . . the which passing up into his intrayles, and being rolled to an fro, burnt the same, but so as no appearance of any wound or hurt outwardly might bee once perceived.⁶²

This is the ultimate penetration, distinguished by its supreme internality as well as its invisibility. "Be secret," commands Mortimer, and have it "be not spied" (V.iv.28,40). Lightborn follows this to the letter, instructing Matrevis and Gurney to "lay the table down, and stamp on it, / But not too hard, lest that you bruise his body" (V.v.111-112). Like the intrusive court peering that began the play, this clandestine penetration is internal and physical -- a peering and piercing into and within. Although Marlowe certainly makes it a deathly emblem of the

62. Holinshed, pp. 341-42; cited in Forker, pp. 355-56.

drama's male love, it is more than that. It is the perfect symbol and end point -- to use the phrase self-consciously -- of a set of conflicts and intersections that transcend Edward's mere sexuality. National politics and social struggle, court jealousy and competition, spying and display, Actaeonesque peering and piercing: all these coalesce in Edward's violated body. It is not just horror and pathos that account for Charles Lamb's powerful reaction to this scene⁶³; it is awe. In Marlowe's virtuosic handling of the peering / piercing perplex that dominates this drama, the distinctions and boundaries between the punned words break down in the same way that other human barriers are crossed and destroyed.

Genre debate; "Actaeonesque history"

The final issue to address regarding *Edward II* is one of genre. Interpreters of the work have split into two major camps. The first considers the drama an essentially "personal tragedy" by a playwright who has little concern with politics, and no coherent or cohesive vision of them. The second disagrees, labels the work a true historical tragedy, and finds within it a primary though unorthodox interest in politics. I would like to ally myself with the

 63. Charles Lamb wrote that Edward's murder instilled more pity and terror than any scene, either ancient or modern, with which he was acquainted; see *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*. in E. V. Lucas, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London, 1903-05), IV.24.

latter viewpoint, and offer up in support a related notion: that in *Edward II* Marlowe creates "Actaeonesque history."

Those who see *Edward* as mainly personal are emphatic, and they go back to E. M. W. Tillyard in the 1930's: "What animates the play," Tillyard believes, is "Edward's personal obsession, his peculiar psychology, the humor and finally the great pathos of the play." The work, he asserts, is "concerned nominally but not essentially with historical matter."⁶⁴ Clifford Leech concurs: Marlowe "cared only for what happened to the individual" and "was interested in Edward not as embodying a suffering England, but as a man who had and lost power." To him the play has "no theory, ... no warning or program for reform, no overt affirmation of a faith in man."⁶⁵ J. C. Maxwell agrees that "the historical process ... has little interest for Marlowe"; and M. C. Bradbrook declares that politically there is no "central feeling or theme."⁶⁶ Harshly critical, Wilbur Sanders derides

the singular absence of any guiding and shaping intelligence behind the presentation of the historical material, ... [and the] consistent subjugation of the political and the public to a very narrowly conceived pattern of personal conflict.⁶⁷

64. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1944), pp. 106-09.

65. Clifford Leech, "Marlowe's *Edward II*: Power and Suffering," *Critical Quarterly* 1 (1959), p. 187.

66. J. C. Maxwell, "The Plays of Christopher Marlowe," in Boris Ford, ed., *The Age of Shakespeare: The Pelican Guide to English Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 175; M. C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935), p. 161.

In a similar vein, the early J. B. Steane observes that in this play "the self is all there is"; that England is "mentioned, but ... not emotionally or dramatically involved."⁶⁸

However, many critics have disagreed adamantly, and stressed Marlowe's deep involvement with history. Tellingly, Steane -- one of Marlowe's most insightful interpreters -- later reverses himself on the issue of the play's "thinness" and praises *Edward II* as a problem play "akin in genre to *Measure for Measure* or *Troilus and Cressida*."⁶⁹ But advocacy of the work as a deeply-involved, iconoclastic history actually began much earlier. In the 1940's Paul Kocher took his cues from Holinshed's observations that the "mischeefes" of Edward's reign "happened not onlie to [Edward], but also to the whole state of the realme"⁷⁰; Kocher emphasized the play's "elementary awareness that the nobles and the commons are political forces of prime importance."⁷¹ Harry Levin takes *Edward II*

67. Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 126.

68. J. B. Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 122-23.

69. See the introduction to the 1974 reprint of Steane, *Marlowe: A Critical Study*.

70. Holinshed, p. 342.

71. Paul Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Summary of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), p. 207.

to be a successful mingling of the historical and the personal, arguing that the play's "unique contribution ... was to bring the chronicle within the perspective of tragedy, to adapt the most public of forms to the most private of emotions."⁷² Irving Ribner eloquently articulates the historical view:

Suffering humanity in this play is a suffering English king, with the ends of tragedy and those of history entirely fused, for Edward's sins are sins of government, the crisis he faces is a political one, and his disaster is not merely death but the loss of his crown and the ruin of his kingdom by civil war.⁷³

More recently still, James Voss has seen in the play "a working out of fundamentally hostile but interlocking sociopolitical forces," which Marlowe masterfully brings together "into a meaningful version of history."⁷⁴

Of these divergent critical camps, only the latter is properly attuned to the nuances of court politics and the destructive sweep of history engaged by Marlowe. The scholars who argue that Marlowe lacks a coherent view of history are baffled because the picture that he presents -- consistently -- is not what they would like it to be: orthodox, optimistic, providential, moral, and didactic. In the cases of Tillyard and Sanders, their impressions of what a *Shakespeare* history play is or should be (including the

72. Levin, p. 88.

73. Irving Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 124.

74. James Voss, "Edward II: Marlowe's Historical Tragedy," *English Studies* 63 (1982), p. 530.

above list of characteristics) so color their notions of the genre that they refuse to accept deviation.⁷⁵ Even as sensitive a critic as Clifford Leech reveals this flaw of oversimplification, when he complains that the work has "no warning or program for reform, no overt affirmation of a faith in man"⁷⁶ -- presumably, the strong moral center of a "real" history play.

In *Edward II*, Marlowe has written a less affirming and comforting, but certainly focused and cohesive political drama. The play is an "Actaeonesque history" that views events of the court and the nation in ways suggested darkly by the Actaeon paradigm. The central characteristics of this variation upon the history play genre mirror the myth. First, power struggles are waged through vision, sight, and spying. Next, and spectacularly, vengeful victors have the power to transform, and also to mutilate the vanquished. Finally, the entire process is unstable, amoral, and ambiguous; it inspires ambivalence, disagreement, and interpretive uncertainty. "Actaeonesque history" is neither Shakespearean nor providential, nor was it meant to be. Rather, the privilege of Diana -- with her imperious wrath and ultimate murderousness -- is Marlowe's metaphor for

75. In Sanders' case, the refusal to accept deviation stems from undisguised homophobia, which accounts for his discomfort with Marlowe's "overemphasis" on the personal. On homophobia and critical resistance to *Edward*, see Claude J. Summers, "Sex, Politics, and Self-Realization in *Edward II*," in Friedenreich et. al, p. 221-23, 237.

76. Leech, p. 187.

court power and the progress of history.

As in the Actaeon myth, power in *Edward II* is equated with sight. In Ovid and other versions of the tale, only a select few can view naked majesty; those who visually intrude, uninvited, are spies and transgressors. They must be taught to fear the angry looks of divinity. One of the most "Actaeonesque" aspects of this history is that characters constantly express power in terms of an omnipotent Cynthian gaze, of having eyes that overpeer all and at the same time inspire awe and fear. The combatants who contend for power consider it, more than anything, visual in nature. Gaveston values his abilities to see and show, but even more to wield the "eyes" of power; as a threatened, jealous noble puts it, "Happy is the man whom he vouchsafes . . . one good look" (I.ii.18-19). As discussed previously, it is the visual power Gaveston has acquired -- his ability to spy from above and laugh -- that most infuriates Mortimer. Edward himself is acutely aware that the struggle that takes place is for primacy of view and potency of gaze: he declares of the menacing nobles, "I'll tread upon their heads / That think *with high looks thus to tread me down*" (II.ii.96-97, ital. mine). And Mortimer in his glory, at the height of his power, perceives potency in terms of eyes that master all. He mingles Machiavelli and a gaze as severe as Diana's:

Mort.: Feared am I more than loved; --let me be feared,
And when I frown, make all the court look pale.
I view the prince with Aristarchus' eyes,
Whose looks were as a breeching to a boy. (V.iv.52-55)

In their ascendancy, Isabella and Mortimer's "eyes ... sparkle fire"; Edward gives up his crown "rather than ... look on them" (V.i.104-06).

Conversely and somewhat ironically, these characters, so determined to attain a power that makes them visually fearsome, resent and fear any exposure to view that is involuntary or unexpected on their part. As in Diana's case, being seen in this manner incites their rage. Since it is a source of power and an opportunity for one-upmanship, the acquisition of this sort of forbidden view, through espionage and secrecy, permeates the play. Gaveston is not the only one who practices the spy's arts, peering on the nobles for scraps of intelligence. The academics Spencer and Baldock, social climbers planning to insinuate themselves into court life, utilize intelligence techniques that suggest Marlowe's other professional career in more ways than one:

Spenc.: A friend of mine told me in secrecy
That [Gaveston] is repealed, and sent for back again;
And even now a post came from the court
With letters to our lady from the King;
And as she reads she smiled, which makes me think
It is about her lover Gaveston. (II.i.17-22)

Like Marlowe's hopes for advancement linked to the fortunes of courtier and spy-master Francis Walsingham, Spencer aims to rise by attaching himself to the up-and-coming Gaveston. To do so effectively, observation and surveillance must be practiced. Accordingly, the nobles are "resolute and full of secrecy" (II.ii.124). They too have their sources of

intelligence: "Now, my lords, know this, / That Gaveston is secretly arrived" (II.iii.15-16). Mortimer is a master of intelligence techniques: he sends an ambiguous, coded letter ordering Edward's death, along with a "secret token" that will result in Lightborn's own murder, in order to silence him; and he gives instructions for the "brave and secret" assassination, "so it be not spied" (V.iv.5-20,28,40). It is fitting indeed that the master-myth Marlowe has adapted for this play has been taken to show "how dangerous a curiosity it is to search into the secrets of princes."⁷⁷

Further following the Actaeon myth, Marlowe in *Edward II* portrays political power as the ability to transform both allies and rivals, and to mutilate in the pursuit of revenge. The early examples of political metamorphic prowess are benign, at least to those who are "transformed":

Ed.: I here create thee Lord High Chamberlain,
Chief Secretary to the State and me,
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man. (I.i.154-56)

... in this place of honor and of trust,
Spencer, sweet Spencer, I adopt thee here;
And merely of our love we do create thee
Earl of Gloucester, and Lord Chamberlain.

(III.ii.143-46)

For the King and those who would usurp his authority, power is a matter of metamorphic might: the ability to alter the state, shape, or form of others. This can be beneficial -- "he that I list to favor shall be great" (II.iii.260) -- or

77. Sandys, p. 151.

destructive. The almost endless threats, catalogued by Karen Cunningham, to hew knees, decapitate, dismember, and to draw and hang, amount to attempts to transform the shapes of one's enemies.⁷⁸ The debt to Diana in this is seen quite explicitly when the temporarily victorious King is read the names of his mutilated rivals: he turns them into dogs who "barked apace a month ago," but will "neither bark nor bite" now (IV.iii.12-13). Later, Edward's shaving in puddle water is a miniature symbolic transformation by his vanquishers. Gaveston's altered form, his "senseless trunk" (II.v.54), concludes the first half of the play, as a symbol of Mortimer's rising Cynthian, metamorphic power. Similarly, Mortimer's cut-off head "crowns" the second half, embodying (perhaps *disembodying* is the better word) the triumph of young Edward III in his ascendance to manhood and mastery. Judith Weil sees the prince in his acquisition of power as "finally play[ing] the just Diana to Mortimer's proud, conceited Actaeon"⁷⁹; perhaps her interpretation is triggered by his ability at last to wield dismembering punishment. Marlowe emphasizes the degree to which the decapitation in all its gore achieves and affirms the young King's triumph:

Ed. III: ... on [Edward's] mournful hearse
Thy hateful and accursed head shall lie. (V.vi.29-30)

1 Lord: My lord, here is the head of Mortimer.

78. Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105 (1990), pp. 205-15.

79. Weil, p. 169.

Ed. III: ... Accursed head,
 Could I have ruled thee then , as I do now,
 Thou hadst not hatched this monstrous treachery
 Sweet father, here unto thy murdered ghost
 I offer up this wicked traitor's head. (V.vi.93-100)

From the viewpoint of Marlowe's "Actaeonesque history," cyclical retributive dismemberment accompanies power, as both a blunt tool and a means of display.

The idea of display leads to the final component of Marlowe's unique, mythological variation upon the history play genre: the deep interpretive ambiguity of the mythic paradigm in its depiction of intense suffering. Diana inflicts punishment upon Actaeon as a form of display, and she holds him up for a public judgment that cannot clearly decide about the virtue of what she has done. In Golding's Ovid, there is analysis and discussion over its merit:

Much muttring was upon this fact. Some thought there was
 A great deale more extremitie than neded. Some commended
Diana's doing; saying that it was but worthely
 For safegarde of hir womanhod. Eche partie did applie
 Good reasons to defende their case.⁸⁰

Has Diana acted "worthely," or with too much "extremitie"? A salient characteristic of the Actaeon myth lies in this ambiguity; meanings are dichotomous and wavering. The myth is amoral, at least in its Ovidian rendering, in the sense that Ovid does not provide -- to use Clifford Leech's criticism of *Edward* -- a "program" or an "overt affirmation." The tale is characterized by its indeterminacy and

 80. Golding, p. 34.

inconclusiveness -- as well as by the fact that these opposing ideas about the justice of Actaeon's fate are so much discussed. Marlowe found in this murkiness and contentious debate an ideal metaphor and forum for English history. He capitalizes upon Ovid's "*Rumor in ambiguo est*" -- "Common talk wavered this way and that."⁸¹ *Edward's* "murmuring commons" (II.ii.157) -- with perhaps an echo of Golding's "muttring" of opinion -- also hold contrary ideas about their monarch. Some are openly critical, others supportive, and yet others "waver." At Edward's lowest, "the commons now begin to pity him," says Mortimer (V.iv.2).

Pity is a crucial, complex concept in both the Actaeon myth and *Edward II*. Actaeon's suffering is intense, and engenders pity:

No part of him was free from wound. He could none other do
 But sigh and in the shape of Hart with voyce as Hartes are
 (For voyce of man was none now left to help him at the
 wont,
 brunt)
 By braying shew his secret grief among the Mountaynes hie,
 And kneeling sadly on his knees with dreerie teares in eye,
 As one by humbling of himselfe that mercy seemde to crave,
 With piteous look instead of hands his head about to wave.⁸²

The hart-like Edward in his fall also inspires pity, as many commentators have observed.⁸³ He is entirely different from

 81. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. F. J. Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), III.253.

82. Golding, p. 34.

83. In addition to Charles Lamb, cited above, the shift towards pity for Edward has been discussed by, among others, Deats in "Myth and Metamorphosis," p. 311; Cutts, pp. 236-37; and David Bevington and James Shapiro, "'What are kings,

the exhibitionistic hedonist of the play's opening; he has lost all. "What, are you moved? Pity you me?" he asks as he relinquishes his crown (V.i.102); and Marlowe does shift the sympathies. In Edward's mental and physical agony, and final pathetic demeanor, he is humanized. As in Ovid, with the "piteous" sighing of the hart near death, Marlowe's suffering Edward in his death throes inspires pity. Even the murderous Matrevis senses some pathos: "I fear me this cry will raise the town" and rally public support, he frets (V.v.113). In Holinshed, Edward's "crie did move many in the castell and the town to compassion" (341).

And yet in both Ovid and Marlowe, interpretive inconclusiveness in the face of intense suffering renders the pity almost meaningless. The agonies of Actaeon and Edward have an immediate cause in their transgressions, but they do not have a clearly justifiable moral reason, nor do they have a cure. As shown above, the pain and pathos are shrouded in ambiguity. There are no virtuous characters in this drama, only corrupt ones whose flaws and blood-thirstiness grow the closer they get to authority. In the end, the justice is debatable -- but the slaughter is inescapable. It is also ongoing, the cyclical by-product of a ruthless struggle to achieve Diana-like omnipotence of view and vengeance. This is Marlowe's brutal, pessimistic portrayal of power, constructed out of Cynthian mythology,

 when regiment is gone?': The Decay of Ceremony in *Edward II*," in Friedenreich et al., pp. 275-76.

the royal double body, and the intersections of peering /
piercing and hart / heart. It is a portrayal of power
unacceptable to those who would deny the playwright a
cohesive political vision. Yet it is the essence of
"Actaeonesque history," distilled from the violence and
vagaries of English chronicle.

Conclusion

To see Christopher Marlowe in terms of an Actaeonesque "overpeering" is to appreciate one of the fundamental forces driving his work. The indelible impressions of his own spying career stamp *The Massacre at Paris*, with its treacherous world of court intrigue, involving secrecy and show, simulation and dissimulation, and Machiavellian and metatheatrical display. In *Dido Queen of Carthage* and *Hero and Leander*, the spying eye becomes erotic, the forbidden sights and secrets more sexual in nature. Yet such pleasing sights and shows pose no less of a threat to the fundamentally endangered self, torn between a desire to conceal and a lust to reveal. Surveillance in *Doctor Faustus* also has this titillation -- in views of naked women, beautiful paramours, and Helen of Troy -- but it is a much more transgressive vision and a "clearing away" (à la Sartre) to get to divine secrets, that powers its protagonist's "Actaeon complex."¹ And in *Edward II*, perhaps the most complex of all these works of "overpeering," visual intrusion is both a feared and desired "piercing" -- first symbolic and then literal -- that yokes the personal and political arenas. Actaeon becomes a paradigm for the process of history.

Out of many possible concluding observations and

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existential Psychoanalysis*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1962), pp. 67-68.

ruminations, a few suggest themselves as the most salient. The first is the issue of authorial agency. Stephen Greenblatt has theorized a Marlowe who is essentially the product of his environment, whose *Tamburlaine* almost unquestionably glamorizes ruthless colonial acquisitiveness: the Scythian shepherd is a violent "desiring machine" created by a violent desiring master, the playwright. In Greenblatt's formulation, Marlowe is produced by his society and feeds back into it by replicating and fostering its values.² In terms of his spying and "overpeering," there is little doubt that Marlowe was strongly influenced by his milieu and that he contributes back to it; but questions insinuate themselves. How much did he *allow* his surroundings to *choose him*? It seems clear that Marlowe was personally drawn to espionage for reasons that involved his individual character. Not all young Cambridge men became intelligencers; it was the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, what is the nature of Marlowe's staged court spying and showing? Is it a simple reiteration and endorsement of these practices? Rather, throughout Marlowe's works the spying, in its danger and destructiveness, is portrayed equivocally and with great ambivalence. Marlowe may have more autonomy and agency than Greenblatt at his most extreme allows.

 2. Stephen Greenblatt, "Marlowe and Renaissance Self-Fashioning," in *Two Renaissance Mythmakers*, ed. Alvin Kernan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

Marlowe's chronic overpeering also intimates that Renaissance espionage was one of the building blocks of Elizabethan drama. In this playwright's case the influence is unmistakable; his spying experience was translated into his public drama, and as John Michael Archer argues, becomes the drama's very subject.³ But as the connections between Marlowe and Shakespeare are investigated, a case for the larger presence of spying might be made. Certainly Marlowe has no monopoly on political and sexual spying, or the Actaeon myth. Yet he has mapped out so much of this terrain first and with such success that one wonders to what degree Shakespeare owes him a debt in *his* scenes of court watching and display, plottings and asides, intelligence and treachery. And while myth was the common stock of Elizabethan poets, one again wonders about subtle Marlovian influence in the preponderance of Shakespeare's "Actaeonesque": to name a few, Orsino's "hart"; Falstaff as "forest stag"; Iago as "Spartan dog"; Bottom gazing upon Cynthian Titania; and the three traitors to Henry V as hound-like "peers" devouring their master, a remarkable coincidence with *Edward II*.⁴ Indirectly, Marlowe's spy

 3. John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 91.

4. *Twelfth Night*, I.i.16-24; *Henry V*, II.ii.80-85. On Iago, see Jonathan Bate, "Ovid and the Mature Tragedies: Metamorphosis in *Othello* and *King Lear*." *SS* 41 (1989): 133-44. On Falstaff and Bottom, see Leonard Barkan, "Diana and Actaeon: The Myth as Synthesis," *ELR* 10:3 (1980), pp. 351-59; and John Steadman, "Falstaff and Actaeon: A Dramatic Emblem," *SQ* 14 (1963), pp. 231-44.

sensibility may have seeped onto an even larger stage.

Finally, Marlowe's overpeering might be considered within the "project" of early modern Humanism. His adaptation of myth may be seen as a culminating instance of Renaissance classicism -- a thorough and vital "owning" and possession of ancient Ovidian myth. Marlowe's engagement with Diana and Actaeon is complete and total. His updated Actaeons walk and run around in Renaissance garb, yet they retain the full power and mystery of the myth -- a mystery that, as Leonard Barkan asserts, is myth's true starting-point.⁵ The European Renaissance that virtually inhaled classical legend was treated to, and challenged by, Marlowe's creative exhalation and exaltation of this particular myth. In giving new life to the Actaeon tale upon the theatrical stage, Marlowe was again -- appropriately -- transforming it, re-imagining and displaying it for new eyes.

5. Barkan, p. 318: "The history of a myth is also the history of a crux. The presence of a myth in a work of art testifies to a problem, a mystery, a complexity, even a self-contradiction. If we understand the myth, we can perceive at least the elements of the mystery."

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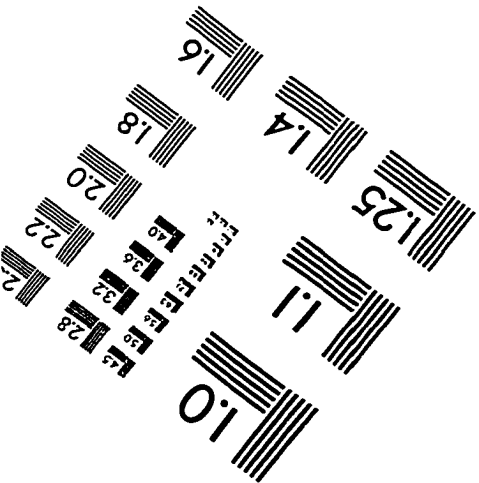
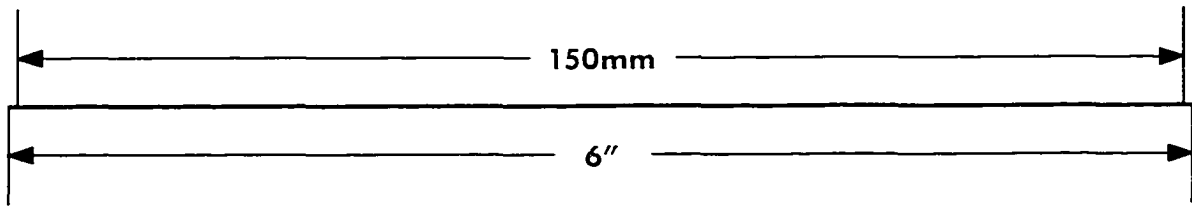
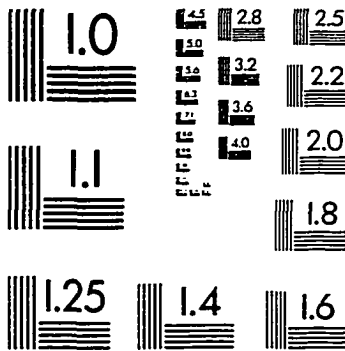
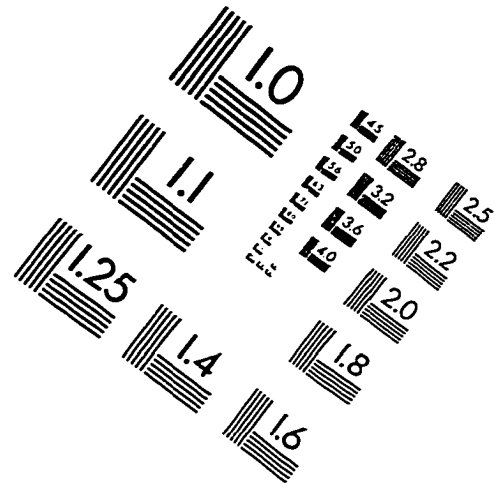
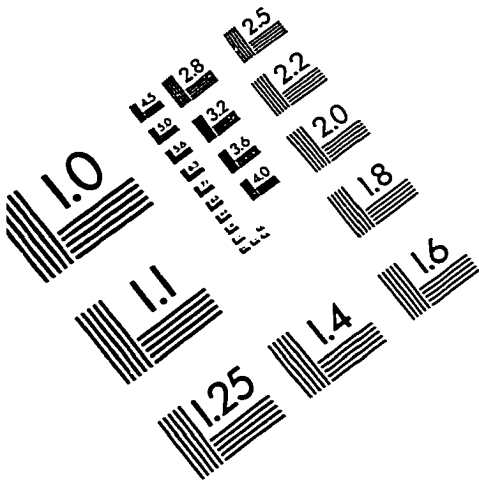
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