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The Machiavellian Influence Manifested in Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great and The Jew of Malta

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THE MACHIAVELLIAN INFLUENCE MANIFESTED IN CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S

TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT AND THE JEW OF MALTA
(TITLE)

BY

CAROL L. JANSSEN

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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THE MACHIAVELLIAN INFLUENCE MANIFESTED IN
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S
TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT AND THE JEW OF MALTA

Carol L. Janssen
Master of Arts, Eastern Illinois University, 1972

Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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The concepts developed by Niccolò Machiavelli and presented in The Prince exerted a profound influence on the dramatists of the Elizabethan age. However, before they were incorporated into Elizabethan dramas, these ideas were perverted and disparaged by Innocent Gentillet, Gabriel Harvey, Father Parsons, and others. The result of this perversion is that Machiavelli's original ideas are barely recognizable, at times, in the Elizabethan interpretations of those ideas.

The key ideas of Machiavelli are these: the ruled majority of the people are passive, weak, mutable, inconsistent, simple, and ungrateful, so they can be easily subjected and controlled by the Prince; the Prince is noble, ambitious, determined, superior to the ruled, and invincible; war is paramount over all other things; religion is a mere prop of the state used to keep subjects under control; and the use of both fraud and force will guarantee successful conquering. In summary, Machiavelli believed that the only successful government is based on power politics in which the Prince uses love and fear to force the peasant to obey his will.

The perverted ideas upon which the Elizabethan villain-hero is based reflect the vilification of Machiavelli's

ideas. His political cynicism is applied to all personal and political affairs; virtù becomes opposed to moral virtue; selfish motives replace the goal of common good through the unification of the Italian state. The result is a black and corrupt fiend who is superior to all others, violent, cruel, deceiving and dissembling, and incredibly ambitious.

Christopher Marlowe used these concepts to develop the main characters of Tamburlaine in Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II, and Barabas in The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta. Tamburlaine evidences the Machiavellian traits of virtù, ambition, and violence while Barabas evinces the villainy, selfish ambition, and deception of a stereotyped Machiavell. By melding the two characters, a completely Machiavellian figure is formed. The careers of both villain-heroes follow the Machiavellian pattern of life: they achieve great power and success through the use of force and fraud, then they are plummeted to destruction by the Fate which they believed that they controlled. Both are forced to learn that Fortune cannot be controlled by any man, not even by a superman or a conquering hero.

The concepts developed by Niccolò Machiavelli and presented in The Prince in 1513¹ exerted a profound influence on the dramatists of the Elizabethan age. However, his ideas, before they were incorporated into Elizabethan dramas, were perverted, twisted, and disparaged to the point that the original Machiavelli is barely recognizable in their Machiavellian characters. The Elizabethan dramatist who brought Machiavelli onto the stage was Christopher Marlowe whose works, Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II, and The Jew of Malta present the first Machiavellian villain-heroes in English dramatic literature.²

An examination of Machiavelli's influence on Christopher Marlowe must begin with a discussion of those ideas which brought fame or infamy to Machiavelli. He was a Florentine statesman and philosopher who spent his life studying the lives and principles of the political and ecclesiastical rulers of Europe during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He unified his own political opinions with his observations of the rulers and wrote his commentary, The Prince, in the form of advice given to the ruler of any territory

¹Clarence Valentine Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (New York, 1964), p. 31.

²John Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe: The Man in His Time (New York, 1937), p. 184.

who wishes to make his dominion a unified and powerful country. His advice can be categorized into three sections, each one dealing with a particular responsibility of a strong ruler: the nature of the ruled; the personality and nature of the Prince himself; and the methods of retaining or achieving power.

One area with which Machiavelli is concerned is the nature of the ruled subjects of any territory. Machiavelli realized that in order to govern effectively, a ruler needed to know how men actually behaved as well as how they were supposed to behave so that he could be prepared with various appropriate means to achieve his objective.³ Machiavelli observed the great majority of ruled people and concluded that men are, in general, "ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain."⁴ The ruled people are relatively easily persuaded to do or accept whatever the Prince desires, but it is quite difficult to keep them convinced and loyal for long periods of time.⁵ The men are simple enough that they consider only present necessities and benefits; therefore, they follow the Prince who is best able to provide for them at one particular moment.⁶ When the Prince can no longer

³Werner L. Gundersheimer, ed., The Italian Renaissance (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), p. 123.

⁴Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Luigi Ricci (New York, 1952), p. 90.

⁵Ibid., p. 50.

⁶Ibid., p. 93.

care for and defend them, when they no longer need the government in all things, or when it appears that another leader is more capable of caring for them, they switch their loyalty.⁷ They are mutable, changeable, inconsistent, and short-sighted. Machiavelli cynically remarks that

as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their goods, their life, and their children, . . . when the necessity is remote, but when it approaches, they revolt.⁸

The people are willing, then, to give everything they have when the ruler does not need it; however, when the peasants' support is necessary, they are unwilling to give it. In another of his works, Discourses, Machiavelli expands this opinion of the inconsistency of man's loyalty when he says that "the desires of mankind are immense and insatiable . . . every man despises what he is already possessed of, commends what is passed, condemns what is present, and longs for what is to come" ⁹ Men, then, willingly reject their present circumstances because both the past and future appear desirable.

A most notable characteristic of ruled men is their political passivity.¹⁰ Most love tranquility, and would live contentedly as long as the rulers did not attack their property or their honour.¹¹ They switch loyalty, but they are interested

⁷Ibid., p. 66.

⁸Ibid., p. 90.

⁹James Burnham, The Machiavellians (Chicago, 1943), pp. 54-55, citing Discourses.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 58.

¹¹Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 95.

neither in the ruler nor in the power which he possesses. They want a minimum of security, a chance to live their own lives and to control their own affairs.¹² If a Prince allows them to do these, he will experience no difficulty in controlling the entire country, unless he is unable to keep the people from mobbing together. When subjects are given the opportunity to gather together, they gain confidence and strength. When hidden in a multitude of others, many are willing to speak out liberally; however, when the same men are separated and cannot feed on another's anger, they think of their own welfare and security rather than of the injustices of the ruler; they fear the punishment for rebelling against the Prince's decrees. The result is that they make their peace with the Prince and return once more to obedience.¹³ As a figure of authority in a mob, the Prince is able to return a tumult to a body of people who are reasonable.¹⁴ When the Prince is able to divide the subjects, he can indeed conquer them.

According to Machiavelli, the ruled majority is fickle and passive; in addition, it is weak, without power or influence. Their lives depend wholly on the actions of the Prince: he approves or disapproves of their behavior and rewards or punishes accordingly. They are unable to revenge great injuries done to them, but they possess enough power to avenge small

¹²Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 58.

¹³Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 59.

injuries; consequently, a Prince must do such a great injury that there can be no vengeance: "men must either be caressed or else annihilated."¹⁵ All injuries and cruelty must be done at one time "so that being less tasted, they will give less offence."¹⁶ On the other hand, subjects are child-like enough to enjoy even small benefits. The Prince should dole these out in small amounts at frequent intervals so that these seem greater, ever near, and thus can be more enjoyed. In general, the picture Machiavelli presents of the ruled majority is of men who are selfish, short-sighted, mutable, inconsistent, apathetic, and weak. It is because they are so passive that a strong man can take over and rule as their Prince.

Machiavelli presents two distinct types of political man: the ruled type, as described, and the ruler type, including those who can and do become Princes. There are definite characteristics which the ruler must possess in order to be worthy or able to rule, for the people will yield readily to a man who is worthy of their confidence and will yield in any case to the man who can overcome them by force.¹⁷

One of the qualities which a would-be Prince must possess is virtù. A Prince is ambitious, willing to drive himself to give the utmost of his abilities and equally determined to get the most possible out of others. He possesses a will to

¹⁵Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 37.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁷Giorgio de Santillana, The Age of Adventure: The Renaissance Philosophers, The Mentor Philosophers (New York, 1964), p. 115.

power, a desire to be Prince over all. He does not become discouraged by difficulties or by dangers; he is capable and willing to persist in spite of incredible odds. He is superior to all of his ruled subjects, a superman who is never deterred from his goal of absolute power.¹⁸

Another characteristic of a Prince is that he commands a great and loyal army. The ruler who desires to retain his power should make himself the defender of his weak subjects and less powerful neighbors.¹⁹ Since "war and fighting are the great training ground of rules . . . and power is secure only on the basis of force,"²⁰ the Prince should have no thought, goal, or subject of study except "war and its organisation and discipline."²¹ War is the only art a commander needs; therefore, during times of war and of peace, a Prince prepares for war by reading history and studying the actions of other leaders during war. When the siege begins, he can imitate the actions of the past that led to victories and avoid the maneuvers which brought about defeats. As a result of this constant study of war, the Prince is always prepared to defend against adversity.

A third quality found in a Prince is his skill in adapting himself to the times.²² A ruler cannot be prosperous if he

¹⁸Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 66.

¹⁹Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 38.

²⁰Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 66.

²¹Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 81.

²²Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 69.

is unable to use anything, good or bad, at any time to gain or retain his power: "He is happy whose mode of procedure accords with the needs of the times . . . and unfortunate whose mode of procedure is opposed to the times."²³ One man may succeed by using circumspection and another by impetuosity, one by violence and another by cunning. The method of action is not paramount, but his ability to change to fit the time and the circumstances is keynote. If he does not change, he is doomed to failure: ". . . Men are successful so long as their ways conform to circumstances, but when they are opposed then they are unsuccessful."²⁴

The most universal characteristic of the Machiavellian Prince is that he is "exempt from the obligations of religion or morality."²⁵ Religion is a mere prop for the state to use in order to keep people subjected to authority. Religion is primarily useful to the Prince when it unifies the people, for a united territory is more easily controlled than is a divided country. For the Prince himself, there is no God, no Goal, no Higher Design in the universe. He is ruled by the laws of Nature which say that man is solely dominated by Necessity.²⁶

Accepting that necessity is the only rule and believing that morality is not an obligation to a Prince, the ruler is

²³Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 121.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 122-123.

²⁵George Clark Sellery, The Renaissance: Its Nature and Origins (Madison, 1964), p. 45.

²⁶de Santillana, The Age of Adventure, p. 110.

removed from any motivation to be good, true, or honest; indeed,

It is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.²⁷

The Prince is a man with many privileges and no moral obligations. He can use cruelty to keep his subjects under control and faithful, but he should still appear merciful.²⁸ To do this, he should give unpopular duties and cruel acts to others to perform while he bestows all honors and favors himself.²⁹ He cultivates the love of subjects but demands fear as well, for it is safer for him to be feared than loved.³⁰ He indulges in things which appear to be vices as long as these result in greater security and well-being for the Prince. In his dual role of good and evil, the Prince makes a pretense of listening to the sage advice of his counselors and aides; however, he accepts none of their advices which does not agree with his own original ideas. Above all, he keeps his own counsel.³¹

The use of a disguise to hide evil behind good is carried to great lengths by the Prince. He is able to be a feigner and a dissembler because his subjects are very simple and allow

²⁷ Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 84.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

³¹ Ibid., p. 114.

themselves to be deceived: "One who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived."³² For a Prince no deception is too great if it achieves his goal: "In the actions of men, and especially of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means."³³ The means to an end for a Prince is most often a combination of force and fraud. Force is necessary to keep subjects loyal when they no longer believe what they have been told, and fraud is indispensable in almost all political affairs.³⁴ The Prince is both a lion and a fox, a rational and an animalistic being.³⁵ The use of fraud is more often successful than is force alone, but both are useful; while force alone cannot bring great fortune or grandeur, a combination of force and fraud has done it many times, and artifice alone can bring more success than force alone.³⁶

The Prince is an ambitious and determined man who is ruled by necessity rather than by religion or by morality. He is a clever man who uses force and cunning with equal alacrity, who convinces his subjects that he is merciful, humane, sincere, and religious while he retains his ability to be cruel, inhuman, fraudulent, and atheistic. A Prince knows

³²Ibid., p. 93.

³³Ibid., p. 94.

³⁴Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 67.

³⁵Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 92.

³⁶Burnham, The Machiavellians, citing Discourses, p. 67.

no bounds to the actions he can perform in order to hold onto his power. He does not even have to keep faith with his subjects because men are innately bad and do not keep faith with a Prince.³⁷

There are three basic recommendations given by Machiavelli to the man who wishes to become a Prince: retain former laws; keep subjects under control; and maintain armed strength. Of these, Machiavelli stressed the last as being the key to a successful leader.

The first advice is to retain the semblance of old forms and institutions while changing to the new forms.³⁸ By making no change in laws or taxes, the old and new governments can become united in the minds of the ruled majority.³⁹ Most subjects do not notice the changes if the appearances of old traditions are maintained because they register only appearances, not realities. It will help to establish the new government if the Prince lives in the country over which he has gained dominion and thus becomes a resident of the country, or if he sets up a government of natives who are dependent on the Prince and so are loyal to him.⁴⁰ Either of these methods will cause the new government to seem more like the old one. Finally, in order to be assured that the old ruling family does not regain the loyalty of the subjects and the

³⁷Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 92.

³⁸de Santillana, The Age of Adventure, citing Discourses, p. 12

³⁹Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 36.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 46.

power over them, all members of the ruling family of the old government should be destroyed.⁴¹

The second recommendation is to keep the subjects under control through the use of fear, force, love, or cunning. Machiavelli felt that the whole purpose of the government was to keep the subjects in such a posture that they could not offend the Prince. The government could accomplish this feat by obliging them, taking away all means of doing any harm, and destroying their hope of a better fortune.⁴² The Prince strives for the loyalty and love of the subjects by keeping them dependent on him, by praising their meritorious deeds, and by doing all things which give the subjects a chance of success, a moment of honor and recognition.⁴³ However, if the Prince cannot have their love, he must at least gain their fear and avoid incurring their hatred.⁴⁴ He can do this by punishing rebels, committing cruel deeds to put down insurrections, and, if absolutely necessary, by killing those who oppose him. The best method of rule is to "caress or annihilate" all subjects,⁴⁵ a sure-fire way to success.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 56.

⁴²Burnham, The Machiavellians, p. 49.

⁴³Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 113.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 37.

The most important advice which Machiavelli gives to the would-be Prince is to maintain armed strength at home, for "it comes about that all armed prophets have conquered, and all unarmed ones have failed."⁴⁶ The arms are to be used to maintain control at home by keeping the ruled majority afraid so that when men no longer believe in the Prince, they can be forced to believe.⁴⁷ It is even permissible for the Prince to kill in order to maintain security, for the safety of the Prince is paramount. The use of murder should be limited to the last choice and should be replaced by other methods as quickly as is possible and feasible.⁴⁸

Another use of arms is to defend the country against outside forces. For this purpose, and for any other, mercenary troops are useless and dangerous because they have no loyalty to the cause which they are defending and because they are thinking only of sparing themselves hardships while they collect their pay.⁴⁹ In fact, "no prince is secure without his own troops, on the contrary, he is entirely dependent on fortune, having no trustworthy means of defence in time of trouble."⁵⁰

The final use of arms is to guarantee good laws, for a Prince who is supported by strong troops can enforce his laws:

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 80.

"There cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws" ⁵¹

For the Prince led by Machiavelli, power politics is the only form of government. He retains power who is the strongest and most capable of ruling. Since he is superior to all the members of the ruled type of man, he deserves to be in power. He can retain his control through the maintenance of old traditions in his new government, through the love and fear of his subjects, and, most of all, through the use of force, cunning, and well-armed troops. Machiavelli summarizes the whole concept of the Prince, his nature and his methods of rule when he states:

Whoever, therefore, deems it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to gain friends, to conquer by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people, followed and revered by the soldiers, to destroy those who can and may injure him, introduce innovation into old customs, to be severe and kind, magnanimous and liberal, suppress the old militia, create a new one, maintain the friendship of kings and princes in such a way that they are glad to benefit him and fear to injure him, such a one ⁵²

is a Prince.

The ideas presented by Machiavelli in The Prince were more forcibly expressed than ever before, but they were not radically different in attitude from the primary political

⁵¹Ibid., p. 72.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 57-58.

views of the time. In spite of this, Machiavelli has been more abused, cursed, and misrepresented by men of all times than any other philosopher or politician.⁵³ He has been considered

the Tempter, the Evil Principle, the discoverer of ambition and revenge, the original inventor of perjury, and it has been believed that before the publication of his fatal 'Prince,' there had never been a hypocrite, a tyrant or a traitor, a simulated virtue, or a convenient crime.⁵⁴

Within seventy-five years of his death, the name Machiavelli was known almost universally and without exception as a synonym for hypocrite, tyrant, master of evil and cunning.⁵⁵

Innocent Gentillet's work can be considered a major source for the wide circulation of the English travesty of Machiavelli, for it was his Contre-Machiavel (1576) which presented in maximum form the perverted version of Machiavelli's ideas.⁵⁶ Many of the characteristics which are evident in the Elizabethan Machiavelli are based on Gentillet's rather than on Machiavelli's concepts. His most well-known maxims are these:

II

I. A Prince above all things ought to wish and desire to be esteemed Devout, although hee be not so indeed.

⁵³Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Machiavelli," The Harvard Classics, ed. C.W. Eliot, XXVII (New York, 1910), p. 381.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Christian Gauss, "Introduction to the Mentor Edition," The Prince (New York, 1952), p. 14.

⁵⁶Mario Praz, The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli, and Other Studies in the Relations Between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot (New York, 1958), p. 94.

III

4. A Prince in a country newly conquered, must subvert & destroy all such as suffer great losse in that conquest, and altogether root out the blood and race of such as before governed there.
8. A Prince need not care to be accounted cruell, if so be that he can make himselfe to be obeyed thereby.
9. It is better for a Prince to be feared than loved.
10. A Prince ought not to trust in the amitie of men.
12. A Prince ought to follow the nature of the Lyon and of the Foxe, yet not of the one without the other.
14. A Prince ought to exercise cruelty all at one; and to do pleasures by little & little.
18. A Prince ought not to feare to be periured, to deceive, and dissemble; for the deceiver alwaies finds some that are fit to be deceived.
22. Faith, Clemencie, and Liberalitie, are vertues very damageable to a Prince: but it is good, that of them he only have some similitude and likenesse.
23. A Prince ought to have a turning and winding wit, with art and practise made fit to bee cruell & unfaithfull, that he may shew himselfe such an one when there is need.
27. A Prince which will make a straight profession of a good man, cannot long continue in the world amongst such an heape of naughtie and wicked people.
34. A Prince ought to commit to another those affaires which are subject to hatred & envy, and reserve to himselfe such as depend upon his grace and favour.⁵⁷

These maxims of Gentillet's emphasize the negative, power-seeking elements only in Machiavelli's work; they ignore completely his beliefs that cruelty must be interspersed with mercy, or that a Prince must strive to be loved and faithful but resort to cruelty and cunning only when he cannot maintain the love and loyalty of his subjects in another way.

Another source which inspired much of the disparagement of Machiavelli in England was a Latin poem by Gabriel Harvey called "Epigramma in Effigiem Machiavelli" (1578).

⁵⁷Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, citing Contre-Machiavel, pp. 34-35.

The heading "Machiavellus ipse loquitur" (Machiavelli speaks himself) indicates that this poem was the model of the Prologue to The Jew of Malta. In essence, Machiavelli states this in the poem:

Let no one think to govern who does not know my rule,
nor think he has gained wisdom who does not know them
well. My talk is only of kingdoms and sceptres, of
camps and wars. In my hand I bear a sword and my
tongue is sprinkled with a thousand poisons. My motto
is and always has been: 'Ambition; either Caesar
or nothing.' Milk is food for babes, I feed on
blood. Blood is nothing, torture is nothing: let lowly
minds perish. I alone have wisdom, I live, and triumph
by myself. Fraud is my greatest virtue; the next is
force. I know no other gods.⁵⁸

In this poem are presented the five principal crimes associated with Machiavelli in Elizabethan drama: poison, murder, fraud, violence, and atheism.

A third work which was widely read and accepted as presenting true Machiavellian ideas was Leycester's Commonwealth (1584), attributed to Father Parsons. It gives three maxims from which characteristics are drawn which appear again and again in Elizabethan dramas. These maxims are:

1. That Princes being unable to give sufficient satisfaction for the benefit of being helped to a crown should recompense such friends with death.
2. That Princes should drive such as they desire to get rid of to 'attempt somewhat whereby they may incur danger, or remain in perpetual suspicion or disgrace.'
3. 'Where you have done a great injury, there you must never forgive.'⁵⁹

⁵⁸Ibid., citing "Epigramma in Effigiem Machiavelli," p. 36.

⁵⁹Ibid., citing Leycester's Commonwealth, p. 38.

He stresses the necessity to rid oneself of accomplices, to destroy all danger and possible danger, and never to forgive an injury. These, like Gentillet's and Harvey's thoughts, are those which appear on the stage as Machiavellian.

As a result of this perversion of Machiavelli's ideas, the Elizabethan concept of Machiavelli was a motley combination of truth, perversion, interpretation, and imagination. The Elizabethan Machiavell possessed characteristics presented in the original Machiavelli, perverted by Gentillet, Harvey, Parsons, and others, spiced by the Senecan tyrant, strengthened by the Vice from Morality plays, and upheld by the old traditions of villainy.⁶⁰ The product on the Elizabethan stage, made up from these various ingredients, is a character who is a black, totally corrupt fiend who feeds on death and destruction and who lives solely for power and wealth.

This black and corrupt fiend is not a one-sided stereotyped figure representing Vice, in spite of the fact that all evils, sins, and stratagems are attributed to him and that he is "an advocate of everything evil in statecraft."⁶¹ He is, above all else, a superman who is greater, more evil, more courageous, more cruel, more violent, and more ambitious than any other character.⁶² No moral law is applicable to

⁶⁰Paul H. Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning and Character (Chapel Hill, 1946), p. 195.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 194.

⁶²Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 6.

him, for morality is "simply a code contrived by the weak to protect them from the strong, and . . . it has no divine authority whatsoever behind it."⁶³ He is his own maker of values; whatever he believes is right because he thinks it is so. He is not restrained or limited by the laws of men or God; indeed, he is superior to all other men, and he recognizes no gods. He is ruled totally by a will to power, by ambition.

Another characteristic which is manifested in the Elizabethan Machiavell is his intelligence. He is aware of all problems before they occur in order to maintain control. His sharp intelligence is notable not only in his shrewdness concerning the machinations of the government but also in his bitter and cynical wit.⁶⁴ The use of the sharp, punning aside which ridicules the weaker subjects is in prominent use by the Machiavells of Elizabethan drama.⁶⁵

The typical Machiavell is a religious hypocrite who evinces great zeal but who is secretly faithless and impious.⁶⁶ He recognizes that religion is only useful in controlling **subjects or in advancing** while hiding his own ambition. Religion, then, is viewed as a "cloak of crime,"⁶⁷ as a means

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴M.C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge, 1966), p. 66.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 122.

⁶⁶Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 74.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 49.

to sustain power, for "the arm of man is a far less terrifying instrument of power than the voice of God."⁶⁸ At times this religious hypocrisy is expanded to make the character not merely impious but diabolically atheistic.⁶⁹ The villain is looked upon as "the instrument of Satan, as ridden by an incubus, as the Secretary of Hell, as the Devil himself."⁷⁰ This is a gross exaggeration of Machiavelli's concept that religion is a prop of the state; it symbolizes the perversion of many of Machiavelli's ideas by the Elizabethans.

Cruelty and violence are the watchwords of the Elizabethan Machiavell. He depends on the fear of the subjects to maintain supremacy over them. No move is too cruel or bloody to be used to gain his desires, to further his goals. He is ready and willing to murder anyone in order to increase his power or to retain his authority. He is renowned for his treachery concerning those who aid him. When his accomplices have completed their work, it is necessary to put them to death so that they cannot reveal any knowledge of the leader's devious methods of accomplishing his objectives.⁷¹ He is remorseless and revenge-seeking; no injury is so small or so great that he does not demand payment for it. His favorite method of disposing of his opposition is poison, as Harvey

⁶⁸Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of His Thought, Learning and Character, p. 49.

⁶⁹Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 129.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 130.

⁷¹Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 42.

notes in his poem. It is a shrewd and clever form of murder, difficult to prove, difficult to blame on anyone. He is always evil, cruel, violent, and, therefore, his subjects are kept under control. This portrayal of the totally cruel and ruthless Machiavelli is another misinterpretation of the original: Niccolò Machiavelli states explicitly that force alone cannot bring about glory, grandeur, or power, and that force is a last resort, after the Prince tries but fails to gain love: "When men no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force."⁷² Emphasis on the word when is important to substantiate that force is a last, rather than a first and best, option.

Another quality found in the typical Elizabethan Machiavell is ambition, including avarice and covetousness. He possesses high aspirations in the form of a will to power which exceeds all other desires or needs.⁷³ He is never contented with a small degree of authority; he wants to be the ruler over all. Combined with this will to power is a desire for great wealth, obtainable through usury, fraud, or power. He wants to accumulate great wealth even if it comes from robbing his subjects. He is so egotistical that he believes that he should be both the richest and the most powerful person in the dominion. This idea is in direct contrast to the original idea that a Prince should be liberal with the money of those outside his country but conservative, even miserly,

⁷²Machiavelli, The Prince, p. 50.

⁷³Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 61.

with his subjects' money. The Elizabethan Prince is miserly with his own money; he refuses to help anyone else with his financial problems, but he expects and demands their support. He wants all he has to stay in his possession, and he believes all that anyone else has should come into his keeping.

The final characteristic of the Machiavell found on the Elizabethan stage is his shrewdness and cunning. The keyword policy occurs quite frequently in Elizabethan dramas and connotes device, trick, sleight, deceit, and fraud.⁷⁴ This is a pejorative meaning of Machiavelli's Italian word politico, which means "in conformity with sound rules of statecraft."⁷⁵ Almost all of the Machiavellian characters use, or overuse, the term policy and in doing so reveal their preoccupation with deception and fraud. Even the word politician became pejorative and took on the meaning of Devil.⁷⁶ Dissembling and feigning are second nature to the Machiavellian characters; furthermore, they feel justified in using deception and policy to get what they want because people are ignorant enough to allow themselves to be deceived.⁷⁷ There is no means too deceptive or dishonest that it cannot be used to reach the goals of the Prince; equivocation is his great art.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 104.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

⁷⁷ Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 49.

⁷⁸ Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 136.

The career of the Machiavellian character is as predictable as is his personality. When thinking of a Machiavell, one assumes that this is one character who is greater, more violent, stronger, more intelligent, hypocritical, faithless, atheistic, cruel, and cunning than any other character in the drama. It is also to be assumed that his career will proceed in this fashion:

The hero commences his tragic career out of hatred and revenge, pursues his plot by guile, but oversteps all bounds of justice and reason in the cruelty of his deeds, and is finally taken in his own toils and destroyed.⁷⁹

The Elizabethan Machiavell is a superhuman villain-hero who is outside the bounds of all other men, who needs no motives for his malignity, who never justifies his actions, who commands both the admiration and condemnation of all other men. He "has become a sort of rallying-point for whatever is most loathsome in statecraft, and indeed in human nature at large."⁸⁰

Christopher Marlowe was fully aware of this vilification of the theories expounded in The Prince, for he was a college student when the criticism of Machiavelli reached its height. Marlowe saw the possibilities of capturing in plays the powerful conflict of personal will and conscience, of expedience and moral will; therefore, he created characters who embodied the principles of conduct of a Machiavell, a

⁷⁹Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 52.

⁸⁰Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 95.

man who is constantly guided by his own will rather than by moral law or conscience. When he had completed the characters, however, they were not Machiavells on paper; they possessed, believed, and acted on some of Machiavelli's principles, but they also manifested the perverted ideas which the Elizabethans had named "Machiavellian."

Christopher Marlowe did not create one single character who possessed all of the Machiavellian characteristics. Instead, he created two characters, Tamburlaine of Tamburlaine the Great and Barabas of The Jew of Malta, who, together, form one complete Machiavell. Tamburlaine possesses the virtù, the ambition for power, and the violent cruelty of a Machiavell while Barabas evinces Machiavellian ambition for wealth, violence, and deceit. Since Machiavelli and those who perverted his ideas advocated the use of both force and fraud to gain their ambitious objectives, the melding of the characters of Tamburlaine and Barabas results in one stereotyped Machiavell.

Tamburlaine is Marlowe's greatest conquering hero. His great pride, his unlimited aspirations, and his supremely violent power make him a Machiavellian Prince, but he does not resort to the deceit and dissembling which the original and perverted Princes utilize:

Tamburlaine is a Machiavellian, indeed, but he is a conquering hero, not a villain . . . He is all lion and no fox; he does not illustrate the subtlety and treachery associated with Machiavellianism.⁸¹

⁸¹Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 60.

Tamburlaine is not merely a successful man; he is superior to all other rulers and men, and he is cognizant of this fact. He possesses a "Machiavellian virtù which enables him to master fortune and win success in his enterprises."⁸² He is beyond petty laws and rules, even beyond Christian values and morals; therefore, he does not need to feign humility; he makes known that he is proud of his abilities, supreme among men. He does not, however, possess moral virtue or goodness; he is greater than mere morality. Nothing can be done by any normal man or laws to slow this superman in his sweep to conquer the universe. He is confident that his will is seconded by destiny, fortune, Nature, and the gods. He boasts to Zenocrate that "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove" (I,11,34), but his bragging is not offensive. He is so self-assured that his boasts seem to be mere statement of truth. He envisages himself "the chiefest lamp of all the earth" (IV,11,36), the "worthiest knight that ever brandished sword" (III,v,71). He evidences a "ruthless determination combined with exceptional ability to conceive and carry through a plan of action,"⁸³ and this is virtù. He is able to endure more suffering than any other man, for no sorrow is great enough to slow him down, not even Zenocrate's death. He continues to succeed and conquer in spite of

⁸²Irving Ribner, "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. R.J. Kaufmann (New York, 1961), p. 85.

⁸³Robert E. Knoll, Christopher Marlowe, Twayne's English Authors Series, general ed. S.E. Bowman (New York, 1969), p. 53.

seemingly insurmountable odds:

There is no defeat or destruction that he must undergo, no physical or mental anguish that he displays. The major burden of the play . . . is the sensational revelation of Tamburlaine's superhuman character and ability.⁸⁴

Tamburlaine's unwavering assurance that his power comes "from the imperial heaven" (IV,iv,30) strengthens his superman qualities. He knows Fortune has deemed him worthy of success. His favorite name for himself is the "scourge of God." He uses this title three times in the first part of Tamburlaine: he tells Theridamas that he is "termed the scourge and wrath of God,/The only fear and terror of the world" (III,iii,44-45). He places his feet on Bajazeth and lords this over him:

Now clear the triple region of the air,
And let the majesty of heaven behold
Their scourge and terror tread on emperors (IV,ii,30-33).

The Soldan of Arabia uses the title in disparagement of the "bloody Tamburlaine" (IV,iii,33). The term "scourge of God" is used more often in Part II than in Part I. In each of the eight times that Tamburlaine is referred to as the scourge, there is implied a justification of his pride, confident actions, and superhuman deeds. He sincerely believes himself to be a "scourge of God sent by God to punish earthly rulers for their tyranny and wicked people for their sins."⁸⁵

⁸⁴Douglas Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (Princeton, 1962), p. 87.

⁸⁵Ribner, "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," p. 85.

Tamburlaine is a superman whose purposes and objectives reach beyond mere earthly concerns to the divine:

He is the avenger, nemesis to the mighty of the world, contemptuous demonstrator of the absurdity of their claims, liberator of captives.⁸⁶

He often asserts the fact that he is smiled upon by the stars:

The chiefest god, first mover of the sphere
Enchased with thousands ever-shining lamps,
Will sooner burn the glorious frame of heaven
Than it should so conspire my overthrow (IV,111,8-11)

He believes that "Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven/To ward the blow and shield me safe from harm" (I,11,179-180)

He never fears defeat or destruction because the "fates and oracles of heaven have sworn/To royalize the deeds of Tamburlaine" (II,111,7-8).

A second trait which Tamburlaine shares with the Prince is ambition, the "strongest and most powerful passion."⁸⁷ Ambition takes away a man's concern for his life; it makes him despise religion; it causes violence to natural laws; it leads to the destruction of family and friends, and it feeds on itself, one success causing another attempt. These feature of ambition appear in Tamburlaine, making him "valorous, magnanimous, and eloquent."⁸⁸ He is the "Incarnation

⁸⁶Eugene M. Waith, "Tamburlaine," Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 73.

⁸⁷Roy W. Battenhouse, "Tamburlaine's Passions," Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, 1964), p. 61.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 62.

of the spirit of aspiration."⁸⁹ He aspires to be no less than the "general of the world" (V,ii,387); his greatest desire is "to sit in the seat of the gods and to have power over life and death."⁹⁰ He affirms at ever victory that each is one step in the staircase leading to "celestial thrones" (I,ii,236). He justifies and clarifies his aspirations by declaring that Nature has placed within men high goals in order that they can "soar above the highest sort" (II,vii,33) to the ultimate, "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown" (II,vii,29):

The thirst and reign and sweetness of a crown,
 That caused the eldest son of heavenly Ops
 To thrust his doting father from his chair,
 And place himself in the imperial heaven,
 Moved me to manage arms against thy state.
 What better precedent than mighty Jove?
 Nature, that framed us of four elements
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds.
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
 The wondrous architecture of the world
 And measure every wandering planet's course,
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
 And always moving as the restless spheres,
 Will us to wear ourselves and never rest,
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown (II,vii,12-29).

His ambition never lessens or abates; he strives always to conquer more kingdoms. After he has fallen ill, he describes all of the vast dominion over which he has had control, and

⁸⁹William L. Phelps, "Introduction," Masterpieces of the English Drama: Christopher Marlowe, ed. F.E. Schelling (New York, 1912), p. 8.

⁹⁰M.M. Mahood, "Marlowe's Heroes," Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. R.J. Kaufmann (New York, 1961), p. 98.

when he has finished, he does not rest satisfied. His comment is, "And shall I die, and this unconquered" (V,iii,158). He relegates the responsibility of conquering the rest to his sons who "for both their worths will equal him no more" (V,iii,253). He cannot, even then, give up his dreams and ambitions. He is a great man because his goals are infinitely higher and greater than are those of his countrymen. His are the goals of a demi-god who cannot be held to earthly concerns; he desires greatness not so that he can be a great help or leader for the sake of the country but in order that he can be esteemed personally great.

The Machiavellian in Tamburlaine manifests itself in the attitude and advice which he gives his sons. He warns them that to love peace is effeminate, and that any man who is not willing to fight is of no value. He despises the graces of peace and civilization, holds that these are poor things by comparison with the excitements of fighting and barbarism.⁹¹ He fears that his sons are "not martial as the sons of Tamburlaine" (I,iv,22) should be, that they could prove "too dainty for the wars" (I,iv,28). When he learns that Calyphas is unwilling to fight, he stabs him. The study of war and fighting is paramount to him, as a means to attain the conquering of the world, and so he insists that his sons take an active role in war early in their lives. He gives them these instructions for conduct during war:

⁹¹J.B. Steane, Marlowe: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1964), p. 83.

how to be physically strong; how to besiege a town; how to defend their country; and how to murder the foe. When they know these things, "then are ye soldiers/And worthy sons of Tamburlaine the Great" (III,11,91-92).

He puts his advice into action, and the result is the conquering of Persia and most of the countries of Asia. He rises from a humble Scythian shepherd to be the greatest commander of the world. He consistently rules the largest and most powerful forces on earth, so the victories are always easily attained. He conquers the lands, destroys their rulers, and places in control one of his trusted aides. He even bestows crowns of kings who have not yet been conquered. He does not try to rule every country himself; his duty is to conquer and purge a country, then a lesser man can assume charge of the daily command. His enemies tally his overwhelmingly great forces, then they surrender without battle:

He brings a world of people to the field . . .
 All Asia is in arms with Tamburlaine
 All Afric is in arms with Tamburlaine;
 Therefore, viceroys, the Christians must have peace
 (I,1,67-77).

He recounts his victories as he approaches death and seems to find consolation in the comprehensiveness of his conquests:

Here I began to march towards Persia,
 Along Armenia and the Caspian Sea,
 And thence unto Bithynia, where I took
 The Turk and his great empress prisoners.
 Then marched I into Egypt and Arabia;
 And here, not far from Alexandria,
 Whereas the Terrene and the Red Sea meet,
 Being distant less than full a hundred leagues,
 I meant to cut a channel to them both,
 That men might quickly sail to India.

From thence to Nubia near Borno lake,
 And so along the Ethiopian sea,
 Cutting the tropic line of Capricorn,
 I conquered all as far as Zanzibar.
 Then, by the northern part of Africa,
 I came at last to Braecia, and from thence
 To Asia, where I stay against my will
 Which is from Scythia, where I first began,
 Backward and forwards near five thousand leagues
 (V,111,126-144).

He is the conqueror of the world; he reigns as the sole king
 of all the provinces. He is "supremely successful,
 caring nothing for curses, scruples, or conventions."⁹²

Tamburlaine enjoys every conquest and revels in every
 moment he is king because as conqueror he holds the power
 of life and death over every one of his victims:

A god is not so glorious as a king.
 I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven
 Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth;
 To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,
 Whose virtues carry with it life and death;
 To ask and have, command and be obeyed;
 When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,
 Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes (II,v,57-64).

Most of the time his choice between life and death is death,
 by a cruel and unusual method. Incident upon incident piles
 up where the cruel will of Tamburlaine is to be carried out:
 he makes Bajazeth his human footstool, carries him and his
 wife around in cages, and starves and torments them until
 both kill themselves by dashing their brains out on the walls
 of the cages. When the governor of Damascus sends four
 virgins out to beg for the salvation of their city, they

⁹²Ibid., p. 97.

are killed. They have come to plead too late, after the last warning had been given. Tamburlaine's reason for killing them is that earlier

They have refused the offer of their lives;
And know my customs are as peremptory
As wrathful planets, death or destiny (V,ii,63-65).

Nothing can sway him from his appointed course once his decisions have been made; "Nothing can move Tamburlaine from the course of action for which his nature calls: the conquest of the world and ruthless destruction of all opposing kings."⁹³

The cruelties in Part I are all executed off-stage, so the reality of these deeds is lessened, and they seem less monumental. In Part II, however, the destruction is brought into full view; Tamburlaine's indiscriminate murders become overwhelming, then his fall begins which results in his being more bestial than human;

Tamburlaine, in his dynamic but futile attempt to be more than man reveals that the drive for superhumanity through martial conquest leads inevitably to inhumanity.⁹⁴

He order an entire city to be burned to the ground because Zenocrate has died there. When he learns that Calyphas is unwilling to go to war, he immediately stabs him in spite of the pleas of his other sons. He justifies his action in

⁹³Ribner, "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," p. 91.

⁹⁴Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe, p. 113.

this way:

Villains these terrors and these tyrannies--
 If tyrannies war's justice yet repute--
 I execute, enjoined me from above,
 To scourge the pride of such as heaven abhors;
 Nor am I made arch-monarch of the world,
 Crowned and invested by the hand of **Jove**,
 For deed of bounty or nobility;
 But since I exercise a greater name,
 The scourge of God and terror of the world,
 I must apply myself to fit those terms,
 In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,
 And plague such peasants as resist in me
 The power of heaven's eternal majesty (IV,11,71-83).

His rationale is that he is wiser and greater; his ways are inevitably right; therefore, any man who opposes him is wrong and must be destroyed.

The next countries which he conquers yield their kings to act as horses to pull Tamburlaine's chariot. When they tire, they are taken out and hanged, and a new set of conquered kings is harnessed up to pull the chariot. He hangs the governor of Babylon above the ruins of his city, then as he pleads for his life, Tamburlaine has him shot. He has his soldiers drown every inhabitant of Babylon, even the children. His order is: "Leave not a Babylonian in the town" (V,1,169). None of these cruelties inspire remorse or guilt feelings in Tamburlaine, for he feels justified in his actions. He is unable to be sated in his quest for more kingdoms to conquer, more people to kill. The King of Amasis says he is the "monster that hath drunk a sea of blood/And yet gapes still for more to quench his thirst" (V,11,13-14). Tamburlaine has changed in Part II from a magnificent conqueror to a villainous monster, intent on death.

it is evident that even while Tamburlaine's conquests have enlarged his seeming power, his greatness of mind has been lost. His cruelty nauseates, and mechanical repetition finally renders it absurd. The intellectual strength which, in Part I, made him a half-legendary figure whose human birth was in question and whose conquests were achieved with almost magical ease, has given place, in Part II, to brute force and common-place strategy--a mere matter of quinque-angles and counters-carps.⁹⁵

In the character of Tamburlaine the theories of Machiavelli have been corrupted. Machiavelli did not advocate the use of overweening power and strength to gain personal power, for he was interested in helping the country through a strong leader. Tamburlaine's phenomenal ambition is totally personal; he wants more lands for himself alone. Machiavelli also did not believe in the use of murder and cruelty as a way of life; these were last resorts to be used only when everything else had failed. Tamburlaine tries no tactic outside of overwhelming force, followed by cruel and indiscriminate murders to gain his goals.

However, Tamburlaine cannot be condemned for his cruelty: "The cruelties of the hero are a necessary part of his triumph and so cannot be judged by regular moral standards."⁹⁶ He does not kill because he wants the ones he has defeated to be dead; they committed wrong in trying to oppose him, so they have to be destroyed. He conceives of himself as opposed to the vilifying dregs of the earth,

⁹⁵Wahood, "Marlowe's Heroes," p. 102.

⁹⁶Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 65.

as the vast cleaner of the world. As the Scourge of God, he rationalizes, he is bound to seek them out and rid the earth of human debris. He effectively performs what he believes to be a divine commission. A second reason he cannot be blamed for these deaths as one would proclaim guilty an ordinary man is that he is a superman whose actions are above and beyond traditional moral codes of right and wrong. "The moral code dissolves under the primacy of his will to power . . . which replaces it as the law of conduct."⁹⁷

Although the bloody conquests and military victories of Tamburlaine continue in the second part, the limitations of mortality begin to encroach persistently on his strength and power. This encroachment is the first limitation which Tamburlaine experiences. He has undergone no defeat of any kind until the death of Zenocrate. He has great difficulty in adjusting to her death, and his revenge takes the form of violent destruction; the violence is unreasonable and indicates the first breakdown in Tamburlaine's super-humanity. He orders the entire city destroyed wherein she had died, yet this sweeping murder does nothing to restore Zenocrate to him. The second blow comes when he learns that one son is a coward and that the other two sons do not approach his level of superiority. The final wound occurs when he

⁹⁷Kocher, Christopher Marlowe: A Study of Thought, Learning and Character, p. 78.

learns that he is mortally ill. He has lived believing that he can "hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains/And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (I,11,173-174). As death approaches, he learns that Fate cannot be bound, that he no longer holds death on his sword point as he had in Damascus. His first reaction to this last blow is rage, an evidence of his mental breakdown because until this time, his self-control has been phenomenal. He cries out against his newest and greatest adversary, Death:

What daring god torments my body thus
 And seeks to conquer mighty Tamburlaine?
 Shall sickness prove me now to be a man,
 That have been termed the terror of the world? . . .
 See where my slave, the ugly monster Death,
 Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
 Stands aiming at me with murdering dart . . . (V,111,41-45,
 67-69).

The rub for Tamburlaine is that Death is no longer his slave; the gods cannot be fought, and "Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die" (V,111,248). He has learned that all men are bound to Fortune's wheel, destined to rise to great heights, doomed to fall to death. His career follows the Machiavellian tradition in that "the self-assertive, ambitious man confronts the limits imposed upon his power by the natures of the persons involved and the mortality to which all are subject";⁹⁸ the ambitious man dies, finding in Death the only thing which he is unable to conquer.

⁹⁸John D. Jump, "Introduction," Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, general ed. Cyrus Hoy (Lincoln, 1967), p. xx.

As a Machiavellian character, Tamburlaine exhibits fully the characteristics of virtù, ambition, and cruelty; he lacks the treachery and deceit which are traditionally used by a Machiavell. Tamburlaine exists in a world far above policy, alliances, and calculation, in a simple world ruled solely by power.⁹⁹ The character of Barabas in The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta evidences the traits least manifested in Tamburlaine: an anti-Christian attitude, an ambitious desire for wealth but not for land, egoism, and the use of policy and deception to accomplish everything. Barabas is

a figure more grotesquely inhuman than Tamburlaine at his cruelest moments, a figure . . . whose closest kinship with humanity is registered in terms of avarice and egoism.¹⁰⁰

He is not a conquering hero; there is none of the greatness of character which is evident in Tamburlaine; Barabas is a villain whose only thoughts are for the increase of his own wealth. He is the black and corrupt fiend whom the Elizabethans pictured as Machiavellian. The Machiavell which Barabas puts into practice is the stereotyped villain: "a pragmatic, underhanded, treacherous, atheistic, covetous, self-centered, machinating, inhuman monster."¹⁰¹

One Machiavellian trait manifested by Barabas is "the idea that religion is mere 'policy' . . . and the related idea that religion is a cloak for crime."¹⁰² As a Jew in a

¹⁰⁰Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe, p. 123.

¹⁰¹Richard W. Van Fossen, ed., The Jew of Malta, Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Lincoln, 1964), p. xvi.

¹⁰²John Bakeless, The Tragicall History of Christopher Marlowe, Volume 1 (Westport, 1942), p. 352.

Christian-ruled city, Barabas harbors much resentment toward those leaders who depend on the Jews for support but who consider the Jews less than human. He is repelled by their "Christian poverty" (I,1,113) and wonders if they are stealing his goods only because theft is "the ground of your religion" (I,11,96). He warns Abigail that "religion/Hides many mischiefs from suspicion" (I,11,282-283), so it is suitable for use in deceiving the town government and in recovering his hidden money. He sees no wrong in causing Abigail to enter the nunnery merely to get his money, for he holds that there is nothing sacred in the vows of a nun. He slurs the behavior of the priests and nuns, and his comments about the "fruits" of their endeavors reveals his anti-Christian attitude. He justifies his deception of Christians on the principle that they are all heretics:

It is no sin to deceive a Christian,
 For they themselves hold it a principle,
 Faith is not to be held with heretics;
 But all are heretics that are not Jews (II,111,306-309).

His final disgust for Christianity is shown in his death speech. He dies cursing, a typically Machiavellian act:

And villains, know you cannot help me now.
 Then, Barabas, breathe forth thy latest fate,
 And in the fury of thy torments strive
 To end thy life with resolution
 I aimed thy overthrow,
 And had I but escaped this stratagem,
 I would have brought confusion on you all,
 Damned Christians, dogs, and Turkish infidels!
 But now begins the extremity of heat
 To pinch me with intolerable pangs.
 Die, life! Fly, soul! Tongue, curse thy fill and die
(V,v,78-89)!

The next quality which Barabas shares with the Machiavellian stereotype is ambition. His ambition is not for love, or luxury, or power, or conquest; his only ambition is for great wealth. Accumulating more money than anyone else is the sole aim of his life, and he can be considered a superman only because of his abnormal aspirations for wealth.

He is the aspiring pagan, drawing wealth from all corners of the world, wielding global power, and delighting in all of the felicity which wealth can convey.¹⁰³

When the villain is first shown on stage, he is in the counting-house, surrounded by heaps of gold, his favorite situation. He is not concerned with his country's welfare or the good of the majority: "Nay, let'em combat, conquer, and kill all,/So they spare me, my daughter, and my wealth." After the governor confiscates all of his known possessions, he goes into an apparent state of mourning for his loss, which is greater to him than the loss of his life:

Why, I esteem the injury far less
To take the lives of miserable men
Than be the causers of their misery.
You have my wealth, the labor of my life,
The comfort of mine age, my children's hope,
And therefore ne'er distinguish of the wrong (I,11,147-152).

He is speaking in answer to Ferneze who has said that he would never stain his hand with the blood of the Jew.

Barabas replies that killing him and stealing his money are the same thing. He vows to "make bar of no policy" (I,11,273)

¹⁰³Irving Ribner, "Introduction," The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe (New York, 1963), p. xxxii.

in order to regain the wealth that has been taken from him. His only appreciation of beauty is encompassed in money as reflected in the line: HERMOSO PLACER DE LOS DINEROS-- "How beautiful is money" (II,1,64). His entire life is spent not in conquering vast territories as Tamburlaine has done but in accumulating great amounts of wealth for himself while destroying the material possessions of others. Just as Tamburlaine's desire for conquest is never satiated, Barabas' greed and avarice are never quieted.

Another Machiavellian trait which is ascribable to Barabas is egoism. He has absolutely no concern for anything except himself, his daughter, and his money. His loyalty to himself comes before all; this hierarchy of valued items is unquestionable: his gold, himself, and Abigail. The fact that he is willing to sacrifice the man Abigail loves and Abigail herself to increase his wealth indicates that his gold is paramount. After Abigail turns from him to a life in the nunnery, he is concerned only with his own selfish interests and his own welfare: "For so I live, perish may all the world" (V,v,10)! This is the epitome of egomania; he is willing to sacrifice the whole world as long as he is alive and well and wealthy.

The quality which confirms that Barabas is a Machiavellian villain is his reliance on deceit to gain him all things. He is a liar, a hypocrite, and a cheat. His career is "an

exhibition of villainies executed by artful deception."¹⁰⁴

The term policy, which is typically linked with Machiavellianism, is used thirteen times, each time indicating that an action is to be done or already has been done with deceit and treachery by someone utilizing Machiavellian tactics. The Turks used policy in order to let the tribute

increase to such a sum
As all the wealth of Malta cannot pay,
And now by that advantage thinks, belike,
To seize upon the town . . . (I,i,180-184).

The actions of the governor were done in policy; Abigail's entering the nunnery for the first time was policy; Barabas is made governor as a result of his policy in feigning death and returning with power to the city. He gained his wealth by dissembling, and after it had been taken, he regained his fortune through deceit. He even feigned death in order to get revenge and to gain more wealth. His life is based on this principle:

As good dissemble that thou never mean'st
As first mean truth and then dissemble it.
A counterfeit profession is better
Than unseen hypocrisy (I,ii,290-293).

"Iniquity is as dear to Barabas as Mammon; his delight in his own ingenious stratagems of revenge is everywhere evidenced."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cole, Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe, p. 141.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 128.

When the desires of Barabas are thwarted, he becomes a vengeful monster who knows no deed too terrible to be carried out in order to punish those who could reveal his dissemblings. "The aspiring superman of the play's beginning has been converted by its end into the caricature of a villain" ¹⁰⁶ The beginning of Barabas' downfall is in his choice of a companion, Ithamore, to aid him in his villainy. Ithamore knows how to poison, murder, and cheat, so he and Barabas are well suited for each other. Barabas advises him to have no compassion, to smile and scorn, to feign friendship and stab behind the back. However, all of their dealings end when Ithamore becomes self-seeking and talkative.

His downfall is a failure of policy--he allows another Machiavelli to partake of his policy and his Fortunes are then dependent on the ¹⁰⁷ good-will of his accomplice, a bitter enemy.

He tells Abigail about the deaths of Mathias and Lodovico; he tells Pilia-Borza about their poisoning the nuns and strangling Friar Jacomo; then, the outrage of outrages, he asks Barabas for money, and for more money. At that point, Barabas vows to murder his "faithful" accomplice, and he also murders Pilia-Borza, so she cannot reveal the murder. This is typical of the murdering cycle in the play: each murder

¹⁰⁶ Ribner, The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, p. xxxi.

¹⁰⁷ Wilbur Sanders, The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1968), p. 53.

causes the next as Barabas attempts to cover his tracks,
to hide his evil deeds from the light of day:

So now the fear is past and I am safe,
For he that shrived her is with in my house.
What if I murdered him ere Jacomo comes?
Now I have such a plot for both their lives
As never Jew nor Christian knew the like.
One turned my daughter; therefore he shall die.
The other knows enough to have my life;
Therefore 'tis not requisite he should live (IV,1,116-123).

This line of destruction which begins with poisoning Abigail and all the nuns extends to the strangling of Friar Jacomo and then to the poisoning of Ithamore and Pilia-Borza. Each murder is accomplished in a shrewd, subtle, Machiavellian fashion--poisoning or strangling. His revenge cannot be sated by one death, for each murder necessitates the next; the end of the murders can come only when Barabas himself is dead.

He does not succeed in ridding the world of all of the people who are aware of his murdering ways, and like every other Machiavellian character, he is doomed to destruction. In his last act of treachery he develops an elaborate scheme to kill Calymath and his troops. He arranges for them to go to his former house where he has devised a collapsing floor and has placed gunpowder under the floor. His plan is for them to be killed and for him to gain a reward. However, when Barabas arrives to witness his villainy, he is caught in his own trap. He falls into a cauldron below the floor and is killed by the deception which he had hoped would

bring him greater wealth and luxury. Fortune's wheel has come around to claim another Machiavelli.

The Jew of Malta is the only play which labels its character a Machiavelli: in the "Prologue Spoken at Court" it is noted that the play is a story of a Jew who is "in all his projects, a sound Machiavel/And that's his character." The regular Prologue is spoken by Machiavelli himself, and is reminiscent of Gabriel Harvey's poem. It outlines the major ideas of the Elizabethan Machiavelli and attributes them to Barabas. The ideas which are presented are that religion is but "a childish toy," "might first made kings," and "a strong citadel/Commands much more than letter can import." At the close Machiavel presents

. . .the tragedy of a Jew
Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed,
Which money was not got without my means (Prologue, 30-33).

Without the deception and deceit encouraged by this Machiavel, Barabas could never have gained so great a fortune or have been so infamous a character. It is from Machiavelli's ideas that Barabas

derives his eagerness for revenge, his contempt for religion as mere self-seeking and hypocrisy, his idea that one is bound to keep faith only when it is profitable to do so, and his complete egoism.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Bakeless, Christopher Marlowe: The Man in His Time, p. 184.

In the dramas of Christopher Marlowe, there is manifested a profound interest in the nature of the Machiavellian hero. In his plays, Tamburlaine the Great and The Jew of Malta, the two main characters illustrate the Elizabethan interpretation of Machiavellian thought.

Marlowe took Gentillet's statements and mis-statements of the true Machiavellian doctrine at their face-value and let his villain-hero advocate them impartially.¹⁰⁹

Marlowe's characters are based on the perversion of the ideas of Machiavelli: Marlowe applies Machiavellian cynicism to all affairs, personal and political while Machiavelli applies them only to political affairs. Both Tamburlaine and Barabas are ambitious for personal gain; they are not interested in the welfare of their countries; Marlowe opposes *virtù* to virtue while Machiavelli does not distinguish between the two, assuming that a virtuous man possesses no moral qualities not held by a man of *virtù*; Marlowe neglects the role of fortune in man's affairs, but Machiavelli admits that an element of luck must be considered; Marlowe's characters seek power and strength for its own sake, but Machiavelli's desire for power in the leader was aimed at unifying Italy; and, in general, Marlowe causes the political theories of Machiavelli to appear black, perverted, and corrupted in his characters.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 183.

¹¹⁰ Bakeless, The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe, p. 349.

Both Tamburlaine and The Jew of Malta are plays concerned with the Machiavellian theme of power: the power of force used to conquer land and earthly kings, and the power of fraud used to attain personal wealth and the material destruction of all enemies. The composite picture of a Machiavell formed by melding the characteristics of Tamburlaine with those of Barabas is of a superman who is proud, powerful, cruel, violent, deceptive, estranged from God, and above all, infinitely ambitious. He leads a tragic career which begins in hatred, is supported by craft, and ends through the underestimation of others' abilities and the overestimation of his own power to avoid Death.¹¹¹ Every Machiavell learns that although he is able to bend Fortune to his own devices for a period of time, finally and inevitably, Fate will bind the Prince to Fortune's wheel and bring him down from success and glory to destruction.

¹¹¹ Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 44.

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