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Marlowe's curious queens: a gender study

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Marlowe's Curious Queens: A Gender Study

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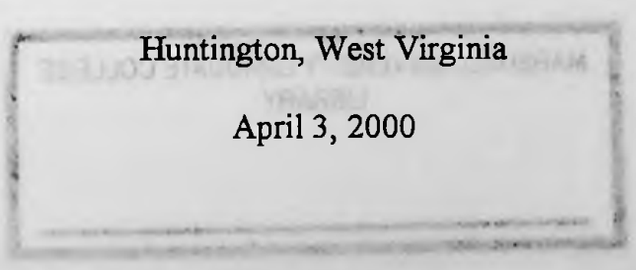

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Last but not least, thanks to God that I can put words together and make sense out of complex ideas without too much effort on my part. I really appreciate that, seeing as I am profoundly lazy.

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Chapter 1

Christopher Marlowe's plays reflect the changing concepts of gender found within the time he wrote them, as Elizabethan England struggled with the contradictions between the ancient, rigid gender roles embodied in the Petrarchan model and the paradox of a female monarch who rejected all suitors. This struggle, coupled with the rising popularity of the companionate marriage that itself implied some degree of sexual equality, challenged fundamental patriarchal assumptions about gender, property, even government, and critical thinkers like Marlowe infused their works with ideas from the debates of the day. Marlowe's early plays, especially *Tamburlaine I & II*, reflect a masculocentric world-view that treasures and eroticizes male relationships while marginalizing, if not ignoring altogether, male-female relations and female status in general. *Edward II* and the anomalous *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, however, are the products of a mind struggling with questions of gender, from the cunning of Isabella in the former to the queen who dominates Aeneas and threatens the order of heaven itself in the latter. Indeed, I contend that Dido ranks as one the most revolutionary characters in Renaissance drama, one who not only challenges but overturns gender roles, dominating the males in her world with as much power as Tamburlaine wields in his. Marlowe creates something in Isabella and especially Dido that history has no context for, that Aristotle and most Renaissance dramatists alike would dismiss as improbable, if not impossible: the tragic heroine.

Marlowe's challenge is daunting, to say the least. Women's roles in tragedies (and history plays, for that matter) are almost always defined by the men that encircle them. In Emily Bartel's words, "women...really could not have had a renaissance" (417). This comes as no surprise to the student of history; Belsey points out that "women posed a problem of identity which unsettled the law" - the same law that offered no rights to women in the first place - and had "no position from

which to define their own being" (153 & 190). Women's status, then, was more defined by negatives and restrictions rather than rights and assurances. Further, for most women, there is no remedy, since they are subject to a "tradition of representation in which rebellious, outspoken, or desiring women habitually end up married [Zenocrate], muted [Isabella], or dead [Dido]" (Bartels 418). Queen Elizabeth serves as a spectacular exception to the assumption that a woman in early modern England is "essentially a woman married, about to be married, destined for marriage or a widow: there is no place in the system...for the woman who intends to remain unmarried" (Maclean 57). Elizabeth's singularity makes sense in light of the fact that, despite the growing popularity of the companionate marriage during the Reformation, the law still provided the husband with "authority over [his wife's] goods" and "her person," and the husband could "'correct' or beat [his wife] to a 'reasonable degree'" to enforce his will (Maclean 76).

The impact of having "no legal rights as members of the social body" is especially important to the present study in that it affects the speech, or rather the frequent lack thereof, of women in drama (Belsey 153). Maclean attributes the paucity of female voices in Renaissance texts to "the association of temptation and seduction with women's speech," an association that dates back to Eve and the expulsion from Eden in Genesis (15). Davis observes that when "*women's voices*, and behind them, women's minds, are at the forefront" in Renaissance writing, the text is "typically...about silencing women" like Dido and Isabella, rather than giving voice to their concerns (191). Belsey provides a considerable amount of support as well by discussing the difficulty of viewing women as "subjects" in the first place, since the entire gender was "enjoined to silence, discouraged from any form of speech which was not an act of submission to the authority of their fathers and husbands. Permitted to break their silence in order to acquiesce in

the utterances of others, women were denied any single place from which to speak for themselves" (149).

Furthermore, women are prone to sin; in Renaissance texts, "it seems generally accepted that woman is not quite the equal of man in the manner of her creation" and that "most writers suggest that woman is less well endowed with moral apparatus," that is to say, women are more easily given to vice (Maclean 27). Along these lines, it must be noted that two of the three queens studied in this paper foreground their sexuality and use their physical beauty to their advantage. This is not shocking, of course, but to the male Renaissance audience, a woman's sexual desire was a boundless mystery that intrigued and terrified, and "women's sexuality unleashed is seen as able to destroy all control, undermining the institutions of society by threatening their continuity" (Belsey 165). When that sexual power is combined with political power, the result is a palpable unease felt throughout the early modern kingdom. Maclean notes that "there are political dangers inherent in female rulers: the sense of continuity offered by patrilineal descent is lost, and queens may marry against the interests of their subjects," a threat that arises in *Dido*, but is dismissed by that heroine with a show of power to support her will (74). In addition, an adulterous queen can threaten the very succession of power in the entire realm in a way that the mightiest armies cannot, and the reality of such a threat only reinforces the culturally sanctioned misogyny.

The notion that sexuality is "misogynistic" and thereby associated with women is fundamental to this study, for reasons that will become apparent when the sexual behavior of Isabella and Dido is discussed in later chapters (Orgel 26). A few words about the relationships, often idealized and eroticized, between men in these plays (and in the culture at large) will help clarify this point. As *Tamburlaine* (and Aeneas in *Dido*, to an extent) will show, "extreme virility,

manifested in Spartan self-denial and military valor, is not only depicted as consistent with men's erotic desire for other men, it also seems to be expressed in it" (Rackin 69). Conversely, "a man's desire for a woman, now coded as a mark of masculinity, is repeatedly associated...with effeminacy" in the Renaissance (Rackin 69). Stephen Orgel goes even further, arguing that "women are dangerous to men [in the Renaissance] because sexual passion for women renders men effeminate: this is an age in which sexuality itself is misogynistic, as the love of women threatens the perilously achieved male identity" (26).

This is not to say that sixteenth century men eschewed carnal relations with women; there is abundant evidence, especially in comedies, that sexual attraction between men and women flourished then as now. Rackin and Orgel are simply illustrating a difference in the construction and presentation of passion in Renaissance drama, in which "the fear of effeminization is a central element in all discussions of what constitutes a 'real man' in the period" (Orgel 26). Tamburlaine and Aeneas both treasure their relationships with their men over the "female drudgerie" that Zenocrate and Dido demand; to do any less would risk self-emasculation (*Dido* 4.3.55). Conversely, Dido's powerful rejection of the effeminate and of sexual desire and her embrace of her own power allows her to be "thought of as 'masculine'" by the same methods of rationalization that reconciled Elizabeth's status as a woman and a ruler (Orgel 127).

Putting the queens aside for a moment, Rackin notes that, though the male warriors' "homoerotic passion exceeds the heteroerotic one...it does not displace it" (70). This is the problem that Gaveston, in *Edward II*, represents; he completely displaces Edward's heteroerotic passion and thus threatens to destroy the entire kingdom (see Chapter 2). His and Edward's open embrace of sodomy over and above the accepted level of homoerotic desire "signifies and enacts

Satan's plot to intensify subversion in the country," and the results can clearly be seen in the revolt of the nobles (Normand 173). In this sense, "the ending of homoerotic desire is death," at least when that desire is not mitigated by the corresponding, if less valued, heteroerotic desire (Smith 136). The ideal male-male relationships in Renaissance drama are described in masculine language and "encompassed a breadth of behaviours that to twentieth century eyes seem sexual (and are now proscribed); and yet were not then so interpreted" (Normand 179). By contrast, "the language of effeminacy [is] correspondingly used to denote male homosexuals then," as now, and this is how Marlowe presents Edward and, especially, Gaveston (Cady 152). Cady's assertions that early modern England "had a sense of different sexual orientations" and that "'love' and related erotic terms [were] the age's language for heterosexuality" are at odds with the work of Alan Bray and those who follow him, including Rackin and Orgel (145). Nevertheless, at least in the case of Edward and Gaveston, his thesis seems valid.

Just as valid, however, is Joseph Pequigney's study of male-male desire, which, like Rackin and Orgel, makes it clear that "'same-sex love'...does not translate *homosexual* but is meant to be more comprehensive, more akin to Eve Sedgwick's notion of 'male homosocial desire,' comprising the male bond in which the sexual body takes part and the one in which it does not, as well as affinities between those bonds" (188). Normand highlights the struggle inherent in these representations, placing Marlowe in a society that "fiercely repressed the possibility of sexual acts between men by the fearful idea of sodomy, and yet, on the other hand, was generally indifferent to most same-sex eroticism among men and boys" (172). The association of sodomy with chaos and political upheaval underlies *Edward II*, but it is also necessary to remember that sodomy, in the Renaissance, does not define homosexual behavior; "the signs of male friendship in the

sixteenth century...were intense and physical," yet they do not, for the most part, denote the "illicit sexual desire" Edward feels for Gaveston (Normand 179).

Haber makes the point most succinctly: in most cases (Edward and Gaveston being exceptions, obviously), "desire for another man, then, fails to compromise these characters' masculinity; instead, it reaffirms it. Desire for a woman, by contrast, incurs the risk of feminization" (70). In this light, Tamburlaine and Aeneas can have passion for their men and their lovers without sacrificing masculinity, according to Renaissance codes, so long as their lovers remain subordinate in consideration to their men. Should they lose perspective in these relationships, the men will suffer; "a man effeminated by passion for a woman suffer[s] a double degradation: the enslavement of his higher reason by his base, bodily appetites, and the subjection of the superior sex to the inferior one" (Haber 70). The risk inherent in female sexual power is quite clear; it metaphorically turns a man into a woman, which, in early modern England, would be psychically disastrous to the masculine ego. Our perspective is quite different, of course; "the closest modern analogue...is boys in a schoolyard, afraid to play with the girls because having a girlfriend will make a boy a sissy" (Rackin 86). Of course, the "boys" in this quote seem to be getting younger and younger every day, almost completely erasing the last remnants of the Renaissance conception of masculinity. Even kindergartners have girlfriends in modern America; somewhere, Tamburlaine weeps.

I begin my analysis with *Tamburlaine.* Roy Battenhouse, in a dated but useful study, reflects the influence of years of superficial criticism, arguing that "Zenocrate and Dido, these 'Helens' of Marlowe's plays, are intended to represent earthly beauties, endowed with nature's gifts, but devoid of religion or conscience" (167). Alluding to both women's comparisons to

Helen of Troy, one of history's most-maligned women, Battenhouse goes so far as to compare Tamburlaine's concubine (later wife) Zenocrate to Spenser's deceitful temptress Duessa, both "beautiful but inconstant ladies" (190). His analysis of Duessa, however, fails to note that Spenser strips the witch of her beauty and reveals the hag beneath, whereas Marlowe allows the shallow -- but essentially good -- Zenocrate to go to her grave with dignity. Further, since Spenser infuses Duessa with allegorical depth and motivations that are fairly complex, she is a much more realistic character than Zenocrate, who exists mainly as a trophy for Tamburlaine and an occasional voice of conscience against his bloodlust. This statement in no way attacks Tamburlaine's queen, but only brings attention to the author's focus in writing this play. Marlowe does not allow Zenocrate the depth that Spenser affords Duessa because Zenocrate is good and pure, recalling Petrarch's Laura, and serves as a foil to Tamburlaine's strength, aggression, and conquest (which certainly have sexual relevance as well). Marlowe does not consider the heroine at this point; his play is about a hero, in the same way that most Renaissance plays are (see Phillippy's comments on this, below), and the women in orbit around the hero are fortunate if they utter a few memorable lines of grief or lament before they leave the stage.

Tamburlaine is the undeniable hero in these plays, and the women around him are marginalized for this reason; just as Virgil chose to give Aeneas speech and heroism at Dido's expense, Marlowe does here for Tamburlaine. He will later make amends with a vengeance, but in this play, he allows his heroine to remain subordinate. Even in her death, Zenocrate serves Tamburlaine, in that the "coming of misfortune [gives] opportunity for revealing Tamburlaine's character" (Battenhouse 163). Zenocrate takes whatever character she has to the grave with her, and even as her husband attempts to tear the earth apart to avenge her death, the reader realizes

she has remained something of a mystery throughout the plays. As Charles Masinton points out, "Tamburlaine's wrath when Zenocrate dies results not so much from his feelings for her...as from an ego thwarted and insulted by a natural event" (43). Tamburlaine conquers Zenocrate just as he conquers the rest of Persia: by sheer force of will. Other than an occasional gentle rebuke, the audience sees only the Zenocrate that Tamburlaine himself sees, a trophy that he crowns at the end of *Part I* and keeps on a pedestal throughout. She "achieves greatest dramatic prominence when Tamburlaine speaks to her or describes her. We see her during the play from his point of view" (Masinton 21). Marlowe gives her very little character and not a single soliloquy. This last omission might not seem important, given the relative rarity of female soliloquies in Renaissance drama, but since both Dido and Isabella have several, this distinction of Zenocrate's is relevant if only as a foil to those later heroines; perhaps the very notion of a tragic heroine rests on the existence of the female soliloquy -- we will deal with this in later chapters.

Zenocrate exists as the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt and the concubine/wife of Tamburlaine the Conqueror. While her lover battles the Turk Bajazeth, Zenocrate trades barbs with the Turk's wife Zabina in a feminized version of the battle; it is significant that neither woman has any conceivable reason to hate the other, save that their husbands are warring, and that is enough justification for them to pray to their respective gods for the other's death (3.3.165-212). Later in *Part I*, as Tamburlaine prepares to attack her father's city, Zenocrate begs for his life, but is careful to assert that she still wants her lover to win the battle; her roles as daughter and wife (though not married yet, she acts as a wife throughout most of the play) conflict and cause her much stress before and during the battle. Nevertheless, she shows only momentary concern for anyone other than her father or lover; Marlowe has not given her anyone else to care about

(4.4.70-80). Her prescribed roles go only so far, and she seems to have no will or desires of her own. She concerns herself only with what Tamburlaine wants and does; she "scarcely ever doubts [Tamburlaine] either in *Tamburlaine I* or *II*, and when she does, as during the destruction of her native town and the slaughter of the virgins...her reservations she quickly puts to rest" (Proser 79). By comparison, nearly all the men in the play, especially those with power like Mycetes and Cosroe (or those recently deposed, such as Bajazeth), have distinctive characteristics that command our attention, if only that they have power and desire to maintain control (Mycetes and Bajazeth), or seek power with such ambition that they destroy everything in their path (Cosroe and Tamburlaine).

Marlowe seems unable, or unwilling, to give the women around Tamburlaine much to do. Only Olympia, who in *Part II* tricks her suitor Theridamus into killing her rather than sacrificing her honor to him, seems to have much strength, and her death prevents her from betraying her roles as the good wife and mother, even though the men who gave her those roles have already died. Her existence is prescribed by her husband and son even after they are gone, and the Petrarchan and Renaissance gender constraints collide and bear down upon her, preventing her from choosing anything other than death. Along those same lines, the only descriptions of Zenocrate come from Tamburlaine himself, in a pair of passages where the warrior invokes Petrarchan devices for familiar purposes (the second passage, 5.1.133-175, is similar enough that this passage will suffice as example):

Tamb. Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
Brighter than is the silver Rhodope,
Fairer than the whitest snow on Scythian hills,

Thy person is worth more to Tamburlaine
Than the possession of the Persian crown,
Which gracious stars have promised at my birth.
A hundred tartars shall attend on thee,
Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus.
Thy garments shall be made of Median silk,
Enchased with precious jewels of mine own,
More rich and valurous than Zenocrate's.
With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled,
Thou shalt be drawn amidst the frozen pools,
And scale the icy mountains' lofty tops,
Which with thy beauty will be soon resolved.
My martial prizes with five hundred men,
And on the fifty-headed Volga's waves,
Shall all we offer to Zenocrate,
And then myself to fair Zenocrate.

Tech. What now! -- in love?

Tamb. Techelles, women must be flattered.
But this is she with whom I am in love. (1.2.87-108)

This passage both reflects and comments on the Petrarchan model of courtship. The language is full of the familiar comparisons of the subject's (object's) beauty and worth, and concludes with various promises of devotion on the part of the suitor. None of this is surprising,

but it must be noted that not only Zenocrate, but her servants and Tamburlaine's as well, attend throughout this scene. Everything Tamburlaine does is in front of an audience, and his winning of the captured princess is no different. This is a commentary on not only the popularity (even overuse) of the Petrarchan suit, but also the paint-by-numbers banality of it, as expressed in the final lines of this passage (Tamburlaine's cynical explanation to Techelles, in front of Zenocrate, of his words).

Tamburlaine begins his well-crafted plea with the traditional exaltations of the subject's beauty, which is "lovelier," "brighter," "fairer," and so forth (1.2.87-89). Recalling Marlowe's own "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," the conqueror then promises his lady the world, with "a hundred tartars" to wait on her and "five hundred men" at her service as the lovers traverse the world (1.2.93 & 102). This sounds suspiciously similar, if more aggressive and violent, to the shepherd's promise to his love that his "swains shall dance and sing / For thy delight each morning" ("Passionate Shepherd" 21-22). Marlowe's pastoral lyric is one of the most well-known invitations of love, both in his own time and ours, and for Tamburlaine to work within that tradition, in addition to the Petrarchan model, only makes sense, especially given the author. Further, Tamburlaine is a passionate shepherd, literally (he is the son of a Scythian shepherd who has risen to power by sheer force of will, i.e., passion for power and conquest), and Zenocrate is to be another victory on his road to power. Marlowe's lyrical shepherd does not pepper his speech with violence as Tamburlaine does, but whereas the shepherd's love provides no answer to his sweet and peaceful entreaties, Zenocrate succumbs (eventually) to Tamburlaine's martial language (see also Othello's winning of Desdemona). Zenocrate seems unaware of the realities behind such language, that "the glory of the words varnishes the true implications of the

destructive qualities of the deeds" of war (Proser 74). She is indeed "flattered" and won, which suggests that the Petrarchan mode of pursuit is most effective when appeals to ambition and physical force complement the expected praise of beauty and chastity -- when love conquers all, so to speak.

In any case, Tamburlaine most certainly uses the Petrarchan and invitational lyric forms to win his maiden, and his odd comment to his henchman at the end of this passage is perhaps Marlowe's contribution to the Petrarchan discourse. By admitting to his men and his would-be love that "women must be flattered," he effectively negates everything he has just said to Zenocrate, reducing it to seductive fluff (1.2.107). Tamburlaine is smarter than he appears, however, and I imagine he looks directly at Zenocrate when he proclaims that "this is she with whom I am in love" (1.2.108). In a way, this honest bluntness breaks free of the Petrarchan conventions and its boldness moves Zenocrate to fall in love with Tamburlaine. Further, Zenocrate herself would have at least a cursory familiarity with the conventions of courtship, having been betrothed to another before Tamburlaine captured her, and could recognize that sweet words of praise are often offered with insincerity, further bolstering her interest in the warrior for his brazenness. Lastly, this pair of lines allows Tamburlaine to save face with his men, who are not accustomed to hearing such flowery words coming from the warrior's mouth. Ultimately, Tamburlaine just does what he does best: he sees something he wants and he takes it, using every weapon in his arsenal. Zenocrate either loves him deeply or convinces herself that she does out of desperation; we cannot possibly know, since she has no soliloquies to reveal her emotions. The reader can only take at face value the dialogue she does have, which (from this scene on) indicates that she does indeed love her conqueror.

Lacking a voice, Zenocrate does not have that much to do; she follows Tamburlaine around, literally, witnessing his victories, bearing him sons, occasionally questioning his fierceness, and then succumbing to the flattering lines that he uses to placate her. Then she dies, and in her death achieves nothing, with the possible exception of a deepening of her husband's character. Although it is possible that Marlowe could be commenting on the relative unimportance of women in a very masculine world (Tamburlaine bestows more affection on his men than on his wife), I must nevertheless conclude that Marlowe's gender representations in *Tamburlaine* are traditional at best, misogynist at worst.

Zenocrate's shining moment comes in Act 5 of *Part I*, where, discovering the bodies of the Turks Bajazeth and Zabina, she momentarily chastises her lover (it is worth noting he is not on stage at the time) and shows concern for herself as a separate entity from the men in her life. While fearing for her father's life at the hands of her betrothed, she laments first the slain virgins hanging from the walls of the besieged Damascus:

> *Zeno.* Wretched Zenocrate! that liv'st to see
> Damascus' walls dyed with Egyptians' blood,
> Thy father's subjects and thy countrymen;
> The streets strowed with dissevered joints of men,
> And wounded bodies gasping yet for life:
> But most accursed, to see the sun-bright troop
> Of heavenly virgins and unspotted maids,
> Whose looks might make the angry god of arms
> To break his sword and mildly treat of love,

On horsemen's lances to be hoisted up
And guiltlessly endure a cruel death:
For every fell and stout Tartarian steed,
That stamped on others with their thundering hoofs,
When all their riders charged their quivering spears,
Began to check the ground and rein themselves,
Gazing upon the beauty of their looks.
Ah Tamburlaine! wert thou the cause of this
That term'st Zenocrate thy dearest love?
Whose lives were dearer to Zenocrate
Than her own life, or aught save thine own love.
But see another bloody spectacle!
Ah, wretched eyes, the enemies of my heart,
How are ye glutted with these grievous objects,
And tell my soul more tales of bleeding ruth!
See, see, Anippe, if they breathe or no.

Anippe. No breath, nor sense, nor motion in them both.
Ah, madam! this their slavery hath enforced,
And ruthless cruelty of Tamburlaine.

Zeno. Earth, cast up fountains from thy entrails,
And wet thy cheeks for their untimely deaths!
Shake with their weight in sign of fear and grief!

Blush, heaven, that gave them honor at their birth
And let them die a death so barbarous!
Those that are proud of fickle empery
And place their chiefest good in earthly pomp,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperess!
Thou, that in conduct of thy happy stars
Sleep'st every night with conquests on thy brows,
And yet would'st shun the wavering turns of war,
In fear and feeling of the like distress,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperess!
Ah, mighty Jove and holy Mahomet,
Pardon my love!- O pardon his contempt
Of earthly fortune and respect of pity,
And let not conquest, ruthlessly pursued,
Be equally against his life incensed
In this great Turk and hapless Emperess!
And pardon me that was not moved with ruth
To see them live so long in misery!
Ah, what may chance to thee, Zenocrate?

Anippe. Madam, content yourself, and be resolved
Your love hath Fortune so at his command,
That she shall stay and turn her wheel no more,

As long as life maintains his mighty arm

That fights for honor to adorn your head. (5.1.321-378)

Zenocrate is "wretched" out of necessity, first of all; her role as a daughter prescribes that she should bemoan her "father's subjects and ...countrymen" (5.1.321-323). She seems to distance herself from their fate by noting that these are not her people, but her father's. Nevertheless, the violence and gore all around her affect her more profoundly than she might have expected; in all her travels with Tamburlaine, this is the first instance of revulsion in the wake of her lover's fury (as noted earlier, this is only a temporary reprimand). Zenocrate's language is powerful and vivid in this passage, as if she is just realizing that "the establishment of both empire and imperial inflection is grounded upon verbal abuse, violence, and carnage," the same martial language that won her to Tamburlaine in the first place (Proser 75). Her honest shock and sorrow invite the reader to see the gore through her horrified eyes, as if awake to death for the first time.

Zenocrate wastes no time portraying the carnage around her; the city's "walls dyed with Egyptians' blood...the streets strowed with dissevered joints of men, / And wounded bodies gasping yet for life" indicates the aftermath of a horrible battle in terms of death, not honor (5.1.322-325). The imagery here and throughout the passage is graphic and painful, allowing Zenocrate's horror to pass to the reader without losing intensity or suffering dilution. For the first time in the play, Zenocrate reacts according to her instincts and speaks unguardedly. There are no men onstage at the time, of course, allowing Zenocrate to freely express her revulsion and castigate her lover (see below). Further, her tone is frantic and immediate, as if she is ranting across the stage, bouncing from horror to horror as she laments the "bloody spectacle" that is the true aftermath of aggression and war (5.1.341).

Honor and victory are notably absent from the vision of the slain virgins, the "sun-bright troop" of "unspotted maids" (in contrast with concubine Zenocrate) whose appeals to Tamburlaine to spare Damascus only served to make an example out of them (5.1.326-327). Zenocrate's revulsion at the virgin's death suggests a bond with the maids who could, in a perfect world, "make the angry god of arms / To break his sword and mildly treat of love" (5.1.328-329). Zenocrate was among the unspoiled only a few acts ago, and the "cruel death" inflicted by invading "horsemen's lances" suggests not only the literal fate that Zenocrate avoided by surrendering to Tamburlaine, but also, metaphorically, the fate she has actually chosen for herself, if "on horsemen's lances to be hoisted up / And guiltlessly endure a cruel death" is read for the sexual meaning that is certainly present (5.1.330-331). She thus simultaneously laments the sacrifice of the virgins while uncomfortably identifying herself with them and their fates.

Zenocrate recalls Tamburlaine's wooing of her earlier in the play when she refers to the "Tartarian steed, / That stamped on others with their thundering hoofs" (5.1.332-333). These same warriors and steeds were pledged to her service by her lord (see 1.2.93, cited above), and certainly Zenocrate cannot escape some semblance of guilt in her mind, although the reader, familiar with Tamburlaine's fury, allows her to escape blame. This guilt leads her to an attempt to reconcile her feelings of love for her lord (if those feelings are love -- again, Marlowe forces us to take her words at face value) with the horror she feels at having possibly caused so much death and destruction. Her handmaiden's words, meant to assuage her fears, only reinforce the idea that all this conquest is for Zenocrate's sake: "his mighty arm...fights for honor to adorn your head" (5.1.377-378). Such an idea, meant to flatter, must strike the young concubine with horror; she is not accustomed to having any power at all, so she is frustrated by the notion that she can wield

power over life and death while remaining powerless herself.

Upon seeing the Turks, who have killed themselves after enduring Tamburlaine's cruel torture and humiliation, she seems to realize the precarious nature of fortune and power, repeating her amazement, "Behold the Turk and his great Emperess!" over and over, as if imagining herself and Tamburlaine, just for a moment, in the same position (5.1.359). This helps explain why Zenocrate distances herself, just slightly, from her lord when she wonders "Ah Tamburlaine! wert thou the cause of this / That term'st Zenocrate thy dearest love?" (5.1.337-338). She has associated herself and her fortunes closely with Tamburlaine since he seduced her (her verbal battle with Zabina and her implicit blessing of the siege of Damascus, so long as her father should not be harmed, come to mind). The violence of her language in this passage confirms that the carnage and bloodshed have overwhelmed her at last, causing her to command "Earth, cast up fountains from thy entrails, / And wet thy cheeks for their untimely deaths! / Shake with their weight in sign of fear and grief!" at the sight of the dead Turks (5.1.349-351). Zenocrate's grief and growing sense of injustice compel her to challenge heaven itself, shouting at the skies "Blush, heaven, that gave them honor at their birth / And let them die a death so barbarous!" (5.1.352-353).

This last sentiment betrays a conscience at work; while it is obvious from her language and tone that she is horrified, has indeed been outraged throughout this passage, her reference to "honor at their birth" and the contrast of a "barbarous" end parallel her concern for herself, also highly born and, at this moment, at the top of fortune's wheel. For the first time, Zenocrate contemplates the cruel turns that wheel can take and, I suspect, imagines herself falling from high. She wonders if being "proud of fickle empery" and placing her "cheifest good in earthly pomp"

will accelerate her eventual decline (5.1.354-355). Her repeated horror upon seeing the mighty Turk "and his great Emperess" dead at the hands of a fierce shepherd forces her to wonder about her own fate (5.1.359). She moves away from her lover, only momentarily, but in doing so she achieves just a smattering of individuality that, in my mind, redeems her character from becoming little more than an appendage. She is by no means the tragic heroine that I am pursuing, and the lack of access to honest thoughts from her mind (i.e., soliloquies) prohibits her from becoming as important as Isabella and Dido. Nevertheless, in this scene, in which men are conspicuously absent from the stage, Zenocrate rebukes her lover's violence and expresses a lack of confidence in his ability to "command" fate (5.1.375). Zenocrate's horror at the fate of the Turk and his queen underscores her fear that she has cast her fortunes too closely with a warrior who may very well end up on the wrong end of a spear. For the first time in the play, she fears the repercussions of her own actions, and suffers regret. She moves toward reconciliation with her conscience, begging whomever might be listening to "pardon me that was not moved with ruth / To see them live so long in misery! Ah, what may chance to thee, Zenocrate?" (5.1.371-373).

Whether honest regret or fear of fortune's reprisal move her to her prayers, she seems to forget all her worries within two hundred lines. The men return to the stage and she loses her voice, once again the happy daughter and lover. Tamburlaine has defeated her father and his allied forces, but pardons the sultan, and crowns Zenocrate his queen as they prepare for their marriage, with her father's blessings. She is silenced immediately by her lover, at first overjoyed to "see the King, my father, issue safe / From dangerous battle of my conquering love" (5.1.443-444). When Tamburlaine more or less tells her that they will marry, she replies simply "else should I much forget myself, my lord" (5.1.502). She never confronts him about her concerns,

and even as she dies in *Part II* their fortunes have not come close to those of the Turks whose suffering she seemed to feel so deeply. Some critics, including Battenhouse, have suggested that Zenocrate is fickle, and is just as addicted to power as Tamburlaine, even if her thrills are mostly vicarious. I do not have enough evidence to make that kind of judgment, since Marlowe provides little more than a few tortured lines of guilt and passionate rebuke, mixed with two plays' worth of what I would term gender-role predictability, and calls it a character. It is no wonder that Tamburlaine enjoys the sports of war and the company of men so much; Marlowe has not given him an interesting woman to come home to. Masinton argues that Tamburlaine "has failed from the beginning to appreciate Zenocrate as a human being," but I counter that since Marlowe has not created a human being in his portrayal of Zenocrate, Tamburlaine is not really to blame (48). All champions get bored with old trophies as new ones accumulate, and this passionate shepherd's Petrarchan leanings cannot compare to his boundless ambition. In the *Tamburlaine* plays, male voices dominate and even silence through brazen aggression and subtle seduction, leaving little, if anything, for women like Zenocrate to say or do, save die and remain forever silent.

Chapter 2

Marlowe's use of the Petrarchan models in *Tamburlaine* falls within the gender role norms for his day; by the time he wrote *Edward II*, he was ready to give a woman a voice, and the result is the first of this study's tragic heroines, Queen Isabella. Clifford Leech provides a useful transition to begin the study of Isabella in *Edward II* by pointing out that "never before had [Marlowe] attempted the probing of a woman's character, for the presentation of Zenocrate, Olympia, Abigail, is for the most part emblematic" (74). The complexity of Isabella's motives, words, and actions are among "the most perceptive things in Marlowe's writing" (Leech 74). The spurned Queen, whose husband has rejected her for his homosexual lover Gaveston and has brought England to the brink of civil war over that unacceptable love/lover and the titles and power he has lavished upon him, seeks the aid of the hotheaded noble Mortimer Junior and eventually overthrows the King and installs herself and Mortimer Junior as *de facto* rulers of the realm. Audience sympathy with her comes and goes, depending on whether we think her actions are justifiable, and more importantly, on whether she has the good of the nation and her son, or her own ambition and lust, at heart. Further, the Queen seems to truly love her disaffected husband throughout much of the play and ostensibly wants nothing more than a reciprocation of that love, which makes her conniving against him from her first appearance on stage all the more interesting. This unwillingness or inability on her part to totally abandon Edward, coupled with her desire for power and her insistence on achieving that power by manipulating the men in her life, constitutes her tragic flaw, the Aristotelian "mistake" that leads to her downfall. She is a remarkable woman and serves as a complete departure for Marlowe, who depicts her with all the complexity that Zenocrate lacks, creating a truly tragic heroine.

Like Queen Elizabeth (to an extent), Isabella relies on careful manipulations of the men in her life to achieve her power, and chooses silence when it benefits her. Regarding the anomalous situation of a female monarch in a patriarchal culture, Robert Shephard observes that "Elizabeth, as an unmarried woman exercising power in her own name, was already operating outside of her age's normal gender and political roles" (106). Further, Elizabeth's "refusal to marry or to name a successor created political anxiety about the future" of the country (106). As such, sexual rumors about the Queen were rampant during her lengthy reign, and "the effect of these rumours was to diminish [her] political standing, even to undermine the legitimacy of [her] rule" (Shephard 101-102). Despite these obstacles to her power, Elizabeth sustained her rule for decades; an important factor in her longevity was her skillful manipulation of the men around her, and her decision to choose silence when it benefited her. Marlowe's heroine behaves in much the same way Elizabeth does, commanding when she can, but more often convincing men like Mortimer Junior to do her bidding for her. In this manner, she plays the nobles as if she were unmarried and held power; given her husband's infatuation with his lover Gaveston and the nobles' general hatred for both those men, it is not unrealistic to view Isabella as an Elizabethan figure, married perhaps, but in her mind free to choose another. That freedom to choose, or in the case of Elizabeth to choose not to choose, becomes a key to the power that these women are able to wield.

Marlowe has placed Isabella in a precarious situation. She is friendless, with a disaffected husband, her only other relatives being her brother, the unsympathetic French king, and her young son, powerless until the end of the play. Isabella is a foreigner as well, and can only suspect what the King and Gaveston might do with her. The King has heaped titles and power upon his lover, much to the nobles' chagrin, but Isabella stands to lose the most in the situation. Often a married

queen's only power comes from the influence she wields upon her husband; Isabella wields none on Edward, which is perhaps why she seems so eager to influence the nobles, who are receptive to her talents. Shephard, in discussing rumors about King James and his homosexual lovers, observes that a male lover was more of a threat to the realm than a mistress, since men "could be named to high office, receive titles of honour, build an independent power base, and eventually become...potent political player[s] in [their] own right" (116). Elizabeth and James both promoted their favorites to high positions, but the English public, according to Shephard, seemed more inflamed by Elizabeth's actions than James's, suggesting that "an autonomous, unmarried woman wielding royal power was perceived as more of an anomaly than...a homosexual male in the same position" (116). Marlowe, on the other hand, portrays an England inflamed to the point of civil war because of the favors bestowed on the *King's* male lover. Isabella takes advantage of the nobles' outrage at the King's actions regarding Gaveston; as Ian McAdam notes, she becomes "a consummate role-player" in order to achieve her will (217). Her increasingly evident desire for power (which will come to light later in this chapter) serves as a foil to the reader's increasing sympathy for Gaveston and especially Edward as their fortunes decline. As readers we must question whether we are not unlike the Renaissance English, more accepting of a gay man who is born into power but cares nothing for it than a powerless woman who achieves command through sheer force of will.

As does *Dido, Queene of Carthage*, *Edward II* invites the reader to pay careful attention to the meaning of gender within its scenes. Most of the gender analysis will center on Queen Isabella, whose complex manipulation of her feminine role reveals an awareness of gender that simply does not exist within *Tamburlaine*, or even *Dido*, for that matter. Isabella employs both

powerful and emotional speech and calculated silence to persuade "gentle Mortimer" and the other nobles to assist her in her power-play, while remaining ostensibly faithful to her husband, who has discarded her (1.2.47). In this way, Marlowe reverses the traditional gender roles, creating a situation in which the "female lover...is the model of fidelity, and [the] male beloved [Edward] is the exemplum of infidelity and cruelty" (Phillippy 2). Isabella indeed loves her husband, or thinks she does, although McAdam contends that "*Edward II* is, in the final analysis, a play in which nobody really loves anybody" (208). McAdam refers to the complex manipulations among Mortimer Junior, Isabella and Gaveston as they jockey for control of the realm, and I concede that there is a great deal of mutual exploitation in the name of love in this play, especially the "essential lovelessness" at the core of the relationship between Mortimer and Isabella (216). Nevertheless, close reading reveals that the Queen does seems to have some feelings for both the King and Mortimer Junior at various points in the play (see below), and her decision to circumvent and usurp Edward's power has not been hastily made, but comes after years of suffering and neglect. Her acute awareness of gender expectations and her manipulations of them to garner the support and affections of Mortimer Junior and his fellow nobles represents a major subversion of gender role norms, and her eventual downfall is the basis of a powerful tragedy that, I argue, depends entirely upon the heroine.

Queen Isabella, it should be noted, is the last of the major characters to be introduced in the play, appearing for the first time in Act I, Scene 2, and speaking only when Mortimer Junior addresses her. The nobles have been discussing their anger at the King and his affection for Gaveston, and are only too willing to entreat the Queen's complaints:

Mort. Jun. Madam, whither walks your majesty so fast?

Queen. Unto the forest, gentle Mortimer,
To live in grief and baleful discontent;
For now my lord the King regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face, and whispers in his ears;
And when I come, he frowns, as who should say,
Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston. (1.2.46-54)

At first glance this is a spurned lover's complaint, and the Queen's feelings should not be dismissed. She seems genuinely hurt, fleeing through the room, probably in tears, after an encounter (and certainly not the first) with her husband in which he has made it clear that he prefers Gaveston to her. Even in an age of arranged marriages, the Queen has lived with Edward for a number of years and has borne him a son. No matter how cunning she may be, her demeanor and words betray a young woman spurned by her love, however imperfect that love might have been.

The Queen's feelings will come up again; for the moment, it is sufficient to acknowledge the possibility that she is truly hurt and move on. If nothing else, the timing of the Queen's entrance and the audience she addresses compels the reader to look for something more. Mortimer Junior's address at the beginning of this passage indicates that the Queen walks past the nobles and the bishop just as they are discussing a course of action against Gaveston (that discussion occurs immediately before the passage cited here); by the end of this scene, the course of action is directed against the King himself. The Queen realizes that the King will not suffer the

loss of his minion, and reminds the nobles of this in detail designed to offend their homophobic sensibilities: "He claps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck, / Smiles in his face, and whispers in his ears" (1.2.51-52). The Queen is describing the actions of a pair of young lovers, but the gender (and class, to an extent) of the lovers works to her advantage, allowing what should appear charming and romantic to offend and enrage. Judith Haber identifies sodomy in the Renaissance with "non-meaning, chaos, and indeterminacy," a reflection of the non-procreative aspect of homosexual desire (173). Along these lines, Edward and Gaveston, "by 'playing the sodomites'...continually threaten to demystify the signs of hierarchy and order, to expose the serious, productive [echoes of procreative] business of the realm as pointless" (Haber 177). Such an interpretation suggests that the nobles' outrage owes more to the threat of chaos in the realm, signified by the King's sodomy, than it does to a particular distaste for homosexual behavior; given the valuation of male-male relationships discussed in Chapter 1, Haber's argument makes sense. For her part, Isabella's outrage might stem from jealousy; Edward certainly does not treat her as affectionately as he does Gaveston. For these and no doubt other reasons, Mortimer Junior is immediately incensed, determined that "the King shall lose his crown," but the other nobles are not so quick to call for the King's head (1.2.59). The Queen fears losing her momentum, so she twice reminds Mortimer Junior not "to levy arms against the king," knowing full well that by presenting herself as the long-suffering wife (which she surely is), she engenders sympathy from the nobles (1.2.82). Her resignation to "live in grief and baleful discontent" is not meant so much as an honest admission of despair but as a subtle invitation for the nobles to assist her (1.2.48). Despairing she may be, but hopeless she is not.

The Queen's motives are clear to the audience; the nobles, already in a furor over the

power lavished upon Gaveston by the King, are less likely to suspect the Queen of playing their sympathies. Shephard's comments about the fear that a ruler's male lover can cause among the nobles are helpful to remember here; Edward has lavished five titles upon Gaveston just moments before this scene, so the nobles are primed to act against their King. Further, the Queen has no intention of venturing "unto the forest" to live in exile from wealth and power (if anything, she plans to return to France, as she does later in the play); she merely realizes that she can achieve more by appearing helpless and defeated than by allowing her outrage to inform her speech (1.2.47). No stranger to cunning, Isabella recognizes the threat that her words and actions, however justified, could "return on themselves and undermine her position" simply because she is a woman (Haber 171). As a result, everything she says in this scene reflects her inability to act, to defend herself and her family against this excessive homosexual desire that threatens to tear apart the entire kingdom (in the nobles' minds, anyway). Mortimer Junior, already shown to be hotheaded and bloodthirsty earlier in the scene, seizes upon the Queen's distress as the flashpoint to motivate the nobles to action. The Queen and Mortimer Junior thus work together without realizing it; she provides the pathetic victim to create sympathy, and he provides the angry rhetoric to promote urgency. The bishop reigns them both in for the time being, believing his own power sufficient to rectify the situation, but the seeds of civil unrest are planted, and the Queen is the source of the seed from the beginning.

It is difficult to suspect the Queen of any duplicity at this point; the reader wants to believe that the Queen is truly despairing and not using her gender to manipulate the nobles. Without dismissing her suffering, I must pause to consider the Queen's position for just a moment. Isabella has no power, no legal protection at all; the King can do with her as he will. Further, she is not

English, but a French noble whose own brother, the King of France, will reject her later in the play. Her only power lies in her femininity, her difference; she is a desirable woman, and it is apparent that she is more popular with (or simply engenders more sympathy from) the nobles than the King himself. Both of these qualities work to her advantage, allowing her to enlist the nobles, especially the lusty Mortimer Junior, into her service.

It is entirely possible that Isabella discovers her power over the course of the play, that she does not suspect at first that she can manipulate these men so well. Masinton contends that her cunning grows throughout the play, and that she feels a need to deceive herself about her own motivations and ambitions, an argument that is plausible, though I would suggest that Isabella has some idea of her plans from the beginning of the play. I do agree that Isabella "obscures the complex reality of emotion and fact behind the rebellion and her part in it and manufactures an illusion" (Masinton 106). Yet, once resolved on a course of action, she never ceases to play what might be called a Machiavellian heroine; however genuine her pain as a result of Edward's cruelty, she never forgets the tenuous nature of her situation, even in her grief. She carefully manipulates every man that she can influence to her advantage, and fails in the end only because her son remains unmoved by her cunning plays on his sympathy. The Queen is a highly complex heroine who is hurt and angry and vengeful and afraid at the same time, and she pursues a course that will satisfy all these emotional demands; the irony is that all of these demands can not be satisfied in the end, and this is part of the "mistake" that causes her downfall. Indeed, her vitriol towards Gaveston may be the result of an "if I can't have him [Edward], no one will" mentality. She, like Elizabeth, is blessed with a strong mind and a cunning that allows her to achieve power in her own right, as this analysis will show. She begins by quietly demanding the nobles' sympathy and

offending their heterosexuality just enough to set a course of action that will eventually lead to the King's destruction.

Perhaps I assume too much about the Queen's motives. She may be distressed and hopeless, and the nobles' intervention could be a coincidence. Mortimer Junior may be the opportunist here, seizing upon the distressed Queen to further his power and seduce her. The following soliloquy, however, suggests otherwise. Given after the Queen encounters her hostile husband and the banished Gaveston, it presumably portrays Isabella at her most honest:

Queen. O miserable and distressed Queen!
Would, when I left sweet France and was embarked,
That charming Circes, walking on the waves,
Had changed my shape, or at the marriage-day
The cup of Hymen had been full of poison,
Or with those arms that twined about my neck
I had been stifled, and not lived to see
The King my lord thus to abandon me.
Like frantic Juno will I fill the earth
With ghastly murmur of my sighs and cries;
For never doted Jove on Ganymed
So much as he on cursed Gaveston. (1.4.170-181)

I cannot overemphasize the importance of Marlowe's use of the soliloquy for this character; seldom are women given such a privileged tool for expression in Renaissance drama. Catherine Belsey cites "the formal development of the soliloquy" as the primary means by which

the "impression of interiority" is produced in Renaissance drama (42). Further, the words spoken in soliloquy are "understood to be confined *within* the *mind* of the protagonist" speaker, allowing the audience (or reader) an invaluable glimpse into the inner workings of a character's mind and, presumably, his or her thoughts in their purest, most honest state (43). Given the problems of women's speech in the first place (see Chapter 1), it is no surprise that examples of female soliloquies are few and far between. Since a soliloquy necessitates the ability to "speak from a place of independence, from an autonomous position, to be, in other words, a subject," which, in the Renaissance, "is to personate masculine virtue," there would, of course, be very few female soliloques (Belsey 181). There are precious few female subjects, in the sense that Belsey uses the word (to be free to speak one's mind is the simplified definition of a subject), in the first place. Other possible tragic heroines ("subjects") like Lady MacBeth, the Duchess of Malfi, and Elizabeth Cary's Mariam (a woman given voice -- and soliloquies -- by a woman writer) whose faults and fates are similar to Isabella's, come to mind; indeed, Belsey dissects Lady MacBeth's "unsex me here" soliloquy to support her thesis that the tragic subject is, by way of soliloquy, "granted the gift of language only in order inevitably to betray itself" (52). The Duchess of Malfi, Mariam, Isabella, and most of the other heroines of Renaissance tragedy who are given speech suffer the same fate; their words inevitably work against them, as if they are unaware of the speech fighting its way from their lips, and the subjects remain "forever tragically locked within [their] own silence" (Belsey 52).

Helping to maintain that silence, at least over women's voices, is Aristotle. His *Poetics*, powerfully influential in Renaissance drama, commands that tragedy must be "complex and not simple, and since it should also be a representation of terrible and piteous events...we are left with

the *man* who on the one hand is not pre-eminent in virtue and justice, and yet on the other hand does not fall into misfortune through vice or depravity, but falls because of some *mistake*" (834, italics mine). In order to achieve "complex" characters, the author must use the soliloquy, the only way to allow a character's thoughts to reveal themselves on stage. Since women rarely are given this tool of expression, it follows that tragic heroines are improbable, if not impossible; hence my emphasis on the word "man" in Aristotle -- all his writing about tragedy reinforces the notion that tragedy is, by default, male. This is no surprise to Renaissance scholars, of course, but Aristotle's influence on Renaissance dramatists must be taken into account when scholars of any discipline examine the lack of female soliloquies and the consequential curiosity of a tragic heroine.

Isabella is certainly a person of high station whose downfall is the result of a "mistake" rather than some "vice," as I will show later. She also speaks her thoughts to the audience. Is she not then a tragic heroine? Marlowe uses the same combination of character and soliloquy to create the tragedy of *Dido*, which constitutes the next chapter. In *Edward II*, Marlowe succeeds in the daunting task of creating a complex character who, over the course of the play, reveals different aspects of her character through dialogue, monologue, and action. She, like Desdemona, "stages different selves" to maximize her control and manipulate those around her, including the audience (Bartels 424). The weak and forlorn Isabella seen in the earlier passage is mostly absent here, replaced by a desperately hurt and angry young woman who realizes that her life will be ruined if she cannot find a solution to her problem. Isabella is "miserable and distressed," which does not bode well for an argument of strength, but note the emphatic exclamation point at the end of this sentence and realize that, her husband and his lover having just stormed out, she is

more furious than helpless (1.4.170). She would most likely be pacing the stage and gesturing wildly (lines 187-190 support this; see below). She wishes that "the cup of Hymen had been full of poison" when she wed Edward, thus preventing her from living to see her present misery (1.4.174). In spite of her anger, there are signs that she genuinely wishes Edward returned her love; her lament that "The King my lord" has abandoned her seems honest (1.4.177). This statement indicates a trace of regret that her marriage, never on solid ground, is failing rapidly. Yet she quickly seizes upon her rage, the tangible cause of that failure, "cursed Gaveston," and the vengeful, angry voice within her bellows forth (1.4.181).

She alludes to two classical scorned (and abandoned) women, Circe and Juno, wishing that the former could have "changed [her] shape" before her arrival in England (1.4.173). What the Queen does not say is just as important: Circe, like Dido, possessed a classical hero for a limited time, in this case Odysseus. The wandering hero, supposedly beguiled by the witch Circe, enjoyed her hospitality for years before leaving her, devastated, and returning to Ithaca. Aside from the obvious similarities to Dido's loss of Aeneas, Marlowe allows the Queen to express her own feeling that she has been abandoned by those who should love and comfort her and, even worse, is being used by powerful men (her brother and her husband) who have no concern for her emotions at all. Further, he attempts to create sympathy for the Queen by associating her with mythological women who had become exempla of female abandonment by inconstant men (see Phillippy and the discussion on abandonment in Chapter 3). The Queen voices her wish for Circe's magic, but leaves unsaid her recognition of their common suffering.

The Queen's apparent death-fantasies also merit close attention. If "the cup of Hymen had been full of poison," she (and her new husband, perhaps) would not have survived her wedding

night (1.4.174). More to the point, she wishes that the king himself would have "stifled" her and put her out of her misery long ago (1.4.176). It is unclear how serious these apparent death wishes are; they may be part of a larger, love-lorn hysteria, but on the other hand, the "cup of Hymen" could most certainly poison the husband, allowing speculation that she only wishes one of them had died, and not necessarily her (1.4.174). Phillippy's discussion of female constancy and male inconstancy, cited above, is relevant here as well, allowing Isabella to pine for her lost husband who has discarded her. Unlike male suitors (Isabella, despite being married, is in the position of a suitor when it comes to Edward), a female has no recourse or prescribed actions to follow to remedy her love-pangs; she cannot pursue her love until that love submits to end her suffering, in the Petrarchan sense. Like characters in the mystery plays and other native (non-Aristotelian) tragedies, the Queen finds herself in a situation over which she has no control. Isabella thus arrives at revenge for lack of any other options. She quickly refutes all thoughts of self-destruction and invokes Juno, a powerful image of a woman, constant despite her mate's infidelity and repeated abandonment, scorned.

Juno, the long-suffering wife of Jove, who "doted" on the boy Ganymede (as well as more than one hundred women other than his wife), is forever avenging herself on her serially adulterous spouse and the women who have the misfortune to attract his attention. Marlowe himself presents Juno as a vengeful wife in *Dido*, which also features Jove dangling Ganymede on his knee (mirroring images of Edward and Gaveston). Her powerful hatred of Jove-sired Hercules has been well-known for millennia, so Isabella's description of her as "frantic" can only be construed as a euphemism (1.4.178). Juno was frantic only in the sense that she was consumed by revenge, and Isabella's promise to likewise "fill the earth / With ghastly murmur of my sighs

and cries" suggests that she plans to make sure Edward cannot escape her wrath (1.4.179-180). This passage also hints that Isabella has consciously chosen her *modus operandi*: she will use "sighs and cries" to get her revenge (contrast this with Dido's method of vengeance, in Chapter 3). Her laments will force men into action, action that she cannot take for herself. Unlike Juno, Isabella is mortal and, wronged as she may be, without any defense save the sympathy of the men around her. She realizes this, and intends to push forward with her "ghastly" campaign until she is satisfied.

Isabella resolves to petition for Gaveston's return to Edward, to appear to be on his side after all. As her soliloquy ends, the nobles enter and the following exchange sheds more light on the extent of the Queen's performance:

Lanc. Look where the sister of the King of France
Sits wringing her hands, and beats her breast!
War. The King, I fear, hath ill intreated her.
Pem. Hard is the heart that injures such a saint.
Mort. Jun. I know 'tis long of Gaveston she weeps.
Mort. Sen. Why? He is gone.
Mort. Jun. Madam, how fares
your grace?
Queen. Ah, Mortimer! now breaks the King's hate forth,
And he confesseth that he loves me not.
Mort. Jun. Cry quittance, madam, then; and love not him.
Queen. No, rather will I die a thousand deaths:

And yet I love in vain; he'll ne'er love me. (1.4.187-197)

The Queen, so recently resolved to a course of revenge, immediately sets upon that course by garishly demonstrating her grief before the assembled nobles. She remains apart, a picture of suffering, long enough for several of them to observe and conclude that the King is to blame for the injury to this "saint" (1.4.190). Lancaster's reference to Isabella as the "sister of the King of France" rather than England's Queen both suggests the Queen's potential power and reinforces just how precarious her situation is; even the nobles, her peers, recognize that the King has abandoned her and symbolically made Gaveston his queen-consort, reducing her to the status of a stranded foreigner (1.4.187). Mortimer Junior is all too willing to insert Gaveston into the equation, much to the confusion of his father. For her part, the Queen, once addressed, performs admirably, perhaps even honestly, lamenting only that her King "loves [her] not" and will "ne'er love" her (1.4.193 & 197). Mortimer Junior counters that the Queen should "love not him" (perhaps implying his own suit to her), but such a pragmatic suggestion either does not lie within the Queen's plans or is anathema to her love-lorn soul, or perhaps a bit of both (1.4.194). She immediately vows to "die a thousand deaths" rather than cast Edward aside, although her soliloquy has suggested that one death, preferably on Gaveston's or even the King's part, would be sufficient (1.4.196). Isabella plays to the noblemen's sympathies again, as in 1.2., and within fifty lines they are plotting against the King.

The nature and origin of that plot are worth noting. Isabella begs for Gaveston's return, much to the nobles' surprise and Mortimer Junior's fury. The Queen takes the hotheaded young noble aside and they talk apart; the only indication in the play of this exchange is the commentary by the other nobles, who observe that the Queen seems to beg Mortimer "earnestly" and that,

within moments, Mortimer seems to acquiesce, causing the Queen to smile (1.4.234). Mortimer Junior, who loathes Gaveston more than he has reason to, returns from this aside to convince the nobles to allow the King's minion to return from banishment. An intelligent reader would have to suspect that the Queen and Mortimer Junior had formed some plan, and from the nobles' accounts of the conversation, the Queen did all the talking. The only other clue comes from Mortimer Junior's statement, after revealing the plan to kill Gaveston to the nobles, that this plan simply "was not thought upon" before (1.4.273). From these clues, it is apparent that the plan to return, and then destroy, Gaveston originated with the Queen herself. Truly, hers has been a busy mind; she has devised a scheme to destroy an enemy without getting blood on her hands and, perhaps, to win back the husband she really has never had anyway. That she is able to make careful plans and exhibit hysterical pain and rage almost simultaneously is a tribute to her cunning.

If the Queen has planted the seeds of civil unrest in the nobles' minds, she brings war to its fruition in 2.4. The nobles' imminent attack on Gaveston sends the King and his minion fleeing with their army, and Isabella remains in the castle, shunned again by her King in favor of his lover:

> *Queen.* Ay, Mortimer, the miserable Queen,
> Whose pining heart her inward sighs have blasted,
> And body with continual mourning wasted;
> These hands are tired with haling of my lord
> From Gaveston, from wicked Gaveston,
> And all in vain; for, when I speak him fair,
> He turns away, and smiles upon his minion. (2.4.23-29)

The Queen's complaint is familiar by this point, but Mortimer Junior and the nobles are

ostensibly pursuing Gaveston, and while the Queen certainly directs invective toward her husband's "wicked" companion, she also reminds the nobles that she is made to suffer at the hands of Edward, who has made it clear that he will never love Isabella, Gaveston or no (2.4.27). The Queen's language invokes Petrarch, inverting the gender roles so that the female has a "pining heart" and "inward sighs" for her disaffected love (2.4.24). Nonetheless, her heart and hands were just as tired and lonely during Gaveston's banishment as they are at this point, so the Queen must be beginning to realize that the King is the true source of her pain and, by extension, her rage. As if to remind the nobles of this, she asks Mortimer Junior, "What would you with the King? Is't him you seek?" (2.4.31). The nobles quickly deny that they intend to harm the King (all but Mortimer Junior, that is), but once again Isabella has planted an idea that she can nurture later. Further, she quickly provides the nobles not only with Gaveston's whereabouts, but also with information about the King's army and his battle plans.

Having helped the crisis along, Isabella is given another monologue, which allows us insight into her ever-evolving plans:

> *Queen.* So well hast thou deserved, sweet Mortimer,
> As Isabel could live with thee for ever.
> In vain I look for love at Edward's hand,
> Whose eyes are fixed on none but Gaveston,
> Yet once more I'll importune him with prayers:
> If he be strange and not regard my words,
> My son and I will over into France,
> And to the King my brother there complain,

How Gaveston hath robbed me of his love:

But yet I hope my sorrows will have end,

And Gaveston this blessed day be slain. (2.4.59-69)

Isabella frequently addresses "sweet Mortimer" to his face, but this is the first indication that she is not simply using the all-too-eager noble, that she might have developed feelings for him (2.4.59). One might suggest that his temper and proclivity for battle provide an appreciable contrast to the effeminate, ineffectual Edward. There is, of course, also the power theory, that Isabella sees Mortimer Junior as the best candidate to usurp the throne for her and her son, and his temper makes him the most easily manipulated as well. Her admission that she "could live with" Mortimer Junior "for ever" comes as something of a surprise; this same passage contains not-so-subtle hints that she is still unable to forget her feelings for Edward (2.4.60). She recalls both the Petrarchan lover and the abandoned heroine, lamenting that "in vain I look for love at Edward's hand" and that Gaveston, not her husband's homosexuality, has "robbed [her] of [Edward's] love" (2.4.61 & 67). At the same time that she is praying for Edward's love, she is admitting feelings for Mortimer Junior and making pragmatic plans to return to France; her motivations are complex and even at odds with each other, to an extent, and in this conflict lies the beginning of the end for this heroine.

Whether her sense of duty or respect for propriety compels her to decide to give Edward one more chance is not really clear; she may only want to be able to say and believe that she tried her best to stay with him, and since she is rapidly losing faith that he will accept her at this point, she is possibly gathering more evidence to justify her plans should Edward continue to reject her love (despite her hopes, she is a smart woman and has to suspect that Edward will never be

content with her; Edward himself has made this abundantly clear). She is very smart to plan to leave the country during the worst of the civil unrest; this will allow her to remain free from implication in any plot against her husband. Her wish that her "sorrows will have end" is something of an anomaly; she seems to have realized elsewhere that Gaveston is only one symptom of a larger disease (2.4.68). She might hope that his death will make everything right between her, Edward, and the nobles; again, however, she seems to have made plans with Mortimer Junior that can only further distance her from her husband. In this light, then, the slaying of Gaveston will either end her sorrows or give her further opportunity to revenge herself on Edward; she has made plans for any eventuality, and (in her mind, which is simultaneously frantic and calculating) cannot lose.

Kathleen Anderson's study of Isabella and her ambition supports this thesis. Anderson takes issue with critics who find Isabella unrealistic or badly written, and suggests that the reader must consider "Isabella's political power and public identity - her position as Queen of England and mother of the prince" (31). Anderson argues exactly the same points I have been making, that Isabella is "explicitly cunning and skilled in the art of political maneuvering" and that she "uses to her advantage the feminine stereotypes of weakness and emotional blindness. She consciously allows Mortimer to manipulate her into making decisions from which she can benefit without having the acts of regicide and rebellion point directly to her" (32). Anderson sees Isabella as Marlowe's strongest female character, a truly tragic heroine who makes the most out of a bad situation by playing on the weaknesses of both sexes.

By the end of Act 4, the Queen has returned from France with Mortimer Junior and an army to wage war against the King. She no longer conceals her ambitions, having realized that

Edward will never love her and having apparently abandoned all hope of reconciling with him. She has allied herself politically and romantically with Mortimer Junior, and though she is preparing to usurp the throne from her husband, she is able to continue to claim that her motives are pure as she boldly addresses the assembled army:

Queen. Now, lords, our loving friends and countrymen,
Welcome to England all, with prosperous winds.
Our kindest friends in Belgia have we left,
To cope with friends at home; a heavy case
When force to force is knit, and sword and glaive
In civil broils makes kin and countrymen
Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides
With their own weapons gored. But what's the help?
Misgoverned kings are cause of all this wrack;
And, Edward, thou art one among them all,
Whose looseness hath betrayed thy land to spoil,
And made the channels overflow with blood
Of thine own people; patron shouldst thou be,
But thou--

Mort. Jun. Nay, madam, if you be a warrior,
Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches. (4.4.1-16)

The Queen here seems to forget herself; she has heretofore manipulated through subtlety and suggestion, but facing her troops, her revenge finally at hand, she allows herself to rally

against her King and husband. Her speech is political, even regal; the broad address to "our loving friends and countrymen" is reminiscent of any number of rallying speeches in Renaissance drama (*Julius Caesar* comes to mind) and suggests that the Queen, especially in using the royal "we," is overtly posturing herself as the leader of this insurrection (4.4.1). Whether the nobles and warriors will accept a female leader is never discovered; Mortimer Junior abruptly interrupts her speech after fourteen lines, just as she is tearing into her husband's faults. Ironically, Mortimer Junior shushes the Queen with "if you be a warrior, / Ye must not grow so passionate in speeches," but his own address to the troops continues for several lines after this rebuke (4.4.15-16). History records numerous examples of the importance of "passionate" speeches in moving armies to action, both in drama and reality, so Mortimer Junior's silencing of the Queen can be interpreted as the self-preservation of masculine pride; the Queen may prove more eloquent and motivational than *him* before *his* troops. Further, he may suspect -- with reason -- that the men will not be as moved by a woman's words as a warrior's. Marlowe could also be alluding to Queen Elizabeth's famous address to her fleet before the battle of 1588, which would imply criticism of the latter queen for being "passionate" in her speech, in other words, speaking like a man.

Isabella, like Elizabeth, realizes the precarious nature of her situation as a female ruler. Further, her status as a rebel in her own kingdom complicates her behavior. She may simply be caught up in the excitement of the impending attack, and Mortimer Junior's interruption helps to preserve her image as a woman wronged. The Queen's accusation that Edward's "looseness hath betrayed [his] land to spoil" alludes to their marriage inasmuch as it does England itself (4.4.11). The ruling family is identified with the land they rule, and the husbands symbolically govern

(*husband* in the farming sense) the land as they do their wives. Edward has neglected husbandry both of his marriage and his nation, by choosing homosexual love over the former and by letting his passion affect his political judgment in the latter. In this manner the Queen remains clever in her criticism, never directly referring to Edward's failure as a husband, but her diction makes it clear that the accusations have twofold meaning.

The Queen's philosophical lament against civil war is telling as well, since she has been a key instigator in this unrest from the beginning. She complains that "sword and glaive / In civil broils makes kin and countrymen / Slaughter themselves in others, and their sides / With their own weapons gored" (4.4.5-8). The similarity between "kin" and "king" should be noted; the Queen is about to introduce direct criticism of a ruler with absolute power, and she is careful to broach that topic gradually. The language here is powerfully violent, filled with weapons ("sword", "glaive") and death ("slaugher", "gored"). The Queen, once again, is suggesting a course of action while remaining esoteric and, for the moment, blameless. There is the possibility that, perhaps subconsciously, the Queen is reminding her audience of the metaphorical violence she has suffered; the violence in this passage is self-directed ("slaughter themselves," "their own weapons gored") and suggests not only the figurative suicide implied by civil war (in which one destroys one's own land and countrymen) but more specifically the fate Edward has chosen for himself by eschewing her for Gaveston (4.4.7-8). The vivid images of death and battle are meant to rile the troops, and with blood on the brain she introduces her primary complaint: "misgoverned kings are the cause of all this wrack" (4.4.9).

This is the first time in the play that Isabella openly and publicly acknowledges her hostility toward her husband. A king who cannot govern his own passions is certainly not fit to

govern a country; Isabella is very cunning to use the word "misgoverned," reminding her audience that Edward has failed in his duties not only to himself (and her), but as a governor of his nation. She addresses her absent King as "one among them all," accusing him of allowing his "land to spoil" and his ditches to "overflow with blood / Of thine own people" (4.4.10-13). These are treasonous allegations, even coming from a queen, but her status as a woman and a foreigner no longer silence her from airing her grievances. Since this army is gathered to fight the King, her risk in assailing him verbally is small, but the courage she shows in doing so is still impressive. She has played the long-suffering wife throughout this play, and for the moment she is allowed to breathe her true feelings, to express all the violence and frustration she has repressed.

Isabella's vocal freedom is short-lived, as she is quickly silenced by the new man in her life, Mortimer Junior. She allows Mortimer Junior to speak for her more often than not, and, though probably annoyed by his interruption, she realizes that it is for the best politically. The army (many of them noblemen) is more likely to fight for a woman they see as a victim than for a woman they perceive as vengeful, however justifiable that vengeance may be. The Queen, no doubt realizing this, never shows such outright aggression again; she reverts to her "female" role, asserting only lines after her blood-drenched vilification of Edward that she "rue[s] my lord's ill-fortune; but alas, / Care of my country called me to this war" (4.5.73-74). This abrupt change of tone might be the result of lingering feelings for her husband, and it probably placates the nobles, but the evidence suggests that, by this point in the play, the Queen knows that her marriage is over and her King does not and will not love her. She is now a powerful player on England's stage, if she was not before, and once clear-headed, returns to the role she has played well throughout. She continues to suggest courses of action to Mortimer Junior, but allows him to

feel that he is making the decisions (see the decision to kill the King, below).

The Queen's reconciliation to her complex, overtly feminine role is the result of "circumstances that force her, not to give up her voice, but to redirect it" through Mortimer Junior (Bartels 428). She has shown throughout the play that she will choose silence when it benefits her cause; her cunning is stronger than her pride. The civil war she has indirectly helped to incite climaxes with the victory of the insurgent forces and the subsequent imprisonment of Edward. Mortimer Junior and the Queen privately discuss what to do with the defeated King, and Isabella shows once again that she can be vicious without getting any blood on her hands:

> *Queen.* Sweet Mortimer, the life of Isabel,
> Be thou persuaded that I love thee well,
> And therefore, so the prince my son be safe,
> Whom I esteem as dear as these mine eyes,
> Conclude against his father what thou wilt,
> And I myself will willingly subscribe. (5.2.15-20)

Once again the Queen disarms her quarry by playing the adoring lover, although "the life of Isabel" is now "sweet Mortimer," not Edward, and she no longer hides the attraction to the noble (yet another aspect of the convoluted desires that lead to her downfall) that she has felt throughout the play (5.2.15-16). To convince him that she loves him, the Queen literally commands him to "be...persuaded" and establishes her power, despite the dialogue that follows (5.2.16). She cleverly conceals her vengeful motives once again, this time behind a seeming (perhaps even valid, considering English history) concern that "the prince my son be safe" (5.2.17). Mentioning the prince to Mortimer might also serve as a reminder to the power-hungry

noble that Edward III is indeed the king now, not Mortimer Junior, and that the noble needs to stay in good graces with the woman who ostensibly controls the young king, i.e., the woman with the power. Isabella's diction may be passive and even submissive, but her meaning remains clear: she is in charge, just as she has always been.

It should come as no surprise, then, where the idea to kill the King really originates. Even Mortimer Junior has not come to the decision to execute the King, but the Queen once again plants the thought in his mind by empowering him to "conclude against his [Edward III's] father what thou wilt, / And I myself will willingly subscribe" (5.2.19-20). The Queen is simultaneously giving Mortimer Junior the power to kill the King (whether it is in her power to give or not is without import) and also removes herself from the suggestion by accepting a submissive role that what Mortimer Junior decides will govern her. She knows that he will decide to kill the King; everything the brash noble has done to this point demands that decision. She simply wants to make the idea more palatable, in the way that hearing something from another person makes the idea less novel, less threatening.

If any doubt about Isabella's intentions remains, consider the following exchange, just a few lines after the last:

> *Mort. Jun.* Speak, shall he presently be dispatched and die?
>
> *Queen.* I would he were, so it were not by my means. (5.2.44-45)

Mortimer Junior and the Queen are alone, and the King's abdication has left them with the need for a decision. He asks the question of her directly, putting the power in her hands (where it has been all along), and she provides the answer the reader expects of her. Stripped of seductive double-talk, abandoned longings, and suggestive comments, the Queen is direct and explicit in her

desires. The operative phrase here, of course, is "so it were not by my means" (5.2.45). The Queen is adamant that she is to remain blameless, and her distance from the eventual plot to kill the King does save her life. Mortimer Junior, whose hand orders the death of the King, is executed for the offense, whereas the vaguely guilty Isabella is only imprisoned (Marlowe actually exaggerates her punishment; the historical Edward III merely prohibited her from traveling).

Her honesty with Mortimer Junior in private does not affect the performance the Queen gives to her court. She wishes the King to know that she "labor[s] all in vain / To ease his grief, and work his liberty" even as she has, in fact, ordered his death (5.2.70-71). Isabella shows a little dark humor here; his grief would certainly disappear with death, the ultimate liberator. Nevertheless, she presents herself as a concerned mother to the prince and maintains that Mortimer Junior is in control; this is particularly chilling in the execution of the King's brother, Edmund of Kent, who is sent to his death by Mortimer Junior, as the young king pleads with his mother to stop the execution. She responds "son, be content; I dare not speak a word" in Kent's defense (5.4.95). Given the relationship between Isabella and Mortimer Junior, I think it is safe to argue that the Queen could most certainly have stopped Kent's execution; after all, she approved the murder of the King. Who's to stop her from intervening in a lesser man's life? Given Kent's attempt to rescue his imprisoned brother and his criticism of Mortimer Junior's regime, Isabella recognizes Kent as a potential enemy to her plans, and allows him to be killed -- remaining blameless, of course.

Just moments after Kent is taken away, the Queen and her son are alone, and she seems to have regained the power she just denied she had:

Queen. Fear not, sweet boy; I'll guard thee from thy foes;

Had Edmund lived he would have sought thy death.

Come, son, we'll ride a-hunting in the park.

K. Edw. III. And shall my uncle Edmund ride with us?

Queen. He is a traitor; think not on him; come. (5.4.110-114)

Isabella immediately placates her son with a show of strength; she, not Mortimer Junior or any other man, will protect him from his enemies. Further, his uncle is his enemy now; Isabella might actually believe this and might actually be right, given the nature of power. After all, she has been rejected by her own brother, and English history is filled with nobles killing relatives for gains in influence. The audience knows that Kent meant young Edward no harm, but the Queen could have convinced herself otherwise, especially since Kent adamantly wants to free the boy's father, who, in the Queen's equation, must die. The Queen then moves to distract her son from the point, as she has done throughout the play, inviting him to "ride a-hunting in the park" (5.4.112). Her response to her son's innocent question is chillingly succinct; Edmund is a "traitor" and the young king might as well give him no more thought (5.4.114).

The Queen's tragic downfall begins almost immediately after she approves the execution of the King. Until this point, the audience's sympathies have rested with her. Whether she seems the proverbial woman scorned or a cunning power broker (or both equally, as I have argued), she has remained a sympathetic character. Then the execution of the King turns the tide. The King is run through with a hot lead poker in a gruesome mockery of homosexual lovemaking. His suffering at the hands of Mortimer Junior's sinister agents moves the reader to reconsider the King's bad decisions and whether he really deserved to die for them; essentially, he has lost his family, his kingdom, and finally his life for love. A forbidden and excessive love, perhaps, but love

nonetheless; this contrasts heavily with Isabella's motives, which have always been clouded, but one of which -- revenge -- has been clear for quite some time. Mortimer Junior has always seemed a powermad noble, but the King's horrible death gives rise to suspicions that the Queen, in whom the audience has invested so much, is a cold-blooded manipulative murderer. This is a simplistic analysis, to be sure, but the tide of sympathy engendered by Edward's gruesome demise demands at the very least a reconsideration of Isabella's role in his death. Nevertheless, she did not come to this point so much as it has been forced upon her (echoes of the mystery plays again); she used her influence to put herself in the best position she could. It was only a matter of time before she ran out of options, and her pleading with her newly empowered son to believe in her innocence provides a final example of her talents, along with a refutation of them:

> *Queen.* Nay, to my death, for too long have I lived,
> Whenas my son thinks to abridge my days.
> *K. Edw. III.* Away with her, her words enforce these tears,
> And I shall pity her if she speak again.
> *Queen.* Shall I not mourn for my beloved lord,
> And with the rest accompany him to his grave? (5.6.83-88)

The Queen may or may not sincerely love her son, but she tailors her interaction with him in just the same way that she has throughout the play with all the male characters with power. She attempts to move him to pity, to make him feel guilty for imprisoning her and seeking to "abridge [her] days" for her crimes against the King (5.6.84). The young king wavers, on the verge of crying, but orders her away before he can be persuaded to change his mind. In this manner, he is the strongest character in the play, and the first example of a ruler who governs

(both his nation and himself) wisely. His father, though not swayed by Isabella at all, did allow emotion to overrun his reign (in the form of his affection for Gaveston and the subsequent rage that his lover's death caused). The new King has the emotional distance to condemn his own mother for the death of a father who, as far as the play is concerned, did not even care about the boy. That her tactics fall on deaf ears for the first time is something of a shock to Isabella; her pleas with the young king and the nobles go unanswered, and she is lead away to the Tower. Historical inaccuracy aside, Isabella's skill at manipulating power from behind a male facade has come to an end, and she is symbolically punished for having transgressed gender roles; as her son says, she is "unnatural" (5.6.76).

No discussion of gender and *Edward II* can be complete without a comment about homosexual love in the play. Whether Gaveston is a sycophant or not, Edward obviously loves him more than anything in the world, even his kingdom. McAdam argues that Edward lives in a state of "almost uninterrupted self-delusion" and, as such, cannot see the harm his obsession for Gaveston causes the realm (207). This misgovernance of passion certainly qualifies Edward as a lousy ruler, and of course, given the time period, places him well outside the accepted behaviors of his society (although the Shephard article shows that English society was more willing to accept a gay male ruler than we might think). Yet audience sympathy grows for the King as the play progresses, and no one can read about or watch his horrible death without being moved. This sympathy confounds the discussion of gender representations in Marlowe, since Edward does not fit neatly into a discussion of male or female roles. He breaks the stereotypes, just like Isabella, but in an open, even naive and destructive, way, causing his own downfall. Tamburlaine can have his soldiers, closer to him than his wife, and still have success; but the openly gay love

the King harbors for Gaveston brings destruction on both men.

Jennifer Brady observes that the "often vacillating" King will not let go of his one desire, his love for Gaveston, and despite his torture, he "continues to assert, to *affirm* his eroticism" (184). Edward dotes on Gaveston as fervently as any suitor in the Petrarchan tradition. This open "homoeroticism is foregrounded as a temporal or fleshly weakness" that threatens the order of both genders and the stability of the kingdom itself (Bredbeck 56). His desire gives Edward's enemies a weapon to use against him, leading both Isabella and the nobles to stand against and finally war on the King. Mortimer Junior is particularly incensed by the King's behavior, although it is possible that "the threat" that Mortimer recognizes in the King's dotage upon his favorite is not homophobic in nature, but "is from Gaveston's advancement," a reference to the heap of titles bestowed upon the commoner by the King (Bredbeck 62). On the other hand, the King's murder, in a manner that "marks the crime as a phobic, sadistic denigration of homosexual love," suggests at least some degree of homophobia at work in the play (Brady 177). The symbolic rape-murder of Edward ostensibly restores the gender roles of the sexes, reestablishing the line that had been blurred by the King. Of course, the Queen's manipulation of her own gender stereotypes in order to achieve her goals escapes Mortimer's attention - he is too distracted by the perceived threat to his heterosexual male role to notice that Isabella is doing the very same thing to him that he thinks Edward does.

Marlowe had a vested interest in presenting the homosexual. As discussed above, there are various opinions about notions of homosexuality as a permanent identity (versus an occasional behavior) in the Renaissance; I agree with Claude Summers, who finds that it is "deeply problematic and dangerously constricting" to construe "Renaissance homosexuality as exclusively

sodomitical," in the manner of Alan Bray and his followers (27). I do not dismiss Bray's work; his theories have helped scholars understand a great deal about male-male relations. Since sodomy itself is ill-defined in Renaissance texts, however, using the modern American conception of sodomy as the definition of homosexual behavior among Renaissance men is indeed dangerous. Marlowe seems to realize the full spectrum of male-male desire, from the affection of Tamburlaine for his men to the relationship between Edward and Gaveston. Indeed, "Marlowe's depictions of same-sex relations is...consistently oppositional *vis-a-vis* his culture's official condemnation of homosexuality as sodomitical" (Summers 34-35). In addition, "the power of the play lies in its insistence on representing same-sex desire as something that exceeds and escapes the familiar same-sex articulations" that characterize Tamburlaine, Aeneas, and most other Renaissance male protagonists (Normand 187). Most importantly, the "homoeroticism that bridges the social gulf between a king and a low-born 'dapper-jack' [Gaveston]...is finally revealed as the most constant emotion in the play even as it ultimately leads to Edward's downfall and barbarous murder" (Summers 41). Proser draws a "parallel between *Dido's* passion for Aeneas and Edward's passion for Gaveston" that further reinforces the apparent depth of Edward's emotions (174). Dido may have been enchanted, but once she begins to love, she loves with all the power of her being, like Edward; this factors into our sympathy for both characters.

I do not necessarily agree with Proser's Freudian contention that "Edward's harsh rejection of Isabella may be understood as a disavowal of the mother which is matched by his espousal of Gaveston, Isabella's 'feminine' counterpart in masculine form" (185). Edward simply loves, or believes to the depths of his soul that he loves, Gaveston, and the brazenness of that love contrasts with the subtle (and not-so-subtle, in the second half) treachery on the part of most of

the other characters in the play, chiefly Isabella and Mortimer Junior. Perhaps Marlowe's own gay stirrings blurred gender lines enough for him that he was able to blur them in his writing, creating not only the flawed yet pitiable Edward, but also the triumphant yet tragic Isabella, a creature simultaneously with and without power, born from the ashes of Zenocrate, who spoke only rarely from her pedestal.

There are dissenting opinions: Dympna Callaghan concurs with the homosexual arguments stated here, but sees Isabella as "the rather stereotypically forlorn queen who cannot survive without male support" (293). While I concede that Isabella does have to rely on males to get what she wants, her ability to manipulate them and play them against each other ranks her among the greatest Machiavels of the sixteenth century - a decidedly male group. Gregory Bredbeck, whose discourse on homoeroticism is astute, stuns when he argues that "the queen's role...is silenced and withdrawn from the audience. The attention rests solely on Mortimer's actions" (70). The Queen frequently operates with stealth and subtle suggestion, but this chapter has shown clearly that she is anything but "silenced and withdrawn." Anderson's analysis presents a much more interesting and, I believe, valid alternative to explaining the seeming weaknesses and calculated silences of Isabella's character. Marlowe stretched his writing muscles with *Edward II*, creating a character who falls from a position of power as the result of a single mistake (the inability to reconcile all her conflicting feelings with her reality). He has created a truly tragic heroine, in the Aristotelian sense (if there can be such a thing), and the results subvert both genders' roles significantly.

Chapter 3

The *Tamburlaine* plays and *Edward II* provide a neat early-late comparison that serves my purposes well, but a comprehensive gender discussion must include a consideration of what many critics and editors believe to be Marlowe's earliest play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. This retelling of the episode from the *Aeneid* ranks lowest in esteem among most scholars, who dismiss it as a youthful rehashing of an old story, with stock characters and mediocre dialogue. I read the play as a complete break with traditional gender roles, one that takes the Trojan hero and places him in the submissive role throughout, acted upon and almost totally controlled by Dido, the strongest of Marlowe's women, who, in spite of her obsession for Aeneas, assumes fully the masculine role of absolute ruler and the Petrarchan role of an aggressive suitor to her love. While most critics may dismiss Dido as a proverbial woman scorned, I choose to see her as a proto-feminist who dies not out of love for Aeneas, but rather like Tamburlaine's rage at Zenocrate's death, out of heroic- and tragic- anger at the forces of fate.

Paul Kocher, one of the few critics to address *Dido* at all, dismisses the play as "too literal a rendering of the *Aeneid* to be significant" (175). Kocher interprets Dido as a tyrant, a despotic ruler whose frequent assertions of her power are "directly opposed to the main traditions of western thought from the classical period to the Renaissance" (176). He assumes that the audience's sympathies will lie exclusively with Aeneas, and that Dido will serve as the antagonist of the piece. Yet in the same chapter, Kocher observes that the "theory of a king's powers held by Tamburlaine and his associates is no less absolute than was Dido's," while never challenging Tamburlaine's status not only as the protagonist, but as a warrior whose cruelties can be forgiven in the context of his conquests (188). If both Tamburlaine and Dido rule in the same manner, and

one is a great leader while the other ranks as a hysterical despot, I can only conclude that, at least for Kocher, gender plays a major role in the interpretation of Marlowe's characters. Dido's subversions of gender role expectations define her, in some eyes, as "demonic;" she is "presented as transgressing the system of differences which gives meaning to social relations," and that transgression demands punishment, whether from the gods or literary critics (Belsey 184). Kocher sees Dido as withholding Aeneas from his fate, whereas a more careful reader might suggest that Dido is in fact the protagonist, and that Aeneas and most of the other characters in the play act to keep her from achieving -- or maintaining, actually, as this chapter will show -- her happiness. This is exactly the point that Phillippy is making when she asserts that, in treatments of epic poetry by Renaissance authors struggling with gender questions, "the abandoned heroine... insists that her narrative is as important as the heroic narrative from which it is radically separated" (3). Poets like Marlowe who "manipulate aspects of a period's or culture's dominant castings of gender in order to challenge, overturn, or revise" gender constraints create a discursive model in which the previously silenced have a voice, in which women speak and insist that their stories are as important as the familiar heroes' tales (Phillippy 1). This chapter will argue from the assumption that Marlowe is doing just that; he is consciously manipulating gender role expectations and creating a mythological revisionist history of Book 4 of the *Aeneid*. Dido will become the most tragic heroine in Renaissance drama.

Before delving into the text itself, a few words about abandonment and the exempla of the abandoned woman are necessary to fully appreciate the traditions that Marlowe inherits. Lawrence Lipking notes that "the abandoned woman threatens" literary authority itself because "she cannot be placed in a canon" (5). She exists throughout the history of literature in every

culture, often vilified and/or patronized (as Dido is in most accounts), but nonetheless ever-present, a tangible "product of fear" of abandonment in both sexes (Lipking 18). Linda Kaufman examines the traditions in Ovid's *Heroides*, a collection that, like Marlowe's play, gives Dido a voice at the expense of Aeneas, and reminds the reader that Ovid, who takes issue with the prevailing heroic narratives such as the *Aeneid*, was "exiled because he refused to relegate love to the margins of discourse" (38). Since he "never shared Virgil's preoccupation with the foundations of a culture and a city," Ovid could afford to make Dido "highly articulate and self-conscious," unlike Virgil, who presents a queen "so overpowered by her passion as to be inarticulate" (Kauffman 48). Marlowe follows this same tradition, insisting that Dido's story is as important as Aeneas's and giving her the voice to tell it thoroughly. Lipking arrives at this same conclusion, submitting that "an abandoned woman knows...the plot could always be told in a different way" (25). Virgil and those who follow him ascribe heroism to Aeneas and his deeds at the expense of the Queen of Carthage, among others; at the same time, in a different voice, "Dido reveals the emptiness of an empire" (Lipking 25).

That fresh voice is the result of "Marlowe's intention to reinterpret his Virgilian source from a perspective that values destiny less than love" (Summers 39). Dido's tragic downfall serves as a catharsis for our collective fears of abandonment; in this manner, "the function of poetic abandoned women...seems largely to provide a channel for feeling -- especially for the shadowy, self-pitying, immoderate fears that the unabandoned work so hard at suppressing" (Lipking 23). Dido is thus reconfigured as a martyr, allowing those among us who have not known abandonment (but who necessarily fear it, as we all do) to experience its horror and its destructive aftermath. Indeed, Lipking suggests that the fear of abandonment is so universal, it "is

the guilty secret of many marriages and poems" throughout history (19). Dido's tragic fall, then, is a service to us all. She achieves transcendence through her suffering, following a pattern in which she "accuses her seducer of infidelity, impugns his motives, demands justice, threatens vengeance, and justifies herself" (Kauffman 45). The identity of the actual "seducer" in this play is problematic, but the rest of this analysis describes Dido and her actions fairly well.

Dido's transition from powerful, independent ruler to suicidal, lovelorn waif occurs in distinct stages. When she first appears onstage, Dido is resolved, Elizabeth-like, to remain free of romantic entanglements, dismissing Aeneas just as she does her long-suffering suitor Iarbus (whose Petrarchan suit of Dido mirrors the Queen's later pursuit of Aeneas -- both end up loveless and dead). Upon learning Aeneas's identity, she greets him as a fellow warrior and commands him to regale her with details of Troy's fall. Their first exchange shows that Dido's interest in Aeneas rests only in the discovery of a hero to whom she can devote her time and thus avoid Iarbus and questions of her matrimonial intentions:

Dido. What stranger art thou that doest eye me thus?

Aeneas. Sometime I was a Trojan, mightie Queene:

But *Troy* is not, what shall I say I am?

Illioneous. Renowned *Dido*, tis our Generall:

Warlike *Aeneas.*

Dido. Warlike *Aeneas*, and in these base robes?

Goe fetch the garment which *Sicheus* ware:

Brave Prince, welcome to *Carthage* and to me,

Both happie that *Aeneas* is our guest:

Sit in this chaire and banquet with a Queene,

Aeneas is *Aeneas*, were he clad

In weedes as bad as ever *Irus* ware.

Aeneas. This is no seate for one that's comfortles,

May it please your grace to let *Aeneas* waite:

For though my birth be great, my fortunes meane,

Too meane to be companion to a Queene.

Dido. Thy fortune may be greater then thy birth,

Sit down, *Aeneas*, sit in *Didos* place,

And if this be thy sonne as I suppose,

Here let him sit, be merrie lovely child.

Aeneas. This place beseemes me not, O pardon me.

Dido. Ile have it so, *Aeneas* be content. (2.1.74-95)

Dido does not so much notice Aeneas as she notices that he "doest eye me thus" (2.1.74). Aeneas, by deliberately avoiding introducing himself, teases her with his importance and mystery; imagine the eye contact between the actors playing these lovers-to-be. Aeneas, embarrassed by his circumstances and in desperate need of a plan, stands before a beautiful and powerful woman who, at the very least, has the means to assist the stranded warrior and his men. By alluding to Troy and thus playing on her sympathies, Aeneas increases the Queen's interest in him. By allowing his subordinate Illioneous to introduce him, Aeneas remains seeming modest, gracefully accepting the "warlike" moniker his man attaches to his name, reminding the Queen that, despite her power, she is in the presence of one mightier than herself (2.1.78). Aeneas remains meek in

his words, allowing Dido to assign "brave prince" to his name and to insist on his company (2.1.81).

Diction is very important; if *Dido* is a discourse on power, especially power in gender relations, then words and phrases that give one character control, tangible or implied, over another become keys to understanding the play. This is not a new concept; Petrarchan complaints imply power and suitors' lyrics are often filled with phrases of command and conquest. Aeneas suffers from an incredible lack of power in his vocabulary; he is commanded by gods, rulers, even his men to the extent that they continually goad him to leave Carthage. Dido, on the other hand, wields power in her vocabulary from the moment she steps on the stage until her death, only occasionally suffering from lapses of weakness. This upset of the typical order of power-gender relations dooms the relationship from the beginning.

Until she slips (or is pushed), Dido holds all the power cards. She commands the men around her with strong, active verbs and succinct orders, beginning with Aeneas in line 74: "What stranger art thou that doest eye me thus?" She commands new clothes for him immediately, and orders the warrior to "sit" and "banquet" with her – reminding him that she is a "Queene," not to gender her, but to empower her – and goes so far as to provide him the identity that he denied himself in lines 75-76 (2.1.80 & 83). Seeming unable (I argue slyly unwilling) to name himself, Aeneas allows first Illioneous and, in lines 84 and 85, Dido to identify him: "Aeneas is Aeneas, were he clad / In weedes as bad as ever Irus ware." In this manner, clever Aeneas hooks Dido, allowing her to describe him based on his legend.

Three times Dido commands Aeneas to sit with her, and the Trojan protests his unworthiness until Dido reveals, in a line that betrays a hint of annoyance at his disobedience, her

absolute power in her realm: "Ile have it so, Aeneas be content" (2.1.95). Aeneas immediately obeys, and the reader wonders whether his plan of modest protest (see below) is still in effect, or if he cannot resist her command when all the flowery praise is stripped away. Aeneas seems to realize, for the first time, that Dido rules absolutely in her country, and that "the power [she] has achieved is a factor of her determination," which is fierce, to say the least (Hendricks 173). This idea is reinforced visually when the servant returns immediately after this exchange with the fine robe for Aeneas, who makes no fuss in putting it on. Dido continues to command Aeneas, forcing him to tell his tale of carnage with less and less tolerance for his protests. She even implicitly questions his masculinity as he refuses to tell the tale: "What, faints Aeneas to remember Troy? / In whose defence he fought so valiantly: / Looke up and speak" (2.1.118-120). At this command Aeneas proceeds without protest.

From the beginning of their relationship, Dido takes the masculine role, a role that is only reinforced as Aeneas tells of his flight from Troy and the numerous scrapes he has been rescued from by his goddess mother, Venus. Aeneas may claim he survived by fighting "manfully," but close reading indicates that his charmed life was never in much danger (2.1.271). Indeed, Aeneas's actions here and throughout the play exhibit "all of the traits normally associated with women -- fickleness, inconstancy, and duplicity" (Hendricks 177). The result is a complete subversion of traditional gender roles, along the lines that Phillippy outlined, with the brave warrior coming off more like a damsel in distress and the female monarch dominating him, to the point that she curses "that ticing strumpet" Helen for causing the war (2.1.300). This statement is a sad irony, given that Dido herself is frequently criticized as another Helen and will indeed later, as a result of Aeneas' mistreatment of her, refer to herself as "a second Helen" (5.1.144).

Hendricks shows the complexity of the gender subversions in this play by suggesting that "it is Aeneas who, Helen-like, is the source of Carthage's fall. Thus it is not Dido who is 'a second Helen' but Aeneas who mirrors the 'ticing strumpet.'" (176). Further, Aeneas is "consumed by desires for the exotic and the feminine" as exemplified by Dido and the power she offers, rather than the masculine heroic desires that the gods would prefer (Hendricks 172). The feminization of Aeneas thus becomes one of the most fascinating manipulations of the Virgilian source.

Aeneas's submissiveness and modesty seem innocuous and even appropriate for one in his condition, although his behavior masks his ambition to charm Dido into repairing his ships (at this point, however, he seems to be playing to her sympathies, rather than trying to romance her). He protests with phrases such as "my fortunes meane" and "this place beseemes me not, O pardon me" (2.1.94). He almost resembles a timid schoolgirl dodging the advances of an aggressive would-be lover, even as Dido greets him as a fellow warrior. Yet Aeneas works his agenda; he manages to frequently reinforce his tragedy, from "But Troy is not" to "one that's comfortles" to "too meane to be companion to a Queene" (2.1.76, 86 & 89). For all his seeming modesty, Aeneas makes it perfectly clear that he is at Dido's mercy, that he is indeed a great warrior of Olympian birth (2.1.88), and that he protests too much.

Dido treats Aeneas as she would any stranger with a good war tale to tell; she obeys the laws of hospitality and welcomes Aeneas "to Carthage and to me, / Both happie that Aeneas is our guest" (2.1.81-82). There is no indication that she has any romantic interest in her new arrival, although this last quote could suggest a hint of something forming. On the other hand, Dido has thought of herself as a man, for lack of a better word, for so long that she is most likely only excited to host Aeneas in Carthage in the same sense that celebrities host presidential families

on their vacations. Aeneas is a celebrity, and Dido takes pleasure in hearing his tales firsthand; conversely, Dido has power and resources, and Aeneas has no problem playing house-guest while she fixes his ships. From the beginning, their relationship is based on mutual exploitation; Aeneas never forgets this, whereas Dido (through divine intervention) loses sight of her detached interest and loses herself in love.

Dido's gradual loss of power and, by extension, of herself, begins when Cupid, disguised as Aeneas's son Ascanius, metaphorically pierces her breast with his arrows, planting the seeds of obsessive love for Aeneas in her heart. Dido struggles with these feelings, and Cupid has probably never had to work quite so hard to enchant someone. Just before the love god's assault, Dido has rejected Iarbus yet again as a suitor, not because of Aeneas, but simply because "no wanton thought / Had ever residence in Didos breast" (3.1.16-17). She maintains power over Iarbus, not only by rejecting his Petrarchan suit, but by reminding him that "yet have I had many mightier Kings" pursue her hand (3.1.12).

Dido attacks these suitors as she would an enemy in war; being a female ruler, she cannot fight like Aeneas, but she can triumph in her rejections of the advances of powerful kings. Hers is essentially a defensive position, and since she enjoys the power she has as an unattached queen (her tragic flaw), she defends that power to her utmost (definite shades of Elizabeth). Her victories in love, or more precisely in avoiding love, allow her to feel a kinship with warriors like Aeneas. Indeed, as a warrior, she has proven more successful than the Trojan; whereas he was unable to defend Troy, she has fought and won the Trojan War countless times in her palace, never falling prey to any potential lovers' wooden horses. That is precisely why the gods, Virgil, and most of the western world attack her and defend Aeneas; instead of being a strong, smart

woman who needs no long-term companion until Venus and Cupid intervene (disastrously only to the woman, of course, who has rejected those particular gods' charms), Dido goes from a chaste warrior to an obsessed lover in the world's eyes. A close inspection of Cupid's seduction of the Queen while disguised as Aeneas's son Ascanius and her valiant attempts to fight him off reveals that such a perception is not only insensitive, but inaccurate:

Dido. Weepe not sweet boy, thou shalt be Didos sonne,
Sit in my lap and let me heare thee sing.
No more my child, now talke another while,
And tell me where learndst thou this pretie song?

Cupid. My cosin Helen taught it me in Troy.

Dido. How lovely is Ascanius when he smiles?

Cupid. Will Dido let me hang around her necke?

Dido. I wagge, and give thee leave to kisse her to.

Cupid. What will you give me now? Ile have this Fanne.

Dido. Take it Ascanius, for thy fathers sake.

Iarbus. Come Dido, leave Ascanius, let us walke.

Dido. Go thou away, Ascanius shall stay.

Iarbus. Ungentle Queene, is this thy love to me?

Dido. O stay Iarbus, and Ile goe with thee.

Cupid. And if my mother goe, Ile follow her.

Dido. Why staiest thou here? thou art no love of mine.

Iarbus. Iarbus dye, seeing she abandons thee.

Dido. No, live Iarbus, what hast thou deserv'd,
That I should say thou art no love of mine?
Something thou hast deserv'd. --- Away I say,
Depart from Carthage, come not in my sight.

Iarbus. Am I not king of rich Getulia?

Dido. Iarbus pardon me, and stay a while.

Cupid. Mother, looke here.

Dido. What telst thou me of rich Getulia?
Am not I Queen of Libia? then depart.

Iarbus. I goe to feed the humour of my Love,
Yet not from Carthage for a thousand worlds.

Dido. Iarbus.

Iarbus. Doth Dido call me backe?

Dido. No, but I charge thee never looke on me.

Iarbus. Then pull out both mine eyes, or let me dye.

Anna. Whereforth doth Dido bid Iarbus goe?

Dido. Because his lothsome sight offends mine eye,
And in my thoughts is shrin'd another love:
O Anna, didst thou know how sweet love were,
Full soone wouldst thou abjure this single life. (3.1.24-60)

Dido's painful, desperate transition from independent ruler to love-struck maiden is a powerful tour-de-force that leaves the reader as exhausted as the Queen herself. As in the

previous passage, the structure does not reveal much, except the shortness of the lines. Each character delivers a single, five-foot line in rapid succession for much of this passage. The actors would speak these lines with the same speed we read them, contributing to a degree of excitement that is the verbal equivalent of a sparring match. Iarbus and Cupid, who do not speak directly to each other, each assault the Queen with love, but Cupid, of course, has the advantage of both appearing as a child (and therefore not representing the danger of sexual love) and of being a god with an invisible quiver of arrows trained on the Queen's heart. She never stands a chance.

The quick succession of dialogue also represents Dido's mental and emotional state during the scene, as she is assaulted by the overt (and familiar) Petrarchan gestures of a suitor and the covert slings and arrows of the god of love (suggesting a love/obsession relationship that I do not have room to delve into here, but that implies much about Marlowe's feelings for Petrarchan conventions). She fights with herself throughout the passage, alternately rejecting and calling back Iarbus as she gradually loses her judgment and herself. She shows more stress and fatigue as the scene progresses, the rapid exchanges mirroring the rapid reversals of her heart, both leaving her exhausted by the time Iarbus departs. When she confides to Anna that she has "another love" in mind, she is a completely different character than the Queen of line 24, and the effect is distressing (3.1.58). Immediately after this passage the Queen admits that she is indeed enamored of Aeneas, who so recently only held interest as a famous house guest. From this point on, she begins to surrender her power, retaining her political strength but allowing vulnerability to enter her heart, and it is the vulnerability, transformed into obsession, that destroys her. Her passion for Aeneas, the result of divine intervention, not personal weakness, collides with her passion for self-rule, and the resulting action is something like a long, spiraling, Aristotelian "mistake."

Close reading of the passage reveals Cupid skillfully planting ideas of love in the Queen's mind. He sings, he dangles from her neck and kisses her, he deflects Iarbus without confronting him directly ("if my mother goe, Ile follow"), and he calls Dido "mother" repeatedly (3.1.38). The repetition of the maternal moniker probably begins to inform Dido's subconscious; she grows to think of Ascanius as her son, to the point of later using him as leverage to keep Aeneas in Carthage (despite her obsession, she never loses her military instincts). Cupid, meanwhile, makes love to her; he uses a boy's body, but the image is nonetheless erotic – he sits in her lap and kisses her, metaphorically piercing her heart with notions of erotic love. The image is reminiscent of another mythological boy, Ganymede, cavorting on Jupiter's lap in the opening scene of this very play, perhaps as a visual reminder that divine powers are at work in what is indeed a type of love-making that, as with Jupiter and Ganymede, is contrary to nature (Dido's nature, at least). Given the obvious impropriety of lusting after Ascanius, Dido is left with the next logical obsession: the father, Aeneas. Cupid awakens the "wanton thought[s]" that Dido had so recently boasted immunity to, and directs those thoughts toward the Trojan warrior (3.1.16).

Dido struggles with her lust; she has suppressed her desires for years, possibly out of morality, but more likely out of the heretofore stronger desire to hold and wield power. Like Elizabeth and Isabella, she is a woman of considerable influence in a world that has no context for such female-based power; unlike the other two queens, she does not feel compelled to hide her ambition behind any mask or use any man to get what she wants. In this manner, her tragedy is the worst of all the queens; she has the most to lose (actual freedom and power over her own fortune). Her innocuous flirting with Cupid/Ascanius quickly escalates into a battle of wills, hers versus Cupid's, with Iarbus as the first victim of her newborn lust. Having only lines before

indicated, like the typical object of Petrarchan pursuit, that "Dido may be thine," the Queen sends Iarbus away after falling to Cupid's assault (3.1.19). The verbal torture Iarbus suffers in this passage is a reflection of the fierce battle the Queen is engaged in; each time she beckons her old suitor, she is herself, but each time she sends him away, she has fallen victim to Cupid's charms. She does not beckon "O stay Iarbus, and Ile goe with thee" to acquiesce to his suit, but to ground herself, to reinforce her reality and her power over her own gender role even as it slips away from her (3.1.37). Iarbus is her long-suffering whipping boy, and her rejections of his suits give her power, part of the power she is trying to retain. Cupid ultimately wins, forcing her to "charge [Iarbus] never looke on me," a command that signifies her surrender to the love god by relinquishing her power to choose, or, more importantly, to choose not to choose (3.1.54). She is metaphorically reined back into a female role, which Anna immediately recognizes; she has been pining for Iarbus for years, and welcomes Dido's newfound lust for Aeneas. The gods have restored the order that Dido had upset for so long. Watching the strong Queen who delights in her independence from men fall to obsession -- it cannot really be termed love -- so quickly and painfully is equally painful for the reader. Cupid has symbolically raped her, planted in her breast a desire that is not her own and left it there to grow, like a cancer, until it finally destroys her.

Dido's diction remains commanding throughout the passage, ordering Cupid to "sit," "sing," "talke," "kisse," and "take." She shows a little of the Petrarchan herself when she confounds Iarbus with rapidly contrasting and irrational orders to "goe...away," "stay," "live," "depart," "stay a while," and "never looke on me." Marlowe positions Iarbus as the long-suffering Petrarchan suitor, and despite the anachronism of such a character, his repeated threat to "dye" without Dido's love allows Marlowe to make his point: Dido wields all the power in their

relationship, which is why she struggles to keep him from going. Cupid effectively comes between them, literally, speaking after two of Dido's bids to keep Iarbus and effectively reversing her decision into a command to leave. Yet the love god acquits himself, or rather Ascanius, from accusations of interference (much like Isabella in the civil war), only (seemingly) innocently saying "and if my mother goe, Ile follow her" and "mother, looke here" (3.1.38 & 47). These simple reminders of Cupid's presence, and more importantly, of Dido's role as Ascanius' new "mother," are enough to turn Dido's pleas for Iarbus' presence into the cruel "Why staiest thou here? thou art no love of mine" and the latter "Am not I Queen of Libia? then depart" (3.1.39 & 49). The latter also marks the first use of her political power to appease her lust; she will later use all her official powers to win and detain Aeneas, rather than to remain in total control of herself. Her growing inability to govern herself (through no fault of her own), like Edward II, leads to her downfall.

Dido's last desperate "Iarbus" is touching and tender, given the Queen's painful struggle with Cupid's attacks and her frantic attempts to hold onto the world and the power she knows, here represented by that suitor (3.1.51). Her tone is gentle and pleading as she looks sorrowfully at him, inspiring hope in him and revealing her vulnerability. Cupid will have none of that, however, and Dido quickly rejects Iarbus one last time. It is the last cry of the independent Dido, Queen of Carthage, who has avoided entanglements with men so successfully for so long. Her tragedy really begins in this passage, and her behavior quickly becomes obsessive and descends from there. Anna's mild shock at the end of this passage, "wherefore doth Dido bid Iarbus goe?" indicates what the reader suspects as well: this is not typical behavior for the Queen (3.1.56). Instead of cautioning Dido against her newfound lust for Aeneas, Anna encourages it for selfish

reasons; she secretly desires Iarbus for herself. Thus, the only other significant female in Dido's court actually offers counsel that pushes Dido further into her obsession.

Within a few lines (and urged by Cupid once again), Dido admits "that till now / Didst never thinke Aeneas beautifull: / But now for quittance of this oversight, / Ile make me bracelets of his golden haire" (3.1.82-85). She attacks her so-called love with the obsessive desire to possess Aeneas, and attempts to do just that by arranging the hunt and seducing/coercing him to accept her love in the cave. In spite of her confessed love (to Anna, that is) for Aeneas, Dido's pride keeps her from admitting her feelings to the Trojan until they are alone in the cave. She has consented to repair his ships (what Venus really wanted in the first place) if he will stay with her, not to love her, but ostensibly to protect her from hostile neighbors. If Aeneas were as sharp as the careful reader, he would realize that this Queen needs no protection, that her statement negating "that any man could conquer me" is only a ruse, and that she has indeed been conquered (3.1.137). In fairness to Aeneas, he does not pursue Dido so much as he lets her pursue him. He allows Dido to lead him into the woods, and then into the cave during the storm; she reveals her feelings for him, effectively courting him, and finally gives him "this wedding ring" and makes him "king of Libia, by *my* guift(sic)" (3.4.62-64, italics mine). This is an exact contrast to Tamburlaine's crowning of Zenocrate, with the gender roles completely reversed and the female suitor controlling the situation. Dido's power in this scene is awe-inspiring; she can conquer the hero Aeneas with her sexuality and her strength and wealth at the same time. Aeneas can do nothing but protest that he is unworthy, but Dido, driven by Cupid's poison, commands all those around her, and Aeneas is no exception, destiny or not. He attempts to act the part of the suitor (to recapture his masculinity, perhaps), protesting his unworthiness too much and then vowing

"never to leave these newe upreared walles, / Whiles Dido lives and rules in Junos towne, / Never to like or love any but her" (3.4.49-51). Only three scenes later, Aeneas is ready to take his men and set out for Italy.

Dido's tragic flaw, her Aristotelian "mistake," allows her to function as a man in a masculine world, but since she is not a man, it is only a matter of time before she overreaches and falls (a theme in all Marlowe's plays). In the meantime, her power and her sexuality combine against the will of the gods, and "she becomes the threat to Aeneas that no man could ever represent" (Hendricks 176). As shown above, she emasculates Aeneas repeatedly, commanding his presence, installing him as king of Libia, preventing him from fleeing with his men to Italy, and ordering her "guard to slay" anyone who voices opposition to the pairing (4.4.72). This is the despotic Dido that Kocher sees, yet this is a woman accustomed to ruling an empire who can no longer rule herself. Had Elizabeth lost control of her emotions and elevated an unlikely suitor to the throne, she would have faced the same odds that Dido does. Fortunately for England's queen, Cupid never got close enough to prick her. Nevertheless, Kocher misses the mark completely by dismissing Dido as a spoiled tyrant, and dismissing Marlowe for focusing on Dido at all, claiming that "no particular purpose of characterization seems to be served" by studying Dido's struggles with her power and her desire (180).

Whereas Dido is a model of the proactive, even after her infatuation begins, Aeneas continually has things happen to him. He is saved from Troy by his goddess mother; likewise his landing on Dido's shores. It should come as no surprise that the gods will take the blame for Aeneas breaking his vow to remain with Dido. Jupiter is unhappy with Aeneas for neglecting his fate, and repeatedly commands Aeneas to pursue his manly destiny and found Rome. Venus and

Cupid have manipulated Dido's heart to advance Aeneas's cause as well. Aeneas thus comes to the decision to leave Dido rather easily, since nothing that has happened in his entire life is apparently his fault. In a soliloquy that frames his orders to his men to prepare to sail for Italy (his men, incidentally, are all too happy to leave Carthage and "that ticing dame…[who] cares not how we sinke or swimme, / So she may have Aeneas in her armes" (4.3.31&41-42)), Aeneas absolves himself of free will and the blame for his imminent departure:

> *Aeneas.* Carthage, my friendly host adue,
>
> Since destinie doth call me from thy shoare:
>
> Hermes this night descending in a dreame,
>
> Hath summoned me to fruitfull Italy:
>
> Jove wils it so, my mother wils it so:
>
> Let my Phenissa graaunt, and then I goe:
>
> Graunt she or no, Aeneas must away,
>
> Whose golden fortunes clogd with courtly ease,
>
> Cannot ascend to fames immortall house,
>
> Or banquet in bright honors burnisht hall,
>
> Till he hath furrowed Neptunes glassie fieldes,
>
> And cut a passage through his toples hilles…
>
> I faine would goe, yet beautie calles me backe:
>
> To leave her so and not once say farewell,
>
> Were to transgresse against all lawes of love:
>
> But if I use such ceremonious thankes,

As parting friends accustome on the shoare,
Her silver armes will coll me round about,
And teares of pearle, crye stay, Aeneas, stay:
Each word she says will then containe a Crowne,
And every speech be ended with a kisse:
I may not dure this female drudgerie,
To sea Aeneas, finde out Italy. (4.3.1-12 & 46-56)

Aeneas begins this speech by invoking his "destinie," but not in the manner of a man seeking his destiny so much as one having his destiny forced upon him (4.3.2). Aeneas is alone, an invitation to read his dialogue as honest, and the multitude of passives and negatives fits well into his character. Throughout this play he has been acted upon: by the gods, by Dido, by destiny. He does not seek his fortune, so he claims; "destinie doth call," implying that Aeneas passively receives his orders (4.3.2). Hermes "hath summoned" him to Italy; again, a passive construction from Aeneas's perspective (4.3.4). Jove and Venus "wil[] it so" and his "Phenissa," Dido, has no say in the matter, because Aeneas simply "must away" to Italy (4.3.5-7). Regardless of where our sympathies lie at this point, even the most critical reader cannot easily fault Aeneas for acquiescing to the all-powerful gods (and his mother, who, as a goddess, is thus doubly intimidating).

Aeneas does not seem to want sympathy, however; in line 8, he changes tone and actively inserts himself in the quest for glory. His "golden fortunes" to come have been "clogd with courtly ease," implying that Dido has somehow smothered his natural greatness with her attempts to comfort and civilize him (4.3.8). She will not let him "ascend to Fames Immortall house, / or

banquet in bright honors burnisht hall" (4.3.9-10). Aeneas never implicates himself as a conspirator in his slackness; neither he nor the gods seem to pay any credence to the oath he so willingly gave to Dido only three scenes earlier. Dido is a "clog," a hindrance, an obstruction that must be removed before destiny can claim Aeneas (he certainly doesn't plan to work for his destiny).

The second part of this passage finds Aeneas grasping for some excuse not to bid farewell to Dido. Admittedly enchanted by her "beautie," he further admits that abandoning her without so much as a word "were to transgresse against all lawes of love" (4.3.46 & 48). In addition to functioning as an admission of his love for the Queen, or at least his recognition that their relationship is construed as one of romantic love, this statement hides the further dilemma that Aeneas faces: he is breaking his oath by leaving Dido. He knows that she will remember his vow and confront him with it, and he cannot answer that accusation, except with his eventual "I am commaunded by immortall Jove, / To leave this towne and passe to Italy, / And therefore must of force" (5.1.99-101). Even that will not suffice for the obsessed Dido, whose infatuation by Act V has grown so profound that she, warrior-like, has ransacked Aeneas's ships and stolen his masts and sails to prevent him from leaving, and to give him incentive to stay, she has indeed crowned him ruler of Libia. This last attempt to keep Aeneas in Carthage is an incredible display of the power Dido wields, all of which is being forced into the service of her obsession in a mockery of the Petrarchan suit. In the end, none of these tactics can conquer the destiny enforced upon Aeneas by the gods.

Interestingly, the reader wonders if Dido's "silver armes" and "teares of pearle" are tempting to Aeneas at all; he seems to focus on the "Crowne" that she will offer with "each word"

that begs him to stay (4.3.51-53). He does accept the crown and royal scepter shortly after this passage, and the "female drudgerie" he dreads, sexual connotations notwithstanding for the moment, can be construed as the pleas and tears that come before the offers of power and wealth (4.3.55). Aeneas is all too willing to rule, whether it be Libia or Italy; Dido offers convenience and speed, ordering her guards (see above) "to slay for their offence" anyone in her kingdom who disapproves of her installment of Aeneas as king (4.4.72). Proser argues that, at times, Dido "turns Tamburlanian," especially in her use of martial language; in this analogy, Aeneas is feminized into another Zenocrate, seduced by the power of a suitor's speech (72). Further, although Aeneas may want to avoid "female drudgerie" in the sexual sense out of fear that physical love will make him less of a warrior, he cannot resist Dido's offers of power, which, of course, have made him less of a warrior anyway, since he is being given power (as opposed to winning it in battle). His desire to rule is stronger than his revulsion at the thought that he owes his position to a woman. Once again transfixed by her absolute power, Aeneas remains in Carthage for another act, until the gods deliver an ultimatum, summoning him to his destiny yet again.

Aeneas's speeches stand in sharp contrast to the Dido passages analyzed here, if only for their respective lack of power. Dido takes charge of Aeneas and his men from the moment they first encounter each other; Aeneas's early attempts to impress Dido fall on blind eyes until Cupid intervenes. Even then, she attacks love like she would attack an enemy, using every weapon at her disposal to win and keep Aeneas, and sacrificing herself in the end to curse him and his descendants. Aeneas speaks in excuses; he dismisses his decision to leave based on his commandment from the gods, even as he betrays his own ambitions for glory. He justifies his

decision to sneak away without telling Dido by dismissing her as a weeping widow-to-be who would move him to stay with tears and, again, more tellingly, offers of power. In a way, Aeneas emasculates himself in this passage, admitting his heroic ambitions but denying himself the skill or drive to seek out that power, and revealing his strong temptation to accept that power not only without working for it, but as a kind of bribe. As king of Libia, he would effectively become a token prince, a sort-of royal bimbo. The gods won't stand for that, although Aeneas doesn't seem to mind; destiny calls him away, and Dido suffers for it.

As Aeneas prepares to leave Carthage, Dido implores him using every defense she can muster: reason, passion, terror, pity, even questioning of the gods. Aeneas is resolved, much to his dismay, I suspect, and bids her adieu. Dido's final unraveling makes for a fascinating investigation:

Dido. Why star'st thou in my face? if thou wilt stay,
Leape in mine armes, mine armes are open wide:
If not, turn from me, and Ile turn from thee:
For though thou hast the heart to say farewell,
I have not power to stay thee: is he gone? [exit *Aeneas*]
I but heele come againe, he cannot goe,
He loves me too well to serve me so:
Yet he that in my sight would not relent,
Will, being absent, be obdurate still.
By this is he got to the water side,
And, see the Sailers take him by the hand,

But he shrinkes backe, and now remembring me,

Returnes amaine: welcome, welcome my love:

But wheres Aeneas? ah hees gone hees gone! (5.1.179-192)

Even in their last moments together, Dido describes Aeneas. He has spoken, just before this passage, in the same passive, Jove-wills-it-so manner, and dispassionately watches Dido as she frantically tries everything she can muster to retain him. For the first time in her life, her command over speech fails her, and her final words to him actually work against her (as Belsey argues, above), allowing the Trojan an opportunity to leave. Her last resort is the bluff, "if not, turne from me, and Ile turne from thee," which gives Aeneas the exit he's been looking for (5.1.181). By taking advantage of this moment and exiting, Aeneas underscores the final failure of language, at least in the mouth of a woman, to command fate. The gods have symbolically restored order by taking Dido's most powerful weapon and using it against her; her words still command, but they command contrary to her intentions. Ironically, Dido gives Aeneas credit for having "the heart to say farewell," although the text has made it clear that his original plan was to steal away without bidding adieu; further, he can only make his exit when Dido turns her back to him (5.1.182). In a way, she has commanded him to leave, just as she has dominated him throughout the play; he takes her bluff literally, perhaps even escaping with a clear conscience, leaving behind a desperate queen who realizes that, in spite of her absolute power, she lacks the "power to stay" Aeneas from his destiny (5.1.183).

Immediately after seeing that Aeneas has fled, the Queen very nearly collapses. Her sharp, strong diction dissolves into the wails and rationalizations of a spurned lover. The well-placed couplet, "I but heele come againe, he cannot goe, / He loves me to well to serve me so" shows us

the unsentimental Queen resorting, in her mania, to the simple, romantic couplet that might conclude a sonnet (5.1.184). Logic sets in momentarily, as she realizes that Aeneas is less likely to return to her given his ability to "not relent" to her charms in her presence; her desperate romantic obsession forces her to quickly abandon this reality and fantasize about Aeneas stepping onto his boat and then being drawn back to her (5.1.186). The struggle between her fantasy and reality here mirrors the earlier struggle, with Cupid on her lap, to preserve her power and independence in the face of the love god's assaults. Her final realization, upon opening her eyes to find emptiness, is even more heartbreaking than her initial submission to Cupid; the powerful Queen is reduced to the sobs "ah hees gone hees gone!" (5.1.192). The Queen falls apart at this point, raving across the stage in her despair. The gods have pulled her apart in their scheming, and the woman whose words have dominated throughout this play is reduced to incoherent sobs, the most polar opposite of her former power.

Dido does not long mourn Aeneas. She quickly remembers, with the help of sister Anna, that she **is** a powerful queen, and that she **is** the only reason Aeneas is even able to leave her. The irony that her power, demonstrated equally through words and actions, both netted her Aeneas in the first place, yet enabled him to leave her in the end, is rich for the reader, but devastating for the character. Dido calmly and surreptitiously plans her self-immolation in a symbolic funeral pyre of Aeneas' effects and her subsequent "revenge" for "this treason to a Queene" (Marlowe's historical allusion to Rome-Carthage hostilities allows Dido to take credit for Hannibal et al.), after Anna has talked her out of her impassioned mourning (5.1.307):

Anna. Ah sister, leave these idle fantasies,

Sweet sister cease, remember who you are.

Dido. Dido I am, unlesse I be deceiv'd,
And must I rave thus for a runnagate?
Must I make ships for him to saile away?
Nothing can beare me to him but a ship,
And he hath all my fleete, what shall I doe
But dye in furie of this oversight?
I, I must be the murderer of my selfe:
No but I am not, yet I will be straight. (5.1.262-271)

Anna's command to "remember who you are" elicits a primal scream from somewhere within Dido, as Cupid's charms wear off and rage sets in (5.1.263). "Dido I am" is as powerful as Webster's "I am Duchess of Malfi still" or Gertude's rebukes of her son's accusations toward her (5.1.264). These self-assertions on the parts of powerful women in Renaissance drama almost always precede those same women's destructions. In reminding herself of her power, Dido also reminds herself of her behavior with Aeneas, and suffers embarrassment and dissociated outrage, almost as if she cannot recognize the woman who made "ships for him to saile away" and allowed Aeneas "all my fleete" (5.1.266 & 268). By simply recognizing Aeneas as a "runnagate," Dido's infatuation seems to have waned completely; she is prepared to "dye in furie" as a result of her "oversight" (5.1.265 & 269).

This last word is a curious understatement; Dido the pragmatic ruler and tactical genius deems her poor decision-making an "oversight" rather than using catastrophous, emotional language. Her obsession fades almost as quickly as it came, and a new obsession replaces it: revenge. Though she arrived at her vengeful desires differently than Isabella, the rage is the same

in both women, and certainly more tragic and self-destructive in Dido's case. The powerful ruler from Act 1 knew something about politics and vengeance, and left with no way to exact her revenge on Aeneas' body, Dido decides to attack his reputation and his all-important lineage with her curse and her suicide. She works in the tradition of the abandoned woman, in which "heroine after heroine imagines the misery the beloved will feel at having caused her death, and each woman prophesies that his name will be blackened for all time" (Kauffman 58). As she burns the relics of their love and, ultimately, immolates herself, Dido "make[s] Aeneas famous throughout the world, / For perjurie and slaughter of a Queene" (5.1.293-294). Her word choice becomes important again as her mind returns to powerful clarity, so near her end; "perjurie" implies that dishonesty, in words and emotions, formed the basis of their relationship, and "slaughter," which has sexual connotations as well, describes the violence that the Queen has suffered as a result of her encounter with Aeneas.

Dido challenges the "gods that guide the starrie frame," presumably the same gods that have been working against her throughout the play, to see that Aeneas and his fellow "traytors...be still tormented with unrest" even after they arrive in Italy (5.1.302-305). If there are any lingering doubts about her intentions just before she leaps onto the fire, Dido makes it clear that she expects "from mine ashes...a Conqueror [will] rise, / That may *revenge* this treason to a Queene" (5.1.306-307, italics mine). Proser sees Tamburlaine again in Dido's speech; comparing this curse to Tamburlaine's fury at Zenocrate's death, he argues that "the sonorousness and majesty in both their speeches appear inseparable from the destructive power each character invokes" (73). Dido, like the Scythian shepherd, speaks powerful rhetoric intertwined with powerful violence, linking creation (of language) with destruction (through language). Dido may

have lost the battle, but she appeals to the ages (again, foreshadowing Rome-Carthage hostilities) to avenge her. Her words, in this context, have the power to destroy.

The justice of ages aside, Dido has no one to physically strike out against (even whipping-boy Iarbus is out of reach), so she sacrifices her own life to satisfy her demand for vengeance. "I must be the murderer of my selfe" constitutes one of the most powerful resolutions in any monologue; Dido the Queen has supplanted Dido the love-struck young woman, and her mind quickly realizes that, obsession aside, her reputation will never survive Aeneas' abuse of her (5.1.270). In an earlier passage she worried that other rulers "counted [her] light / In being too familiar with Iarbus;" certainly her fellow rulers would never let her forget her abdication to Aeneas (3.1.14-15). Ever the calculating politician, Dido arrives at her decision by means of passion, surely, but also as the only logical way out of the situation in which she finds herself. She certainly contemplates chasing Aeneas, but since "he hath all my fleete," she cannot punish him (5.1.268). She is left with no victim but herself, and I contend that Dido dies heroically, as a last act of revenge against Aeneas, hoping that the infamy of her death will haunt him and his descendants throughout history.

Dido's progression from powerful ruler to powerful lover to broken victim is as tragic as any in literature; as Phillippy observed, we have a tendency to read stories like hers with an eye for the epic hero, for the Aeneas or the Odysseus. Marlowe's Dido is clearly the heroine of this play (the title, if nothing else, suggests this), and Aeneas, even if the gods are primarily to blame for his behavior, is not only the antagonist, but the weaker vessel in this relationship. Dido commands him from the moment they meet, not only in deed but in words, and her realization that she "ha[s] not power to stay [him]" leads rapidly to her death (5.1.183). For a woman who is

accustomed to being in control, not only of her subjects but of her emotions, the loss of total control at the hands of Cupid, Venus, and destiny is simply not acceptable. Aeneas has the benefit of the Olympian gods on his side pushing him toward some greater destiny for the whole world, whereas Dido is simply a woman whose strength, her "independence, power, and desirability," threatens the world she lives in -- and that of the gods -- too much for Fortune to bear (Hendricks 175). It is significant that she is reduced to ashes by Venus and Cupid, those effeminate characters who represent sexual, possibly heterosexual, love. In trying to restore the Queen to an acceptable female role, they destroy her. Her will cannot be contained in the shell of a powerless woman; her tragic flaw will not allow it. She is just as heroic as the Trojan who leaves her, even more so for standing against all the forces of nature and heaven that are aligned against her. As Jupiter frolics with Ganymede in heaven (again, reminding us of Edward and Gaveston), the only strong woman on earth chooses to die rather than to lose and admit her powerlessness. She destroys herself in the fire for a variety of reasons discussed above, but among them, perhaps chief among them, is the realization that she lost control, and can never regain it to the extent that she wielded it before Aeneas. Faced with the choice between living in almost certain subjugation and infamy through death, the Queen makes the choice we would expect her to make; her last act of power ensures that she will never lose control again.

Recognizing Dido as an unusually powerful and vocal female character begs the question: if *Dido* comes before *Tamburlaine*, as most editors contend, why the reversal in gender roles from Dido to Zenocrate? It is possible that *Dido* is an example of youthful experimentation, an explanation that legitimizes most critics' dismissal of the play (I disagree, obviously). Perhaps the Renaissance audience may not have been ready for such a strong female character, especially

given the prevalence of Virgil's account of these episodes. Possibly the similarities between Carthage's Queen and England's Elizabeth struck too close to home for the latter's subjects. Further, Marlowe struggles with gender throughout his career; one of his greatest pieces, *Dr. Faustus*, features no female characters, save the ghostly appearance of Helen of Troy which Faustus is so drawn to. With this playwright, there will be no easy answer.

Marlowe's own sexuality forced him to confront gender issues, and from a certain point of view Zenocrate, despite her banality, is still preferable to the barbaric Tamburlaine; perhaps Marlowe just let her fall short because she is not so much the focus of that play, as Dido is of hers. As revolutionary as Dido is, Isabella is certainly the most complex of Marlowe's women, since she exists almost within Marlowe's time and both understands and subverts the gender roles of her society, rather than assaulting them head-on as the pre-Christian Queen of Carthage does. Furhter, Isabella's motivations remain in a constant state of flux throughout most of the play, leaving the reader to speculate about her often conflicting ambitions. Dido and Zenocrate function in opposite ways, but neither woman seems aware of her situation as a woman. Isabella is acutely aware of her gender, and in spite of whatever feelings she has for her husband, she uses her gender, often in a reversal of expectations, to her advantage throughout the play. Yet as much as I respect the quality of the writing of *Edward II*, I cannot turn away from Dido, whose plight moves me to even greater pity than Isabella's. Dido never knows what damns her, whereas Isabella has at least some idea of her duplicity. Dido is earnest and powerful and runs headlong into a wall that she cannot penetrate, and for these reasons, I argue that hers is the greatest tragedy of all.

Final Thoughts

Dido and Isabella present two very different examples of powerful women. Both women explode their gendered expectations, one overtly and one covertly, and both tales end tragically for the women at their hearts. Dido, however, manages to retain audience sympathy throughout her play; indeed, our association with her grows as her madness deepens. Isabella, initially wholly sympathetic (although arguably duplicitous, as I have shown), seems to lose reader sympathy inversely as her power grows. Even if we allow for her presumed feelings for her husband, she eventually revels in power, and it is this revelry that costs her points with her audience. Marlowe may simply be making a statement about the respective time periods of these plays; in ancient Carthage, he seems to be saying, a woman could rule absolutely without having to rely on the complicity of men to wield power for her, as in Isabella's time. Is Marlowe commenting on progress, or the lack thereof? Or is he implying that, if a woman is powerful, it is better to wield that power openly than through manipulation?

I am not even sure that these questions are relevant, much less answerable. Marlowe presents more complicated women as his career progresses, and mixed feelings for Isabella are the result of greater craftsmanship than the wholly sympathetic (i.e., uncomplicated) feelings engendered by Dido. Dido's tragedy may speak to me more because of the violence of her passion; Isabella rarely lets her passion surface. Indeed, hers is a cold, clever heart -- much like that of her son, the "good" ruler we see at the end of the play. For a woman to have such a heart -- a "man's" heart, if you will indulge me to remember sixteenth century notions of gender -- is more detrimental to social structure than for a woman to rule with passion and die by that same passion. In this way, Dido is less of a threat than Isabella, and the audience can afford her

character more sympathy. Isabella is ruled by her mind, and a mind that can win a civil war and kill a king is a mind to be wary of, regardless of gender.

I can sympathize with Isabella; she is trapped in a loveless marriage in a foreign country, essentially friendless and legally powerless. She is desperate and does what she has to do to survive and improve her situation. Dido, on the other hand, in no way improves her situation by obsessing over Aeneas; her mind, formerly her rock, is destroyed by the slings of Cupid's arrows, and her passion leads to her downfall. Perhaps this is why Dido seems more tragic; tragedy is defined (Aristotle again) by the pitiable downfall of a person of high position as a result of a single mistake. Isabella rises throughout her play, whereas Dido begins hers at the top. Isabella maintains control until the very end; Dido loses control early on and does not regain it until her power has dissipated. Dido's last act, however, is one of passionate, powerful revenge, whereas Isabella is dragged away to prison pleading for her life. This, more than anything, defines the difference between these two powerful women. By wielding power through men, Isabella took the chance of ending up with a man she could not control, whereas Dido maintains power over her fate even at the moment of her death. Isabella's defeat and Dido's triumph remain two of the most fascinating female tragedies of all time.

Marlowe's three queens represent an evolution from the powerful woman to the powerless woman to the overtly powerless woman who wields her considerable power covertly. If we want to trace a progression of gender representations in Marlowe, we can see that as the author matures, he presents women with greater complexity, finally coming to a conclusion with Isabella that even when a woman finds a way to influence her own fate, she will still be destroyed by men in the end. Homosexual relationships are similarly stifled by the oppressive masculine culture, and

in the end we are left with a surprisingly incisive study of gender relations in Renaissance England.

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