Robert Greene and the Theatrical Vocabulary of the Early 1590s

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Here is a familiar tale found in literary handbooks for much of the twentieth century. Once upon a time in the 1560s and 1570s (the boyhoods of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson) English drama was in a deplorable state characterized by fourteener couplets, allegory, the heavy hand of didacticism, and touring troupes of players with limited numbers and resources. A first breakthrough came with the building of the first permanent playhouses in the London area in 1576-77 (The Theatre, The Curtain)--hence an opportunity for stable groups to form so as to develop a repertory of plays and an audience. A decade later the University Wits came down to bring their learning and sophistication to the London desert, so that the heavyhandedness and primitive skills of early 1580s playwrights such as Robert Wilson and predecessors such as Thomas Lupton, George Wapull, and William Wager were superseded by the artistry of Marlowe, Kyd, and Greene. The introduction of blank verse and the suppression of allegory and onstage sermons yielded what Willard Thorp billed in 1928 as "the triumph of realism."[1]

Theatre and drama historians have picked away at some of these details (in particular, 1576 has lost some of its luster or uniqueness), but the narrative of the University Wits' resuscitation of a moribund English drama has retained its status as received truth. No one, myself included, would deny that something changed in the mid to late 1580s with the appearance of *1 Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, two items that irrevocably shifted the paradigm. In this watershed period that lasted through the early 1590s (Marlowe's death in 1593 provides one possible terminus) fresh materials and experiments abound, as evidenced in such landmark items as *The Jew of Malta*, the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Arden of Faversham*. If not a triumph of *realism* (a term notoriously difficult to pin down), a notable change from the pre-Kyd and pre-Marlowe dramatic fare cannot be disputed.

My focus, however, is upon continuity rather than breakthroughs. Few plays have survived from the London theatre company repertories of the early to mid 1580s. Of those few no one chooses to weigh *The Three Ladies of London* and *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* in the same scale as *Doctor Faustus* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. Marlowe, moreover, in his Prologue to *1 Tamburlaine* clearly thumbed his nose at "the jigging veins of rhyming mother wits" of the previous generation. Nonetheless, I wish to pose the question: even if fourteeners, overt allegory, and onstage sermons did (more or less) disappear, was the break with the dramatic forms and procedures of the 1570s and early 1580s as severe as assumed in the prevailing narrative? Especially in the canon of plays from the late 1580s and early 1590s what kinds of carry-overs can be discerned?

As a point of departure, consider a fundamental yet very slippery question: why does X happen at a given moment in a given play? Generations of readers, at least up through the early 1980s, would provide such stock answers as: 1) to advance the plot or narrative and 2) to develop "character." The latter answer may be out of fashion among academics and post-modernists who talk in terms of "subject positions" but is still prevalent among theatrical professionals (and my undergraduates). Another stock response is 3) to provide "comic relief" wherein the main action of a play becomes comparable to heartburn or a headache. Less common would be the response that X might be present at a given point 4) for its symbolic or imagistic value and least common would be 5) for its contribution to "structure" or patterning. My goal in this essay is to explore, briefly and tentatively, categories 4 and 5, with particular reference to Robert Greene's *Alphonsus of Aragon* and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*.

Let me start with a stock device found in the late moral plays: the choice to break down X (an individual, a key choice, a kingdom) into its component parts that in turn can be represented onstage. A particularly revealing example is to be found in R. B.'s *Apius and Virginia* (1564)[2] where, after Apius agrees to the Vice's plan (that will wrest Virginia from her family), the stage direction reads: "*Here let him make as though he went out and let Conscience and Justice come out*

of him, and let Conscience hold in his hand a lamp burning and let Justice have a sword and hold it before Apius' breast" (500). Although Conscience and Justice have no lines while Apius is onstage, the judge himself supplies their half of the argument:

> But out I am wounded, how am I divided?
> Two states of my life, from me are now glided,
> For Conscience he pricketh me contemned,
> And Justice saith, judgment would have me condemned:
> Conscience saith cruelty sure will detest me:
> And Justice saith, death in the end will molest me,
> And both in one sudden me thinks they do cry,
> That fire eternal, my soul shall destroy. (501-8)

Haphazard the Vice, however, mocks Conscience and Justice ("these are but thoughts"--510) and argues instead: "Then care not for Conscience the worth of a fable, / Justice is no man, nor nought to do able" (521-2). After Apius agrees to forgo his scruples ("let Conscience grope, and judgment crave"), Conscience and Justice are left alone onstage to lament his decision in psychological terms (e.g., Conscience complains: "I spotted am by willful will, / By lawless love and lust / By dreadful danger of the life. / By faith that is unjust"--538-41).

To act out the central decision in his play, R. B. has not resorted to a soliloquy or even to straightforward temptation by the Vice but has chosen to break down Apius' choice into its component parts. Somehow, at the moment when the judge is leaving the stage under the influence of the Vice and his own lust, Conscience and Justice are to "*come out of*" Apius (or "glide" from him, according to the dialogue), whether from behind his cloak or through some stage device (as in the genealogy of Sin sequence in *All for Money* [1577]). The theatrically emphatic presence of these two figures (with their striking entrance, their emblems, and their gestures) is then linked verbally to Apius' own conscience and sense of justice. Apius' subsequent exit with the Vice acts out his choice and spells out how he has abandoned his conscience and sense of justice in favor of his lust. Both

the stage direction that indicates that Conscience and Justice are to "come out of" Apius and the Vice's insistence that "these are but thoughts" underscore how the inner workings of the protagonist's mind have been made external in a fashion particularly suited to onstage presentation.

The late moral dramatists regularly used such onstage psychomachias to display at length pivotal decisions, whether the choice of Faith over Despair (*The Tide Tarrieth No Man* [1576]), the effect of Knowledge of Sin upon Infidelity (*The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* [1558]), or the choice of Covetous over Enough (*Enough is as Good as a Feast* [1560]). The technique survives in the 1590s, as witnessed by the Good and Evil Angels of *Doctor Faustus* and one or more angels who flank a despairing figure in Lodge and Greene's *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1590). Consider in particular *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599) where a pivotal event, the seduction of Mistress Sanders, is presented not through dialogue among the characters but by means of a dumb show:

> *next comes Lust before Brown, leading Mistress Sanders*
> *covered with a black veil: Chastity all in white, pulling*
> *her back softly by the arm: then Drury, thrusting away*
> *Chastity, Roger following: they march about, and then sit*
> *to the table: the Furies fill wine, Lust drinks to Brown,*
> *he to Mistress Sanders, she pledgeth him: Lust embraceth*
> *her, she thrusteth Chastity from her, Chastity wrings her*
> *hands, and departs: Drury and Roger embrace one another:*
> *the Furies leap and embrace one another.* (D1r)

To underscore the effect, Tragedy as presenter explicates this dumb show for the spectator (e.g., "Now blood and *Lust*, doth conquer and subdue, / And *Chastity* is quite abandoned"). Clearly, the anonymous dramatist has not opted for the temptation scene expected by a modern reader but instead has provided a breaking down of the event into components that include both verisimilar figures (wife, seducer, bawds) and allegorical forces (Chastity, Lust, the Furies). In place of a soliloquy or a

speech of acquiescence for the protagonist, the dramatist provides as major signals the thrusting away of Chastity and the embracing of Lust. Like R. B., Wapull, and Wager (or Marlowe with his good and evil angels), this dramatist felt that such an orchestration of component parts was a workable method of putting the mind of his protagonist on theatrical display at an important moment.

I invoke R. B.'s use of Conscience and Justice along with the dumb show from *A Warning for Fair Women* to suggest some of the expertise in the late moral drama that regularly goes unrecognized and to call attention to comparable devices (part of what I term *theatrical vocabulary*) in the 1580s and thereafter. My larger goal is to further isolate and develop these and comparable techniques in the plays that precede Kyd and Marlowe and then to deal with a wide range of plays from the late 1580s and thereafter in which playwrights somehow incorporate or adapt such devices. In this essay my primary focus will be on some of Robert Greene's distinctive choices in an early, even primitive play, *Alphonsus of Aragon*, and his subsequent comic masterpiece, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*.

A passage from Greene's prose would support the familiar tale with which I started. In his *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) the Player tells Roberto that he was once "a country Author, passing at a Morall, for `twas I that penned the Morall of man's wit, the Dialogue of Dives, and for seven years' space was absolute Interpreter to the puppets. But now my Almanac is out of date: *The people make no estimation, / Of Moralls teaching education*"[3] (p. 34). Clearly Greene knew well the drama of the previous generation, here characterized by the term *morall* (a dramatic kind surprisingly difficult to pin down), which by the early 1590s is seen as "out of date" and lacking any "estimation" as entertainment or edification. Greene, moreover (like Kyd and Marlowe), is far more skillful as a theatrical poet and craftsman than Wilson and his predecessors. But what happens when one looks for continuity rather than breakthroughs, especially in Greene's most fully realized plays?

Of the plays scholars have linked to Greene, certainly the least impressive is *The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* whose title page asserts "Made by R. G." and "*As it hath been*

sundry times Acted." Though not printed until 1599 this play was clearly written a decade or so earlier (*Annals of English Drama* dates it in 1587) and in language and action is heavily indebted to, even derivative from, Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. For example, Alphonsus' boast: "I clap up Fortune in a cage of gold, / To make her turn her wheel as I think best" (1614-15) is a clear echo of Tamburlaine's vaunt to Theridimas: "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains, / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (1.2, 369-70). Similarly, the slaughter of the kneeling, pleading virgins of Damascus by a black-clad Tamburlaine in Act 5 of Part I is echoed with a difference in *Edward III* and *Alphonsus*. In their final sequences both plays provide kneeling figures (the six burghers of Calais; Amurack, Fausta, and Iphigina) who at first confront a stern figure who imposes a death sentence (Edward III, Alphonsus) but are spared owing to the intervention of another figure (Queen Phillipa; Alphonsus' father, Carinus). The link between *1 Tamburlaine* and *Alphonsus* is clearest when Iphigina first rejects her conqueror's offer of marriage (hence the three figures are doomed to death) but later kneels and pleads that he revoke his sentence "for that love if any love you had" (1902). Alphonsus answers in a clear echo of Tamburlaine's white-red-black policy (submit when you have the opportunity or face death thereafter): "If that you had when first I proffer made, / Yielded to me . . . / I would have done, but since you did deny, / Look for denial at *Alphonsus*' hands" (1906-9).

Despite the 1599 publication date, various features of this play point to its early, even primitive status. In particular, the stage directions are couched in a vocabulary that would disappear by the early to mid 1590s. Typical are the three uses of *let*, as in "*Let there be a brazen Head set in the middle of the place behind the Stage*" (1246-7; see also 2-3, 2109-10), a locution common in the 1580s but hard to find thereafter. Also not typical of later usage are the two "*as soon as ...* " items: "*as soon as they are in, strike up alarum a while*"; "*As soon as he is gone, sound music within*" (373, 923) and the repeated uses of "*toward*" (e.g., "*Albinius and Fabius go toward Alphonsus*"--337), "*in this sort*" ("*Enter Laelius, who seeing that his King is slain, upbraids Alphonsus in this sort*"--401-2), *thy-thou*, and *say* ("*Fabius give Belinus thy sword drawn, Belinus say as followeth*"--603-4).

Another feature of *Alphonsus* typical of the 1580s and early 1590s is the presence of a framework to the action consisting of allegorical or mythical figures--here Venus and the Muses. Venus opens the play (4-43) lamenting the absence of poets to sing the praises of Alphonsus ("And all his acts drowned in oblivion"--33) and then "*Stands aside*" (57) at the entrance of the Muses "*playing all upon sundry Instruments, Calliope only excepted*" (44-5), with Calliope, as the champion of epic poetry, mocked by Melpomene, Clio, and Erato. Venus asks Calliope "To entertain Dame *Venus* in her school, / And further me with her instructions" (97-8) so that she can "describe *Alphonus*' warlike fame: / And in the manner of a Comedy, / Set down his noble valor presently" (109-11). This opening sequence thereby suggests a connection between comedy, the epic or heroic, and Venus-love as might be expected from the title page's characterization of this work as a "Comical History."

What then is of particular interest for my purposes is how little is done in what follows with the presence of Venus in relation to the play proper (as opposed to Thomas Kyd's suggestive integration of Revenge and Don Andrea into the various actions of *The Spanish Tragedy*). The goddess does appear before each of the subsequent acts (which consist largely of the rise of Alphonsus, a series of battles, and some supernatural events involving Mahomet, a brazen head, and Medea the conjurer) and with the Muses in a coda at the end of the action, but these appearances provide little more than a narrative preview of what is to happen in Acts 2 through 5. Typical is Venus' prologue to Act 5 (1656-74) where she tells of the battle to come between Alphonsus and Amurack, the former's victory, and Amurack's being taken prisoner "until his daughter came: / And by her marrying, did his pardon frame" (1673-4).

That Venus serves as little more than a choric program note for Acts 2 through 4 should not surprise a reader or playgoer, for the onstage events have little to do with Love. What *is* surprising is how little is made of Venus' presence in Act 5 where the power of Love does have a significant effect on key choices and where allusions to Venus, Mars, and Cupid do appear in the dialogue. Initially, the all-conquering Alphonsus flees from Iphigina on the battlefield saying that he is not

afraid to fight a woman, "But love sweet mouse hath so benumbed my wit, / That though I would, I must refrain from it" (1744-5). She replies in mythological terms: "Your noble acts were fitter to be writ / Within the Tables of dame *Venus* sun, / Than in God *Mars* his warlike registers" (1547-9) and adds mockingly: "When as your Lords are hacking helms abroad, / . . . Your mind is busied in fond Cupid's toys. / Come on I'faith, I'll teach you for to know / We came to fight, and not to love I trow" (1750-4) and refuses to be his wife or concubine, though eventually she too flies and re-enters with her father and mother "*all bound with their hands behind them*" (1783-4).

Though Iphigina does change her tune and offer her love, the triumphant Alphonsus (as noted above) is intransigent, so that the impasse is only resolved with the appearance of Carinus, Alphonsus' father, who is moved by "Her sighs and sobs" and "store of Crystal tears" (1966-8) and, after observing that Alphonsus has "Been trained up in bloody broils of *Mars*" (1976), notes: "I should account that maid / A wanton wench, unconstant lewd and light, / That yields the field, before she venture fight" (1980-2). Here again the gods enter into the equation, at least verbally, so that Carinus, seeing that Alphonsus is fitter "to enter Lists and combat with your foes, / Then court fair Ladies in God *Cupid's* tents" (1987-8), pleads to Iphigina in behalf of his son, and she responds: "But *Cupid* cannot enter in the breast, / Where *Mars* before had took possession: / That was no time to talk of *Venus* games, / When all our fellows were pressed in the wars" (2021-4). Eventually Alphonsus can talk of "my joy, since that I now have got, / That which I long desired in my heart" (2035-6).

The coda that brings back the Muses tells of the marriage of Iphigina and Alphonsus and Venus' return to heaven but does little to develop the triumph of Venus over Mars (or resolve the presence of Mahomet in the midst of the classical pantheon). The power of Venus, even over an otherwise all-conquering hero dedicated to Mars, is evident in Act 5 and is signaled in the passages cited, but, despite various key choices and actions in Act 5, the actual appearances of this figure before Acts 2, 3, and 4 and in the coda add little to the mix. Kyd's provocative use of *his* choric figures may or may not have been available as a model, but other comparable plays before and after

Alphonsus (e.g., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, *Soliman and Perseda*, *Mucedorus*, *Two Lamentable Tragedies*) do integrate their allegorical personae into the main action in ways not visible in Greene's play.

My goal here is not to belittle this early work but rather to use its shortcomings, particularly the missed opportunities in Venus' presence, to highlight the skillful development of comparable devices and motifs in Greene's most successful play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. This comedy has no equivalent to Venus and the Muses and makes no overt use of allegory as in *Apius* or *Warning for Fair Women*. Nonetheless, a close look at the function of two figures, the fool and the clown, can demonstrate how Greene has successfully adapted such techniques to his own purposes.

Consider first Rafe Simnell, Prince Edward's fool, who, along with Friar Bacon's servant Miles, elicits much of the play's laughter and, like comparable later and better known figures (e.g., Feste, Lear's fool), highlights the folly of others. What is of particular interest is how both Rafe and Miles serve to spell out the folly or weakness of their masters in a manner akin to the supposedly primitive techniques of the previous generation. First, in the opening scene after the prince reveals he has been struck by Margaret's beauty, it is Rafe who suggests that they turn to Friar Bacon for help. The fool's original notion may be comically absurd (that Bacon "shall turn me into thee; and I'll to the court and I'll prince it out" whereas Edward will be changed into "either a silken purse, full of gold, or else a fine wrought smock" to gain access to his lady--1.98-101),[4] but Edward does seize on the fool's suggestion: "Lacy, the fool hath laid a perfect plot," for if Margaret is coy and demands marriage, "it must be nigromantic spells / And charms of art that must enchain her love" (118, 122-3). The fool's (foolish) notion--to use Bacon's magic to gain Margaret--has quickly become the prince's strategy.

After Lacy has been delegated to woo Margaret in the prince's behalf, Rafe, Edward, Warren, and Ermsby appear again with the fool "*in Edward's apparel*" (5.0.s.d.). Not only has Rafe assumed the prince's garb, but the fool gives (comical) orders to the lords, entitles himself their "master" (2), is verbally deferred to as "your honor" and "my lord" (3, 6, 13), and is told "see you keep your

countenance like a prince" (17). Here and in scene 7 where Rafe, Warren and Ermsby confront the Oxford dignitaries, the playgoer witnesses princely folly in action wherein the fool-as-prince visibly supersedes the true prince (and both scenes are linked to violence, actual or threatened). This ascendancy (or mastery) of fool over prince is spelled out at the close of scene 5 when Edward, about to head off to Bacon's study, tells his two lords: "take the fool; / Let him be master, and go revel it" and Rafe responds: ""Faith, Ned, and I'll lord it out till thou comest. I'll be Prince of Wales over all the blackpots in Oxford" (111-12, 116-17). This masquerade does not deceive Bacon, who tells the prince "Thy fool disguis'd cannot conceal thyself" (5.70), or even the Oxford dons ("I cannot believe that this is the Prince of Wales"--7.55). Rather, this easily penetrable disguise is for the benefit of the playgoer and serves as Greene's version of R. B.'s "*let Conscience and Justice come out of him*" or *A Warning for Fair Women*'s "*Lust embraceth her, she thrusteth Chastity from her*"--here to spell out Edward's folly in his pursuit of Margaret and in his subsequent vengeful anger at Lacy. The onstage deference of lords and dignitaries to the fool-as-prince may be mocking or grudging, but the situation, the language, and the likely stage business (both deferential and violent) add up to a telling comment on Edward's foolishness.

In addition to costume and onstage behavior, the placement of scenes in this sequence is also significant, for Edward's use of the prospective glass, which allows him to see Margaret, Lacy, and Friar Bungay but not hear what the playgoer hears,[5] is bracketed by the two Rafe-as-prince scenes in what John Weld terms "clever cross-cutting."[6] Edward's use of Bacon to prevent the marriage ("stop the marriage now, / If devils or nigromancy may suffice") and his determination to "hie me to Fressingfield / And quite these wrongs on Lacy ere it be long" (6.146-7, 179-80) are framed by the antics of his foolish counterpart "*in Edward's apparel*." In the second Rafe scene, moreover, we are told that the false prince and his lords "have made a great brawl, and almost kill'd the vintner," and Rafe himself claims "These are my lords, and I the Prince of Wales" and adds that when the dons "see how soundly I have broke his head, they'll say 'twas done by no less man than a prince" (7.38-9, 48-9, 52-4).

This defense of princely violence is then followed by the key moment in the first half of this comedy, Edward's confrontation with Lacy and Margaret which starts with menace (the prince enters "*with his poniard in his hand*" [8.0.s.d.]), moves to each lover's selfless plea to spare the other, and climaxes with Edward's self-examination that starts with questions ("art thou that famous Prince of Wales / Who at Damasco beat the Saracens"; "Is it princely to dissever lovers' leagues, / To part such friends as glory in their loves?") and builds to a recognition of a different kind of conquest: "So in subduing fancy's passion, / Conquering thyself, thou get'st the richest spoil"; "Lacy, rise up. Fair Peggy, here's my hand. / The Prince of Wales hath conquered all his thoughts, / And all his loves he yields unto the earl" (8.112-13, 116-17, 120-4). For the playgoer, this conquest of love and self[7] ("subduing fancy's passion, / Conquering thyself"), Edward's crowning achievement, is linked not only to famous battles but also to the fool-as-prince scenes that have preceded it. As Margaret notes, the prince's "conquest is as great, / In conquering love, as Caesar's victories" (137-8).

In the second half of the play the roles of prince and fool are much diminished, for the focus turns primarily to Friar Bacon's magic and Margaret's beauty (the combination noted in 1935 by William Empson in *Some Versions of Pastoral*). In several of these scenes Miles serves a function roughly comparable to Rafe's--and the two have already been linked in a variety of ways, as when the fool-as-prince commands "I will lead the way; only I will have Miles go before me, because I have heard Henry say that wisdom must go before majesty" (7.119-21). Miles is as far from being a scholar or magician as Rafe is from being a prince (as is evident in the former's clownish quips and Bacon's labeling of him twice as a dunce--5.24, 36), so that both the clown and the fool can highlight the folly or limitations of their respective masters and supposed superiors.

As befits his titular status, Friar Bacon's strengths or skills are central to a series of scenes, starting with the putting down of Burden and building to the triumph over Vandermast and the two uses of the prospective glass, and serve as a major source of this play's appeal. Less obvious but equally important are Bacon's limitations. As early as the second scene Burden, skeptical about the notion of a brazen head that can "tell of deep philosophy," objects: "But Bacon roves a bow beyond

his reach, / And tells of more than magic can perform" (2.82, 76-7). Bacon can embarrass and thereby undercut this skeptic by magically bringing the hostess from Henley, so that his critic is abashed by "his guilty conscience" and "mated by this frolic friar" (149-50), but the ability to use a devil to move figures around geographically (here with the hostess and later with Bungay to stop the wedding) or to use a prospective glass to see far off events does not counter Burden's critique. That the users of the glass (first Edward, then young Lambert and Serlsby) are provoked to deadly violence or near-violence indicates the presence of seeing or knowledge without true understanding or control, just as the failure of the brazen head project points to limitations that correspond to Burden's "beyond his reach."

Here is where Miles like Rafe contributes to a playgoer's fuller understanding. As with many such clowns, the series of quips provide not only fun but also a parody of the learning of his master and regularly convey the ineducable status of the would-be student-magician. The key scene is the failure of the brazen head where, after seven years of preparation and threescore days of watching, Bacon must rest and therefore must trust in Miles to watch (i.e., to stay awake) and to wake him. As with the fool-as-prince, the clown-as-magician is programmed to fail (Greene's version of the sorcerer's apprentice story), so that, after having slept through the critical moments, Bacon can conclude: "My life, my fame, my glory, all are past" (11.95).

Scholars and editors have puzzled over the staging of the brazen head sequence,[8] but these discussions rarely take into account what Miles is doing during his "watch." After Bacon "*falleth asleep*," Miles comments on the head (especially the nose), announces "Well, I am furnished with weapons," and adds: "Now, sir, I will set me down by a post, and make it as good as a watchman to wake me if I chance to slumber" (11.37.s.d., 46-8). The Quarto's marginal stage direction then reads: "*Sit down and knock your head*" (49.s.d.), to which Miles reacts: "Passion a'God, I have almost broke my pate! Up, Miles, to your task; take your brown bill in your hand; here's some of your master's hobgoblins abroad," at which point: "*With this a great noise. The Head speaks*" (50-2). As Daniel Seltzer spells out the action in his note (p. 74), apparently Miles has injured his head "by

falling asleep and letting it knock against the column." The clown then falls asleep a second time even though he has sought to forestall this lapse by setting "a prick against my breast" (60-1)--here Seltzer adds a bracketed stage direction "*Places the point of the halberd against his breast*" (J. A. Lavin inserts a comparable signal in his New Mermaid edition). When the third noise is heard that leads to the destruction of the brazen head, Miles reacts: "What, a fresh noise? Take thy pistols in hand, Miles" (73-4). Apparently the weapons the clown is "furnished with" include both a "brown bill" or halberd and pistols, none of which prove to be of much help.

Perhaps the stage business here should be written off as no more than "comic relief" supplied by the play's clown. But, as with Rafe-as-prince, Miles here is a stand-in (or sleep-in) for his master, and both of them fall asleep at pivotal moments, with the result that great plans fail owing to simple human weakness, the inability to sustain a watch. Bacon's magical tools are far more potent than Miles' weapons, but the magician's grand project also fails and his prospective glass will soon be destroyed in an act of repentance. That a sleepy Miles bangs his head against a stage post can therefore serve as a comment on the failure of "the head" in Bacon's plans, a failure to take into account human weakness (whether his own or that of Miles). Similarly, the failed attempt to stay awake by means of a halberd placed against his breast displays the clown-as-magician using a tool that is potentially self-destructive and almost leads to the demise of the user, a comical version of the danger inherent in Bacon's projects. These two images (neither of which is to be found in *The Famous Victories of Friar Bacon*), along with the taking "in hand" of two useless pistols, are designed to tell the story and elicit laughter, but they also comment on Bacon's failures.

By means of secondary figures and framing actions the folly and weakness of both the prince and the magician have thereby been made explicit or further explored, a form of theatrical vocabulary widespread in the drama to follow (including the plays of Shakespeare) but with its roots in the pre-University Wits plays. Our notions of "character" or psychological realism may blur such effects or reduce our ability to recognize them, but Greene's combination of lively entertainment and potentially meaningful images is here delivered in a manner that likely made excellent sense to his

playgoers. Indeed, such onstage techniques call attention to a liminal area between outright allegory (as in *Apius and Virginia* and other plays of the previous generation) and the supposed verisimilar-literal 1590s triumph of realism.[9]

By way of conclusion consider a change made by a Royal Shakespeare Company director in his playscript for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. In his 1989 production in the Swan, Barry Kyle chose to build on the shorter A-text and, in addition, work with thirteen actors, all of them men. To no one's surprise some elements in the A-text were gone or transposed, with several of the alterations of potential interest. For me the most revealing change came late in the action. Few readers of this tragedy will leap to the defense of its "middle" (Acts 3 and 4 in modernized editions), the scenes that depict Faustus' activities during his twenty-four years of "profit and delight" (A-83) after signing his pact with Lucifer. The last such episode in both A and B-texts is the protagonist's encounter with the Vanholts where he supplies out-of-season grapes for the pregnant Duchess, a scene that follows the practical joke Faustus plays on the horse-courser. Kyle transposed these two scenes so that the interaction with the Vanholts preceded that with the horse-courser; moreover, he omitted the speech that closes the horse-courser sequence (the punch line for the episode in both early texts) in which the protagonist gloats that "Faustus has his leg again, and the Horse-courser, I take it, a bottle of hay for his labor" (A-1217-19).

Behind this change lay a desire by director and actor to improve Marlowe's presentation of Faustus' growing torment or apprehension, a progression that started in this production with his evident discomfort in his scene with the Emperor and was followed by the show for the Vanholts and finally by a reconception of the horse-courser encounter which was played as a nightmare vision (the horse-courser was portrayed as a diabolic figure with talons). What in both early printed texts is a successful practical joke at the expense of the horse-courser became something decidedly different at the Swan.

Two incompatible senses of theatre or structure collide here. Although such reflexes may be deplored in academic circles, many readers, actors, and directors are most comfortable with some

form of psychological realism and therefore seek to establish a progression of states of mind that makes best sense in such terms. The RSC Faustus, who lost his leg while writhing on the floor in pain, was clearly not a practical joker duping a bargain hunter. Readers may disagree about the function of this episode (at least those readers who assume it *does* have a function), but for me the point lies in a fairly obvious analogy: both the horse-courser and Faustus have made a bargain (for a horse at a low price, for twenty-four years of indulgence) that seemed like a good idea at the time but has a catch (don't ride the horse into the water, you must sign away your immortal soul) that leads to an unfortunate conclusion. The tragic fate of Faustus (like the folly of Prince Edward or the dangerous practices of Friar Bacon) is here previewed in comic terms by the discomfiture of the bargain hunter whose horse turns into a bundle of hay. Such use of prolepsis or analogical reasoning, however, is unlikely to work for playgoers at the Swan, so that the director's choice here is an excellent example of rescripting to make a 1590s play conform to 1990s play logic.

That rescripting in turn brings me back to the various moments I have singled out from Greene's two plays. In keeping with the prevailing narrative about the role of the University Wits in the mid 1580s, Greene clearly does bring new expertise and professionalism to the popular stage. That expertise and professionalism, however, include an awareness of the potential in the pre-1585 drama for putting ideas and images in action onstage. In particular, his exploration of the folly and limitations of Prince Edward and Friar Bacon by means of Rafe and Miles (as with the link between Faustus and the horse-courser) demonstrates how the overt allegory of *Apius and Virginia* or *A Warning for Fair Women* can be metamorphosed into a new theatrical vocabulary rich in potential meanings. The gap between the relatively primitive use of Venus in *Alphonsus* and the fully realized Rafe-Miles scenes in *Friar Bacon* point to Greene's growth as a playwright, in particular his ability to use his legacy from the plays of the previous generation to forge something new and distinctive in Elizabethan drama.

Notes

1. According to Thorp, early Elizabethan drama "was often rambling in structure and its realism was still of the sort which the miracles supported, horse-play, tumbling, and the antics of rustics, tavern-brawlers and half-witted clowns." Such plays lacked "strongly individualized characters belonging to a higher order of society" and were characterized by a heavy-handed didacticism. In contrast, by the death of Queen Elizabeth, an "evolutionary process" had taken place wherein plays preserve "a complete panorama of English life." The most important feature of this evolution, he argues, "is the loss of didactic purpose," for him "the predominant characteristic of early Elizabethan drama": "Before plays could be written which would show men as they are, writers had to believe that this was a better thing to do than to show them as the church or any other regent of morals thought they should be." His goal therefore is to trace "the decline of didacticism in theme and plot and the consequent triumph of realism" (*The triumph of realism in Elizabethan drama, 1558-1612*, vii-ix). For a representative account of the University Wits see chapter four of Parrott and Ball's *A Short View of Elizabethan Drama*; according to this mid twentieth-century handbook, these figures (Lyly, Peele, Greene, Kyd, and Marlowe) "shared the tastes of their public, but their education and their inborn talent enabled them to guide, purify, and elevate these tastes till at last they trained an audience ready to receive and applaud the work of Shakespeare" (p. 64).

2. Dates attached to plays are for the convenience of the reader and are taken (often with a substantial grain of salt) from *Annals of English Drama 975-1700*, ed. Alfred Harbage, rev. S. Schoenbaum (London, 1964). With *Apius and Virginia*, *A Warning for Fair Women*, *Alphonsus of Aragon*, Brooke's Marlowe, and Greg's *Doctor Faustus* I have modernized the spelling.

3. For an extended account of the *morall* as a dramatic kind along with my struggle to make sense of the evidence (e.g., many of the allusions refer to a post 1600 phenomenon) see "The Morall as an Elizabethan Dramatic Kind: An Exploratory Essay," *Comparative Drama* 5 (1971): 138-59.

4. Citations are from Daniel Seltzer's 1963 edition, though I have also consulted the Malone Society reprint and J. A. Lavin's New Mermaid edition.

5. Here and elsewhere the innovative Greene comes up with a device that Shakespeare will later adapt for his own purposes. I.e., Edward's seeing but not hearing is an early version of Iago's "ocular proof" in *Othello*, 4.1 wherein initially Othello sees but does not hear Cassio talk about Desdemona-Bianca. Similarly, the Bacon-Miles combination in which the magus has a servant whose nature cannot be nurtured anticipates Prospero-Caliban.

6. *Meaning in Comedy*, p. 138. My reading of Rafe-as-prince is comparable to Weld's "dramatic metaphor" analysis in terms of "the overthrow of reason by passion" wherein "The inversion of order in the band [of courtiers], folly on top, reason below, thus duplicates the inversion in Edward's own psyche." For Weld, when "Edward views the lovers in the enchanted glass of his own passion and mistakes their murder for his good," that metaphor provides "an alternative statement of the moral-psychological inversion writ large in the riot scenes that precede and follow it" (pp. 138-9).

7. Perhaps worth noting is that this conquest of love/conquest of self as part of the first movement of a play is also found in the Edward III-Countess of Salisbury pre-France action of *Edward III*, the section of that history play regularly attributed to Shakespeare.

8. See, for example, editor Daniel Seltzer's Appendix A, pp. 98-100 and editor J. A. Lavin's introduction, pp. xvii-xxi.

9. I am sliding over several other items of potential interest. E.g., another much discussed moment (one not prized highly by many readers) is the Griselda-like testing of Margaret (perhaps comparable to the duke's testing of Isabella by not telling her that Claudio is alive) who eventually does choose Lacy over God. Here our sense of psychological realism or plausibility (why put either Margaret or Isabella through such hoops?) is superseded by Greene's strategy of setting up various parallels between his heroine and Bacon. For Greene X can take precedence over Y when Y is *our* sense of plausibility and X represents a pattern to be fulfilled or a thesis to be sustained. Also, having Miles ride off to Hell on a devil's back (see 16.48-64) demonstrates Greene's awareness of one of the two most often alluded to features of the late moral plays (the other being the Vice's

dagger of lath)--but with a twist. I.e., usually the figure in question is the Vice (Nichol Newfangle in *Like Will to Like* [1568]) or a fallen earthly protagonist (Worldly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*), so that, according to previous theatrical tradition, if Bacon had not repented, he should have been the one to exit in this manner. To have Miles go to Hell willingly in the hopes of future profit as a tapster (42-4) adapts the still familiar moral play device to something suitable to clowns and comedy while separating Miles' folly or false expectations from those of his former (and now repentant) master.

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