For the Love of Gaveston: *Edward II* and Audience Response in Elizabethan England

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I

One of the most typical features of Marlowe's dramatic production is his introduction of tragic characters that resist classification according to conventional typologies. The play *Edward II* is perhaps the most extreme case in point. Instead of a central character, we find at least three (Edward, Gaveston and Mortimer Jr), all of them featuring some kind of evident moral or ideological flaw which would discard them as tragic heroes. Our perception of the characters as negative examples, with whom we have or wish to have nothing in common, would provoke a kind of quasi-brechtian detachment which is inconsistent with the tragic mode, as it would also preclude the development of the effects required for the production of cathartic purification. There is simply no purification when the audience is not cleansed as well, alongside with the characters. And in order for this to occur, the audience must feel committed to a kind of action or a system of values which the central character, the tragic hero, represents in some way.

The vicious circle in which we would find ourselves if we accept this premise could be avoided if we assume that we fail to recognize the existence of these means, and that much of our disorientation is caused by the general conditions in which our response to the play occurs nowadays –conditions that differ significantly from the ones that determined the audience's response to the play in Marlowe's time (see Bensel-Meyers 1989:75, 77).

My suggestion is that we should focus on aspects of characterization and behaviour which, for the audiences of the late sixteenth century at least, could have had an even stronger impact than moral presuppositions in the development of emotional and ideological ties with the characters. To do so, we should analyse the way these characters interact with one another and create a particular relational network *on the stage*. This interaction occurs mostly by means of their language, that is, by the things they say to or about one another and above all by the way they say these things. I believe this approach will help us to bring to light the existence of rather subtle compositional strategies, intended, first, to make the audiences see the story as the expression of the confrontation between different socio-ideological positions (the barons vs. the king) based on the issue of the presence of non-aristocratic people in the upper circles of power, then, to make the audience take sides in favour of the king's more liberal attitude –or, at any rate, against the barons' strongly conservative views.

II

The effects of Marlowe's compositional strategies can be better comprehended if we blend some of the principles of literary reception with those of recent pragmatic and cognitive theories regarding the production and effects of interpersonal communication and apply them to the analysis of three closely interrelated phases.

The first one consists in the deployment of strategies leading to the definition, recognition and mutual acknowledgement of each participant's relative positional status or "face". In principle, a speaker's conversational status is primarily determined in relation to the status of the other participants, by means of the application of hierarchical criteria based on each one's social rank or identity; but it should also be considered that this position is but the surface presentation of other, essentially ideological criteria which need to be acknowledged as well by all parties involved (see Kress & Hodge 1979). To give a rather simple example which could nevertheless help to explain my evaluation of the conversations presented in *Edward II*: a king, holding the highest status in society, would also naturally take the leading role in any conversation, while all the other participants would adopt comparatively lower positions and accomodate their behaviour and the nature of their utterances to the conditions resulting from those positions; but the king's role would be accepted by the rest of the participants because he is acknowledged as the representation of values naturally and exclusively associated to a king –not, strictly speaking, because of his mere possession of the title of king. Otherwise, the positions to be held by each of the participants would need to be submitted to negotiations based on the presentation and acceptance of other, more suitable ideological criteria in the conditions in which the communicative exchange is to take place. An indication of the preeminence of ideological over purely social criteria is that, although the roles of each participant are either conventionally preestablished or negotiated in the earliest stages of the conversation, they can also be subjected to fluctuation or renegotiation during the process of the conversation itself, as a result of the imposition of new ideological criteria. So, for example, the conditions of a specific situation may force a king to shift his position to a lower level as he receives a piece of advice provided by someone whom he acknowledges as a much more experienced and therefore wiser man, even if his social rank is much lower than the king's: experience and wisdom would then become the overriding criteria in the definition of their relative positions, for at least as long as they are the ones that the situation requires.[1]

In ordinary personal interaction, the process of recognition of the values promoted in the definition of each participant's position is relatively smooth and uncomplicated, due to the existence of a degree of familiarization of the participants with one another and with the context in which the conversation is to be held. However, the problems associated to this process may reach considerable proportions when the conversation is viewed from outside, especially when the person engaged in it is a reader or spectator of a text belonging to a different geographical, temporal and therefore cultural background. Not only are the values underlying a speaker's position subjected to variation in accordance with the conditions in which the conversation occurs; also, they may not be easily perceptible if the reader is not fully acquainted with the conventional markers applied in those particular conditions to express those values. So, for example, the sceptre and crown and the ermine cloak could be recognized by most people as the symbols of royalty,

even if they are not aware of the fact that they stand as allegorical or emblematic expressions of the power, nobility and purity expected in a king. But although these attributes could be carried or worn by any king (or by an actor impersonating a king onstage), their associate qualities may not be embodied by that particular king on all occasions. Furthermore, the number of values attached to a person's status on a particular occasion is even harder to ascertain. Not all of them are conventionally predetermined, nor are all of them made operative under all circumstances, nor equally relevant. Rather, each speaker's position will result from the promotion of a selected number of them, namely those which will help him/her to back up his/her position before the other participants in the particular conditions of the conversational exchange. So the king might choose to appear as a magnanimous or as a cruel ruler, on the basis of his capacity to decide how he should apply the law; or might adopt a paternalistic role, if he chooses to address his subjects as if they were his children; or may even promote the image of the suffering victim of his many duties or obligations. None of these images would surprise the king's subjects, since they would probably confirm their schematic model of kingly behaviour.[2] This promotion of specific ideological criteria in the process of negotiated adaptations of conversational positions corresponds to the strategies underlying what I would call "positional face". Under different conditions, so will each participant's positional face be defined by different value-systems projected by their behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal.[3]

The selection of values and their corresponding markers or attributes is an essential resource in a playwright's construction of his characters' identities and in the audience's response to them. As George Rowe has pointed out, the audiences of the Elizabethan period were used to viewing characters as the allegorical, emblematic or figurative expression of specific value-systems, represented by means their iconic and behavioural attributes (1984:449-450). These attributes helped turn them into types; and since the most noticeable set of markers would correspond to their social status, so the characters would be perceived as representations of the social or institutional group they embody, and their behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal, as the illustration of that class and the values underlying these attributes.[4]

The significance of the author's choice of attributes and behavioural qualifications lies in the audience's perception of them as markers of the author's ideological definition of that class. In this sense, the audiences of *Edward II* would perceive Edward, not just as an individual who coincidentally happens to be a king, but as Marlowe's view of kingly behaviour, in the same way as the earls and Gaveston represent his view of the nobility and the commons respectively. The emphasis on the notion of the author's subjective view, rather than on the more or less objective projection of modelic kingly behaviour, would be determined by the extent of divergence or coincidence existing between this projection and the audience's schematic image of what a king should do and say and should not do or say.

The second phase in the development of a conversation consists in the enactment of the strategies of interaction. It is in this phase where the values underlying a person's positional face will be really displayed before all the other participants.

Unlike what happens in ordinary discourse situations, where cooperation and agreement are normally sought, the interaction of characters on the stage is mostly based on a system of oppositional contrasts and alliances which, as Roseanne Potter remarks, are often read as a confrontation of the value-systems represented by each party (1992:19). In fact, the values that really respond to the author's projection of the character's identity will not be displayed until that character is shown in action and until the effects of these actions are shown as well. However this confrontation is not displayed merely for con-

templation. The spectators are expected to take sides and, ultimately, to evaluate the roles played by each of the characters or the parties involved; but in order for them to do so, they must have reached a sort of tacit agreement with the author as to the terms on which this evaluation should be effected. Some of them would be predetermined by shared cultural, social and dramatic conventions; but a great deal of them may need to be elaborated *ad hoc*, following clues provided by the author. In the process, the spectators will temporarily leave aside their own personal value-systems and adopt the one proposed by the author, and in so doing they will "fuse together" and become part of the collective entity known as the audience.[5] In this sense, therefore, while the performance is in progress, the audience's evaluation of the characters will be mostly conditioned by the way in which the author makes these characters interact with others, and will assume the view held by the author as to whose positional face is to be considered more acceptable or agreeable, whose should not –even when outside the context of the performance they may hold relatively different views of equivalent positional values (Potter 1992:25).

When undertaken by readers belonging to a different cultural context, the recognition of the author's point of view in plays like *Edward II*, where there is no explicit dominant value-system (no hero-values) and no voice which could be identifed as the mouthpiece for the author's ideas, may not be an easy task. In such cases, the more significant clues can be extracted from the author's control of ways in which the characters comply with the relatively stable principles of conversational interaction.

The basic principle requires that once each speaker's positional face has been defined and acknowledged, no attempt should be made to challenge it by forcing any of them to undertake a hitherto unnegotiated and undesirable line of action. Its essential justification is that what is at stake in the production and reception of these challenging acts (or face-threatening acts, as Brown and Levinson called them) is no less than the progress and success of the conversation, the stability of the community of speakers and, ultimately, the recognition of the values that defined that community and the affected speaker's face projections. To avoid the risk implicit in a face-threatening act, the speaker can choose from a number of discursive strategies of politeness, ranging from the simple avoidance of the act to a range of more or less indirect expressions (see Brown and Levinson 1978).

While in most ordinary conversations the speakers' discourse is essentially polite, in literary texts, and in the process of the confrontation between characters, this principle is often violated by one or all of the parties involved. Yet, in terms of an audience's reception and evaluation of it, impoliteness will not be acceptable, unless its effects are perceived as beneficial for a community whose values would in some way coincide with those held by the audience itself. Without this exception, a violation of this kind would be deemed abusive, and would justify the devaluation of the violator's own face. It would also entail the development of certain processes of emotional engagement with the victim of the violator's practices and the disengagement from the violator, with consequences in the promotion or demotion of the value-systems represented by each of them.

This is, indeed, the third of the main compositional resources for the author's control of an audience's response to dramatic events and characters and their representative values. By making the audience react to specific manifestations of the characters' behaviour during the performance of the play, and by forcing that audience to elaborate on the ideological implications of the contrasting positions held by each of the characters on stage, the author will also make the audience consider these ideological implications in a way which would be congenial with his own view of the value systems represented by the characters.[6] In other words, what the audience would perceive is not just a description of the way these values interact, but a

presentation of the way they should or should not interact, according to the author's point of view. Contrary to what might perhaps be expected, the author's subjective mediation is not a handicap in the presentation of that interaction; rather, it is the means to induce the audience to elaborate their own view of how it should be.[7]

<div align="center">III</div>

In *Edward II*, Marlowe has presented a cast of characters who, from the very beginning of the play, are involved in a confrontation that will place them in two distinctly separate groups. On one side we find the Mortimers, Lancaster, Warwick and the rest of the rebel barons; on the other, Edward, Gaveston, and the Spencers, among other minor characters. Edward's love for Gaveston first, and then for Spencer Jr, and its effects on the government of the realm, seem to be the primary cause of the conflict. It should be obvious for most readers and spectators, however, that this conflict has strong socio-political implications that take it far beyond the mere presentation of contrasting attitudes concerning the practice of love. In 1.4, Marlowe makes it clear that no moral prejudices should be applied in the evaluation of Edward's affective relationship with Gaveston. Believing that Mortimer Jr is upset by these prejudices, his uncle tries to make him see Edward's love in the light of glorious precedents in the history of ancient Greece and Rome. The gist of his speech is that the homosexual relations held by great men did not prevent them from achieving greatness, nor, consequently, should they prevent Edward from being a good ruler. Mortimer Jr's reply is that his uncle has misunderstood the reasons of his attitude:

> Uncle, his wanton humour grieves not me,
> But this I scorn, that one so basely born
> Should by his sovereign's favour grow so pert
> And riot it with the treasure of the realm... (1.4.401-404)

What really makes him angry and "impatient" is that Gaveston is "basely born" and yet has been granted favours and privileges that raise him above his condition. For him this is an unnatural action which, when undertaken by a ruler, can only lead to the destruction of both the ruler and the ruled.

In the light of this, we should also understand the apparently paradoxical or inconsistent meaning of the word "love" in Mortimer Jr's "If you love us, my lord, hate Gaveston" (1.1.79) or of Isabella's "Now is the king of England rich and strong,/ Having the love of his renowned peers" (1.4.365-6). As an affection, love cannot be given or taken away on the spot. As the expression of the state resulting from socio-political alliances, it is perfectly possible to shift from love to hate in very short lapses of time. In this sense, therefore, the earls's rejection of Edward's love-alliance with characters who are distinctly non-aristocratic would lead Marlowe's audiences to assume that the real basis of the conflict lies in the confrontation of two socio-ideological stances: on the one hand, the one represented by the earls; on the other, the stance represented by the king in his alliance with the "basely born".[8] From this point of view, then, the issue that Marlowe submitted for discussion would be whether it is acceptable or not for a king to choose his advisors outside the aristocracy and risk the disruption of the already existing order.[9]

What is not immediately obvious is how Marlowe would want his audiences to react to this con-

frontation. If we accept that the majority of the people that attended the performance of this play in Marlowe's time were also "basely born" citizens (Gurr 1987:72), and that the notion of social promotion was one of the essential principles of the emerging bourgeoisie, then we could guess that these audiences would not be predisposed to sympathise with stances so closely resembling those still held by the Elizabethan aristocracy regarding birth or marriage as the only means to deserve a place in the royal court (Stone 1965:55), whereas they would feel attracted by Edward's enactment of "the values, ideals, and sysmbolic patterns that comprise a radically nontraditional world view" which made "subjective experience and the pursuit of inner fulfilment... and personal achievement the central categories of individual orientation in the world" (Voss 1982:523). This guess is however by no means undisputable.

It should nevertheless be possible to reach some more definite conclusions if we adopt the critical point of view outlined in section II of this essay and look at the textual and discursive clues provided by the author.

It is my opinion that Marlowe took great pains to feature the characters in each of the confronted sides by means of their use of clearly distinguishable speech modes or sets of utterances. These utterances do not only project an image of the speakers according to their social position, they also display the terms of their relationship with the characters addressed both socially and ideologically. The significance of Marlowe's use of specific speech modes is that they are the means used to feature the characters as Marlowe wants them to be perceived and to induce the audience to see and evaluate them in a way which coincides as much as possible with his own point of view.

IV

Perhaps the clearest illustration of the effects achieved by the dramatic use of specific speech modes can be found in the utterances of the rebel noblemen, particularly in their persistent use of what I have called the aristocratic mode, which seems to be the means used by Marlowe to display his view of the values represented by this class.

The aristocratic mode is represented by the blend of three main speech-act categories: straight or plain commands; evaluative statements concerning other people's positional faces that can occasionally be used as accusations; and strong oaths and other declarations of commitment to a future line of action which at times can be used as threats.[10] All of them have a strong face-threatening potential and, under ordinary circumstances, would require the application of some politeness strategy. The barons, however, use them "bald-on", i.e. in ways which can be perceived as impolite, in most of their conversations with the king and his minions.

To a certain extent, the nature of these speech acts is explained by a coincidence in the speakers' social and conversational status, and above all by the projection of a positional face based on the power which derives from their social and moral superiority. So, Mortimer's commanding utterances can be blunt and straightforward in his conversations with Lightborn, where the latter is given instructions by the earl as to the way to proceed in Edward's murder (5.4.21-46), or with Matrevis, when he is warned not to tell what he knows and to seek refuge abroad (5.6.1-9). From the audience's point of view, however, his use of this mood would be less acceptable in situations in which the addressees are the king's "flatterers", Gaveston, Baldock and the Spencers.

As regards Gaveston, from the very beginning of the play we learn that the earls consider him unworthy of their respect. In 1.1 and 1.2, the focus of their deprecations is Gaveston's moral misconduct; but, for them, the causes of this behaviour lie in the lowness of his social extraction. As James Voss remarks, most of the terms used by the barons to refer to Gaveston throughout the play indicate their contempt for his low birth (1982:520). The term "base" is, in this sense, an appropriate blend in its reference to both social and moral disqualification.

The strength of the barons' accusations is so high, that it is very difficult for the audience to dissociate themselves from the view held by them as regards Gaveston and consider other, more positive options in Gaveston's characterization. It would indeed seem that the audience cannot but justify the barons' evaluation of Gaveston, in the light of his words and behaviour in the play's first scene, particularly his mistreatment of the bishop in 1.1.174-206. Yet it should not escape our notice that Gaveston hits the bishop only when he is told to do so by Edward (see 1.1.177-8 and 186-195). This does not excuse his behaviour, but it does extend the responsibilities to the king as well. However, all the accusations produced by the earls focus exclusively on Gaveston's participation, while the king is excused by his state of bewitchment.[11]

The earls' predisposition against Gaveston should make us consider whether their contempt could be explained in terms of the prejudices attached to their view of the non-aristocratic classes and their reaction to the challenge to the existing order caused by the access to power of such a "base" man as Gaveston. Indeed, these same prejudices seem to underlie their choice of terms to refer to Baldock and the Spencers. The herald sent to the king in 3.2 compares Spenser Jr to "a putrefying branch/ That deads the royal vine" (3.2.132-3), and Rice ap Howell calls Spencer Sr "the father to that wanton Spencer" (4.5.59) and Baldock "that smooth-tongued scholar", intensifying the derogatory overtones by means of the use of the pronoun "that". And yet, although their words might seem to be justified by their belief in the bad influence they exert on the king, the fact is that, on stage at least, their behaviour towards the king is by no means censurable. Not only do they remain by his side all through the war, also they give sufficient verbal evidences of the truthfulness of their allegiance and love for him. The strategy sought by Marlowe in the elicitation of a specific kind of response from his audiences can be perceived in his choice of the words uttered by Spencer Jr and Baldock before their execution, once Edward has been taken away by Leicester. Spencer's sorrow and Baldock's courageousness are set in contrast, perhaps deliberately, with the plainness of Rice ap Howell's prose speech and the bluntness of his response to the Mower:

SPENCER JUNIOR
Oh is he gone? is noble Edward gone,
Parted from hence, never to see us more?
Rent, sphere of heaven, and fire, forsake thy orb,
Earth, melt to air, gone is my sovereign,
Gone, alas, never to make return.

BALDOCK
Spencer, I see our souls are fleeted hence,
We are deprived the sunshine of our life.
Make for a new life, man, throw up thy eyes,

And heart and hand to heaven's immortal throne,
Pay nature's debt with cheerful countenance;
Reduce we all our lessons unto this:
To die, sweet Spencer, therefore live we all,
Spencer, all live to die, and rise to fall.

RICE
Come, come, keep these preachments till you come to the place appointed; you, and such as you
are, have made wise work in England. Will your lordships away?
MOWER
Your worship I trust will remember me?
RICE
Remember thee, fellow? what else? Follow me to the town. (4.6.99-116)

That the earls' evaluation of the king's favourites is essentially based on social prejudices is further
shown in their insistent refusal to engage in any kind of conversation with them, since this would force
them to acknowledge the favourites' right to some kind of respectful treatment, and to accept, if only for
the sake of politeness, the titles awarded to them by the king. Leicester makes this sufficiently explicit
when Baldock and Spencer Jr are captured:

Spencer and Baldock, by no other names
I arrest you of high treason here;
Stand not on titles, but obey the arrest. (4.6.57.58)

Also, when Spencer Sr dares to correct Mortimer –who has used the term "rebel" to refer to him in
a speech addressed to the Queen– with the statement that "Rebel is he that fights against his prince,/ So
fought not that fought in Edward's right" (4.5.80-81), Mortimer's reaction is to have him taken away and
say that "he prates" (4.5.82), showing his refusal to even consider the possibility of any conversational
exchange with someone who, for him, cannot speak coherently or reasonably.

But the most radical illustration of this attitude occurs in 2.2.50-85, where, in spite of their explicit
commitment to accept Gaveston's presence by the king's side, when the barons are forced to welcome
him, they use the third person verbal form (instead of the usual second person) and the titles awarded
to him by the king, as if they really acknowledged the presence of the titles, not of the man behind them.
Their attitude is perceived by Gaveston as "injurious" and by Edward and Gaveston as abusive (2.2.69-
71); so, to respond to them, and once again prompted by the king, Gaveston replies with the accusation
that the earls are "glorying in [their] birth" and then refers to himself by his own surname (instead of the
first-person pronoun or any of his "aristocratic" titles) in order to stress the fact that his identity as a com-
mon man does not contradict the superiority of his thoughts over the "leaden baseness" of the earls:

Base leaden earls that glory in your birth,
Go sit at home and eat your tenants' beef,
And come not here to scoff at Gaveston,
Whose mounting thoughts never did creep so low,
As to bestow a look on such as you. (2.2.74-78)

Yet, once again, this is all he is allowed to say, because the earls' immediate response is to draw their swords and attack him, in a final display of their refusal to engage in any other kind of interaction with a person who dares to challenge the values that support their status. For the audience, however, their behaviour is probably not justified (they would probably agree with Gaveston's evaluation of it), and would therefore strengthen their perception of Gaveston as a victim of the earls' actions. In this way, the grounds of the barons' attitude towards the commons become less and less stable, to the extent that, by the time the encounter of 4.6 occurs, the audience must have already perceived that the attitude of the barons is mostly conditioned by their prejudices against the social group that Gaveston, Baldock and the Spencers represent.

The tenor of the aristocratic speech mode is not greatly improved in the earls' conversations with the king. Although he should be acknowledged a position of privilege due to his institutional role, in the eyes of the peers his *moral* status seems to be diminished by the corrupting influence of his flatterers and, above all, by his state of dotage, which does not allow him to discern between honourable and dishonourable love and between good and corrupting advice (see 1.1.98-99). These conditions "incense" their spirits (1.1.98) and make them act in such a way that their minds seem to be partly controlled by their emotions, especially by their anger. The first textual evidence of the way their emotions affect their behaviour is given very early in the play, when Edward's speech is interrupted by Warwick who in turns tries and fails to appease Mortimer Jr. The situation is particularly significant because not only is Mortimer's rebellious attitude defined by his anger; also Warwick's violation of the rules of speech-turns, not allowing a speaker of superior rank to conclude an utterance, and his disregard for the potential risk of Edward's threat, disclose a kind of behaviour that seems to be ruled by emotions:

> KENT
> ... Brother revenge it, and let these their heads
> Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues.
>
> WARWICK
> O, our heads!
>
> EDWARD
> Ay yours, and therefore I would wish you grant...
>
> WARWICK
> Bridle thy anger gentle Mortimer.
>
> MORTIMER
> I cannot, nor I will not; I must speak;
> Cousin, our hands I hope shall fence our heads
> And strike off his that makes you threaten us.
> Come uncle, let us leave the brainsick king
> And henceforth parley with our naked swords. (1.1.116-125)

It would seem therefore that it is their temper that leads the earls to challenge the king's positional authority even before their open declaration of rebellion in 2.2, with straight commands to do things he

is not willing or predisposed to do and threats against him and the kingdom itself, should he not comply with their wishes. For the audience, these are clear displays of unacceptable impoliteness. Their awareness of the influence exerted by the barons' mood in the production of their utterances would in fact increase their negative evaluation.

Their emotions, however, are not so strong as to impair their awareness of the strength of Edward's *institutional* position, which could weaken the force of their commands and might even backfire at them if the king chose to respond to their challenging utterances. It is this awareness that leads them to seek the backup of other sources of authority. So, in their first attempt to dissuade Edward from calling Gaveston forth from France, they invoke an oath made before Edward's father; then, in order to force him to banish Gaveston, they use the authority of the Bishop of Canterbury as a legate to the Pope (1.4.51-53); and, finally, in the declaration of their rebellion, they disclaim any sort of allegiance or duty to the king on the basis of the damage his behaviour has caused to the kingdom, hence on the principle that their allegiance is to the kingdom, not to the person who represents it (2.2.155-199). Only in the first of these episodes do the earls fail to achieve their purpose (Kent manages to present a stronger argument in favour of Edward's decision); but I believe that in none of them is the earls' position sufficiently justified in the eyes of the audience, due, mostly, to the abusive overtones carried by their explicit commands and threats. The king does simply not deserve the treatment given him by such "proud overdaring" people (1.4.47). All their utterances are indicative of their challenging, even militant and military, predisposition against the king, and their disregard for the respect owed to someone who represents the highest institution in the country. In this sense, the declaration of the end of their allegiance to the king in 2.2.155-199 is but the culmination of a state of rebelliousness which Marlowe inscribed in their personalities from the very beginning of the play.

This declaration is expressed by means of a sequence of explicit accusations in which they describe the lamentable conditions of the kingdom and the king's prestige. Yet it should be remarked that they are not merely intended to make the king realize the damage caused by his behaviour. The existence of other purposes is disclosed by the sudden shift in their choice of address forms from the more respectful "you", "your majesty", or "my lord" to the clearly emotional and derogatory "thou".[12] This shift is the clearest indication of their state of rebellion, as it shows that they have just demoted Edward to a category equivalent to that of the "base men". Strategically, the demotion is necessary: in order to invest their behaviour with some sense of righteousness, they must show that they no longer acknowledge Edward as a source of any kind of authority. However, the audience would probably perceive that the demotion is unjustified and abusive, not only because Edward is still the king and, by birth, a nobleman, but also and above all because the breach of the king's positional status does not entail any sort of benefit for the kingdom: rather on the contrary, the barons' behaviour after the rebellion will confirm that they too lack the moral and ideological qualifications to make that rebellion acceptable.

Somewhat unexpectedly, in all these encounters Edward never reacts as we would expect a king to do; he never states, clarifies or imposes the superiority of his rank before the barons. In 1.1., his response to the barons' attitude is to complain before Kent and to produce a series of promises which, though prophetic, at that stage seem to be quite ineffective (1.1.133-137). And in 2.2 the king can only speak after the barons leave, and then only to acknowledge that he has not dared to take revenge against them because of their great power (2.2.200-2). And yet this power was not given by their possession of better social or moral qualifications, but by their openly bullying and abusive manners. He is not as powerless

as he appears to be before the barons, as I shall try to show presently. But this, in my opinion, is part of Marlowe's strategy, in order to stress the projection of the noblemen as frightful characters whose very self-protective ideological preconceptions and angry mood are disclosed by the way in which they violate the most basic principles of personal interaction. In other words, Marlowe's purpose seems to be to induce the audience to produce a negative evaluation of their behaviour and, by extension, of the ideological foundations of that behaviour.

<div align="center">V</div>

The audience's evaluation of Edward in the play is conditioned by the way he speaks, too. So far, we have focused on his role as addressee of the noblemen's utterances; but we should also consider the effects produced by his position as the leading speaker.

Edward is a nobleman by birth; perhaps therefore Marlowe places him in situations in which he too uses the aristocratic speech mode, and in which he therefore provokes the same kind of negative response from the audience. The most evident instances are those in which he unfairly blames queen Isabella of having an adulterous relationship with Mortimer Jr (see his use of abusive commands in 1.4.145, and Isabella's report of his refusal to speak to her in 2.4.28-9) and some of his encounters with the barons after the war has begun (e.g., 3.3). Unlike them, however, Edward is also featured by his use of other speech modes resulting from his adoption of a wider variety of positional faces, most of which must have been rather attractive for the audiences of Marlowe's times.

Perhaps the most remarkable among his speech modes is the one associated to the projection of himself as a lover. But important though it is as the means to display the nature of his feelings towards Gaveston and, to a certain extent, for Spencer Jr, there would probably be no unanimous response in the evaluative qualifications that should be attached to these feelings.[13] I would therefore stress the significance of two other major speech modes, corresponding to two different face projections.

What could be called his regal mode is the result of a specific value projection associated to his use of declarative speech acts.[14] Throughout the play, Edward is featured as a king who uses –perhaps even abuses– the institutional prerogatives of a man with the power to give, to promote, even to create. This mode is applied, above all, when he wishes to show his gratitude to other people's actions. That was the case in his conversation with the noblemen in 1.4, after they accept the truce that would allow Gaveston to remain in England. But what is really important in terms of the definition of Edward's personality is that he also uses the regal mode in his addresses to lower-class characters; namely, before Gaveston at the very beginning of the play, and later on before Baldock and the Spencers, in utterances in which the strong overtones of his commands are significantly replaced by much softer offers.

In 1.1.149-169, the circumstances of Gaveston's recent arrival in England and his common birth seem to force Edward to make his offers more explicitly declarative. The very first includes the performative "to create", a clear indication of the kind of transformation he wishes to effect as he utters his words: by his authority as the king, he turns a commoner into a nobleman of the highest rank (an earl) and gives him the highest offices in the kingdom (High Chamberlain). His offers are so excessive, that they surpass Gaveston's own expectations; in fact, they trigger what looks like a move of refusal, based on the recognition of his lower, real worth (1.1.156). Kent's reaction is also a relatively strong complaint which might

be perceived as a challenge to Edward's authority. However, both reactions are waived aside by the king with one of his few demonstrations of authority (his "Cease brother, for I cannot brook these words" of 1.1.159) and an explanation that is very clarifying in terms of the expression of the values underlying his personality. For him, "worth" is not a matter of class ascription and can therefore be found outside the court and the system of values traditionally attached to it.

This same attitude is displayed later on in the play, when he explicitly acknowledges the value of Baldock's university degree:

EDWARD
Tell me, where wast thou born? what is thine arms?

BALDOCK
My name is Baldock and my gentry
I fetched from Oxford, not from heraldry.
EDWARD
The fitter art thou, Baldock, for my turn;
Wait on me, and I'll see thou shalt not want. (2.2.241-245)

and then when he makes Spencer Sr Earl of Wiltshire and promises him his favours (3.2.34-51), and when he "adopts" Spencer Jr and creates him Earl of Gloucester and Lord Chamberlain (3.2.144-147). In all these cases, he exchanges titles for their help or merely for their company, as an expression of his gratitude. But we should also focus on another, more significant justification. For Edward, Spencer Sr's behaviour is the expression of his "noble mind and disposition" (3.2.48), and he has just raised his social status so that it matches the "status" of his mind. So, in these scenes we see how Edward is moved by his capacity to recognize and accept the existence of a kind of nobility that is not given by birth alone. His transformation of the status of people is therefore his very generous way of raising that kind of nobility of the mind to the place it should occupy. I believe that this aspect of the king's personality was used by Marlowe to intensify the contrast between him and the rebel earls and to make him the most attractive character on the stage for the audience of his time. Indeed he is not an executive character in the ways Tamburlaine or even Doctor Faustus are; but his ideological stance may have been as attractive for the audiences of the Elizabethan period as the actions of Marlowe's other heroes.

One final indication of the kind of response effected by the confrontation between the earls and the king is provided by Edward's use of what could be called the lamentative mode. In principle, a speaker's lament would induce the recipient (hence the reader or spectator) to perceive the speaker as a victim of circumstances wholly or partly provoked by other people's actions, when these circumstances are not justified by the victim's behaviour. In terms of the development of strategies of identification or engagement, the perception of a character as a victim would almost automatically result in the establishment of emotional and ideological ties based on the production of pity or compassion, which will be proportionally stronger if the victim's suffering mirrors those of the recipient in some way.[15] These effects were sought by Marlowe throughout the confrontation between Edward and the barons, and were deliberately intensified in the last part of the play, from the moment he is captured by the earls:

Oh day, the last of all my bliss on earth,

Centre of all misfortune! Oh my stars!
Why do you lour unkindly on a king?
Comes Leicester then in Isabella's name,
To take my life, my company from me?
Here man, rip up this panting breast of mine
And take my heart in rescue of my friends. (4.6.61-67)

This excerpt illustrates the basic linguistic resources in Edward's lamentative mode: the use of questions and exclamative sentences to remark Edward's loss of certainty about reality and to stress the emotional modulation of his utterances respectively, and the syntactic relocation of references to himself in order to feature him as the affected recipient of other peoples' actions. Alongside with them, Edward's speech mode will feature more explicit references to the conditions of his fate (see 4.6.86-91), his sorrow (5.1.32-35) and his distracted mind (5.1.79-81), as well as direct appeals to his addressee's compassion (5.1.102). Marlowe will even make Mortimer Jr remark with alarm how the earls of Leicester and Berkeley and even the commons eventually begin to pity him (5.2.30-35 and 5.4.2).

The culmination of this process is reached in the death scene itself, where Edward describes the terrible conditions of his imprisonment and makes several direct appeals to Lightborn's compassion, while the audience see Lightborn make the preparations and enact his crime. The whole scene is arranged so as to induce the audience to feel that Edward is being tragically mistreated, and that he does not deserve this kind of punishment.[16]

The character who is held responsible of Edward's fate is Mortimer Jr. Eventually, he too will die; but, unlike Edward, he is not given any opportunity to appeal for any other character's or for the audience's pity: rather on the contrary, the purpose of his last utterances is to slight the new king, whom he calls "a paltry boy" (5.6.57) and to declare his scorn of the world, in an exhibition of his unrelenting and unrepentant pride; all of which confirms the image he projected throughout the play. Not only do the spectators perceive that he has sought his own benefit rather than the kingdom's in his confrontation with the king, also Marlowe takes good care to make the audience see that the result of his success has been his transformation into a ruler who gloats over the power he has and enjoys the fear he can provoke in others:

The prince I rule, the queen do I command,
And with a lowly congé to the ground
The proudest lords salute me as I pass;
I seal, I cancel, I do what I will;
Feared I am more than loved, let me be feared,
And when I frown make all the court pale. (5.4.47-52)

But Mortimer's self-projection as a fear-provoking character would have a strong impact among the spectators of the play as well, if they perceived him as the dramatic representation of the power of a part –if not all– of the aristocracy in their own, real world.

VI

The explicitness of Marlowe's references to pity and fear in *Edward II* is distinctly evocative of Aristotle's use of these terms in his *Poetics* and should lead us to assume that, in all probability, Aristotle's theory is a determining influence in the characterization of Edward and Mortimer (and, by extension, of the groups each represent) as objects of pity and fear respectively.[17] We should furthermore assume that the production of these emotions was the means to engage the audience in some kind of cathartic process. Marlowe's practice would thus be significantly close to the strategies of deliberative rhetoric described by Linda Bensel Meyers, who argues that the dramatists of the English Renaissance saw the production of emotions as the most appropriate means to persuade their audiences "to explore a question and form an ethical judgement about it" and adopt a line of action in consequence with that thought. This, accordingly, "explains why the drama of this period, as an art that concerns itself with particular examples and emotional catharsis, became most vital as a rhetorical art" (1989:76).

But the notion of catharsis, and therefore of pity and fear as well, should not be associated to the mere production of emotional responses. Without the existence of specific ideological ties, the punctual arousal of pity at the contemplation of Edward's suffering on the stage, or of fear before Mortimer's declaration of his power, would be irrelevant or, simply, impossible. In her analysis of the kind of response elicited by the protagonists of Elizabethan revenge tragedies, Martha Rozzett stresses how "the audience's participation... depends primarily on a balance between their inclination to identify with the tragic protagonist and their sense of detachment from him" (1979:250). What she describes as identification and detachment are the results of the production of essentially behavioural and therefore ideological ties between characters and audience. A spectator or reader will consequently identify with a character if he is perceived as the representation of admirable or desirable values; and will detach from him if he represents values with which the spectator has or wishes to have no attachment (see Jauss 1986). Rozzett goes on to explain how the production of catharsis through pity and fear "signified the audience's simultaneous awareness that the tragic protagonist was similar yet different from themselves, and that his fate both could and could never be their own" (1979:250); but although this applies to the revenge tragedies and to a significant proportion of other kinds of tragedies, the situation presented in *Edward II* is remarkably different, in that Marlowe seems to have taken great care to focus the production of each emotion on a separate character.

This does not mean, however, that Marlowe's construction of the play as a tragedy is faulty. Rather, I believe that the goal of his explicit references to pity and fear was to intensify the audiences' development of processes of identification and/or detachment from the characters involved, on the basis of the value-systems represented by each of them throughout the play. In this sense, the audience's pity would be aroused when they perceived Edward's pitiful condition and death as the result of his willingness to seek and promote a "nobility" of the mind which stands as an implicit reference to some of the values advocated by some of the social groups represented in that audience in Marlowe's times.[18] If only for this reason, Edward would deserve the audience's admiration.[19] As for the barons, Marlowe's purpose seems to have been to force the audience to detach themselves from the values dictating their behaviour from the very beginning of the play. The audience's fear would come with the realization that these values could also be influencing the behaviour of part of the ruling aristocracy in the real world, and could at that time be obstructing or plotting to obstruct the kinds of social advancement that were so congenial to the middle and

lower classes of that period.

The issue which the audience would be asked to respond to in *Edward II* would therefore be a politico-ideological one. Perhaps it is not a very relevant one for us in the late twentieth century, since we may find no clear means to establish the necessary links between what is shown onstage and what happens in our social context; but it most probably was a moving issue for the audiences of late sixteenth-century England. Marlowe, at least, took good care to make his audiences sympathise with the position and the ideas represented by the suffering characters, especially with the one that could accomplish what the audiences would like to see happen in the real world.

NOTES

[1] This situation has been analysed by Calvo (1991) in her study of dialogues between Fools and Masters in Shakespeare's plays.

[2] I am applying the concept of schematic model in relation to the definition provided in schema theories in descriptions of the role played by specific knowledge structures in the activation of comprehension processes. For a relatively recent account of the use of schemata in literary communication, see Cook (1994).

[3] The term "positional face" is closely associated to Brown and Levinson's definition of the term "face" and the strategies of face interaction in Brown and Levinson (1978).

[4] See Bensel-Meyers' discussion of the views on characterization held by Erasmus and Sidney (1989:81-82). Although she reduces the posibility of allegorical characterization to the projection of vices and virtues, the evaluation leading to the distinction between vice and virtue has obvious ideological implications.

[5] The term "fused together" has been taken from Hess-Lüttich (1991:237). For the definition of the spectators' response as a collective response, see also Bennet (1990:164-5).

[6] The spectators' unresisting participation in the process of fusion into an audience is largely the result of what Roger Sell (1991) has called the "politeness *of* the text". As a literary text can be the means to persuade the reader or spectator to accept a specific set of values, and therefore a potentially hazardous face-threatening act, the author will politely construct his own positional face on the basis of a series of values which he shares with his audience, even if (and especially when) in the end he intends to promote new ones.

[7] This point is remarked by Bensel-Meyers in her view of Renaissance drama as the expression of deliberative rhetorical practices by which the authors sought to "pose... questions and a copious variety of possible answers, empowering the audiences to judge for themselves which was best" (1989:73). My position, however, is that the author did present a preferable answer, although he did not impose it. This process is not too far, either, from what Iser defined as the process of emotional and cognitive "discovery" in *The Implied Reader* (1974:xiii).

[8] The fact that Spencer should be featured as a common man in the play is significant in terms of Marlowe's projection of the king's favourites as representative of the non-aristocratic classes.

[9] This does not mean that I disregard the relevance of other points of view concerning the dramatic role of Edward's homosexuality. I agree with Pistotnik's (1990) and Bartels' (1991) presentation of it as a projection of Marlowe's radically liberal attitude, and believe that it is a significant addition to his presentation of the relationship between the monarchy and the commons as based on less conventional and more open relational terms.

[10] The terminology applied here and in the following sections is based on Searle's classification of illocutionary acts (Searle 1976). The use of the more technical terms has been avoided whenever possible.

[11] It should also not escape us that mistreating a bishop might not been seen as a form of abuse in Elizabethan theatrical performances (cf with Faustus's mistreatment of the Pope and cardinals).

[12] For this use of the pronoun, see Partridge (1969:24-28) and Brown and Gilman's definition of the "thou" of contempt and anger (1960:273-5).

[13] For a brief but accurate description of the ways in which love and friendship can blend in the expression of male-to-male relationship in Renaissance texts, including Edward II, see Bray (1994). I would also like to stress the often neglected fact that there is no textual indication that could lead us to doubt the sincerity of Edward's affections. As for Gaveston, Spencer Jr and Baldock, before they meet the king onstage, they do certainly indicate that they are willing to use Edward's friendship as the means to achieve rather personal goals; but once they engage in that relationship, all their utterances feature them as true lovers, happy with the king's company, sad and sorry in his absence.

[14] The term is taken from Searle (1976), and refers to the utterances produced by speakers endowed with such a degree of authority (usually institutional) that the propositional value of their utterances becomes indisputable.

[15] This effect has been called "reminding" in cognitive psychology. For a recent description of the term, see Halász (1992).

[16] If compared with the way his death is presented in Holinshed's account, this is a significant variation, since, as Bartels shows, Holinshed seems to present it as the punishment due to him for the kind of crime he committed (Bartels 1991:147-156).

[17] Marlowe may not have been directly acquainted with Aristotle's Poetics; but his theory, and the dramatic function of pity and fear, were already commonplaces in Marlowe's time.

[18] The same effects would be achieved by the deaths of Gaveston, Baldock and the Spencers, due mostly to Marlowe's emphasis on the positive qualities of their affection for Edward.

[19] Another possible source of admiration would be Edward's and Gaveston's "pursuit of inner fulfilment," if we accept Voss's point of view (1982:523).

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