AN ANALYSIS OF BLANK VERSE FROM SURREY TO SHAKESPEARE

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摘 要

無韻詩（blank verse）是英國十六世紀末年馬羅（Marlowe），莎士比亞（Shakespeare）等劇作家用以創作劇本的重要詩體，也是密爾敦（Milton）的「失樂園」以及華茲華斯（Wordsworth）和柯勒律治（Coleridge）的景物詩的基本形式。本文以舍理（Surrey）所譯 Virgil's *Aeneid* 為起點，分析自一五五〇至一六〇〇年英國的短詩及戲劇中的無韻詩的風格特徵，俾讀者能瞭解此一詩體的起源和早期的演進。

"Unrhymed iambic pentameter" is the simple formula for a verse form which has managed considerable grace in narrative verse and a rather extraordinary richness and range of expression in the Elizabethan drama. Indeed, such is its penchant for eloquence and ease that we might be led to assume that it had always been thus, and that it is some profound accord with the native rhythms of English speech which bestowed its existence and shape. "It is grouped," writes one critic, "according to the sense, obeying an internal melody, and allowing the thought contained in words to dominate the form."[1] To quote another, "it becomes pliable and falls around the thought or feeling which it covers in nobly significant lines."[2] Yet blank verse was not always native to English poetry. Neither did it always possess the particular charm and fluidity which we have come to know it by. It was subjected to a long and arduous process of birth, growth, and maturation at the hands of the impetuous and innovative makers of the English Renaissance.

As a matter of historical interest then, this paper will undertake to explore the circumstances of blank verse in its early stages of development. Two other considerations will, however, contribute to the manner and emphasis of the study. Firstly, it is with the perfection of blank verse as a dramatic medium in mind that this study bears significance. For in the drama after the fifteen-eighties, blank verse has become so internal to the texture and quality of the play as a whole that its presence is easily taken for granted. By drawing attention to the ragged roots and coarse trunk of this growth, we may hope to better account for those rare achievements

that are its flower. Secondly, the given difficulty inherent in discussions of versification (i.e. either too technical or too impressionistic) is further compounded by the freedom of form in blank verse. Indeed, blank verse at its best possesses a protean richness which is capable of assuming whatever shape it inhabits, or the spontaneity of jazz, which knows no rules of meter except those which the instincts dictate. It is within this order of subtlety that we encounter both a maximun of aesthetic enjoyment and a vanishing point in the extent to which form can be characterized. It is with this in mind that this study will attempt to be as concrete and specific as possible in its analysis of form and the effects of form. We begin with a look at narrative blank verse in Surrey, Grimald, and Gascoigne, then on to the inception of blank verse as a dramatic medium in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, and finally to a culmination of its development as such in Marlowe and Shakespeare. The discussion of Shakespeare's use of the medium is not meant to be exhaustive or conclusive. A summary of the development of his blank verse will, however, show how potentialities that had been inherent in the verse form in its early stages, have been realized and brought to perfection by a great artist.

How a certain literary form comes into being is a question which will consistently elude attempts at explication. Numerous hypotheses have been advanced with regard to the Earl of Surrey's translation of Books II and IV of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Published in the year 1557 by Richard Tottel but composed certainly no later than 1547 (the year of Surrey's death), the work stands as the earliest example of blank verse in English. Granted, humanism in Italy had, even before Surrey's time, initiated a vogue in "versi sciolti," or unrhymed verse. The classical tragedies of Trissio and Ruscellai and the versi sciolti narrative of Alamanni date to as early as 1520. It was Alamanni's presence in the French court upon the publication of his *Opere Toscane*[3] in 1532 which, in fact, coincided with the young Surrey's visit in the country.[4] Finally, a versi sciolti translation of Book II of Virgil by Ippolito de Medici, published in 1539, would appear to be the immediate source for Surrey's own translation.

In view of Surrey's immense interest in translating Petrarch's sonnets into English, it is not inconceivable that he had knowledge of these works, and that they influenced his choice of medium. It would be a different thing, however, to argue in favor of direct indebtedness.[5] For translation of Petrarch was meaningful to Surrey as both reception of a great foreign work and as a legitimate exercise in literary creation. Translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* based upon an Italian translation of the same would, on the other hand, only have set the original at two removes, in which case the purpose of translation would have been lost.

All the hypothetical conditions for the appearance of the kind of work such as Surrey produced are, in fact, present in the native environment. For humanism in England had generated a similar interest in the translation and imitation of the classics. Gavin Douglas's *Eneados,* a 1513 translation of Virgil into his so-called "Scottish metre,"[6] is an early instance of this and, for our purposes, an important one. For here is the one work which, if any, shows traces of having served as a model for Surrey's translation. Its rendering of Vigil's Latin heaxameters into decasyllabic couplets would also help to explain Surrev's use of pentameter, though pentameter had, in any case, been an established verse form since the time of Chaucer. The eschewal of rhyme in Surrey's translation is also comprehensible in view of current theories on the use of metre. Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570) notes the low opinion of rhyme which the Cambridge scholars had, since the forties, entertained: "Rude beggerly ryming" was "brought first into Italie by Gothes and Hunnes." In addition, "this misliking of Rhyming, beginneth not now of any newfangled singularitie, but hath bene long misliked of many, and that of men of greatest learning and deepest judgement."[7] Ascham's treatise is not the only one which reflects this perspective.[8] Apparently, the notion of verse without rhyme, whether or not it was meant to be in imitation of the ancients, was for a time fashionable, and could well have been on Surrey's mind when he undertook to translate the *Aeneid.*

Ignorance of the circumstances surrounding Surrey's effort eventually reduces all theories to mere speculation. Aside from the date of composition being unknown, we lack an authoritative text for the work.[9] A wiser and more instructive course would be to consider Surrey as an unself-conscious experimenter working in the spirit of the time. The interest in translation of a classic, the eschewal of rhyme, and the apparent effort to reproduce the effect of Latin prosody would all seem to be manifestations of a common humanist impulse that was not confined to any one aspect, person, or nation. Surrey's blank verse was original, but not necessarily unique. The Italian precedent and the kind of unacknowledged proliferation of blank verse in writers after Surrey would seem to suggest that those concerned were working in a medium that was not altogether alien to their sensibility. Gascoigne makes considerable use of the form in his poetry, and yet, no mention of it is made in *Certain Notes of Instruction Concerning the Making of Verse* (1575) where he conducts a survey of verse forms to date. Ascham, in *The Scholemaster,* notes Surrey's achievement for the first time, but only in passing conjunction with the discussion on imitation. And it is not until Thomas Nashe's *Preface* to Greene's *Menaphon* in 1589 that we have the coinage of the term "blank verse,"[10] by which

time blank verse had already become a successful dramatic medium.

A glance at a passage from Surrey's translation of Book II and the corresponding passage from Douglas's *Eneados* will shed light on both the nature and characteristics of Surrey's work:

The Greeks' chieftains, all irked with the war
Wherein they wasted had so many years,
20 And oft repulsed by fatal destinv,
A huge horse made, high raised like a hill,
By the divine science of Minerva,
(Of cloven fir compacted were his ribs)
For their return a feigned sacrifice:
25 The fame whereof so wandered it at point.
In the dark bulk they closed bodies of men
Chosen by lot, and did enstuff by stealth
The hollow womb with armed soldiers.
There stands in sight an isle hight Tenedon,
30 Rich and of fame which Priam's kingdom stood,
Now but a bay, and road unsure for ship.
Hither them secretly the Greeks withdrew,
Shrouding themselves under the desert shore.
And, weening we they had been fled and gone,
35 And with that wind had fet the land of Greece,
Troye discharged her long-continued dole.
The gates cast up, we issued out to play,
The Greekish camp desirous to behold,
The places void, and the forsaken coasts.
40 Here Pyrrhus' band, there fierce Achilles' pight;
Here rode the ships; there did their battles join.
Astonied, some the scatheful gift beheld,
Behight by vow unto the chaste Minerve.
(Surrey's *Aeneid*, Book II, 18-43)

The Greikis chiftanes, irkit of the weir
Bypast or than sa mony langsum yeir,
And oft rebutit by fataile destany
An huige hors, like ane greit hill, in hy
5 Cratrelie thai wrocht in wirship of Pallas;
Of sawin beich the ribbis forgit was.
Fenyeand and oblatioun as it had be.
For prosper returnyng hame in their cuntre;
The voce thus wise throw out the ciete woik.
10 Of chost men syne, walit by cutt, thai tuik
Ane greit nwmir, and hid in bilgis derne
Within that best, in many huge caverne;
Schortlie, the belly was stuffit euery deil
Full of knychtis armit in plait of steil.
15 Their standis in the sycht of Troy an ile,
wele knawin by name, hecht Tenedos wmquhile,
Mychty of gudis quill Priamus ring sa stuide. . . .
In desert coistis of this iland thaire
20 The Greikis thaim full screitlie withdrew;
We wening thaim hame passit and adew,
And, with guide wynd, of Myce the realm hed socht. . . .
26 Keist wp the portis and ischit furth to play,
The Greikis tentis desyrus for the se,
And voyd placis quhar thai war wont to be,
The coist and strandis left desert all clene.
30 Heir stude the army of Dolopes, sum wald mene,
Cruel Achilles heir stentit his pavillon,
Quhar stude the navy, lo the place yonder done,
Heir the oistis was wont to ione in feild.
(Secund Buik of *Eneados*, 1-33)

Surrey's translation attends to three things: (i) To retain the syntactical effect of the original. We note the concision and involution of syntax—i.e. retrograde clauses and inversions of subject and verb or modifier and substantive—that is more characteristic of Latin prosody. For example: "A huge horse made, high raised like a hill" 21, "Of cloven fir compacted were his ribs" 23, "And, weening we they had been fled and gone" 34, "Astonied, some the scatheful gift beheld" 42. In addition, Surrey's pentameter line will, on occasion, be curtailed in accordance with a shorter line in the original (II, 85; IV, 57). (ii) To make use of the given constructions of Douglas's earlier translation. There are other passages where Surrey follows Douglas more closely, but it is evident here that Surrey is borrowing from Douglas. Lines 18, 20, 21, 37, and 38 are wholesale transpositions of lines 1, 3, 4, 26, and 37 respectively in Douglas. Lines 29 and 39 in Surrey are condensations each of two lines in Douglas. In general, most of the syntactical constructions in Douglas remain in Surrey, though there is the tendency towards abridgement and concision and the constant updating of Douglas's medieval diction. Of interest is this latter process, still visible in Surrey's translation. In the borrowing of Douglas's "Greikis" (1, 20) for example, Surrey vacillates between using "Greeks'" (18) and "Greekish" (38). Douglas's "stuffit" (13, Middle English term for "supplying with munitions and troops") becomes the rather curious "enstuff" (37) and later, simply "stuffed" (121) in Surrey's version. (iii) Finally, to render the translation in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Though much jaggedness in the workmanship is still visible, Surrey basically achieves this end. With the exception of an occasional hendecasyllabic, all the lines have exactly ten syllables. "Minerve" (43) and "Troy" become "Minerva" (22) and "Troyé" (36) for example, to meet this requirement. Surrey also makes a conscious effort to secure the iambic beat. A normal "they had wasted" sequence becomes "they wasted had" (19), and the mute "e" in "irked" (18), "raised" (21), "feigned" (24), and "armed" (28) activated to sustain the iambic rhythm.

With the blank verse that we are familiar with in mind, it is not difficult to depreciate Surrey's example. His rhythms are flawed. Entire lines are not amenable to scansion: "By the divine science of Minerva" (22), "In the dark bulk they closed bodies of men" (26); or are only barely scannable: "A huge horse made, high raised like a hill" (21, "huge horse" being borrowed directly from Douglas's "huige hors"); or are scannable at the expense of syntax: "Wherein they, wasted had so many years" (19), "the fame whereof so wandered it at point" (25). Unmetricality of lines is one of the primary reasons for the harshness of Surrey's rhythm. In addition, too many caesural pauses occur after the fourth syllable. Of the two thousand or so lines in Books II and IV, some thirteen to fourteen hundred follow

this pattern. Of the twenty–six lines cited above, seventeen are thus. This contributes not only to monotony and stasis of rhythm, but to a certain jerkiness as well, as in 23-31 and 37-41 where such lines come in succession. Finally, Surrey's tenth and last syllables carry unusually heavy stress. The retrograde syntax of Latin is obviously a contributor to this phenomenon, though the tendency to effect a heavier stress here in compensation for the lack of rhyme would commend itself as the more subtle and basic cause. At any rate, the violently end-stopped nature of Surrey's lines further contributes to their woodenness and discontinuity. For example, lines 27-28· "Chosen by lot, and did enstuff by stealth/ The hollow womb with armed soldiers" reads as two separate sentences until one stops to consider the meaning. The reason for this, among other things, is the awkward and heavy presence of "by stealth" at the end of the line.

Of course, some instances of fluid enjambment occur, particularly in the passages which narrate the battle of Troy and Priam's death (II, 600-800) where Surrey, seemingly caught up in the speed and vigor of the action, has given freer rein to the movement and accumulation of line upon line. On the whole, however, Surrey's practice betrays a habit of mind more in tune with the couplet. Marked groves remain in the poem's field where the stakes of rhyme's fence have been removed. Morever, rhyme, having been formally dismissed, keeps plotting a return in informal ways. For not only is there an abundance of alliteration in Surrey's lines (See lines 21, 27, 33, 34, 35), but an occasional assonantal rhyme (". . .descried" – "... high" in II, 72-73: "... seas" – "seen" in II, 82-83), and the appearance of rhyme proper, separated by only one line ("... sight" – "... refused" – "... wight" in II, 159-161). These phenomena all bespeak the timidity and self-consciousness of blank verse in its early state of development. Like an injured limb that has only just been relieved of its cast, blank verse still looked for its crutches whenever possible and would not lose its stiffness before subjection to considerable exercise. Only then could it move with the agility and ease which it was inherently capable of.

Yet, by comparison with Gavin Douglas's version, Surrey's translation must be credited with certain interesting and significant improvements. Condensation of Douglas's lines (Lines 10-14 in Douglas become 27-28 in Surrey; lines 15-16 become 29; lines 28-29 become 39; lines 30-33 become 40-41) makes not only for greater economy of expression, but an over-all effect which is closer to the original. Douglas's familiar and diffuse style, more reminiscent of Chaucer, has been transformed into the elevated and concise style of the Latin *Aeneid.* Many passages in Surrey, those of the battle of Troy in particular, are capable of that sense of heroic splendor and dignity that belongs to antiquity. The blank verse metre, used here for the first

time, has, in addition, much to do with this. For its regular and solid iambic beat communicates more of a sense of stateliness than the gentle rhythms of the "riding rime." How Surrey was able to accomplish all this must go back to his selection of the blank verse form. The imposition of a rhyme scheme on his translation would, no doubt, have diminished its effect, if not altered its nature altogether. This is not to suggest that such a consideration dictated the choice of medium. Yet with translation in mind as the primary purpose of this venture, it must be said that these factors were certainly at work during composition and that, at some point, the commitment to blank verse as the medium must have occurred to Surrey as being a worthwhile one.

This relationship of blank verse and the Latin epic will be important to keep in mind. Apparently, the epic tradition and the rhetoric with which it is associated was very much on the minds of the early Elizabethan poets and playwrights. Nicholas Grimald's "The Death of Zoroas" begins with an epic style narration of battle. Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, though a tragedy of a British king, carries certain reverberations of Surrey's *Aeneid* in the allusions to Troy in Act II and the rhetoric of Porrex's death in Act IV, Scene ii. Sidney praises the play for its "stately speeches and well-sounding phrases" in his *Apology for Poetry.*[11] Aeneas presents a long speech on the fall of Troy and Priam's death in Act II of Marlowe's play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. And in Hamlet's play speech on Priam's slaughter, we have a familiar instauce of this kind of epic interpolation. To cite a few lines:

> "The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
> Black as his purpose, did the night resemble,
> When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
> Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
> With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot
> Now is he total gules, horridly trick'd (. . .)
> With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
> Old grandshire Priam seeks." (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 440-452)

In a manner somewhat characteristic of Shakespeare, conventional material is parodied at the same time that it is used. There is no mistaking the kind of style which the halting rhythms and oddly involuted syntax here attempt to suggest. Some of the phrasing and diction could very well have been borrowed from the passages narrating Priam's death in Surrey's translation (See lines 640-700). The effect, however, is one of brilliant and comic parody. The rhythm is much more controlled and deliberately truculent (note the use of false trochees). The epithets seem outlandish

("ominous" horse, eyes like "carbuncles," "hellish" Pyrrhus). And the speech becomes less stately and more burlesque even as Polonius praises it for its being "well-spoken, with good accent, and good discretion."

The two blank verse poems that appear in *Tottel's Miscellany* (published 1557) are adaptations of poems in Latin by Nicholas Grimald. They bear some similarity to Surrey's *Aeneid* in point of syntax:

> Now clattering arms, now ragyng broyls of warr
> Gan passe the noyes of tarantars clang:
> Shrowded with shafts, the heuen: with clowd of darts,
> Couered, the ayre: against fulfatted bulls,
> As forceth kindled ire the Lions keen:
> Whose greedy gutts the gnawing hoonger pricks:
> So Macedoins against the Persians fare.
> New corpses hide the purpurde soyl with blood: (. . .)
> The lightning Macedon, by swoords, by gleaus,
> By bands, and trowps, of fotemen with his garde,
> Speeds to Darie: but him, his nearest kyn,
> Oxate preserues, with horsemen on a plump
> Before his carr: that none the charge could giue,
> Here grunts, here grones, echwhere strong youth is sprny.
> ("The death of Zoroas, an Egiptian Astronomer, in the first fight that Alexander
> had with the Persiang" 1-17)

Yet it must be said that Grimald's lines exhibit greater elegance and modulation than Surrey's. Aside from the fact that they are rhythmically more regular and harmonious (All the lines scan, inversion of the first foot permitting), Grimald seems to have better accommodated his purposes to some principle inherent in the medium. Specifically: (i) Polysyllabic words begin to link adjacent feet in the metre. One of the reasons for the stiffness of Surrey's blank verse is his tendency to mould not only each line as a single unit, but each foot as well. For example (from above):

> "Chosen | by lot, | and did | enstuff | by stealth" (26)
>
> "Behight | by vow, | unto | the chaste | Minerve" (43)

With Surrey, there is an oppressively regular coincidence of syntactical and metric distribution. Grimald, on the other hand, has understood the importance of playing polysyllables off against a base metre:

"Now clat | tering arms, | now rag | yng broyls | of war" (1)
"As forc | eth kind | led ire | the Li | ons keen" (5)
"Whose greed | y gutts | the gnaw | ing hoong | er pricks" (6)
"So Ma | cedoins | against | the Per | sians fare" (7)
"Now corps | es hide | the purp | urde soyl | with blood" (8)

To describe the effect technically, disyllabic and trisyllabic words which span adjoining feet in one utterance tend to hasten and compress the flow of an imagined metronomic beat. The result is a sense of both greater smoothness and speed. To put it another way, a rhythmic movement which would conceptually end with the stressed second syllable of a foot is actually carried over into the next foot by the word. The movement that is generated may be likened to that of a speedboat riding the crest of a wave, then shooting the trough to arrive at the next crest. In this way, sound and sense combine to reproduce the excitement of battle. The use of a prosodic counterpoint of this kind is not a novelty. Chaucer's brief but animated description of armed clash in *The Knight's Tale* depends upon it for effect:

Now ryngen trompes loude and clarioun. (2600)
Ther shyveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke; (2604)
Up springen speres twenty foot on highte; (2607)
With mighty maces the bones they tobreste. (2611)

The adaptation of this technique to blank verse by Grimald must, however, stand as very significant. For herein lies the basis of Marlowe's "mighty line," praised by so many for its "speed" and "explosiveness."[12] (iii) An additional tendency in these lines is towards a collocation of words which balances one segment of the line off against another. For example:

Whose greedy gutts the gnawing hoonger pricks:
So Macedoins against the Persians fare. (6-7)

From derk obliuion of deuouryng death. (115)

By syntax, alliteration, or the use of the polysyllabic word, rhythmic distribution becomes polarized in units of three or four syllables at either end of the line. The result is a kind of couplet within the line which imparts further symmetry and solidity to the rhythm and makes for a bolder, more resounding rhetorical effect. The use of this construction is, again, considerable in verse of the time, rhetorical and epigrammatic verse in particular. But its adaptation to blank verse is important, as it contributes the second aspect of what will become Marlowe's "mighty line." It is

somewhat of a paradox that a verse form which professes a minimum of order and stability will, of itself, eventually return to some configuration that is ordered and stable; that the couplet denied between the line has, in essence, re-emerged from within the line. This configuration, though ultimately to be superseded by other more subtle forms of rhythmic order, must be regarded as more satisfactory and internal to the medium than the arbitrary solutions observed in Surrey.

Though Grimald's blank verse is much improved over that of Surrey, it must be remarked that the lay of his lines is not essentially different from that of the latter. Of the total two hundred or so lines in "The Death of Zoroas" and Grimald's other poem in blank verse, "Marcus Tullius Ciceroes Death," some one hundred-fifty exhibit the kind of fourth position caesural pause that is typical of Surrey. And whereas lack of variation begets woodenness in Surrey's rhythms, the effect here tends towards sing-songiness. Alliteration (See 6, 115 above) and approximations of rhyme also appear with some frequency in Grimald. Finally, Grimald's lines are basically still end-stopped, though the smoother cadences of each line contribute to a sense of greater continuity between lines. The one place where he does succeed in making his lines flow and interpenetrate is at the close of "Marcus Tullius Ciceroes Death":

> Fled with her fleeyng friend: and (out alas)
> Hath left the erth, ne will no more return.
> Popilius flyeth, therwhyle: and leaving there
> The senseless stack, a gryzely sight doth bear
> Unto Antonius board, with mischief fed.

The charm in these lines is considerable. One flows into the next effortlessly, like wave upon wave. Reading them over, we get a better sense of why lines of the kind Surrey wrote lacked enjambment. Firstly, there is a rich inner music here, of alliteration ("Fled," "fleeyng," "flyeth," "mischief," "fed", "Hath," "erth," "flyeth," "therwhyle," "there," "doth," "with"; "ne," "no," "return," "Unto," "Antonius"; "alas," "left," "wil," "Popilius," "flyeth," "therwhyle," "leauyng," "senseless"; "senseles," "stock," "sight"; "bear," "board"), and of assonance (The various "e"s; "alas" and "Hath"; "flyeth," "therwhyle", "therwhyle," "there," ',bear") which both moves the lines along with grace and weaves a kind of inner polyphony that grows and reverberates beyond the reading of the poem. Further, the alliteration and assonance facilitate enjambment: "alas" with "Hath" and "left"; "there" with "The"; "bear" with "board." But in addition, "alas" and "there" carry very faint stresses,

and the disyllabic words "leavyng" and "Unto" help, respectively, to generate and sustain the momentum of transition.

A further subtlety lies with variation in caesural position. In the five lines from Grimald's poem, the caesura falls after the third, the second, the third, the second, and again the third foot, respectively. Thus, a secondary sequence of rhythmic movements which modulate from three, to four, to three, then three, to four, to six, to two feet is established. The kind of fluidity and subtle variation achieved is something that is generally not present in blank verse until the late works of Shakespeare and the narrative verse of Milton. The sequence ends with an illusion of truncation (the lengthy cadence beginning with "a gryzely sight" suddenly drops to two feet in "with mischief fed"), appropriate to the tone of irony and finality required here at the end.

Though George Gascoigne's "The Steel Glass" comes in 1576, we mention it here to close out our discussion of non-dramatic blank verse. In its development of a central conceit, its use of the rambling, cataloguing enumeratio structure, and its mode of ethical-satyrical analysis, "The Steel Glass" resembles Gascoigne's well-known "Woodmanship." Alliteration is oppressively present at the beginning and end of the poem. The iambic rhythm is painfully regular, as though Gascoigne were following his advice "to place every word in his natural emphasis or sound"[13] to the letter. Each foot is single–moulded without variation or inversion. In addition, perhaps ninety percent of the caesuras fall after the fourth syllable, as though Gascoigne were following his own advice concerning caesura[14] literally. Finally, there is some enjambment, but most of it is very wooden:

> And note their names, in Liegeland where they lurk
> Under the pretense of holy humble hearts. (224-225)

> Do not come in, and bring good evidence
> Before the God which judgeth all men's thoughts
> Of some whose wealth made them neglect their charge. (232-234)

There is continuity of syntax and sense between these lines, but rhythmic continuity is nil. Some of the difficulty lies with the inverted stress of "Under" (first example) coming after the stressed "lurk." Enjambment is awkward in the second example because of the trisyllabic "evidence" at the end of the line. The transition between the next lines is, by comparison, smoother. But there are none of the light monosyllables at the end of the preceding line and the upswinging cadences at the beginning of the next, as in the example of Grimald, which so facilitate enjambment. A further difficulty in Gascoigne's poem is the predominance of monosyllabic words. His

remarks in "Certain Notes of Instruction" would give sanction to this practice:

> "Here, I thinke it not amisse to forewarne you that you thruste as few wordes of many syllables into your verse as may be: and hereunto I might alledge many reasons. First, the most ancient English words are of one syllable, so that the more monosyllables that you use, the truer Englishman you shall seeme, and the lesse you shall smell of the Inkehorne. Also, wordes of many syllables do cloye a verse and make it unpleasant, whereas woordes of one syllable will more easily fall to be short or long as occasion requireth."[14]

It is true, especially with regard to blank verse, that monosyllables play an important role. The unique success that English poetry has enjoyed in its use of the blank verse medium can perhaps only be explained in terms of the congruity of form with the singly accented, predominantly monosyllabic language. Yet polysyllabic words remain essential to the creation of variety and fluidity in rhythm. We need but recall the refreshing appearance of the multisyllabic "Popilius flyeth" after a full line of monosyllables in Grimald's poem, which tends to facilitate the movement of the line rather than "cloye" it, to use Gascoigne's term.

The "plain style" advocate and characteristically medicval turn of mind in Gascoigne provide food for thought for more than Gascoigne's particular shortcomings. As we began to observe in Surrey, the tautness and regularity of the blank verse rhythm, the rhetorical boldness and evolving fluidity towards which it would eventually move and excel in all represent a cast of mind quite antithetical to the relative looseness and monotony of medieval constructions. Indeed, if the proposition can be ventured, the evolution and perfection of blank verse in Elizabethan times reflects perhaps more than any other verse form of the time, the emerging spirit of the modern age.

Sackville and Norton's jointly-authored play, *Gorboduc* (1561), enjoys the distinction of being not only the first drama to make extensive use of blank verse, but the first work to use blank verse in a non-translation capacity as well. The motivation behind the former however, may have had a great deal to do with the blank verse translations of Latin and the epic by Surrey and Grimald. For with these examples in mind, the medium of blank verse could have occurred to Sackville (assuming his greater role in the conception of the play due to his historical interests) as a means of investing his story of a British king with epic stature. In fact, Troy is alluded to throughout the work and phrases in the tirades on Porrex's death in Act IV seem to be borrowed from Surrey and Grimald:

"His ruthful end. ran to the woeful bed."	The woeful end that was alotted him
(*Gorboduc,* IV, ii, 215)	(Surrey's *Aeneid.* II, 722)

"Even with a twink a senseless stock I saw"	The senseless stock. a gryzely sight doth bear.
(*Gorboduc*, IV, ii, 202)	(Grimald's "Marcus Tullius Ciceroes Death")

In addition, the Senecan format which Sackville adopted demanded the kind of stately and sententious oratory which blank verse would appear to be capable of.

The similarities between the verse of Gorboduc and Sackville's *Induction to A Mirror for Magistrates* are worthy of notice. The two begin in like manner:

> The wrathful winter, 'proaching on apace,
> With blustering blasts had all ybared the treen,
> And old Saturnus, with his frosty face,
> With chilling cold had pierced the tender green;
> The mantles rent, wherein enwrapped been
> The gladsome groves that now lay overthrown,
> The tapets torn, and every bloom down blown.
> (Sackville's *Induction*, 1-7)

> "The silent night, that brings the quiet pause
> From painful travails of the weary day,
> Prolongs my careful thoughts, and makes me blame
> The slow Aurore, that so for love or shame
> Doth long delay to show her blushing face;
> And now the day renews my griefful plaint."
> (*Gorboduc*, I, i, 1-6)

Rhyme and assonantal rhyme occur in the passage from *Gorboduc*, though it is blank verse. And the balanced lines, the meandering trail of involuted clauses, and stock expressions of the passage from the *Induction* are also present. The balanced and ornate style which Sackville achieves in the *Induction* makes its influence felt, in fact, throughout the blank verse of *Gorboduc.*

Stock phrases of the kind in lines 1-4 in the *Induction* ("wrathful winter," "blustering blasts," "frosty face," "chilling cold," "tender green") are present in great number in *Gorboduc*, usually in balanced and occasionally alliterative constructions. To cite a few examples:

"With furrowed face and with enfeebled limbs"	(I, ii, 104)
"In stately cities and in fruitful soil"	(II, i, 38)
"By guileful cloak of an alluring show"	(II, i, 102)
"That, if the mindful wrath of wreakful gods"	(II, ii, 75)
"And greedy worms had gnawn this pined heart"	(IV, i, 17)
"This living death remain the ruthful tomb"	(IV, i, 19)
"The thoughtful griefs that in the aged king"	(IV, ii, 259)

"His ruthful end, ran to the woeful bed" (IV, ii, 98)

More subtle perhaps is the interwoven, involuted syntactical structure which Sackville seems to have borrowed from medieval verse constructions. Each line of the rhyme royal stanza is rhymed and end-stopped. Yet by the use of inversion and correlatives, each sustains a certain continuity with and progression in a larger syntactical whole ("The wrathful winter, 'proaching. . .With. . .And old Saturnus, with . . . , With. . .The mantles. . . , wherein enwrapped. . .The gladsome groves. . . , The tapets torn. . ."). The construction in typical of many passages in *Gorboduc*:

> "Perhaps some traitorous tales have filled his ears
> With false reports against your noble grace;
> Which, once disclosed, shall end the growing strife
> That else, not stayed with wise foresight in time,
> Shall hazard both your kingdoms and your lives."
> (*Gorboduc*, II, ii, 31-36)

In the case of rhyme royale, given the stable and harmonious rhyme scheme, the sequence further contributes to the ebb and flow of rhythm and sense. The result is the rich and reverberant music of Sackville's rhyme royal stanza. In the case of blank verse, however, the construction tends to subvert the fluidity and directness of expression which the medium must needs acquire if it is to become a successful dramatic medium. The only sense that we get from reading the above lines is one of growing tedium and digression. In addition, all these lines are essentially end–stopped, as if they had been composed by one more accustomed to writing in rhyme (as Sackville, considering the technical achievement of his *Induction*, undoubtedly was). The resultant effect is one of repetitiousness, with line-clause heaped upon line-clause in the exact same cadences.

It must have been out of a sense of the inadequacy of the stylistic guideposts at hand that the authors of *Gorboduc* turned to plain style rhetoric for further assistance. The conscious use of a large number of rhetorical figures and tropes is the other distinguishing feature of blank verse in Gorboduc. Examples of ploce (III, i, 45; V, i, 62), anaphora (II, i, 45-52), synathroesmus (IV, ii, 269), paroemia (IV, ii, 282), and all kinds of lines with contrasting phrases balanced against one another (See examples given on last page. Also: "Or mutual treason, or a just revenge" I, i, 63; "For public wealth and not for private joy" I, ii, 102; "The youthful heads of these unskillful kings" II, i, 208; "A loving heart within a brother's breast" IV, ii, 98; "The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound" IV, ii, 204) abound. The use

of these figures is in the interest of securing a kind of formality and sententiousness of statement appropriate to the subject. Their effect, however, is again subversive of the success of blank verse as a dramatic medium. Rhythmic fluidity is hampered by their excessive accumulation, particularly in the case of the last variety. And they carry conviction by the artificial logic of the language set forth rather than by reason of ideas or movement of thought.

As a play, *Gorboduc* is still far from achieving the fusion of poetry and dramatic development that makes for the success of a drama. Reliance on the devices of rhetoric and rhymed verse inhibit the variety, directness, and spontaniety of expression that blank verse is inherently capable of. Yet this play's appearance at such an early date must be regarded as auspicious. For the rest of the century, the medium which it used would remain, flourish, and attain to perfection in this capacity.

After the example of *Gorboduce*, George Gascoigne and Francois Kinwelmarsh's jointly-authored *Jocasta* (1566) and George Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* (1581) are of some importance. The former is actually a translation of an Italian play (Lodovic Dolce's *Giocasta*, 1549) into blank verse modeled after *Gorboduc*. Already, rhythms are smoother, exposition more direct, and the use of the balanced line more consolidated in effect:

> "But sound of trumpe and neigh of trampling stedes,
> Which, running up and down from place to place,
> With hideous cries betoken bloude and death:
> The blasing sunne ne shinneth halfe so brighte
> As it was wont to doe at dawne of day."
> (*Jocasta*, I, iii, 13-17)

The latter is a pastoral comedy, only parts of which are written in blank verse. Though these passages are more clear in sense and more rhythmically fluid than any blank verse that had been composed to date, they are limited still by want of enjambment, and do not differ essentially from *Gorboduc*:

> "And for the one, contentment is my wealth;
> A shell of salt will serve a shepherd swain,
> A slender banquet in a homely scrip,
> And water running from the silver spring.
> For arms, they dread no foes that sit so low;
> A thorn can keep the wind from off my back,
> A sheep-cote thatched a shepherd's palace hight."
> (*The Arraignment of Paris*, IV, iv, 113-119)

No substantial improvement in the medium comes until Christopher Marlowe.[15] A look at Marlowe's early translations of Latin foretells of things to come. *The Elegies*, rhymed couplet translations of Ovid's *Amores*, probably contributed to the development of Marlowe's sensuous and colorful imagery. His translation of Lucan's *Civil Wars*, on the other hand, probably served to heighten his interest in the violence, danger, the exotic geography, and charismatic leadership of war (the matter of *Tamburlaine*). The blank verse translation in this work already exhibits some of the color, fluidity, and directness of style that is to come:

> . . . thou wilt reign as king,
> Or mount the Sun's flame-bearing chariot,
> And with bright restless fire compass the earth,
> Undaunted though her former guide be changed;
> Nature and every power shall give thee place,
> What god it please thee be, or where to sway. (47-52)

The passage looks forward to Tamburlaine's speech to Cosroe: "Nature, that fram'd us of four elements/. . .Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds/. . .And measure every wandering planet's course,/ Still climbing after knowledge infinite." (Tamburlaine I, II, vii, 18-24) and the choral depiction of Faustus: "Learned Faustus. . .did mount himself to scale Olympus' top,/ Being seated in a chariot burning bright,/Drawn by the strength of yoky dragon' necks." (*Faustus*, II, iii). In Marlowe's *Dido, Oüeen of Carthage* (1586), we have an early example of the ease and exuberance of Marlowe's style. Aeneas' speech in the Second Act makes use of the epic tradition:

> "The Grecian soldiers, tir'd with ten years' war,
> Began to cry, let us unto our ships,
> Troy is invincible, why stay we here? (. . .)
> And so in troops all march'd to Tenedos:
> Where when they came, Ulysses on the sand
> Assay's with honey words to turn them back;
> And, as he spoke, to further his intent,
> The winds did drive huge billows to the shore,
> And heaven was darken'd with tempestuous clouds.'.
> (*Dido, Queen of Carthage*, II, 118-132)

Yet the contrast with the corresponding earlier example of Surrey (See quoted passage on page 4) cannot but be striking. More remarkable is Marlowe's description of the death of Priam where the speed of his style and vigor of his imagination have transformed the conventional tale into something both more savage and more comic:

"And at Jove's altar finding Priamus
About whose wither'd neck hung Hecuba,
Folding his hand in hers, and jointly both
Beating their breasts, and falling on the ground,
He, with Megera's eyes, star's in their face,
Threatening a thousand deaths at every glance:
To whom the aged king thus spoke:
'. . .0, let me live, great Neoptolemus'
. . .Which he disdaining, whisk'd his sword about,
And with the wind thereof the king fell down;
Then from the navel to the throat at once
He ripp'd old Priam, at whose latter gasp
Jove's marble statue gan to bend the brow
As loathing Pyrrhus for this wicked act.'
(*Dido, Queen of Carthage*, II, 215-235)

More vigorous and audacious is the blank verse of *Tamburlaine* (1587), this achieved ostensibly through the frequent use of the kind of balanced and sweeping line which we first observed in Grimald's "The Death of Zoroas" and the plays, *Gorboduc* and *Jocasta*. To cite two examples:

"Gather an army of Cimmerian clouds,
Auster and Aquilon with winged steeds,
All sweating, tilt about the watery heavens,
With shivering spears enforcing thunderclaps,
And from their shields strike flames of lightning,
All-fearful folds his sails, and sounds the main."
(*Tamburlaine* I, III, ii, 77-83)

"Let ugly Darkness with her rusty coach,
Engirt with tempests, wrapt in pitchy clouds,
Smother the earth with never-fading mists,
And let her horse from their nostrils breathe
Rebellious winds and dreadful thunderclaps.
(*Tamburlaine* I, V, i, 314-318)

Again, we are aware of the effect of the rushing polysyllables:

"With shiv	ering spears	enforc	ing thun	derclaps"
"Engirt	with temp	ests wrapt	in pitch	y clouds"
"Rebel	lious winds	and dread	ful thun	derclaps"

A near continuous play of syllables against metre is responsible for the tremendous undercurrent of tension in these lines. Symmetry between elements within the line contribute an additional level of reverberation. It is the exhuberance and intensity of these rhythmic counterpoints that has attracted such labels as "the mighty line" (Ben Jonson), or "the swelling bombast of the bragging blank verse" (Nashe's *Preface* to Greene's *Menaphon*).

Other things are present which both modify and heighten the effects of these lines. Alliterative–onomatopoeic devices add the richness of sound to that of rhythm. For instance, in the first example, the pattern of "s" and "f" consonants running through "shivering," "spears," "enforcing," "thunderclaps," "from," "shields," "strike," "flames," "All-fearful folds," "his," "sails," and "sounds" contributes an aural dimension to the fanfare of image and rhythm. There are the abrupt and harsh-sounding "p" and "t" consonants (appropriate to the mood) in "Engirt," "tempests," "wrapt," and "pitchy" in the second example, each one of them in a position of stress. And there is considerable onomotopoeic effect in "dreadful thunderclaps" (repetition of "d"s) and the positioning of "thunderclaps" (itself onomatopoeic) at the end of the lines.

Rhythm in Marlowe is greatly varied. We get, for instance in the first example, the stately line of marching trochees in "Auster | and A | quilon | with wing | ed steeds" (78), and the rhythmically broken line (79) ending with the full and mellifluous "watery heavens" (both words trail an extra syllable, the latter constituting a feminine ending) before we reach the trenchant line, "With shivering spears enforcing thunderclaps." And in the second example, the tight and tumultuous second line is followed by the sweeping rhythm of the third, and then the monosyllabic fourth line before we come to the dramatic fifth, "Rebellious wind and dreadful thunderclaps."

Rhythmic variation is perhaps what distinguishes Marlowe the most from his predecessors. Extra unaccented syllables which continually crop up in and at the end of lines ("watery heavens" for example) lend a sense of ease and fullness to the line. Effective use is made of the trochaic foot at the beginning of the line ("Gather an army of Cimmerian clouds" and "Smother the earth with never-fading mists" for example) and the illusion of a continuous sequence of trochaics within the line ("Auster and Aquilon with winged steeds" above; two other effective but very different examples of this technique occur in "Five hundred thousand footmen threatening shot" IV, i, 30, and "Or ever-drizzling drops of April showers" IV, i, 37). The occasional appearance of the alexandrine ("How now my Lords of Egypt and Zenocrate" in I, ii, 125 for example), of the tetrameter line ("Where is this Scythian

Tamburlaine" I, ii, 154), the trimeter and dimeter ("What now, in love?" i, ii, 118) always carry great dramatic effect. And there is the use of the abrupt, unmetrical monosyllabic which achieves both greater emphasis and colloquialness ("News, news" I, ii, 120; Stoop, villain, stoop, stoop" IV, ii, 22; "Go, never to return with victory" V, i, 225; "Come, happy father of Zenocrate" V, i, 270). The remarkable contrast with the early plays, *Gorboduc* and *Jocasta*, is not accidental. For here is a poet who has understood the nature of the medium, and who will not rest content until he has tested all its extremities and permutations. The technical triumph affects the very nature of the drama. For when we speak in vague terms about the greater presence of a bold, impetuous ego in the plays of Marlowe, we are really describing a certain quality inherent in his verse.

The profusion of the polysyllabic is perhaps the other distinguishing feature of blank verse in *Tamburlaine.* As we noted in the discussion of Grimald and Gascoigne, polysyllabic words render the movement of the line more fluid and graceful. Furthermore, the poised encompassing of several metric syllables within the breath of one utterance lends a sense of fullness and magnanimity to the verse. The subject matter of *Tamburlaine* has to do with the grandeur of events, the glamour of battle, the infinity of horizons. It concerns charismatic leadership and regal splendour. The full, round multisyllables of exotic names and Latinate substantives in the play achieve this effect:

"Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?
Usumcasane and Theridamas,
Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?"
(*Tamburlaine*, II, v, 51-54)

"Then sit thou down, divine Zenocrate;
And here we crown thee Queen of Persia,
And all the kingdoms and dominions
That late the power of Tamburlaine subdu'd."
(*Tamburlaine*, V, i, end)

"Nature, that framed us of four elements
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us to have aspiring mids.
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world
And measure every wandering planet's course
Still climbing after knowledge infinite. . ."
(*Tamburlaine*, II, vii, 18-24)

We are reminded of some of the noble and majestic speeches of *Othello* (Othello's soliloquy beginning with "It is the cause. . ." for example) and *Antony and Cleopatra* ("Let Rome in Tiber melt. . ." in I, i and Cleopatra's dream of Antony in V, ii for example). James Russell Lowell speaks of the "sudden amidst the hurly-burly" in Marlowe when we come upon verses that "open silently as roses" and "passages calm and pellucid as mountain tarns filled to the brim with the purest distillations of heaven."[16] It is the magnanimous polysyllabic words which impart this sense.

"Infinite riches in a little room," to borrow an expression from Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (I, 37), would perhaps be an appropriate image to characterize the style of *Tamburlaine*. By comparison with its dramatic predecessors, it is indeed rich. And yet this image could be appropriate in a manner not so approbative. For the riches in *Tamburlaine* are ornamental rather than organic. And they remain in the little room. The colorful imagery, the exotic names, and the thundering lines are all a kind of exemplification of Horace's "ut pictura poesis."[17] The lines flash by us as a procession of pictorials, drawing our attention away from particularity and dramatic progression to generality and an enjoyment of lines in and for themselves. In this sense, *Tamburlaine* is still in the category of its predecessors. Related to this is the fact that most of the lines are still end-stopped. Occasionally, as in the speech on "Nature" quoted above, there will be a freer movement between lines reflecting the process of human thought in evolution. But so long as the format of wondrous and bombastic lines and their cumulative effect is adhered to, each line begins separate and anew, and the chance is less for the fluid, natural exposition and the evolving ramifications of a truly dramatic medium. *Tamburlaine* could conceivably go on indefinitely in the manner of a narrative poem. It could as well stop at any point.

Insofar as both plays concern man's fascination with power and grandeur, *Doctor Faustus* (1590) tends to persist in the use of the cloudy bombast and luscious polysyllables of *Tamburlaine* (see choral speeches in Faustus; Valdes and Cornelius' speeches in I, i, etc.). There is, however, a marked consolidation and foreshortening of effect. Images and diction carry a greater sense of specificity. Monosyllabic and disyllabic words come in greater quantities and are used with a plainness and ease which more closely approximates human speech. The audacious and memorable line which transcends the context has, moreover, begun to subordinate itself to a larger movement that is more akin to the progression of thought:

> "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.
> Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand bells,

In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?
O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul"
(*Faustus*, I, iii, 81-87)

"Now, Faustus, must thou needs be damned
And canst thou not to be saved
What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies and despair.
Despair in God, and trust in Belzebub.
Now go not backward; no, Faustus, be resolute:
Why waver'st thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears. . ."
(*Faustus*, II, i, 1-7)

Enjambment is almost realized in these lines. Though end-stopped in punctuation, line 84 in the first example "Am not tormented. . ." runs freely into the next line as does line 86, "O, Faustus. . ." into line 87. Lines 1 and 2 in the second example are continuous. Clearly, the bombastic, single-moulded line of *Tamburlaine* has given itself over to a considerably more fluid and plastic one, one that is now capable of psychological introspection; of the representation of thought processes in evolution. Here lies the basis for the many poignant and probing soliloquies in the plays of Shakespeare. We note here that there are none of the alliterative devices, the conscious loading of the line with polysyllabic names and sententious syntax that we observed in *Tamburlaine* and earlier plays. Yet there is still a remarkable variety of cadence, one that has become even less artificial and more internal to the inherent nature of the medium. Rhythms run on interrupted, then pause in the middle of a line; lines swell to alexandrines, then shrink to tetrameter; and unmetrical imperatives ("No, Faustus" 6) intrude themselves, all in subtle accord with the rhythm of thought. These fluid and naturalistic effects are even more remarkable in Faustus' frenzied final speech:

"Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually.
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come.
Fair nature's eye, rise, rise again and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a weak, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!

O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn'd
O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ —
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on him: O, spare me Lucifer!
Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God
Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!
No, no... ." (*Faustus*, V, ii, 154-178)

Alliteration and polysyllabics are used only with subtle and specific effects in mind (". . .perpetually" 156, with its sustained, pyrrhic foot ending and "Perpetual day" 161; "Stand still. . ." 158, with its heightening of both the meaning and the vocative; "must be damned" 164, with its heightening of the imperative; ". . .streams in the firmament" 166, with its evocation of streaming blood; ". . .bends his ireful brows" 176, contributing to the sense of motion). Inverted syllables create striking effects. The inversion in "time runs" (163), coming between the steady, marching clauses "The stars. . ." and "the clock. . ." throws the two words into relief, thus isolating the sense of time running, making it all the more imperative. "Half a drop" (170) and "'tis gone" (173) make a similar emphatic point for themselves. Reiterated monosyllabic imperatives contort the normal flow of rhythm in simulation of extreme psychic anguish: "O lente, lente. . ." 163, "See, see" (166) "come, come" (177), "No, no" (179) (The two reiterated words may be read as two feet which, without the first, unaccented syllable, become more intense and emphatic). Finally, the echoes and reverberations of syllables within and between lines build an incantatory effect ("ever-moving"—"never," "repent"— "lente," "still"—"will," "Christ" —"Christ" etc.). With a reading of this passage, we are closer to an understanding of the effects which Shakespeare achieves in the anguished utterances of *King Lear*:

"Blow, winds, and crack you checks! rage! blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
. . .Smite flat the thick rotundity of the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once
That make ingrateful man!" (*King Lear*, III, ii, 1-9)

"And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,

> And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
> Never, never, never, never, never!
> Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
> Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
> Look there, look there! (*King Lear* V, iii, 305-311)

The violent intensity of Lear's anguish is also made possible by virtue of deliberate unmetricality, managed with even greater confidence and skill than in *Dr. Faustus.* Or, from the point of view of life, it is raw emotion, channelled through but still reacting against the poetic medium, which makes possible the certain majestic range and stature of Lear. The extremeness of his agony is achieved in the bold juxtaposition of stressed syllables: "Blow winds. . .cheeks ! rage ! blow ! " "Smite flat. . ." "Crack nature's. . ." "No, no, no life ! " "Look on her, look. . ." and the use of trochees: "Never, never, never never, never." The latter in its barren simplicity is essential to the grim despair at the end of the play. Cataclysmic grandeur is, in addition, evoked in the first passage through the use of polysyllables ("cataracts," "hurricanoes," "rotundity") and alliterative and assonantal effects ("c"s and "o"s).

By comparison with *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus*, the blank verse of *Edward II* (1591) is surprisingly plain and subdued. Yet as a medium for drama, it must represent a further advance in technique. Individual lines are now even more homogeneously integrated into larger passages. The result is a corresponding deepening in the capacity of the verse for evolving, probing introspection. Edward's speech to Leicester which begins "Leicester, if gentle words might comfort me. . ." is poignant not only in its slow, muted rhythms and contemplative tone, but in its mode of direct address to another character in the scene. Eubulus's speech at the end of *Gorboduc* and those of Faustus were essentially words spoken with the presence of a listening audience in mind. The pathos here is much richer inasmuch as it comes indirectly (The idea is akin to Ariel's ". . .if you now beheld them, your affections would become tender. . .Mine would sir, were I human."). We are thus closer to the kind of speech of converging significance and lucid revelation in Shakespeare's tragedies. Edward's words to Lightborn towards the end of the play look forward to the utterances in the hushed, last moments of *Hamlet* and *Othello*:

> "These looks of thine can harbour naught but death;
> I see my tragedy written in thy brows.
> Yet stay a while; forbear they bloody hand,
> And let me see the stroke before it comes,
> That even then when I shall lose my life,
> My mind may be more steadfast on my God."
> (*Edward II*, Act V)

Shakespeare begins roughly where Marlowe left off. Greater tonal homogeneity marks the blank verse passages of *Edward II*. Yet there is still a lack of truly fluid enjambment. In the early histories and comedies of Shakespeare, the habit persists. There are even signs of the rhetorical and lative constructions so typical of early blank verse:

> "Wouldst thou not spit at me and spurn at me.
> And hurl the name of husband in my face,
> And tear the stain'd skin off my harlot brow,
> And from my false hand cut the wedding ring. . ."
> (*Henry VI*)

> "What fool hath added water to the sea,
> Or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy?"
> (*The Comedy of Errors*)

The tendency to alliterate, to use stereotypical expressions in a balanced scheme within the line, and to enumerate ("epanaphora") all go back to the blank verse which we discussed in Grimald, Sackville, and Gascoigne. As in the other aspects of his art, Shakespeare necessarily underwent an apprenticeship devoted to working out the possibilities of existing models. The change comes somewhere between *Richard II* and *Twelfth Night*:

> "I see what you are, you are to proud;
> But, if you were the devil, you are fair.
> My lord and master loves you: O, such love
> Could be but recompensed, though you were crown'd
> The nonpareil of beauty."
> (Viola in *Twelfth Night*)

Only one quote from one play. And yet the difference is obvious. The lines accomplish enjambment with an ease that was not possible before, even in Marlowe. To characterize the means by which this is achieved is not so easy as before. Alliteration and assonance, however, are rich here, and contribute to the motion of the lines ("l"s in "lord," "lovers," "love"; "o"s in "loves," "O," "love," "Could" in the case of the third and fourth lines; "though" and "The" and assonance in "though," "you," "were," "crown'd" in the case of the fourth and fifth lines). In addition, the fact that "love" at the end of the third line carries a faint stress, and that the trisyllabic "nonpareil" tends to pick up the tempo at the beginning of the fifth line help the transitions. Significant is the use of the feminine ending in "devil," "loves your," "beauty'," for it lends ease and grace to the rhythm and,

ultimately, contributes to the flow of enjambment as well. The use of the feminine ending is one of the more subtle, but more consistent features in Shakespeare's blank verse. Once he had discovered its utility and appropriateness in blank verse, he proceeded to use it with increasing freedom until, in the late romances, an almost pellucid kind of fluidity is arrived at. A comparison of the above passage with, say, Macbeth's soliloquy, "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow," then with Florizel's enchanting "What you do,/ Still betters what is done. . ." would bear this distinction out.

The importance of this new fluidity to the utility of blank verse as a dramatic medium cannot be overstressed. It is only through such pliant rhythms and flowing enjambment that a sense of both the unity as well as the spontaneity of a process and progression akin to human thought is realized. A look at Hamlet's soliloquy with *Gorboduc* (see the discussion of *Gorboduc*) or *Tamburlaine* (see the discussion of *Tamburlaine*) in mind will illustrate this:

"Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die – to sleep–
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die – to sleep;
To sleep–perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub."

From this point begins the infinite variety of Shakespeare's blank verse. Its rich and fluent rhythms are explainable in terms of the techiques delineated in the last analysis: (i) Strategic collocation of syllables and syntax (i.e. faintly–accented monosyllabic or feminine endings, and the use of polysyllables in positions where they either build or sustain the momentum of enjambed rhythm). (ii) The rich interwoven pattern of alliteration and assonance which assists the flow of the verse as well as generates an inner, symphonic music that grows and reverberates. (iii) The generous use of the feminine ending, within and at the end of the line, making for great delicateness, and often, a more sustained evocation of mood.

Continuities in development between Shakespeare and his predecessors are also useful to consider: (i) The full, round, polysyllabic words which so engaged the fascination of Marlowe in *Tamburlaine* (See page 19) are also responsible for the exotic grandeur and overflowing magnanimity of *Antony and Cleopatra* ("Let Rome in Tiber melt. . ." "O sovereign mistress of true melancholy," "I dreamt

there was an Emperor Antony. . ."). These polysyllables are, however, equally capable of haunting or menacing effects (Macbeth's "The multitudinous seas incarnadine. . ." Othello's speech, "Like to the Pontic sea. . ."). (ii) The seeming trochee is put to a variety of effective use in Marlowe (See page 18). Shakespeare makes use of the device, but achieves more specific effects with it (Macbeth's "I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded" with its evocation of plummeting motion; Cleopatra's "I am dying, Egypt, dying" with its prolonged, fading cadences; and Caesar's ". . .Goes to a back lackeying the varying tide" with its evocation of the same). (iii) Harsh, unmetrical effects in *King Lear* and elsewhere are reminiscent of *Doctor Faustus* (See page 22). Yet Lear's anguish may be more cataclysmic ("Blow, winds, and crack you cheeks! rage! blow!/ You cataracts and hurricanoes. . ."), more grimly intense ("Never, never, never, never, never"). (iv) The truncated line is already a functional aspect in Marlowe's blank verse (see discussion of Marlowe). In Shakespeare's early works, it does not much appear, but increases in usage until, in the tragedies, it becomes a powerful instrument of dramatic (often ironic) effect (Othello's ". . .Till that a capable and wide revenge/Swallow then up," Albany's ". . .Send quickly down to tame these vile offences./ It will come,/ Humanity must perforce prey on itself/ Like monsters of the deep." Macbeth's ". . .It is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing.") (v) The temptation to alliterate, something we observed in all the blank verse to date, is likewise not resisted in the earlier works of Shakespeare ("How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,/ Like softest music to attending ears" in *Romeo and Juliet*). What is interesting is that its use becomes less ornate and more internal until, together with assonance, it begins to achieve rather extraordinary and sustained evocations of mood (Enobarbus' vivid and sensuous description of Cleopatra, "The barge she sat in,/Like a burnish'd throne,/ Burn'd on the water. . ." in *Antony and Cleopatra;* the intoned, cavernous music of Alonso's "O, it is monstrous, monstrous/ Methought the billows spoke. . ." with its rotund vowels and fading cadences in *The Tempest*.

Thus, we become aware that technical development in blank verse is a continuum—yet to such an extent have techniques been assimilated and internalized that it becomes difficult to speak analytically about them without diminishing returns. Angularity and regularity have given way to plasticity and variety. So pliant is the verse that it gives the impression of having been worked out of homogeneous material rather than a selection of words. The abundance of feminine endings does not wholly explain the rhythmic charm of Florizel's speech "What you do/ Still betters what is done. . ." in *The Winter's Tale*. And when we attempt to analyze the mesmeric music of alliterative and assonantal patterns in Prospero's

farewell speech "Our revels now are ended. . ." in *The Tempest*, we are isolating something that belongs to and pervades the very texture of the verse itself. One would do better to simply listen to the spoken fullness of their charm.

It is now possible to make a summary of our analyses. We have come a long way since Surrey. It has been in the manner of a dialectical progression towards formal entelechy. From Surrey's efforts, we have the advent of a new medium, one that promises greater freedom in poetic composition. Yet too much freedom from form can, paradoxically, become a burden for poets accustomed to writing in rhymed verse. Thus, the somewhat paranoic expediencies of alliteration and occasional rhyme in Surrey's translation. Grimald's balanced constructions and fluid polysyllables are more appealing and satisfactory an attempt to find order because they accord internally with the medium. Uncertainty with regard to the medium is again apparent in the use of cumulative rhetoric and a more medieval syntax and diction in *Gorboduc*. But the work is significant for suggesting the possibilities of blank verse as a dramatic medium. In *Tamburlaine*, we see a more fluid line, and a successful continuation of the balanced, polysyllabic structures found in Grimald. But, as though Marlow had realized that these devices were still too ornate and stiff for dramatic verse, there ensues the more pliant, eccentric verse of *Faustus* and the plain, subdued speeches of *Edward II*. The latter, no less passionate in its unostentatiousness, has now, however, a capacity for fluid and probing discourse remarkably akin to ordinary speech and thought. The end-stopped line, that subtle and persistent legacy of rhymed verse now remains as the lone obstacle to the achievement of a fully dramatic medium. And its removal by Shakespeare secures this end. The fluidity, plasticity, and transparency of Shakespeare's verse marks a return to formlessness and freedom of the medium. Yet it is a different freedom than the random freedom of our initial sample. It is a true freedom which comes after painstaking discipline and endless refinement; a freedom that is a fusion of the richness and spontaneity of life and the shaping eloquence of this unique verse form. We end in the whereabouts of that vanishing point of criticism foretold at the beginning of our discussion, but not without having learned why this is so.

NOTES

1. Quote from J. A. Symonds in *Blank Verse* (London, 1894), p. 70.
2. Quote from Edward Dowden's criticism of *Doctor Faustus* in *Fortnightly Review*, XIII, 81.

3. Alamanni's collection of sonnets, ballads, verse satire, hymns, and blank verse dedicated to King Francis.
4. Surrey and Alamanni were present in the French court at the same time, though the latter makes no mention in writings of ever having met Surrey. Age differences between the two also diminish the possibility of their meeting.
5. F. M. Padelford argues from a comparison of texts that Surrey's translation of Book II is indebted to Ippolito's previous translation. This would not, however, explain the translation of Book IV by Surrey.
6. The possible date of composition of 1513 is suggested by Douglas's epilogue where he states that he completed the translation on June 22 of the year. The term "Scottish metre" appears in Douglas's title on the first page. The verse form appears to have been descended from Chaucer.
7. In *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, G. Gregory Smith ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1904) vol. 1, 30-33.
8. Blenerhasset's *Induction to the Complaint of Sigebert* (In *A Mirror for Magistrates*), William Webbe's *A Discourse of Englished Poetrie* also expresses this view.
9. Another text, printed by John Day for Wm. Owen, who dedicated the the work to a "Thomas, Duke of Norfolk" exists. Based upon whether the dedication was to the elder or the younger Thomas, there are two possible dates of publication, 1554 and after 1560. The version contradicts Tottel's edition in many places.
10. "the swelling bumbast of the bragging blank verse line."
11. In *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, vol. 1, 196-197.
12. The great sense of energy and tempo in Marlowe's blank verse becomes apparent upon reading it. See the following discussion of Marlowe. Edward Thomas, in his introduction to the Everyman's Library edition of Marlowe's plays (London, 1909), talks about the swiftness and passion of the verse. Other discussions abound.
13. Gascoigne's "Certain Notes of Instruction." In *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, vol. 1, p. 49.
14. Ibid. 13. P. 54 in vol. 1 of *Elizabethan Critical Essays.*
15. I omit the discussion of blank verse in the plays of Robert Greene and Thomas Kyd for the sake of economy (though their writings also show continuation of and marked improvement over technical aspects that have been discussed up to now), but also for the fact that their principal works are either concurrent with or later in time than those of Marlowe.
16. Lowell, *The Old English Dramatists* (1892).
17. Horace's *Epistle to Pisos.* In H. Adams' *Critical Theory Since Plato* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971).

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