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TOPIC- EDWARD II

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“EDWARD II” AS A TRAGEDY

From artistic point of view “Edward II” is acclaimed to be the masterpiece of Marlowe and also as his structural triumph. It is in this play that Marlowe becomes successful in attaining dramatic unity in respect to his earlier plays. Tamburlain and Dr. Faustus are merely the succession of scenes united together only to stress the achievements, power and greatness of the hero. All Marlowe’s early plays concentrate and magnify only the heroes while other characters are imperfectly defined, only as the foils of the hero. But in Edward II

the king himself is the dominant character while the others have their own individuality and definition.

In Edward II Marlowe successfully develops real dramatic conflict between the king and his opponents. The conflict continues till the end of the play with varying ups and downs. At one stage the king is able to defeat the rebel lords but in the end he is defeated and finally executed by the treachery of his own disloyal queen. In Tamburlaine the hero is invincible and is able to crush and overpower any opponent, so there cannot be any dramatic conflict. Same is the situation with Dr. Faustus. The dramatic conflict disappears with doctor's selling his soul to the Devil.

Moreover, Edward II marks another advancement over the previous plays. It exhibits an artistic restraint as well as, there are no long tirades , no lyrical outbursts in the play. The dialogues are even better and the use of blank verse causes maturity and mellowness. The play is significant also for its most

pathetic scenes in the dramatic literature of England. The king's sorrows and sufferings in prison and his murder in Berkeley Castle arouse intense pity and pathos.

But, despite its technical excellences and intensely pathetic scenes, Edward II does not appeal as Shakespearean tragedies. Shakespearean tragedies deal with noble universal ideals and lofty ideals. His tragic heroes are great men having great make up of character. Hamlet is a man of lofty ideals, Macbeth and Othello possess outstanding qualities and King Lear has nobility of soul. All these tragic heroes evoke sense of pity and fear. But Edward II's character is something different. He is not only a fool but a coward as well. From beginning to the end of the king displays colossal spectacle of folly, insufficiency and cruelty .
