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Introduction

A. D. Cousins and Daniel Derrin

Ask someone to quote from a Shakespeare play and you will probably hear, 'To be or not to be; that is the question' or 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' or maybe 'But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?' The reply will probably come from one of the famous soliloquies.[1] Yet although early modern English drama is so widely taught across the world and the soliloquy is no slight component of that drama – and although there is so much research published on early modern plays and playwrights – there is no single scholarly volume that examines the soliloquy's antecedents, diversity of form, theatrical functions, cultural significances, and history in the period from Marlowe to Davenant. The aim of this book is to offer a comprehensive, albeit not complete, response to that need.

Beginning with an account of paradigmatic precedents in Roman drama (given its prominence in early modern English education), the book then proceeds to discuss the soliloquy's roles in English plays from the later fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth centuries. After those preparatory chapters, the book moves on to study the soliloquy from Marlowe to Davenant. The chapters on playwrights trace variations in theatrical conceptualizing of the soliloquy and in its use to represent individuated characterization (or, versions of selfhood). They also trace how, as indicated by a range of soliloquies, authors revisit and rewrite one another's texts in order to suggest authorial identity (for instance, how Davenant reworks Shakespeare). In addition, the chapters explore the soliloquy's relations with cultural history: the ways in which playwrights employ the soliloquy to highlight engagement with preoccupations and concerns in early modern English culture. There are, for example, analyses of it in relation to ethical discourse (as in the chapters by Smith, Hirsh, Falco, Semler, Derrin, Gray, Loxley, Woolland, and Hiscock), issues of gender (as in those by Aughterson, Derrin, and Bates), debates about cognition (those by Hirsh, Cousins, Aughterson, Griffiths, and Napton), and political theory and practice (those by Smith, Bevington, Loxley, Hiscock, and

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Napton). The book concludes by positing a typology of the soliloquy in early modern English drama. The chapters are not narrowly focussed and are designed to interact in several ways. They cohere but do not necessarily agree with one another. Central to *Shakespeare and the Soliloquy in Early Modern English Drama* is a study of the soliloquy's functions throughout the Shakespeare canon. Approximately half the book examines Shakespeare's deployment of the soliloquy across his plays.

Here we shall consider, by way of a prologue to the ensuing chapters, techniques through which soliloquies from that time proffer exposition, deliberation, praise, dispraise, or elements of forensic argument. That is to say, we shall consider the rhetorical manoeuvres through which, as is so frequently the case, they open individuated perspectives onto social and political concerns that go beyond those presented by their immediate dramatic contexts. In light of that discussion, we shall then more broadly consider the scope and function of the soliloquy on the early modern English stage. A useful place to start is with the soliloquy that begins Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, which presents an explicitly challenging evaluation of Humanism.

In that tragedy's opening speech, Marlowe's protagonist claims to be deciding the future direction of his intellectual pursuits. 'Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin / To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess', he initially instructs himself.[2] His speech goes on to tell us about the possibilities before him and is expository; moreover, inasmuch as it seems about choosing among those possibilities it appears deliberative.[3] But Faustus' soliloquy is disingenuous, for Faustus has in effect already made his choice. Near the end of his soliloquy, he enthuses: 'These metaphysics of magicians / And necromantic books are heavenly, / Lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters – / Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires' (1.1.51–4; cf. 1.1.6 and 1.1.112). His deliberative set piece really serves, then, to fabricate a rationale for the inclination that Faustus will ultimately confirm as his choice, and so develops an elaborate lie.[4]

According to Quintilian, underpinning a deliberative speech are the generally antithetic considerations of honour and expediency.[5] Ambition for the greatest possible honour motivates Faustus, and he will ruthlessly practise expediency in order to justify gaining it through illicit means, that is, magic. Honour and expediency, in his case, support rather than oppose each other. Thus, when he surveys the licit arts and sciences to which he could commit himself, each is trivialized or misrepresented because each is an inconvenience – an obstacle between him and the means to fulfil his hubristic fantasy of honour. He does not 'sound [their] depth[s]' (1.1.2).

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Seeking to metamorphose himself, he first metamorphoses them. Logic, he therefore says, is only about disputing well (1.1.7–10); medicine is simply about wealth and fame (14–15); law is finally about 'trash' (30–5, at 35); divinity is about determinism and so, ironically, he bids it 'adieu' (49–50).[6] By this process of transformation or, more accurately, deformation he diminishes their *human* value.

There are in fact several aspects to his doing so. First, he downplays the importance of each to the community. They are hindrances to his over-reaching and hence their benefits to other human beings do not much matter. Second, his repudiation of them consequently implies his retreat from a theocentric into an egocentric universe – and, at the same time, denial of what Shakespeare's contemporaries would have recognized as *caritas* (a God-centred love for others) in favour of what they would have seen as *cupiditas*, or *concupiscentia* (self-centred, inordinate desire). This dream of inhabiting a self-centred universe aligns him with Lucifer, as Mephistopheles obliquely remarks (1.3.69–70); and his self-centred appetite, the vast concupiscence that will link him to Jonson's Volpone or Sir Epicure Mammon, receives acknowledgement at an even earlier point in the play (1.1.80, as 'glutted' indicates). His turning away from the human arts and sciences is, hence, a turning away from his own *humanitas:* from his quintessential humanity, his higher and better self. Transforming them, he initiates in fact a lessening of his own humanity. Yet he seeks dehumanization, after a fashion. What he 'aim[s]' at by way of 'advantage' – to cite the terms used in *Ad Herennium* – is metamorphosis into the more than human.

Faustus' process of contaminated deliberation reveals that – glories in that thought – when he dismisses 'physic' (1.1.12–27). After a moment spent in extravagant praise of his own medical triumphs (19–22), he says: 'Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man. / Wouldst thou make man to live eternally, / Or, being dead, raise them to life again, / Then this profession were to be esteemed' (23–6). He fantasizes about becoming Christ's secular counterpart (cf. John 11:25). He does not, however, so much reject Galen by blasphemously appropriating scripture as repudiate a classical authority in order to pursue a dream formulated by an older generation of Humanists. He simultaneously attacks an established Humanist view of medical practice and intimates endorsement of long-standing, ambiguous Humanist theorizing about humankind's potential for self-transformation and self-perfectibility. According, for instance, to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* and Juan Luis Vives in his *A Fable about Man*, human beings are unique within the creation

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because they have the power to transform themselves. True, they can undergo degradation if they so choose (and this will prove to be Faustus' actual choice); they can also metamorphose 'into . . . higher forms, which are divine'.[7] The question remains in each treatise as to whether people can do this by exertion of will alone or are dependent, to whatever extent, on grace. Faustus' interest in 'higher forms, which are divine' centres of course not on enablement by grace but on empowerment by magic. His aspiration to become Christ's profane equivalent suggests a darkness within the older Humanist vision of self-transformation and self-perfectibility, laying bare the will to illimitable power that informs it and implying that pursuit of it will most likely involve unreason and ruin, descent not ascent.

So too does the manic, magniloquent fantasizing near the end of his soliloquy:

> All things that move between the quiet poles
> Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
> Are but obeyed in their several provinces,
> Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;
> But his dominion that exceeds in this
> Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.
> A sound magician is a mighty god.
> Here, Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity. (1.1.58–65)

Such is the honour, if we return to Quintilian's thinking on deliberative rhetoric, towards which Faustus reaches. Like man-the-actor in Vives' *Fable,* he would achieve apotheosis – though, unlike Vives' protagonist, he would not gain it by wisdom (*sapientia*). Faustus' opening speech thus presents a double attack on Humanism: his expedient subversion of more or less conventional Humanist learning and Marlowe's indirect if distinct subversion, through him, of earlier Humanists' claims that humankind can transform and perfect itself. As we soon see, Faustus' attempt to make good on those latter claims – to metamorphose himself and achieve virtual deity – leads not to transcendence of his humanity but to diminution of it, and nowhere is that more apparent than in his episodes of comic violence.

Nonetheless, Marlowe will also show Faustus reaching back to Humanist learning in order to recover contact with the *humanitas* that he has abandoned. The nostalgia with which he does this expresses itself strikingly through the allusion to Ovid's *Amores* in his desperate, final soliloquy: '*O lente, lente currite noctis equi!*' (5.2.74: 'O slowly, slowly run, horses of the night'). Seeking at the last to re-direct his trajectory – we hear

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the forensic undertones, that is, the undertones of legal argument to his rhetoric at 98–104 – the man who has turned from Humanist learning and at the same time embraced Humanist dreams of self-deification instinctively words his desire in classical terms, evoking a Roman portrayal of mundane happiness. Yet, beyond that sudden glance at mutual human joy (at shared, private, powerless delight), the man who once would be singular, pre-eminent, would now, just before the demons return, be anonymously, undetectably merged with the rest of creation (5.2.118–119). He would in fact experience a final metamorphosis into unconscious matter, one that recalls Heraclitus' dictum, 'For souls it is death to become water'.[8]

Faustus' initial soliloquy engenders a critique of Humanism by way, in part, of considering Christian belief; but the attention devoted to religious doctrine in the speech seems evasive. For example, when Faustus reads 1 John 1:8 (42–5), he ignores the immediately following verse, which complements its predecessor and is surely among the best known in scripture: '*Si confiteamur peccata nostra: fidelis est, et iustus, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate*'.[9] Faustus must know that verse, and, in any event, it lies before him. Nevertheless, he erases it and thereafter lives as well as dies with the consequences. Faustus avoids an inconvenient truth. Marlowe leaves open the question as to whether Faustus' act of avoidance is freely willed or predestined, as he will similar questions throughout the play. The fall of this particular Icarus, to revisit the Chorus's trope (Prologue, 20–2), may or may not be an act of God – an issue the harder to resolve since this variant of Icarus is also a man of intellectual achievements and, thence, likewise implicitly akin to Daedalus. We see that Marlowe's tragedy begins by querying Humanism, subsequently affirms elements of it, and gestures towards Christian belief as a context for Humanism that is no more stable than is Humanism itself.

The potential for soliloquies to display and explore rhetorical procedures themselves becomes even clearer when we consider the entranced speech of Brutus that begins act two, scene one, of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.[10] This self-addressed soliloquy begins as a deliberative speech. Honour, here, is in tension with expediency. Unlike Marlowe's Faustus, Shakespeare's Brutus will not refashion honour to suit what is expedient that he may thus ruthlessly follow it. In his soliloquy, Brutus moves quickly towards a clarification of the issue:

> It must be by his death. And for my part
> I know no personal cause to spurn at him,

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> But for the general. He would be crowned.
> How that might change his nature, there's the question. (2.1.10–13)[11]

It would be expedient and honourable simply to support his friend, but it would be dishonourable not to protect the republic from the approach of tyranny. Brutus develops an enthymeme to convince himself that Caesar is on a course that leads to tyranny.[12] He convinces himself by arguing that Caesar, having accepted sovereignty (what the Romans would have called *imperium*), would naturally then become a tyrant:

> It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
> And that craves wary walking. Crown him: that!
> And then I grant we put a sting in him
> That at his will he may do danger with.
> Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
> Remorse from power. And to speak truth of Caesar,
> I have not known when his affections swayed
> More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof
> That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
> Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
> But when he once attains the upmost round,
> He then unto the ladder turns his back,
> Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
> By which he did ascend. So Caesar may. (2.1.14–27)

The growing enthymeme contends with Brutus' repeated recognition (in lines 11 and 20–1) that there is no evidence of this tendency in Caesar as he is; thus, it addresses an implied lack of legal evidence. That contention crystallizes further in the last lines of the speech:

> Then lest he may, prevent. And since the quarrel
> Will bear no colour for the thing he is,
> Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
> Would run to these and these extremities;
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
> Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,
> And kill him in the shell. (2.1.28–34)

Increasingly desperate for resolution, and lacking forensic evidence, Brutus instructs himself that the man would 'run to . . . extremities' (31), perhaps half concealing, even from himself, the evident fact that he is deciding how to 'fashion' (30) Caesar for his own purposes. In Brutus' soliloquy, the deliberative rhetorical mode reveals a disjunction between rhetorical decision-making and rhetorical effect that is usually concealed.

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In one sense, then, like Faustus though less disingenuously so, Brutus has already made his choice, even though honour and expediency remain in this case separate and his is a genuine deliberation. His increasing clarity in resolution attends upon a decreasing clarity in representing the past and the present. That is to say, in resolving his deliberative problem, Brutus' search for forensic evidence concerning what has been hitherto the case regarding Caesar becomes more and more half-hearted and overrun by the force of the enthymeme. He begins with 'I know no personal cause' (11), moving to 'I have not known when his affections swayed / More than his reason' (20–1), and thence to the vague recognition that 'the quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing he is' (28–9), with its awkward if not cryptic syntax. The personal and the concrete have morphed into the merely concrete and thence into something comparatively general and vague. This connects him not only with Marlowe's Faustus but with Shakespeare's other tragic heroes, such as Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth. (Patrick Gray, in his subsequent chapter, explores how each goads himself into action by way of self-addressed speech.) Brutus' soliloquy therefore offers us an interesting window onto politically focussed rhetorics because it puts on display rhetorical practice that is in progress, formative, and where the struggle to articulate a way of seeing things in relation to a public code of behaviour has not yet been finalized. Moreover, his speech evokes several concerns of early modern society. It implicitly touches, for example, on worries about casuistry: about cases of conscience in relation to constraints of political power. Likewise, it points to debates over republicanism and tyrannicide.

Having seen how Faustus' soliloquy puts on display a tragically deformed process of deliberation, and Brutus' a tragically confused mingling of the deliberative with the forensic, we can now examine how the soliloquy that opens Jonson's *Volpone* displays a comically deformed *epideixis*. The third ancient genre of oratory, following deliberative and forensic, *epideixis* categorizes those speeches that praise people for their achievements of virtue and magnanimity or, by contrast, blame their failures.[13] However, epideictic speech does not merely display the greatness and goodness (or, as may be, evil) of its subject. It puts on display the character and skills of the performing orator. A soliloquy shows the performance of those additional rhetorical manoeuvres yet does so, of course, not always with its speaker's full realisation of what he or she is saying. This we see spectacularly in the ironic self-revelation, by way of a comic *epideixis*, throughout Volpone's address to gold at the start of Jonson's play (1.1.1–27).[14]

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As the waking Volpone praises his gold, he unwittingly voices a reprehensible, comically idolatrous self-characterization by metamorphosing gold into divinity. He has no awareness of or interest in what that indicates about himself. He begins:

> Good morning to the day; and next, my gold!
> Open the shrine that I may see my saint.
> [*Mosca reveals the treasure.*]
>
> Hail the world's soul, and mine! More glad than is
> The teeming earth to see the longed-for sun
> Peep through the horns of the celestial Ram
> Am I to view thy splendour, darkening his;
> That lying here, amongst my other hoards,
> Show'st like a flame by night, or like the day
> Struck out of chaos, when all darkness fled
> Unto the centre. O thou son of Sol
> – But brighter than thy father – let me kiss,
> With adoration, thee, and every relic
> Of sacred treasure in this blessèd room. (1.1.1–13)

Volpone's idolatrous address to his gold inverts a customary gesture of epideictic rhetoric. Speeches of praise allow the orator to display his or her own character positively, as an appropriate platform for praising the virtues of someone or something else. Aristotle had explicitly linked display of one's supposed character with *epideixis* when claiming that 'the ways in which to make [our hearers] trust the goodness of other people are also the ways in which to make them trust our own'.[15] Volpone, however, speaking in epideictic mode but, as if in private reverie, produces an unguarded revelation of his character: one he does not intend or think that he needs to guard. From the perspective of an audience for whom his magniloquent, loving praise is emphatically idolatrous, he is a perfect example of the ignorance (*agnoia*) that Plato in *Philebus* made the essence of the laughable.[16] Yet Volpone is oblivious. That is to say, he is emphatically if implicitly positioned through this scene as being from a world in which his attitude to money is normative rather than a deformity. This is, of course, the basis of Jonson's satire. Yet Volpone's monologue lays bare the gap between the comically deformed character visible only to Jonson's audience and the standards of behaviour that are normative within Volpone's own world, one unconcerned with external criticism. The soliloquy achieves this because it is an epideictic speech without obviously public auditors; it is an unguarded window onto the gap between Volpone's personal character and the public standards of behaviour of

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Jonson's audience, a gap that the soliloquy's rhetoric makes visible. But, given that England is then transitioning into a new kind of economy, one evidently figured by Venice's, we are aware that the notional gap may be not so great after all. At one level, Jonson uses Volpone here, as has been for a long time suggested, to mock the acquisitiveness of the emerging consumer culture in England in the early seventeenth century.[17]

In keeping with conventional tactics of rhetorical praise, the structure of Volpone's praise begins with an elaborate amplification (heightening) by way of comparison. One of the primary forms of highlighting something, writes Quintilian, involves making it seem worse or better by comparison with relatable things. The orator moves the subject into a comparative position where he, she, or it cannot be topped by anything.[18] Volpone makes gold into something than which nothing could be 'greater', first by picturing gold as the greater son of Sol who eclipses his father. It is the initial layer of openly idolatrous comparison. Volpone metamorphoses wealth and the will to pleasure into a higher divinity than even great Apollo. Nevertheless, the elaborate comparison is not merely a positive contrast of analogous qualities – light (8–9), splendour (6), warming pleasure (4–5) – in gold's favour.

Volpone's comparison of gold with 'a flame by night, or like the day / Struck out of chaos' makes his golden heresy hyperbolically emphatic: gold is constitutive of his very world and of the goodness that is in it. Further on in his soliloquizing reverie, the idea develops and takes on a more explicitly Christian colouring:

> . . . Dear saint,
> Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues,
> That canst do naught and yet mak'st men do all things;
> The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
> Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame,
> Honour, and all things else. Who can get thee,
> He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise – (1.1.21–27)

Pushing the manoeuvre of heightening by comparison to its adulatory and comic utmost, the soliloquy of course puts two worlds into contrast: first, that from which Volpone comes and, second, the one that sees him and it as comic deformities. The two worlds are, furthermore, entirely different contexts in which to fashion the self. Volpone's idolatry implicitly excludes the world that sees it as such, that is to say, a world in which the will to power and the will to pleasure – each of which riches facilitate – are actually accountable to a higher divinity. From that world's perspective, Volpone is

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a comic deformity, a counterpart to the tragic deformity of Faustus. Both characters embody a vast, outrageous, self-centred desire. But all divinity in Volpone's world dissolves into money. There, money is divinely generative, for Volpone's treasure is not just his 'saint' but the 'soul' of both his world and of himself (4). In conventional Aristotelian terms, the soul as the form of the body is constitutive of its being. Moreover, 'Riches', despite being 'dumb', in Volpone's world 'giv'st all men tongues' (22). It has been suggested, too, that the following line – 'that canst do naught and yet mak'st men do all things' – parodies the concept of divinity as 'the unmoved mover' (which Christian orthodoxy appropriated) because it puts in tension the fact that while riches 'do naught', they also do everything.[19] Volpone unambiguously claims that riches generate honour, wisdom, and nobility (25–7).

The creative force of money in the world where Volpone exhibits himself appears, in the audience's world, to be anarchic because it is deleterious to the fashioning of virtue. L. C. Knights observed that *Volpone* draws on a growing sense of social discord so as to condemn acquisitiveness; more recent scholarship has shown that writers' responses to new economic projects were ambivalent. Those projects injected the creative energy of private enterprise into larger public benefits, many said, such as the employment of the poor.[20] Yet Volpone's soliloquy, putting epideictic rhetoric itself on display, gives us a lucid, subtle perspective onto the gap between alternate possibilities for self-fashioning, between espousing a moral or a financial economy. About five years later, Jonson will create as its direct counterpart the grandiose fantasizing of Sir Epicure Mammon in a famous soliloquy from *The Alchemist* (at 2.2.41–56 and 57–87 along with 88–94). There, like his vulpine predecessor – and Faustus, too – Mammon indulges a fantasy of *Cosmopoiesis*, that is, of world-making. He voices a seigniorial dream of luxury, summoning before his eyes a personal domain of incoherent, bedazzling excess and extravagant consumption. There, moreover, just as Volpone speaks in the presence of Mosca but for his own benefit, so likewise Mammon speaks in the company of Face but to himself. That particular commonality invites further consideration of what the soliloquy's scope and function are in early modern English drama.

For a start, it asks us to reconsider what a 'soliloquy' actually is in Shakespeare's time. One often-cited formula suggests that, as the term's Latin components indicate (they mean 'to speak' and 'alone'), a soliloquy occurs when a character speaks alone onstage. Clearly, nonetheless, as in the cases of Volpone and Mammon, this is not invariably so. Neither

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