

Move Grammar and *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*: A Linguistic Study

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Abstract. This piece of research tries to apply Pavel's linguistic model, the Move Grammar, to Marlowe's play *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*. The idea of "move" depends on the choice of one solution from among a number of alternatives that are offered. This move or rather choice affects the plot either positively or negatively. This 'move' consists of two main components:

1. the existence of the problems or conflict.
2. the efforts exerted to resolve it.

These efforts have to use a catalyst, which would either solve the problem or complicate it further and so on.

Certain maxims are reached namely that

1. earthly power is a desirable thing.
2. the end justifies the means, especially in political affairs.
3. It is the right of the victorious to deal severely with and humiliate the defeated.

Interest in matters of language and of verbal art emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. It emerged against the backdrop of another practice that was directly concerned with language; namely, rhetoric where praxis or plot constitutes the main part. The dimension of the praxical poses many problems of analysis. In the realm of language it involves the interplay of discourses. In literary studies one finds one of the oldest approaches to this realm, which is that part of poetics that Aristotle

assigned to the study of the imitation of action, that is, to the representation of praxis that we call plot.

A study of plot is doubly interesting: it addresses the problematic area that emerges at the nexus of linguistics and literary studies. The study of plot is not only a relatively specialized subject matter within the sphere of poetics that is called "narratology," but is also that part of literary studies that is relevant to the understanding of praxis. The aim of the present paper is: 1) to shed light on Pavel's approach, namely: Move Grammar; 2) to try to apply this approach to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, parts one and two; and 3) to describe the characteristics of Tamburlaine's poetic speeches and try to relate these stylistic approaches to dramatic criticism.

The plot-grammar as Thomas Pavel explicitly explains it, starts from the assumption that plot-structure is comparable to the syntactic structure of sentences. Here it stresses primarily the elementary stages of the construction of a formalism. Plot-grammar consists of a categorical vocabulary including an initial symbol indicating what kind of objects the grammar accounts for (enumerates), and two formally distinct kinds of rules: *a set of context-free rules and a set of transformations.*⁽¹⁾

Since there is no such thing as (the) correct plot-grammar, it is realistic to assume that for each grammar one may establish a certain inventory of categories according to the specific needs of that grammar, adapted to both its formal structure and to the range of intuitions it strives to account for. The grammar proposed by Pavel tries to grasp the phenomenon of plot-advance, the simple and obvious fact that plots link together actions performed by the characters. The categorical vocabulary used in the grammar contains the symbols: Move, Problem, Solution, Auxiliary, Tribulation and the prefixes pro and counter.

The notion of Move is used as the central operational concept of the grammar. As in game-theory, a Move is the choice of an action among a number of alternatives, in a certain strategic situation and according to certain rules. From this tentative definition, it follows that in this grammar the logic of the story is a progressive one. The place of the notion of Move within the narrative grammar is approximately comparable to that of the sentence in the syntax of natural languages. Complex sentences are made up of simple sentences hierarchically linked according to the rules of the grammar. Similarly, the abstract story, which is structured as a complex Move, is made up of several simple Moves, embedded one under another, according to the prescriptions of the narrative grammar.

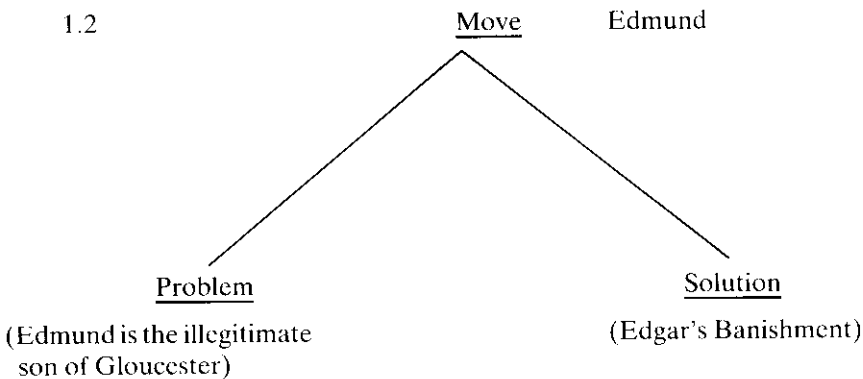
(1) Thomas Pavel, *The Poetics of Plot* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 3-24. I am drawing heavily on this work for the analysis of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II*.

Moves can be analyzed in two main components. Any such Move is called for by a problem and represents an effort toward its solution. To illustrate how the grammar works, let's examine Edgar's revenge in *King Lear*. Schematically, this section of the play consists in two main Moves: first, through the evil machination of Edmund, the natural son of Gloucester, his half brother Edgar, Gloucester's legitimate heir, is banished from his father's castle. Second, Edgar finds the means to destroy Edmund and does so. Admittedly, this account considerably simplifies the action of the episode, which in the play is interconnected with other happenings.

In this example, at the beginning of the play Edmund's problem is how to overcome the disadvantages of his illegitimate status. His solution will include the stratagem resulting in Edgar's banishment. Represented as a plot-grammatical rule, this can be expressed as follows:

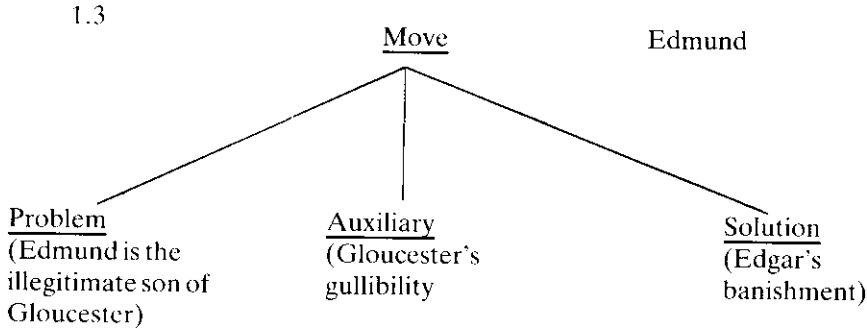
1.1 Move: Problem + Solution, in which: means "is manifested by" and + means "is followed by." The colon corresponds to the arrow found in transformational generative grammar.

Similar to the syntactic constituent trees, the structure of plots will be represented as narrative trees, closely related to the rules of the plot-grammar. A rule like 1.1 will result in a tree (like 1.2), in which the symbol appearing in the rule at the left of the column directly dominates the symbols in the rule that are situated at the right of the column. The narrative content of the problem and solution is represented as simple narrative sentences within brackets, which schematically describe the happenings in the story. By adding an indication about the character who initiates the Move, the first Move of the episode will look like tree 1.2.

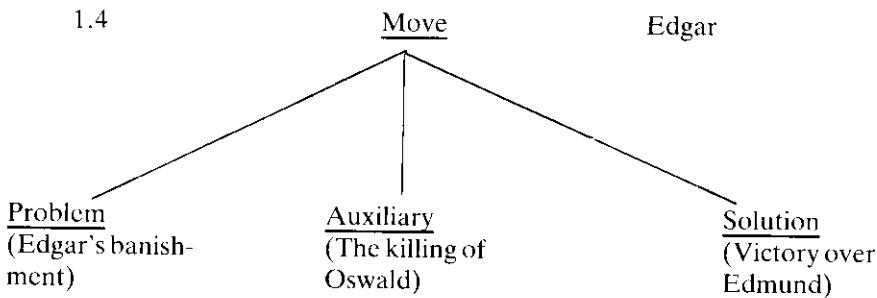


Sometimes, in order to achieve their purposes, the actors who initiate a Move make use of auxiliary actors or circumstances. Thus Edmund takes advantage of Gloucester's credulity, which functions as an Auxiliary to Edgar's banishment. To

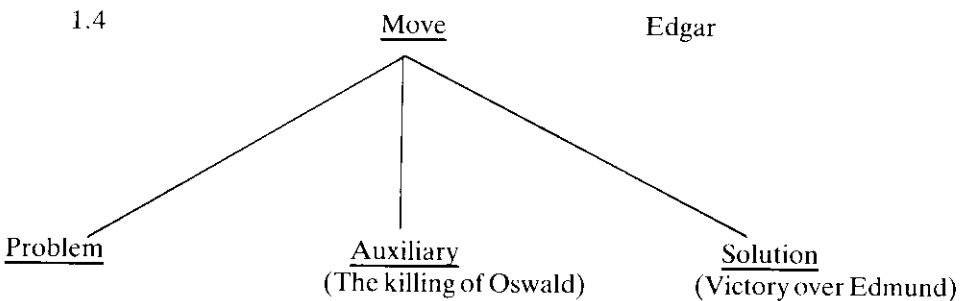
include this possibility, the first move of the episode will be represented diagrammatically by tree 1.3.

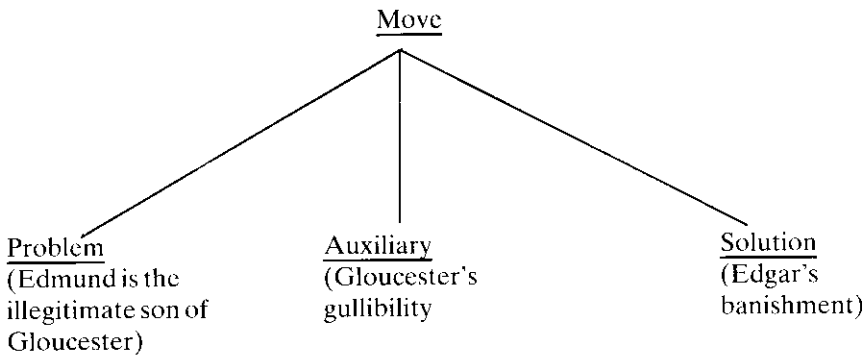


The second Move of the episode has a similar structure. Edgar's problem consists in having been banished and separated from his father. His solution which requires the description of Edmund will be significantly helped by the killing of Oswald and the subsequent finding of Goneril's letter to Edmund. The Move has the simplified structure of tree 1.4.



To represent the whole development within a single tree, one can embed 1.3 under the problem of 1.4, with the purpose of indicating that Edmund's action cause Edgar's problem.





An interesting property of the problems, auxiliaries and solutions is that in some cases they can be analyzed as sequences of these symbols, as in the following rules:

- 1.5 Problem: Problem 1 + Problem 2 + Problem n
- 1.6 Auxiliary: Auxiliary 1 + Auxiliary 2 + Auxiliary n
- 1.7 Solution: Solution 1 + Solution 2 + Solution n

In more intuitive terms, the main problem can sometimes be made up of a series of problems, each needing its own solution. Similarly, a solution may consist in several subsolutions or in several attempts to implement it.⁽²⁾ As Bremond has shown, any solution goes through three stages, each consisting of a choice:⁽³⁾

- 1.8 Solution: (± Considered)
- (+ Considered): (± Attempted)
- (+ Attempted): (± Success)

The two prefixes Pro-and Counter may be attached to the solution according to the episode-generating rule:

- 1.9 Solution: (Pro-Solution + Counter-Solution)ⁿ + (Solution)

Pro-solution events favor the implementation of the solution, while counter-solution events work against it. If the solution succeeds, the last symbols of 1.9 are selected. The parentheses indicate that the choice of the enclosed symbol is optional. The exponent n means that the sequence indexed by it may be repeated by any finite number of times.

(2) Pavel, p. 19.

(3) Claude Bremond, *Logic of Recitations* (Paris: Editions du serial, 1973), pp. 60-67.

The following rules constitute the base component of the Move-grammar:

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|------|----------------|---|
| 1.10 | Move: | Problem + (Auxiliary) + Solution |
| 1.11 | Problem: | Move |
| 1.12 | Auxiliary: | Move |
| 1.13 | Solution: | Move |
| 1.14 | Problem: | Problem 1 + Problem 2 + Problem n |
| 1.15 | Auxiliary: | Auxiliary 1 + Auxiliary 2 + Auxiliary n |
| 1.16 | Solution: | Solution 1 + Solution 2 + Solution n |
| 1.17 | Solution: | (± Considered) |
| | (Considered): | (Attempted) |
| | (+ Attempted): | (± Success) |
| 1.18 | Solution: | (Pro-Solution + Counter-Solution) ⁿ + (Solution) |

Several narrative phenomena have to be represented through transformations.⁽⁴⁾ A transformation is basically a rule relating two classes of (narrative) trees. The domain of a transformation contains a class of trees satisfying certain structural conditions. The output of the transformation consists of a new class of trees, modified according to certain structural changes. Other transformations will be referred to here as well. The Move grammar approach can be used in the analysis of many plays that have complex or intricate plots. One might go far as to say that the majority of Renaissance tragedies lend themselves easily to this kind of analysis, e.g. Ben Johnson's *Volpone*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Marlowe's plays, to name only a few.

The plot-grammar advanced and proposed by Pavel belongs to the already numerous class of recent structural analyses of stories.⁽⁵⁾ It has been developed as an attempt to avoid the shortcomings of available models and to integrate the findings of structural analyses of plot within a more explicit grammar, tentatively linked to a plot-based semantics. While the grammar proposed by Pavel owes much to its predecessors, both in the general orientation and in the details of its functioning, it aims at improving the standards of narratological models in several areas, namely, the explicitness of plot-advance, the role of characters and group of characters, and the links between plot and meaning.

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- (4) Pavel has shown that narrative structures present transformational aspects, and that an adequate narrative grammar must include a transformational component, p. 20.
- (5) Narratology as one of the most dynamic fields in structuralist poetics is linked to its bias in favor of highly regular phenomena. To mention only a few contributions, Barthes (1966), Todorov (1981), Marranda and Kongas (1971), have developed a cluster of notions, categories, and methods of narratological description related to the theoretical advances in structural linguistics. Lakoff (1972), Prince (1973, 1982), Vandijk (1975) are among those proposing narrative models based on transformational generative research. The plot-grammar approach can be used in the analysis of many Renaissance plays with complex and intricate plots, in Tzevan Todolo, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 50.

In representing plot-advance the available models disregard either the detailed links between actions, or the abstract narrative categories that confer meaning to each section of the plot. With respect to characters, the existing models overlook the connection between actions and characters or groups of characters. In addition, to understand a plot involves not only relating actions to one another and to the characters who perform them but also to a group of maxims that define the meaning of “raw” actions and give them a cultural and narrative status.⁽⁶⁾

Like its predecessors, the present grammar starts from the assumption that plot-structure is comparable to the syntactic structure of sentences. Imagine the set of possible plots as a language obeying tacit or explicit rules. The author composes a plot and the reader or spectator understands it by virtue of these rules and cases of misunderstanding can be attributed to the lack of common grammar.⁽⁷⁾

Pavel has shown that a grammar which generates stories is subject to the same restrictions as grammars for natural-language sentences. Arguments similar to those proposed by Chomsky (1956) against regular and context-free grammars can be constructed in order to show that typically narrative phenomena cannot be accounted for by this variety of formal grammars. Consequently, the grammar adopted by Pavel belongs to the family of transformational generative grammars.

The notion of Move is used as the central operational concept of the grammar. As in game-theory, a Move is the choice of an action among a number of alternatives, in a certain strategic situation and according to certain rules.⁽⁸⁾ Naturally, not every action of the characters constitutes a Move. The main criterion for an action to be considered as a Move is its impact on the overall strategic situation. An action is a Move if it either, directly or indirectly, brings about another Move, or if it ends the story. The place of the notion of Move within the narrative grammar is approximately comparable to that of the sentence in the syntax of natural languages. Complex sentences are made up of simple sentences hierarchically linked according to the rules of the grammar. Similarly, the abstract story, which is structured as a complex Move, is made up of several simple Moves, embedded one under another, according to prescriptions of narrative grammar.⁽⁹⁾

(6) Gerard Genette tends to restrict narratology to the textual study of narratives, thus eliminating on the one hand the abstract level of plot, on the other hand artifacts containing plots, but not centering around diegetic techniques: drama, film, narrative painting. Although discourse narratology provides us with important conceptual tools and invaluable insights, there are areas where an abstract narrative structure independent of its discourse manifestation is indispensable for an adequate representation of our literary knowledge. See Gerard Genette, *New Discourse* (Paris: Serial, 1983), p. 60.

(7) Pavel, p. 15.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Ibid., p. 17.

In the following section I shall present an analysis of Tamburlaine's plot, explaining the function of the Move-grammar.

The first episode of the tragedy is designed to present succinctly the strategic state of affairs at the beginning of the action.

The tragedy begins "early," i.e. before any major event determining the course of the action occurs. The episode in question consists of an unsuccessful attempt by the weak King Mycetes to convince Tamburlaine to abandon his paramilitary activities within the boundaries of the Persian Kingdom. Theridamas, the King's delegate, fails to persuade Tamburlaine, but is converted himself into an ally of Tamburlaine against the King.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Theridamas episode can be represented as a two-stage operation: first, the attempt by Mycetes to neutralize Tamburlaine, and second Tamburlaine's own success in converting Theridamas. These two incidents can be further decomposed into several elements, in accordance with the grammar previously outlined. Thus, Mycetes' Move is caused by what the King perceives as a violation of the established order,⁽¹¹⁾ namely, by Tamburlaine's hopes of becoming King of Asia and his ensuing robberies. Theridamas' mission is an attempt to reestablish the order. But from Tamburlaine's point of view, Theridamas' mission represents a violation.

In Tamburlaine's domain the main rule is to fight for power.⁽¹²⁾ Theridamas and Mycetes' attempts threaten Tamburlaine's purposeful action. Thus the seduction of Theridamas functions as a solution. Since Theridamas' attempt was triggered by Mycetes' effort to put his domain in order, one can embed Mycetes' Move under the problem of Tamburlaine's Move, showing that the state of affairs in Mycetes' domain constitutes a problem in Tamburlaine's domain. In this example, the immediate reason of Tamburlaine's problem is the action that serves as a solution in Mycetes' Move, namely Theridamas' mission.⁽¹³⁾ This is diagrammatically represented by tree 2.1.

(10) Mycetes has been described as a weak king in many critical comments on the play.

(11) The idea of order will be dealt with later in the paper.

(12) For a detailed analysis of power in the Elizabethan theatre see Simon Shepherd, *Marlowe and The Politics of Elizabethan Theatre* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1936), pp. 15-16, 118-22.

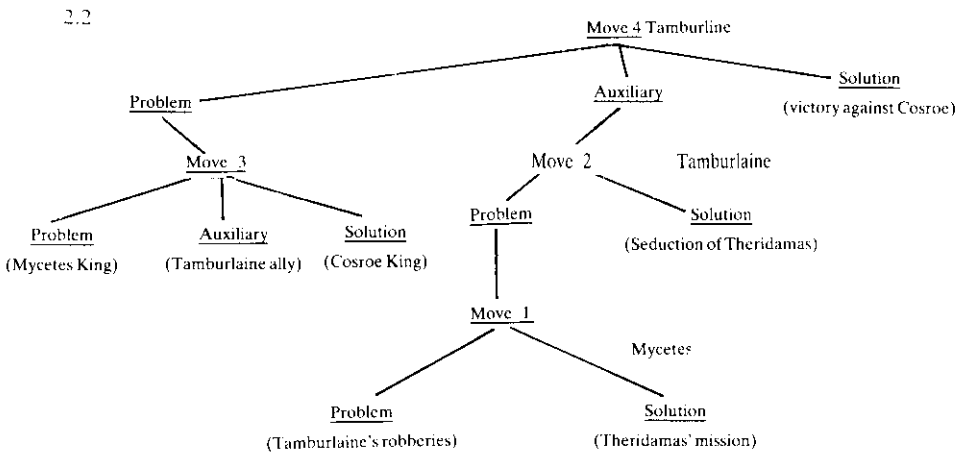
(13) See Eugene M. Waith, "Marlowe's Herculean Hero," in *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I and II. A Casebook*, ed. by S.R. Brown (Essex; Macmillan, 1982), pp. 89-90. See also the analysis of Jonstone Parr, "2 Tamburlaine," in Brown, p. 117.

The whole episode serves the interests of Tamburlaine and will accordingly be represented as a Move belonging to Tamburlaine’s domain. Obviously, Tamburlaine’s problem consists in Cosroe’s possessing the crown. In turn, Cosroe’s victory over Mycetes belongs to Cosroe’s domain and comes as a reaction to the reign of the weak Mycetes.⁽¹⁶⁾

I see the state of Persia droop
And languish in my brother’s government

says Cosroe to the noblemen, (I,i, v. 155-156). Cosroe’s seeking the friendship of Tamburlaine functions as the main Auxiliary to the plot against Mycetes. Carefully planned, Cosroe’s conspiracy is actually performed, and its outcome is successful.⁽¹⁷⁾

Theridamas’ episode influences Tamburlaine’s destiny in two respects: first, it provides Tamburlaine with a faithful follower, second, it offers Tamburlaine the opportunity to exert his charisma on a well-known Persian character, giving him enough publicity to make possible his short-lived alliance with Cosroe, and implicitly granting him the status he needs to win the crown. Accordingly, Theridamas’ episode functions as an Auxiliary in Tamburlaine’s domain and can be attached to the node Move Tamburlaine. Thus, the overall structure of the first two acts of the play will look like tree 2.2.



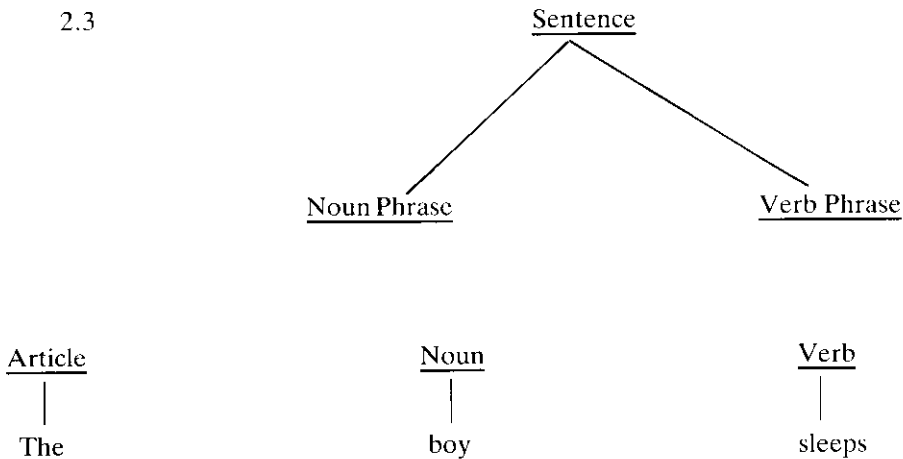
(16) The image of the crown in the play is very important. It preoccupies Cosroe all the time. In many instances in the plot he is shown as hiding his crown behind his back, ostrich-like, thinking that he might be saved or in saving the crown or keeping it away from everybody, he will remain the king with the crown at the top of his head.

(17) Pavel, p. 35.

Since the spectator expects the action of this historical play to follow the polemical configuration course, the quick disappearance of Mycetes and the conflict between Tamburlaine and Cosroe set an unanticipated mood of loosely bound actions. In contrast to the vagaries of the events, Tamburlaine emerges as the only constant element of the first two acts. Every action of both Mycetes and Cosroe is taken advantage of by Tamburlaine, so that at the end of act II, he is strongly in control, having asserted his charisma and his strategic qualities, in sixteenth century words, his virtue.⁽¹⁸⁾

Another significant aspect of the narrative structure as Pavel sees it is the placement of the Moves under the abstract symbols problem, Auxiliary and Solution. The Move in tree 2.2 is dominated by the “less dynamic” symbol auxiliary. One can provide a more explicit analysis of that statement as follows:

In early transformational grammar, dominance receives an intuitive grammatical interpretation. A node X dominates another node Y if the path between X and Y is uninterrupted and only descends. If a given node labeled X dominates the nodes Y, W, ..., Z, then the string Y, W, ..., Z is an X.⁽¹⁹⁾ To give a simple example, in the tree 2.3 the node Noun Phrase dominates the nodes Article and Noun at one level, and at the next level, the nodes The and boy. According to the above agreement, this is interpreted as meaning that the sequence Article Noun is a Noun Phrase, and that The boy is a Noun Phrase as well. This also means that ‘boy’ is a Noun, that the string The boy sleeps is a Sentence, and so on.



(18) Ibid.

(19) Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965). See also his book *Rules and Representations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

This is a most natural way of interpreting the grammatical relevance of labelled trees. However, as it stands, it cannot be applied to narrative trees. The reason is that narrative trees incorporate crucial information about the causal and logico temporal order of the Moves. Although the numbering of the Moves does not necessarily refer to the temporal succession of the events, it is generally clear that the solution of a Move takes place later than everything else dominated by the Move, including, of course, the embedded Moves and all the events they contain. This constraint, which can be called the Principle of Solution Postponement, restricts the range of possible narrative trees for a given story.⁽²⁰⁾

This principle, as here formulated, allows for cases like tree 2.2, in which Move 2 and Move 3 do not obey any strict chronological order. Indeed, Cosroe's successful attempt to become King (Move 3) ends long after Move 2, Theridamas' conversion, has taken place. But the two Moves do not belong to the relation of dominance, so the principle of Solution Postponement does not apply to them. The solution of Move 4 in the same tree does not obey the principle. It comes only after the completion of everything in the Moves dominated by Move 4. Similarly, Move 2 concludes only after Move 1 has ended.

The division of a Move into Problem, Auxiliary, and Solution is not a uniform one. Rather, the first two constituents are grouped together as the elements that lead to the Solution. The Solution is thus the focus of a Move, the event toward which the whole Move is oriented. Accordingly, the node Move has two ways of relating to the dominated nodes: on the one hand it "opens" with everything that precedes the solution, on the other hand it is "closed", or "cleared up" by the Solution itself. Thus, the interpretation of a Move will consist of two distinct aspects. Branches to the left of the Solution are said to 'lead' to the uppermost Move, while the Solution itself constitutes the Move.⁽²¹⁾

Often the spectator feels that certain events are less pertinent to a given Move, although they may somehow contribute to it.⁽²²⁾ To account for this intuition, the two relations can be refined. One can thus introduce a distinction between directly and indirectly "leading to." A node directly leads to a given Move if it is dominated by that Move, the path between the node and the Move being at the left of the path between the Move and its Solution, and between the node and the Move there are no other nodes labelled Move. In tree 2.2 the node Mycetes King directly leads to Move 3 Cosroe while this last node directly leads to Move 4 Tamburlaine. A node indirectly leads to a given Move, if it leads to the Move, and if between the node and the Move there is another node labelled Move. In tree 2.2, the node Mycetes King

(20) See Pavel, p. 31.

(21) Ibid.

(22) Ibid., p. 33.

indirectly leads to Move 4, because it is dominated by Move 4; because the path between Move 4 and the node *Mycetes King* is at the left of the path between Move 4 and its solution; and finally, because between Move 4 and *Mycetes King* there is another Move, namely Move 3 *Cosroe*.

Chronology and Narrative Precedence

Syntactic trees benefit from a natural way of ordering nodes from left to right, according to the correct succession of the constituents. In transformational generative grammar, however, a given sentence can be represented by a set of trees in a transformational derivation. Constituent trees that satisfactorily represent the grammatical relations in a sentence can not, in most cases, represent as well the correct order of the constituents and, particularly, the correct order of the ultimate constituents and words. A similar problem arises in narratology. All proposed varieties of narrative structures, including the trees, have at least an abstract narrative level, in which the order of the ultimate constituents (events) can be different from the chronological order.⁽²³⁾ It must be added that the temporal sequence is once again disrupted at the textual level, where a wide range of chronological figures diversify the presentation.

In tree 2.2 one can easily see that the order of the narrative elements mentioned at the bottom of the tree is not a chronological one. The most obvious discrepancy is situated at the left of the tree. Indeed, although in the play everything under Move 1 *Mycetes* takes place before any of the events under Move 3 *Cosroe*, the order of the narrative branches is determined by the necessity of first introducing *Cosroe's* Move, as the immediate cause of *Tamburlaine's* worries, and only then *Mycetes's* actions, which contribute to *Tamburlaine's* victory as mere Auxiliaries. Tree 2.2 thus represents something that could be called abstract narrative precedence.⁽²⁴⁾ This relation strives to represent the narrative role Moves play with respect to one another. Accordingly, it can make use of nonchronological ordering of the Moves from left to right. Indeed, from a chronological point of view, the Moves are not compact entities. The Solution to a Problem can arrive long after its first appearance. Chronological order is thus a property of individual events rather than of entire Moves. As a consequence, it cannot be located at a very abstract level of plot-structure. A more abstract analysis shows the relative independence of the logical narrative structure from the chronological order of events.

Move grammar stresses the logical and causal succession of actions insisting on their reciprocal links and on their strategic role in the advance of plot. Moreover, in contrast to narratological studies relying solely on chronological considerations,

(23) Vandijk (1973) has shown how a prechronological order can be related to a temporal sequence of events.

(24) Pavel, p. 34.

Move grammar offers a supplementary level of information, essential for a full understanding of plot.⁽²⁵⁾ Those authors who acknowledge only the linear succession of events in discourse and their chronology miss an important narrative point. Textual succession combines references to events, habits, feelings, projections and remembrance. To simply group events according to their chronology means to neglect all these distinctions, which are relevant at the level of plot. One can consequently distinguish between time order and textual order. The textual order provides the author with the opportunity of changing the focusing pattern of the play. It gives him more freedom for powerful stylistic effects. Other methods of changing the focus include choosing between direct stage presentation of an event and the narration of the event, the length of time devoted to a given event, and so on. These stylistic tools are well known. The point of mentioning them here is to suggest that they are only a part of a greater array of narrative and dramatic effects, and that in order to better understand the textual arrangement of a literary work, knowledge of the abstract Move and chronological structures is necessary.

I would like to argue that the division of the first two acts into scenes provides for a level of event-arrangement distinct from both the Move-structure and the chronological order.⁽²⁶⁾ Here is a list of the scenes, the narrative content of each being specified in a separate column followed by the indication of the Move it belongs to and it will be represented by a tree:

Scene I, i	Mycetes King (Move 3); Tamburlaine's robberies (Move 1); Theridamas' mission (Move 1); Cosroe King (Move 3)
Scene I, ii	Tamburlaine and Zenocrate; Theridamas: mission (Move 1); conversion of Theridamas (Move 2)
Scene II, i	Cosroe King (Move 3); Tamburlaine ally of Cosroe (Move 3)
Scene II, ii	Mycetes King (Move 3)
Scene II, iii	Cosroe King (Move 3)
Scene II, iv	Cosroe King (Move 3); Tamburlaine ally (Move 3)
Scene II, v	Tamburlaine King (Move 4)
Scene II, vi	Cosroe King (Move 4)
Scene II, vii	Tamburlaine King (Move 4)

The list of scenes shows that the text of the tragedy freely mixes episodes belonging to different Moves, stretches some incidents over several scenes, compresses other

(25) *Ibid.*

(26) J.R. Brown, "Marlowe's Style," in *Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great and the Jew of Malta*, ed. J.R. Brown (Essex: Macmillan, 1982), p. 56.

events, and introduces plot elements that do not even belong to the tree. Thus, one gains a detailed insight into Marlowe's dramatic technique in the first part of *Tamburlaine*.⁽²⁷⁾ The play opens with two long scenes (act I), each introducing several narrative themes.⁽²⁸⁾ There follows a series of short scenes (act II), each dedicated to only one protagonist (and possibly to his allies). Thus, the rhythm is accelerating as the play progresses towards Mycetes' and Cosroe's downfalls. But the main element of surprise at the end of the dynastic fight is, after the victory of Cosroe, the sudden change in Tamburlaine's attitude, his quick decision to compete for the crown and the equally quick victory over Mycetes.

To sum up, the first two acts of *Tamburlaine* offer a good example of a complete action, that is, of an action in which every explicit or implicit Problem receives a satisfactory solution.⁽²⁹⁾ The structure of the Moves is only moderately complex, due perhaps to the absence of strong devices, like chains of violations or polemical configurations. The main surprise of the Move-structure consists in the sudden discovery that Theridamas' episode is not an incident of little concern leading to the success of Cosroe's conspiracy, but rather that together with Cosroe's plot it prepares the striking accomplishment of Tamburlaine's accession to power.⁽³⁰⁾ One must note that the strongest device used to emphasize Tamburlaine's preeminence over the other characters is language. From his first speech, Tamburlaine makes it clear that he is addressing everybody else from a privileged vantage point. His poetic discourses reveal, from the very beginning, that he looks over the heads of his interlocutors.⁽³¹⁾

Tamburlaine's success and the death of his adversaries having ended all conflicts, the continuation of the play becomes possible only if old friends become enemies, as had already happened to Cosroe and Tamburlaine, or if new enemies appear from outside. The first alternative would be anticlimactic: it would not employ the same device twice in a row, but, more seriously, it would present Tamburlaine with a lesser challenge than the previous one. A freshly crowned King could be able to meet adversaries greater than his former opponent; hence the pleasant feeling of continuity experienced by the spectator at the gathering of Emperor Bajazeth of the Turks with his allies, Kings and Pashas,⁽³²⁾ in Bajazeth's eyes, Tamburlaine represents a danger too unimportant to deserve more than a warning. But this warning being defied, the Emperor must confront his turbulent neighbor. After

(27) For a full analysis of Marlowe's dramatic technique in the play see J.H. Birringer, "Marlowe's Violent Stage: Mirrors of Horror in *Tamburlaine*," *ELH*, 5 (1984), 2.

(28) See Waith, p. 102.

(29) For action and the structure of the play, see Clifford Leech, *Christopher Marlowe: Poet for the Stage*, ed. Anne Lancashire (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 68-75.

(30) Pavel, p. 37.

(31) Birringer, p. 227.

(32) See Parr, p. 124.

an exchange of ritual insults, the battle ensues, and following a brief combat, Bajazeth is defeated and taken prisoner.⁽³³⁾ One can find here at least two explicit Moves: Bajazeth's attempt to prevent Tamburlaine from achieving more power, and Tamburlaine's aggressive rejection of Bajazeth's supremacy.

The new Moves in acts iv and v relate to the first two acts in the loosest way. By now the spectator takes for granted that Tamburlaine's martial thrust will go on indefinitely, so there is no need for a specific link between the siege of Damascus and the previous moves. The fourth act starts bluntly with the news of the siege, for which there is no other justification than Tamburlaine's plans to conquer the world.⁽³⁴⁾ Tamburlaine employs a warning system based on three tent colors, changing the message every morning. White means pardon for everybody, red entails death for those who bear arms, and black indicates a complete massacre. Only when the color displayed by the encircling army turns to black do the officials of Damascus realize the danger and send a group of virgins to Tamburlaine, hoping to make him change his mind. The virgins are handed down to the soldiers. Damascus is taken, and the entire population massacred. Soldan's army is defeated and Soldan himself taken prisoner and condemned to death; but at the last moment, wishing to please Zenocrate, Tamburlaine pardons the father of his bride and proceeds to a sumptuous wedding.⁽³⁵⁾

A possible way of accounting for the discontinuity between the Bajazeth and Damascus episodes would be to represent the whole play as made up of a single highest Move, the Solution of which embeds all main episodes. The Problem triggering the highest Move is not a local narrative nature. It could be equated with Tamburlaine's inextinguishable thirst for wordly domination.⁽³⁶⁾

Most Problem-creating narrative situations could be divided into two main categories: violations of accepted order and lack. Violations are active, external actions. Naturally, the person or group affected by a violation is different from the person or group that perpetrates it. Violations are thus prone to lead to group confrontations and to formation of polemical configurations.⁽³⁷⁾

Most often lack relates to situations when the origin of the action lies inside a character, often caused by desire, but sometimes taking other forms, religious zeal, for example. The character who feels the lack is usually the one who understands its liquidation. Subsequent actions do not necessarily lead to chains of embedded struc-

(33) See Waith, pp. 95-96.

(34) *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

(35) For a more detailed analysis of acts III to V, see Pavel, pp. 44-51.

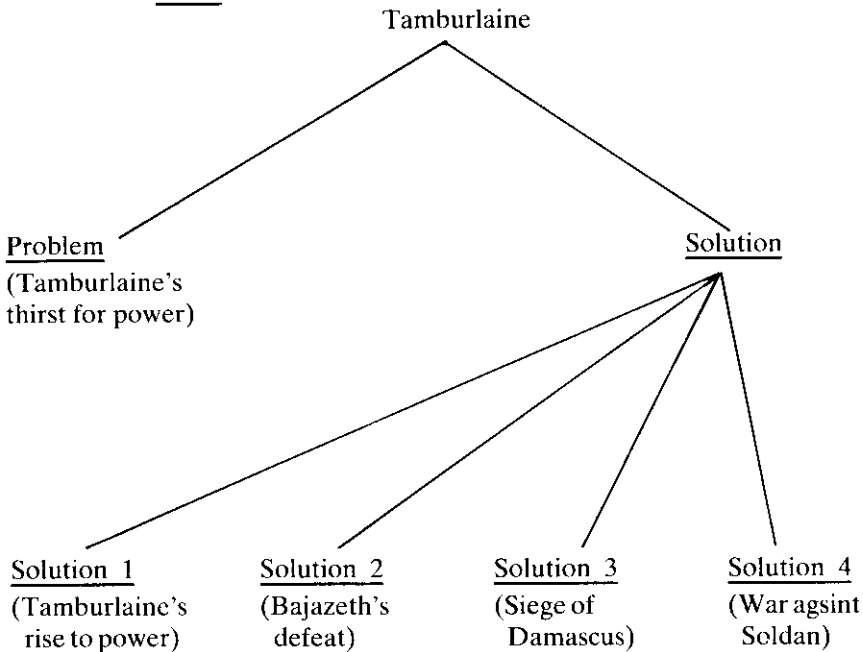
(36) See Leech, pp. 52-55.

(37) Pavel, p. 40.

tures, but can take the form of successive attempted solutions, each dominating one or more Moves. There are certainly cases when, at the origin of the first violation in a series, one finds an attempt to liquidate a lack. Or, conversely, a violation or a series of violations can lead to a solution that proceeds by successive attempts. One can, however, separate those narrative structures in which the main force behind the development of the action is a lack as in the plot of *Tamburlaine*, from narrative structures in which the lack serves to set off the first in a series of violations that quickly becomes the main feature of the plot as in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.⁽³⁸⁾

All episodes of *Tamburlaine* boil down to unsatisfactory attempts to liquidate the fundamental lack. Without going into the details of Damascus' and Soldan's episode, an overall structure of the play can be sketched that would account for the division of the tragedy into four distinct macro-episodes: the rise of Tamburlaine to power, Bajazeth's defeat, the siege of Damascus, and the war against Soldan.⁽³⁹⁾ These episodes would be attached directly to the uppermost Solution. Thus every macro-episode would appear as an independent attempt to appease Tamburlaine's thirst for power, as seen in tree 2.3.

2.3 Move



(38) Ibid.

(39) Structure, see J.S. Cunningham & Roger Warren, "Tamburlaine," in Brown, *Tamburlaine The Great*, p. 129. See also Leech, p. 72.

This representation of the plot points to the possibility of a second tragedy. Everything has been done to convince the spectator that there is no such thing as a natural limit for Tamburlaine's power; consequently, the end of the tragedy may be suspected of being only an interruption in the series of successive solutions to the global problem.⁽⁴⁰⁾

The preceding analysis handles Move-structure as a syntactic object. This is, of course, peculiar. The Move-structure can be compared to the syntactic structure of a sentence, but it is not necessarily more closely related to it than is some other feature of a literary text. As a matter of fact, the categories employed here are strongly permeated by semantics, not unlike traditional grammatical categories themselves.

I must also note that the term syntax plays an important role in Todorov's poetics, as well as Greimas' semiotics.⁽⁴¹⁾ According to these authors, narrative, syntax consists of a taxonomy of narrative propositions divided into propositions about states of affairs, propositions about actions, and model propositions. These distinctions are of considerable importance. Nonetheless, Greimas' system lacks an explicit grammar that would link together narrative propositions and narrative programs. Greimas' syntactic model does not use categorical nodes and thus can not explicitly represent more abstract grammatical knowledge.

Move-grammar attempts to fill precisely this gap by accounting for the formal links between narrative events. If we use the metaphor of syntax for such links, Move grammar provides for a stronger and more explicit syntax than Greimas.⁽⁴²⁾

If syntax plays such an important role in the overall structure of the play, semantics, I would assume, plays a similar, if not a more important part.

The semantic study of *Tamburlaine's* domains includes the examination of the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and action-governing propositions.⁽⁴³⁾

Now, although Marlowe is one of those authors whose ontological interests constitute a central part of their message, in *Tamburlaine I*, one is not compelled to assume a special ontology. All the poetic passages about the power of man, his closeness to God, can be taken as mere metaphorical expressions.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Tamburlaine is a typical epistemically open play. No move is planned in secret with the purpose of catching the adversary off guard, not even the two-stage con-

(40) See Parr, p. 125; Brown, p. 66.

(41) Todorov, p. 40.

(42) Pavel, p. 41.

(43) These criteria have been illustrated by Pavel, p. 47.

(44) See Birringer, p. 227.

quest of the crown by Tamburlaine.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Indeed, the main actor could have made plans to fight on Cosroe's side and then to turn against him in cold blood. Instead, he is presented as suddenly interested in the crown only after Cosroe's victory over Mycetes. The only moment in the play when something close to a secret plot occurs is Agydas' attempt to persuade Zenocrate into abandoning her conqueror. But the incident does not qualify as a move, and moreover, as if drawn there by the very epistemic openness of the plot, Tamburlaine overhears everything.⁽⁴⁶⁾

At the axiological and action-governing levels, it is worthwhile noticing that all Problems and Moves are fully caused by the decisions of the characters. No event is due to chance, luck or coincidence. Plots in which this is the case are completely internally motivated. They exclude any intervention of what is traditionally called providence, namely an outside, unnamed, invisible volatile force, regulating the events independently of any of the parties present in the plot.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The absence of Providence in *Tamburlaine* eases the decision-making processes since the actors of a completely internally motivated play need not pay heed to any risks other than those due to the expected course of action of rival characters.

A remarkable unanimity on the maxims of power characterizes the narrative domains of the play. Significantly, with the exception of the last Move, the nature of the Problems that bring about the Moves is always related to power.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The characters are worried by the lack of power, which is the main stimulus for Tamburlaine's and Cosroe's actions, or by the threat of a growing outside power, which justifies Mycetes's, Bajazeth's, and Solden's Moves. These two basic power-Problems are dealt with by corresponding power-Solutions. The lack of power may be felt in a "reasonable" way. Thus, in Cosroe's apparently justified revolt against his feeble brother, the motives seem to be oriented toward the common good; or, power may be sought for in a "demonic way," the main stimulus being an irrepressible desire, such as Tamburlaine's thirst for power. Once the decision is taken to fight for power, be it "reasonable" or "demonic," there is no moral restraint on the ways to achieve one's aims. True, Cosroe's actions are less violent and repulsive than Tamburlaine's, nevertheless Cosroe as well is guilty of treason.

The other type of Power-Problem is the defense of existing power against challenge. An important maxim of diagnosis requires authority to interpret as a threat

(45) I should like to express my sincere appreciation to my former teacher and adviser at Harvard University, Professor Chapman who directed me to study Marlowe as a typical representative of the Renaissance drama. This dramatic technique of warning and magnanimity has been highlighted before by Professor Chapman and G.B. Evans, the editor of *Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton, 1979).

(46) See Leech, p. 60.

(47) The idea of *deus ex machina* is manifest here.

(48) See Birringer, 234-36.

any existing power outside the empire. Mycetes worries about Tamburlaine's successes as soon as they take place; Bajazeth takes the first steps against the new King of Persia as soon as Tamburlaine gives sign that he "presumes a bickering" with the Turkish emperor.

To meet the challenges to this authority, every King and emperor in the play resorts to the same two-step procedure: first he warns the challenger to either restrain his activities or to submit entirely. Then, after the negative reaction of the opponent, he takes strong military action against his adversary. Tamburlaine's progress from bandit to king goes together with a change in strategy: after the third act he no longer attacks by surprise, but instead he considerably warns his future victims of his intentions, in the same way as he, in his former days, was warned by Mycetes or Bajazeth.

The outcome of every conflict is regulated by a simple trans-domain maxim: every power seeker succeeds in his endeavors and every power keeper, except Tamburlaine, fails. It is easy to usurp power, but, if one is not Tamburlaine, it is impossible to secure it. This maxim accounts for Cosroe's and Tamburlaine's successes in the first two acts, as well as for Mycetes' and Bajazeth's failure.

The main difference between the various domains of the play consists in his treatment of the opponents. Tamburlaine is notoriously cruel to his unlucky opponents, while the only other victor in the play, Cosroe, gives no sign of brutality. Notice that in *Tamburlaine I* this aspect does not become a narratively significant one.⁽⁴⁹⁾ No Move is caused here by the bad treatment of Tamburlaine's adversaries; nobody cares yet about Bajazeth's being kept in a cage and starved. Seen from the point of view of its impact on the plot, Tamburlaine's viciousness is merely an ornamental device.

If it does not determine the shape of the plot, Tamburlaine's cruelty creates a semantic partition of the play into two "cells"; Tamburlaine's domain vs. all other narrative domains. The latter displays a remarkable uniformity, in spite of the potential differences between the main actors. But the play is calculated to concentrate on Tamburlaine. The other characters and their domains are simply the background against which the overwhelming hero is projected.

Semantic domains are sets of propositions that describe ontological configurations, give the relevant epistemological and axiological information, and lists the maxims for action. In *Tamburlaine I*, the number of maxims belonging to the plot relevant set or to the semantic focus seems to be rather limited. Among those maxims one may count the following:

(49) Ibid.

- 2.1 Earthly power is the most desirable thing;
- 2.2 The aim of gaining power justifies any action;
- 2.3 Neighboring power is a threat to power;
- 2.4 Kings and emperors warn their enemies before attacking;
- 2.5 A defeated enemy can be dealt with in the cruellest fashion;
- 2.6 Power seekers succeed, power keepers fail.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Maxim 2.1 indicates the uniform nature of the problem leading to moves. Maxim 2.3 supplements 2.1, giving a maxim for the cases when the character already possesses a crown. Maxims 2.2 and 2.4 prescribe the kind of action to be taken once the problem has been identified and the strategic setting examined. The two maxims distinguish between the possessor of a crown and the adventurer who attempts to gain one. Being a king restricts the possible courses of action. They relate to 2.3, which in spite of its providential character, appears to be at least obscurely known by Cosroe and is firmly upheld by Tamburlaine. Much of the fascination the hero exerts on his bewildered interlocutors in the first two acts stems from his certitude that 2.3 is the case. As for 2.6, it is a sentence that belongs to the semantic focus of the play, without having any impact on the plot.

Maxims 2.1 – 2.6 function together with a set of more general regularities concerning plots and their understanding. Such is

2.7 When a given state is the most desirable for some actor, then, if the actor is not in this state, his problem will involve how to reach it.⁽⁵¹⁾

The above proposition stipulates that the main purpose of characters in fiction is to reach optimum states. Together with 2.8, it constitutes the basis of the classical theory of action.

2.8 If a given actor's obtaining the optimum state leads to another actor's being prevented from obtaining his optimum state, the first actor is said to violate the second's interests.

The last two propositions provide the missing link between maxims 2.1-7 and the more concrete narrative sentences of *Tamburlaine I*.

For other details of the play, one may add a maxim for making allies, as well as to propositions related to courtship.

2.9 In the process of fighting for power, any alliance is allowed. No previous alliance is to be respected if it goes against the purposes of gaining power.

(50) These maxims have been spelled out by Pavel, pp. 51-53.

(51) *Ibid.*, Tamburlaine's ferocity and magnanimity have been highlighted by many critics, chief among them are Harry Levin and E. Waith.

2.10 The main hero of the play must be in love.

2.11 His affection for his beloved extends to her family.

Maxim 2.9 allows for the alliance between Cosroe and Tamburlaine, as well as for the parallel “treasons” of Cosroe toward Mycetes and of Tamburlaine toward Cosroe. Maxim 2.10 is an omnipresent rule, especially in the tradition of chivalric literature. Its role in *Tamburlaine I* is less central than in romance or in some other Elizabethan plays. It merely provides for a useful relief of the martial tension of the play and has an indirect impact upon the plot by means of 2.11, which makes the denouement possible, since Tamburlaine gives to maxim 2.11 over 2.5 and suspends his usual cruelty.

قواعد التحرك ومسرحية مارلو تامبرلين العظيم، الجزء الأول

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ملخص البحث. يتناول البحث إطاراً نظرياً يطبق من خلاله المنهج اللغوي لبائل Pavel على الدراما، وبخاصة على مسرحية كريستوفر مارلو *Tamburlaine* من حيث خصائص الأسلوب التي تميز الحبكة الدرامية في المسرحية. والبحث قائم على أن فكرة الحركة Move تعد اختياراً ضمن مجموعة من البدائل المتاحة للكاتب الدرامي، وبالطبع للشخصيات الرئيسة في المسرحية. وهذا الاختيار وهذه الحركة تؤثر على سير المسرحية وسير الأحداث المهمة. فهي إما تؤثر سلباً أو إيجاباً وإما تنهي الحبكة المسرحية. وتحتل فكرة الحركة، كوحدة أسلوبية المكانة نفسها التي تحتلها الجملة في البناء التركيبي للغات الطبيعية. ويمكن تحليل فكرة الحركة كوحدة أسلوبية إلى مكونين أساسيين: (١) وجود المشكلة (الصراع)؛ (٢) الجهود التي تبذل لحل هذا الصراع أو وضع حد له. وتتضمن تلك الجهود استخدام عامل مساعد catalyst. ويتج عن ذلك إما حل للمشكلة أو تعقيد إضافي لها. فإذا ما حدث التعقيد تفرعت المشكلة إلى عدة مشكلات تستوجب جميعها الحل وهكذا. ثم يوضح البحث أن مسرحية *Tamburlaine* تقدم نموذجاً جيداً لحركة من الحركات حيث تنشأ المشكلة، ثم تتجه نحو الحل وتتعد ثم تحل في النهاية. ويخلص الباحث إلى استنتاج عدة قواعد عامة تتحكم في الحبكة المسرحية لتامبرلين *Tamburlaine* منها: (١) أن القوة الأرضية شيء مرغوب فيه؛ (٢) أن الغاية تبرر الوسيلة، خاصة في النواحي السياسية. (٣) أنه من حق المنتصر أن يعامل المهزوم معاملة سيئة.