pressed by different characters may be discredited through the presentation of the novel's action from the perspective of a placeable narrator. Deconstruction, however, has to do, not with the attitudes of characters and narrators, but with the logical operations involved in the production of plot and the construction of character. Wilt confuses the operations of narrative point of view with another kind of narrative operation in George Eliot's novel: deconstruction, which is the focus of my essay.

The depiction of Deronda's mother, the monumentalized, self-mythifying Al-Charisi, is not a "deconstruction of art," as Wilt writes, but a "discrediting" or "demythification" of "the perspective of genius," as she puts it in a first formulation—mistakenly using the terms as if they were interchangeable and deconstruction consisted in the discrediting of a stance or view. Deconstruction involves, rather, an exposure of how a representational system (whether a story, or history, or philosophical or critical discourse) is constructed: by means of what laws of language, what arbitrary rhetorical principles. Texts of any complexity, including realistic novels, deconstruct the processes by which they represent their subject. *Daniel Deronda*, as my essay argues, deconstructs the concept of identity, one of the novel's main subjects, by showing how Deronda's identity is produced as the effect of certain unwarranted tropological processes, such as the reversal of cause and effect that structures the novel's plot. George Eliot does not simply discredit the excessive pretensions of art and, as Wilt implies, of excessively artful deconstructive criticism. Eliot's text displays the arbitrary rhetorical status of identity and of cause, concepts essential not only to the theory and practice of art but to the possibility of political action and the idea of history. The relation between these two altogether different ways that meaning is produced in the novel (the enforcement of a narrative point of view, as distinct from the display of the rhetorical status of narrative operations) is genuinely complicated, and one ought not to add confusion to the issue by mistakenly equating two incommensurable types of meaning. Beginning from the sharp distinction between "discrediting" a perspective and deconstructing a concept, critical theory might take up the project of describing the relationship between language conceived as the product of the intentions of individual selves and language as a system of rules producing effects of meaning. George Eliot's novels show us a great deal about both ways in which language may be seen to operate.

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Tamburlaine

To the Editor:

Richard Martin's article "Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and the Language of Romance" (*PMLA*, 93 [1978], 248–64) was interesting reading, but it left me entirely unconvinced that *Tamburlaine the Great* was written as a romance. My skepticism derives essentially from Martin's initial generalizations about the nature of the play; modern critics have tended to assume that it is two separate works, a successful play and its sequel. Because they have largely ignored or dismissed such organic, bipartite structure that is suggested by the Providential historical subject of *Tamburlaine*, they have produced a number of alternative explanations of Marlowe's "artistic intent" in writing his second play. A similar exercise on Martin's part leads, I think, to a basic misdirection of his critical insights.

One of the least trustworthy of his suppositions is that Part II is a sequel. The August 1590 entry in the *Stationers' Register* does not clearly state that the play was two separate ones; nor was it printed as a play with its sequel. Such circumstantial evidence as can be gleaned from contemporary reference to *Tamburlaine* is similarly inconclusive. In addition, the often cited prologue of Part II is not irrefutable proof that the second play was an afterthought. True, it does say that the response to Tamburlaine ". . . hath made our Poet pen his second part," but it also announces that in Part II, ". . . death cuts off the progress of his [Tamburlaine's] pomp / And murderous Fates throws all his triumphs down." Since the prologue to Part I invites us to view Tamburlaine's picture in a "tragic glass," and the Providential histories of the sixteenth century document his loss of pomp and triumph, one may as easily assume that Part II is the logical, moral denouement of an orthodox Providential tragedy. Indeed, those who see a moral continuity between *Tamburlaine* I and II are not "stuck with the *fact* that Part II was written *only after* the popularity of Part I was established," as Martin avers (p. 249, my italics). No substantive evidence verifies what Martin offhandedly assumes is a fact.

Martin further derives much of his mandate to hypothesize about the nature of *Tamburlaine* from another pair of assumptions that are equally unreliable. He claims that there was "an unresolved Renaissance attitude toward the historical Tamburlaine" and that the play does not "easily fit any description of a *de casibus* tragedy" (pp. 248, 249). In fact, there is much in the moral discourse of the sixteenth century to substantiate the statement that Timur Khan was widely considered to have been an

https://doi.org/10.2307/461791 Published online by Cambridge University Press

exceptional example of the working of Providence. Pedro Mexia's *The Foreste* (English translation, 1571) is generally acknowledged as a Marlowe source, and it specifically identifies Tamburlaine as a "Scourge of God" in a chapter entirely devoted to recounting his illustrative life. Another possible source is Pierre de la Primaudaye's *The French Academie* (English translation of Part I, 1586). It emphasizes Tamburlaine's Providential role in scourging the pride of the Turkish sultan Bajazeth and in raising the siege of Constantinople; it also singles out Tamburlaine as a prince who was himself "puffed up exceedingly" by pride. A third potential source for Marlowe may have been George Whetstone's *The English Mirrour* (1586). It expressly states that Tamburlaine was a Scourge of God and pointedly concludes that, even though he was successful all his life, his glory evaporated after his death because God had done with him. These moralists are remarkably consistent in their attitudes toward Tamburlaine as a specific type of divine agent, and Tamburlaine is named a Scourge of God in the title of the play. There is considerable precedent for analyzing *Tamburlaine the Great* as a conventional *de casibus* tragedy with a discernible rise/fall cycle spanning the course of two plays.

Only by overlooking Renaissance morality can Martin then theorize that Marlowe's dramatic world was controlled not by "moral or potentially tragic forces . . . but by Tamburlaine and the imagination from within" (p. 251). The extent to which Martin must reinterpret the play as romance is perhaps indicative of how forcefully Providential morality animates the play. Zenocrate's warning against valuing transitory worldly pomp is inverted into a statement that the world is free of the restraints of fortune and law; Tamburlaine's victory over Bajazeth is recast as the key to "greater romantic freedom." However, when Martin overlays his romantic reinterpretation on the tragic conclusion of *Tamburlaine*, the inadequacy of the romance theory becomes apparent. Faced with Tamburlaine's sudden death at the height of his glory, Martin is forced to ask whether the audience (presumably manipulated into approving the hero's romantic quest) must now disavow Tamburlaine and the heroic, romantic life. His answer is that this was Marlowe's means of demonstrating that Tamburlaine's death was tragic "insofar as it manifests the subordination of the romantic imagination to necessity and reality" (p. 263). This is an imposition of a strongly existential focus upon a work of art that was written to illustrate a markedly different philosophical attitude toward life and death. I would not argue that Martin's analysis is clever and innovative; however, it is a decidedly modern critical analysis. As such, it may account for a twentieth-century reader's fascination with *Tamburlaine*, but it must ultimately prove inadequate as an explanation of the structure and theme of a Renaissance tragical dramatization of the life and death of a Scourge of God.

Stephen D. Rowe
Louisiana State University, Eunice

Mr. Martin replies:

Stephen Rowe adheres to Roy Battenhouse's argument that the two parts of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* constitute a single, morally orthodox play following the *de casibus* pattern of a rise and tragic fall. Battenhouse's interpretation of the plays (*Marlowe's* Tamburlaine, 1941) has gained ground in recent years, as Rowe's letter attests, but it remains controversial, having as many critics as it has followers.

What is objectionable about a strictly moral or "Providential" interpretation of the *Tamburlaine* plays is that such an interpretation looks beyond the rhetorical impact of these "twooe commicall discourses" (*Stationers' Register*, 1590) to beliefs presumed to have been ubiquitous and inviolable. The *Tamburlaine* plays would certainly be less disturbing if they did fit some conventional Renaissance pattern of morality or art, but they don't. Even Willard Farnham, who first applied the *de casibus* concept to Elizabethan tragedy (*The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy*, 1936), acknowledged the exceptional qualities of *Tamburlaine*, Parts I and II, and found the plays "a rebellious violation of all that *De Casibus* tragedy had set out to convey" (p. 369).

Willard Farnham's sense of the *Tamburlaine* plays is shared by most modern critics. The real divergence in modern opinion originated with Battenhouse and particularly with E. M. W. Tillyard (*The Elizabethan World Picture*, 1943). Tillyard trivialized Marlowe's rhetorical abilities by supposing that moral judgments in Marlowe's day depended "more on a habit of mind than on a few powerful appeals to the imagination" (p. 59). Rowe likewise underestimates the importance of rhetoric in Marlowe and dismisses as a twentieth-century phenomenon any audience admiration of earthly glory in *Tamburlaine*. Such admiration, one must assume from Rowe's remarks, was not felt by the sober Elizabethan spectator, who presumably saw nothing incongruous about comparing a Scourge of God to Vergil's Aeneas (ll. 2160–84), the one literary figure Sir Philip Sidney described as "so excellent a man [in] every way."

https://doi.org/10.2307/461791 Published online by Cambridge University Press