

## 4 • *Tamburlaine* in London

The London to which Kit Marlowe went was too big for its walls. Many houses were outside the city proper and their inhabitants came in through 'gates' to the city. Some of the names survive in street and tube station titles such as Aldgate, Moorgate and Bishopsgate.

There were several theatres when Kit arrived in London in 1587. Two in the northern area beyond Bishopsgate were the Theatre and the Curtain. James Burbage, of the famous theatrical family, had constructed the Theatre in 1576 and its timbers were later rebuilt into the Globe in 1598. As the city authorities were not well disposed towards the stage and Puritans supported this opposition, it was safer for the theatres to be outside the city walls. Acting companies could also perform in inn yards inside the walls, where galleries above central square areas were common, but as these did not make for artistic production and allowed for changing of lines, they were not the stages the playwrights favoured for their works. The arrival of the great dramatists brought a need for theatres specifically constructed for their plays; and the status given to actors by patronage also made these buildings necessary.

An acting company became 'legal' if it was 'patronized' by a nobleman – an Act passed in 1572 stated that a company could not perform in public unless under the name of a baron or someone higher in the peerage. Until this time strolling companies had been motley collections, sometimes more like circuses than serious actors, containing acrobats, bearwards, minstrels, fortune-tellers, and other fairground characters as well as players. Under the 1572 Act of Parliament a patronized acting company received a licence

to perform. Elizabeth herself allowed a troupe to exist called the Queen's Men, and her successor James I was to take over the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who became the King's Men.

One of the first noblemen to give his name to a company was Elizabeth's favourite, the Earl of Leicester. In 1574 Letters Patent gave the Queen's permission to members of Leicester's Men, including James Burbage, to 'use, exercise and occupy the art and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies, stage plays . . . for the recreation of our loving subjects and our solace and pleasure'. The players performed at the Earl's country mansion at Kenilworth before the Queen in 1575. Then in 1576 James Burbage built the Theatre in Shoreditch, beyond Bishopsgate, for Leicester's Men to occupy. Other companies performed there later, and the Burbage family ultimately went on to different associations. But Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, played an important part in establishing the respectability of the theatre against Puritan and civic hostility.

An actor important to Kit Marlowe was Edward Alleyn, first heard of as a youth in Worcester's Men. He was soon to join the troupe of Lord Howard, the Lord Admiral. Lord Howard of Effingham, the Queen's cousin, was to be England's admiral in the successful defence against the Armada, and his players performed at court at Christmas 1585. He himself was important politically as well as through his relationship to the Queen. His was the troupe for whom Kit Marlowe was to write most of his plays.

A company Kit later worked for was Lord Pembroke's. This troupe, while making a large contribution to the development of historical drama, was to have difficult times, demonstrating that noblemen sometimes gave only their names to companies. When Pembroke's Men were driven out of London by the plague in 1593 and went bankrupt on tour, the Earl did not rescue them with a subsidy. Henslowe wrote in a letter to Edward Alleyn that Pembroke's Men could not 'save their charges with travel on the road' and had to pawn their costumes to stay alive. By this time

Marlowe and Shakespeare, who had both worked on historical plays for Pembroke's Men, had moved – Marlowe back to Edward Alleyn for *Doctor Faustus*, and Shakespeare to the Lord Chamberlain's Men. There was in fact much movement between groups, and sometimes whole troupes merged, as when the Admiral's Men joined with Lord Strange's in 1589, and both later joined the Chamberlain's Men.

When Kit arrived in London in 1587 the person to whom he had an introduction was Thomas Watson, the poet, Latin scholar, madrigal writer and general man-about-town. Tom Watson had been acquainted with the Walsingham family since he met Sir Francis during his ambassadorship in Paris. Watson was to become Kit's mentor in London. The Walsinghams were patrons of poetry rather than the theatre, but Tom Watson, who was a convivial fellow, knew actors. He was residing at Bishopsgate, working as tutor to William Cornwallis's son in 1587, and may have initiated Kit into the theatre immediately after his arrival.

Tom Watson was seven years older than Kit. He had travelled in Europe, studying at the seminary at Douai and in one of the Roman law schools in Italy. He suffered from having too many talents; they diversified his interests, and his frothy sense of humour inclined him to indiscipline in their management. Watson's contemporaries ranked him as a poet with Spenser and Sidney, but few of his works survive. He published a book of madrigals in 1590 with William Byrd; Byrd is still famous but Watson is not. William Cornwallis, to whose son Watson was tutor, said that writing plays was Watson's daily occupation, but none are known to survive. Watson may have been accident prone. Certainly he suffered more than Kit in the three-way sword fight between himself, Marlowe and Bradley which was to take place in 1589.

The Cornwallis family, by whom Watson was employed in 1587, was musical and cultivated, but though Watson had the patronage of the great Walsinghams he did not aspire to marriage

with the Cornwallis family, and married the sister of another retainer, Swift. Swift, however, wanted to marry a Cornwallis lady, and after Watson died in 1592 the Cornwallis family claimed that *he*, Watson, had composed Swift's love-letters, and that he could 'devise twenty fictions and knaveries in a play, which was his daily practice and his living'.

One of Watson's 'pranks' was to encourage a woman of the parish of St Helen, Bishopsgate, to believe that she was the illegitimate child of King Philip of Spain, from the time when Philip had been in England. She thought the marks on her back resembled the royal arms. Watson suggested that these marks could grow greater and that she would even have a lock of hair like gold wire in her head. Some of the jokes in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* seem to have had their origin in Watson's particular sense of humour.

People who suggest that the three-way sword fight in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is based on Watson, Marlowe and Bradley, make the mistake of casting Kit Marlowe, not Watson, as Mercutio, thus disregarding Watson's personality and age — he was not at all like Romeo. It does seem that the character of Mercutio may have been based on Watson — he had the same jesting facility with words, which the acute Shakespeare would have noticed.

A piece of ill luck had befallen Watson in 1585 when another poet, Abraham Fraunce, translated Watson's Latin verse 'Amyntas' into English, claiming it as his own work and dedicating it to Lady Mary Sidney. Kit Marlowe made certain no such fate befell Watson's last Latin poem, 'Amyntae Gaudia', which he personally published in his dead friend's name in 1592, and dedicated to the same lady, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke. Watson's verse was, however, lacking in inspiration. For example :

This latter night amidst my troubled rest  
 A dismal dream my fearful heart appalled,  
 Whereof the sum was this; Love made a feast

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To which all neighbour saints and gods were called;  
The cheer was more than mortal men can think  
And mirth grew on, by taking in their drink . . .

And thou, Oh Death! When I possess my heart,  
Dispatch me then at once, Why so?  
By promise thou are bound to end my smart.  
Why, if thy heart return, then what's thy woe?  
That, brought from cold, it never will desire  
To rest with me, which am more hot than fire.

(*Hekatompathia*, 1582)

Tom Watson said of himself in his dedication to the Earl of Arundel of *Sophoclis Antigone* in 1581:

While I altogether devoted my early days to study, and while far from my native land, I passed a lustrum and a half, learning to utter words of diverse sounds . . . So far as I was able I paid worship to the Muses, wherever I went. Justinian, too, was especially dear. But Mars often broke in upon reluctant Pallas . . .

This was to be true not only of battles interrupting his earlier life, but of the Bradley sword fight which was to become the tragedy of his life, though touching Kit Marlowe less devastatingly.

This was the man who introduced Kit Marlowe to theatrical London.

London itself, outside whose walls the theatres were beginning to appear, was a crowded city with cobbled streets and the Thames as busy thoroughfares. Boats hurried up and down the river with ferrymen shouting 'Eastward Ho' and 'Westward Ho'. A typical remark came from Frederick, Duke of Württemberg, in 1592; 'It is a very populous city, so that one can scarcely pass along the streets, because of the throng' (W. B. Rye, *England as seen by Foreigners*, 1865).

There was a bridge over the river with shops on both sides,

some of them bookshops. St Paul's churchyard was a centre for printers, and a meeting place for the literary community who had no compunction about pasting posters and pamphlets on handy pillars. The spire of St Paul's, which had been hit by lightning in 1562, had a flat tower; and windmills stood in the fields just outside the walls. There was anti-foreign feeling among many of the inhabitants, not only against the Spanish but against Flemish merchants who took work from native-born Londoners. The equivalent of 'Go Home Dutchman' was found written more than once on the sides of Calvinistic churches. London was a metropolis for trade as well as for the arts, and Kit Marlowe, who had briefly seen Paris, must nevertheless have found London daunting. The company of older, seasoned Tom Watson would have been comforting.

There is no definite proof that the first performance of *Tamburlaine* starred Edward Alleyn, though the play was staged by the Admiral's Men and Alleyn was to be famous in the part. No one has established when Alleyn joined the Admiral's Men or when they allowed such a young actor (he was two years Kit's junior) to become their leading player. But it is probable that the new young playwright and the aspiring young actor began together. *Tamburlaine* needed a charismatic actor – a shepherd conquering the world must be dominating – and Ned Alleyn was the most magnetic actor of the late Elizabethan period.

Though Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the other major play of the early days of the theatre, was to be successful and influential, it did not have the impact of *Tamburlaine*. The combination of Marlowe's poetry and Alleyn's performance was to make *Tamburlaine* a catalyst. When Kit Marlowe read about *Tamburlaine* in the Master's library at King's School, a train of events was set in motion resulting in English drama as it is still known. Kit Marlowe was to write other plays, Shakespeare and Jonson were to follow, more actors were to dominate the boards. But the coming together of Kit Marlowe, Ned Alleyn and the new theatres with *Tamburlaine* was a definitive inspiration. It is fitting



that the twenty-three-year-old 'father' of drama should have been born in the spiritual capital, Canterbury, and educated on scholarships. Drama belongs to the people and Kit Marlowe was one of the people. Shakespeare was to have Marlowe's example to follow; Marlowe's good fortune was to have gained the right introductions and to find a suitable actor for his plays – at the time when theatres were being built.

Much unfounded legend has grown up round Kit Marlowe's life. Hearsay material exists from unhappy playwrights like Greene and Kyd; and the informer Baines said much in support of Kyd. A few fellow-travellers went along with Kyd and Baines. But there were favourable comments from friends, like Ned Blout the publisher and playwright John Marston, and Shakespeare himself quoted more from Marlowe than from any other playwright. Further damage has been done to Kit's reputation recently by alarmed Shakespeare purists, because of the suggestion that Shakespeare did not exist and that the plays were written by Kit Marlowe, incognito. Marlowe is denigrated for this, though he is in no way responsible for what is alleged about him four hundred years later!

When it is stated that Shakespeare's plays are better constructed than Marlowe's it should be remembered that Marlowe came first. Shakespeare improved on Marlowe's already demonstrated technique. Marlowe gave life to the dramatic form which Shakespeare used. Marlowe and Shakespeare were involved with Pembroke's Men at the same time, and with several other playwrights including Kyd and Greene. Some works later revised by Shakespeare, and attributed to him, began with Marlowe and Kyd. After Marlowe and Kyd died Shakespeare came into his own, until he was ultimately succeeded by Beaumont and Fletcher. But in 1587, when *Tamburlaine* was staged, the leading playwrights were Marlowe because of *Tamburlaine*, and Kyd because of *The Spanish Tragedy*. That *Tamburlaine* was an instant success was proved by the staging of *Tamburlaine*, Part Two, within several months of Part One's first performance.

The play audiences who saw *Tamburlaine* were a cross-section of London dwellers, with the exception of Puritans and workers employed in the afternoons. Plays were staged in the afternoons because there was no artificial light for evening productions. Rehearsals could be conducted at night by candlelight, and in the morning.

Thomas Nashe, in his defence of drama against 'shallow-brained censors', claimed that it kept gentlemen from harmful pursuits.

For whereas the afternoon being the idlest time of the day, wherein men who are their own masters (as Gentlemen of the Court, the Inns of Court, and the number of Captains and Soldiers about London) do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasure and that pleasure they divide (how virtuously it skills not) either into gaming, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a play, is it not better (since of four extremes all the world cannot keep them but they will choose one) they should betake them to the least, which is plays?

Often women accompanied these gentlemen, a fact that Nashe does not mention.

The poor were also represented. Crosse, the author of *Vertue's Common-wealth*, wrote in 1603: 'pinched, needy creatures, that live of almes, with scarce clothes for their backs or food for their bellies, make hard shift that they will see a play . . .'

The poet Sir John Davies wrote of one stage-struck fellow :

. . . First, he doth rise at ten; and at eleven  
 He goes to Gylys, where he doth eate till one;  
 Then sees a Play till sixe, and sups at seven;  
 And after supper, straight to bed is gone;  
 And there till ten next day he doth remaine,  
 And then he dines, and sees a Comedy  
 And then he suppes, and goes to bed againe.

Not all plays lasted till six. The Prologue of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* mentions 'the two hours' traffic of our stage', and plays usually started at two or two-thirty.



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Another section of the audience was the groundlings or 'penny-knaves' who occupied the standing room close to and around the stage. This was made up of soldiers and sailors on leave, artisans on holiday and groups of workers on public holidays. The groundlings had more full-blooded tastes than discriminatory onlookers, and Kit Marlowe probably despaired when they showed greater appreciation of a bloodthirsty murder than of beautiful poetry. Some playwrights, like Kyd and later Webster, did little to temper blood with poetry, while Marlowe and even Shakespeare did not omit violence. *The Massacre at Paris*, the most 'corrupt' of Marlowe's texts, has kept the murders and appears to have had the poetry cut. Such was crowd-pleasing editing.

The early theatres were open-roofed and while Elizabethan audiences seem to have been hardy, playwrights could blame bad weather for small houses. Webster complained in 1612 that *The White Devil* had small audiences because it was 'in so dull a time of winter and in so open and black a theatre'.

Kit Marlowe's plays were the best attended of his time. For example, in February 1592 at the Rose Theatre, Henslowe's list of takings shows *The Jew of Malta* as easily the most popular.

Feb. 19	Fryer Bacune	17s 3d
21	Mulomurco	29s
22	Orlando	16s 6d
23	Spanes comodye Donne Oracoe	13s 6d
24	Sir John Mandevell	12s 6d
25	Harey of Cornwell	32s
26	the Jewe of Malltuse	50s

*The Massacre at Paris* (known as *The Guise*), *The Jew of Malta*, both *Tamburlaines*, and *Harey the VI* (at least partially written by Marlowe) always drew large audiences, and though Henslowe's records do not go back to 1587, *Tamburlaine's* initial success can be judged by the quick staging of the sequel.

Although scenery was not used in the early theatres except for the judicious placing of balconies, curtains and properties, atten-

tion was paid to costumes. Edward Alleyn was fond of fine garments and the majesty of *Tamburlaine* was as much to his liking as to the audience's. Entries for productions of *Tamburlaine* in Henslowe's Diary in the early 1590s show expensive materials, and especially copper-lace, being purchased for him.

In 1587 plays were still staged in innyards as well as in the new theatres, and there were over fifty inns in London, the larger ones often having regular performances of plays. Belle Savage's Inn on Ludgate Hill, the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, and the Bell and the Crosskeys in Gracechurch Street, were examples. These stagings, like the theatre performances, usually began at two in the afternoon, finishing in time for spectators to get home before dark. Decorated signs outside inns, like plays, were meant to attract customers.

When an Elizabethan theatre was about to begin a performance a flag was raised on the roof, a trumpet was blown and a drum sounded. For lesser stagings in inn yards, as well as for theatre performances, bills were posted. Alehouses, eating places and Inns of Court were likely centres from which to attract audiences. A company on tour would parade through a country town like a circus. Kit Marlowe would have seen such parades in Cambridge and must have approved the better organization of the London theatres.

In 1587 Watson, Nashe, Peele, Greene and Kyd were already in London and Kit Marlowe had arrived in mid-year. Of the poets, Raleigh was a favourite at court, Sir Philip Sidney had died the year before, Spenser was still in Ireland and Donne (whose daughter was to be Ned Alleyn's second wife) was not yet known. (Alleyn's first wife was Henslowe's daughter.) Shakespeare was not yet in London, though his friend from Stratford, Richard Field, who had apprenticed himself in London to the Huguenot printer Thomas Vautrollier, married Vautrollier's widow and took over the press in 1587. Field was to publish Shakespeare's partner poem for Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, *Venus and Adonis* in 1593.

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The fame of the Kit Marlowe–Ned Alleyn partnership is borne out in the 1633 Quarto edition of *The Jew of Malta*, the earliest surviving text of this play. They are referred to in an Epistle and a Prologue, both added by Thomas Heywood. The Epistle (to Master Thomas Hammon, of Gray's Inn, etc.) begins:

This play, composed by so worthy an author as Master Marlowe, and the part of the Jew presented by so unimitable an actor as Master Alleyn.

And the Prologue to the Stage (at The Cockpit):

We know not how our play may pass this stage,  
But by the best of poets in that age  
The Malta-Jew had being and was made;  
And he then by the best of actors play'd:  
In Hero and Leander one did gain  
A lasting memory; In Tamburlaine,  
This Jew, with others many, th'other wan  
The attribute of peerless, being a man  
Whom we may rank with (doing no one wrong)  
Proteus for shapes, and Roscius for a tongue . . .

Roscius was a famous Roman actor.

Thomas Nashe was even more complimentary to Alleyn in 1592 when he wrote in *Pierce Penilesse*: 'Not Roscius, not Esope, those tragedians admyred before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous Ned Allen . . .'

To what extent Kit Marlowe changed the text of *Tamburlaine* after he arrived in London is not clear. But as extra lines, and even extra actions, had been interpolated by others into pre-1590 performances of the *Tamburlaines*, the publisher Richard Jones, in dedicating the printed text in 1590, outlined what must have been heartfelt by Kit Marlowe.

I have purposely omitted and left out some fond and frivolous gestures, digressing and, in my poor opinion, far unmeet for the matter,

which I thought might seem more tedious unto the wise than any way else to be regarded, though haply they have been of some vain, conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what times they were showed upon the stage in their graced deformities. Nevertheless, now to be mixtured in print with such matter of worth, it would prove a great disgrace to so honourable and stately a history.

The title page of Richard Jones's 1590 first edition made clear that the *Tamburlaines* had been performed in inn yards, as it read 'two tragical discourses, as they were sundry times showed upon stages in the City of London'.

It is likely that Tom Watson took Kit to some performances when he arrived in London, where he observed the need for martial speeches and many murders to excite the crowd. Though he may already have visited London from Cambridge, he would not have viewed the audiences then with professional eyes. Residence in London near the theatres, and the company of a person like Tom Watson, would give him confidence to aim for success, as King's School had given him the confidence to gain a scholarship to Cambridge University.

*Tamburlaine's* opening speech begins:

Mycetes: Brother Cosroe, I find myself agriev'd;  
Yet insufficient to express the same,  
For it requires a great and thundering speech.

There are many 'great and thundering' speeches in *Tamburlaine*. To have caught the mood of pre-Armada London so speedily shows quick initiation into the theatre as well as quick-wittedness and good luck.

There is no record of bitterness or rivalry on Tom Watson's part after his young friend's success. As in the sword fight, when he was to rescue Kit, he was generous. Other playwrights like Greene, and Kit's erstwhile friend Nashe, were not so kind. Marlowe had written in the Prologue to *Tamburlaine*:

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother wits

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And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war . . .

and Nashe wrote in his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589):

Idiot art-masters that intrude themselves to our ears as the alcumists of eloquence, who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse.

Nashe later claimed he never abused Marlowe, and that is true of his activities after Kit's death. He published their jointly written play from their Cambridge days, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, prefacing it with a Latin elegy to Kit's memory; and in his Preface to *Christs Tears over Jerusalem* (1594) he referred to 'poor deceased Marlowe'. He also, in *Lenten Stuffe* (1599), wrote a parody of Marlowe's unfinished poem *Hero and Leander*.

Greene was vitriolic, referring in *Perimedes the Black-Smith* (1588) to '...daring God out of heauen with that Atheist Tamburlan . . . such mad and scoffing poets, that have propheticall spirits, as bred of Merlins race . . .'

'Daring God out of heaven with that atheist Tamburlaine' is taken out of context, as is Machiavelli's speech in the opening of *The Jew of Malta*, to 'prove' Marlowe's lack of belief. The actual scene, in *Tamburlaine*, Part Two (Act v), depicts Tamburlaine trying to defy death as he had defied everything else, and *not succeeding*. He initially says:

Now, Mahomet, if thou have any power,  
Come down thyself, and work a miracle . . .

After nothing happens, he adds:

Well, soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell;  
He cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine.  
Seek out another godhead to adore:  
The God that sits in heaven, if any god,  
For he is God alone, and none but he.

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. . . Whatsoe'er it be,  
Sickness or death can never conquer me.

*But*, soon after, he admits:

See, where my slave, the ugly monster Death,  
Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,  
Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,  
Who flies away at every glance I give,  
And, when I look away, comes stealing on.

Tamburlaine loses his last battle, and dies. Mahomet, who was 'dared out of heaven' (not God), is avenged. Right ultimately wins.

Marlowe has suffered much from misquotation and misrepresentation.

Greene added, in *Farewell to Folly*, that Marlowe, the 'Cobblers eldest son', was a 'prophetically full mouth' and that a pedlar was 'fain to bargain for the life of Tamburlaine to wrap up his sweet powders in those unsavory papers'. Greene was an unhappy soul, and came to a sad end in poverty.

In the summer of 1587 no such clouds were on the horizon. *Tamburlaine*, Part One, had been staged by the Admiral's Men with such success that Kit had prepared a sequel, and the notes he had brought from Cambridge were put to good use. In Part Two Tamburlaine continued his conquests, though both Zenocrate and Tamburlaine were dead by the end of the play. (Had Kit exhausted the material, or did the triumph of right demand these deaths?)

As 1587 was the year before the Spanish Armada, martial verse was at the height of its appeal – a zenith which continued in the wake of England's victory. This patriotism was mainly responsible for the success of rousing plays, and as *Tamburlaine* was the leader of the fashion, it was to be copied by aspiring playwrights.

George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* was one example. Another was *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, by Robert Greene, who later referred to *Tamburlaine* as 'unsavory papers'. George Peele was



to speak kindly of Marlowe (and Watson) in 1593 in his poem 'The Honour of the Garter', dedicated to his patron the Earl of Northumberland, who had been made a Knight of the Garter.

Watson, worthy many Epitaphes  
 For his sweet Poesie, for Amintas teares  
 And joyes so well set downe. And after thee  
 Why hie thee not, unhappy in thine end,  
 Marley, the Muses darling, for thy verse,  
 Fitte to write passions for the soules below.

In *Tamburlaine*, Part One, there is a cruel scene where the conquered Emperor of the Turks, Bajazeth, is carried on stage in a cage and then brought out to be Tamburlaine's footstool. Later Bajazeth and his wife Zabina kill themselves on the side of the cage. In a ruthless age this was great theatre. Zenocrate was allowed to feel pity and remorse, but eventually married an unrepentant Tamburlaine at the end of Part One.

Another exciting ingredient was the new geography. News of voyages to distant lands and discoveries of countries previously unknown had permeated to London, Cambridge and Canterbury. That Kit Marlowe was inspired by the elastic horizons of the known world is clear from *Tamburlaine*. Of scholarly bent, he related them to Ortelius's atlas, even reproducing the atlas's mistakes.

In *Tamburlaine*, Part Two, Kit Marlowe wrote a line which was quoted and misquoted more than any other of the period. It was 'Holla, ye pamper'd jades of Asia', which Tamburlaine shouted as he entered with his chariot drawn by kings instead of horses. Even Shakespeare used it:

Pistol: . . . Shall pack-horses  
 And hollow pampered jades of Asia,  
 Which cannot go but thirty miles a day,  
 Compare with Caesars and with Canibals?  
 (Henry IV, Part Two)

and Beaumont and Fletcher:

... Wee-hee,  
My pampered jade of Asia.

Ben Jonson was to refer to 'Tamberlanes and Tamer-Chams' some years later, and it is further evidence of *Tamburlaine's* impact that its quotations and misquotations echoed for so long.

When the *Tamburlaines* were printed in 1590 some additions were included which could not have been in the original performances. These were 'cross-references' with Spenser's long poem *The Faerie Queen* and information from *The Practice of Fortification* by Paul Ive, printed in 1589. More will be said about Spenser, whom Walter Raleigh brought from Ireland. Paul Ive was a Kentishman who had also attended Corpus Christi. He was known to both the Walsingham and Raleigh circles, and had been employed by Sir Richard Grenville to construct coastal defences in Cornwall during Raleigh's Lord Lieutenancy. Though Kit may have read the book in manuscript (as he could also have done with *The Faerie Queen*) it could not have been available in 1587. When he was preparing the plays for printing in 1590 he took this opportunity of bringing them up to date.

In 1587, having had two great successes in a matter of months, Kit Marlowe was like Tamburlaine:

Over my zenith hang a blazing star  
That may endure till heaven be dissolv'd . . .

But tragedy was to strike in a performance by the Admiral's Men of *Tamburlaine*, Part Two, which was to strengthen the opposition of Puritans to the theatre and temporarily halt all performances.

Philip Gawdy, in a letter of November 1587, described what happened:

The Lord Admiral's Men and players having a device in their play to tie one of their fellows to a post and so shoot him to death, having borrowed their calivers, one of the player's hands swerved his piece

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being charged with bullet, missed the fellow he aimed at and killed a child and a woman great with child forthwith, and hurt another man in the head very sore.

The scene in Act v of *Tamburlaine*, Part Two, has the Governor of Babylon tied on to the wall.

Amyras: See, now, my lord, how brave the captain hangs!

Tamburlaine: 'Tis brave indeed, my boy; well done!

Shoot first, my lord, and then the rest shall follow.

Theridamas: Then have at him, to begin withal.

(Theridamas shoots at the Governor)

After that the accident occurred; whether Theridamas or one of the 'rest' that followed had the loaded gun is not known, and, if in a less warlike time such a tragedy could have happened at all bears reflection. The same atmosphere that helped the play's success also contributed to the tragedy in its staging.

In Part Two, *Tamburlaine* said:

There is a God, full of revenging wrath,  
From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,  
*Whose scourge I am*, and him I will obey.

In understanding the killings and in correcting Greene's misinterpretation of 'daring God out of heaven', two aspects need to be considered: one is Marlowe's irony, which is also overlooked in *The Jew of Malta*, and the other is the serious idea of the pagan tyrant as 'the scourge of God'.

The 'scourge of God' theory has cropped up at various times; great wars have been God's scourge, and plague, which was all too common in Marlowe's period. A modern variant is the suggestion that communism is God's punishment to the Orthodox Church for its lack of involvement.

For Marlowe, who later wrote about the Faust theme of selling a soul and ultimate retribution, the conqueror as God's scourge to the hypocritical was another broad subject. Because he

presented it ironically – perhaps a mistake of youth – the point has often been missed.

To Kit Marlowe, who had seen the seminary at Rheims, a religious organization for education, used for fomenting war, the scourge of God theme was very relevant. Similarly he had known the Church to claim that the earth was flat, misquoting verses from the Old Testament and taking passages out of context to prove it. Exploration had now proved that the earth was round.

There is heavy irony in the betrayal of their Christian oaths by Baldwin and Frederick in *Tamburlaine*, Part Two, Act II. Their God did not give them victory because they had broken their oaths sworn in Christ's name. They were defeated by Orcanes, who had had strong words to say about perfidious Christians.

Can there be such deceit in Christians,  
 Or treason in the fleshy heart of man,  
 Whose shape is figure of the highest God?  
 Then, if there be a Christ, as Christians say,  
 But in their deeds deny him for their Christ . . .

On his deathbed Tamburlaine asked for a map, and traced where he had marched with his conquering armies. He wished to see

. . . how much  
 Is left for me to conquer of all the world,  
 That these, my boys, may finish all my wants . . .

. . . what a world of ground  
 Lies westward from the midst of Cancer's line  
 Unto the rising of this earthly globe,  
 Whereas the sun, declining from our sight,  
 Begins the day with our Antipodes!  
 And shall I die, and this unconquered!

In 1580, just seven years before these first performances of *Tamburlaine*, Francis Drake had returned from circumnavigating

the world. He had established, even for the most reactionary, that the earth was a 'globe' and that the sun was lightening the southern hemisphere when the northern hemisphere was dark. Sir Francis Walsingham had, with the Queen, the Earl of Leicester, Sir Christopher Hatton and others, formed a syndicate to back Drake's voyage in 1577. Kit had no doubt heard from Thomas Walsingham exciting tales of Drake's travels, and was later to hear similar stories from Walter Raleigh. Narratives from Drake's sailors were still circulating and Kit's plays, mentioning distant countries, generated further excitement.

Although 1587 was the year in which the English were expecting the Armada, it was also the time when Walter Raleigh organized an expedition to found a colony in Virginia. Under the leadership of an artist, John White, whom Raleigh appointed governor, about one hundred and fifty people set out from Plymouth on 8 May. Raleigh, whom some have suggested was the model for Tamburlaine (though Marlowe met him too late for this to be the case), was typical of one kind of aspiring Renaissance man, anxious to expand knowledge in all directions. Watercolour paintings of Indians, found in Thomas Walsingham's home at the time of its demolition in the eighteenth century, may have been done by John White and have been relics of this Virginia expedition.

Kit Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, staged seven years after Drake's circumnavigation of the world and the year before the Spanish Armada attacked England, caught the warlike feeling of the times and the excitement of the new learning and geographical discoveries, and was a spectacular success.