
"Islam in Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great"

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ملخص

الإسلامي في مسرحية (تيمورلنك) لمارلو

يسعى هذا البحث إلى تقديم دراسة دينية لمسرحية (تيمورلنك). ولهذه الدراسة مسوّغاتها التي تبدو من خلال العقوبات الإلهية التي يلقيها الأشخاص المذنبون نتيجة لأعمالهم الشريرة، فعندما يواجه هؤلاء الأشخاص الظروف القاسية أو العقاب يتوسلون إلى قوى إلهية مختلفة: يتوسل الفرس إلى «جوف» ويتوسل الأتراك المسلمون إلى النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم، ويتوسل المسيحيون إلى المسيح عليه السلام. أما تيمورلنك الذي يقدم نفسه على أنه سوط الله وغضبه فإنه يتوسل إلى إله عام. وهذا هو الإله الذي عاقب الأتراك والمسيحيين. وعاقب هذا الإله تيمورلنك الذي أحرق القرآن الكريم. إن مرض تيمورلنك المفاجيء إثر عمله المستهتر هو رد الفعل الفوري والقوي من جانب الإله العام. ويدل موته على دحض المسرحية لتأكيد تيمورلنك أن الناس يؤمنون دون جدوى بتعاليم النبي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم، وأن النبي لم يقم بأي إجراء انتقامي لمقتل الأتراك المسلمين على يد تيمورلنك. إن هذا الدحض القوي يبرز بوضوح دفاع المسرحية عن صحة الدين الإسلامي.

"Islam in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*"

Abstract

This paper seeks to present a providential approach to *Tamburlaine*. This approach is justified in terms of the divine punishment which guilty figures suffer as a result of their misdeeds. When facing misfortune or penalty, characters supplicate to different divine powers: the Persian supplicate to Jove, the Moslem Turks supplicate to the Prophet Muhammad, and the Christians appeal to Christ. But *Tamburlaine*, who introduces himself as the Scourge of God, always supplicates to a generalised God. Through its invocation of Jove, the play combines these divine forces into a generalised God. It is this generalised God Who punished *Tamburlaine* for burning the holy Koran and other Islamic texts. *Tamburlaine's* sudden sickness in the wake of his sacrilegious action will be seen as showing God's refutation of *Tamburlaine's* assertion that 'In vain... men worship Mahomet'. This refutation emphasizes the play's defence of Islam, and shows the play to be a tragedy of divine justice.

Islam in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*

Tamburlaine the Great was entered to Richard Jones in the Stationers' Register on 14 August 1550 as "The twooe commicall discourses of TOMBERLEIN the Cithian shep-parde".⁽¹⁾ The title page of this first edition (1550) states that these "two Tragical Discourses... were sundrie times shewed upon Stages in the Citie of London".⁽²⁾ This suggests an earlier date for the composition of the two-part play, namely 1547-1548.⁽³⁾ This date seems to glean strength from Robert Greene's allusion to the play in his epistle to *Perimedes the Blacksmith*, which was entered in the Stationers' Register on 29 March 1548.⁽⁴⁾

Greene's allusion to Marlowe 'daring God out of heaven with that Atheist Tamburlan', which forms the first accusation of atheism against Marlowe, led critics to see the play as a self-dramatized confession of his atheism.⁽⁵⁾ This trend of belief that *Tamburlaine* is an embodiment of the received image of Marlowe's life and personality has persisted within the province of Marlovian scholarship.

In *Christopher Marlowe*, Michel Poirier sees *Tamburlaine* as 'the dramatic expression of a lyrical theme':

Although [*Tamburlaine*] bears the name of an historical personage, he issues forth not from the real outside world but from Marlowe's mind. He is the first and one of the most perfect symbols of the quest of the infinite that torments the poet's soul, the embodiment of that boundless ambition that recurs like a **leitmotif** in his dramas.⁽⁶⁾

And, it is in terms of the received image of Marlowe that Greenblatt asserts that the former approaches his culture as "rebel and blasphemer":

Marlowe seems to have regarded the drama's participation in such a system-an admonitory fiction upholding a moral order-with a blend of obsessive fascination and contemptuous loathing. Tamburlaine repeatedly teases its audience with the form of the cautionary tale, only to violate the convention.⁽⁷⁾

But before taking issue with Greenblatt's other assertion that Marlowe "writes plays which spurn and subvert his culture's metaphysical and ethical certainties", I would like to emphasize that these readings do not properly address the text itself because they are biographical in that they are generally based upon the received image of Marlowe's personality.⁽⁸⁾ And it is in view of this biographical tendency that we would best appreciate the attempt to draw the analogue between Marlowe and his Tamburlaine.⁽⁹⁾

Such criticism consists for the most part in saying that Marlowe was an atheist or a man whose beliefs ran strongly counter to accepted opinion.⁽¹⁰⁾ But this would ignore the purposes of criticism and reading. Roland Barthes powerfully argues that 'to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the reading'.⁽¹¹⁾ And it is in terms of this call for ridding reading and criticism of any assumptions based upon the author's personality that Barthes concludes that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author'.⁽¹²⁾ This study adopts Barthes' critical premise because it seeks to liberate *Tamburlaine* from the assumptions that this play is a dramatization of Marlowe's

beliefs which are said to have run counter to orthodox ideas.

My thesis in this paper is to show that *Tamburlaine* emerges as a tragedy of divine justice, a morality play.⁽¹³⁾ But it is not a simplistic morality play: it is a sophisticated one. This reading will be different from that of R. Battenhouse who looks at the play as a dramatization of 'the concept of the Scourge of God [which] assures tyrants that God is not helpless before their power but that he will, when he has used them destroy them utterly.'⁽¹⁴⁾ The idea of the play as a tragedy of divine justice could be justified in that the play sets up the notion of a world in which a divinity executes vengeance on the guilty and thus administers justice. And it is in the light of the play's moralistic thrust that we would best appreciate its running inveighing against ambitious pride. The arrogant Bajazeth, whose feet were Kissed by the Kings of Africa, Moralizes when he turns into Tamburlaine's footstool':

Ambitious pride shall make thee fall as low,

For treading on the back of Bajazeth...⁽¹⁵⁾

Alongside this warning there runs the inveighing against 'the thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown'.⁽¹⁶⁾ Moralizing on the fickleness of fortune and the transience of earthly pomp, Zenocrate turns the case of the dead Bajazeth and his wife into a moral lesson:

Those that are proud of fickle empery

And place their chiefest good in earthly pomp,

Behold the Turk and his great empress!⁽¹⁷⁾

Evidently, these moralistic observations suggest the idea of a just deity who appears to supervise the lives of men. But in

accordance with his sophisticated execution of this morality play, Marlowe problematizes this deity by inviting us to debate about the nature of the various religious powers invoked by the *dramatis personae*. These religious forces fall into three categories: pagan, christian and Moslem. Prominent among the major pagan forces are Jove (the supreme god of the Romans) Fortune, (or Fortuna, the blind and fickle goddess of chance the unpredictably **determines** events and issues favourably and unfavourably), the stars (whose position at one's birth was believed to influence one's character and life) and Fates (Destinies, three goddesses determining the course of human life).⁽¹⁸⁾

These pagan forces are best to be seen within the context of the Renaissance period in which the play was written and performed. The concept of Fortune, for instance, witnessed an enfeeblement in the Medieval and the Renaissance periods. In his analytic exploration of the medieval heritage of Elizabethan tragedy, W.Farnham has shown that 'the power of fortune', according to Boccaccio 'is really the power of God when considered rightly, since all things proceed from God'.

Like Boccaccio, Boethius (a Roman philosopher) stresses the omnipotence of God. In his *Consolation of philosophy*, Boethius places the stars and all other aspects of Fate under God as ministers of His high purposes.⁽²⁰⁾ He also denies the independent existence of Fortune of Chance:

If any shall define chance to be an event produced by a confused motion, and without connection of causes, I affirm that there is no such thing, and that chance is an empty voice that hath beneath it no real signification. for what place van confusion hve, since God disposeth all

things in due order.⁽²¹⁾

Similarly, LA Primaudaye holds that Fortune is the 'ordinance of God'.⁽²²⁾ Philip Mornay also states that we must either deny Fortune or accept it as meaning God under another name.⁽²³⁾

The view of these pagan forces as ministers of God's high purposes seems to tally well with the moral and providential framework within which the play is subtly set, and it is in view of this providential framework that we would best appreciate the presentation of 'Jove' as a general metaphor to refer to a transcendent God Who appeals to the Persians, the Moslem Turks, the Christians, Tamburlaine and others. It is also in terms of this providential framework that we would best appreciate the presentation of Tamburlaine as the Scourge of God. The view of God's use of scourges to further His high purposes occurs in the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies:

O Assyrian the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people, of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey and to tread them down like the mire of the street.⁽²⁴⁾

In his commentary on these passages, John Calvin suggests the doctrine that all the miseries which the Jewish people suffered at the hands of the Assyrian emperor are 'a temporary scourge inflicted by God'.⁽²⁵⁾

The idea of the 'Scourge of God' emphasizes the notion of *Tamburlaine* as a tragedy of divine justice because the play

presents its title character as visiting divine retribution on guilty figures. It is in the light of the idea of divine retribution that the revenging aspect of God is emphasized right away in the play. Zenocrate tells Tamburlaine:

The gods, defenders of the innocent,
Will never prosper your intended drifts,
That thus oppress poor friendless passengers.⁽²⁶⁾

Besides stressing the providential context within which Marlowe wishes his play to move, this sentiment brings in the notion of guilt as a thematic concern which reinforces the plays' integrity and unity.⁽²⁷⁾ In exploring this thematic point, I have chosen to discuss the characters individually so as to enter into their idiosyncratic experiences. This method has proved to be rewarding because it has enabled me to look at Marlowe's skilful presentation of his characters which depends on hints thrown here and there. It is in view of these hints that we can properly look at the characters' prayers for victory and their awareness of guilt, and explore the motives which propel their stage careers.

The Persian Mycetes emerges as a weak emperor whose weakness is presented as the work of the stars. On Cosroe's reference to the influence of the position of the stars at Mycetes' birth, Tatiana A. Wolff comments:

Cynthia (the moon) had contributed melancholy and Saturn mental obtuseness and restlessness, the conjunction of the two Jove, the Sun, and Mercury, such as probity and quickness of mind, had been denied.⁽²⁸⁾

The reference to the star's influence on Mycetes' 'fickle brain'

suggests the notion of a wrathful God Who would devastate the Persian empire which, 'in former age' invaded' Afric [a] and the bounds of Europe'.⁽²⁹⁾ And because of Mycetes' weakness (which is presented as the work of God), Persia

swarms with vile outrageous men,

That live by rapine and by lawless spoil.⁽³⁰⁾

we also learn that 'the warlike soldiers and the gentlemen,.../ Wanthing both pay and martial discipline,/Begin in troops to threaten civil war,/And openly exclaim against the King.'⁽³¹⁾ It is also because of the misgovernment of Mycetes that the Persian noblemen crown Cosroe emperor, thus brushing aside their duty and allegiance'⁽³²⁾ During this time both sides assert that Fortune smiles on them. cosroe is strongly encouraged by Menaphon to regard the plot to crown the former as an opportunity given by Fortune to cure 'this maimed Empery'.⁽³³⁾ Similarly, Meander, on Mycetes' side, encourages his soldiers to confront Cosroe and Tamburlaine as follows:

Fortunr herself doth sit upon our crest.⁽³⁴⁾

But, Fortune sists upon the crests of neither party. Mycetes is soon ironized, defeated and swept away without any dying speech.

Cosroe displays a sense of tait despair, a sense which appears in his prayer prior to battle.

And all the stars that meke

The loathsome circle of my dated life,

Direct my weapon to [Tamburlain's] barbarous heart.⁽³⁵⁾

Glossing the phrase 'the loathsome circle of my dated life',

T.A. Wolff writes:

This appears a curious volte-face from the challenging words

cosroe has just been uttering and hardly encouraging to his followers.⁽³⁶⁾

These lines, she goes on to argue, seem to be 'an aside' 'in which his inner despair and sense of personal doom are revealed'.⁽³⁷⁾ The notion of these lines as an aside could be seen in that they are placed immediately after Cosroe has given the order for the drum to be struck.⁽³⁸⁾ Also, the notion of an aside here tallies well with Cosroe's thinly disguised awareness of Tamburlaine's divine mission as a scourge. Before joining force with Tamburlaine, Cosroe asserts that the former, 'in the forehead of his fortune/Bears figures of renown and miracle'.⁽³⁹⁾ The term 'miracle' is suggestive of the divine help which Tamburlaine is imagined to receive from heaven. This notion finds vigour when Cosroe asserts that the former is 'a wondrous man' and that

Nature doth strive with Fortune and his [Tamburlaine's] stars

To make him famous in accomplished worth.⁽⁴⁰⁾

It is in view of his awareness of Tamburlaine's mission as a scourge that we would best appreciate the dying Cosroe's confession that 'an uncouth pain torments my grieved soul'.⁽⁴¹⁾ 'Uncouth' has been rightly glossed as 'novel' because Cosroe looks within his 'grieved soul' which seems to have produced in him a sense of tacit guilt in the wake of his loss of the 'crown' and the 'royal throne' which precipitated his rebellion against his brotherly emperor.⁽⁴²⁾ It is in terms of his tacit guilt that we

would properly appreciate his despair which culminates in his assertion that '[his] soul begins to take her flight to hell'.⁽⁴³⁾

Like Cosroe, the Turkish Bajazeth sinks into despair upon his capture at the hands of Tamburlaine. His cry 'O Mahomet! O sleepy Mahomet!' marks Bajazeth's growing despair which gains momentum when he turns to the powers of hell for help.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Bajazeth's despair stems from his disguised awareness of the divine character of Tamburlaine's victory over him. This awareness unfolds in Bajazeth's following confidential address to his wife:

Ah, fair Zabina, we may curse his power,
The heavens may frown, the earth for anger quake;
But such a star hath influence in his sword
As rules the skies and countermands the gods
More than Cimmerian Sty or Destiny.⁽⁴⁵⁾

And it is in the light of his despair of ever finding any divine deliverance that we would best appreciate his suicide.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Like Bajazeth, Agydas expresses an awareness of the divine character of Tamburlaine's mission. No sooner does Tamburlaine look warthfully on Agydas who has been backbiting him, than the latter suspects 'hideous revenge'.⁽⁴⁷⁾ He lifts his 'prayers to the heavens for aid'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ But he feels the futility of his prayers: his 'soul divens [s] [its] overthrow'.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Rather than 'stay [i.e. await] the torments [Tamburlaine] and heaven have sworn', Agydas committed suicide.⁽⁵⁰⁾ His conception of his 'threatened end' as the work of both Tamburlaine and heaven reveals Agydas' view of the former as a Scourge of God.⁽⁵¹⁾

Also, the Governor of Damascus conceives of the fate

threatening the Damascene people as the work of heaven. This idea appears in his following address to the supplicating Virgins:

Endure as we the malice of our stars,
The wrath of Tamburlaine and power of wars;
Or be the means the overweighing heavens,
Have Kept to qualify these hot extremis
And bring up pardon in your cheerful looks.⁽⁵²⁾

But 'heaven' and the 'holy partons of Egyptia' do not respond to the prayers of the Virgins of Damascus.⁽⁵³⁾ The girls fail to win Tamburlaine over and are soon slaughtered. The 'ruthless governor' is to blame because he 'refused the offer of their lives' when Tamburlaine pitched his white tents.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Like the aforesaid characters. the Soldan of Egypt tacitly admits that there is something divine about Tamburlaine. This idea appears in his description of Tamburlaine and his followers in a malignant sense:

The scum of men, the hate and scourge of Goe.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Expressing a vehement desire for retaliation, the Soldan makes 'a sacred vow to heaven' and confirms it with 'Ibis' holy name/That Tamburlaine shall rue the day' he captured Bajazeth and Zenocrate.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The Soldan's confirmation of his oath with Ibis ('a bird held sacred by the Egyptians') implies a prayer to heaven for help.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The notion of an implied prayer here gains vigour when the King of Arabia supplicates heaven to take sides with him and the Soldan against Tamburlaine.

Let Tamburlaine fro his offences feel

Such plagues as heaven and we can pour on him.⁽⁵⁸⁾

But, when the battle takes place, we realize that heaven did not side with them.

The wounded Arabia acknowledges the invincibility of Tamburlaine:

What cursed power guides the murdering hands
Of this infamous tyrant's soldiers,
That no escape may save their enemies,
Nor fortune keep themselves from victory?⁽⁵⁹⁾

The reference to Fortune (which means God under another name as we have already seen) plays down the reference to the 'cursed power' thought to help Tamburlaine and his soldiers. This idea is strongly emphasized in the Soldan's later assertion that Tamburlaine enjoys God's protection. The Soldan tells Tamburlaine:

Mighty hath God and Mahomet made the hand.⁽⁶⁰⁾

The characters' awareness of Tamburlaine's divine mission asserts the play's presentation of him as the Scourge of God. And, in order to look at the play's presentation of him as the Scourge of God let us explore his own conception of himself. Early in the play he expresses an ardent desire to open the eyes of the world to his claim that he is a man with a divine mission. In his address to Theridamas, the Persian army-general, Tamburlaine says:

Draw forth the sword...
Intending but to raze my charmed skin,
And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven
To ward the blow, and shield me safe from harm.⁽⁶¹⁾

It is his awareness that he enjoys divine protection that encourages Tamburlaine to launch his campaign against Bajazeth, a campaign which emphasizes the play's presentation of the former as a rescuer of the weak and punisher of the wicked:

I that am term'd the Scourge and Wrath of God...

Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge

Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves.⁽⁶²⁾

Tamburlaine performs his mission through God's blessing. This idea is subtly reinforced in the Turkish Basso's assertion that Tamburlain's 'men are valiant, but their number few'.⁽⁶³⁾

The presentation of Tamburlaine as a rescuer of the weak and a punisher of the wicked suggests the play's presentation of him as God's righteous agent.⁽⁶⁴⁾ It is in the light of this idea that we can best appreciate the play's incessant attempts at humanizing Tamburlaine who has been stigmatized as a base and barbarous thief by his opponents in the play.⁽⁶⁵⁾ The presentation of Tamburlaine in a favourable light could be seen in that he is not represented as a lame figure like the historical Timur.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Marlowe omits the fact that Tamburlaine was lame and says that he was 'straightly fashioned'.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Marlowe also **present** Tamburlaine as warrior of valour, chivalry and majesty akin to the Greek hero, Achilles.⁽⁶⁸⁾ And unlike the historical Timur who is said to have taken excessive delight in women's company, the Marlovian Tamburlaine devotedly addresses Zenocrate as his only paragon.⁽⁶⁹⁾

But, it is to be stressed that Tamburlaine's successive victories make him misunderstand his mission as a scourge. This misunderstanding features when he kills his cowardly son,

Calyphas. this murder prompts his opponents to accuse him of unwarranted cruelty. The captive King of Jerusalem tells Tamburlaine:

Thy victories are grown so violent,
That shortly heaven filled with the meteors
Of blood and fire thy tyrannies have made,
Will pour down blood and fire on the head...⁽⁷⁰⁾

This indicates Tamburlaine's departure from his mission because in slaying his son, he has not scourged 'the pride [which] Heaven abhors'.⁽⁷¹⁾ Tamburlaine's departure from his mission culminates in his defiance of Mahomet and in his order that his followers burn the Koran and other Islamic books:

Now, Mahometn if thou have any power
Come down thyself and work a miracle.⁽⁷²⁾

It is to be emphasized that the play subtly indicates the 'Mahomet work [s] a miracle' because Tamburlaine soon confesses: 'I feel myself distempered suddenly'.⁽⁷³⁾ Undoubtedly, Tamburlain's sudden illness asserts itself as a divine punishment.

As we have already seen, Tamburlain's defiance of Mahomet and his bonfire of the Islamic books prompted **some Marlowe's** contemporaries to view it as a confession of his atheism.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Harry Levin, who states that the 'critical scene with the Koran is one of Marlowe's most characteristic inventions, writes:

In so far as its target is Mohammedanism, it conforms to the doctrines of orthodox Christianity. In so far as it aims

at nearer targets, it anticipates Voltaire's discovery that, under pretence of attacking Islam, the rationalistic playwright could attack all organized religions.⁽⁷⁵⁾

On Tamburlaine's sudden distemper, Marguerite Alexander says:

Certainly, the distemper that finally Kills him follows with almost naive speed and logic on Tamburlain's burning of the slamic texts. However his military supremacy over his actual Islamic enemies remains undiminished-in Elizabethan political literature God's will is more apparent in battle than in distempers.⁽⁷⁶⁾

Similarly, Philip Edwards does not see Tamburlaine's death as an act of divine vengeance. '[Tamburlain's] death,' so argues Edwards, 'is the most ordinary thing that happens to him'.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Close inspection, however, reveals that these attitudes to Tamburlain's death are based upon the traditional image of Marlowe's life and personality as rebel and blasphemer. But as I have already suggested, Tamburlain's death asserts itself as an act of divine retribution because his sudden **distempers** subtly and powerfully-emerges as an immediate punishment for his pride which has culminated in his defiance of Mahoment.

The presentation of Tamburlain's death as an act of divine vengeance tallies well with the play's running inveighing against 'ambitious pride' It is this ambitious pride which has led him to misunderstand himself and his mission as a divine agent. And it is in view of his misunderstanding of his mission that we would properly appreciate the idea that he rages blasphemously against heaven's powers when facing Zenocrat's death and again when his own death approaches. Tamburlain's misunder-

satnding of himself finds expression in his complaint against his sudden sickness:

Shall sickness prove me now to be a man

That have been term'd the terro of the world.⁽⁷⁸⁾

Evidently, his victories have blinded him to his mortality which he slowly comes to acknowledge. As his sickness aggravates, he resignedly says:

... I perceive my martial strength is spent:

In vain I strive and rail against those powers

That meant' invest me in a higher throne

As much too high for this disdainful earth.⁽⁷⁹⁾

Tamburlain's acknowledgement of his mortality and his visualization of posthumous life with the heavenly Jove emerges as a breakthrough because they stem from a newly-established stoicism, a stoicism which features in his later advice to his son:

Nor bar thy mind that magnanimity

That nobly must admit necessity.⁽⁸⁰⁾

Tamburlain's gradual achnowledgement of his mortality and the serenity with which he faces death militate against any assumptions that he does not experience any self-awareness or solace.⁽⁸¹⁾

Tamburlain's conception of his death as a passage into eternal life with Jove which implies a tacit repentance on his part stresses the point that the play is a work of great complexity. It is this complexity that enables us to appreciate the play's use of the word 'Jove' as a mask or a unifying metaphor which refers to a

transcendent God. In establishing this point, let us consider the Deities available in the play. On the surface, the play presents three Deities: the God of the Moslems, the God of the Christians and finally Tamburlain's God of the Scourges. Read in depth, the play appears to centre on a transcendent Deity that figures in the appeals and sentiments of most of the characters therein. Orcanes' image of an unsleeping God, for instance, seems to lend itself as a basis for this providential thesis. Orcanes, disappointed at hearing of Sigismund's breach of the oath of peace, appeals to a more generalized God. He says:

Open, thou shining veil of Cynthia,
And make a passage from the imperial heaven
That he that sits on high and never sleeps,
Nor in one place is circumscribable,
But everywhere fills every continent
With strange indusion of his sacred vigour,
May, in his endless power and purity,
Behold and avenge this traitor's perjury.⁽⁸²⁾

The God depicted here is a generalized version of the Maker of this Universe (he.. sits on high and never sleeps.. fills... everywhere and [possesses] endless power and purity'.) These main traits of Orcanes' view of God correspond to the traits found in Sigismund's version of the Christian God. The dying Sigismund confesses:

God hath thundered vengeance from on high,
For my accursed and hateful perjury.

O just and dreadful punisher of sin.⁽⁸³⁾

Similarly, Tamburlain's God of the Scourges is revengeful and just:

There is a God, full of revenging wrath,
From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,
Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey.⁽⁸⁴⁾

The combination of these divinities into a general God is reinforced by the wide deployment of the word 'Jove' in the play. At times, 'Jove' means no more than the astrological planet, and sometimes it refers to the mythological god of war. But most often it is used as a general metaphor to refer to a transcendent God. Cosroe, for instance, swears by Jove to gratify his supporters.⁽⁸⁵⁾

Bajazeth appeals to the 'ever-living Jove'.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Callapine, Bajazeth's son, regards his escape as a providentially facilitated act done through the mercy of Jove.⁽⁸⁷⁾

The Jove invoked by these characters is God Himself-the Ruler of the Universe. Moreover, the Jove that Tamburlaine decides to defy is merely the 'black Jove' that presides over hell, it is not the 'mighty Jove' to whose service Tamburlaine is faithfully committed.⁽⁸⁸⁾

It is in terms of the intermingling of the Deities of a variety of faiths that we can best appreciate the presence of the classical Elysium, Hell, the Christian Heaven and the Moslem Paradise in the play. Tamburlaine says:

Millions of souls sit on the banks of styx,

Waiting the back return of Charon's boat;
Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men
That I have sent from sundry foughten fields.⁽⁸⁹⁾

Like Zenocrate's invocation of pagan and Moslem powers in one breath ('Ah, mighty JOve and holy Mahomet'), Tamburlain's use of Elysium and the Christian Heaven in the same speech indicates the play's attempt to make Elysium coexist with the Christian Heaven.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Also, in his lamentation over the dying Zenocrate, Tamburlaine visualizes her going to Heaven, a vision of predominantly Biblical Heaven, with a few pagan touches (i.e., the references to Apollo and Cynthia)⁽⁹¹⁾. Similarly, the Hell in which Orcanes imagines the souls of his enemies to be punished after death is made up of Moslem, Christian and pagan elements.⁽⁹²⁾

The intermingling of the Deities of a variety of faiths and the coexistence of Elysium, Hell, Paradise and Heaven indicate the dramatist's process of presenting a generalized formula of a Deity of rewards (that is, through the references to Heaven) and punishments (that is, through the references to Hell). It is this generalized God Who punished Tamburlaine for defying Mahomet and burning the Holy Koran and other sacred books. Mahomet's vindication of his prestige refutes Tamburlain's assertion:

In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet:
My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell
Slew all his priests, his Kinsmen and his friends,
and yet live untouched by Mahomet.⁽⁹³⁾

The presentation of Mahomet's vindication of His prestige shows the play's presentation of Islam alongside Christianity, This also indicts the play's defence of the validity of Islam. Marlowe's defence of Islam and his presentation of it alongside Christianity-powerfully and subtly- militate against any assumptions that the play is a dramatization of his atheism or his criticism of all organized religions.

NOTES

- 1 - Christopher Marlowe, **Complete Plays and Poems**, edited by E.D. Pendry and J.C. Maxwell, Dent, London, 1976, reprinted in 1983, p. 3.
- 2 - C. Marlowe, **Tamburlaine the Great**, edited by T.A. Wolff, The Chaucer Press, Bungay, London, 1964, p. 45.
- 3 - M. Alexander, **An Introduction to Shakespeare and his Contemporaries**, The Chaucer Press, Bungay, Suffolk, 1979, pp. 273, 279.
- 4 - C. Marlowe, **Complete Plays and Poems**, edited by E.D. Pendry and J.C. Maxwell, p.3.
- 5 - R. Greene, Perimedes the Blacksmith, Preface. Quoted in Pendry, p. 3. See Limited, London, 1961, pp. 71-1.
- 6 - M. Poirier, **Christopher Marlowe**, Chatto and Windus, London, 1951, p. 100.
- 7 - S. Greenblatt, 'The Improvisation of Power' in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespear*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1980 reprinted in **Shakespearean Tragedy**, edited by John Drakakis, Longman, London and New York, 1992, p. 182. See also his 'Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play' in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning...*, reprinted in **New Historicism & Renaissance Dramam** edited and introduced by R. Wilson and R. Dutton, Longman, London and Nyew YOrk, 1992, p. 65.

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- 8 - Greenblatt, 'Marlowe and the Will To Absolute Play', p. 82.
- 9 - Poirier, p. 100. See also Wolff, pp. 32-3.
- 10 - See, for instance, H. Levin, **Christopher Marlowe**, pp. 45-6, 70-1, Alexander, p. 284, Pendry, p. xviii, and Greenblatt whom I have just referred to
- 11 - R. Barthes, 'The death of the author' (1968) reprinted in **Modern Criticism and Theory, A Reader**, edited by D. Lodge, Longman, London and New York, 1988, pp. 166-72, p. 171.
- 12 - Barthes, p. 172.
- 13 - For another view see I. Ribner who asserts that the play displays 'a strong and direct denial of the role of providence in the affairs of man'. 'The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamburlaine, in *Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism*, edited by R.J. Kaufmann, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961, p. 86. See also Wolff's edition of the play, p[p. 31-2.
- 14 - R.W. Battenhouse, *Marlowe's Tamburlaine*, Nashville, 1941, p. 113.
- 15 - Tamburlaine in **Complete Plays and Poems**, edited by Pendry, Part One, IV, ii, 76-7. All further citations are from this edition.
- 16 - Part One, II. vii. 12.
- 17 - Part One, V. i. 352-4.
- 18 - See Wolff's notes on I.i 13-5 in her edition of the play, pp.

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- 221-2. See also K. Thomas, **Rligion and the Decline of Magic**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 455-8. See also, Pendry pp. 524-5.
- 19 - W. Farnham the Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy, Berkeley, 1936, p.78.
- 20 - Boethius, Consloation of Philosophy, edited and translated by H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand, Leob Classical Library, London, 1926. BK. IV. pp. 340ff. Quoted in Farnham, pp. 112-3.
- 21 - Boethius, BK. V.pp. 366 f.
- 22 - LA Primaudaye, the French Academie, chap. 23. Quoted in Battenhouse, p. 89.
- 23 - P. Mornay, **The Trewnesse of the Christian Religion**, pp. 217-8.
- 24 - Isaiah X. 5-6. In John Calvin, commentaries on the Book the Prophet Isaiah, translated from the original Latin by the Rev. William Pringle, Michigan, 1947, vols. 5, vol. 1, pp. 330-1.
- 25 - Calvin, p. 338.
- 26 - Part One, I.ii. 68-70.
- 27 - See, for example, Wolff's edition of the play where she argues that the structure of the play is episodic, pp. 22-6.
- 28 - Wolff, I.i. 13-4 and below, pp. 221-6.
- 29 - Part one, I.i. 15,9 - 10.

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- 30 - Part One, II.ii. 22-3.
- 31 - Part One, I.i. 140-9.
- 32 - Part One, I.i. 101.
- 33 - Part One, I.ii. 126.
- 34 - Part One, II.ii. 73.
- 35 - Part One, II. vi. 36 - 8.
- 36 - Wolff's edition, II.vi. 37 and below, p. 232.
- 37 - Wolff, p 232.
- 38 - Wolff, p. 232.
- 39 - Part One, II.i. 3-4.
- 40 - Part One, II.i. 32-4.
- 41 - Part One, II.vii. 7.
- 42 - Part One, II.vii, 7 and below.
- 43 - Part One, II.vii. 44.
- 44 - Part One, III.iii. 269.
- 45 - Part One, V.i. 229-33.
- 46 - Part One, V.i. 472.
- 47 - Part One, III.ii. 68.
- 48 - Part One, III.ii. 83.
- 49 - Part One, III.ii. 87.

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- 50 - Part One, III.ii. 99.
- 51 - Part One, III.ii. 94.
- 52 - Part One, V.i. 43-7.
- 53 - Part One, V.i. 48, 49.
- 54 - Part One, V.i. 92, 126.
- 55 - Part One, IV. iii. 9.
- 56 - Part One,, IV.iii. 35-42.
- 57 - Wolff, IV. iii. 37 and below, p. 241.
- 58 - Part One,, IV.iii. 44-5.
- 59 - Part One,, V.i. 403-6.
- 60 - Part One,, V.i. 480.
- 61 - Part One, I.ii. 178-81.
- 62 - Part One, V.i. 44-7.
- 63 - Part One, III.ii. 11.
- 64 - In his edition of the play, J.S. Cunningham has suggested that the title character seems to have conceived of himself as God's righteous agent. The editor cites University Press, 1981, p. 74.
- 65 - See, for instance, Mycetes' description of Tamburlaine as a Thief, Part One, L.i. 35-40.
- 66 - Wolff, pp. 20-1.
- 67 - Part One, II.i. 7-18.

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- 68 - Part One, II.i. 7-30.
- 69 - H. Hookham, **Tamburlaine the Conqueror**, London, 1962, p.
74. See also Part One, III.iii. 119.
- 70 - Part Two, Iv.i. 140-3.
- 71 - Part Two, IV.i. 149.
- 72 - Part Two, V.i. 185-6.
- 73 - Part Two, V.i. 216.
- 74 - Levin, pp. 70-1.
- 75 - Levin, pp. 54, 71.
- 76 - Alexanderm p. 284.
- 77 - P.Edwards, "Thrusting Elysium into Hell': the Originality
of The spanish Tragedy", in **Elizabethan Theatre
Conference**, Waterloo, Candan, 1985, p. 16.
- 78 - Part Two, V.iii. 44-5.
- 79 - Part Two, V.iii. 119-22.
- 80 - Part Two, V.iii. 200-1.
- 81 - Some critics have curiously suggested that Tamburlaine
does not experince andy self-awareness or solace. See, for
instance, Wolff, p. 27, Pendry, p. vii, and Greenblatth,
'Marlowe and the Will to Absolute Play', p. 81.
- 82 - Part Two, II.ii. 47-54.
- 83 - Part Two, II.iii. 66-8.

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- 84 - Part Two, V.i. 181-3.
- 85 - Part One, I.i. 170.
- 86 - Part One, V.i. 289.
- 87 - Part Two, III.i. 36.
- 88 - Part Two, V.i. 78-92.
- 89 - Part One, V.i. 463-7.
- 90 - Part one, V.i. 363.
- 91 - Wolff's edition, Part Two, II.iv. 15 and below, p. 256.
- 92 - Wolff's edition, Part Two, II.iii. 18-30 and below, p. 256.
- 93 - Wolff's edition, Part Two, V.i. 177-80.