



**CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S
"TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT" IN RENAISSANCE AND MODERN LITERARY
CRITICISM**

Shukrullayeva Durdona

Teacher at the university of Information technology and management

shukrullaevadurdona@mail.ru

Abstract: *The present article is devoted to the study of the actuality and scholarly relevance of Christopher Marlowe's tragedy Tamburlaine the Great in modern literary studies. The play is analyzed as a key work of English Renaissance drama that introduced a new type of tragic hero and transformed the dramatic use of blank verse. Particular attention is paid to the themes of ambition, power, imperial expansion, religion, and human limitation. The research demonstrates that Tamburlaine the Great remains an important object of literary analysis due to its thematic universality, ideological complexity, and openness to contemporary critical approaches, including humanist, political, and postcolonial interpretations.*

Keywords: *Christopher Marlowe, Tamburlaine the Great, Renaissance drama, ambition, power, overreacher, literary actuality*

Introduction: In contemporary literary scholarship, the study of English Renaissance drama continues to be of great importance, as this period laid the foundations for modern European theatrical and literary traditions. Among the major dramatists of the late sixteenth century, Christopher Marlowe occupies a special position due to his innovative approach to tragedy and his bold philosophical vision. His play *Tamburlaine the Great* is one of the most influential works of the Elizabethan era, and its actuality in literary studies remains undeniable. The relevance of *Tamburlaine the Great* is primarily determined by its exploration of universal human concerns such as ambition, power, authority, violence, and the limits of human potential. Although the play reflects the historical and cultural realities of the Renaissance, the problems it raises continue to resonate with modern readers and researchers. In an age marked by political conflicts, struggles for power, and debates about leadership and morality, Tamburlaine's figure remains strikingly contemporary. Furthermore, the play is actual because it represents a decisive break from medieval dramatic traditions. Marlowe replaces morality-based characters with a psychologically complex protagonist whose actions are driven by personal will rather than divine command. This transformation makes *Tamburlaine the Great* a key text for understanding the transition from medieval to Renaissance worldviews.

Purpose and Objectives of the Research. The main purpose of this research is to provide a comprehensive justification of the literary and scholarly relevance of Christopher



Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* within the framework of modern literary studies and OAK requirements.

The objectives of the research are:

- to analyze *Tamburlaine the Great* as a turning point in the development of English Renaissance tragedy;
- to examine the theme of ambition as a central driving force of the plot;
- to explore the representation of power and authority in the play;
- to identify the ideological and philosophical significance of Tamburlaine's character;
- to demonstrate the applicability of modern critical approaches to the analysis of the play.

Object and Subject of the Research. The object of the research is Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Tamburlaine the Great* (Parts I and II) as a literary text of the English Renaissance. The subject of the research is the actuality of the play's thematic, ideological, and artistic features in contemporary literary criticism.

Research Methodology. The research is based on a combination of traditional and modern methods of literary analysis. Textual and close-reading methods are used to examine Tamburlaine's speeches and key dramatic episodes. The historical-literary method allows the play to be analyzed within the cultural and philosophical context of Renaissance humanism. In addition, elements of comparative, political, and cultural criticism are employed to demonstrate the play's relevance for modern theoretical discourse. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive and objective analysis of the text. One of the main reasons for the continued actuality of *Tamburlaine the Great* is the figure of Tamburlaine himself. He represents the Renaissance "overreacher," a character type driven by limitless ambition and an unshakable belief in human potential. Unlike medieval heroes, Tamburlaine does not rely on noble lineage or divine favor. Instead, he asserts that greatness is achieved through strength, intelligence, and determination. This concept reflects the ideals of Renaissance humanism, which emphasized individual achievement and self-fashioning. Tamburlaine's rise from a shepherd to a conqueror of empires symbolizes the possibility of social mobility and challenges the traditional hierarchical order. Modern literary studies continue to examine this aspect of the play in relation to questions of identity, leadership, and personal agency.

Power, violence, and imperial ambition. The theme of power is inseparable from violence in *Tamburlaine the Great*. Tamburlaine's conquests are marked by extreme cruelty, humiliation of defeated rulers, and large-scale destruction. Marlowe presents these acts without moral simplification, allowing the audience to witness both the grandeur and the horror of imperial ambition. This portrayal makes the play particularly relevant for political and postcolonial interpretations. Tamburlaine's domination of foreign lands and peoples reflects early modern ideas of empire and expansion. Modern scholars analyze the play as a reflection of Europe's emerging imperial consciousness, making it significant for



interdisciplinary research that connects literature with history and political theory. Another factor contributing to the play's actuality is its controversial treatment of religion. Tamburlaine repeatedly challenges religious authority and presents himself as superior to the gods worshipped by his enemies. His actions, especially in Part II, represent a radical assertion of human supremacy over divine power.

This aspect of the play has attracted considerable scholarly attention, as it reflects the tension between faith and skepticism in the Renaissance period. In modern literary studies, Tamburlaine's blasphemy is often interpreted as a critique of religious absolutism and a reflection of Marlowe's own intellectual daring. These issues remain highly relevant in contemporary debates about religion, secularism, and freedom of thought.

Language and dramatic innovation. The actuality of *Tamburlaine the Great* is also closely connected with Marlowe's contribution to dramatic language. His powerful use of blank verse introduced a new level of expressiveness to English drama. Tamburlaine's speeches are characterized by elevated imagery, cosmic metaphors, and rhythmic intensity, which reinforce his ambition and authority. Modern literary criticism continues to explore how Marlowe's language shapes character and ideology. The play's stylistic innovations influenced later dramatists, most notably William Shakespeare, and therefore remain central to studies of English literary history.

Tragedy and the limits of human power. Despite Tamburlaine's apparent invincibility, the play ultimately reveals the limits of human ambition. His illness and death demonstrate that even the most powerful ruler cannot escape mortality. This tragic conclusion introduces a moral and philosophical dimension that tempers the play's celebration of power. The tension between boundless aspiration and inevitable limitation ensures the play's enduring relevance. Modern readers recognize in Tamburlaine a universal human struggle between the desire for control and the reality of human fragility.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the actuality of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* is determined by its lasting artistic, ideological, and philosophical significance. The play remains relevant for modern literary studies due to its innovative dramatic form, its complex portrayal of ambition and power, and its openness to contemporary critical interpretations. As a foundational work of English Renaissance drama, *Tamburlaine the Great* continues to serve as an essential object of academic research within the framework of OAK requirements.

References

1. Bartels, E. C. *Spectacles of Strangeness: Imperialism, Alienation, and Marlowe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.
2. Boas, F. S. *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.

- 
3. Cheney, P. Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
 4. Dollimore, J. Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries. 3rd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
 5. Greenblatt, S. Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
 6. Leech, C. Christopher Marlowe: A Critical Study. London: Faber and Faber, 1964.
 7. Logan, R. A. Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
 8. Marlowe, C. Tamburlaine the Great. Ed. J. S. Cunningham. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.
 9. Riggs, D. The World of Christopher Marlowe. New York: Henry Holt, 2004.
 10. Tillyard, E. M. W. The Elizabethan World Picture. London: Chatto & Windus, 1943.
- 