

## 8 • Newgate

The inquest on William Bradley was held next day, 19 September, when the Middlesex county coroner, Ion Chalkhill, presided. Evidence was brought that Thomas Watson killed Bradley in self-defence. The jurors decided Bradley's death was 'not by felony', and Watson and Marlowe were to await the Queen's pardon.

Kit Marlowe was allowed bail from 1 October. Two men, 'Richard Kytchine of Clifford's Inn, gentleman, and Humfrey Rowland of East Smithfield, horner', stood surety of twenty pounds each. He was bound over in the sum of forty pounds, had to appear at the next Sessions to answer anything alleged against him, and could not depart without permission of the court. Kitchin practised law at Clifford's Inn, and later appeared as Philip Henslowe's legal representative. In 1600 he was to give evidence on behalf of the Mermaid Tavern's host, William Williamson, in a Star Chamber case. Humphrey Rowland was a constable of East Smithfield and 'a maker of Lanterne hornes', who stood surety for people on a number of occasions.

As Kit Marlowe's bail was from 1 October, he waited almost a fortnight in Newgate prison. Until this time, apart from the threat to withhold his MA at Cambridge, he had not been in trouble, and though there had been jealousy of the success of *Tamburlaine*, records even of this came mainly after the Newgate episode. Earlier his family had moved because of non-payment of rent, and he had been a spy, but these were less disturbing than this fatal affray, which he had not anticipated. If Norton Folgate was disappointing after Cambridge, Newgate was the nadir of existence.

Richard Baines in 1593, supporting Kyd's accusations when Marlowe was charged with atheism, referred to this episode. Baines claimed that Marlowe learned to make counterfeit coins in Newgate from 'poole a prisoner in newgate who hath greate Skill in mixture of mettals'. Baines alleged that Kit claimed he had 'as good Right to Coine as the Queen of England . . . (and) ment through help of a Cunninge stamp maker to Coin ffrench Crownes, pistolets and English shillings'.

Marlowe and Watson escaped the worst rigours of Newgate as their friends could afford to bribe the jailers. This was the custom of the time. The 'boozing ken' was one haunt of 'privileged' prisoners in Newgate. However, even the privileged did not escape the squalor. In 'The Blacke Dogge of Newgate' (published 1600) Luke Hutton wrote of his experience there.

A rat doth rob the candle from my handes,  
And then a hundred rats all sallie forth . . .  
Whilst thus I lay in irons under ground,  
I heard a man that begged for releese:  
And in a chaine or iron was he bound . . .  
Begging one penny to buie a hundred bread  
Hungred and stervd, for want of food ny dead . . .

It was a cruel age in terms of punishment; hanging, drawing and quartering was the normal method of execution for traitors. Hanging was a spectacle much enjoyed by crowds, who flocked to Tyburn, the site of the public hangman (near the area now called Marble Arch). This enjoyment of public hanging explains why the plays in this period contained so much bloodshed and violence.

Newgate prison was an example of the cruelty of the age. Apart from the general appalling conditions and tortures used, the cell reserved for condemned prisoners, 'limbo', was completely in darkness, a space with no window over the prison gate. Residence there before hanging shocked condemned prisoners into numb-

ness. One improvement of Elizabethan times was that there were fewer deaths by burning than in Mary's reign, though burning for heresy still occurred, as in the case of Francis Kett. Newgate prison did not alter much during several Tudor reigns.

What Kit saw in Newgate is reflected in additions to *The Jew* and *The Massacre*, and in *Edward II* and *Doctor Faustus*. For example, from *Doctor Faustus*:

Now, Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare  
Into that vast perpetual torture-house.  
There are the furies tossing damned souls  
On burning forks.

And from *Edward II*:

This usage makes my misery increase.  
But can my air of life continue long,  
When all my senses are annoy'd with stench?  
Within a dungeon England's King is kept,  
Where I am starv'd for want of sustenance.

Fastidious Kit, who had known the refinements of Cambridge and the grand house of his patron Thomas Walsingham, found Newgate prison most unpleasant.

On 3 December Kit Marlowe appeared at the assizes, where Richard Kitchen and Humphrey Rowland stood surety for him. One of the Judges of Assize was a Kentishman, Sir Roger Manwood, Chief Baron of the Exchequer. When Manwood died in December 1592, Kit wrote a Latin epitaph for him, probably commissioned, though perhaps it was Kit's gratitude for his acquittal. This epitaph was discovered in a 1629 edition of *Hero and Leander*, on the back of the title page, with Marlowe's name subscribed. It also appeared twice in the commonplace book of a young contemporary of Kit's called Henry Oxinden, who lived at Barham, a few miles outside Canterbury. Translated, it reads:

On the death of this most honourable man, Roger Manwood,  
Knight,

Chief Baron of the Queen's Exchequer.  
Terror of the night vagrant, stern scourge of the profligate,  
Speedy Alcides, and destroyer of the obdurate thief,  
Is buried within the urn. Rejoice ye sons of iniquity!  
Mourn, innocent one, with hair dishevelled on your sorrowful  
head!

The light of the courts, the glory of the ancient law is dead;  
Alas, much virtue has gone out with him to the barren shores  
Of the nether world. So many virtues had he  
United in one man; do not profane the remains  
Of one whose glance made thousands tremble.  
And so when the messenger of bloody death strikes you  
May your bones rest happily in peace  
And may they outlive the monuments of the tomb!\*

Fulsome words, particularly as rumour suggested that the judge was not averse to bending the law. Kit was fortunate to have both Manwood, and Fleetwood, who later bought a copy of *Tamburlaine*, on the bench on this occasion.

Nevertheless, Newgate was the turning point of Kit's life, though he was exonerated. As well as the shattering effect of residence in this terrifying prison, when Kit emerged he no longer had the company of Thomas Watson, who was still in Newgate. If Kit had the protection of Thomas Watson from the moment he arrived in London, then he was now alone for the first time and a prey to less benevolent company.

\* This translation is by A. J. P. Taylor and the author.