

“ACTIONS TOP HIS SPEECH:” BODIES OF POWER IN MARLOWE’S

*TAMBURLAINE, THE GREAT*

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## INTRODUCTION

How does one take down a sovereign? Early modern dramas such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus* and Marlowe's *Edward II* all answer this question with regicide. Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays, however, raise the stakes of political tragedy and ask a question that cannot be so easily answered. How does one take down a totalitarian who has managed to convince every one around him that he and only he has the power to create reality?

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* is a "monster turned to manly shape" (*Part I*, II. vi. 16), a totalitarian who seems to live up to the title by *speaking* a new reality into existence and thereby controlling every thing and every person on the world-stage. In *Tamburlaine, The Great Parts 1 and 2*, Marlowe's audience watches "barbarous bloody *Tamburlaine*" (*Part 2*, V. i. 133) discursively shape the ways in which those around him see their own bodies and the embodiment of universal 'truths.' *Tamburlaine* operates within an ideological fantasy that insists on his infinite sovereignty through prophesied speech-acts. And yet, contemporaneous translations of Pedro Mexia's 1540 *Silvia de Varia Lecion* ensured that Marlowe's audience knew *Tamburlaine*'s regime did stop and did lose power by the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in the prologue of *Part 2*, Marlowe explicitly tells his audience that "death cuts off the progress of [*Tamburlaine*'s] pomp / And murd'rous Fates throws all his triumphs down" (*Part 2*, Prologue. 4-5). Therefore, *Tamburlaine* does not "stress virtually unlimited opportunities for self-assertion," as many critics have suggested (Bevington).<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, these plays prove that *Tamburlaine*'s pompous promise to "become immortal like the gods" will never come true (*Part I*, I. ii. 201).

*Tamburlaine Parts 1 and 2* disprove the foundational tenets of the protagonist's autocratic beliefs by exposing the embodied reality behind his myth of limitless power. Tamburlaine's narrative of absolute rule demands the warrior-king's strict identification with a doctrine of prophecy and performative speech. The *Tamburlaine* plays complicate the eponymous hero's "infinite ambition, ... inordinate lust, and unbounded belief in his own victorious destiny," by illustrating a reality in which political power is constituted through and yet threatened by human bodies (Ingram 41). Tamburlaine needs dead material bodies to prove the veracity of his public word and live bodies to willingly enact the bloody domination he repeatedly promises. The plays reveal that Tamburlaine's hegemony is in fact consolidated in transactions of active consent, not in authoritarian commands. Tamburlaine's dogmatic identification with the word of power ultimately exposes that his speech-act doctrine is a fiction through the need for bodily proof and willing consent. *Tamburlaine, The Great Parts 1 and 2* provide a narrative filled with violent spectacle, subtle irony and what Ben Jonson critically called "scenical strutting" and "furious vociferation" in order to explore the limits of one man's sovereignty (398). Marlowe's dramas give theatrical form to the conceptual space of friction between a tyrant's speech and his actions.

#### OVERIDENTIFICATION IN *TAMBURLAINE, THE GREAT*

*Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2* represent a process through which Tamburlaine destroys himself and his regime by adhering fanatically to his own public word. Because he believes that prophecies term him the "Scourge of God," Tamburlaine himself says, "I must apply myself to fit those terms / In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty" (*Part 2, IV. i.*

154-156). *Tamburlaine* reveals that the protagonist's complete adoption of his role is in fact a too-literal identification, or an *overidentification*. Slavoj Žižek offers a useful paradigm for thinking about the overidentification of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. Žižek writes,

sometimes, at least — *overidentifying* with the explicit power discourse - *ignoring* this inherent obscene underside and simply taking the power discourse at its (public) word, acting as if it really means what it explicitly says (and promises) — can be the most effective way of disturbing its smooth functioning (“De Capo senza Fine” 217-220).<sup>3</sup>

For *Tamburlaine The Great*, the public word of power is the speech-act. The warrior-king overidentifies with the ideological fantasy of performative speech founded in divination. More specifically, *Tamburlaine* overidentifies with the concept that his interpretations of oracles are performative and illocutionary. *Tamburlaine*'s unflinching fidelity to public predictions exposes the fallacy of performative speech and the true fragility of his dominion over the world-stage

Marlowe's plays set up the inevitability of *Tamburlaine*'s overidentification as the man destined to violently “scourge the pride of such as Heaven abhors” (*Part 2*, IV. i. 149). *Tamburlaine* refers to himself and is referred to by others as the “scourge of God” no less than a dozen times over the course of the hugely popular *Tamburlaine* plays.<sup>4</sup> This Scythian warrior not only understands himself as having been “termed the terror of the world,” (*Part 2*, V. iii. 45), he identifies with the role so much that the terms themselves appear to determine each ensuing event. *Tamburlaine* claims time and again that prophecies dictate his destiny to become “arch- monarch of the world” (*Part 2*, I. ii. 114).<sup>5</sup> These prophecies and oracles, then, become the original public word of *Tamburlaine*'s ideological edifice and the foundation of his single-minded self-

identification.<sup>6</sup> Mycetes, the King of Persia before Tamburlaine, calls the blood-thirsty warrior “misled by dreaming prophecies, / To reign in Asia” (*Part I*, I. i. 40-42).<sup>7</sup>

Tamburlaine insists that his merciless hegemony is and always has been fated, and he successfully convinces others of this fiction as well. By convincing others that his interpretation of oracles is the predetermined truth, Tamburlaine makes it look as though he has the authority to constitute “the given through utterances,” through his speech (Bourdieu 170). In other words, Tamburlaine makes it seem as if the forces of destiny have given him the power to control words and with words, to make and destroy the world any way he wants. Tamburlaine follows prophetic narratives to the word, insisting that these doctrines grant him the ability to control constitutive language.

Still dressed in his shepherd’s cloak, Tamburlaine prophesies in Act 1 of *Part I* that he will be a “terror to the world,” conquering Asia and Africa until he measures “the limits of his empery / By east and west as Phoebus doth his course” (*Part I*, I. ii. 38-40). Marlowe demonstrates Tamburlaine’s cunning manipulation of the “symbolic power” of words in the warrior’s first pivotal stage appearance (Bourdieu 170). In this scene, Tamburlaine holds an Egyptian princess and band of Egyptian lords hostage. One lord, Magnetes, appeals for the group’s release by promising further earthly treasures and by informing Tamburlaine that he and his fellow Egyptians “have his highness’ letters to command / Aid and assistance,” which Tamburlaine spurns and disavows, saying that “these letters and commands / Are countermanded by a greater man” (*Part I*, I. ii. 21-22). Tamburlaine makes use of the double meaning of “letters” through what Johannes Birringer calls the “duplicitous translatability of discourse” so that the Egyptian’s letters represent Magnetes’s mastery of language (220). Understanding letters and language as

units to be controlled plays into Tamburlaine's illusion of speech-acts. He proclaims that he now commands authority of the captives' letters, and through that, all of their words. Tamburlaine's regime starts here in all its dissimulation and totalitarian glory when he makes himself the supreme "dictator" and author of all words.

#### SPEECH-ACTS

Tamburlaine insists that his "words are oracles," implying that he has performative or effective speech (*Part 1*, III. iii. 102). If one is to believe Tamburlaine's argument that his public word is more true than "Apollo's oracles," (*Part 1*, I. ii. 212), then Tamburlaine must have the power of "illocutionary" speech. In what has become a field-defining text, *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin describes an "illocutionary" act as a "performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something" (99-100). With nearly a coronation per act and a spectacular closing marriage ceremony, *Tamburlaine Part 1* contains a generous number of those legal performances commonly used to illustrate illocutionary speech-acts, those in which a task is accomplished in the moment a person in power speaks particular utterances. It is no surprise, then, that critics such as Marjorie Garber have called Tamburlaine a "master of speech-acts" capable of "performative illocutionary utterance[s]" (Garber 302). Mark Thornton Burnett expands upon Garber's argument when he claims that while Tamburlaine is at first "drawn as a master of linguistic power" in Marlowe's first installment, *Part 2* demonstrates "Tamburlaine's failing prowess with parlance" (128). I want to complicate both Garber and Burnett's well-founded readings by noting the ways in which the plays actually depict an ongoing tension between the

fiction of performative speech and the material reality of living and dead bodies. Before I turn to the illusion of performative speech and the truth of embodiment, I want to map out how the speech-acts *seem* to operate in these plays.

Tamburlaine repeatedly proclaims that he can create reality by *speaking* it into existence. Statements such as “*will* and *shall* best fitteth Tamburlaine” demonstrate his belief in illocutionary speech (*Part I*, III. iii. 40-41). The dramas, on the contrary, reveal that Tamburlaine’s speech is perlocutionary rather than illocutionary. The distinction between perlocutionary and illocutionary utterances is a notoriously difficult one to undertake, but this theoretical sticking point is one that Marlowe illustrates with both nuance and bloody spectacle in *Tamburlaine Parts 1* and *2*. Perlocutionary acts “are instrumental to the accomplishment of actions, but they are not themselves the actions which they help accomplish (Butler “Burning Acts- Injurious Speech” 197). Because Tamburlaine’s statements are perlocutionary rather than illocutionary, he must fulfill his promises in order to prove to others that his “words are oracles.” In other words, Tamburlaine’s power does not reside in illocutionary speech-acts, but rather in his ability to convince others that it does. Tamburlaine consolidates his military supremacy by making people believe in his supposed linguistic power. As Theridamas says, “Not Hermes, the prolocutor to the gods, / Could use persuasion more pathological” (*Part I*, I. ii. 210). Tamburlaine says that his words are powerful because of his prophecied identity, but the plays themselves demonstrate the persuasive skills that actually enable this Scythian’s rule.

Perhaps the most commonly noted “working words” (*Part I*, II. iii. 25) in *Tamburlaine*, are those that act as weapons.<sup>8</sup> In the prologue of *Part I*, Marlowe

introduces his villainous hero as “Threat’ning the world with high astounding term, / And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword” (Prologue. 5-6). These two short lines of blank verse suggest a parallel between term and sword, and so introduce the contradictory ways in which linguistic acts, rather than spectacles of torture, seem to perform the real violence in *Tamburlaine*.<sup>9</sup> Marlowe offers numerous examples of the word-weapon conflation. For instance, Mycetes tells Theridamas, “thy words are swords” (*Part I*, I. i. 74), Techelles says, “our swords shall play orators for us” (*Part I*, I. ii. 132), and Zenocrate gives Agydas “leave to wound me with these words” (*Part I*, III. ii. 35).<sup>10</sup> Repeated references to the wounding capabilities of words work to naturalize the ideology of effective speech and make Tamburlaine’s myth of absolute power so seemingly successful. The notion of “working words” in the *Tamburlaine* dramas contends that language can express violence and language can perform violence.

Marlowe illustrates the charade of autocratic domination by way of performative speech after Bajazeth and Zabina insult Tamburlaine from inside a horse-drawn cage. Zenocrate asks Tamburlaine “My lord, how can you suffer these outrageous / curses by these slaves of yours?” to which Tamburlaine responds, “To let them see, divine Zenocrate, / I glory in the curses of my foes, / Having the power from the empyreal heaven / To turn them all upon their heads” (*Part I*, IV. iv. 26-31). Tamburlaine tells his lady and the audience that his identity makes him impervious to the damaging words of others. Like the weaponized words Tamburlaine says he wields, his very material possession of abstract words in *Tamburlaine Part I*, depends on his insistence that words act like objects. By making it seem as though words function like material objects, Tamburlaine can then use words the way he would use things, such as swords or the



spoils of war. This means that treating linguistic units as if they are tangible entities gives Tamburlaine the ability to claim them for himself. Tamburlaine consolidates his tyranny over others by making them believe he snatches the words right out of their mouths.

According to Tamburlaine's mythological narrative, he has been destined to overtake the objectified words of all people in his path to world conquest. After Tamburlaine defeats Bajazeth, the Turk's wife, Zabina, rails at her captors, "Injurious villains, thieves, runagates! / How dare you thus abuse my majesty?" (*Part I*, III. iii. 225-226). When Theridamas indulges Zabina's argument by way of reasoning that now Zenocrate has majesty and not the Turckess, Tamburlaine refuses to even entertain a discussion of sovereignty, telling his man, "Not now, Theridamas, her time is past. / The pillars that have bolstered up those terms / Are fall'n in clusters at my conquering feet" (*Part I*, III. iii. 228-230). Tamburlaine tries to convince his allies and enemies that Zabina's words are evacuated of all potency. He is contending that because Zabina does not have Tamburlaine's god-given symbolic power, her words are ineffective and hollow. So according to Tamburlaine's doctrine, Zabina's words are not weapons. This fundamentalist interpretation of public doctrine holds that Tamburlaine's prophecies are constituted of speech-acts and so these promises must be fulfilled, including the promise that Tamburlaine is endowed with effective speech.

Tamburlaine believes that his utterances are speech-acts because "fates and oracles of heaven have sworn / To royalize the deeds of Tamburlaine," and these oracular declarations must be realized (*Part I*, I. ii. 7-8). This belief ironically traps Tamburlaine in a web of forced identification. In fact, the speech-act is simply the logical development of a world predetermined by such divinations. This means that

Tamburlaine's violent ascendancy is only the material actualization of illocutionary prophecies written before he ever lifted a sword in battle. By claiming that his reign is preordained by the stars "who never meant to make a conqueror / So famous as is mighty Tamburlaine" (*Part 2*, III. v. 83-84), Tamburlaine turns himself into a figure that ultimately has no control over his own destiny, even as he seems to be controlling nation after conquered nation.<sup>11</sup> His insistence that oracles are speech-acts means that he can do nothing but enact each prophesied exploit. Tamburlaine calls himself "I that am term'd the scourge and wrath of God / The only fear and terror of the world" (*Part 1*, II. iii. 44-45), suggesting that he has no alternative but to identify with terms that have identified him. Furthermore, Tamburlaine can only prove that his public word is true if he makes them come true with material actions. An overly-literal interpretation of public discourse demands that Tamburlaine's "actions top his speech" (*Part 1*, II. iii. 25) and his "deeds shall prove" (*Part 1*, I. ii. 34) his right to reign in Asia with "barbarous arms" (*Part 1*, I. i. 42), not witty words. This is only one of the double logics of Tamburlaine's power. He becomes a totalitarian of the material world by identifying absolutely with words he cannot defy.

Marlowe illustrates Tamburlaine's forced interpellation by his own dogma on the eve of the slaughter of Damascus. Tamburlaine previously instated a chromatic code of genocidal violence, in which the erection of black tents signifies the inevitable annihilation of a community. This chromatic code is a component of Tamburlaine's public word, his discourse of power inherited from prophecy. Marjorie Garber aptly suggests that perhaps Tamburlaine is so "adept in the language of signs" because "his semiotic codes [like the colored tents] are far from subtle" (302). This scene shows how

Tamburlaine is both adept at and also trapped by his unsubtle system of signs. The conqueror is trapped into corporeally enacting his promises by means of mass murder. When the governor of Damascus appoints six virgins to offer a laurel of peace, Tamburlaine approaches with his soldiers “*all in black, and very melancholy*” (*Part I*, V. i. 63) because the tyrant regrets the fact that he must murder these “poor fools” from Damascus (*Part I*, V. i. 65). When the virgins supplicate for their lives, Tamburlaine replies, “in vain ye labour to prevent / That which mine honour swears shall be performed” (*Part I*, V. i. 106-107). Tamburlaine has no choice but to murder these women because he cannot go back on something he previously said. The audience can now recognize that this “all-powerful” sovereign is a slave to his own honor. Tamburlaine constructs his infamy by way of his “name and honour,” a form of his public word he “shall spread” (*Part I*, V. i.) by slaughtering nations.<sup>12</sup> Tamburlaine is both an agent of conquest and an interpellated enactor of expanding credo.

Tamburlaine must physically enact public word in order for those prophecies to be made legitimate on the world-stage. The necessity of material manifestation complicates Tamburlaine’s interaction with the Persian king, Mycetes, in Act 2 of *Part I*. First, Tamburlaine out-wits Mycetes when he seizes the king’s crown and asks

Tamburlaine: You will not sell it, will ye?

Mycetes: Such another word, and I will have thee executed. Come, give it to me.

Tamburlaine: No, I took it prisoner.

Mycetes: You lie, I gave it to you.

Tamburlaine: Then ‘tis mine.

Mycetes: No, I mean I let you keep it (*Part I*, II. iv. 26-34).

Here, Marlowe humorously demonstrates what at first seems to be Tamburlaine’s illocutionary ability to take over Mycetes’s crown and through synecdoche the Persian nation. While there is no doubt that Mycetes does look the fool in this moment of poorly

matched wits, Tamburlaine is not the unchecked totalitarian he claims to be. The moment Mycetes consents to Tamburlaine's taking of the crown, the Persian king destabilizes the power dynamics at play. The truth is that Tamburlaine cannot fulfill prophecy unless he seizes the crown through warfare, not debate.

Tamburlaine uncharacteristically hands the crown back to Mycetes, saying, "Here, take it for a while. / I lend it thee / Till I may see thee hemmed with armed men. / Then shalt thou see me pull it from thy head" (*Part 1*, II. iv. 36-38). Why does Tamburlaine have to pull the crown from Mycetes's head in battle when it's already in his hands? In a narrative bait-and-switch that parallels Tamburlaine's rhetorical trickery, Marlowe traps his hero in the masquerade of speech-acts. Because Tamburlaine believes that prophecies are speech-acts, he must belatedly manifest his oracular interpretations. Marlowe shows that his protagonist is nothing more than a servant to the master of identification. Because Tamburlaine has publicly stated, "gracious stars have promised" the "possession of the Persian crown" at his birth (*Part 1*, I. ii. 91-92), he becomes the subject who needs to tangibly perform that supposedly illocutionary prophecy. Not only does Tamburlaine have to perform his predicted taking of the Persian crown, he must do so with bodies in bloody warfare.<sup>13</sup>

*Tamburlaine, The Great Part 2* explores the extents to which Tamburlaine will adhere to his own brutal discourse after he discovers that his first-born son, Calyphas, ignored the king's commands and abstained from battle. Tamburlaine acts in accordance with his identity as "the scourge of God and terror of the world," (*Part 2*, IV. i. 154) when he stabs and kills Calyphas. Many scholars read the murder of Calyphas as a "culminating demonstration of Tamburlaine's capacity for unmitigated cruelty," though

this assumption is, as Carolyn Williams states, “open to question” (56).<sup>14</sup> I argue that the play’s brutal filicide is above all, a culminating demonstration of the speech-act trap. This is to say that Tamburlaine must kill his own son because to not do so would mean disproving prophecies and the myth of performative speech. When Calyphas expressed a desire to refrain from warfare two acts earlier, Tamburlaine called his son a “Bastardly boy, sprung from some coward’s loins / And not the issue of great Tamburlaine” (*Part 2*, I. iii. 69-70), then explicitly ordered Calyphas to murder or be murdered in turn.

Tamburlaine told Calyphas, “hold [the enemy] and cleave him, too, or I’ll cleave thee” (*Part 2*, I. iii. 104). This threat becomes Tamburlaine’s public word, binding the sovereign to action. When Calyphas refuses to fight, Tamburlaine must enact doctrine and kill his own son. Tamburlaine himself insists that he has no choice but to “execute” “these terrors and these tyrannies” “enjoined [him] from above” (*Part 2*, IV. i. 146, 148).

Tamburlaine explains his compulsory actions saying,

since I exercise a great name,  
The scourge of God and terror of the world,  
I must apply myself to fit those terms,  
In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,  
and plague such peasants as resist in me  
The power of heaven’s eternal majesty (*Part 2*, IV. i. 153-158)

Tamburlaine’s devotion to his name empowers and ensnares the warrior-king.

#### THE TRUTH OF EMBODIMENT

Tamburlaine’s tyrannical regime is haunted by the fact that every supposed speech-act does not just become reality through the magic of illocution. Instead, each speech-act depends on a constellation of material bodies. Tamburlaine needs dead,

objectified bodies to prove that his performative power is legitimate and he needs live bodies to consent to his commands. Tamburlaine cannot acknowledge this hidden truth of embodiment, because to do so would mean admitting that his power is less than absolute.

The speech-act narrative maintains that Tamburlaine wounds his enemies with words, and thus the physical violation of fleshly bodies on the stage should be unnecessary, if not counter to the canon of pre-destined rule. In that case, why does Tamburlaine show off the corpses of his victims? For example, why have the Governor of Babylon “*hung up in chains*” (*Part 2*, V. i. 148) and publicly shot? The discourse of power says that Tamburlaine should be able to kill the governor simply by saying so. The plays reveal that Tamburlaine needs these fully objectified, dead bodies as evidence in order to validate his speech-acts. All perlocutionary statements assume a “burden of evidence,” and Tamburlaine satisfies this burden by flaunting the carcasses of those he conquers (Butler 17).<sup>15</sup> At the end of *Part I*, Tamburlaine explains how dead bodies legitimate his dominion as he crowns his wife in a field of slaughtered corpses, saying “Emperors and kings lie breathless at my feet ... All sights of power to grace my victory / And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine” (*Part I*, V. i. 469, 474-475). This means that the parading around of mangled corpses in *Tamburlaine* is not simply “triumphal pageant,” but material testimony to the physical labor necessary for maintaining an illusion of performative speech (Romaney and Lindsey xvii). Tamburlaine uses dead material bodies as evidence of his power in order to make people believe that he is in fact a totalitarian in the truest sense of the word.

Tamburlaine’s myth of performative speech can only function so long as he never acknowledges his actual dependency on the consent and participation of other bodies.

This means that Tamburlaine can only maintain sovereignty by never wavering from the well-known axiom that, “*will* and *shall* best fitteth Tamburlaine, / Whose smiling stars gives him assured hope / Of martial triumph ere he meet his foes” (*Part I*, III. iii. 41-43). An overly-literal interpretation of prophecies forces Tamburlaine to ignore the fact that no matter what he says to the contrary, “his foes” always have the option of either consenting or refusing to join the Scythian band of “base, usurping vagabond[s]” (*Part I*, IV. iii. 21). The plays, in contrast, expose the fact that Tamburlaine’s commands are actually transactions, always contingent on the embodied agency of others.

In *Tamburlaine*, a consenting body performs submission by moving or not moving in whatever ways the monarch commands. In *Part I*, the soldiers Techelles and Usumcasane first physically perform their active consent by not moving their bodies upon Tamburlaine’s request. Tamburlaine tells the soldiers to abort a planned attack, ordering them to, “keep all your standings and not stir a foot” (*Part I*, I. ii. 150). Techelles and Usumcasane remain still and in doing so, acquiesce to Tamburlaine’s plans of parley. Even though they are submitting to Tamburlaine, Techelles and Usumcasane still make the deliberate choice to move (or in this case, not move) their bodies. When the soldiers decide to conform to the new battle plans by way of their flesh, they illustrate Elaine Scarry’s argument that “the will itself is couched in embodiment” (875). Because “movement locates, rather than merely illustrates the will,” the soldiers’ obedient actions both indicate submission and testify to their own embodiments of will (875). Such personal will makes the soldiers’ bodies potential threats to Tamburlaine’s supreme sovereignty. The soldiers’ consenting bodies are the key to Tamburlaine’s tyranny, and yet they are also the ever-present challenge to the notion of pure totalitarianism. The

*Tamburlaine* plays prove that an embodied contingency lurks just below the surface of every demand.

When a character in *Tamburlaine* consents to the protagonist's wishes, he or she demonstrates agency in the embodied act of submission. Elaine Scarry's essay, "Consent and the Body" resonates with the paradox of embodiment present throughout *Parts 1* and *2*. Scarry writes,

The whole issue of consent, by holding within it notions of sovereignty and authorization, bears within it extremely *active* powers. Yet it often arises precisely at the point where by any conventional description there seems an extreme of passivity (873).<sup>16</sup>

*Tamburlaine* attempts to maintain that his objectification of bodies occurs within a paradigm in which he is the active agent and his interlocutor is passive. In *Part 2*, a frightened messenger spreads this myth of passive consent, reporting to the Sultan of Egypt that *Tamburlaine* "commands the hearts of his associates" with such unidirectional authority that "It might amaze [his] royal majesty" (*Part 2*, IV. i. 15-16). The plays, on the other hand, deny this dream of pure absolutism by exposing the extremely active nature of embodied consent. To put this in Žižekian terms, embodied consent is the "inherent transgression" of *Tamburlaine*'s regime; it is that which is both "publicly disavowed" and "the ultimate support of the existing power edifice" (217). *Tamburlaine* can't take over the world unless other bodies acquiesce to his will; however, to acknowledge another person's active consent would mean recognizing that body's sovereignty and would therefore tacitly destroy the myth of pure totalitarian rule.

The necessity of consent in *Tamburlaine* is both artfully staged and yet studiously ignored in one of Marlowe's most canonical scenes. In Act 1, Scene 2, *Tamburlaine* appears to effortlessly draft the Persian general, Theridamas into his thieving band of



Scythian warriors with a seemingly preternatural power of performative speech. In fact, it is a testament to the power of Tamburlaine's illusion that critics often quote Act I Scene 2 when describing Tamburlaine as a master of speech-acts.<sup>17</sup> This critical tradition is not surprising considering that Theridamas marvels at Tamburlaine's "enchantments" (*Part I*, I. ii. 224) and consents to his new position in Tamburlaine's band by declaring, "Won with thy words and conquered with thy looks, / I yield myself, my men, and horse to thee, / To be partaker of thy good or ill / As long as life maintains Theridamas" (*Part I*, I. ii. 228-231). Marlowe's audience recognizes that what may appear like a speech-act actually involves the performance of active, embodied consent. Despite saying he has been enchanted by Tamburlaine, Theridamas *chooses* to "forsake [his] king and join with [Tamburlaine]" (171). By having Theridamas choose to join Tamburlaine's quest for world domination, *Tamburlaine Part I* grants Theridamas agency.

*Tamburlaine Part I* also uses the interaction between Tamburlaine and Theridamas to highlight the embodied nature of all consent. Theridamas goes from being the "very legs" (*Part I*, I. i. 59) of Persia to a seemingly sycophantic "trustworthy friend of Tamburlaine" (*Part I*, I. ii. 227). As a general of war, Theridamas's allegiance is inherently tied to his physical well-being. By willing his loyalty to Tamburlaine, Theridamas promises to sacrifice his body in battle. Beyond the inevitable physicality of war, the scene further emphasizes embodiment when Tamburlaine solemnizes Theridamas's submission with the same anatomical rhetoric used in Renaissance marriages, telling Theridamas to "take here my hand ... Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine / Until our bodies turn to elements / And both our souls aspire celestial thrones" (*Part I*, I. ii. 234, 236-237).<sup>18</sup> Theridamas performs his consent with

his tangible body in battle and with his metaphorical body in this ceremony of fleshly union. A number of scholarly readings understandably focus on the quasi-spousal relationship between the two men and the supposed “enchantments” of Tamburlaine’s speech, rather than on the fact that this exchange is in fact a transaction of active consent performed both materially and figuratively through Theridamas’s body.<sup>19</sup> By ignoring Theridamas’s consent, these analyses elide this character’s agency and consequently participate in the very charade *Tamburlaine Parts 1 and 2* reveal as such. The *Tamburlaine* plays deny this myth and reveal the contingency of embodiment that Tamburlaine and Theridamas conspire to conceal.

Another oft-quoted scene in Marlowe’s first volume features the suicide of the Median lord, Agydas. After he is overheard telling Zenocrate that her captor and object of affection is “vile and barbarous” (*Part 1*, III. ii. 26), Agydas is handed a dagger by Techelles with the message, “See you, Agydas, how the king salutes you! / He bids you prophesy what it imports” (*Part 1*, III. ii. 88-89). Agydas then kills himself with the weapon in question under the assumption that the dagger prophesies he “shalt surely die” (*Part 1*, III. ii. 95). This suicide at first appears like an exemplary illustration of Tamburlaine’s labor-free performative speech and unstoppable power. However, through the lens of consent, it becomes clear that even Agydas, a figure seemingly plagued by fates and a tyrant’s rage (*Part 1*, III. ii. 101-102), still actively consents to participate in this rhetorical schema. With the intention to “let Agydas by Agydas die” (*Part 1*, III. ii. 105), the Median’s body performs his active consent onto itself, creating a fatal circuit of embodied agency through the act of self-administered death. Tamburlaine does not simply speak or metonymically signal Agydas’s destruction. On the contrary, Agydas

agrees to destroy his body in accordance with Tamburlaine's discourse of divined might. The play also hints at embodiment's subversive potential in this moment as the power of prophecy is transferred to Agydas. Tamburlaine's overidentification with oracles will later make these destabilizing possibilities of embodiment impossible to ignore. With Agydas, *Tamburlaine Part 1* reveals the ways in which even a suicide is inherently a transaction of consent.

When Agydas seditiously insults Tamburlaine in Act 3, Zenocrate spurns her fellow hostage, and declares that her opinion of Tamburlaine has changed. Zenocrate rivals the devotion of Theridamas when she declares her desire to "leave [her] body senseless as the earth" if she cannot "live and die with Tamburlaine!" (*Part 1*, 3. 2. 22, 24). As with Theridamas in Act 2, Zenocrate flips her previous loyalties and begins to support Tamburlaine with such seemingly "enchanted" passion, that it becomes easy to ignore her performance as one of active, embodied consent. Zenocrate's narrative in *Tamburlaine* seems to be one of strict objectification, but proves far more complex.<sup>20</sup> Mary Beth Rose explains that while "Tamburlaine objectifies Zenocrate by aestheticizing her and rendering her static," Marlowe's protagonist is also objectified in the dialogue of others (5). While Rose's analysis astutely identifies Tamburlaine's interpellation in his public word, I argue that Zenocrate's portrayal is far from static. Marlowe stages a series of consensual transactions between Zenocrate and Tamburlaine, all of which play themselves out by way of Zenocrate's body.

The Egyptian princess' body is the site of both her supposed objectification and personal autonomy. Zenocrate's first appearance on the stage in Marlowe's first volume sets her up to be understood as an object, rather than an autonomous agent in

Tamburlaine's schema. In Act 1, Scene 2, Tamburlaine leads the Egyptian princess, Zenocrate, and multiple Egyptian lords in tow after a successful military conquest. Tamburlaine tells Zenocrate to not be upset with her new situation because "The jewels and treasure we have ta'en / Shall be reserved, and you in better state / Than if you were arrived in Syria" in her own father's arms (*Part I*, I. ii. 2-3). In Tamburlaine's attempt to pacify Zenocrate, he equates her with decorative jewels and money, assigning her a notional value.<sup>21</sup> Later in the same scene, Zenocrate's status as decorative object is reified when Agydas pleads to Tamburlaine that "I hope our lady's treasure and our own/ May serve for ransom to our liberties" (*Part I*, I. ii. 74-75), and again as Tamburlaine continues to woo the Egyptian princess. He tells Zenocrate how he will adorn her with jewels and bring her beauty to new settings. In other words, Tamburlaine promises to heap precious metals on top of a body he has already codified as a coin.

Tamburlaine's treasure-laden speech is not a command or work of enchantment as it may first appear; this interaction is a transaction of consent. After all, why does Tamburlaine work so hard to flatter Zenocrate by calling her "lovelier than the love of Jove, / Brighter than the silver Rhodope / Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills (*Part I*, I. ii. 87-89)? Tamburlaine flatters Zenocrate for the same reason that he offers her garments of "Median silk, enchased with precious jewels" (*Part I*, I. ii. 95-96): in order to persuade her to stay with him willingly. Tamburlaine asks for Zenocrate's consent, occluding the fact that he already has her body physically bound to his own at this moment. He still seeks her acquiescence, however, because Tamburlaine's illusion of performative speech and the resulting objectification of bodies like that of Zenocrate is always contingent on the embodied agency of others. In other words, despite what

Tamburlaine says, he actually needs Zenocrate to choose him, just as he has chosen her. When Tamburlaine finally says that Zenocrate and her lords must either “willingly remain with [him]” ...” Or else ... be forced with slavery,”<sup>22</sup> Zenocrate submits, saying, “I must be pleased perforce, wretched Zenocrate!” (*Part 1*, I. ii. 254, 256, 259).<sup>23</sup> Zenocrate’s enactment of embodied consent shows that collaboration is always a requirement for the dominance of any ideological schema.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most complex illustrations of the speech-act / embodied consent paradox in *Tamburlaine* occurs in connection with the seeming objectification and eventual suicide of the Turkish emperor and empress, Bajazeth and Zabina. Tamburlaine’s sadistic<sup>25</sup> treatment of his Turkish captives is so extreme that it makes Marlowe’s play seem more like a farce than a tragedy. In fact, Tamburlaine becomes a parody of himself during his interactions with Bajazaeth and Zabina, indicating the sovereign’s overidentification with his role as scourge of God.<sup>26</sup> The play calls attention to the excessive nature of Tamburlaine’s self-identification by having his gruesome interactions with Bajazeth and Zabina tend toward parody. Tamburlaine locks Bajazeth and Zabina in a cage, tortures them with thirst and starvation, then perversely suggests Bajazeth eat his wife “while she is fat” (*Part 1*, IV. iv. 49). In one of Marlowe’s most infamous stage directions, Tamburlaine uses Bajazeth as a footstool, thereby forcing the Turk to corporeally perform his objectification. Bajazeth refuses to deliberately consent to his new position, saying his captors will have to “rip his bowels” before he “submits to such slavery,” but Tamburlaine “gets up on [Bajazeth] into his chair,” all the same (*Part 1*, IV. ii. 16, 18, 28). Tamburlaine makes Bajazeth physically embody what he already represents for his captor: an article that must be surpassed and crushed in the pursuit of

world domination.<sup>27</sup> Regardless of their humiliating subjugation in the hands of Tamburlaine, Bajazeth and Zabina's unflinching refusal to agree with their captor's right to the Turkish crown challenges Tamburlaine's despotic narrative. The *Tamburlaine* plays challenge previous depictions of agency in consent when Bajazeth kills himself by "braining" himself against his cage (*Part 1*, V. i. 303). Bajazeth's fleshy suicide echoes that of Agydas earlier in the play, but with pivotal contextual differences. While Agydas consents to see reality according to Tamburlaine's public word, Bajazeth never does. In the moment of his grotesque suicide, Bajazeth refuses Tamburlaine's ideological fantasy, deciding to escape Tamburlaine's torturous grasp and take his own life by "beating [his] brains out of [his] conquered head" (*Part 1*, V. i. 287). When Zabina discovers her husband's mangled remains, she joins his resistant form of consent and "*runs against the cage and brains herself*" (*Part 1*, V. i. 318). Marlowe uses Bajazeth and Zabina's resistant consent to point out the ways in which a character can simultaneously escape the contract of submission with Tamburlaine as he or she is conforming to it. Bajazeth and Zabina's corpses may prove Tamburlaine's material power as a conqueror, but still defy Tamburlaine's linguistic power as an ideologue. Bajazeth and Zabina thus become evidence for the "inherent transgression" that resides in the need for both consensual living and objectified dead bodies.

From Bajazeth and Zabina's resistant consent, the play finally arrives at Zenocrate's total refusal of consent upon her death. Tamburlaine tries to command his expiring wife to "live still" and by doing so "conserve [his] life" in turn, but she refuses, seeking instead his permission to "let me die, my love, let me die" (*Part 2*, II. iv. 66). By refusing to consent to her husband's demands, Zenocrate points out that his system of

control can only function when the other bodies on the stage actively follow the public word of power. Zenocrate recognizes her body's imminent mortality as it "waned with enforced and necessary change," and she declines to entertain her husband's futile wishes that "may never such a change transform my love" (*Part 2*, II. iv. 46-47). Tamburlaine's failure as a supreme monarch is two-fold in this scene: he cannot force Zenocrate's body to live, and he cannot force her embodied will to try. Tamburlaine's overidentification as the "scourge of God" is rendered impotent in the face of his wife's bodily death, which Tamburlaine quite accurately calls the "scourge of the scourge of the immortal God" (*Part 2*, II. iv. 80).

At first, Tamburlaine attempts to deny the embodied contingency of his ideology by treating his wife's dead body just as he did while she was alive, encasing it in gold and carting it around to battle after battle with him. Dead or alive, Tamburlaine insists on making Zenocrate's body his jewel, his object. Because Zenocrate is "lucky" enough to be "she with whom [Tamburlaine is] in love" (*Part 1*, I. ii. 107-108), she is a treasured object according to Tamburlaine's explicit discourse of power, but an object and a possession nonetheless. If Tamburlaine so successfully turns bodies like Zenocrate's into commodities through his speech, why does he mourn his wife's passing with such grief, anger, and fear? Tamburlaine's policy of speech-acts *should* mean that there is no difference between a living and a deceased body. Zenocrate's death proves that there is in fact a vast difference between an alive and a dead body and this distinction is the secret of embodiment made spectacularly clear.<sup>28</sup> Tamburlaine has to acknowledge the fact that embodiment signifies mortality, the vulnerability of "frail and transitory flesh" (*Part 2*, II. iv. 43). No matter how hard Tamburlaine re-iterates his own overidentification with

totalitarian sovereignty by wrapping Zenocrate's body in gold or by trying to believe "she lives" even "though she be dead" (*Part 2, II. iv. 127*), the truth of a life through embodiment means eventual death. Tamburlaine wants to separate dead bodies from live ones in order to obscure the fundamental fact that each constitutes the inherent transgression of corporeal proof and consent. Tamburlaine hopes to make corpses, slaves, and consenting allies into objects, but the plays themselves show that the conqueror ultimately fails in each category. It is the inherent vulnerability of embodiment that so terrifies Marlowe's character, a shepherd-turned-emperor who has staked his entire identity on being a man with no vulnerabilities. Zenocrate's shift from life to death actually highlights Tamburlaine's need for both kinds of verification, and implicates his own body in the proof-and-consent dynamic he tries to disavow.

Like Zenocrate, Theridamas refuses to participate in Tamburlaine's desperate attempts to deny the reality of embodiment and the inevitability of mortality biological existence demands. He beseeches Tamburlaine with emotion, saying,

Ah, good my lord, be patient. She is dead,  
And all this raging cannot make her live.  
If words might serve, our voice hath rent the air,  
If tears, our eyes have watered all the earth,  
If grief, our murdered hearts have strained forth blood.  
Nothing prevails, for she is dead, my lord (*Part 2, II. iv. 119-124*).

By telling Tamburlaine that no amount of "raging" can bring his beloved back to life, Theridamas refuses the existence of the speech-act entirely. Because to "rage" means to *either act or speak* with feverish violence, Theridamas denies the possibility that Tamburlaine can act *by speaking*. This is to say that Tamburlaine's most trusted friend rejects the fiction of non-contingent, illocutionary speech. Theridamas is telling



Tamburlaine sovereign that not only will his “vaunts [not] prove substantial,” but speech and action in this case, are mutually exclusive.

## CONCLUSION

Lying on his deathbed, Tamburlaine orders his soldiers to bring his heretofore hypothetical map onto the stage. Tamburlaine’s world map is the materialization of the speech-act fantasy, a fantasy that made Tamburlaine’s gory conquests both possible to obtain and impossible to refuse. As Tamburlaine exhaustively lists his geographic conquests, the audience recognizes with what success Tamburlaine has managed to “write [himself] lord of Africa,” (*Part 1*, III. ii. 245) and reduce the world to a map, naming “provinces, cities, and towns” after himself and his beloved Zenocrate (*Part 1*, IV iv. 81-83). Until now, the map has served as a trope of the effective speech illusion, repeatedly invoked in order to point to out the supposed ease with which Tamburlaine actualizes his pre-written destiny. At the moment of his death, however, the map reveals that along with Tamburlaine’s wasted body, this masquerade has come to its end.

Tamburlaine fails to manifest his map’s speech-acts, because “Death forbids [his] life” and he must die with much unconquered (*Part 2*, V. iii. 158, 160). Marlowe punctuates the unavoidable necessity of embodied consent as Tamburlaine recognizes his final failure. Consent is both embodied and governed by the limits of the body in this moment. Tamburlaine’s desiccating flesh cannot agree to the very labor he has vowed to accomplish. There is no possibility of consent in the Scythian’s exhausted body. Now Death, and not Tamburlaine, is the “monarch of the earth” (*Part 2*, V. iii. 215).

1 A majority of Marlowe biographers and literary historians agree that Marlowe and his audience would have encountered the Tamburlaine myth in Sir Thomas Fortescue's *The Forest or Collection of Histories* (1571) and George Whetstone's *English Mirror* (1586).

2 There is a robust critical tradition of seeing Tamburlaine as an un-ironic representation of self-created sovereignty. See Battenhouse, Bevington, W. Brown, Friedenreich, and McAldin among others. This is not to suggest that all Tamburlaine criticism fails to bring to light Marlowe's ambiguous relationship to the self-made tyrant. See critics such as Peter Berek, Marjorie Garber and Constance Brown Kuriyama for readings that allow for this potential ambiguity.

3 At first, Tamburlaine may not appear to be a prime candidate for overidentification because he wants to expand, not subvert the Scythian hegemony. Tamburlaine's overidentification with the "explicit power discourse" in Marlowe's dramas complicates Žižek's original concept of the term, because this overidentification is not strictly a means of "subversion through identification" (*Plague of Fantasies* 29). Whether or not Tamburlaine intends to subvert his own power edifice becomes irrelevant by the end of the second play because Marlowe makes it clear that Tamburlaine's too-literal interpretation of performative speech works to prove that tautology wrong.

4 Tamburlaine was not only Marlowe's first big hit production, it was one of the first enormously popular plays of Elizabethan theatre. Marlowe even tells his audience that he was compelled to "pen his Second Part" (*Part 2*, prologue. 3) because of the first play's box-office success.

<sup>5</sup> The plays never detail the "original" word of prophecies Tamburlaine references, nor the original sources. Rather, only Tamburlaine's understandings of oracles are provided. The agency of interpretation may be yet another unexplored inroad into the façade of unmitigated dominion.

<sup>6</sup> The audience never actually hears these prophecies except through the lens of Tamburlaine's interpretations, making them a kind of "lost origin" of the plays' ideological schema.

7 Because Tamburlaine is not yet in power at this point in the drama, his claims are what Pierre Bourdieu terms a "mistranslation" according to the existing power discourse. Marlowe's protagonist "mistranslates" prophecies about his fated kingship through military victory.

8 In her essay, "Here is Nothing Writ," Marjorie Garber insists that Tamburlaine's pen is a metonym for his sword, pinning Tamburlaine in a metaphorical battle with his playwright-creator, Marlowe.

9 Tamburlaine's insistence on the violence of words renders the often-unrepresented but highly-discussed battle scenes redundant. In fact, Tamburlaine's structure has been

likened to Roman triumphal processions, which celebrated martial victories through theatrical parades, showing off the spoils of wars such as dead and enslaved bodies.

10 Interestingly, Marlowe's second *Tamburlaine* play does not offer this same repeated union of word and sword.

11 In one instance, Tamburlaine tries to say he has control of his future, declaring, "I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains / And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about" (*Part 1*, I. ii. 174-175).

12 Tamburlaine repeatedly connects his public word with his honor throughout these two plays. Furthermore, he conceptualizes his sovereignty as an outcome of this honor in several instances, such as when he says his honor "consists in shedding blood" (*Part 1*, V. i. 477) in *Part 1*, and "wondrous victories" (*Part 2*, IV. i. 206) in *Part 2*.

13 Tamburlaine's insistence on taking the Persian crown in battle may also open this scene up to arguments regarding the importance of embodied *witnesses* in the constitution of reality. Furthermore, it could be said that Marlowe is reflecting on the nature of dramatic works written for live performance and the nature of Elizabethan theatre as a literary genre of spectacle. This scene also brings to mind issues of sanctioned speech-acts in legal hierarchies. Mark Thornton Burnett contends that "by co-ordinating multiple coronations and his own marriage, [Tamburlaine] executes the role of archbishop, suggesting that, contestatory actions notwithstanding, a need for formal sanction is still in evidence" (134). Burnett's argument augments my own because Tamburlaine's need for "formal sanction" indicates his adherence to the rules of an illocutionary ideological fantasy.

<sup>14</sup> Carolyn Williams explores the implications of Calyphas's effeminacy, while T.M. Pearce argues that Tamburlaine embodies the Renaissance educational theories of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Gosson. Paul Kocher sees the stabbing as "an act of military discipline" that would prove heroic in Elizabethan ideals.

<sup>15</sup> It can be argued that Tamburlaine also uses live bodies to evidence his powers of objectification, though this paper will argue that live bodies always bring with them the problematic embodiment of sovereignty. Still, one particularly explicit example of live bodily evidence occurs in *Part 2*, when Tamburlaine enters the stage "[all in black, drawn in his chariot by the kings of Trebizond and Soria]" (*Part 2*, V. i. 61). In this scene, Tamburlaine literally bridles these objectified men and forces them to be the vehicle of his ideological will. Paradoxically, Tamburlaine must materially evidence his power to objectify others in order to make it seem as though he did not even need to bridle Trebizond and Soria.

16 Elaine Scarry's article, "Consent and the Body: Injury, Departure, and Desire," argues that in historical and contemporary discourse, the body becomes the "primary ground of all subsequent rights." Scarry discusses the body and consent in regards to medicine,

political philosophy and marriage law. For more of Scarry's discussion of the body, language, and violence, see her monograph, *The Body in Pain*.

17 Critics who discuss Tamburlaine's linguistic prowess include but are certainly not limited to Marjorie Garber, Johannes Birringer, Melissa Mohr, Matthew Greenfield and the theater studies scholar Martin Miesel.

18 Theridamas and Tamburlaine mirror the early modern legacy of husband and wife becoming one flesh with patriarchal sovereign (in this case, Tamburlaine) as head. Frances E. Dolan's *Marriage and Violence: The Early Modern Legacy* explores models of marriage from Renaissance England in depth. Dolan argues that the "one flesh, two heads" model of spousal union like that mirrored in Tamburlaine with Theridamas, creates power hierarchies and violence. For a methodologically disparate historical study of marriage in Elizabethan England, see Keith Wrightson's *English Society 1580-1680*.

19 Karen Cunningham, Matthew Greenfield, Alan Shepard and Michelle Warren discuss at different lengths the character and embodiment of Theridamas as Tamburlaine's soldier and lackey, but devote their attention to issues other than his performance of consent.

20 For discussions of Zenocrate's objectification, see Jolene Mendel, Mary Beth Rose, and Kent Cartwright.

21 Tamburlaine gives words a kind of currency or value, "that is not objective, but depends on 'notional' determinations" (Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, xix). Tamburlaine insists that he has the power to unilaterally delegate notional value onto words, ignoring the fact that all notional values must be collectively accepted by a consenting community.

22 Matthew Sharpe explains that "arguably the key feature that enables us to comprehend Žižek's theorization of 'totalitarianism' is his fascination notion of a 'forced choice' that totalitarian regimes present to their subject (Sharpe 78, Žižek, 1997a: 27ff). The forced choice according to Žižek actually differs from my focus on consent, because according to Žižek, an option such as death or enslavement is "even worse than open coercion" because it forces subjects to pretend that they are freely and willingly participating in repulsive actions. I do not disagree with Žižek; however, I want to register the ways in which even a forced choice exposes a hegemonic power's vulnerability to the agency of its subjects.

23 A scene between Theridamas and the woman, Olympia in Marlowe's second part offers a glimpse into how the Tamburlaine-Zenocrate interaction could have ended in an alternate world. Olympia tricks Theridamas into stabbing her, enacting the kind of resistant consent that Marlowe shows in the suicides of Bajazeth and Zabina in *Part 2*. Alan Shepard's "Soldiers' Desire in Tamburlaine" offers an interesting reading of Theridamas and Olympia's encounter.

24 The collaborative nature of reality is a commonly explored theme in other Renaissance tragedies such as Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, in which the playwright's protagonist exposes how "the ongoing deceptive revision of public specification turns out to be fantastically unreal" (John Plotz 813). For further discussion of collaborative fiction in Elizabethan drama, consult Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean* and Stanley Cavell's discussion of withheld and implied consent in *The Claim of Reason*.

25 Frank Romaney and Robert Lindsey's introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of Marlowe's complete plays states, "Tamburlaine's triumphs over his enemies increasingly seem the ceremonious exultations of sadism" (xviii). Romaney and Lindsey are only one voice in a chorus of scholars who have devoted volumes to ascertaining a message of morality in Marlowe's bloody Tamburlaine dramas.

26 There is a robust critical tradition of disagreement regarding Tamburlaine's status as a tragic drama. Harry Levin agrees with Richard A. Martin when he states that *Part I* is "not a tragedy; it is a heroic play or romantic drama" (35), while Robert Egan and William Brown refer to it as a "conqueror play." Thomas McAlindon says that the tragic aspects of Tamburlaine are only superficially developed and Mathew Martin argues that Tamburlaine is a tragedy with a trauma narrative. Roy Battenhouse and Una Ellis-Fermor consider Marlowe's "comedic element" regarding the limits of human ambition.

27 Bajazeth's becoming a footstool can be seen in agreement with what Alan Shepard calls the "ancient assumption that human body and natural universe are congruent" (736) because Tamburlaine forces his enemy's body to perform what he believes the universe has promised him: in this case, the Turkish throne. This scene is easily one of critics' favorites to excise while citing Marlowe's propensity for spectacle and over-the-top power plays.

28 In her text, *Creaturely Ambiguities*, Anat Pick brings seemingly disparate voices of posthumanist studies together under what she terms, the "logic of flesh." In her introduction, Pick states that by definition, all living bodies are "material, temporal, and vulnerable" (5).

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