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Where Heaven and Earth Meet: Amyras’ Eulogy and the Unconquered Map

Amyras’ eulogy at the end of Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays offers itself up to a utopian reading that troubles popular understandings of the role of governmental and religious power. The existing criticism for these plays focuses largely on Tamburlaine, the self-proclaimed “scourge of God” and his temporary success and ultimate demise (1:3.3.44-45; 2:5.3.248). Many scholars have read this play as a testament to the downfall of an atheistic tyrant, as the Commonwealth’s relationship to its leaders, or as a commentary on the role of religion in politics[1]. With this background in place, I intend to pursue a new interpretation of the *Tamburlaine* plays. Marlowe’s historical context, Tamburlaine’s death in the second play, and the fact that Amyras has the final words combine to offer a previously unexplored utopian reading of *Tamburlaine 2* through Amyras. Where critics tend to read Amyras as a weak rehearsal of Tamburlaine, I offer a reading of an Amyras who progressively loses faith in his father and ends the play with a denial of his father’s approach to power.

The scarce criticism that mentions Amyras undervalues his contribution to the play or his ability to take the rule from Tamburlaine. Arthur Lindley, for example, points specifically to the map scene to state that Tamburlaine “is preoccupied not only with storming the heavens but, more practically, with that map which shows, more clearly and finally than anything else, what he has *not* conquered” (7). Lindley makes no reference to the fact that Tamburlaine shows it to his sons who will continue his rule, whom Lindley characterizes elsewhere simply as “little piping voices” (14). Similarly, Emrys Jones portrays the map scene as a tragic gesture of “what he has done and what he would still long to do” (168-69), but Jones does not see a true transfer of power to the sons. Both of these articles overlook Tamburlaine’s instructions to his sons to continue his conquest, as if the request is out of desperation and not with an expectation that they are capable of succeeding. If Tamburlaine, in his final hours, considers Amyras capable of such lofty ambitions, it is worth considering his faith as affirmation that Amyras qualifies as a proper scourge.

Since there is little prior criticism on Amyras, I offer a reading of his language and development to suggest that he represents a shift away from Tamburlaine’s despotic rule and towards a hope for a new type of ruler.First, I offer an analysis of Amyras’ development as a character through the second play, paying close attention to his encounters with dissent to Tamburlaine’s rule. Second, I provide a close reading of Amyras’ four-line eulogy to demonstrate the utopian element in Amyras’ words at the end of the play. Third, after establishing Amyras’ character as one who has hope for his own future, I investigate to what degree Amyras’ eulogy for Tamburlaine challenges ultimate political and religious authority in Marlowe’s time and for the modern reader. Shifting the emphasis from Tamburlaine’s death to Amyras’ view of the horizon allows the reader to encounter the text as a utopian expression of unfulfilled potential in Amyras’ character.

To clarify my use of “utopian” in this context, I argue that the content of Amyras’ eulogy exhibits a hopefulness that conditions will improve after the last line of the play, not that Tamburlaine’s brand of tyranny is an ideal political state. In taking this view, I borrow Ernst Bloch’s definition of “utopia”: “utopias then become conceptions which do not mirror and justify the given society, like ideology, but undermine and explode it” (*Heritage of Our Times* 264). Bloch focuses primarily on the rise and fall of utopian ideas in art and literature, stating that art is timeless only if it contains a utopian charge[2]:

Every great work of art thus still remains, except for its manifest character, impelled towards the latency of the other side, i.e. towards the contents of a future which had not yet appeared in its own time, if not towards the contents of an as yet unknown final state. For this reason alone great works have something to say to all ages. (*Principle of Hope Vol. 1* 127)

Bloch, then, reworks the early twentieth-century understanding of “utopia” as “the ideal state” to point to a larger cultural project that continuously creates alternatives to real-world problems. Within Bloch’s framework of utopia, I locate the *Tamburlaine* plays as one of these created worlds in which Marlowe points to the horizon of a world that does not yet exist.

I am not the first reader to notice a utopian charge in Marlowe’s texts, but I am the first to note the utopian charge in Amyras’ eulogy. Christopher Kendrick argues that Marlowe benefits from Thomas More’s notion of utopia, with particular emphasis on Marlowe “attacking the moralizing conventions bequeathed to Elizabethan drama” (220). He sees the *Tamburlaine* plays specifically as a satire of the origin of power, “leveling social hierarchy in the boundless desire of fable, and by suggesting that the power driving absolutism derives, ultimately, from the underclass” (225). Kendrick’s assessment supports the claim that *Tamburlaine* holds a utopian charge, but I believe that the force of that charge is found chiefly in Amyras’ last words that end the plays. A utopian analysis of this text must focus, then, on Tamburlaine’s rule within Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays to see the extent to which Amyras stands at the edge of something new.

At the end of *Tamburlaine* *2*,Amyras exists at the limit of what is possible for an early modern audience, exposing a material potential for a change in modes of power. Shepherds were not becoming kings or rulers in Marlowe’s day, and atheists were not openly challenging and defeating organized religions. Within the text of *Tamburlaine 1*, however,the reader can witness a world in which such a thing is possible. In *Tamburlaine 2*, Tamburlaine reigns through the stereotypical cruelty of the tyrant, but his death opens a possibility for a decentralization of power. Bloch states these moments typify the Renaissance:

So far the Renaissance has been the most easily surveyable example of such a change, especially on the ideological and cultural side. Here more clearly than almost anywhere else there is, in the first shift of feudal society towards the modern bourgeois one, departure and expectation, Not-Yet-Consciousness as conscious premonition. (118)

Where Tamburlaine collects all power, both political and religious, and allows no questioning of his own power, Amyras develops throughout the play as a leader who does not believe in the ruler’s right to supreme power. To highlight how Amyras moves away from this old mode of power, we must first look at his encounters with Tamburlaine and at other subjects’ subversions of Tamburlaine’s power before he crafts his final eulogy declaring his move in a new direction.

Tracing Amyras’ development throughout *Tamburlaine 2* demonstrates how Amyras’ early stated desire to be like Tamburlaine fades after hearing the subversive voices of Calyphas, Olympia, Theridamas, and, ultimately, Tamburlaine himself. Amyras’ first appearance sets the stage for his eventual claim to Tamburlaine’s throne when he asks Tamburlaine why he and his brother Celebinus cannot be scourges after Tamburlaine becomes too old to fill this position (*2*:1.4). Tamburlaine replies to all three of his sons, “Be all a scourge and terror to the world, / Or else you are not sons of Tamburlaine” (63-64). Despite this command, his youngest son, Calyphas, asks if he can stay with Zenocrate while Amyras and Celebinus become scourges. Tamburlaine outlines the parameters for his rightful heir:

For he shall wear the crown of Persia

Whose head hath deepest scars, whose breast most wounds,

Which being wroth, sends lightning from his eyes,

And in the furrows of his frowning brows

Harbours revenge, war, death and cruelty. (74-78)

Celebinus and Amyras pledge to meet this standard, while Calyphas agrees only half-heartedly to kill those who are being held for him. Tamburlaine reiterates that his sons must be vicious, that they must “hold him and cleave him too,” or face Tamburlaine’s wrath as scourge (104). Amyras desires to assume his father’s role as scourge, and Tamburlaine sets a very clear standard for being able to be the next scourge. Amyras is not yet emboldened to speak on his father’s or brother’s behalf, but he plans to rule after his father dies.

Amyras’ next appearance is at his mother’s death, where he first uses the hyperbolic language of mourning. Amyras uses this occasion to praise his father by calling him “monarch of the East” (2:3.2.22) after they destroy the city where Zenocrate dies. He simultaneously praises his mother’s memory by stating “As is that town, so is my heart consumed / With grief and sorrow for my mother’s death” (2:3.2.49-50). Tamburlaine excuses his sons from this custom by explaining to all three sons that they must learn how to be good soldiers and strategists to become “worthy sons of Tamburlaine the Great” (2:3.2.92). Amyras uses hyperbole to describe his grief in his eulogy for Zenocrate, stating that he is completely destroyed by grief. When Tamburlaine excuses him from this social duty to his mother, however, Amyras quickly pledges to begin his career as a soldier. Far from burning with grief in any way similar to the way Natolia burns with fire, Amyras uses language to indicate the depth of his loss without indicating a literal meaning that would prevent him from striving to be king. Amyras returns to this hyperbolic language after Tamburlaine’s death, subverting any literal interpretation of a depth of grief that prevents him from continuing as the new ruler.

In addition to the hyperbolic language at Zenocrates’ funeral, Amyras also witnesses the first open defiance of Tamburlaine’s power. Calyphas interrupts the violence of Tamburlaine’s speech about how to be a good soldier with timidity when he says, “My lord, but this is dangerous to be done – / We may be slain or wounded ere we learn” (2:3.2.93-94). Tamburlaine curses him for being a “villain” (2:3.2.95) and a “coward” (2:3.2.102) before cutting himself to prove to his sons that pain is not something to be feared. Calyphas exposes the meaninglessness of Tamburlaine’s gesture when he says, “I know not what I should think of it. Methinks ‘tis a pitiful sight” (2:3.2.130-131). Celebinus answers appropriately, requesting a wound like Tamburlaine’s (2:3.2.132), and Amyras seconds this request, saying, “And me another, my lord” (2:3.2.133). Tamburlaine assures Amyras and Celebinus that it is enough that these two sons are willing to be cut at this time, so that in the battle they can be fearless of injury and be “Fit for the followers of great Tamburlaine” (2:3.2.144). Amyras still desires to follow in Tamburlaine’s footsteps and abide by Tamburlaine’s rules, but he witnesses a blatant rejection of Tamburlaine’s power. Calyphas is not immediately punished for his defiance, which sets a precedent for any of his sons to deviate from Tamburlaine’s wishes.

When Calyphas refuses to join in a battle, Amyras attempts to use Tamburlaine’s power of speech to coerce Calyphas to join the battle, but he is unable to succeed using Tamburlaine’s method. Amyras and Celebinus know that if Tamburlaine “miss him [Calyphas] in the field, / Wrath kindled in the furnace of his [Tamburlaine’s] breast / Will send a deadly lightning to his heart” (2:4.1.8-10). They do not have the same strength of persuasion that their father demonstrates throughout *Tamburlaine 1*. Calyphas subverts Tamburlaine’s power by asking how their presence can assist when Tamburlaine consistently boasts that his own prowess is sufficient to rule the world (2:4.1.15-21). Amyras abandons his attempt to mimic Tamburlaine’s style of persuasive language and answers that all three sons should fight whenever Tamburlaine fights:

What, dar’st thou then be absent from the fight,

Knowing my father hates thy cowardice

And oft hath warned thee to be still in field,

When he himself amidst the thickest troops

Beats down our foes, to flesh our taintless swords? (2:4.1.22-26)

Calyphas replies that he prefers wine to blood, and Celebinus and Amyras can only encourage him to join them in “all the honours he [Tamburlaine] proposed for us” (2:4.1.48). Tamburlaine’s sons attempt to reenact their father’s powerful speech, but Calyphas ignores their words, replying, “Take you the honour, I will take my ease, / My wisdom shall excuse my cowardice” (2:4.1.49-50). True to his word, he retires to play cards with a servant while his brothers join the battle. Amyras witnesses Calyphas’ open defiance of their father’s orders, and rather than take action as his father would, Amyras allows Calyphas to exercise free will in making his decision to stay behind. Despite his stated desire to be like his father, Amyras allows his brother to speak ill against Tamburlaine and simply goes on his own way to join the battle.

After Amyras follows his father into battle, he witnesses Tamburlaine contradict himself regarding his power over fate. Calyphas’ external subversion of Tamburlaine’s power allows Amyras to question his father’s power, but Tamburlaine increases this doubt by his inconsistent claims to control fate. When the battle is over, Amyras asks Tamburlaine if they should let the enemy kings go so they can be defeated again to demonstrate that Tamburlaine’s victory was not only luck. Tamburlaine replies, “No, no Amyras, tempt not fortune so” (2:4.1.85). This line could easily get lost against the violent scene that follows, but Tamburlaine’s statement contradicts his previous boasts. Before he becomes an emperor, Tamburlaine tells his men, “I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains / And with my hand turn Fortune’s wheel about” (1:1.2.174-175). Once he has succeeded in establishing an empire, he continues this grandiose rhetoric, proposing that “we descend into th’eternal vaults / To hale the Fatal Sisters by the hair / And throw them in the triple moat of hell” (2:2.4.98-100). Tamburlaine, whose speeches convince enemies to become allies and scare even kings and emperors, here contradicts himself regarding his ability to control Fate and Fortune.

Tamburlaine’s contradiction, combined with Calyphas’ reasoned responses to his brothers in defiance of Tamburlaine’s wishes, causes Amyras to speak against his father when Tamburlaine threatens to kill Calyphas for his cowardice. Tamburlaine has never taught his sons the idea of forgiveness, but Amyras offers it as an alternative to killing Calyphas: “Good my lord, let him be forgiven for once / And we will force him to the field hereafter” (2:4.1.100-101). Amyras, aware that his words do not control Calyphas, suggests that he is powerful enough to control his brother and dares to contradict his father’s pronouncement. Tamburlaine addresses this challenge directly: “Stand up, my boys, and I will teach ye arms, / And what the jealousy of wars must do” (2:4.1.102-103). Tamburlaine invokes God before his sons to refuse to accept this cowardly son, demonstrating for Amyras that not even God can alter Tamburlaine’s words. Tamburlaine emphasizes this further by describing himself as an unstoppable force,

… valiant, proud, ambitious,

Ready to levy power against thy [Jove’s] throne,

That I might move the turning spheres of heaven –

For earth and all this airy region

Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine. [Stabs Calyhpas] (2.4.1.115-119)

Tamburlaine once again uses language that exalts himself over the Gods, challenging even heaven while stating that earth cannot contain his whole. Just as Calyphas was unmoved by his brother’s words, Tamburlaine cannot be dissuaded by words alone. Amyras, desiring to be like his father, clearly does not have the authority of speech or action to convince his brother or father to follow him.

Amyras receives a test by which to judge the veracity of Tamburlaine and his critics’ claims: either God will destroy Tamburlaine violently or God will allow him to conquer until his job is done. When the enemy kings see Tamburlaine kill his own son, the King of Jerusalem curses Tamburlaine to die with “blood and fire on thy head” (2:4.1.142) as revenge from all those Tamburlaine has killed. Tamburlaine answers with a characteristically bold claim:

But since I exercise a greater 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. (2:4.1.152-157)

Tamburlaine continues this violent rhetoric, concluding, “And till by vision or by speech I hear / Immortal Jove say ‘Cease, my Tamburlaine,’ / I will persist a terror to the world” (2:4.1.197-199). Amyras observes the enemy’s curse on his father and his father’s claim that only the fulfillment of God’s will can stop him. When Amyras stands to take the throne, however, he sees that Tamburlaine does not pass either test: Tamburlaine’s death is silent and he dies before he can conquer the known world. Thus an excluded middle possibility exists for Amyras’ rule.

Increasingly aware of his father’s loss of linguistic power, Amyras ends the play by striving with his father for the last word. Tamburlaine charts out the lands remaining to be conquered on a map so that his sons can continue his reign as he quickly approaches death. Amyras begins to speak of the grief they will have for him once he has died, stating, “Your soul gives essence to our wretched subjects, / Whose matter is incorporate in your flesh” (171). Despite these words, Amyras accepts Tamburlaine’s whip and crown as he takes his place in Tamburlaine’s chariot. Amyras continues to speak of the difficulty he will have ruling after Tamburlaine has died, but he also consistently accepts each element of Tamburlaine’s authority in stark contrast to the language he uses. Each time Amyras attempts eulogizing language, Tamburlaine interrupts him, attempting to have the last word. For example, in Tamburlaine’s reply, “Let not thy love exceed thine honour, son, / Nor bar thy mind that magnanimity / That nobly must admit necessity” (2:5.3.199-201), Tamburlaine admits that there is a necessity that is greater than his own will. When Amyras responds with more eulogistic language, Tamburlaine admonishes him, “So, reign my son, scourge and control those slaves, / Guiding thy chariot with thy father’s hand” (2:5.3.228-229). As Tamburlaine’s power weakens, his speech becomes increasingly contradictory: he admits that there is a necessity greater than his own will, but he also attempts to maintain control through attributing his own hand in Amyras’ rule. Tamburlaine’s handle on his son through speech disappears, and Amyras gives the last words in the play with the same type of hyperbolic eulogistic language he uses at Zenocrate’s funeral:

[Tamburlaine]: My body feels, my soul doth weep to see

Your sweet desires deprived my company,

For Tamburlaine the scourge of God must die. [Dies]

Amyras: Meet heaven and earth, and here let all things end,

For earth hath spent the pride of all her fruit

And heaven consumed his choicest living fire.

Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore,

For both their worths will equal him no more. [Exeunt] (2:5.3.246-253)

Marlowe mediates *Tamburlaine 1*’s successful tyrant with a conclusion in which Tamburlaine dies, ending his exploitative, violent reign and transferring his powerful language to his successor. This exchange results in Amyras’ eulogy, demonstrating his willingness to depart from Tamburlaine’s methods of tyrannical speech towards the horizon.

With Amyras’ development demonstrating a decline in Tamburlaine’s power over him, the eulogy carries a double valence of mourning language and Amyras’ personal hopes for his own future. The eulogy begins with an imperative command, “Meet heaven and earth, and here let all things end” (2:5.3.249). The subject of this command is either Tamburlaine, who has just died, or heaven and earth. Commanding Tamburlaine to meet heaven and earth may bear out from Tamburlaine’s previous proposal, “Come let us march against the powers of heaven / And set black streamers in the firmament / To signify the slaughter of the Gods” (2:5.3.48-50). Yet the subsequent lines indicate that Amyras commands heaven and earth to meet since this meeting will be an end to all things. While the language appears to state pessimistically that nothing is left after Tamburlaine’s death, Amyras evokes the symbol of the earth meeting heaven in the horizon. As this traveling prince knows from following his father’s military conquests, the horizon cannot be a true destination, and Tamburlaine himself has shown his sons a map of the lands that still need to be conquered (2:5.3.123-125). Thus the location of “here” becomes the key to determining whether Amyras despairs of any future or whether he indicates the potential in the horizon of his own future.

If Amyras locates Tamburlaine’s death as the “here” where all things end, then the function of this eulogy in the text is unclear. Tamburlaine’s last line in *Tamburlaine 2* could easily end the play with the type of finality found at the end of *Tamburlaine 1*: “Hang up your weapons on Alcides’ post, / For Tamburlaine takes truce with all the world” (1:5.2.466-467). The presence of Amyras’ eulogy, however, draws attention to the fact that not all has ended. Ultimately, then, this eulogy is not pessimistic to the extent that Amyras has given up all hope or his will to live, but it may still represent a despair of being able to assume Tamburlaine’s lofty position. Amyras’ eulogy ends with a focus on Tamburlaine’s superlative qualities, referring to his father as both “the pride of all her [the earth’s] fruit” as well as “his [heaven’s] choicest living fire” (2:5.3.250-251). Both of these statements appear to praise his father, but both operate with a double valence to expose Tamburlaine’s insufficiencies.

The use of “pride,” for example, would normally indicate in this context that Tamburlaine is “the foremost, best, or most distinguished of a class, country, etc…” (*Oxford English Dictionary*), which is certainly how Tamburlaine views himself throughout the play[3] and how his followers perceive him[4]. Amyras could be using “pride” equivocally, however, to mean “an excessively high opinion of one’s own worth or importance which gives rise to a feeling or attitude of superiority over others” (*OED*). Amyras has just witnessed Tamburlaine’s declaration of war on heaven and the Gods shortly before his death, along with his previous claim to the King of Jerusalem that he would be a scourge until God himself tells him he is finished. This equivocal use of “pride” is further supported by Amyras’ ironic use of “living” regarding the “choicest living fire” of heaven for his father who has just died. Tamburlaine was “choicest” in that he was “worthy of being chosen” (*OED*), but that could only be true while he was alive. Both of these references to earth and heaven thus operate as a direct contradiction to Tamburlaine’s view of his own importance: “For earth and all this airy region / Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine” (2:4.1.118-119). Amyras clarifies that Tamburlaine has been “spent” and “consumed” by the same powers he once boasted to exceed. Even these poetic lines mourning his father work ultimately to subvert the claims his father had made throughout his life.

The last sentence of the play contains an equally ambiguous claim concerning Tamburlaine’s legacy: “Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore, / For both their worths will equal him no more” (2:5.3.252-253). While this eulogistic language shows a type of rhetorical regret at Tamburlaine’s passing, it also distinguishes the temporal nature of Tamburlaine’s rule and indicates a progress that goes beyond Tamburlaine’s lifetime, supporting the imagery of the horizon in the first three lines of the eulogy. *The* *Oxford English Dictionary* uses this specific use of “timeless” as an example of the meaning “that which has not happened at the proper or rightful time; … untimely,” and the Dawson edition also provides a gloss defining “timeless” as “untimely” (174). This reading follows on Tamburlaine’s final words, “My body feels, my soul doth weep to see / Your sweet desires deprived my company, / For Tamburlaine the scourge of God must die” (2:5.3.246-248). At first glance, the last sentence of Amyras’ eulogy states that the worth of heaven and earth can no longer equal Tamburlaine’s worth, which agrees with the *OED* and Dawson edition gloss of “untimely.” The setting, however, implies that heaven and earth will continue to “deplore” as well as to “equal him no more” (2:5.3.252-253). Tamburlaine’s death is untimely from Amyras’ perspective, but it is located firmly in a set time. In other words, Amyras says that just as Tamburlaine was clearly held between earth and sky, he is also bound by time. Tamburlaine, who claimed to have power over fate and heaven, died early and ended an era of his own successful military conquest; Amyras, however, survives as the speaker and will seek the horizon where all things end.

Amyras’ eulogy demonstrates his refusal of Tamburlaine’s claim to total political and religious authority. Tamburlaine claims religious power by assuming the role of divine scourge, but he equivocates this title by speaking of the divine in pagan, Muslim, and Christian terms[5]. He defies the idea of nobility by fomenting revolt while still a peasant, but he attempts to continue the noble tradition of bequeathing his kingdom to his son. He exhibits his political and religious power through a combination of his linguistic and military might, demonstrating his own right to authority not through birth but through speech and action. Amyras knows from Calyphas’ death that his speech is not as powerful as Tamburlaine’s, but Amyras demonstrates his understanding that the end of any leader claiming ultimate authority comes to the same end: death. Through Amyras’ eulogistic language of spending and consuming, it is clear that Amyras is aware of the expendability of all men, including kings. He witnesses firsthand how even a strong leader who attempts to consolidate all power into his own hands cannot escape the inevitable force of death.

Rather than offer a nihilistic statement about the absurdity of human effort, Amyras shifts the focus from one single man’s achievements to a continued pursuit of new goals. The horizon image in Amyras’ five-line eulogy operates with a strong utopian charge at the end of *Tamburlaine 2*. Amyras’ horizon fits into Ernst Bloch’s discussion of the horizon, which Bloch figures as the ideological space at the periphery of what an age believes possible: “Thus the beginning philosophy of revolution … was ultimately revealed on and in the *horizon of the future*” (*Principle* 283 italics original). Bloch’s utopian philosophy offers two useful critiques that sharpen the awareness of *Tamburlaine 2* as a utopian project. First, Bloch, as a Marxist scholar, is interested largely in the material conditions in which an author writes. Second, Bloch’s awareness of the need for religious fervor divorced from dogmatic practice was prefigured in Amyras’ dismissal of Tamburlaine’s exclusive claim to religious[6]. Since Tamburlaine works to control political and religious power throughout the plays, any utopian reading must explain how Amyras relates to these issues of power.

Within the realm of political power, the *Tamburlaine* plays address social mobility and absolute power. Concerning social mobility in Marlowe’s day, David Riggs has researched government records and secondary texts from Marlowe’s childhood and career to craft a careful and thoughtful analysis of Marlowe’s life and work. Riggs documents how Christopher Marlowe’s father rose from a tradesman to a clerk, allowing Christopher to attend school, where he succeeded beyond expectations (24). Riggs uses this upbringing to argue that “From the English playwright’s standpoint, Tamburlaine’s poverty signified an ominous social crisis, and a novel way of resolving it” (204). By this token, Tamburlaine represents the growing number of discontent poor who threatened social disorder, specifically those educated poor whose “class origins prevented them from ever exercising real power” (208-209). In this way we see Tamburlaine representing “a Not-Yet-Conscious which is carried by a rising class” (Bloch 119), signaling that there is a cultural shift away from fixed social structures toward an idea of social mobility.

In addition to the individual’s social mobility, *Tamburlaine* parallels Queen Elizabeth’s focus on the public’s role in a monarch’s reign. Riggs connects Elizabeth’s style of leading-as-spectacle to Tamburlaine’s flair for the dramatic as he leads his armies against the Turks. To buttress this argument, Riggs describes Elizabeth’s appearance in Canterbury during Marlowe’s boyhood. Elizabeth ruled from a previous Catholic landmark, the bishops asked her for mercy as she entered, and she was carried into the former cathedral by her servants, demonstrating her “remarkable talent for self-deification” (34). Jeffrey Doty agrees with this assessment of Elizabeth’s desire for spectacle, which he argues “developed in concert with (and contributed to) an expanded access to political matters (through rumor, sermons, plays, printed polemics, and aristocratic self-staging) that suggests the formation of an early modern public sphere” (38-39). The public nature of Elizabeth and Tamburlaine’s reigns both work to open up the monarchy to the people’s observation as opposed to previous modes of secrecy. While it is not close to more revolutionary forms of government, it is the beginning of the concept that the public plays a role in their leaders’ authority. Riggs describes the *Tamburlaine* plays as “a fantasy of self-empowerment, unimpeded by social custom or religious belief” (230). This political exploration of the place of the public in constructing governmental authority supports my utopian reading, fitting into a larger cultural project of exploring new possibilities.

This cultural project also informs Marlowe’s choice of the Timur figure for the title character in the *Tamburlaine* plays. Timur, historically a Mongolian military leader, was the topic of several histories detailing his military might (Grogan 51, Izard 411-414). Marlowe’s choice to cast him as a Scythian shepherd’s son allows Tamburlaine to occupy the peasant category, but also ascribes to him an ability to climb to the very height of political power through unusually cruel treatment of his enemies. His violence begins at the lowest echelon, but it grows in proportion to his political power. Thus we see Marlowe using Tamburlaine to explore the ways in which civilians and government authorities both operate through violence. *Tamburlaine 1* shows the potential dangers of discontented citizens taking power from the ruling nobility, and *Tamburlaine 2* shows the extent to which tyrannical violence cannot last. Amyras must choose how he will handle power, and the references to the ways in which his father was limited by heaven, earth, and time indicate that he understands that Tamburlaine’s violence is not a viable path.

Tamburlaine represents one man’s potential mobility to become an emperor, but once he is in power he intends to follow noble protocol and leave his kingdom to his sons. Perhaps this irony causes critics to ignore Amyras as a viable heir to the throne, because he has not proven himself in the same ways. Amyras receives training from Tamburlaine, Calyphas, and Theridamas in the limits of his father’s power, though: despite Tamburlaine’s rise to power from shepherd to emperor, he controls his kingdom no differently than the rulers he supplants. Marlowe clarifies the scope of his utopian vision by portraying Tamburlaine’s death and the threshold of Amyras’ rule, leaving the reader to anticipate whether or not Amyras will continue to be a scourge or find his own path. He is in Tamburlaine’s chariot with Tamburlaine’s whip, so it seems that he will try to follow his father. At the same time, though, his final words point directly to his knowledge that tyrannical power does not prolong life or rule, and Amyras has a history of viewing situations differently than his father. In this way, Marlowe portrays Tamburlaine as a self-made emperor, reveals the error of making oneself in the image of a corrupt system, and leaves the audience with Amyras at a moment of decision.

Amyras’ decision always exists in the future since his last words in the text simply show mourning for his father and hope for his own path. If Amyras chooses to follow his father, Marlowe could easily demonstrate his fate in a third play about the continued acts of barbarism. Instead, the future is left open. This may be to allow the reader to choose how the story ends, or this may be the limit of what Marlowe and his audience could imagine. Marlowe, himself the victim of marginalization in his early days (Riggs 208), creates a world in which a single man can rise past his raising. In creating this world, Marlowe reaches the very limit of his own imagination: if that barrier were crossed, what other alternatives could Amyras face? The utopian charge of Amyras’ eulogy, in addition to pointing towards an uncertain future, delineates the border of what is possible for Marlowe’s early modern imagination.

Beyond Tamburlaine’s political power, his self-assumed mantle of “scourge of God” centralizes religious power in his own hands. Early modern English audiences were familiar with popes, imams, and the English monarchy claiming absolute religious authority. Catholic and Muslim powers threatened to invade and defeat England’s Protestant Christian culture, but Henry VIII, Mary, and Elizabeth had all conducted various levels of violence in their institution of reformation and Catholic rule as well. *Tamburlaine 1* challenges the notion that political power must be in the hands of a devout religious leader, and opens the way for an “atheist” ruler. Rather than subscribe to Christianity or Islam, Tamburlaine figures himself as the supreme ruler. Throughout his reign, he increases the strength of his claims to defy God, going so far in *Tamburlaine 2* that he burns the Koran and taunts Muhammad:

Now Mahomet, if thou have any power,

Come down thyself and work a miracle,

Thou art not worthy to be worshipped

That suffers flames of fire to burn the writ

Wherein the sum of thy religion rests.

…Well, soldiers, Mahomet remains in hell –

He cannot hear the voice of Tamburlaine. (2:5.1.185-188,196-197)

Whether or not Tamburlaine’s sudden illness follows from his blasphemy is unclear, but what is clear is that Tamburlaine remains unrepentant. His only religion is the worship of his own power. In the wake of his death, however, this religion is shown to be no stronger than Islam.

Tamburlaine’s war on religion was necessary to usher in a new age for Amyras. Bloch clarifies this utopian work when he speaks of the nihilism that must precede the Novum, or new order:

New heaven, new earth, the logic of the apocalypse presuppose the dialectical functional change of the fire of annihilation which is otherwise considered to be satanic: *every advent contains nihilism as something utilized and defeated*, death as something devoured in victory (311 italics original).

Tamburlaine, taking Godhood on himself and annihilating other Gods, dies mysteriously, but his death is mediated by Amyras’ ascension into his chariot. When Tamburlaine breathes his last breath, a new world arrives for Amyras, and his eulogy shows a keen awareness of his own future: heaven and earth meet at the horizon, and all things do not end until the horizon is reached. Tamburlaine fights against the religious orders of his day and claims the supreme religious role, but once he ends his reign Amyras no longer must address those defeated religions. This is what Bloch means when he says, “Utopia presses forward, in the will of the subject and in the tendency-latency of the process-world; behind the cracked ontology of a supposedly attained, even finished There” (312). Tamburlaine’s death counters his claims to Godhood, opening a nihilism that Amyras can address by identifying meaning in the progress towards the horizon and not in a theological system.

Amyras stands at an edge of the possible, on the cusp of leaving Tamburlaine’s legacy to history to strike out and find a new horizon. Politically, he is leaving behind the cruel methods of tyranny that seeks to inflict violence on anything that would question his power. Religiously, he is abandoning the pretense that he is the ultimate power that determines all men’s fate. In this way, Amyras has a potential in front of him to reach a new world, which Bloch reminds us must “have antiquity within it, working with and continuing to work beyond it, obviously, not copying it” (386). Marlowe places Amyras at this cusp in a historical setting, drawing attention to the early modern social circumstances in his re-writing of the Timur story. We approach this text in our globalized age, still within a capitalist system, and Amyras’ eulogy denotes the lasting condition of the search for the horizon. Tamburlaine closes a record on a specific political and religious power, but Amyras stands able to open it in a new direction.

Opening Amyras’ eulogy to a utopian reading turns our focus from the historical moment to our own present, to what Bloch called “the Front.” Focusing exclusively on Tamburlaine continues his tyrannical legacy, allowing us only to speculate whether his death is natural or supernatural. By analyzing Amyras’ last words, however, we can see a utopian charge within the narrative, opening the entire text to new interpretations. Tamburlaine leaves us with a map only partially conquered, but Amyras reminds us of a horizon to be explored. Viewing Amyras’ language as a utopian metaphor for the horizon allows the reader to create an ending to this narrative, but it also forces a comparison between Marlowe’s historical moment and our own. We live in a world in which people regularly rise from lowly estates to assume staggering heights of power, but we have not seen what comes next. We have not seen another horizon since feudalism was replaced by capitalism. We wait, with Amyras, at the outset of a new age in which the old forms of power and tyranny have collapsed with a choice to resurrect a failed form of power or to strike out for new ground. Like him, we must be ready to proclaim “here let all things end” (2:5.3.249).

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[1] Most criticism on the *Tamburlaine* plays focuses largely on Tamburlaine as the primary character, speculating about his role as scourge, as a sign of political unrest, or as a representative of the power of speech. Roy Battenhouse, for example, analyzes Tamburlaine’s role as a biblical scourge. Jane Grogan explores the political facet of religion in Marlowe’s use of Tamburlaine’s Islam as a division in the Turkish world, viewing it as “schism…as geopolitics” (48). Arthur Lindley, however, sees Tamburlaine as a “protagonist of slapstick tragedy” (7), pursuing divinity by sacrificing his own humanity through acts of cruelty. Mark Thornton Burnett and Emily Bartels interpret Tamburlaine’s fall as an unraveling of the power of Tamburlaine’s speech, as evidenced by Olympia’s immunity to Theridamas’ words and the power of her own actions (Burnett 129). Each of these criticisms offers useful insight to Tamburlaine, but none of them focus attention on Amyras.

[2] I use the term “utopian charge” throughout this paper to indicate anything that points to what Bloch calls an “undischarged element” in utopia, any element that points to a “Not-Yet-Conscious” (*Principle* 141).

[3] For a brief list of Tamburlaine’s boasts about his powers, consult:1:1.2.172-187; 1:2.3.6-24; 1:3.7.65-67; and 2:1.4.12-34.

[4] For a brief list of Tamburlaine’s followers’ adulations, consult:1:3.3.36-39; 1:5.2.335-340; and 2:3.5.45-67.

[5] The following passages exemplify these references where Amyras is present but are not an exhaustive list: Tamburlaine refers to pagan deities in 2:3.2.12-13; 2:4.1.110. He refers to Allah and Muhammad in 2:1.5.109; 2:4.1.120-130; 2:5.1.171-200. While Tamburlaine does not speak of Christianity in front of Amyras, he does mention it in 1:2.5.84-86; 1:3.3.44-60.

[6] For an overview of Bloch’s religious thoughts, consult Vincent Geoghegan’s seminal biography *Ernst Bloch* chapter three.