

TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

General Editor: Michael Scott

The series is designed to introduce sixth-form and undergraduate students to the themes, continuing vitality and performance of major dramatic works. The attention given to production aspects is an element of special importance, responding to the invigoration given to literary study by the work of leading contemporary critics.

The prime aim is to present each play as a vital experience in the mind of the reader – achieved by analysis of the text in relation to its themes and theatricality. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the relevance of the work to the modern reader and the world of today. At the same time, traditional views are presented and appraised, forming the basis from which a creative response to the text can develop.

In each volume, Part One: *Text* discusses certain key themes or problems, the reader being encouraged to gain a stronger perception both of the inherent character of the work or works and also of variations in interpreting it. Part Two: *Performance* examines the ways in which these themes or problems have been handled in modern productions, how, that is, the plays work on the stage.

A synopsis of the play is given and an outline of its major sources, and a concluding Reading List offers guidance to the student's independent study of the work.

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TAMBURLAINE
AND
EDWARD II

Text and Performance

GEORGE L. GECKLE

M
MACMILLAN
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First published 1988

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

Typeset by Wessex Typesetters
(Division of The Eastern Press Ltd)
Frome, Somerset

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Geckle, George L.
Tamburlaine and Edward II.—(Text and
performance).

1. Marlowe, Christopher, *1564–1593*
Edward II. 2. Marlowe, Christopher,
1564–1593 Tamburlaine the Great

I. Title II. Series
822'.3 PR2665

ISBN 978-0-333-42272-4 ISBN 978-1-349-08930-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-08930-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quotations of the texts of *Tamburlaine* and *Edward II* are taken from the Penguin English Library *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (1969), edited by J. B. Steane.

Sources and copyrights for the illustrations are given with the captions to the photographs.

I wish to thank the following libraries and theatres and their staffs for making their material available (some over a period of ten years) to me: The Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Library Newspaper Library, London; the British Theatre Association, London; the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.; the Harvard Theatre Collection of Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.; the National Theatre, London; the Old Vic Theatre, London; the Performing Arts Research Center of the New York Public Library, New York City; the Prospect Theatre Company, London; the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon; the Theatre Museum of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, Bristol; the University of South Carolina Cooper Library, Columbia, S.C.; Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.

This work was partially supported by a grant from the University of South Carolina Research and Productive Scholarship Fund, and I thank the Research and Productive Scholarship Committee for the award.

I thank the Johns Hopkins University Press for permission to reprint material from my article 'The National Theatre Production of *Tamburlaine*' (*Educational Theatre Journal*, 30, October 1978, pp. 329–42).

I am forever grateful to my staff assistant, Beth Busby, for her indefatigable labours on the typescript.

I dedicate this book to my parents, George and Dorothy Geckle.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

For many years a mutual suspicion existed between the theatre director and the literary critic of drama. Although in the first half of the century there were important exceptions, such was the rule. A radical change of attitude, however, has taken place over the last thirty years. Critics and directors now increasingly recognise the significance of each other's work and acknowledge their growing awareness of interdependence. Both interpret the same text, but do so according to their different situations and functions. Without the director, the designer and the actor, a play's existence is only partial. They revitalise the text with action, enabling the drama to live fully at each performance. The academic critic investigates the script to elucidate its textual problems, understand its conventions and discover how it operates. He may also propose his view of the work, expounding what he considers to be its significance.

Dramatic texts belong therefore to theatre and to literature. The aim of the 'Text and Performance' series is to achieve a fuller recognition of how both enhance our enjoyment of the play. Each volume follows the same basic pattern. Part One provides a critical introduction to the plays under discussion, using the techniques and criteria of the literary critic in examining the manner in which the work operates through language, imagery and action. Part Two takes the enquiry further into the plays' theatricality by focusing on selected productions so as to illustrate points of contrast and comparison in the interpretation of different directors and actors, and to demonstrate how the plays have worked on the stage. In this way the series seeks to provide a lively and informative introduction to major plays in their text and performance.

MICHAEL SCOTT

PLOT SYNOPSES AND SOURCES

TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT: PART ONE

i i Mycetes, the weak King of Persia, opens the play with a complaint to his ambitious brother, Cosroe, and other lords about the Scythian shepherd Tamburlaine, who is robbing merchants and appears to be a threat to the realm. Theridamas is dispatched to conquer Tamburlaine. Cosroe, meanwhile, is given the crown of Persia by other nobles disgruntled by the weakness of Mycetes. i ii Tamburlaine and his cohorts, Techelles and Usumcasane, capture Zenocrate, daughter of the Soldan of Egypt, as she travels through Scythia. Tamburlaine declares his intention to conquer Asia, courts Zenocrate, and overcomes Theridamas with his rhetoric. ii i The Persian lord Menaphon describes Tamburlaine to Cosroe in terms befitting a god. ii ii Mycetes is enraged that Theridamas and Tamburlaine have joined with Cosroe to oppose him. ii iii Tamburlaine, Theridamas and Cosroe prepare to meet Mycetes in battle. ii iv Mycetes in defeat tries to hide his crown, but is discovered by Tamburlaine, who mocks him. ii v Cosroe makes Tamburlaine regent of Persia, but Tamburlaine begins to think about Cosroe's crown. ii vi Cosroe is enraged at Tamburlaine's presumption. ii vii Tamburlaine defeats Cosroe and becomes king of Persia. iii i Tamburlaine's most impressive opponent, Bajazeth, Emperor of the Turks, appears with his three contributory kings, Fez, Morocco and Argier. Bajazeth is angered at the presumption of Tamburlaine, who is threatening Bajazeth's siege of Greek Constantinople. Bajazeth sends a messenger to tell Tamburlaine not to enter Africa or raise his colours in Greece. iii ii Agydas, Median lord and retainer of Zenocrate, speaks badly to her of Tamburlaine, but she rebukes him because Tamburlaine has treated her well and she has fallen in love with him. Tamburlaine, having overheard the conversation, enters and takes Zenocrate away while glaring in wrath at Agydas. When Techelles appears with a knife, Agydas takes the hint and commits suicide. iii iii Tamburlaine tells Bajazeth's messenger that he is ready for war, even though Bajazeth's army greatly outnumbers his. He promises victory and crowns to Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane. Bajazeth enters with his contributory kings and his wife, Zabina, and engages in bitter taunts with Tamburlaine. When the men leave to fight, Zabina and Zenocrate sit on thrones and engage in a flyting match. Tamburlaine wins the battle, has Zenocrate crown him with the Turkish crown and imprisons Bajazeth and Zabina. iv i The Soldan of Egypt prepares to meet Tamburlaine's onslaught. A messenger explains to him Tamburlaine's psychological use of colours – white, red and black tents – when he mounts a siege. iv ii Tamburlaine has caged Bajazeth and now mocks him by using the fallen emperor as a footstool. iv iii The Soldan and Zenocrate's betrothed, the King of Arabia, prepare to confront Tamburlaine

at Damascus. iv iv Tamburlaine, dressed in scarlet, displays his red colours signifying that clemency is too late and that all men-at-arms shall be slaughtered. He taunts Bajazeth and Zabina, promises Zenocrate that he will spare her father and crowns Theridamas King of Argier, Techelles King of Fez and Usumcasane King of Morroco. v i The Governor of Damascus appears with four Virgins and hopes to sue for peace, but Tamburlaine has already set up his black tents, which signify death to all who oppose him. v ii Tamburlaine, dressed in black, rejects the plea of the Virgins and orders them and the rest of Damascus to be slaughtered. He then extols the beauty of Zenocrate and leaves to confront the Soldan. Bajazeth and Zabina commit suicide by braining themselves on the cage, and Zenocrate laments the futility of earthly pomp. Arabia is defeated and dies at the feet of Zenocrate. Tamburlaine arrives with the defeated Soldan, but frees him for the sake of Zenocrate and then crowns her Queen of Persia.

PART TWO

i i Orcanes, King of Natolia, Gazellus, Viceroy of Byron, and Uribassa meet on the banks of the Danube to conclude a treaty with the Christian Sigismund, King of Hungary, so that their forces can be directed against Tamburlaine. i ii Peace is concluded between the Christians and non-Christians. i iii Callapine, son of Bajazeth, persuades his keeper, Almeda, to let him escape from Egypt. i iv Tamburlaine and Zenocrate arrive with their three sons, Calyphas, Amyras and Celebinus. Calyphas appears less bloodthirsty than his brothers. i v–vi Tamburlaine's contributory kings, Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane, arrive to pay tribute and to join with Tamburlaine to attack Natolia. ii i Sigismund, Frederick, lord of Buda, and Baldwin, lord of Bohemia, decide to break the treaty, confirmed in the name of Christ, made with Orcanes. ii ii Orcanes, infuriated at the perfidy of the Christians, asks Christ's help as they attack him and his allies. ii iii Orcanes and allies defeat Sigismund and allies. ii iv Zenocrate, on her deathbed, is lamented by Tamburlaine. iii i Callapine, released by Almeda, is crowned by Orcanes and the King of Jerusalem and given a sceptre by the Kings of Trebizon and Soria. iii ii Tamburlaine enters with Usumcasane and his three sons with the hearse of Zenocrate and burns the town in which she died. He instructs his sons in the rudiments of war and then leaves with them and Usumcasane to meet Techelles and Theridamas and hunt for Callapine. iii iii Theridamas and Techelles approach Balsera in Natolia and threaten the Captain of the town. He refuses to capitulate, and they lay siege. iii iv The Captain is mortally wounded, and his wife, Olympia, stabs their son to prevent his being tortured. She burns the bodies and is about to kill herself when Theridamas arrives, prevents her suicide, and takes her to meet Tamburlaine at Natolia. iii iv Callapine arrives at Natolia with Almeda, Orcanes and the Kings of Jerusalem, Trebizon and Soria. Tamburlaine with his three sons and Usumcasane confronts and threatens them in a flying match. Theridamas and Techelles arrive, and the battle is set.

iv i Tamburlaine's sons Amyras and Celebinis leave for battle, but the cowardly Calyphas stays in his tent and plays cards with Perdicas. Tamburlaine defeats Orcanes and the Kings of Jerusalem, Trebizon and Soria. He stabs the cowardly Calyphas for being unworthy of him, and as the defeated kings rail at him, Tamburlaine decides to bridle them and conquer more of their cities. iv ii Theridamas courts Olympia, but, unlike Tamburlaine, who successfully wooed Zenocrate in Part I, he loses her as she tricks him and commits suicide. iv iii Tamburlaine enters in his chariot with the bridled Kings of Trebizon and Soria. He turns over the Turkish Concubines, who have buried his son Calyphas, to his common soldiers. Tamburlaine sets out for Babylon. v i The Governor of Babylon refuses Theridamas' offer of clemency even though it is the third day of siege. Tamburlaine's forces win, and the Governor is hung up on the walls of the city and shot to death. The Kings of Trebizon and Soria are also hung up on the walls and replaced in Tamburlaine's chariot by Orcanes and the King of Jerusalem. Tamburlaine orders the rest of the Babylonians drowned in the city's lake, burns the Koran and other holy books, challenges Mahomet and within a few lines falls ill of distemper. v ii Callapine and the King of Amasia prepare to confront Tamburlaine at Babylon. v iii Theridamas and Techelles lament that Death now gives battle to Tamburlaine. Physicians attend Tamburlaine, but his real medicine is the news that Callapine waits to do battle. He exits and enters again quickly, announces that Callapine and his forces have fled, says that his strength is fast leaving him, asks for a map so that he can determine how much of the world is left unconquered, gives his scourge and crown to Amyras, who mounts the chariot, has Zenocrate's hearse placed by his chair and, finally defeated by Death, expires.

SOURCES

The two main sources are a Latin work by Petrus Perondinus, *Magni Tamerlanis Scytharum Imperatoris Vita* (1553) and an English work by George Whetstone, *The English Myrror* (1586), the former influenced by Pedro Mexia's *Silva de varia lección* (1540) and the latter influenced by Claude Gruget's *Diverses Leçons* (1552), a version of Mexia.

EDWARD II

i i Gaveston, exiled by Edward I for being a corrupting influence on his son, has been called back to England by the newly crowned Edward II. He flatters three Poor Men and then speaks of pleasing the King by means of lascivious masques and other shows. Edward, meanwhile, is in conflict with his barons, particularly Lancaster, Warwick and the Mortimers, over the return of Gaveston. Even Edward's brother, Edmund, Earl of Kent, disagrees with Edward when he bestows excessive honours and titles upon Gaveston, but Edward rejects all such advice and encourages Gaveston to degrade the

Bishop of Coventry publicly. i ii The barons and Archbishop of Canterbury confer. Queen Isabella laments her unhappy relationship with Edward. i iii Kent, who is later accused of favouring Gaveston, appears with the King's favourite. i iv The barons and Archbishop subscribe to Gaveston's exile and confront Edward, who capitulates and hands out honours and titles, but they do not relent. Edward and Gaveston exchange pictures Gaveston is made Governor of Ireland, and leaves after implying that Isabella has a dishonourable relationship with the Younger Mortimer. Isabella pleads with the Younger Mortimer to repeal the banishment so that Edward will like her. The barons agree, mainly to have Gaveston in their power. Edward rejoices and forgives Isabella. The Younger Mortimer tells his uncle, the Elder Mortimer, why he dislikes the base-born Gaveston. ii i The Younger Spenser tells Baldock that the way to gain the King's favour is through Gaveston. The King's niece, Gaveston's betrothed and friend to Baldock and Spenser, is joyous over Gaveston's imminent return. ii ii The barons mock Edward, Gaveston returns from exile and is mocked by the barons, replies in kind, and is wounded by the Younger Mortimer. Edward vows war. The Younger Mortimer tells Edward his uncle is prisoner of the Scots and should be ransomed by Edward, who refuses. Lancaster and Mortimer tell Edward the kingdom is besieged by foreigners, and Lancaster quotes the mocking jig of Bannocksbourn. Edward, furious, is advised by his brother, Kent, to appease the barons, but Kent is rejected. Gaveston introduces Spenser to Edward. ii iii Kent joins forces with Lancaster, Mortimer, Warwick and the other nobles. ii iv Edward, in retreat with Spenser, worries about Gaveston and rejects Isabella, who now expresses affection for Mortimer when he arrives in pursuit of Edward and Gaveston. ii v Gaveston is captured and after negotiation is delivered to the Earl of Pembroke. iii i Gaveston is apprehended by Warwick and taken away to be executed. iii ii Edward, awaiting the return of Gaveston with the Younger Spenser and Baldock, is greeted by the Elder Spenser, who comes with troops to aid his king. Isabella and Prince Edward arrive and are sent to negotiate with the King of France, Isabella's brother, over seizure of Normandy. Arundel arrives and tells Edward that Gaveston has been beheaded. Edward, enraged, vows revenge and gives the Younger Spenser some of Gaveston's titles. A herald from the barons expresses their displeasure over the elevation of the Younger Spenser. Edward announces war on the barons. iii iii Edward conquers the barons, banishes his brother, Kent, orders Warwick and Lancaster to be executed and imprisons Mortimer in the Tower of London. The Younger Spenser sends Levune to France with treasure to bribe the French lords to deny aid to Isabella, who he fears wants to put Prince Edward on England's throne. iv i Kent, on his way to France to aid Isabella, meets Mortimer, who has just escaped from the Tower. iv ii Isabella is rejected by the French. Sir John of Hainault offers refuge (in Flanders) as Kent and Mortimer arrive, and all vow to rid England of Edward's flatterers. iv iii Edward revels in his triumph, but receives news of the escape of Mortimer and impending danger. He prepares for more war. iv iv Isabella and Mortimer arrive in England and vow to remove Edward's flatterers. iv v Edward, the Younger Spenser, and Baldock flee. Kent in soliloquy laments the fate of Edward. The Elder

Spenser is apprehended at Bristol, but King Edward, the Younger Spenser and Baldock escape to Ireland. iv vi Edward, Spenser and Baldock hide in a monastery, but are apprehended by Rice ap Howell, a Welsh friend of the barons, and the Earl of Leicester. Spenser and Baldock are sent off to be executed, and Edward is sent to Killingworth (Kenilworth). v i Edward laments his state and curses ambitious Mortimer and unnatural Isabella as Leicester and the Bishop of Winchester urge him to resign his crown so that Prince Edward may reign. He vacillates, knowing that Mortimer will actually be in power, but he finally relents so that Prince Edward will not lose his right to the throne. Edward is turned over to Sir Thomas Berkeley. v ii Mortimer plots with Isabella to gain control of England. He assigns Gurney and Matrevis to guard Edward and to move him from Berkeley to Killingworth and back again in order to prevent Kent, who plots to rescue the King, from knowing Edward's whereabouts. v iii Matrevis and Gurney humiliate King Edward by washing him in puddle water and shaving off his beard. Kent is captured trying to rescue Edward. v iv Mortimer, who is now protector of the prince, appoints Lightborn as Edward's executioner. Prince Edward is crowned, and Kent is taken off to be executed. v v Matrevis and Gurney, who have been tormenting Edward at Berkeley, turn him over to Lightborn, who first torments and then kills Edward, and is in turn killed by Gurney. v vi The newly crowned Edward III accuses Mortimer of arranging Edward II's death and has a letter from the penitent Gurney to prove it. Edward III orders the traitor Mortimer to be executed and Isabella sent to the Tower. Mortimer's head is brought in and offered up by Edward III to his dead father's hearse.

SOURCES

Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London, second edn, 1587) was the main source for *Edward II*. Robert Fabyan's *Chronicle* (London, 1559) provided the jig of Bannocksbourn and John Stow's *Annales* (London, 1592) was the source for the shaving of Edward in puddle water.