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presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

TAMBURLAINE the GREAT
Part the First
by Christopher Marlowe
c. 1586-7

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INTRODUCTION to the PLAY

Christopher Marlowe's play, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*, was the explosion that ignited the fabulous era of Elizabethan drama. The story is simple: a shepherd-turned-warrior meets and defeats every army he challenges, and in the process builds an enormous, if short-lived, empire. Tamburlaine's success is achieved with a streak of cruelty matching those of the worst villains in history. In addition, the strict iambic pentameter is mesmerizing, allowing you to race through speeches at a pace that will leave you breath-less.

OUR PLAY'S SOURCE

The text of the play is taken from the *Mermaid* edition of the plays of Christopher Marlowe, edited by Havelock Ellis, and cited in the footnotes below at #7.

NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS

References in the annotations to Cunningham, Dyce, Schelling and Ribner refer to the notes supplied by these editors for *Tamburlaine the Great, 1st Part*, in their individual collections of Marlowe's work, each volume cited fully below.

The most commonly cited sources are listed in the footnotes immediately below. The complete list of footnotes appears at the end of this play.

Footnotes in the text correspond as follows:


Brief Notes on Tamburlaine, Part One.

A. Note on the Real Tamburlaine.

The original Tamburlaine's real name was Timur. He was born in 1336 in Kesh, the modern city of Shahrisabz in the modern country of Uzbekistan, in the region of Asia known as Transoxiana.

Timur's father was the head of a clan known as the Berlas, which seems to have converted to Islam in the years prior to Timur's birth. Given a typical tribal leader's education - lots of outdoor exercise - Timur began his military career by leading regiment-sized cavalry and conquering neighboring tribes. By 1369, his father having died and his brother assassinated, Timur was proclaimed sovereign.

Timur spent the 1370's consolidating his rule east of the Caspian Sea. In the 1380's and 1390's he broke the back of the Golden Horde, the Mongol faction that ruled Russia, and conquered Persia. During this period, Timur's international reputation for cruelty reached its zenith, as he was known to destroy any city that failed to submit to, or rebelled against, him, and slaughter all of its inhabitants.

In 1398, Timur turned his attention east, crossing the Indus River, easily winning another battle and sacking Delhi.

Timur's last campaign - he was now well into his sixties - was comprised of an invasion of Anatolia and Syria. He destroyed Damascus and many other cities in the Levant, as well as Baghdad, before routing the Ottoman army at the Battle of Angora (modern Ankara) in 1402, capturing the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid I in the process.

While planning his next campaign, into China, Timur died on February 17, 1405, at Otrar in modern Kazakhstan. He had built an empire covering an area greater than that of all of western and central Europe.

Timur ranks with Attila the Great and Genghis Kahn as one of the most destructive ravagers of civilization and exterminators of human beings in history. While all demographic statistics regarding the ancient world can only be educated guesses at best, it has been estimated that 7-20 million people died due to his wars.30

In the modern city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan stands the Gur Emir, a magnificent mausoleum in which Timur and his descendants are entombed.

Information in this note was adapted from an article in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1911.

B. Why the Name Tamburlaine?

By tradition, Timur was said to be significantly disabled, having a withered right arm (or he may have simply lost two fingers) and a crippled right leg, thanks to injuries received in a skirmish in his youth. In Turkish he was known as Timur I Leng - Timur the Lame - which was corrupted into the modern Tamerlane, or Tamburlaine (Bartlett, pp. 236-7).11

We may note that Timur was referred to as "the lame" only by his enemies, and not his friends.

In 1941, Russian archeologists opened Timur's tomb, confirming the existence of his injuries.31 That Timur was able to successfully command armies and rule nations for almost half a century with these physical impairments makes him all the more astonishing, if not particularly admirable.

C. Why Marlowe's History is Mostly Wrong.

What are considered the more reliable biographies of Timur were not yet available in the west when Christopher Marlowe wrote his play.

So what were Marlowe's sources?

(1) Marlowe's primary source was a major Spanish work, Sylva de varia Lecion, by Pedro Mexia. The book was translated into English in 1571 as The
Foreste, or a Collection of Histories, by Thomas Fortescue. Part II, chapter 14, tells the history of "the renowned and greate Tamberlaine". Apparently Mexio himself complained about the fragmentary nature of his own sources, "scarely lendying you any shewe of his conquirous exploytes, the same only confusely, and without any order".

(2) A work by the Italian Pietro Perondini, Magni Tamerlanis Scytharvm Imperatoris Vita (The Life of Tamerlane the Great Scythian Emperor) provided Marlowe with additional details.

Information in this note was adapted from Leslie Spence's article in Modern Philology, The Influence of Marlowe's Sources on "Tamburlaine I" (1926).^52

D. A Dull But Important Note on Marlowe's Geography in Tamburlaine, Part One.

In this note we will briefly describe the geography of western Asia as it really was in the late 14th century, the period of time during which Timur was beginning to expand his empire; comments about Marlowe's accuracy (or lack thereof) are also included.

(1) Starting in the far west, Asia Minor was under the control of the Ottoman Turks, who were in the very slow process of appropriating the territory of the entire Byzantine Empire for themselves. In fact, they had already taken over land on the European side of the Bosporus, leaving the Byzantines with little outside of Constantinople itself.

Marlowe's Ottomans are correctly in Anatolia, although at one point he seems to situate the Turkish army at some vague point between Persia and Syria.

(2) Syria was under the rule of the Egyptians, as it had been for centuries. Egypt itself was led by a Sultan.

Marlowe is correct regarding the big picture here; however, Tamburlaine is portrayed by the playwright as falling in love with (and eventually marrying) the Egyptian Sultan's daughter; the real Sultan at the time was only about 14 years old at the time Timur invaded the Levant, hardly old enough to have a fully grown daughter.

(3) Bordering Syria to the East was the land historically known as Persia, encompassing roughly what today are the northern part of Iraq and all of Iran. Persia until recently had been ruled as an independent empire, known as the Ilkhanate, by a sub-group of Mongols whose leader was titled "Ilkahn". However, this empire had broken up by 1340, and Persia was split into numerous petty kingdoms - which had no chance against the powerful armies of Timur.

Marlowe portrays the Persian Empire as whole and governed by a king, with a ruling class probably intended to be ethnic Persians, rather than Mongols; the characters themselves look back on ancient Persian rulers such as Cyrus the Great as their heroes.

(4) Governing the lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas, and thus comprising much of modern western Russia, was another group of Mongols, who have come down to us by the name of the Golden Horde.

Marlowe ignores the existence of the Golden Horde, and imagines the vast region north of Persia as still belonging to the ancient and still-vaguely understood people known to history as the Scythians. Marlowe portrays Tamburlaine as coming from this area, and thus not necessarily of Mongol stock, as he was.

E. Further Fiction Regarding Timur in Part One.

In Marlowe's play, Tamburlaine is still in the prime of his life as he takes on the Egyptians and Ottomans, when in reality he was well into his sixties at the time.

Marlowe's Tamburlaine also falls in love with and marries but one woman; the real Timur married many women, and fathered numerous children by them.
F. Marlowe’s Cartological Source:
the Ortelius Maps.

Commentators have long recognized that Marlowe, while writing the Tamburlaine plays, had at his disposal the maps of the great 16th century geographer, Antwerp native Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598). Ortelius had published his Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, the world’s first atlas, containing 53 maps of the world, in 1570. Three years later, a supplementary work was released containing an additional 17 maps. The maps were generally not original with Ortelius, and he properly gave credit where it was due.

The maps are colorful and detailed, and quite beautiful, if somewhat fanciful and even joyously inaccurate.

Marlowe borrowed exotic sounding place names extensively from the maps as he wrote the Tamburlaine plays, especially for Part Two. Our annotations will regularly note where the many locations (most of which have no connection to any modern place names) mentioned in the plays appear on the Ortelius maps, and you may even wish to consult reproductions of the maps on the internet as you read the plays.
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THE PROLOGUE.

1 From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits.
2 And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
3 We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
4 Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
5 Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
6 And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
7 View but his picture in this tragic glass,
8 And then applaud his fortune as you please.

Editor's Suggestion: to get the best sense of the Prologue, we suggest you read it one time through, then read the annotation at the end of the Prologue (line 8), then read the Prologue again!

1: the sense is, "Away from the frivolous verse-making of those writers with natural wit and a bent for rhyming..."
     jigging = Schelling suggests "the making of merry or satirical verses."
     mother wits = those with native wit or intellect, likely meant ironically.¹
2: ie. "and similar ideas (conceits) that keep those engaged in such buffoonery (clownage) employed..."
   = language.
   = looking glass or magic mirror.¹
1-8: The Prologue: the Prologue of Tamburlaine the Great has been interpreted by early editors as Marlowe's call to arms against both the use of rhyming in drama, and the employment of drama to expound on low-bred themes and characters. Marlowe could not have imagined the degree to which his exhortation succeeded.

ACT I.

SCENE I.
[Persia.]

Enter Mycetes, Cosroe, Meander, Theridamas, Ortygius, Ceneus, Menaphon, with others.

1 Myc. Brother Cosroe, I find myself aggrieved,
Yet insufficient to express the same; 
For it requires a great and thundering speech:
Good brother, tell the cause unto my lords; 
I know you have a better wit than I.

Cos. Unhappy Persia, that in former age
Hast been the seat of mighty conquerors,
That, in their prowess and their policies,
Have triumphed over Afric and the bounds
Of Europe, where the sun scarce dares appear
For freezing meteors and congealed cold,
Now to be ruled and governed by a man
At whose birthday Cynthia with Saturn joined,

And Jove, the Sun, and Mercury denied
To shed their influence in his fickle brain!
Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee,
Meaning to mangle all thy provinces.

Myc. Brother, I see your meaning well enough,
And through your planets I perceive you think
I am not wise enough to be a king;
But I refer me to my noblemen
That know my wit, and can be witnesses.
I might command you to be slain for this:
Meander, might I not?

Meand. Not for so small a fault, my sovereign lord.

Myc. I mean it not, but yet I know I might;
Yet live; yea live, Mycetes wills it so.

Meander, thou, my faithful counselor,
Declare the cause of my conceivèd grief,
Which is, God knows, about that Tamburlaine,
That, like a fox in midst of harvest time,
Doth prey upon my flocks of passengers;
And, as I hear, doth mean to pull my plumes:

Therefore 'tis good and meet for to be wise.

Meand. Oft have I heard your majesty complain
Of Tamburlaine, that sturdy Scythian thief,

That robs your merchants of Persepolis
Trading by land unto the Western Isles.
And in your confines with his lawless train
Daily commits incivil outrages,
Hoping (misled by dreaming prophecies)
To reign in Asia, and with barbarous arms

To make himself the monarch of the East;
But ere he march in Asia, or display
His vagrant ensign in the Persian fields,
Your grace hath taken order by Theridamas,
Charged with a thousand horse, to apprehend
And bring him captive to your highness' throne.

Myc. Full true thou speakest, and like thyself, my lord,
Whom I may term a Damon for thy love:
Therefore 'tis best, if so it like you all,
To send my thousand horse incontinent
To apprehend that paltry Scythian.
How like you this, my honourable lords?

Is't not a kingly resolution?

Cos. It cannot choose, because it comes from you.

Myc. Then hear thy charge, valiant Theridamas,
The chiefest captain of Mycetes' host,
The hope of Persia, and the very legs
Whereon our state doth lean as on a staff,
That holds us up, and foils our neighbour foes:
Thou shalt be leader of this thousand horse,
Whose foaming gall with rage and high disdain
Have sworn the death of wicked Tamburlaine.

Go frowning forth; but come thou smiling home,
As did Sir Paris with the Grecian dame;

Return with speed – time passeth swift away;

Ther. Before the moon renew her borrowed light,
Doubt not, my lord and gracious sovereign,
But Tamburlaine and that Tartarian rout
Shall either perish by our warlike hands,
Or plead for mercy at your highness' feet.

Myc. Go, stout Theridamas, thy words are swords,

And with thy looks thou conquerest all thy foes;
I long to see thee back return from thence,
That I may view these milk-white steeds of mine
All loaden with the heads of killed men,
And from their knees e'en to their hoofs below
Besmeared with blood that makes a dainty show.
we will give you the opportunity to catch them on your own; for completeness sake, here is a list of the future rhyming couplets in this play (there may be ones that I missed):

- Act I, i, 125-6 (essentially Mycetes' last lines in the scene);
- I, ii, 308-310 (three rhyming lines!);
- Act II, v, 54-55 (maybe); II, vi, 24-25;
- Act III, iii, 194-5 (Tamburlaine's last lines in the scene);
- III, iii, 240 (a rhyme within a single line);
- Act IV, iii, 65-66 (the King of Arabia's last lines in the scene);
- Act V, i, 33-34; 176-8 (again, three rhyming lines); V, i, 432-3; 514-5 (the King of Arabia's last lines in the scene); 524-5; and lastly at V, i, 634-5, the final lines of the play.

\[\text{Ther.} \quad \text{Then now, my lord, I humbly take my leave.}\]
\[\text{Myc.} \quad \text{Theridamas, farewell! ten thousand times.} \quad [\text{Exit Theridamas.}]\]

Ah, Menaphon, why stay'st thou thus behind,
When other men press forward to renown?
Go, Menaphon, go into Scythia;
And foot by foot follow Theridamas.

\[\text{Cos.} \quad \text{Nay, pray you let him stay; a greater task}
\quad \text{Fits Menaphon than warring with a thief:}
\quad \text{Create him Prorex of all Africa.}\]

That he may win the Babylonians' hearts
Which will revolt from Persian government,
Unless they have a wiser king than you.

\[\text{Myc.} \quad \text{"Unless they have a wiser king than you."}
\quad \text{These are his words; Meander, set them down.}\]

\[\text{Cos.} \quad \text{And add this to them – that all Asiä}
\quad \text{Laments to see the folly of their king.}\]

\[\text{Myc.} \quad \text{Well, here I swear by this my royal seat, –}\]

\[\text{Cos.} \quad \text{You may do well to kiss it then.}\]

= fame.

= please.

= Viceroy or Deputy King.\(^1\) = throughout the play, Africa refers to northern Africa (corresponding to the location of ancient Rome's provinces), but also seems to include Syria, which was ruled at the time by the Egyptian Sultan.

106-8: Babylonia is in Persia, so why would Cosroe suggest Menaphon be made Prorex of Africa, a land that is not part of their empire? Perhaps Cosroe is saying that Mycetes, by appointing the able Menaphon to be the Viceroy of some jurisdiction other than Persia, will cause the citizens of Persia proper to rise up against their own incompetent king out of jealousy. In other words, he is being absurd to add sting to his insults.

= "write this down", so that Cosroe's insult will not be forgotten!

= ie. "my throne"; it was common in Elizabethan drama to swear on inanimate objects.

118: Cosroe, insultingly, suggests that Mycetes should kiss his throne just as he would kiss a Bible or some like holy object that he was swearing on. Marlowe may have had in mind an oath known as a corporal oath, in which a witness touched or held the gospels, the relics of a saint, or some object equally sanctified, when swearing his or her oath, and may at some point in the past have also kissed the object.\(^{10}\) To a modern reader, Cosroe may appear to be taking seat to refer to Mycete's posterior, hence producing the English language's earliest version of "kissing one's a**". However,
Myc. Embossed with silk as best beseems my state,
To be revenged for these contemptuous words.
Oh, where is duty and allegiance now?
Fled to the Caspian or the Ocean main?
What shall I call thee? brother? — no, a foe;
Monster of nature! — Shame unto thy stock
That dar'st presume thy sovereign for to mock!

Meander, come: I am abused, Meander.

[Exeunt all but Cosroe and Menaphon.]

Men. How now, my lord? What, mated and amazed
To hear the king thus threaten like himself!

Cos. Ah, Menaphon, I pass not for his threats;
The plot is laid by Persian noblemen
And captains of the Median garrisons

To crown me Emperor of Asii:
But this it is that doth excruciate
The very substance of my vexèd soul —
To see our neighbours that were wont to quake
And tremble at the Persian monarch's name,
Now sit and laugh our regiment to scorn;
And that which might resolve me into tears,

Men from the farthest equinoctial line

Have swarmed in troops into the Eastern India,
Lading their ships with gold and precious stones,
And made their spoils from all our provinces.

Men. This should entreat your highness to rejoice,
Since Fortune gives you opportunity
To gain the title of a conqueror
By curing of this maimèd empery.
Afric and Europe bordering on your land,  
And continent to your dominions,  
How easily may you, with a mighty host,  
Pass into Graecia, as did Cyrus once,  
And cause them to withdraw their forces home,  
Lest you subdue the pride of Christendom.

[Trumpet within.]

Cos. But, Menaphon, what means this trumpet's sound?

Men. Behold, my lord, Ortygius and the rest  
Bringing the crown to make you Emperor!

Enter Ortygius and Ceneus, with others,  
bearing a crown.

Orty. Magnificent and mighty Prince Cosroe,  
We, in the name of other Persian states  
And commons of the mighty monarchy,  
Present thee with th' imperial diadem.

Cen. The warlike soldiers and the gentlemen,  
That heretofore have filled Persepolis  
With Afric captains taken in the field,  
Whose ransom made them march in coats of gold,  
With costly jewels hanging at their ears,  
And shining stones upon their lofty crests,  
Now living idle in the walled towns,  
Wanting both pay and martial discipline,  
Begin in troops to threaten civil war,  
And openly exclaim against their king:  
Therefore, to stop all sudden mutinies,  
We will invest your highness Emperor,  
Whereat the soldiers will conceive more joy  
Than did the Macedonians at the spoil  
Of great Darius and his wealthy host.

= continuous with, connecting to.¹

155-8: Menaphon flatters Cosroe: if he were king, he could begin to reclaim the greatness of the ancient Persian Empire by invading and capturing Asia Minor, as Cyrus the Great did in the 6th century B.C.

=Graecia= refers to western Asia Minor, which was historically Greek in population. Cyrus never crossed into European Greece during his career.

157-8: any Byzantine forces employed outside of Anatolia would be forced to unite therein to prevent the fall of Constantinople, its capital city, to Cosroe.

= ie. Constantinople (Ribner, p. 55). As a historical matter, most of the Byzantine Empire by this time had been conquered by the Ottoman Turks; Constantinople was more or less all that remained of the empire. Menaphon, seems completely ignorant of, or at least unconcerned with, the Ottomans’ success in this area.

172-5= noblemen.⁵  
= the general population, ie. everybody who is not noble.

175-182: Ceneus describes what will become a common motif in Elizabethan drama: in times of peace, a country's soldiers become soft and undisciplined.

= commanders. = ie. captured in battle.  
= ie. Persia’s soldiers.

= a crest is a three-dimensional heraldic device, such as an eagle or fan, worn on the top of one's helmet, usually for ceremonies and tournaments.¹

= lacking.

188-9: a reference to Alexander the Great's victories over King Darius III that destroyed the Persian Achaemenid Empire around 330 B.C. Alexander's army famously captured Darius' baggage train and even his family at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C.

It is perhaps incongruous for Ceneus to so breezily use this greatest of Persian historical disasters as a point of comparison.
Cos. Well, since I see the state of Persia droop
And languish in my brother's government,
I willingly receive th' imperial crown,
And vow to wear it for my country's good,
In spite of them shall malice my estate.

Orty. And in assurance of desired success,
We here do crown thee monarch of the East,
Emperor of Asiä and Persiä;
Great Lord of Media and Armenia;
Duke of Africa and Albania.
Mesopotamia and of Parthia.
East India and the late-discovered isles;
Chief Lord of all the wide, vast Euxine sea,
And of the ever-raging Caspian lake.

All. Long live Cosroë, mighty Emperor!

Cos. And Jove may never let me longer live
Than I may seek to gratify your love,
And cause the soldiers that thus honour me
To triumph over many provinces!
By whose desire of discipline in arms
I doubt not shortly but to reign sole king,
And with the army of Theridamas,
(Whither we presently will fly, my lords)
To rest secure against my brother's force.

Orty. We knew, my lord, before we brought the crown,
Intending your investiön so near
The residence of your despisèd brother,
The lords would not be too exasperate
to injury or suppress your worthy title;
Or, if they would, there are in readiness
Ten thousand horse to carry you from hence,
In spite of all suspected enemies.

Cos. I know it well, my lord, and thank you all.

Orly. Sound up the trumpets then.

[Trumpets sound.]

All. God save the King!

[Exeunt.]

ACT I, SCENE II.

[Scythia.]

Enter Tamburlaine leading Zenocrate, Techelles,
Usumcasane, Agydas, Magnetes, Lords,
and Soldiers, laden with treasure.

Tamb. Come, lady, let not this appal your thoughts;
The jewel and the treasure we have ta'en
Shall be reserved, and you in better state,
Than if you were arrived in Syria,
Even in the circle of your father's arms,
The mighty Soldan of Ægyptia.

Zeno. Ah, shepherd! pity my distressèd plight,
(If, as thou seem'st, thou art so mean a man,)
And seek not to enrich thy followers
By lawless rapine from a silly maid,
Who travelling with these Median lords
To Memphis, from my uncle's country of Media,
Where all my youth I have been governèd,
Entering Characters: Tamburlaine is of course our play's hero; at this point he is nothing more than a bandit in charge of a body of 500 marauders. Techelles and Usumcasane (who is frequently called simply Casane) are Tamburlaine's closest friends and commanders. Agydas and Magnetes are lords of Media; they have been accompanying and travelling with Zenocrate, the daughter of the Soldan (Sultan) of Egypt; the three of them are now prisoners of Tamburlaine.

Zeno. Ah, shepherd! pity my distressèd plight,
(If, as thou seem'st, thou art so mean a man,)
And seek not to enrich thy followers
By lawless rapine from a silly maid,
Who travelling with these Median lords
To Memphis, from my uncle's country of Media,
Where all my youth I have been governèd,

1-6: that Zenocrate and her baggage train of treasures were captured as she was travelling from Media in Persia to return to her father the Soldan of Egypt emphasizes the Persians' characterization of Tamburlaine as nothing more than a common gangster.

= this is the first of several references to Tamburlaine's humble beginnings as a Scythian shepherd. The real Tamburlaine was the son of a local Mongol chieftain in what is now Uzbekistan.
= base or lowly. Note that since she is a princess, Zenocrate uses "thou" to address a man she views as one of much lower status.
= plunder or robbery.¹ = helpless, defenseless.¹

16
Have passed the army of the mighty Turk,

15: Zenocrate's party somehow had to pass through the Turkish army, even though Persia and Syria (which comprised the northern portion of the Egyptian empire at this time) were contiguous. In reality, the Turks were presently engaged in their slow project of subjugating the Byzantine Empire in western Asia Minor and across the Bosporus into Greece.

16-17: ie. bearing a pass from the Turkish Sultan granting protection as they travel; the document was written personally by the Sultan (his hand) and bears his official seal (privy signet); thorough = through.

18: And since we have arrived in Scythia,

Besides rich presents from the puissant Cham,

We have his highness' letters to command

Aid and assistance, if we stand in need.

19-22: the exact sequence of events leading to Zenocrate's capture is not clear: we may reasonably have believed to this point that Zenocrate and her party had been travelling in a straight line west from Persia to Egypt, and were picked up by Tamburlaine during one of his raids and brought back north to Scythia.

Magnetes' speech, however, suggests another possibility, namely that the royal party rode north first to visit the leader of the Golden Horde, a Mongol sub-group which was ruling Russia at the time, before turning southwest to go home. Khan was a term used to describe a Mongol leader (puissant Cham = mighty khan), and in the play's geography, the khan of the Golden Horde would be the only Mongol candidate available.

The areas controlled by the Golden Horde would have overlapped with the region understood to be Scythia north of the Black Sea.

24-25: note the wordplay suggested by the repetition of the syllable man in these lines; the effect is one of intensification.

= ie. "me".

29-32: in claiming in line 29 that he likes to be generous (at liberty; Ribner, p. 269), Tamburlaine seems to suggest that the Medians may have hope of keeping their treasure if they ally with him rather than oppose him; but the passage is still ambiguous: wouldn't they really find it impossible to remove the Soldan's crown from Tamburlaine and his territory, once Tamburlaine had possession of it?

Note the alliteration in line 29.

= nurture or raise, like a child.\(^1\)

33: Tamburlaine has clear expectations to grow his still modest empire.

= subjection to others, slavery.\(^1\)

= ie. "for so you suggest - that you are a lord"; Zenocrate hesitates, uncertain if she should use that title.
But, lady, this fair face and heavenly hue
Must grace his bed that conquers Asiâ,
And means to be a terror to the world,
Measuring the limits of his empery
By east and west, as Phoebus doth his course.

Lie here ye weeds that I disdain to wear!
This complete armour and this curtle-axe
Are adjuncts more beseeming Tamburlaine.
And, madam, whatsoever you esteem
Of this success and loss unvalued,
Both may invest you Empress of the East;
And these that seem but silly country swains
May have the leading of so great an host,
As with their weight shall make the mountains quake,
Even as when windy exhalations
Fighting for passage, tilt within the earth.

Tech. As princely lions, when they rouse themselves,
Stretching their paws, and threatening herds of beasts,
So in his armour looketh Tamburlaine.
Methinks I see kings kneeling at his feet,
And he with frowning brows and fiery looks,
Spurning their crowns from off their captive heads.

Usum. And making thee and me, Techelles, kings,
That even to death will follow Tamburlaine.

Tamb. Nobly resolved, sweet friends and followers!
These lords perhaps do scorn our estimates,
And think we prattle with distempered spirits;
But since they measure our deserts so mean,
That in conceit bear empires on our spears,
Affecting thoughts coequal with the clouds,
They shall be kept our forcéd followers,
Till with their eyes they view us emperors.

Zeno. The gods, defenders of the innocent,
Will never prosper your intended drifts.
That thus oppress poor friendless passengers.
Therefore at least admit us liberty,
Even as thou hopest to be eternized.
By living Asia's mighty Emperor.

Agyd. I hope our ladies' treasure and our own
May serve for ransom to our liberties:
Return our mules and empty camels back,
That we may travel into Syria,
Where her betrothed lord Alcidamas,
Expects th' arrival of her highness' person.

Mag. And wheresoever we repose ourselves,
We will report but well of Tamburlaine.

Tamb. Disdains Zenocrate to live with me?
Or you, my lords, to be my followers?
Think you I weigh this treasure more than you?
Not all the gold in India's wealthy arms
Shall buy the meanest soldier in my train.
Zenocrate, lovelier than the love of Jove,
Brighter than is the silver Rhodope.
Fairer than whitest snow on Scythian hills,
Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine
Than the possession of the Persian crown,
Which gracious stars have promised at my birth.
A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee,
Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus;
Thy garments shall be made of Median silk.

Enchased with precious jewels of mine own,
More rich and valurous than Zenocrate's.
With milk-white harts upon an ivory sled,
Thou shalt be drawn amidst the frozen pools,
And scale the icy mountains' lofty tops,
Which with thy beauty will be soon resolved.
My martial prizes with five hundred men,
Won on the fifty-headed Volga's waves.

Shall we all offer to Zenocrate, −
And then myself to fair Zenocrate.

Tech. What now! − in love?

Tamb. Techelles, women must be flatterèd:

78: prosper = interesting but not unknown transitive use.
drifts = plans.

78: = travellers.

= made famous forever.¹

88: Zenocrate is engaged to the King of Arabia. She had previously mentioned, however, that she spent her entire youth in Media, which means she probably has never met the King, and that her betrothal was arranged by her father, the Soldan of Egypt.

¹ = the Rhodopes are a mountain chain on the border of Thrace and Macedonia; the Perseus Encyclopedia mentions the mountains were an ancient source of gold and silver.²

² = the famed winged-horse of Greek myth.
³ = in the 6th century A.D., the secret of silk production was finally learned in the west when two Persian monks who had long lived in China smuggled out the eggs of a silkworm in a hollow cane, and delivered them to the Byzantine emperor Justinian.⁸

⁸ = inlaid or set.¹

= valuable.¹

¹¹⁰-²: the image is one of all-encompassing whiteness:
the albino deer (harts), the ivory sleigh (sled), and the snow over which it is pulled.

= melted.

⁸ = the Volga is the longest river in Europe, flowing from north-west of Moscow to the Caspian Sea, and hence through Scythia; its fifty-heads allude to its numerous sources.⁸
But this is she with whom I am in love.

Enter a Soldier.

Sold. News! news!

Tamb. How now − what's the matter?

Sold. A thousand Persian horsemen are at hand, Sent from the king to overcome us all.

Tamb. How now, my lords of Egypt, and Zenocrate! How! − must your jewels be restored again, And I, that triumphed so, be overcome? How say you, lordings, − is not this your hope?

Agyd. We hope yourself will willingly restore them.

Tamb. Such hope, such fortune, have the thousand horse. Soft ye, my lords, and sweet Zenocrate!

You must be forcèd from me ere you go. A thousand horsemen! − We five hundred foot! − An odds too great for us to stand against. But are they rich? − and is their armour good?

Sold. Their plumèd helms are wrought with beaten gold, Their swords enamelled, and about their necks Hang massy chains of gold, down to the waist, In every part exceeding brave and rich.

Tamb. Then shall we fight courageously with them? Or look you I should play the orator?

Tech. No: cowards and faint-hearted runaways Look for orations when the foe is near: Our swords shall play the orator for us.

Usum. Come! let us meet them at the mountain foot, And with a sudden and a hot alarum, Drive all their horses headlong down the hill.

Tech. Come, let us march!

Tamb. Stay, Techelles! ask a parley first.

Open the mails, yet guard the treasure sure; Lay out our golden wedges to the view, That their reflections may amaze the Persians; And look we friendly on them when they come; But if they offer word or violence, We'll fight five hundred men-at-arms to one,
Before we part with our possessiön.
And 'gainst the general we will lift our swords,
And either lance his greedy thirsting throat,
Or take him prisoner, and his chain shall serve
For manacles, till he be ransomed home.

**Tech.** I hear them come; shall we encounter them?

**Tamb.** Keep all your standings and not stir a foot,
Myself will bide the danger of the brunt.

_Enter Theridamas and others._

**Ther.** Where is this Scythian Tamburlaine?

**Tamb.** Whom seek'st thou, Persian? − I am Tamburlaine.

**Ther.** Tamburlaine! −
A Scythian shepherd so embellishèd
With nature's pride and richest furniture!
His looks do menace Heaven and dare the gods:

His fiery eyes are fixed upon the earth,
As if he now devised some stratagem,
Or meant to pierce Avernus' darksome vaults
To pull the triple-headed dog from hell.

**Tamb.** Noble and mild this Persian seems to be,
If outward habit judge the inward man.

**Tech.** His deep affections make him passionate.

**Tamb.** With what a majesty he rears his looks! −
In thee, thou valiant man of Persiä,
I see the folly of thy emperor.
Art thou but captain of a thousand horse,
That by characters graven in thy brows,
And by thy martial face and stout aspect.

184: Tamburlaine will stand at the front of his troops to take the first shock of any charge the Persians might make.

193-4: Theridamas is impressed with the riches surrounding Tamburlaine, who is supposed to be a mere shepherd.

*furniture* = possessions, i.e. armour, equipment, etc.¹

¹ = *Heaven*, like many common words containing a medial *v* (such as *even* and *given*) should be pronounced as a one-syllable word, with the *v* elided over - that is, essentially omitted.

198-9: allusion to Hercules' twelfth labour, in which he descended into Hades and wrestled Cerberus, the vicious three-headed guard-dog of the underworld, into submission, returning with the monster to the surface.

*Avernus* is a lake situated at the entrance to Hades, whose vapours are so toxic that birds fall dead if they attempt to fly over it.

= bearing or appearance. = allows one to make a judgment about.¹

¹ cf. Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, Act II, iii: "Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan / The outward habit by the inward man." Shakespeare's version seems to confusingly reverse the expected order of the *inward man* and the *outward habit*.

204: "his deep-felt emotions cause him to be agitated or unusually expressive of those feelings."

210: the OED suggests that the *characters* engraved (graven) in Tamburlaine's brow here refers to "indelible quality" (def. I,1.a); but *characters* can also refer to letters or markings, and, intriguingly, to astrological symbols of the planets: see the next note.

= magnificent or brave. = there could be, with *characters*, an astrological metaphor here, as *aspect* can, in addition
Deserv'st to have the leading of a host!
Forsake thy king, and do but join with me,
And we will triumph over all the world;
I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chains,

And with my hand turn Fortune's wheel about:

And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere,

Than Tamburlaine be slain or overcome.
Draw forth thy sword, thou mighty man-at-arms,
Intending but to raze my charmèd skin,
And Jove himself will stretch his hand from Heaven
to guard the blow and shield me safe from harm.
See how he rains down heaps of gold in showers,
As if he meant to give my soldiers pay!
And as a sure and grounded argument
That I shall be the monarch of the East,
He sends this Soldan's daughter rich and brave,
To be my Queen and portly Emperèss.
If thou wilt stay with me, renownèd man,
And lead thy thousand horse with my conduct,
Besides thy share of this Egyptian prize,

Both we will walk upon the lofty cliffs,
And mighty kings shall be our senators.

Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian sea,
Shall vail to us, as lords of all the lake.
Both we will reign as consuls of the earth,

And by those steps that he hath scaled the Heavens
May we become immortal like the gods.
Join with me now in this my mean estate,
(I call it mean because being yet obscure,
The nations far removed admire me not,

And when my name and honour shall be spread
As far as Boreas claps his brazen wings,
Or fair Boötes sends his cheerful light,
Then shalt thou be competitor with me,
And sit with Tamburlaine in all his majesty.

Ther. Not Hermes, prolocutor to the gods,
Could use persuasions more pathetical.

Tamb. Nor are Apollo’s oracles more true,
Than thou shalt find my vaunts substantial.

Tech. We are his friends, and if the Persian king
Should offer present dukedoms to our state,
We think it loss to make exchange for that
We are assured of by our friend’s success.

Usum. And kingdoms at the least we all expect,
Besides the honour in assured conquests,
When kings shall crouch unto our conquering swords
And hosts of soldiers stand amazed at us;
When with their fearful tongues they shall confess,
"These are the men that all the world admires."

Ther. What strong enchantments tice my yielding soul!
These are resolvèd, noble Scythians:
But shall I prove a traitor to my king?

Tamb. No, but the trusty friend of Tamburlaine.

Ther. 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.

Tamb. Theridamas, my friend, take here my hand,
Which is as much as if I swore by Heaven,
And called the gods to witness of my vow.
Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine
Until our bodies turn to elements,
And both our souls aspire celestial thrones.
Techelles and Casane, welcome him!

Tech. Welcome, renownèd Persian, to us all!

Usum. Long may Theridamas remain with us!

Tamb. These are my friends, in whom I more rejoice
Than doth the King of Persia in his crown,
And by the love of Pylades and Orestes.

= "the herdsman", a large constellation in the northern sky.
= partner or associate.

252: Hermes (the Roman Mercury) was the messenger god.
prolocutor = spokesman.
253: "could speak more movingly (pathetical)."
= an allusion to the Delphic oracle; the Greek Olympian god Apollo was famously known to speak through his priestess (oracle) at Delphi in central Greece. For a fee, the oracle would channel the god and answer questions or make predictions, most of which were notoriously ambiguous. Note that the word oracle could refer to either the priestess herself or the words the oracle spoke.
= boasts. = reliable.
258: "should offer to make us dukes".

= bow down to or cringe before.
= frightened.

= entice.

= "as good as".
= always.
= ie. decompose into their component parts, which were believed to be four elements: fire, air, earth and water.

= Orestes was the son of Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek troops during the Trojan War, and his wife Clytemnestra. With her husband away at war for ten years, Clytemnestra took a new husband, Aegisthus
Whose statues we adore in Scythia,
Thyself and them shall never part from me
Before I crown you kings in Asiā. —
Make much of them, gentle Theridamas,
And they will never leave thee till the death.

Ther. Nor thee nor them, thrice noble Tamburlaine,
Shall want my heart to be with gladness pierced,
To do you honour and security.

Tamb. A thousand thanks, worthy Theridamas.
And now fair madam, and my noble lords,
If you will willingly remain with me
You shall have honours as your merits be;
Or else you shall be forced with slavery.

Agyd. We yield unto thee, happy Tamburlaine.

Tamb. For you then, madam, I am out of doubt.

Zeno. I must be pleased perforce. Wretched Zenocrine!

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT I.
SCENE I.
[Persia.]

Enter Cosroe, Menaphon, Ortygius, and Ceneus, with Soldiers.

*Cos.* Thus far are we towards Theridamas, And valiant Tamburlaine, the man of fame, The man that in the forehead of his fortune Bears figures of renown and miracle.

But tell me, that hast seen him, Menaphon, What stature wields he, and what personage?

*Men.* Of stature tall, and straightly fashion'd, Like his desire lift upward and divine; So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit, Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear Old Atlas' burthen; - 'twixt his manly pitch, A pearl, more worth than all the world, is placed, Wherein by curious sovereignty of art Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight, Whose fiery circles bear encompass'd A Heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres, That guides his steps and actions to the throne, Where honour sits invested royally: Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion, Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms; His lofty brows in folds do figure death, And in their smoothness amity and life; About them hangs a knot of amber hair, Wrapp'd in curls, as fierce Achilles' was, On which the breath of Heaven delights to play, Making it dance with wanton majesty. - His arms and fingers, long, and sinewy, Betokening valour and excess of strength; - In every part proportioned like the man Should make the world subdued to Tamburlaine.

*Cos.* Well hast thou portrayed in thy terms of life The face and personage of a wondrous man; Nature doth strive with Fortune and his stars
To make him famous in accomplished worth;
And well his merits show him to be made
His fortune's master and the king of men,
That could persuade at such a sudden pinch.
With reasons of his valour and his life,
A thousand sworn and overmatching foes.

Then, when our powers in points of swords are joined
And closed in compass of the killing bullet,
Though strait the passage and the port be made
That leads to palace of my brother's life,
Proud is his fortune if we pierce it not.
And when the princely Persian diadem
Shall overweigh his weary witless head,
And fall like mellowed fruit with shakes of death,
In fair Persia, noble Tamburlaine
Shall be my regent and remain as king.

Orty. In happy hour we have set the crown
Upon your kingly head that seeks our honour,
In joining with the man ordained by Heaven,
To further every action to the best.

Cen. He that with shepherds and a little spoil
Durst, in disdain of wrong and tyranny,
Defend his freedom 'gainst a monarchy,
What will he do supported by a king,
Leading a troop of gentlemen and lords,
And stuffed with treasure for his highest thoughts!

Cos. And such shall wait on worthy Tamburlaine.
Our army will be forty thousand strong,

When Tamburlaine and brave Theridamas
Have met us by the river Araris:

And all conjoined to meet the witless king.
That now is marching near to Parthia.

And with unwilling soldiers faintly armed,
To seek revenge on me and Tamburlaine,
To whom, sweet Menaphon, direct me straight.

Men. I will, my lord.
ACT II, SCENE II.

[Georgia.]

Enter Mycetes, Meander, with other Lords and Soldiers.

Myc. Come, my Meander, let us to this gear. I tell you true, my heart is swoln with wrath On this same thievish villain, Tamburlaine, And on that false Cosroe, my traitorous brother. Would it not grieve a king to be so abused And have a thousand horsemen ta'en away? And, which is worse, to have his diadem Sought for by such scald knaves as love him not? I think it would; well then, by Heavens I swear, Aurora shall not peep out of her doors, But I will have Cosroë by the head, And kill proud Tamburlaine with point of sword. Tell you the rest. Meander: I have said.

Meand. Then having passed Armenian deserts now, And pitched our tents under the Georgian hills, Whose tops are covered with Tartarian thieves, That lie in ambush, waiting for a prey, What should we do but bid them battle straight, And rid the world of those detested troops? Lest, if we let them linger here awhile, They gather strength by power of fresh supplies. This country swarms with vile outrageous men That live by rapine and by lawless spoil, Fit soldiers for the wicked Tamburlaine; And he that could with gifts and promises Inveigle him that led a thousand horse, And make him false his faith unto his king, Will quickly win such as be like himself. Therefore cheer up your minds; prepare to fight; He that can take or slaughter Tamburlaine Shall rule the province of Albania: Who brings that traitor's head, Theridamas, Shall have a government in Media, Beside the spoil of him and all his train: But if Cosroë, (as our spials say, And as we know) remains with Tamburlaine, His highness' pleasure is that he should live, And be reclaimed with princely lenity.

Enter A Spy.

A Spy. A hundred horsemen of my company Scouting abroad upon these champion plains Have viewed the army of the Scythians,
Which make report it far exceeds the king's.

Meand. Suppose they be in number infinite,
Yet being void of martial discipline,
All running headlong greedy after spoils,
And more regarding gain than victory,
Like to the cruel brothers of the earth,
Sprung of the teeth of dragons venomous,

Their careless swords shall lance their fellows' throats,
And make us triumph in their overthrow.

Myc. Was there such brethren, sweet Meander, say,
That sprung of teeth of dragons venomous?

Meand. So poets say, my lord.

Myc. And 'tis a pretty toy to be a poet.
Well, well, Meander, thou art deeply read,
And having thee, I have a jewel sure.
Go on, my lord, and give your charge, I say;
Thy wit will make us conquerors to-day.

Meand. Then, noble soldiers, to entrap these thieves,
That live confounded in disordered troops,
If wealth or riches may prevail with them,
We have our camels laden all with gold,
Which you that be but common soldièrs
Shall fling in every corner of the field;
And while the base-born Tartars take it up,
You, fighting more for honour than for gold,
Shall massacre those greedy-minded slaves;
And when their scattered army is subdued,
And you march on their slaughtered carcasses,
Share equally the gold that bought their lives,
And live like gentlemen in Persiæ.

Myc. He tells you true, my masters: so he does.
Drums, why sound ye not, when Meander speaks?

[Exeunt, drums sounding.]

ACT II, SCENE III.
[Georgia.]

Enter Cosroe, Tamburlaine, Theridamas, Techelles, Usumcasane, and Ortygius, with others.

52-53: an allusion to the famous story of the founding of the ancient Greek city of Thebes: the demi-god Cadmus, having slain the dragon who guarded the well near where Thebes would be built, was instructed by Athena to sow the dragon's teeth in the ground. From the teeth quickly grew a race of armed men who turned on Cadmus; he threw a stone amongst them which upset them, and each, thinking one of their own had tossed the stone, attacked the others. From the five warriors who survived this slaughter grew the founding families of Thebes.15

54-55: Tamburlaine's soldiers can be expected to kill each other in their pursuit of booty, which Meander expects would be more important to them than winning a battle.

57-58: Mycetes reveals his ignorance.

1 = practice of little value.

63-64: Mycetes is ironic.

= orders.

= cleverness.

= pronounced with three syllables: SOL-di-ers.

= helmets.
Cos. Now, worthy Tamburlaine, have I reposed
In thy approved fortunes all my hope.
What think'st thou, man, shall come of our attempts?
For even as from assured oracle,
I take thy doom for satisfaction.

Tamb. And so mistake you not a whit, my lord;
For fates and oracles of Heaven have sworn
To rouse the deeds of Tamburlaine,
And make them blest that share in his attempts.
And doubt you not but, if you favour me,
And let my fortunes and my valour sway
To some direction in your martial deeds,
The host of Xerxes, which by fame is said
To have drank the mighty Parthian Araris,

Was but a handful to that we will have.
Our quivering lances, shaking in the air,
And bullets, like Jove’s dreadful thunderbolts,
Enrolled in flames and fiery smouldering mists,
Shall threat the gods more than Cyclopian wars:
And with our sun-bright armour as we march,
We’ll chase the stars from Heaven and dim their eyes
That stand and muse at our admired arms.

Ther. You see, my lord, what working words he hath;
But when you see his actions top his speech,

= ie. "I have placed"; Cosroe and Tamburlaine have already agreed to join their forces.
= proven good fortune.

4-5: ie. "I am content to believe in your judgment (doom), as if your words were a certain or reliable (assured) oracle."

= make famous.¹
= who.
= command or influence.

= banner.

16-17: Xerxes, King of the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia (485-465 B.C.), invaded Greece in 480 B.C. with what the Greek historian Herodotus claimed was over one million men, only to be famously defeated at Thermopylae, and then at sea at Salamis.

Regarding the size of Xerxes’ army, Herodotus wrote “What body of water did his forces not drink dry except for the greatest rivers?” (Strassler, 7.21, p. 505);¹⁴ and when his army reached northwest Asia Minor on its way to Greece, Herodotus further wrote, upon the army’s arriving at the Scamander River, that it "was the first river it had encountered on its journey from Sardis that failed to provide enough water for the troops and the pack animals attempting to drink from it” (7.43, p. 480).¹⁴

Ribner identifies the Parthian Araris as the Oxus River north-east of Persia; if this was what Marlowe had in mind, he was certainly in error.

= the king of the gods was frequently portrayed in his guise as the controller of lightning.
= an allusion to the Battle of the Titans of Greek mythology. The Titans, offspring of Uranus and Gaea (she being the personification of earth), overthrew the gods who ruled before them, before being overthrown in turn by the Olympian gods (Zeus, etc.). It is this latter war that is called the Battle of the Titans. Cyclopian, alluding to the one-eyed giant, is used to describe the over-sized Titans generally.

= ie. by out-shining them with their sun-bright armour.
= surpass.²
Your speech will stay or so extol his worth.

As I shall be commended and excused
For turning my poor charge to his direction.
And these his two renowned friends, my lord,
Would make one thirst and strive to be retained
In such a great degree of amity.

Tech. With duty and with amity we yield
Our utmost service to the fair Cosroe.

Cos. Which I esteem as portion of my crown,
Usumcasane and Techelles both,
When she that rules in Rhamnus' golden gates,

And makes a passage for all prosperous arms,
Shall make me solely Emperor of Asiä.
Then shall your needs and valours be advanced
To rooms of honour and nobility.

Tamb. Then haste, Cosroë, to be king alone,
That I with these, my friends, and all my men
May triumph in our long-expected fate.

Tech. With duty and with amity we yield
Our utmost service to the fair Cosroe.

Cos. This is my part of my crown
Usumcasane and Techelles both,
When she that rules in Rhamnus' golden gates,

And makes a passage for all prosperous arms,
Shall make me solely Emperor of Asiä.
Then shall your needs and valours be advanced
To rooms of honour and nobility.

Tamb. Then haste, Cosroë, to be king alone,
That I with these, my friends, and all my men
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That I with these, my friends, and all my men
May triumph in our long-expected fate.

Tech. With duty and with amity we yield
Our utmost service to the fair Cosroe.

Cos. Which I esteem as portion of my crown,
Usumcasane and Techelles both,
When she that rules in Rhamnus' golden gates,
**ACT II, SCENE IV.**

**[Georgia, a battlefield.]**

*Enter Mycetes with his crown in his hand.*

---

**Myc.** Accursed be he that first invented war!

They knew not, ah they knew not, simple men,

How those were hit by pelting cannon shot,

Stand staggering like a quivering aspen leaf,

Fearing the force of Boreas' boisterous blasts.

In what a lamentable case were I
If Nature had not given me wisdom's lore,

For kings are clouts that every man shoots at,

Our crown the pin that thousands seek to cleave:

Therefore in policy I think it good
To hide it close; a goodly stratagem,

And far from any man that is a fool:

They cannot take away my crown from me.

Here will I hide it in this simple hole.

---

*Enter Tamburlaine.*

---

**Tamb.** What, fearful coward, straggling from the camp,

When kings themselves are present in the field?

**Myc.** Thou liest.

**Tamb.** Base villain! darest give me the lie?

**Myc.** Away; I am the king; go; touch me not.

Thou break'st the law of arms, unless thou kneel

And cry me "mercy, noble king."

**Tamb.** Are you the witty King of Persiä?

**Myc.** Ay, marry am I: have you any suit to me?

**Tamb.** I would entreat you speak but three wise words.

**Myc.** So I can when I see my time.

**Tamb.** Is this your crown?
Myc. Ay, didst thou ever see a fairer?

Tamb. You will not sell it, will you?

Myc. Such another word and I will have thee executed. Come, give it me!

Tamb. No; I took it prisoner.

Myc. You lie; I gave it you.

Tamb. Then 'tis mine.

Myc. No; I mean I let you keep it.

Tamb. Well; I mean you shall have it again. Here; take it for a while: I lend it thee, 'Till I may see thee hemmed with arm'd men; Then shalt thou see me pull it from thy head: Thou art no match for mighty Tamburlaine.

[Exit Tamburlaine.]

Myc. O gods! Is this Tamburlaine the thief? I marvel much he stole it not away.

[Trumpets sound to the battle, and he runs out.]

ACT II, SCENE V.

[Georgia, after the battle.]

Enter Cosroe, Tamburlaine, Meander, Theridamas, Ortygius, Menaphon, Techelles, Usumcasane, with others.

Tamb. Hold thee, Cosroe! wear two imperial crowns; Think thee invested now as royally, Even by the mighty hand of Tamburlaine, As if as many kings as could encompass thee With greatest pomp, had crowned thee emperor.

Cos. So do I, thrice renown'd man-at-arms, And none shall keep the crown but Tamburlaine. Thee do I make my regent of Persia, And general lieutenant of my armes. — Meander, you, that were our brother's guide, And chiefest counsellor in all his acts, Since he is yielded to the stroke of war, On your submission we with thanks excuse, And give you equal place in our affairs.

Meand. Most happy Emperor, in humblest terms, I vow my service to your majesty, With utmost virtue of my faith and duty.

Cos. Thanks, good Meander: then, Cosroë, reign, And govern Persia in her former pomp!
Now send embassage to thy neighbour kings,
And let them know the Persian king is changed,
From one that knew not what a king should do,
To one that can command what 'longs thereto.
And now we will to fair Perseopolis, = ambassadors.

With twenty thousand expert soldièrs.
The lords and captains of my brother's camp
With little slaughter take Meander's course,
And gladly yield them to my gracious rule.
Ortygus and Menaphon, my trusty friends,
Now will I gratify your former good,
And grace your calling with a greater sway.

Orty. And as we ever aimed at your behoof,
And sought your state all honour it deserved,
So will we with our powèrs and our lives
Endeavour to preserve and prosper it.

Cos. I will not thank thee, sweet Ortygus;
Better replies shall prove my purposes. −
And now, Lord Tamburlaine, my brother's camp
I leave to thee and to Theridamas,
To follow me to fair Perseopolis.
Then will we march to all those Indian mines
My witless brother to the Christians lost,
And ransom them with fame and usury.
And till thou overtake me, Tamburlaine,
(Staying to order all the scattered troops,)
Farewell, lord regent and his happy friends!
I long to sit upon my brother's throne.

Meand. Your majesty shall shortly have your wish,
And ride in triumph through Perseopolis.

[Exeunt all but Tamburlaine, Theridamas,
Techelles, and Usumcasane.]

Tamb. "And ride in triumph through Perseopolis!"
Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
"And ride in triumph through Perseopolis?"

Tech. O, my lord, 'tis sweet and full of pomp.

Usum. To be a king is half to be a god.

Ther. A god is not so glorious as a king.
I think the pleasure they enjoy in Heaven
Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth. −
To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;

= ie. "we will go to"; note the common Elizabethan grammatical construction of this phrase: in the presence of a word of intent (will), the word of movement (go) may be omitted.

34: "and promote you to positions of additional power."
There may also be a bit of wordplay, as calling can refer to being called by God into a state of grace.¹

= ie. to act for your benefit (behoof)".
= royal position or person.
= power(s), normally pronounced as a one-syllable word, is disyllabic here.

41-42: a common motif in Elizabethan drama: it is not sufficient to reward the deserving with simple words of gratitude.

46-48: the reference here is unknown. Previous editors have had nothing helpful to say about these lines.

= "catch up to me (with your troops)".
50: "remaining here only to bring order to your scattered forces".

= excellent.
= exceedingly.

= on.
= set or inlaid.¹
To ask and have, command and be obeyed;
When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,
Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes!

**Tamb.** Why say, Theridamas, wilt thou be a king?

**Ther.** Nay, though I praise it, I can live without it.

**Tamb.** What say my other friends? Will you be kings?

**Tech.** Aye, if I could, with all my heart, my lord.

**Tamb.** Why, that's well said, Techelles; so would I,
And so would you, my masters, would you not?

**Usum.** What then, my lord?

**Tamb.** Why then, Casane, shall we wish for aught
The world affords in greatest novelty.

And rest attemptless, faint and destitute?
Methinks we should not: I am strongly moved.
That if I should desire the Persian crown,
I could attain it with a wondrous ease.
And would not all our soldiers soon consent,
If we should aim at such a dignity?

**Ther.** I know they would with our persuasions.

**Tamb.** Why then, Theridamas, I'll first assay
To get the Persian kingdom to myself;
Then thou for Parthia; they for Scythia and Media;
And, if I prosper, all shall be as sure
As if the Turk, the Pope, Afric and Greece,
Came creeping to us with their crowns apace.

**Tech.** Then shall we send to this triumphing king,
And bid him battle for his novel crown?

**Usum.** Nay, quickly then, before his room be hot.

**Tamb.** 'Twill prove a pretty jest, in faith, my friends.

**Ther.** A jest to charge on twenty thousand men!
I judge the purchase more important far.

**Tamb.** Judge by thyself, Theridamas, not me;
For presently Techelles here shall haste
To bid him battle ere he pass too far,
And lose more labour than the game will quite.
Then shalt thou see this Scythian Tamburlaine,
Make but a jest to win the Persian crown. —
Techelles, take a thousand horse with thee,
And bid him turn him back to war with us.
That only made him king to make us sport.
We will not steal upon him cowardly,
But give him warning and more warriors.
Haste thee, Techelles, we will follow thee.

[Exit Techelles.]

What saith Theridamas?

Ther. Go on for me.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II, SCENE VI.
[Georgia or northern Persia.]

Enter Cosroe, Meander, Ortygius, Menaphon,
with Soldiers.

Cos. What means this devilish shepherd to aspire
With such a giantly presumptiön
To cast up hills against the face of Heaven,
And dare the force of angry Jupiter?

But as he thrust them underneath the hills,
And pressed out fire from their burning jaws,

So will I send this monstrous slave to hell,
Where flames shall ever feed upon his soul.

Meand. Some powers divine, or else infernal, mixed
Their angry seeds at his conception;
For he was never sprung of human race,
Since with the spirit of his fearful pride,
He dare so doubtlessly resolve of rule,
And by profession be ambitiöus.

Orty. What god, or fiend, or spirit of the earth,
Or monster turnèd to a manly shape,
Or of what mould or mettle he be made,
What star or fate soever govern him,
Let us put on our meet encountering minds;

And in detesting such a devilish thief,
In love of honour and defence of right,
Be armed against the hate of such a foe,
Whether from earth, or hell, or Heaven, he grow.

Cos. Nobly resolved, my good Ortygius;
And since we all have sucked one wholesome air,
And with the same proportiön of elements
Resolve, I hope we are resembled
Vowing our loves to equal death and life.

Let's cheer our soldiers to encounter him,
That grievous image of ingratitude,
That fiery thirster after sovereignty,
And burn him in the fury of that flame,
That none can quench but blood and empery.
Resolve, my lords and loving soldiers, now
To save your king and country from decay.

Then strike up, drum; and all the stars that make
The loathsome circle of my dated life,
Direct my weapon to his barbarous heart,
That thus opposeth him against the gods,
And scorns the powers that govern Persiä!

[Exeunt; drums and trumpets sounding.]

ACT II, SCENE VII.
[A battlefield in Georgia or northern Persia.]

Alarms of battle within.
Enter Cosroe, wounded, Tamburlaine,
Theridamas, Techelles, Usuncasane, with others.

Cos. Barbarous and bloody Tamburlaine,
Thus to deprive me of my crown and life!
The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown,
That caused the eldest son of heavenly Ops

To thrust his doting father from his chair,
And place himself in the empyreal Heaven,
Moved me to manage arms against thy state.
What better precedent than mighty Jove?
Nature that framed us of four elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds;
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

And that made me to join with Tamburlaine:
For he is gross and like the massy earth,
That moves not upwards, nor by princely deeds
Doth mean to soar above the highest sort.

And that made us the friends of Tamburlaine,
To lift our swords against the Persian king.

For as when Jove did thrust old Saturn down,
Neptune and Dis gained each of them a crown,
So do we hope to reign in Asiä,
If Tamburlaine be placed in Persiä.
Cos. The strangest men that ever nature made!
I know not how to take their tyrannies,
My bloodless body waxeth chill and cold.
And with my blood my life slides through my wound;
My soul begins to take her flight to hell,
And summons all my senses to depart. —
The heat and moisture, which did feed each other,
For want of nourishment to feed them both,
Are dry and cold; and now doth ghastly Death
With greedy talons grip my bleeding heart,
And like a harpy tires on my life.

Theridamas and Tamburlaine, I die:
And fearful vengeance light upon you both!

Tamb. Not all the curses which the Furies breathe,
Shall make me leave so rich a prize as this.
Theridamas, Techelles, and the rest,
Who think you now is King of Persiä?

All. Tamburlaine! Tamburlaine!

Tamb. Though Mars himself, the angry god of arms,
And all the earthly potentates conspire
To dispossess me of this diadem,
Yet will I wear it in despite of them,
As great commander of this eastern world,
If you but say that Tamburlaine shall reign.

All. Long live Tamburlaine and reign in Asia!

Tamb. So now it is more surer on my head,
Than if the gods had held a parliament,
And all pronounced me King of Persiä.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT II.

51-54: The heat...cold = Cosroe alludes again to the four elements which comprise the human body; in Book II of On Generation and Corruption, Aristotle identified the characteristics of the four elements: fire is hot and dry, air is hot and moist, water is cold and moist, and earth is cold and dry. = Cosroe alludes again to the four elements which comprise the human body; in Book II of On Generation and Corruption, Aristotle identified the characteristics of the four elements: fire is hot and dry, air is hot and moist, water is cold and moist, and earth is cold and dry.

55: harpy = the harpies were three mythical monsters, often pictured as birds with human heads, who were originally goddesses of the storm; they were punishers of crime, and also were imagined to carry their victims off of earth (Murray, p. 190-1).

56: The heat and moisture, which did feed each other,
For want of nourishment to feed them both,
Are dry and cold; and now doth ghastly Death
With greedy talons grip my bleeding heart,
And like a harpy tires on my life.

57: Theridamas and Tamburlaine, I die:
And fearful vengeance light upon you both!

58: Cosroe dies. —

59: Tamburlaine takes his crown and puts it on.

60: Tamb. Not all the curses which the Furies breathe,
Shall make me leave so rich a prize as this.
Theridamas, Techelles, and the rest,
Who think you now is King of Persiä?

61: All. Tamburlaine! Tamburlaine!

62: Tamb. Though Mars himself, the angry god of arms,
And all the earthly potentates conspire
To dispossess me of this diadem,
Yet will I wear it in despite of them,
As great commander of this eastern world,
If you but say that Tamburlaine shall reign.

63: All. Long live Tamburlaine and reign in Asia!

64: Tamb. So now it is more surer on my head,
Than if the gods had held a parliament,
And all pronounced me King of Persiä.

65: [Exeunt.]
ACT III.

SCENE I.
[Anatolia.]

Enter Bajazeth, the Kings of Fez, Morocco, and Argier, with others in great pomp.

Entering Characters: Bajazeth is the Sultan of the Ottoman Turks. He was a real historical figure, Bayezid I, who ruled the Ottomans from 1389 until 1403. The accompanying kings are basically vassals of Bajazeth; that is, they themselves rule lands that have been conquered by the Ottomans, and they serve at Bajazeth's pleasure. As such, they are required to support and contribute troops and arms to Bajazeth's army whenever he calls for them.

Marlowe enjoyed borrowing many of the exotic place-names for Tamburlaine from the Ortelius maps; on the map of Africa, Morocco is the name of both a city and the region, and Fez is a still-extent city in northern Morocco. Marlowe likely intends Morocco here to be the city (perhaps modern Marrakech?). Argier is the city of Algiers.

As a matter of history, at the time of our play - about 1400 A.D. - the Ottomans only occupied western Asia Minor, most of Greece, and much of south-eastern Eastern Europe. Only in the 16th century would they bring North Africa into their orbit.

Baj. Great Kings of Barbary and my portly bassoes.

We hear the Tartars and the eastern thieves,
Under the conduct of one Tamburlaine,
Presume a bickering with your emperor,
And think to rouse us from our dreadful siege
Of the famous Grecian Constantinople.

You know our army is invincible;
As many circumcisèd Turks we have,
And warlike bands of Christiäns renied.

As hath the ocean or the Terrene sea
Small drops of water when the moon begins
To join in one her semicircled horns.
Yet would we not be braved with foreign power,
Nor raise our siege before the Grecians yield,
Or breathless lie before the city walls.

K. of Fez. Renowned Emperor, and mighty general,
What if you sent the bassoes of your guard
To charge him to remain in Asiä,
Or else to threaten death and deadly arms
As from the mouth of mighty Bajazeth.

Baj. Hie thee, my basso, fast to Persiä,
Tell him thy Lord, the Turkish Emperor,
Dread Lord of Afric, Europe, and Asiä,
Great King and conqueror of Graecia,
The ocean, Terrene, and the Coal-black sea,
The high and highest monarch of the world,
Wills and commands (for say not I entreat),
Not once to set his foot on Africa,
Or spread his colours once in Graecia,
Lest he incur the fury of my wrath.
Tell him I am content to take a truce,
Because I hear he bears a valiant mind:
But if, presuming on his silly power,
He be so mad to manage arms with me,
Then stay thou with him; say, I bid thee so:
With triple circuit, thou regreet us not,
We mean to take his morning's next arise
For messenger he will not be reclaimed,
And mean to fetch thee in despite of him.

Basso. Most great and puissant monarch of the earth,
Your basso will accomplish your behest,
And show your pleasure to the Persiän,
As fits the legate of the stately Turk.

[Exit.]

K. of Arg. They say he is the King of Persiä;
But, if he dare attempt to stir your siege,
'Twere requisite he should be ten times more,
For all flesh quakes at your magnificence.

Baj. True, Argièr; and trembles at my looks.

K. of Mor. The spring is hindered by your smothering host,
For neither rain can fall upon the earth,
Nor sun reflex his virtuous beams thereon,
The ground is mantled with such multitudes.

Baj. All this is true as holy Mahomet;
And all the trees are blasted with our breaths.
K. of Fez. What thinks your greatness best to be achieved
In pursuit of the city's overthrow?

Baj. I will the captive pioners of Argier

Cut off the water that by leaden pipes
Runs to the city from the mountain Carnon.
Two thousand horse shall forage up and down,
That no relief or succour come by land:
And all the sea my galleys countermand.
Then shall our footmen lie within the trench,
And with their cannons mouthed like Orcus' gulf.

Batter the walls, and we will enter in;
And thus the Grecians shall be conquerèd.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III, SCENE II.
[Persia or Anatolia.]

Enter Zenocrate, Agydas, Anippe, with others.

Agyd. Madam Zenocrate, may I presume
To know the cause of these unquiet fits,
That work such trouble to your wonted rest?
'Tis more than pity such a heavenly face
Should by heart's sorrow wax so wan and pale,
When your offensive rape by Tamburlaine,
(Which of your whole displeasures should be most,)
Hath seemed to be digested long ago.

Zeno. Although it be digested long ago,
As his exceeding favours have deserved,
And might content the Queen of Heaven, as well
As it hath changed my first conceived disdain,
Yet since a farther passion feeds my thoughts
With ceaseless and disconsolate conceits,
Which dyes my looks so lifeless as they are,
And might, if my extremes had full events,

Make me the ghastly counterfeit of death.

Agyd. Eternal Heavèn sooner be dissolved,

66-67: "how shall we go about capturing Constantinople?"

= ie. "I will have". = the impressed labourers provided by
the King of Argier to accompany the Sultan's army.
pioners = pioneers, ie. sappers, those whose job
within the army is to build and repair fortifications,
defenses, tunnels, etc.

= the reference is unknown. No earlier editor has chosen
to comment on this mountain, and a search of Ortelius'
maps failed to discover it. The Byzantine aqueduct
system was vast, with lengthy conduits stretching from
deep in Thrace (the European side of the Bosporus)
delivering water to the city.

= control.

76: cannons = modern artillery had been in use in the
Muslim and European worlds since the 13th century.
mouthed like = ie. "with mouths as big as those of".
Orcus' gulf = the opening to Hades. Orcus was another
name for Pluto, or Dis.

= ie. Juno, the sister and husband of Jove.

14-15: "my mind is troubled by other never-ending and
disheartening (disconsolate) notions (conceits)"

= "if my hardships proceed to their natural conclusions";
Ribner suggests "if my violent passions were given full
expression in action" (p. 78).
And all that pierceth Phoebus' silver eye,

Before such hap fall to Zenocrate!

Zeno. Ah, life and soul, still hover in his breast
And leave my body senseless as the earth,
Or else unite you to his life and soul,
That I may live and die with Tamburlaine!

Enter, behind, Tamburlaine, Techelles, and others.

Agyd. With Tamburlaine! Ah, fair Zenocrate,
Let not a man so vile and barbarous,
That holds you from your father in despite,
And keeps you from the honours of a queen,
(Being supposed his worthless concubine.)
Be honoured with your love but for necessity.

So, now the mighty Soldan hears of you,
Your highness needs not doubt but in short time
He will with Tamburlaine's destruction
Redeem you from this deadly servitude.

Zeno. Agydas, leave to wound me with these words,
And speak of Tamburlaine as he deserves.
The entertainment we have had of him
Is far from villany or servitude,
And might in noble minds be counted princely.

Agyd. How can you fancy one that looks so fierce,
Only disposed to martial stratagems?
Who, when he shall embrace you in his arms,
Will tell how many thousand men he slew;
And when you look for amorous discourse,
Will rattle forth his facts of war and blood,
Too harsh a subject for your dainty ears.

Zeno. As looks the Sun through Nilus' flowing stream,
Or when the Morning holds him in her arms,
So looks my lordly love, fair Tamburlaine;
His talk much sweeter than the Muses' song
They sung for honour 'gainst Piërides;
Or when Minerva did with Neptune strive:

Minerva (the Greek Athena) and Neptune (the Greek Poseidon) quarreled over who should have sovereignty of Attica (the region of central Greece including Athens). It was finally agreed that whichever of the two could perform a miracle that bestowed the greatest gift on Attica would rule. Poseidon, going first, caused a spring of sea water - not of much value - to well up from a certain rock; Minerva then produced the first olive tree to grow from the same rock, giving her the victory (Murray, p. 51).  

How Marlowe conceived this contest to make sense in the context of Zenocrate’s speech is unclear.

And higher would I rear my estimate
Than Juno, sister to the highest god,

If I were matched with mighty Tamburlaine.

Agyd. Yet be not so inconstant in your love;
But let the young Arabian live in hope
After your rescue to enjoy his choice.
You see though first the King of Persiä,
Being a shepherd, seemed to love you much,
Now in his majesty he leaves those looks,
Those words of favour, and those comfortings,
And gives no more than common courtesies.

Zeno. Thence rise the tears that so distain my cheeks,
Fearing his love through my unworthiness. –

[Tamburlaine goes to her and takes her away lovingly by the hand, looking wrathfully on Agydas.]

[Exeunt all but Agydas.]

Agyd. Betrayed by fortune and suspicious love,
Threatened with frowning wrath and jealousy,
Surprised with fear of hideous revenge,
I stand aghast; but most astonied

To see his choler shut in secret thoughts,
And wrapt in silence of his angry soul.
Upon his brows was portrayed ugly death;
And in his eyes the furies of his heart
That shone as comets, menacing revenge,
And cast a pale complexion on his cheeks.
As when the seaman sees the Hyades

Gather an army of Cimmerian clouds,
(Auster and Aquilon with wingèd steeds,  
All sweating, iilt about the watery Heavens,  
With shivering spears enforcing thunder claps,  
And from their shields strike flames of lightning.)  
All-fearful folds his sails and sounds the main,  
Lifting his prayers to the Heavens for aid  
Against the terror of the winds and waves,  
So fares Agydas for the late-felt frowns  
That sent a tempest to my daunted thoughts,  
And make my soul divine her overthrow.  

Re-enter Techelles with a naked dagger,  
followed by Usuncasane.

Tech. See you, Agydas, how the king salutes you?  
He bids you prophesy what it imports.

Agyd. I prophesied before, and now I prove  
The killing frowns of jealousy and love.  
He needed not with words confirm my fear,  
For words are vain where working tools present  
The naked action of my threatened end:  
It says, Agydas, thou shalt surely die,  
And of extremities elect the least;  
More honour and less pain it may procure  
To die by this resolvd hand of thine,  
Than stay the torments he and Heaven have sworn.  
Then haste, Agydas, and prevent the plagues  
Which thy prolonged fates may draw on thee.  
Go, wander, free from fear of tyrant's rage,  
Removèd from the torments and the hell,  
Wherewith he may excruciate thy soul,  
And let Agydas by Agydas die,  
And with this stab slumber eternally.  

[Stabs himself.]

Tech. Usuncasane, see, how right the man  
Hath hit the meaning of my lord, the king.

Usum. 'Faith, and Techelles, it was manly done;  
And since he was so wise and honourable,  
Let us afford him now the bearing hence,  
And crave his triple-worthy burial.

Tech. Agreed, Casane; we will honour him.  

[Exeunt bearing out the body.]

ACT III, SCENE III.  
[Anatolia.]  
Enter Tamburlaine, Techelles, Usuncasane,  
Theridamas, a Basso, Zenocrate, Anippe,  
= the south and north winds, respectively.  
= joust.  
= lightning is likely tri-syllabic: LIGHT-en-ing.  
99: ie. "the seaman, afraid, lowers his sails and measures the depth of the sea below him".

ie. Agydas' own soul's.

110: ie. "he asks you to interpret for us the meaning of this dagger." Prophesy is a verb; the final syllable rhymes with sky.

112-128: during this speech, Techelles hands the dagger to Agydas.

118: perhaps "if you (speaking to himself) are going to die, go out by the least horrible way".

= determined.  
= wait for.

124: this is the last time we will point out the alliteration in a line.

135-8: since Agydas, in killing himself without fuss, proved himself honourable, and no coward, Usuncasane suggests they request from Tamburlaine that he be given a funeral worthy of his status and honour.

= the Sultan's emissary to Tamburlaine.
with others.

1 Tamb. Basso, by this thy lord and master knows
I mean to meet him in Bithynia:
See how he comes! tush, Turks are full of brags,
And menace more than they can well perform.
He meet me in the field, and fetch thee hence!
Alas! poor Turk! his fortune is too weak
T’ encounter with the strength of Tamburlaine.
View well my camp, and speak indifferently;
Do not my captains and my soldiers look
As if they meant to conquer Africa?

2 Bas. Your men are valiant, but their number few,
And cannot terrify his mighty host.
My lord, the great commander of the world,
Besides fifteen contributory kings,
Hath now in arms ten thousand Janissaries,
Mounted on lusty Mauritanian steeds.

3 Brought to the war by men of Tripoli;
Two hundred thousand footmen that have served
In two set battles fought in Graecia;
And for the expedition of this war,
If he think good, can from his garrisons
 Withdraw as many more to follow him.

4 Tech. The more he brings the greater is the spoil,
For when they perish by our warlike hands,
We mean to set our footmen on their steeds,
And rifle all those stately Janissars.

5 Tamb. But will those kings accompany your lord?
Bas. Such as his highness please; but some must stay
To rule the provinces he late subdued.

6 Tamb. [To his Officers]
Then fight courageously: their crowns are yours;
This hand shall set them on your conquering heads,
That made me Emperor of Asiä.

7 = by now.
= a small region, and one-time kingdom, at the extreme northwest of Asia Minor, bordering the Black Sea; pronounced as bi-THY-ni-a, a four-syllable word.
= "retrieve you from here!"
= objectively, without bias.

8 = the kings of those lands which the Ottomans have conquered would be required to pay a tribute to their new master, hence they are contributory, or tributary.¹

9: lusty = vigorous.
Mauretania is the ancient land now comprising Morocco and western Algeria; this area was famous for its horses.

10 = candidates for the two battles include:
(1) the Battle of Kosovo (1389), in which the Ottomans wiped out a coalition of armies led by the Serbs; it was in this fight that Bajazeth's father, the Sultan Murad I, was killed, and the Ottomans' rule passed to Bayezid (Bajazeth);
(2) the Battle of Rovine (1395), in which a Wallachian army at least drew even with the Turks, but prince Mircea of Wallachia still ended up having to pay tribute to the Sultan, and recognize his authority; and
(3) the Battle of Nicopolis (1396), in which the Turks, still led by Bajazeth, destroyed a crusading army led Sigismund, the king of Hungary and Croatia.

11 = ie. "decides to do so".

12: ie. he will take the Turks' horses and make cavalymen of his own foot-soldiers.
= rob, plunder.
Usum. Let him bring millions infinite of men,
Unpeopling Western Africa and Greece,
Yet we assure us of the victory.

Ther. Even he that in a trice vanquished two kings,

More mighty than the Turkish emperor,
Shall rouse him out of Europe, and pursue
His scattered army till they yield or die.

Tamb. Well said, Theridamas; speak in that mood;
For will and shall best fitteth Tamburlaine,
Whose smiling stars give him assurèd hope
Of martial triumph ere he meet his foes.
I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God,
The only fear and terror of the world,
Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge
Those Christian captives, which you keep as slaves,
Burthening their bodies with your heavy chains,
And feeding them with thin and slender fare;
That naked row about the Terrene sea,

And when they chance to rest or breathe a space,
Are punished with bastones so grievously,
That they lie panting on the galley's side,
And strive for life at every stroke they give.

These are the cruèl pirates of Argier,

44: he = ie. Tamburlaine.
in a trice = in only a moment, just like that. This phrase, and its predecessor at a trice, go back to the 15th and early 16th centuries.1
two kings = ie. Mycetes and Cosroe.
= ie. "who is more".
= force him from cover or hiding, a hunting term.1

= ie. as opposed to conditional words such as "might" or "may".
= ie. "even before".
53: the epithet Scourge of God was first applied to the 5th century empire-builder Attila the Hun.

55-56: it is unlikely Tamburlaine was much concerned with Christians as he conquered his way across Asia. However, his image in Europe at the time of his battle and victory over the Turks was that of the savior of European civilization: during the period when Timur (Tamburlaine) was invading Asia Minor, the Ottomans were overrunning Greece and south-eastern Europe. A wide collection of European soldiers combined to try to stop the advance of the Turks, but were destroyed in the Battle of Nicopolis (1396) in what is now northern Bulgaria. The fall of Constantinople itself seemed imminent. Tamburlaine's invasion forced the Turks to fall back to Asia Minor to face him, and their destruction at the Mongols' hands provided a half-century reprieve for the Byzantine capital and Europe.18

The Turks, as victorious armies have done since time immemorial, would naturally enslave any captured foes, most of whom at this point were Christians.

= Tamburlaine refers to the employment of European slaves in the galleys of Muslim ships; but see the note below at line 64.
= bastinadoes, ie. rods or sticks.3

64-67: the great age of Mediterranean piracy only began in the 16th century, after the Ottomans had brought North Africa under their control, and of course more than a century after the events of our play.

From 1530 to 1780, it is estimated that over one million Europeans were captured and enslaved by African pirates.35 The pirates not only made prizes of European shipping, but also raided the extensive European coastline for slaves, even descending on English villages occasionally, as they did in Cornwall.
That damned train, the scum of Africa, Inhabited with stragglung runagates, That make quick havoc of the Christian blood; But as I live that town shall curse the time That Tamburlaine set foot in Africa.

Enter Bajazeth with his Bassoes, the Kings of Fez, Morocco, and Argier, Zabina and Ebea.

Baj. Bassoes and Janissaries of my guard, Attend upon the person of your lord, The greatest potentate of Africa.

Tamb. Techefles, and the rest, prepare your swords; I mean t' encounter with that Bajazeth.

Baj. Kings of Fez, Morocco, and Argier, He calls me Bajazeth, whom you call lord! Note the presumption of this Scythian slave! — I tell thee, villain, those that lead my horse Have to their names titles of dignity, And dar'st thou bluntly call me Bajazeth?

Tamb. And know, thou Turk, that those which lead my horse, Shall lead thee captive thorough Africa; And dar'st thou bluntly call me Tamburlaine?

Baj. By Mahomet my kinsman's sepulchre, And by the holy Alcoran I swear, He shall be made a chaste and lustless eunuch, And in my sarell tend my concubines; And all his captains that thus stoutly stand, Shall draw the chariot of my emperess, Whom I have brought to see their overthrow.

Tamb. By this my sword, that conquered Persiä, Thy fall shall make me famous through the world. I will not tell thee how I'll handle thee, But every common soldier of my camp Shall smile to see thy miserable state.

K. of Fez. What means the mighty Turkish emperor, To talk with one so base as Tamburlaine?

K. of Mor. Ye Moors and valiant men of Barbary, How can ye suffer these indignities?

K. of Arg. Leave words, and let them feel your lances' points Which glided through the bowels of the Greeks.
Baj. Well said, my stout contributory kings:
Your threefold army and my hugy host
Shall swallow up these base-born Persiâns.

Tech. Puissant, renowned, and mighty Tamburlaine,
Why stay we thus prolonging of their lives?

Ther. I long to see those crowns won by our swords,
That we may rule as kings of Africa.

Usum. What coward would not fight for such a prize?

Tamb. Fight all courageously, and be you kings;
I speak it, and my words are oracles.

Baj. Zabina, mother of three braver boys
Than Hercules, that in his infancy
Did pash the jaws of serpents venomous;
Whose hands are made to grip a warlike lance,
Their shoulders broad for complete armour fit,
Their limbs more large, and of a bigger size,
Than all the brats y-sprung from Typhon's loins;
Who, when they come unto their father's age,
Will batter turrets with their manly fists; −
Sit here upon this royal chair of state.

And on thy head wear my imperial crown,
Until I bring this sturdy Tamburlaine
And all his captains bound in captive chains.

Zab. Such good success happen to Bajazeth!

Tamb. Zenocrate, the loveliest maid alive,
Fairer than rocks of pearl and precious stone,
The only paragon of Tamburlaine,
Whose eyes are brighter than the lamps of Heaven,
And speech more pleasant than sweet harmony!
That with thy looks canst clear the darkened sky,
And calm the rage of thundering Jupiter,
Sit down by her, adornèd with my crown,
As if thou wert the Empress of the world.
Stir not, Zenocrate, until thou see

= huge.
= wait, delay.
= Zabina is Bajazeth's wife.
131-2: Juno always hated Hercules, because he was the bastard son of her husband Jupiter. She sent two snakes to kill Hercules when he was still an infant, but Hercules managed to strangle them first.
= grip.

136: different myths describe Typhon, or Typhoeus, as either a hurricane or monster with a hundred heads; with Echidna (a half-woman-half-serpent), Typhon fathered a number of mythology's greatest beasts: the Nemean lion and the Lernean hydra (both of whom were later killed by Hercules), Cerberus the three-headed dog who guarded Hades, and the Sphinx (Murray, p. 249).^{14,19} y-sprung = the y- prefix (which derived from the Old English ge- prefix) was used to emphasize the completion of an action; these prefixes had dropped out of everyday English use by the end of the 15th century, only to be employed by future poets and dramatists to add an archaistic touch to their language.

138: having finally finished exalting his sons, Bajazeth resumes addressing his wife; chair of state = essentially the throne.

= Tamburlaine asks Zenocrate to sit next to the Turkish empress.
Me march victoriously with all my men,
Triumphing over him and these his kings;
Which I will bring as vassals to thy feet;
Till then take thou my crown, vaunt of my worth.

And manage words with her, as we will arms.

Zeno. And may my love the King of Persia,
Return with victory and free from wound!

Baj. Now shalt thou feel the force of Turkish arms,
Which lately made all Europe quake for fear.
I have of Turks, Arabians, Moors, and Jews,
Enough to cover all Bithynia.
Let thousands die; their slaughtered carcasses
Shall serve for walls and bulwarks to the rest
And as the heads of Hydra, so my power,

Subdued, shall stand as mighty as before.
If they should yield their necks unto the sword,
Thy soldiers' arms could not endure to strike
So many blows as I have heads for thee.
Thou know'st not, foolish, hardy Tamburlaine,

What 'tis to meet me in the open field,
That leave no ground for thee to march upon.

Tamb. Our conquering swords shall marshal us the way
We use to march upon the slaughtered foe,
Trampling their bowels with our horses' hoofs;
Brave horses bred on th' white Tartarian hills;
My camp is like to Julius Caesar's host,
That never fought but had the victory;
Nor in Pharsalia was there such hot war,

As these, my followers, willingly would have.
Legions of spirits fleeting in the air
Direct our bullets and our weapons' points,
And make your strokes to wound the senseless lure.

= "the object that proclaims my importance or greatness",
preumably meaning his crown, though he could be
 describing Zenocrate here too.
= "carry on a war of words" (Cunningham, p. 313),
a variation on manage arms (conduct war), itself a phrase
used multiple times in this play.

167-178: throughout this speech, the Sultan tries to impress
upon Tamburlaine the size of his army.

= ramparts or fortifications.
= the Lernean hydra was a famous nine-headed monster,
assigned to Hercules to kill; he found that every time
he cut off one head, two new ones grew in to take its
place. One can see why the arrogant Sultan might
apply the characteristics of such a creature - even as
you think you are destroying it, it remains at least as
powerful as before - to himself and his army.
= conquered, brought under subjection.
= ie. "if every soldier serving under me".

= foolish-hardy was a term dating back to the early 16th
century, obviously a combination of the separate words
foolish and hardy, the latter meaning courageous or daring;
interestingly, the abbreviated word foolishly first appeared
much earlier, at least as far back as the early 13th century.
= lead.
= like, similar to.
= ie. Pharsalus in Greece, where Julius Caesar decisively
defeated the army of Pompey in the climax of the civil war
(49-45 B.C.).
= floating.
= bullets might refer here to cannon balls, or even arrows.
= a decoy, made to look kind of like a small bird, attached to
the end of a cord, and used to call young hawks;
early editors were unhappy with the choice of word here, and
have suggested others such as wind, air or light to
take the place of lure. But the sense of the line, that
supernatural forces will cause the Turkish missiles
and swords to harm apparent, and not real, targets, is
clear enough.
And when she sees our bloody colours spread,
Then Victory begins to take her flight,
Resting herself upon my milk-white tent. –
But come, my lords, to weapons let us fall;
The field is ours, the Turk, his wife and all.

[Exit with his followers.]

*Baj.* Come, kings and bassoes, let us glut our swords,
That thirst to drink the feeble Persians’ blood.

[Exit with his followers.]

*Zab.* Base concubine, must thou be placed by me,
That am the empress of the mighty Turk?

*Zeno.* Disdainful Turkess and unreverend boss!
Call’st thou me concubine, that am betrothed
Unto the great and mighty Tamburlaine?

*Zab.* To Tamburlaine, the great Tartarian thief!

*Zeno.* Thou wilt repent these lavish words of thine,
When thy great basso-master and thyself
Must plead for mercy at his kingly feet,
And sue to me to be your advocate.

*Zab.* And sue to thee! – I tell thee, shameless girl.

Thou shalt be laundress to my waiting maid!
How lik’st thou her, *Ebea*? – Will she serve?

*Ebea.* Madam, perhaps, she thinks she is too fine,
But I shall turn her into other weeds,
And make her dainty fingers fall to work.

*Zeno.* Hear’st thou, Anippe, how thy drudge doth talk?
And how my slave, her mistress, menaceth?
Both for their sauciness shall be employed
To dress the common soldiers’ meat and drink,
For we will scorn they should come near ourselves.

*Anip.* Yet sometimes let your highness send for them
To do the work my chambermaid disdains.

[They sound to the battle within.]

*Zeno.* Ye gods and powers that govern Persiä,
And made my lordly love her worthy king,
Now strengthen him against the Turkish Bajazeth,
And let his foes, like flocks of fearful roes
Pursued by hunters, fly his angry looks,
That I may see him issue conqueror!

Zab. Now, Mahomet, solicit God himself,
And make him rain down murdering shot from Heaven
To dash the Scythians' brains, and strike them dead,
That dare to manage arms with him
That offered jewels to thy sacred shrine,
When first he warred against the Christians!

[They sound again to the battle within.]

Zeno. By this the Turks lie weltering in their blood,
And Tamburlaine is Lord of Africa.

Zab. Thou art deceived. — I heard the trumpets sound,
As when my emperor overthrew the Greeks,
And led them captive into Africa.
Straight will I use thee as thy pride deserves —
Prepare thyself to live and die my slave.

Zeno. If Mahomet should come from Heaven and swear
My royal lord is slain or conquerèd,
Yet should he not persuade me otherwise
But that he lives and will be conqueror.

[Re-enter Bajazeth, pursued by Tamburlaine;
they fight, and Bajazeth is overcome.]

Tamb. Now, king of Bassoes, who is conqueror?

Baj. Thou, by the fortune of this damned foil.

Tamb. Where are your stout contributory kings?

Re-enter Techelles, Theridamas, and Usumcasane.

Tech. We have their crowns — their bodies strow the field.

Tamb. Each man a crown! — Why kingly fought i' faith.
Deliver them into my treasury.

Zeno. Now let me offer to my gracious lord
His royal crown again so highly won.

Tamb. Nay, take the crown from her, Zenocrate,
And crown me Emperor of Africa.

Zab. No, Tamburlaine: though now thou got the best,
Thou shalt not yet be lord of Africa.

Ther. Give her the crown, Turkess: you were best.

[He takes it from her.]

Zab. Injurious villains! — thieves! — runagates!
How dare you thus abuse my majesty?

_Ther._ Here, madam, you are Empress; she is none.

[Given it to Zenocrate.]

_Thamb._ Not now, Theridamas; her time is past.
The pillars that have bolstered up those terms,
Are fall’n in clusters at my conquering feet.

_Zab._ Though he be prisoner, he may be ransomed.

_Thamb._ Not all the world shall ransom Bajazeth.

_Baj._ Ah, fair Zabina! we have lost the field;
And never had the Turkish emperor
So great a foil by any foreign foe.
Now will the Christian miscreants be glad,
Ringing with joy their superstitious bells,
And making bonfires for my overthrow.
But, ere I die, those foul idolaters
Shall make me bonfires with their filthy bones.

For though the glory of this day be lost,
Afric and Greece have garrisons enough
To make me sovereign of the earth again.

_Thamb._ Those wallèd garrisons will I subdue,
And write myself great lord of Africa.
So from the East unto the furthest West
Shall Tamburlaine extend his puissant arm.
The galleys and those pilling brigandines,
That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf,
And hover in the Straits for Christians’ wreck,
Shall lie at anchor in the isle Asant,
Until the Persian fleet and men of war,
Sailing along the oriental sea,
Have fetched about the Indian continent,
Even from Persepolis to Mexico.

And thence unto the straits of Jubalter;
Where they shall meet and join their force in one
Keeping in awe the bay of Portingale,

And all the ocean by the British shore;
And by this means I'll win the world at last.

_Baj._ Yet set a ransom on me, Tamburlaine.

_Tamb._ What, think'st thou Tamburlaine esteems thy gold?

_I'll make the kings of India, ere I die,
Offer their mines to sue for peace to me,
And dig for treasure to appease my wrath._

_Come, bind them both, and one lead in the Turk;
The Turkess let my love's maid lead away._

[They bind them.]

_Baj._ Ah, villains!—dare you touch my sacred arms?
_O Mahomet!—O sleepy Mahomet!_  

_Zab._ O cursèd Mahomet, that makes us thus
_The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous!_  

_Tamb._ Come, bring them in; and for this _happy_ conquest,
_Triumph_ and solemnise a martial feast._

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT III.
ACT IV.

SCENE I.
[Egypt.]

Enter the Soldan of Egypt, Capolin, Lords, and a Messenger.

Sold. Awake, ye men of Memphis! – hear the clang
Of Scythian trumpets! – hear the basilisks.

That, roaring, shake Damascus' turrets down!

The rogue of Volga holds Zenocrate,
The Soldan's daughter, for his concubine,
And with a troop of thieves and vagabonds,
Hath spread his colours to our high disgrace,
While you, faint-hearted, base Egyptian,
Lie slumbering on the flowery banks of Nile,
As crocodiles that unaffrighted rest,
While thundering cannons rattle on their skins.

Mess. Nay, mighty Soldan, did your greatness see
The frowning looks of fiery Tamburlaine,
That with his terror and imperious eyes,
Commands the hearts of his associates,
It might amaze your royal majesty.

Sold. Villain, I tell thee, were that Tamburlaine
As monstrous as Gorgon prince of hell,
The Soldan would not start a foot from him.
But speak, what power hath he?

Mess. Mighty lord,
Three hundred thousand men in armour clad,
Upon their prancing steeds disdainfully,
With wanton paces trampling on the ground:
Five hundred thousand footmen threatening shot,
Shaking their swords, their spears, and iron bills.

Enviroring their standard round, that stood
As bristle-pointed as a thorny wood:
Their warlike engines and munition
Exceed the forces of their martial men.

Sold. Nay, could their numbers countervail the stars,
Or ever-drizzling drops of *April showers*.

Or withered leaves that Autumn shaketh down,
Yet would the Soldan by his conquering power
So scatter and consume them in his rage,
That not a man should live to rue their fall.

**Capo.** So might your highness, had you time to sort
Your fighting men, and raise your royal host;
But Tamburlaine, by expeditiön,
Advantage takes of your unreadiness.

**Sold.** Let him take all th' advantages he can.
Were all the world conspired to fight for him,
Nay, were he devil, as he is no man,
Yet in revenge of fair Zenocrates,
Whom he detaineth in despite of us,
This arm should send him down to Erebos,
To shroud his shame in darkness of the night.

**Mess.** Pleaseth your mightiness to understand,
His resolution far exceedeth all.
The first day when he pitcheth down his tents,
White is their hue, and on his silver crest,
A snowy feather spangled white he bears,
To signify the mildness of his mind,
That, satiate with spoil, refuseth blood.
But when Aurora mounts the second time
As red as scarlet is his furniture;
Then must his kindled wrath be quenched with blood,
Not sparing any that can manage arms;

But if these threats move not submission,
Black are his colours, black paviliön;
His spear, his shield, his horse, his armour, plumes,
And jetty feathers, menace death and hell!
Without respect of sex, degree, or age,
He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.

**Sold.** Merciless villain! – peasant, ignorant
Of lawful arms or martial discipline!
Pillage and murder are his usual trades.
The slave usurps the glorious name of war.
See, Capolin, the fair Arabian king,
That hath been disappointed by this slave
Of my fair daughter, and his princely love,
May have fresh warning to go war with us,
And be revenged for her disparagement.
[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE II.
[Outside Damascus' walls.]

Enter Tamburlaine, Techelles, Theridamas,
Usumcasane, Zenocrate, Anippe,
two Moors drawing Bajazeth in a cage,
and Zabina following him.

Tamb. Bring out my footstool.

[Bajazeth is taken out of the cage.]

Baj. Ye holy priests of heavenly Mahomet,
That, sacrificing, slice and cut your flesh,
Staining his altars with your purple blood;

Make Heaven to frown and every fixed star
To suck up poison from the moorish fens,
And pour it in this glorious tyrant's throat!

Tamb. The chiefest God, first mover of that sphere,
Enchased with thousands ever-shining lamps,
Will sooner burn the glorious frame of Heaven,
Than it should so conspire my overthrow.

But, villain! thou that wishest this to me,
Fall prostrate on the low disdainful earth,
And be the footstool of great Tamburlaine,
That I may rise into my royal throne.

Baj. First shalt thou rip my bowels with thy sword,
And sacrifice my soul to death and hell,
Before I yield to such a slavery.

Tamb. Base villain, vassal, slave to Tamburlaine!
Unworthy to embrace or touch the ground,
That bears the honour of my royal weight;
Stoop, villain, stoop! − Stoop! for so he bids

That may command thee piecemeal to be torn,
Or scattered like the lofty cedar trees
Struck with the voice of thundering Jupiter.

Baj. Then, as I look down to the damnèd fiends,
Fiends look on me! and thou, dread god of hell,
With ebon sceptre strike this hateful earth,
And make it swallow both of us at once!

[Tamburlaine steps upon him to mount his throne.]

Tamb. Now clear the triple region of the air.

And let the majesty of Heaven behold
Their scourge and terror tread on emperors.
Smile stars, that reigned at my nativity,
And dim the brightness of your neighbour lamps!
Disdain to borrow light of Cynthia!

For I, the chiepest lamp of all the earth,
First rising in the East with mild aspect,
But fixèd now in the meridian line.
Will send up fire to your turning spheres,
And cause the sun to borrow light of you.

My sword struck fire from his coat of steel,
Even in Bithynia, when I took this Turk;
As when a fiery exhalatiön,

Wrap't in the bowels of a freezing cloud
Fighting for passage, makes the welkin crack,
And casts a flash of lightning to the earth:
But ere I march to wealthy Persiä,
Or leave Damascus and th' Egyptian fields,
As was the fame of Clymene's brain sick son,
That almost brent the axle-tree of Heaven.

So shall our swords, our lances, and our shot
Fill all the air with fiery meteors:
Then when the sky shall wax as red as blood
It shall be said I made it red myself,
To make me think of nought but blood and war.

Zab. Unworthy king, that by thy cruelty
Unlawfully usurp'st the Persian seat,
Dar'st thou that never saw an emperor
Before thou met my husband in the field,
Being thy captive, thus abuse his state.
Keeping his kingly body in a cage,
That roofs of gold and sun-bright palaces
Should have prepared to entertain his grace?
And treading him beneath thy loathsome feet,
Whose feet the kings of Africa have kissed?

Tech. You must devise some torment worse, my lord.
To make these captives rein their lavish tongues.

Tamb. Zenocrate, look better to your slave.

Zeno. She is my handmaid's slave, and she shall look
That these abuses flow not from her tongue: –
Chide her, Anippe.

Anip. Let these be warnings for you then, my slave,
How you abuse the person of the king;
Or else I swear to have you whipt, stark-naked.

Baj. Great Tamburlaine, great in my overthrow,
Ambitious pride shall make thee fall as low,
For treading on the back of Bajazeth,
That should be horsèd on four mighty kings.

Tamb. Thy names, and titles, and thy dignities
Are fled from Bajazeth and remain with me,
That will maintain it 'gainst a world of kings.
Put him in again.

[They put him back into the cage.]
Shall ransom him, or take him from his cage.
The ages that shall talk of Tamburlaine,
Even from this day to Plato's wondrous year,

Shall talk how I have handled Bajazeth;
These Moors, that drew him from Bithynia,
To fair Damascus, where we now remain,
Shall lead him with us wheresoe'er we go.
Techelles, and my loving followers,
Now may we see Damascus' lofty towers,
Like to the shadows of Pyramides.

That with their beauties grace the Memphian fields:
The golden statue of their feathered bird,
That spreads her wings upon the city’s walls,
Shall not defend it from our battering shot:
The townsmen mask in silk and cloth of gold,
And every house is as a treasury:
The men, the treasure, and the town is ours.

Ther. Your tents of white now pitched before the gates,
And gentle flags of amity displayed,
I doubt not but the governor will yield,
Offering Damascus to your majesty.

Tamb. So shall he have his life and all the rest:
But if he stay until the bloody flag
Be once advanced on my vermilion tent,
He dies, and those that kept us out so long,
And when they see us march in black array,
With mournful streamers hanging down their heads,
Were in that city all the world contained,
Not one should 'scape, but perish by our swords.

Zeno. Yet would you have some pity for my sake,
Because it is my country, and my father's.

Tamb. Not for the world, Zenocrate; I've sworn.
Come; bring in the Turk.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE III.
[Somewhere on the march to Damascus.]

Enter the Soldan, the King of Arabia, Capolin, and Soldiers with colours flying.

Sold. Methinks we march as Meleager did,
Environ'd with brave Argolian knights.

= ie. Plato's *perfect year*, a reference to the cycle of time it takes for the revolving spheres of planets and stars to return to their original position; today the *Great Year* or *Platonic Year* is used to describe the amount of time it takes for the equinoxes to complete their revolution, about 25,800 years.\(^1\)

= ie. the Pyramids of Egypt, though Schelling suggests obelisks; the word may contain four syllables here, with the primary stress being on the second: *py-RI-mi-des*.

= delays, waits.
= red, the color of Tamburlaine’s tents and banners on the second day of a siege.

= delays, waits.
= probably meaning "to move around aimlessly".\(^1\)
To chase the savage Calydonian boar, which was terrorizing the countryside of Aetolia, on the southern coast of central Greece. The hunt was led by Meleager, the son of the King of Calydon, and many of the greatest heroes of Greece, such as Theseus, Jason, and Peleus took part. Argolian knights refers to those hunters who went on to take part with Jason in the search for the golden fleece, their collective name being the Argonauts.

4-8: In Book VII of the Metamorphoses, Ovid tells the tale of a monster hunted by Cephalus and the other Theban youth. As he was about to release his javelin at the fiend, Cephalus saw the monster and his dog, which was closely pursuing it, turned to marble (Humphries, pp. 177-8). Aonian here means simply "Greek". Themis is the personification of the state of order, as set by law and custom.

6: Tamburlaine's army described as a hunted monster.

7: Tamburlaine's army described as a hunted monster.

= the Soldan is addressing his prospective son-in-law, the King of Arabia.

= fierce, cruel or uncompromising.

= raise.

= condition or status.

= defy.

= misfortune.

34: ie. "than the pilot of a ship who stands in the safety of the harbor".

= foreigner's. = torn apart.

= smashed.

= condition.
K. of Arab. Let grief and fury hasten on revenge;
Let Tamburlaine for his offences feel
Such plagues as we and Heaven can pour on him.
I long to break my spear upon his crest,
And prove the weight of his victorious arm;
For Fame, I fear, hath been too prodigal
In sounding through the world his partial praise.

Sold. Capolin, hast thou surveyèd our powers?

Capo. Great Emperors of Egypt and Arabia,
The number of your hosts united is
A hundred and fifty thousand horse;
Two hundred thousand foot, brave men-at-arms,
Courageous, and full of hardiness,
As frolic as the hunters in the chase
Of savage beasts amid the desert woods.

K. of Arab. My mind presageth fortunate success;
And Tamburlaine, my spirit doth foresee
The utter ruin of thy men and thee.

Sold. Then rear your standards; let your sounding drums
Direct our soldiers to Damascus' walls. –
Now, Tamburlaine, the mighty Soldan comes,
And leads with him the great Arabian king.
To dim thy baseness and obscurity,
Famous for nothing but for theft and spoil;
To raze and scatter thy inglorious crew
Of Scythians and slavish Persians.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.
[Outside the walls of Damascus.]

A Banquet set out; to it come Tamburlaine,
all in scarlet, Zenocrate, Theridamas, Techelles,
Usuncasane, Bajazeth in his cage, Zabina,
and others.

Tamb. Now hang our bloody colours by Damascus,
Reflexing hues of blood upon their heads,
While they walk quivering on their city walls,
Half dead for fear before they feel my wrath.
Then let us freely banquet and carouse
Full bowls of wine unto the god of war
That means to fill your helmets full of gold,
And make Damascus spoils as rich to you,
As was to Jason Colchos' golden fleece. –
And now, Bajazeth, hast thou any stomach?

**Baj.** Ay, such a stomach, cruel Tamburlaine, as I could willingly feed upon thy blood-raw heart.

**Tamb.** Nay, thine own is easier to come by; pluck out that; and 'twill serve thee and thy wife: — Well, Zenocrate, Techelles, and the rest, fall to your victuals.

**Baj.** Fall to, and never may your meat digest!

*Ye Furies,* that can mask invisible,

Dive to the bottom of Avernus' pool,

And in your hands bring hellish poison up
And squeeze it in the cup of Tamburlaine!

Or, winged snakes of Lerna, cast your stings,

And leave your venoms in this tyrant's dish!

**Zab.** And may this banquet prove as ominous
As Progne's to th' adulterous Thracian king,
That fed upon the substance of his child.

**Zeno.** My lord, how can you tamely suffer these
Outrageous curses by these slaves of yours?

**Tamb.** To let them see, divine Zenocrate,
I glory in the curses of my foes,
Having the power from the imperial Heaven
To turn them all upon their proper heads.

**Tech.** I pray you give them leave, madam; this speech is a goodly refreshing to them.

**Ther.** But if his highness would let them be fed, it would do them more good.

**Tamb.** Sirrah, why fall you not to? — are you so daintily brought up, you cannot eat your own flesh?

**Baj.** First, legions of devils shall tear thee in pieces.

**Usum.** Villain, know'st thou to whom thou speakest?

was captured by Jason and his band of Argonauts, so named for the ship they sailed on, the *Argo.*

= appetite; lines 10-17 are in prose.

= an imperative: "eat."

20: *Ye Furies* = the goddesses who tormented the guilty.

*mask = probably meaning "wander."*

= a second allusion in the play to lake at the entrance to Hades.

= *Lerna* was a region of springs and marshes in the Peloponnese, and the home of the hydra, or "water-snake" with nine heads, which Hercules slew.

27-29: the allusion is to the gruesome mythological story of Tereus, the king of Thrace, who violently raped Philomena, the sister of his wife Procne. Tereus cut out Philomena's tongue to keep her from telling anyone what happened, and kept her locked in a shed. Philomena famously weaved her story onto a cloth, which she then was able to pass on to a friend. When Procne, who had been told by Tereus that her sister was dead, learned the truth, she, in revenge, cooked and fed Itys, her son by Tereus, to Tereus. As Tereus chased the girls with murderous intent, the gods transformed them into birds - Philomena a nightingale, and Procne a swallow. (Humphries, 143-151).

= tolerate.

39-93: the conversation with and about Bajazeth is in prose.

= a contemptuous term of address. = "why haven't you begun to eat yet?" - Tamburlaine here refers to his suggestion at lines 15-16 that the Sultan pull out and consume his own heart. Notice Tamburlaine speaks with mock formality, addressing Bajazeth as 'you'.
52 Tamb. O, let him alone. Here; eat, sir; take it from my sword's point, or I'll thrust it to thy heart.

[Bajazeth takes it and stamps upon it.]

54 Ther. He stamps it under his feet, my lord.

56 Tamb. Take it up, villain, and eat it; or I will make thee slice the brawns of thy arms into carbonadoes and eat them.

58 Usum. Nay, 'twere better he killed his wife, and then she shall be sure not to be starved, and he be provided for a month's victual beforehand.

60 Tamb. Here is my dagger: despatch her while she is fat, for if she live but a while longer, she will fall into a consumption with fretting, and then she will not be worth the eating.

62 Ther. Dost thou think that Mahomet will suffer this?

64 Tech. 'Tis like he will when he cannot let it.

66 Tamb. Go to; fall to your meat. − What, not a bit! Belike he hath not been watered today; give him some drink.

[They give Bajazeth water to drink, and he flings it upon the ground.]

68 Fast, and welcome, sir, while hunger make you eat. − How now, Zenocrate, do not the Turk and his wife make a goodly show at a banquet?

70 Zeno. Yes, my lord.

72 Ther. Methinks,'tis a great deal better than a consort of music.

74 Tamb. Yet music would do well to cheer up Zenocrate. Pray thee, tell, why thou art so sad? − If thou wilt have a song, the Turk shall strain his voice. But why is it?

76 Zeno. My lord, to see my father's town besieged, The country wasted where myself was born, How can it but afflict my very soul?

78 If any love remain in you, my lord, Or if my love unto your majesty May merit favour at your highness' hands, Then raise your siege from fair Damascus' walls, And with my father take a friendly truce.

79 52-53: Tamburlaine offers some meat or other food to Bajazeth.

= flesh or muscles.¹ = small pieces of flesh, for grilling.²

63-65: rare humour is shown in Usumcasane's joke about Zabina's obesity, as well as Tamburlaine's response.

= wasting disease.

72: permit. On its face, it seems perhaps that Bajazeth should be the one to speak this line; but assuming Theridamas is indeed the correct speaker, we may infer he is addressing the Sultan here (Theridamas' use of "thou" supports this), mocking Bajazeth's previous warnings that Mahomet will not allow the situation to continue.

= hinder.⁵

89: consort of music = company of musicians playing together, or a playing or singing in harmony.¹

95ff: the play returns to verse.
Tamb. Zenocrate, were Egypt Jove's own land,
Yet would I with my sword make Jove to stoop.
I will confute those blind geographers
That make a triple region in the world,
Excluding regions which I mean to trace,
And with this pen reduce them to a map,
Calling the provinces, cities, and towns,
After my name and thine, Zenocrate.
Here at Damascus will I make the point
That shall begin the perpendicular:

And would'st thou have me buy thy father's love
With such a loss? — Tell me, Zenocrate.

Zeno. Honour still wait on happy Tamburlaine;
Yet give me leave to plead for him, my lord.

Tamb. Content thyself: his person shall be safe,
And all the friends of fair Zenocrate,
If with their lives they may be pleased to yield,
Or may be forced to make me Emperor;
Feed, you slave; thou may'st think thyself happy to be
fed from my trencher.

Baj. My empty stomach, full of idle heat,
Draws bloody humours from my feeble parts,
Preserving life by hastening cruel death.
My veins are pale; my sinews hard and dry;
My joints benumbed; unless I eat, I die.

Zab. Eat, Bajazeth: and let us live in spite of them, —
looking some happy power will pity and enlarge us.

Tamb. Here, Turk; wilt thou have a clean trencher?

Baj. Ay, tyrant, and more meat.

Tamb. Soft, sir; you must be dieted; too much eating
will make you surfeit.

Ther. So it would, my lord, 'specially having so small
a walk and so little exercise.
[<br>[A second course of crowns is brought in.]]

Tamb. Theridamas, Techelles, and Casane, here are
the cates you desire to finger, are they not?

Ther. Ay, my lord: but none save kings must feed with
these.
Tech. 'Tis enough for us to see them, and for Tamburlaine only to enjoy them.

Tamb. Well; here is now to the Soldan of Egypt, the King of Arabia, and the Governor of Damascus. Now take these three crowns, and pledge me, my contributory kings. – I crown you here, Theridamas, King of Argier; Techelles, King of Fez; and Usumcasane, King of Morocco. – How say you to this, Turk? These are not your contributory kings.

Baj. Nor shall they long be thine, I warrant them.

Tamb. Kings of Argier, Morocco, and of Fez, You that have marched with happy Tamburlaine As far as from the frozen plage of Heaven, Unto the watery morning's ruddy bower.

And thence by land unto the torrid zone.

Deserve these titles I endow you with, By valour and by magnanimity. Your births shall be no blemish to your fame, For virtue is the fount whence honour springs, And they are worthy she investeth kings.

Ther. And since your highness hath so well vouchsafed, If we deserve them not with higher meeds Than erst our states and actions have retained, Take them away again and make us slaves.

Tamb. Well said, Theridamas; when holy fates Shall 'stablish me in strong Ægyptia, We mean to travel to th' antarctic pole, Conquering the people underneath our feet, And be renowned as never emperors were. – Zenocrate, I will not crown thee yet, Until with greater honours I be graced.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT IV.

170: ie. "as far as is the distance"; plage = region.¹
171: perhaps "to the farthest reaches of the east"; morning is watery because it is dewy and ruddy because it shades red.
bower = abode.¹
175: "the fact that none of you is of noble or high birth will not harm your reputations or honours".
176: = from where.
178: = personified Virtue; read as "whom she".
180: = granted.
180-1: "and if we do not deserve to keep the crowns through bearing and conduct which is even greater than what we engaged in before".
higher meeds = greater excellence or deserving.²
ACT V.

SCENE I.
[Inside Damascus.]

Enter the Governor of Damascus, with several Citizens, and four Virgins, having branches of laurel in their hands.

Gov. Still doth this man, or rather god of war, Batter our walls and beat our turrets down; And to resist with longer stubbornness Or hope of rescue from the Soldan's power, Were but to bring our wilful overthrow, And make us desperate of our threatened lives. We see his tents have now been alterèd With terrors to the last and cruellest hue. His coal-black colours everywhere advanced, Threaten our city with a general spoil:

And if we should with common rites of arms Offer our safeties to his clemency, I fear the custom, proper to his sword, Intending so to terrify the world, By any innovation or remorse, Will never be dispensed with till our deaths;

Therefore, for these our harmless virgins' sakes, Whose honours and whose lives rely on him, Let us have hope that their unspotted prayers, Their blubbered cheeks, and hearty, humble moans,

Will melt his fury into some remorse, And use us like a loving conqueror.

1st Virg. If humble suits or imprecatiöns,

(Uttered with tears of wretchedness and blood Shed from the heads and hearts of all our sex, Some made your wives and some your children) Might have entreated your obdurate breasts To entertain some care of our securities Whiles only danger beat upon our walls, These more than dangerous warrants of our death Had never been erected as they be,

Nor you depend on such weak helps as we.

Scene Setting: within this final scene of the play, the setting will change twice.

4: the Egyptians, we remember, rule Syria.
5: the sense is that they will be destroyed due to their own obstinate refusal to surrender to Tamburlaine.

= destruction or slaughter; if by the third day of a siege a city has not surrendered, Tamburlaine will have every human occupant killed.
11-12: "and as is customary by the laws of war we throw ourselves at his mercy".

= part.
16-17: ie. "Tamburlaine's customary procedure will not be altered, through any new ideas or pity, before we are all slaughtered."

= untainted, pure.
= tearful; previous editors point out how the word was not intended to convey any sense of ridiculousness.5,7
= pity.
= "and cause him to treat (use) us".
= begging, entreaties. = prayers; in this speech (25-34), made up of a single lengthy and sinuous sentence, the Virgin suggests the Governor should not have waited for Tamburlaine's black banners to go up before submitting to him.

= stubborn, resistant to persuasion.1
30: "to have some consideration for our safety"; the Virgin is bitter and sarcastic.
32: allusion to the black banners and tents of Tamburlaine.
34: "we would not have reached this absurd point in which the lives of everyone in the city now depend on its weakest citizens to save them."
Gov. Well, lovely virgins, think our country's care,
Our love of honour, loath to be in thrall
To foreign powers and rough imperious yokes,
Would not with too much cowardice or fear,
Submit yourselves and us to servitude.

Therefore in that your safeties and our own,
Your honours, liberties, and lives were weighed
In equal care and balance with our own,
Endure as we the malice of our stars,
The wrath of Tamburlaine and power of wars;
Or be the means the overweighing heavens
Have kept to qualify these hot extremes.

And bring us pardon in your cheerful looks.

2nd Virg. Then here before the majesty of Heaven
And holy patrons of Ægyptia,
With knees and hearts submissive we entreat
Grace to our words and pity to our looks
That this device may prove propitiöus,
And through the eyes and ears of Tamburlaine
Convey events of mercy to his heart;

Grant that these signs of victory we yield
May bind the temples of his conquering head,
To hide the folded furrows of his brows,
And shadow his displeasèd countenance
With happy looks of ruth and lenity.

Gov. Farewell, sweet virgins, on whose safe return
Depends our city, liberty, and lives.

[Exeunt Governor and Citizens; the Virgins remain.]

Enter Tamburlaine, all in black and very melancholy,
Techelles, Theridamas, Usumcasane, with others.

Tamb. What, are the turtles frayed out of their nests?

Alas, poor fools! must you be first shall feel
The sworn destruction of Damascus?
They knew my custom; could they not as well

= "you must understand that my concern for Damascus";
the Governor employs the "royal we", ie. our = my.
= enslaved.

36-41: the Governor explains that both the pursuit of honour and
the fear of enslavement required that he not submit to
Tamburlaine, which would be a cowardly act, so long as
there was some hope they would be rescued by the Soldan.

= "the evil fate our stars have fixed for us".

47-48: "or be the agents the most important (overweighing)
powers of Heaven above have appointed to alleviate
this acute point of crisis (extremes)."

= strategy.²

56-57: an interesting image of the Virgins' supplications,
which Tamburlaine would both see and hear, sending
a message of mercy through his eyes and ears to his heart.
= ie. the branches of laurel, with which they hope to make
a wreath that Tamburlaine will accept. The laurel was a
a symbol of victory.

60-61: ie. to cause his anger to fade.

= pity.

69-72: the exit and entrance of characters signals that the
Virgins have left Damascus and entered Tamburlaine's
camp.

74: turtles = in the 16th century, turtle meant turtledove;
tortoise was the name assigned to all the reptiles with shells
on their backs of the Testudine order.¹
frayed = frightened.² Fray and afraid are cognates, both
derived from affray, meaning "to frighten".¹
Have sent ye out, when first my milk-white flags,  
Through which sweet Mercy threw her gentle beams,  
As now, when fury and incensèd hate  
Flings slaughtering terror from my coal-black tents,  
And tells for truth submission comes too late?

1st Virg. Most happy King and Emperor of the earth,  
Image of honour and nobility,  
For whom the powers divine have made the world,  
And on whose throne the Holy Graces sit;  
Of Nature's skill and heavenly majesty;  
Pity our plights! O pity poor Damascus!  
Honour and reverence evermore have reigned!

Pity the marriage bed, where many a lord,  
In prime and glory of his loving joy,  
Embraceth now with tears of ruth and blood  
The jealous body of his fearful wife,  
Whose cheeks and hearts so punished with conceit,  
To think thy puissant, never-stayed arm,  
Will part their bodies, and prevent their souls  
From heavens of comfort yet their age might bear,  
Now wax all pale and withered to the death,  
As well for grief our ruthless governor  
Hath thus refused the mercy of thy hand,  
(Whose sceptre angels kiss and furies dread,)  
As for their liberties, their loves, or lives!  
O then for these, and such as we ourselves,  
For us, our infants, and for all our bloods,  
That never nourished thought against thy rule,  
Pity, O pity, sacred Emperor,  
The prostrate service of this wretched town,  
And take in sign thereof this gilded wreath;  
Whereunto each man of rule hath given his hand,  
And wished, as worthy subjects, happy means  
To be investors of thy royal brows  
Even with the true Egyptian diadem!

Tamb. Virgins, in vain you labour to prevent  
That which mine honour swears shall be performed.  
Behold my sword! what see you at the point?

1st Virg. Nothing but fear, and fatal steel, my lord.

Tamb. Your fearful minds are thick and misty then;  
For there sits Death; there sits imperious Death  
Keeping his circuit by the slicing edge,  
But I am pleased you shall not see him there;  
He now is seated on my horsemen's spears,  
And on their points his fleshless body feeds. −

Techelles, straight go charge a few of them

= casting or reflecting.¹

= the Graces, or Charities, were three goddesses who were  
responsible for bestowing beauty and gracefulness.

= ie. "our old people".

= probably meaning "apprehensive".¹  
= brooding imagination.²  
= never stopping or ceasing activity.¹

= grow.

103-4: "and everyone greatly regrets that the governor  
did not submit to you earlier".

= bowing down or lying with one's face on the ground in  
submission.

112-6: the gilded wreath the Virgins wish to hand to  
Tamburlaine (which if accepted he would place on his  
head) is a symbol of the intent of Damascus' rulers to  
grant him the crown of Egypt, making him their  
legitimate ruler.

= ie. the regular path of his journeys.  = ie. of his sword.

= Death was traditionally imagined to be a skeleton  
(Ribner, p. 101).⁹  
= order; note Tamburlaine's word play with charge in the  
next line.
To charge these dames, and show my servant, Death,  
Sitting in scarlet on their armèd spears.

**Virgins.** O pity us!

**Tamb.** Away with them, I say, and show them Death.  
[The Virgins are taken out.]

I will not spare these proud Egyptiäns,  
Nor change my martial observatiöns  
For all the wealth of Gihon's golden waves,  
Or for the love of Venus, would she leave  
The angry god of arms and lie with me.  
They have refused the offer of their lives,  
And know my customs are as **péremptory**  
As wrathful planets, death, or destiny.

**Re-enter Techelles.**

What, have your horsemen shown the virgins Death?

**Tech.** They have, my lord, and on Damascus' walls  
Have hoisted up their slaughtered carcasses.

**Tamb.** A sight as **baneful** to their souls, I think,  
As are Thessalian drugs or mithridate:

But go, my lords, put the rest to the sword.  
[Exeunt all except Tamburlaine.]
captives of the city: living men and women "were piled on top of each other, along with bricks and mortar" (see Bartlett, pp. 242-4, 249).

162: this line is an example of an alexandrine, a line of poetry in iambic meter containing 12 syllables instead of our usual 10, and especially one like this one which has a natural pause exactly half-way through it (ie. after the 6th syllable, called a medial caesura).

163: ie. "the word fair is not good enough to describe you"; note that in apostrophizing to Zenocrate, Tamburlaine uses "thee" as a signal of his deep affection for her.

164: "That in thy passion for thy country's love, And fear to see thy kingly father's harm, With hair dishevelled wip'st thy watery cheeks; And, like to Flora in her morning pride, Shaking her silver tresses in the air, Rain'st on the earth resolvèd pearl in showers, And sprinklest sapphires on thy shining face, Where Beauty, mother to the Muses, sits And comments volumes with her ivory pen, Taking instructions from thy flowing eyes; Eyes that, when Ebena steps to Heaven, In silence of thy solemn evening's walk, Make, in the mantle of the richest night, The moon, the planets, and the meteors, light; There angels in their crystal armours fight A doubtful battle with my tempted thoughts For Egypt's freedom, and the Soldan's life; His life that so consumes Zenocrate, Whose sorrows lay more siege unto my soul, Than all my army to Damascus' walls: And neither Persia's sovereign, nor the Turk Troubled my senses with conceit of foil So much by much as doth Zenocrate. What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then? If all the pens that ever poets held

172: even in the darkest night, Zenocrate's eyes illuminate the heavenly bodies.

178: in this poetical description of the stars, Cunningham sees an allusion to Judges 5:20: "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (King James Version).

179: Tamburlaine admits he has been considering sparing Egypt (which includes Syria) and Zenocrate's father from his wrath.

181: Ribner notes that no such deity as Ebena exists, and that what or who Marlowe is referring to here has been the source of much historical conjecture (p. 102).6 Schelling suggests she may be a personification of Evening. The fact that the line is metrically irregular suggests it may be corrupt.

185: "if all the pens that all poets ever held were able to put all of their poets' thoughts of beauty into words".
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,  
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,  
Their minds, and muses on admired themes;  
If all the heavenly quintessence they still  
From their immortal flowers of poesy,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit;  
If these had made one poem's period,  
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,  
Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,  
Which into words no virtue can digest,  
But how unseemly is it for my sex,  
My discipline of arms and chivalry,  
My nature, and the terror of my name,  
To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint!  
Save only that in beauty's just applause,

With whose instinct the soul of man is touched;  
And every warrior that is wrapt with love  
Of fame, of valour, and of victory,  
Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits:  
I thus conceiving and subduing both  
That which hath stooped the chiefest of the gods,  
Even from the fiery-spangled veil of Heaven,  
To feel the lowly warmth of shepherds' flames,

And mask in cottages of strowèd reeds,  
Shall give the world to note for all my birth,  
That virtue solely is the sum of glory,  
And fashions men with true nobility. −

Who's within there?

Enter Attendants.

Hath Bajazeth been fed to-day?
Atten. Ay, my lord.

Tamb. Bring him forth; and let us know if the town be ransacked.

224-7: a brief return to prose.

227: at this point we should briefly describe the true history of Tamburlaine, Damascus, and the Egyptians: while Timur was camped near the great Syrian city, the Egyptian army did in fact come north, and even approached Timur's army, which caused him to retreat from Damascus; the citizens, overjoyed at the appearance of their rescuers, emerged from behind their walls to harass Timur's rearguard.

Unfortunately, the next day, the Egyptians, recognizing that Timur's army was too large for it to handled, went home; with Damascus now at his mercy, Timur first demanded a ransom of one million dinars - which was paid - and then demanded another ten million - which was probably impossible to raise.

Timur then let his army take the city and permitted his soldiers to do whatever their fierce hearts desired to its population. Unspeakable acts of cruelty naturally ensued, and Damascus was burned (Bartlett, pp. 254-5). ¹¹

[Exeunt Attendants.]

Enter Techelles, Theridamas, Usumcasane, and others.

Tech. The town is ours, my lord, and fresh supply Of conquest and of spoil is offered us.

233-4: note another compression of time: in the two and one-half minutes it took Tamburlaine to recite his soliloquy, his soldiers have vanquished Damascus and presumably slaughtered the entire population. This technique speeds up the pace of the play and increases the drama.

240: "as if we were to lose our lives." ⁵

Tamb. That's well, Techelles; what's the news?

Tech. The Soldan and th' Arabian king together March on us with such eager violence, As if there were no way but one with us.

Tamb. No more there is not, I warrant thee, Techelles.

Tech. The Soldan and th' Arabian king together March on us with such eager violence, As if there were no way but one with us.

Tamb. That will we chiefly see unto, Theridamas, For sweet Zenocrate that so laments his state. ²⁵⁸

Ther. We know the victory is ours, my lord; But let us save the reverend Soldan's life, For fair Zenocrate that so laments his state.

Tamb. That will we chiefly see unto, Theridamas, For sweet Zenocrate, whose worthiness Deserves a conquest over every heart. − And now, my footstool, if I lose the field, You hope of liberty and restitution? − Here let him stay, my masters, from the tents, Till we have made us ready for the field. − Pray for us, Bajazeth; we are going.

Baj. Go, never to return with victory.

²⁵¹: another long line of 12 syllables.

= Tamburlaine is of course addressing Bajazeth.

= i.e. away from.

²⁵⁷: "until we are ready to offer battle."
Millions of men encompass thee about,  
And gore thy body with as many wounds!  
Sharp, forkèd arrows light upon thy horse!

Furies from the black Cocytus lake,

Break up the earth, and with their firebrands 
Enforce thee run upon the baneful pikes!  
Volley of shot pierce through thy charmed skin,  
And every bullet dipt in poisoned drugs! 

Or, roaring cannons sever all thy joints,  
Making thee mount as high as eagles soar!

Zab. Let all the swords and lances in the field
Stick in his breast as in their proper rooms!  
At every pore let blood come dropping forth,  
That lingering pains may massacre his heart,  
And madness send his damned soul to hell!

Baj. Ah, fair Zabina! we may curse his power; 
The heavens may frown, the earth for anger quake:  
But such a star hath influence on his sword,  
As rules the skies and countermands the gods. 

More than Cimmerian Styx or destiny;  
And then shall we in this detested guise,  
With shame, with hunger, and with horror stay,  
Gripping our bowels with retorquèd thoughts.

And have no hope to end our ecstasies.

Zab. Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,
No fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end 
To our infamous monstrosities.  
Gape earth, and let the fiends infernal view

A hell as hopeless and as full of fear  
As are the blasted banks of Erebus.  
Where shaking ghosts with ever-howling groans  
Hover about the ugly ferryman.

To get a passage to Elysium!

Why should we live? O, wretches, beggars, slaves! 
Why live we, Bajazeth, and build up nests  
So high within the region of the air  
By living long in this oppression,  
That all the world will see and laugh to scorn  
The former triumphs of our mightiness  
In this obscure infernal servitude?

Baj. O life, more loathsome to my vexèd thoughts

= read as "may millions". = surround. 
= barbed arrows, ie. arrows in which sharp prongs extend 
in the reverse direction near the head, resulting in 
extensive tearing of the flesh when the arrow is pulled 
out of its victim.  
= the River Cocytus was a branch of the River Styx, the 
principle river of the underworld.19  
= firebrands is tri-syllabic here: fi-yer-brands. 
= "force you to". = poisonous.  
= ie. arrow.  

273: "blasting your body into the sky!"

= "the same way they fit into their sheaths!" 

= "commands or controls even the gods".1  
= dark or black. = the primary river of Hades. 
= manner.1  
= remain.  
= gripping or clutching. = Dyce has the best gloss for this 
uniquely Marlovian phrase; "bent back in reflections on 
our former happiness" (p. 34).5  
= ie. state of fear or anxiety.1

294f: an imperative: "Gape, earth, and let the demons 
below see up here a hell on earth, as hopeless etc."

= withered. = the dark region souls must pass through on 
their journey to Hades.  
= ie. the souls of the dead.  
= allusion to Charon, the famous elderly ferryman who 
transports the souls of the dead across the rivers of 
the underworld to deliver them to Hades proper. 
= referring to Hades generally, although Elysium technically 
describes the part of hell in which the blessed souls are 
sent.

301-2: build up...air = a metaphor for Bajazeth and his wife 
living their humiliating lives as prisoners in full view of 
all those around them.

= troubled.
Than noisome parbreak of the Stygian snakes,
Which fills the nooks of hell with standing air,
Infesting all the ghosts with cureless griefs!
O dreary engines of my loathèd sight,
That see my crown, my honour, and my name
Thrust under yoke and thraldom of a thief,
Why feed ye still on day's accursed beams
And sink not quite into my tortured soul?
You see my wife, my queen, and emperèss,
Brought up and proppèd by the hand of fame,
Queen of fifteen contributory queens,
Now thrown to rooms of black abjection.

Smeared with blots of basest drudgery,
Accursèd Bajazeth, whose words of ruth,
(That would with pity cheer Zabina's heart,
And make our souls resolve in ceaseless tears,)
Sharp hunger bites upon, and gripes the root,
From whence the issues of my thoughts do break; −
O poor Zabina! O my queen! my queen!
Fetch me some water for my burning breast,
To cool and comfort me with longer date,
That in the shortened sequel of my life
I may pour forth my soul into thine arms

With words of love, whose moaning intercourse
Hath hitherto been stayed with wrath and hate
Of our expressless banned inflictions.

Zab. Sweet Bajazeth, I will prolong thy life,
As long as any blood or spark of breath
Can quench or cool the torments of my grief.

Baj. Now, Bajazeth, abridge thy baneful days,
And beat thy brains out of thy conquered head,
Since other means are all forbidden me,

That may be ministers of my decay,
O, highest lamp of ever-living Jove,
Accursèd day! infected with my griefs,
Hide now thy stained face in endless night,
And shut the windows of the lightsome heavens!
Let ugly Darkness with her rusty coach,
Engirt with tempests, wrapt in pitchy clouds,
Smother the earth with never-fading mists!
And let her horses from their nostrils breathe
Rebellious winds and dreadful thunder-claps!
That in this terror Tamburlaine may live,
And my pined soul, resolved in liquid air,

May still excruciate his tormented thoughts!
Then let the stony dart of senseless cold
Pierce through the centre of my withered heart,
And make a passage for my loathed life!

[He brains himself against the cage.]

357: pined = wasted away from sorrow or suffering.\(^2\)
resolved = dissolved.
liquid = clear; the phrase liquid air was common in ancient poetry.\(^1\)

362: a certain candidate for a top-five stage direction from Elizabethan drama. We may note here that the real Ottoman Sultan, Bayezid I, was indeed captured by Tamburlaine in the Battle of Angora (Ankara) in 1402 and died in captivity in 1403.\(^8\)

363: = unfeeling spear.\(^1\) = ie. without physical feeling.

367: = split in two.

372-382: as her distraught emotions get the best of her, Zabina's speech turns to prose, as is conventional in Elizabethan drama for those out of their minds.
liquor = drink.

378: = probable reference to Greek fire, an incendiary substance which resists suppression by ordinary means. This material, whose formula was kept secret by the Byzantines, likely played a large part in saving their empire from destruction by its numerous enemies over the centuries, as it could be deployed against enemy ships, whose sailors had no recourse to put out the flames, water being useless against it.

384: = like Bajazeth before her, Zenocrate calls for an allegorical coach, but hers represents death.

389f: note that Zenocrate, so wrapped up in her own angst, fails for twenty lines to even notice the now-dead Sultan and his wife before her.

392: = a 16th century variation of strewn.\(^1\)

394: = ie. Mars.
On horsemen's lances to be hoisted up
And guiltlessly endure a cruel death:
For every fell and stout Tartarian steed,
That stampt on others with their thundering hoofs,
When all their riders charged their quivering spears,
Began to \text{check} the ground and rein themselves,

Gazing upon the beauty of their looks. —
Ah Tamburlaine! wert thou the cause of this,
That term'st Zenocrate thy dearest love?
Whose lives were dearer to Zenocrate
Than her own life, or aught save thine own love. —
But see another bloody spectacle!
Ah, wretched eyes, the enemies of my heart.
How are ye glutted with these grievous objects,
And tell my soul more tales of bleeding \text{ruth}? —
See, see, Anippe, if they breathe or no.

\textit{Anip.} No breath, nor sense, nor motion in them both;
Ah, madam! this their slavery hath enforced,
And ruthless cruelty of Tamburlaine.

\textit{Zeno.} Earth, cast up fountains from thy entrails,
And wet thy cheeks for their untimely deaths!
Shake with their weight in sign of fear and grief!
Blush, Heaven, that gave them honour at their birth
And let them die a death so barbarous!
Those that are proud of fickle empery
And place their chiefest good in earthly pomp,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperèss!

Ah, Tamburlaine! my love! sweet Tamburlaine!
That fight'st for sceptres and for slippery crowns,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperèss!
Thou, that in conduct of thy happy stars
Sleep'st every night with conquests on thy brows,
And yet wou'dst shun the wavering turns of war,
In fear and feeling of the like distress,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperèss!
Ah, mighty Jove and holy Mahomet,
Pardon my love! — O, pardon his contempt
Of earthly fortune and respect of pity,
And let not conquest, ruthlessly pursued,

Be equally against his life incensed
In this great Turk and hapless Emperèss!
And pardon me that was not moved with \text{ruth}
To see them live so long in misery!
Ah, what may chance to thee, Zenocrate?

\textit{Anip.} Madam, content yourself, and be resolved
Your love hath Fortune so at his command,

= fierce or cruel. = proud or formidable.\(^1\)

= perhaps "stop suddenly (on)"; \textit{A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words} (1887) has as one definition of \textit{check}, "when a hound stops on its own accord, having lost scent" (Vol. I, p. 243).\(^2\) Ribner alone suggests "stamp upon" (p. 106).\(^3\)

= "he who calls".

= "anything and everything except".

408: Zenocrate finally notices the corpses before her.

= plural form of "you", addressing her eyes.
= pity.

418: Zenocrate calls for volcanoes.

420: Zenocrate calls for earthquakes.
= ie. with embarrassment.

= "those people who". = treacherous or dangerous.\(^4\)

425: Zenocrate will repeat this line two more times exactly, and once with variation, in this speech.

= ie. hard to hold on to.\(^5\)

431-2: perhaps something like "and yet you would evade or avoid the fickleness and uncertainty of war, if you could experience the distress of Bajazeth and Zabina."

434: an interesting intertwining of pagan and Islamic faith!

435: "forgive me for being in love with such a man!"

437-9: the sense is something like, "let not Tamburlaine’s unchecked pursuit of conquest cause him to suffer a fate like that of Bajazeth and Zabina!"

= unlucky.
= pity.
= happen.

445-6: personified \textit{Fortune} is regularly portrayed as
That she shall stay and turn her wheel no more,

As long as life maintains his mighty arm
That fights for honour to adorn your head.

Enter Philemus, a Messenger.

Zeno. What other heavy news now brings Philemus?

Phil. Madam, your father, and th' Arabian king,
The first affecter of your excellence,
Comes now, as Turnus 'gainst Æneas did,
Armèd with lance into th' Egyptian fields,
Ready for battle 'gainst my lord, the king.

Zeno. Now shame and duty, love and fear present
A thousand sorrows to my martyred soul.
Whom should I wish the fatal victory
When my poor pleasures are divided thus
And racked by duty from my cursed heart?
My father and my first-betrothed love
Must fight against my life and present love;
Wherein the change I use condemns my faith,
And makes my deeds infamous through the world:
But as the gods, to end the Trojans' toil,

Prevented Turnus of Lavinia,
And fatally enriched Æneas' love,
So for a final issue to my griefs,
To pacify my country and my love,
Must Tamburlaine by their resistless powers
With virtue of a gentle victory
Conclude a league of honour to my hope;
Then, as the Powers divine have pre-ordained,
With happy safety of my father's life
Send like defence of fair Arabia.

[Trumpets sound to the battle within:
Afterwards, the King of Arabia enters wounded.]

K. of Arab. What cursed power guides the murdering hands
Of this infamous tyrant's soldiers,
That no escape may save their enemies,  
Nor fortune keep themselves from victory?  

Lie down, Arabia, wounded to the death,  
And let Zenocrate's fair eyes behold  
That, as for her thou bear'st these wretched arms,  
Even so for her thou diest in these arms,  
Leaving thy blood for witness of thy love.  

**Zeno.** Too dear a witness for such love, my lord,  
Behold Zenocrate! the cursed object,  
Whose fortunes never mastered her griefs;  
Behold her wounded, in conceit, for thee,  
As much as thy fair body is for me.  

**K. of Arab.** Then shall I die with full, contented heart,  
Having beheld divine Zenocrate,  
Whose sight with joy would take away my life  
As now it bringeth sweetness to my wound,  
If I had not been wounded as I am.  
Ah! that the deadly pangs I suffer now,  
Would lend an hour's licence to my tongue,  
To make discourse of some sweet accidents  
Have chanced thy merits in this worthless bondage;  
And that I might be privy to the state  
Of thy deserved contentment, and thy love;  
But, making now a virtue of thy sight,  
To drive all sorrow from my fainting soul,  
Since death denies me farther cause of joy,  
Deprived of care, my heart with comfort dies,  
Since thy desired hand shall close mine eyes.

[He dies.]

Re-enter Tamburlaine, leading the Soldan, Techelles,  
Theridamas, Usumcasane, with others.

**Tamb.** Come, happy father of Zenocrate,  
A title higher than thy Soldan's name.  
Though my right hand have thus enthralled thee,  
Thy princely daughter here shall set thee free;  
She that hath calmed the fury of my sword,  
Which had ere this been bathed in streams of blood  
As vast and deep as Euphrates or Nile.

**Zeno.** O sight thrice welcome to my joyful soul,  
To see the king, my father, issue safe  
From dangerous battle of my conquering love!  

**Sold.** Well met, my only dear Zenocrate,  
Though with the loss of Egypt and my crown.
'Twas I, my lord, that got the victory,
And therefore grieve not at your overthrow,
Since I shall render all into your hands,
And add more strength to your dominions
Than ever yet confirmed th' Egyptian crown.
The god of war resigns his room to me,
Meaning to make me general of the world:
Jove, viewing me in arms, looks pale and wan,
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne.

Where'er I come the Fatal Sisters sweat,
And grisly Death, by running to and fro,
To do their ceaseless homage to my sword;
And here in Afric, where it seldom rains,
Since I arrived with my triumphant host,
Have swelling clouds, drawn from wide-gasping wounds,
Been oft resolved in bloody purple showers,
A meteor that might terrify the earth,
And make it quake at every drop it drinks.
Millions of souls sit on the banks of Styx
Waiting the back return of Charon's boat;
Hell and Elysium swarm with ghosts of men,
That I have sent from sundry foughten fields,
To spread my fame through hell and up to Heaven.
And see, my lord, a sight of strange import,
Emperors and kings lie breathless at my feet:
The Turk and his great Empress, as it seems,
Left to themselves while we were at the fight,
Have desperately despatched their slavish lives:
With them Arabia, too, hath left his life:
All sights of power to grace my victory;
And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine;
Wherein, as in a mirror, may be seen
His honour, that consists in shedding blood,
When men presume to manage arms with him.

Mighty hath God and Mahomet made thy hand,
Renownèd Tamburlaine! to whom all kings
Of force must yield their crowns and emperies;
And I am pleased with this my overthrow,
If, as beseems a person of thy state,
Thou hast with honour used Zenocrate.

Tamb. Her state and person want no pomp, you see;
And for all blot of foul in chastity

=Tamburlaine seems to use Afric to include the Levant, as he never entered Africa proper.

551-2: Tamburlaine compares the ceaseless flow of his enemies' blood to rainstorms; resolved = dissolved.
553: meteors, which sometimes referred to comets, were believed to be omens of ill fortune.
= every drop of blood that seeps into the earth (it).
555-6: another reference to the ferryman of the underworld.
= Marlowe poetically divides Hades into two components, one part for the damned and one for the blessed.
= fields which have been fought on, ie. battlefields. This is not a unique use of the phrase foughten field(s), which appears occasionally in old verse.

= unusual or great importance or significance.

= ie. things to see, spectacles.

= conduct war.

= by force, without choice.

= treated.

= lack.
I record Heaven her heavenly self is clear:
Then let me find no farther time to grace
Her princely temples with the Persian crown.
But here these kings that on my fortunes wait,
And have been crowned for prov'd worthiness,
Even by this hand that shall establish them,
Shall now, adjoining all their hands with mine,
Invest her here the Queen of Persiä.
What saith the noble Soldan and Zenocrate!

Sold. I yield with thanks and protestations
Of endless honour to thee for her love.
Tamb. Then doubt I not but fair Zenocrate
Will soon consent to satisfy us both.
Zeno. Else should I much forget myself, my lord.

Ther. Then let us set the crown upon her head,
That long hath lingered for so high a seat.
Tech. My hand is ready to perform the deed;
For now her marriage-time shall work us rest.

Usum. And here's the crown, my lord; help set it on.

Tamb. Then sit thou down, divine Zenocrate;
And here we crown thee Queen of Persiä,
And all the kingdoms and dominions
That late the power of Tamburlaine subdued.
As Juno, when the giants were suppressed,
That darted mountains at her brother Jove,

So looks my love, shadowing in her brows
Triumphs and trophies for my victories;
Or, as Latona's daughter, bent to arms,
Adding more courage to my conquering mind.
To gratify the sweet Zenocrate,
Egyptians, Moors, and men of Asiä,
From Barbary unto the western India,
Shall pay a yearly tribute to thy sire:
And from the bounds of Afric to the banks
Of Ganges shall his mighty arm extend.

And now, my lords and loving followers,
That purchased kingdoms by your martial deeds,
Cast off your armour, put on scarlet robes,
Mount up your royal places of estate,
Environèd with troops of noblemen,

And there make laws to rule your provinces.
Hang up your weapons on Alcides' post.

For Tamburlaine takes truce with all the world.
Thy first-betrothèd love, Arabia,
Shall we with honour, as beseems, entomb
With this great Turk and his fair Emperèss.

Then, after all these solemn exequies,
We will our rites of marriage solemnise.

FINIS
Marlowe’s Invented Words

Like all of the writers of the era, Christopher Marlowe made up words when he felt like it, usually by adding prefixes and suffixes to known words, combining words, or using a word in a way not yet used before. The following is a list of words from *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*, that are indicated by the OED as being either the first or only use of a given word, or, as noted, the first use with a given meaning:

- architecture (used figuratively to mean structure)
- aspect (meaning countenance)
- astounding (as an adjective)
- attemptless
- blood-raw
- Caspian
- ceaseless
- celebrated (as a festival)
- the phrase cleave the pin
- clownage
- countermand (meaning control)
- the phrase dispatch the life of
- encountering (as an adjective)
- enroll (meaning to wrap up in)
- the phrase place of estate
- excrutiate (meaning to torture mentally)
- expressless
- fetch (meaning to take a course)
- fiery-spangled
- fleshless
- in chastity
- incivil (meaning barbarous)
- investor
- judge (meaning allow judgment to be made about)
- jigging
- lustless (meaning without sexual urges)
- the phrase to manage arms
- marshall (meaning to lead or usher)
- mother wit (meaning one who possesses mother wit)
- mountain foot
- novel (meaning newly-acquired)
- obdurate (meaning hard-hearted)
- the phrase ocean main
- overmatching (as an adjective)
- overweighing (as an adjective)
- parbreak (as a noun)
- period (meaning goal or point)
- piling (meaning pillaging)
- reflex (meaning to cast, as a beam of light)
- regret (meaning to greet again)
- resistless
- retorqued
- royalize (meaning make famous)
- the phrase rue the day
- satisfaction (meaning release from suspense or uncertainty)
- scum (applied to persons)
- semi-circled
- sled (meaning a sleigh, pulling people for recreation)
- smothering (meaning covering completely)
spangled (meaning speckled)

top (as a verb, meaning to surpass or outdo)

Turkess

unaffrighted

unvalued

vagrant (adjective, applied to things as opposed to people)

valorous

villainess

the phrase make the welkin crack and variants, such as howl, roar, etc.
FOOTNOTES

The footnotes in the annotations correspond as follows:

thrace&highlight=silver%2Crhodope.
31. History Today Website. Death of Tamerlane. Retrieved 7/21/2107: