ElizabethanDrama.org
presents
the Annotated Popular Edition of

TAMBURLAINE the GREAT
PART ONE

by Christopher Marlowe
Written c. 1586-87
Earliest Extant Edition: 1590

Featuring complete and easy-to-read annotations.

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TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT
Part the First
By Christopher Marlowe
Written c. 1586-7
First Published 1590

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Tamburlaine, a Scythian Shepherd.
   Techelles, his follower.
   Usumcasane, his follower.

The Persian Royal Family:
   Mycetes, King of Persia.
      Cosroe, his Brother.

Persian Lords and Captains:
   Ortygius.
   Ceneus.
   Menaphon.
   Meaneus.
   Theridamas.

Other Nations' Leaders:
   Bajazeth, Emperor of the Turks.
      Zabina, Wife of Bajazeth.
         Ebea, her Maid.
   Alcidamas, King of Arabia, betrothed to Zenocrate.
   King of Fess.
   King of Morocco.
   King of Argier.
   Soldan of Egypt.
      Zenocrate, Daughter of the Soldan of Egypt.
         Anippe, her Maid.
      Capolin, an Egyptian Captain.
   Governor of Damascus.

Median Lords:
   Agydas.
   Magnetes.

Philemus, a Messenger.
   Virgins of Damascus.
Messengers, Soldiers, etc.

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 play's strict iambic pentameter is mesmerizing, allowing you to race through speeches at a pace that will leave you breathless.

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, with some original wording and spelling reinstated from the octavo of 1590.

NOTES ON THE ANNOTATIONS

Mention in the annotations of various editors (citation #3-7, 9, and 12-15 below) refers to the notes supplied by these scholars for their editions of this play. We note that Bartlett's work (#11) is a history text.

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:
1. Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online.
6. Schelling, Felix E. Christopher Marlowe. New York:


NOTES on TAMBURLAINE
and this EDITION.

A. 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 17 February 1405, at Otrar in modern Kazakhstan. He had built an empire covering an area greater than that of all of western and central Europe combined.

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 have been significantly disabled, owning 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. 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 renouned and greate Tamberlaine". Apparently Mexio himself complained about the fragmentary nature of his own sources, "scarce 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.

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) ASIA MINOR: 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 placed in Anatolia, although at one point he seems to situate the Turkish army at some vague point between Persia and Syria.

(2) SYRIA AND EGYPT: 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 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) PERSIA: 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) NORTH ASIA: 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 colourful 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.

G. Scene Breaks, Settings, and Stage Directions.

Tamburlaine the Great, Part I was originally published in 1590 in combination with Tamburlaine, Part II in a single octavo; it was
reprinted in 1592 and 1597, with further editions released in the first
decade of the 17th century. As usual, we lean towards adhering to the
wording of the earliest volume as much as possible.

Words or syllables which have been added to the original text to
clarify the sense or repair the meter are surrounded by hard brackets [ ];
these additions usually are adopted from the play's later editions. A
director who wishes to remain truer to the original text may of course
choose to omit any of the supplementary wording.

The 1590 octavo divides our edition of Tamburlaine into Acts and
Scenes. However, as is the usual case, it does not provide scene
settings or identify asides. We adopt the scene settings suggested by
Dyce and Ellis, and the asides by Dyce.

Finally, as is our normal practice, a good number of the octavo's
stage directions have been modified, and others added, usually without
comment, to give clarity to the action. Most of these changes are
adopted from Dyce.
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
Threatening the world with high astounding terms.

6 And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.

8 View but his picture in this tragic glass,
And then applaud his fortune as you please.

END OF PROLOGUE.

Editor's Suggestion: to get the best sense of the Prologue, we suggest you read it one time through without peeking at the notes, then read the annotation at the end of the Prologue (line 8), then read the Prologue again!

1-2: "Away from the frivolous verse-making of those writers with natural wit and a bent for rhyming, and similar ideas (conceits) that keep those engaged in such buffoonery (clownage) employed".

jigging = Schelling suggests "the making of merry or satirical verses."

mother wits = those with native wit or intellect, likely meant ironically.

= language.

6: Marlowe deliberately creates an analogy between his hero Tamburlaine and the 5th century A.D. conqueror Attila the Hun, the original Scourge of God.

= looking glass or magic mirror.

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 would succeed.
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 dares scarce 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!

Scene Settings: please note, settings are not included in any of the referenced editions of Tamburlaine the Great; all scene settings in this edition are the editor's own suggestions - as always, done with the goal of making the play easier for the reader to follow.

Entering Characters: Mycetes is the King of Persia; Cosroe is his brother. The remaining gentlemen are all Persian lords and war chiefs.

1: the play opens with the Persian king Mycetes, a weak man, unable to find the words to describe the cause of his anguish. Cosroe is pronounced with the stress on the second syllable: cos-ROE.

= unable.\(^{14}\)

= ability to speak cleverly.\(^{1}\)

7f: Cosroe ignores his brother's instruction, and instead brazenly complains of Mycetes' unfitness to rule.

= statesmanship.\(^{2}\)

= Afric and Africa are often used to mean the Levant in this play.

11-12: Cosroe seems ignorant of Europe's climate; but Wolff\(^{13}\) suggests the reference here is to the invasion of Eastern Europe by the 6th-5th centuries B.C. Persian King Darius, whose army suffered terribly from the period's cold weather.

dares scarce = "barely dares to". Many editors emend this to scarce dares, but a search of the Early English Books Online database shows that dare(s) scarce and scarce dare(s) appear with equal frequency.

For = due to.

freezing meteors = ie. snow and ice; the term meteor could be used as here to describe atmospheric conditions in general.\(^{1}\)

congealed = frozen.\(^{1}\)

14-16: Cosroe conveys the traditional view of astrology, in which the location of the planets at the time of one's birth determines one's fate and personality. When Cynthia (the personified Moon) is in conjunction (joined) with Saturn (that is, located in the same sign of the zodiac) when one is born, the result will be a melancholic temperament.\(^{33}\) The influence of the moon alone was also believed to produce a fickle temperament, and Saturn a half-witted one.\(^{15}\)

Cosroe rues the fact that different planets were not in position to have a positive influence on Mycetes at his birth. Jupiter (Jove) would have made him "magnanimous...doing
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 conceiveèd 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

Glorious things”: the Sun would have given him
"incomparable Judgment, of great Majesty and
Stateliness", and grant him the ability to "speak with
gravity...and with great confidence"; and, Mercury
would bestow on him "much elegance in his speech", making him
"sharp and witty". 33

fickle = unreliable. 1

17-18: Cosroe refers to the Ottoman Turks and the Scythian
band (Tartars) led by Tamburlaine, both of whom pose a
threat to the peace of Persia (thee). 14

Tartars = Ribner9 notes that Marlowe uses the term
Tartar interchangeably with Scythian.

In writing the Tamburlaine plays, Marlowe made
extensive use of a collection of colourful, if generally
inaccurate, maps of the world, gathered by the Antwerp
geographer Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) and published in
1570. On Ortelius' complete map of the known world, the
area labeled Tartaria is an extensive region, about the size of
Europe, located to the north of the Black Sea.

= appeal.
= intelligence.
25: as king, Mycetes holds the lives of all of his subjects
in his hands.

= with four exceptions - Tamburlaine, Menaphon, Bajazeth
and Capolin - all the names in the play are pronounced with
the stress on the second syllable; the above four names begin
with a stressed syllable.

= explain. 1

36-37: flocks of passengers = ie. travellers (passengers)
within Persia; flocks, with plumes in line 37, brings together
a metaphor of the chickens or other poultry a fox (line 35)
might try to snare while the members of the household are
away gathering the harvest.
To pull one's plumes also suggests a tearing down of
one's pride.

= fitting.

41: Tamburlaine is portrayed as coming from Scythia, an
ancient land vaguely conceived to be situated on the north
side of the Black Sea, though with its northern and eastern
limits undefined. The real Tamburlaine was born and raised
further east, in south-east modern Uzbekistan.

= the capital of the ancient Persian Empire of the 6th-4th
centuries B.C., burned by Alexander the Great in 330. By
Trading by land unto the Western Isles.

And in your confines with his lawless train
Daily commits incivil outrages,
Hoping (mislled 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 speak'st, 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:

Tamburlaine's time, Persepolis no longer existed, having been long surpassed by nearby Istakhr, which itself may have disappeared by the 14th century.\(^8\)

43: Trading = the octavo prints Treading, universally emended to Trading.
   the Western Isles = Ribner believes this refers to Britain.
   = within your borders. = entourage.
   = barbarous.\(^5\)
   = before.
   = nomadic or itinerant standards or banners.\(^1\) = battlefields.
   = commanded. Note that line 51 is a 12-syllable line, called an alexandrine, the first of several in this play.
   = entrusted with.\(^1\) = ie. cavalry.

55: thou = as king, Mycetes addresses his subjects as thou, signifying his superior rank; the king is in turn addressed using the formal and deferential you.
   like thyself = 'as is worthy of you'.\(^12\)

56: term = call.
   Damon = the names of the two Greeks Damon and his pal Pythias were proverbial for true friendship.
   Having been sentenced to death for plotting to kill the tyrant Dionysius, Pythias asked for permission to go home first to settle his affairs. Dionysius assented, but on the condition that another man volunteer to take his place for execution, should Pythias not return. Damon famously offered himself as surety for his friend, shocking the tyrant. Dionysius was even more surprised when Pythias actually returned to spare Damon. Impressed by this display of perfect love between the two men, the tyrant pardoned them both.

   = pleases.
   = immediately.\(^5\)

60-61: Mycetes reveals his weakness with these questions; a true leader would have no need to seek validation from his subjects.
   resolution = a 5-syllable word here; the ö injects an extra syllable, common in Elizabethan verse: RE-so-LU-shee-on.
   = ie. "choose but to do so", ie. "be otherwise": Cosroe is sarcastic!

   = orders.
   = army.

   = defeats or frustrates.\(^2\)
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;
Our life is frail, and we may die to-day.

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 killèd men,

And from their knees e'en to their hoofs below
Besmeared with blood that makes a dainty show.

Ther. Then now, my lord, I humbly take my leave.

Myc. Theridamas, farewell! ten thousand times.

Theridamas.

Ah, Menaphon, why stay'st thou thus behind,
When other men prease forward to renown?

= horsemen, cavalry.

71: foaming gall = the foaming gall could belong to either the cavalrymen or Theridamas; foaming suggests extreme wrath on the part of the soldiers, though the word could also apply literally to the horses.
gall = refers to a spirit of bitterness, whose supposed source was the secretion, called gall, of the liver.

71-72: despite Marlowe's admonition in the Prologue against employing rhymes in drama, a rhyming couplet seems to have snuck into the verse. In fact, quite a few rhyming lines, including rhyming triplets, will appear in our play.

73: ie. in fury. = ie. in victory.

74: a reference to the Trojan prince Paris, who returned from a trip to Sparta in Greece accompanied by Helen (the Grecian dame), the wife of the Spartan king Menelaus, precipitating the Trojan War. Having appropriated the most beautiful woman in the world, it is no wonder that Paris came home smiling (line 73).

75-76: Mycetes is simply exhorting Theridamas to get going; while the king seems in line 76 to be suggesting he is ill, he means only to point out that human life in general is fragile.

Our = ie. "my"; Mycetes employs the royal "we".

78: ie. before another month passes.
her borrowed light = borrowed because it is reflected from the sun.

84: stout = valiant.
thy words are swords = "your words can wound like a weapon", a proverbial notion; words and swords sounded more alike in the 16th century than they do today.

= technically redundant, though commonly used, collocation; thence alone means "from there".

84-90: Wolff notes Mycetes' glee as he thrills in the juxtaposition of snow-white horses coated with bright-red blood.

89-90: another rhyming couplet.

98-101: the king wants Menaphon to take his own body of troops and go in support of the cavalry.
= press. = fame.
Go, Menaphon, go into Scythia;
And foot by foot follow Theridamas.

**Cos.** Nay, pray you let him stay; a greater [task]
Fits Menaphon than warring with a thief:
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.

**Myc.** "Unless they have a wiser king than you."
These are his words; Meander, set them down.

**Cos.** And add this to them – that all Asiā
Laments to see the folly of their king.

**Myc.** Well, here I swear by this my royal seat, –

**Cos.** You may do well to kiss it then.

**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 Asiä: 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 sits and laughs our regiment to scorn;

And that which might resolve me into tears,

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.
The pride of Christendom = ie. Constantinople. 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.

[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 this 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 stay 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.

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 lord[s] would not be too exasperate
To injure 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.

200: *Media* is disyllabic here, with the stress on the first syllable; *Armenia* has its normal four syllables.
= a small region between the Black and Caspian Seas.

202: *Mesopotamia* = the land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers in modern Iraq. *Parthia* = while the earlier Parthian Empire comprised much of the same area as did the Persian Empire, *Parthia* here refers to a smaller district in north-eastern Iran.

= Ribner posits an allusion to the recently-discovered Americas or West Indies here (p. 56). Such a reference would of course be anachronistic to the 14th century Persians. Later Elizabethan dramatists made occasional allusions to the English colonies in the western hemisphere, but these did not come into existence until after Marlowe's time (Jamestown in Virginia in 1607, Plymouth colony in Massachusetts in 1620).

= ie. Black Sea.
= ie. sea.

207: this line, along with four others, appears short or irregular, but all contain the name *Cosroë* in it: Marlowe likely considers *Cosroë* to be trisyllabic in these lines (something like *cos-RO-eh*) which would in each case repair the meter. In these cases, *Cosroë* will appear as *Cosroe*.

=ie "may Jove"; we may note here the frequent references to Greek and Roman gods and myths made by all the characters of the play; the 19th century editor Havelock Ellis commented, "Marlowe had very vague ideas respecting the Persian and Mahommedan religions. Tamburlaine often invokes Jove, and seems well versed in the Greek mythology" (p. 11).

= satisfy or repay.

= to which. = hurry.
= stand.

= investiture.3

222-3: Ortygius expects that Cosroe's usurping of the crown would not enrage (*exasperate*, used here as an adjective)1 Mycetes' adherents enough to lead them to quash Cosroe's rebellion.

224-6: but just in case, an army is ready to whisk Cosroe away to safety.
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 jewels 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 Egyptia.

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.

234: is there not something charming about the Persians cheering their new sovereign with such an English acclamation?

Scene II: we are in Scythia, the land north of the Black Sea, and home of Tamburlaine.

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.

= dismay. 2

3: reserved = ie. kept safe. 14 and you in better state = "and you will be treated with greater honours" (Ribner, p. 56). 9

= throughout the play, even is always pronounced in one syllable, the v essentially omitted: e'en.

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

= the ancient capital of Egypt. Note that the line, unusually, has 13 syllables; Dyce suggests it is corrupt.

14: Zenocrate's back-story of being raised (governed) in Media was invented by Marlowe for no other reason than to explain her presence in Persia, where she could be taken
Have passed the army of the mighty Turk,

16 Bearing his privy signet and his hand
To safe conduct us thorough Africa.

18 Mag. 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.

20 Tamb. But now you see these letters and commands
Are countermanded by a greater man;
And through my provinces you must expect
Letters of conduct from my mightiness.
But, since I love to live at liberty,
As easily may you get the Soldan's crown
As any prizes out of my precinct;
For they are friends that help to wean my state,
'Till men and kingdoms help to strengthen it,
And must maintain my life exempt from servitude.
But, tell me, madam, is your grace betrothed?

32 Zeno. I am — my lord — for so you do import.

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).\textsuperscript{1}

\textit{thorough} = through, a common two-syllable form.

\textit{Africa} = some editors emend this to Assyria.

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.

Magne's 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, and were then taken prisoner as they passed through Scythia.

\textit{puissant Cham} = mighty khan; \textit{cham}, or khan, is the term used to describe a Mongol leader. In our play's geography, the khan of the Golden Horde would be the only Mongol candidate to which Magnetes could be referring.

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 \textit{man} in these lines; the effect is one of intensification.

= ie. "me".

= "as I please", or "unrestrained";\textsuperscript{1} note the alliteration in the line.

= valuables. = areas controlled by Tamburlaine.

32: the Egyptian's treasure will help support Tamburlaine's rise to power (state).
\textit{wean} = nurture or raise, like a child.\textsuperscript{1}

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

= subjection to others, slavery.\textsuperscript{1}

= ie. "for so your manner suggests, ie. that you are a lord";

Zenocrate hesitates, uncertain if she should use that title.
Tamb. I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove:
And yet a shepherd by my parentage.
But, lady, this fair face and heavenly hue
Must grace his bed that conquers Asiä,
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 exhalatiöns

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;

= usually a disyllable, as here: HE’N-ly.
= ie. "the bed of him who"

= empire.

= Phoebus is another name for Apollo in his guise as the sun god; his course alludes to the path he follows as he pulls the sun across the sky with his team of horses. Tamburlaine means that he expects his empire to grow as large as the area of land the sun shines on in a day.

46: the editors agree that Tamburlaine here removes his shepherd's clothing, either revealing his suit of armour underneath (Dawson) or donning a suit of armour captured from the Egyptians (Bevington).

weeds = clothes.

47-48: "this full set of armour and this weapon are the only accessories that are fitting for me to wear and employ."

curtle-axe = not an axe, but a short, curved sword.

49-51: "and, Zenocrate, whatever you think (esteem) of this event (success, ie. her capture) and the loss of your treasure, these two occurrences might just lead to your becoming my empress."

unvalued = invaluable.

52: these = here Tamburlaine indicates Techelles and Usumcasane.

silly country swains = lowly or simple country bumpkins or shepherds.

= ie. end up. = army.

= a reference to the trapped vapours that were believed since ancient times to be the cause of earthquakes.

= joust, as knights at a tournament would do.

58-60: Techelles' metaphor, comparing Tamburlaine to a lion rampant, is reminiscent of the similar extended similes involving wild beasts employed by Homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

= ie. foresee.

= kicking.

= determined.

= ie. "scorn us because of our reputations (estimates)". = mad or deranged.
But since they measure our deserts so mean,
Affecting thoughts coequal with the clouds,
They shall be kept our forcèd 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.

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 betrothèd 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.

71: "but since our guests reckon us to be of so little worth".
    *deserts* = deservings.

73: "with dreams that reach as high as the clouds".

74-75: Tamburlaine decides not to release Zenocrate and
      the captive lords until he has reached the pinnacle of
      his success.

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

80: = made famous forever.¹

82: = ie. becoming.

84: = ie. "to give us back our freedom."

88: Zenocrate is engaged to the King of Arabia. She had
    previously mentioned, however, that she spent her entire
    youth in Media, so we may wonder whether she has ever met
    her betrothed.

100: = value.

102: = lowliest. = retinue.

104: first of numerous allusions to the role the arrangement
    of the stars plays in determining one's fortune and path
    in life.

A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee,
Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus;
Thy garments shall be made of Median silk.

1: *love* and *Jove* would have rhymed in Elizabethan English.

29: = 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.²⁹

38: = the citizens of Media were famous for their luxurious dress
    and living.³⁸

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
Enchased with precious jewêls 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 all we offer to Zenocrate, −
And then myself to fair Zenocrate.

Tech. What now! − in love?

Tamb. Techelles, women must be flatterèd:
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 jewêls 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
Hangs massy chains of gold, down to the waist,
In every part exceeding brave and rich.

Justinian. 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 and ice over which it is pulled.
pools = lakes.
= melted.
= "the plunder I will collect".

= 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 Ortelius' map of Asia shows the Volga
winding sinuously through Russia, with its numerous
tributaries.

130-1: the cavalry division of Theridamas, sent by Mycetes
to capture Tamburlaine, is approaching.
= meaning Agydas and Magnetes; note that line 133 pos-
sesses 12 syllables, another alexandrine.

138: Agydas is diplomatic in his response!

140: the Persian cavalry entertain the same hope of seeing
Tamburlaine destroyed.
= "be silent", "hurry", or "wait". 1,14
142: "you will only be able to leave me if I am forced to let
you go."

143-4: foot-soldiers are never a match for cavalry - and
Tamburlaine's army is outnumbered two-to-one to boot!
But Bevington suggests Tamburlaine is ironic.

= ie. helmets. = worked or finished.
= massive.
= splendidly dressed. 3
Then shall we fight courageously with them?
Or look you I should play the orator?

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

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.

Come, let us march!
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 possession.
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.

I hear them come; shall we encounter them?
Keep all your standings and not stir a foot,
Myself will bide the danger of the brunt.

Where is this Scythian Tamburlaine?
Whom seek'st thou, Persian? — I am Tamburlaine.

Tamburlaine! —
A Scythian shepherd so embellishèd

Tamburlaine is likely teasing his subordinates.
= if Usumcasane wants to drive the enemy down the hill (line 161), then mountain foot does not make sense here; Wolff suggests foot here means “foot-hill”, but Dyce would emend foot to top.
= call to arms or battle, but Jump suggests hot alarum means "sudden assault".

Tamburlaine has an idea: he wants to meet Theridamas first before plunging into battle with the Persians.
ask a parley first = it was a convention of medieval English warfare for opposing sides to send messengers to each other demanding surrender, or presenting conditions to negotiate away their differences, before offering battle.
= i.e. Theridamas.
= i.e. the heavy gold chain worn by Theridamas; see lines 148-9 above.
= places.

Tamburlaine will stand at the front of his troops to take the first shock of any charge the Persians might make.
bide = face, encounter. ¹
brunt = attack. ¹

because line 188 is short, and based on Theridamas' referring to a Scythian shepherd at line 193, Dyce suggests emending line 188 by inserting shepherd after Scythian.

note how Tamburlaine and Theridamas are each immediately attracted to the other.

Theridamas is impressed with the riches surrounding
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 charácters graven in thy brows,
And by thy martial face and stout aspect,
Deserv'est to have the leading of an 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:

Tamburlaine, who is supposed to be a mere shepherd. _furniture_ = accoutrements, i.e. armour, equipment, etc.¹

195-9: Wolff observes that Tamburlaine's ambitions extend all the way from Heaven to hell. _Heaven_ = Heaven will in almost every case be a monosyllable, with the _v_ essentially omitted: _Hea'n._

198-9: "or he intended to break through the boundaries of hell, and capture Cerberus."
The allusion is to Hercules' twelfth labour, in which the hero descended into Hades and wrestled Cerberus, the vicious _three-headed guard-dog_ of the underworld, into submission, returning with the monster to the earth's 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.

202: _habit_ = bearing or appearance.
_judge_ = allows one to make a judgment about.¹
Shakespeare borrowed this sentiment for _Pericles, Prince of Tyre_, Act II.iii: "Opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan / The outward habit by the inward man." However, 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."

208-9: ie. Mycetes is foolish for giving such an obviously gifted man as Theridamas command of such a small force.

210: the OED suggests that the _characters_ engraved (_graven_) in Theridamas' 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.

211: _stout_ = magnificent or brave.
_aspect_ = there could be, with _characters_, an astrological metaphor here, as _aspect_ can, in addition to its modern sense of "countenance" or "appearance", refer to the relative positions of the planets in the heavens.¹

= an army; Tamburlaine is flattering Theridamas.

= _the Fates_ were three goddesses who determined the course and length of human lives. Tamburlaine suggests he controls them, rather than the other way around.

= _Fortune_ was a goddess who spun a _wheel_, which arbitrarily raised or lowered people's circumstances and states; Tamburlaine presumes to control the wheel.
And sooner shall the sun fall from his sphere.

218 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 ward 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 empress.

If thou wilt stay with me, renownèd man,
And lead thy thousand horse with my conduct,
Besides thy share of this Egyptian prize,
Those thousand horse shall sweat with martial spoil
Of conquered kingdoms and of cities sacked;
Both we will walk upon the lofty cliffs,
And Christian merchants that with Russian stems
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 mighty kings shall be our senators.

236 Jove sometimes maskèd in a shepherd's weed.

217: Elizabethan drama frequently referenced a Ptolemaic view of the universe, in which the sun, moon, planets and all the stars were encased in distinct concentric spheres that revolved around the earth.

his sphere = ie. its sphere.

= scratch or graze.1,15

= ie. Jove.

= evidence.2

228: portly = majestic.2
empress = Marlowe employs this alternate spelling of empress whenever he wishes it to be pronounced with three syllables.

= renowned, a common alternate spelling. The early editions of the play do not spell renowned / renownèd consistently one way or the other; our version will follow whatever is found in the earliest octavo in each location.

= ie. "under my leadership or management".1

= cliffs.

235: the editors cannot agree as to whether the line describes Christian trading ships (merchants) possessing Russian prows (stems), or if Russian stems refers to separate Russian trading ships; if the latter interpretation is correct, then stems would be a good example of a synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a term for a part is used to represent the whole (ie. stem for "ship").

= lower their topsails as a sign of respect.3

= Tamburlaine hearkens back to the title given to the two Romans who together ruled Rome each year. His use of this term to apply to both Theridamas and himself is more meaningful than if he had said something like "co-rulers".

= our senators continues Tamburlaine's evocation of ancient Rome.

240: Tamburlaine, an actual shepherd, implicitly compares himself to the king of the gods, who once disguised himself as a shepherd.
masked = disguised himself.
weed = outfit.
The allusion is likely to a passage in Book VI of Ovid's Metamorphoses, in which Jove, described as a shepherd, seduced Mnemosine, the goddess of memory; mythology
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!
Are these resolvèd, noble Scythians?
But shall I prove a traitor to my king?

observes that the pair slept together for nine consecutive
nights, resulting in the birth of the nine Muses.

= ie. "yet still humble condition".

= "which are far away".

247: ie. "as far as Boreas, the god of the north wind, blows."
The line is adapted from Ovid's Lamentations: "and though Boreas roars and thrashes his wings".6,39

= "the herdsman", a large constellation in the northern sky.40

252: Hermes (the Roman Mercury) was the messenger god,
and the god of eloquence.15
prolocutor = spokesman.1
253: "could speak more movingly (pathetical)."1

255-6: Tamburlaine's predictions will prove as prescient as
were those made by Apollo's oracle.
Apollo's oracles = 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.

vaunts = boasts.
substantial = reliable.1

= "even if".
259: "should offer to make us dukes".

260-1: ie. "we would come out losers if we took Mycetes
up on his offer, in exchange for what we expect to gain by
sticking with Tamburlaine."

= bow down to or cringe before.2

= frightened.

= entice.

271: ie. "is it possible that Scythians can be so determined
and noble?"12

Line 271 has been the victim of a lot of emending. Many
editors reverse Are these to These are, turning the question
into an assertion. Dyce combines line 270-1 into a single
sentence, removing the punctuation at the end of line 270,
emending Are these in line 271 to to these, and changing the
question mark at the end of line 271 into an exclamation
point.
**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, renownéd 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.

Whose statutes we adore in Scythia,

Thyself and them shall never part from me
Before I crown you kings in Asiä. –
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 Zenocrate!

295: Tamburlaine vows on the mutual affection between Pylades and Orestes.

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 (Agamemnon's cousin). Clytemnestra slew Agamemnon upon his return from Troy; in vengeance, Orestes killed his mother, and his kinsman and best friend Pylades murdered Aegisthus (Murray, p. 302-3).

296: Schelling traces the notion that the Scythians honoured Orestes and Pylades to Ovid's Ex Ponto, Book III.i.95-96.

statutes = statues, an alternate form.

302: more interesting alliteration in this line.
= "shall find my heart to be lacking".
= ie. "offer you protection".

306: more dramatic alliteration with th-, as in line 302.
307-310: Tamburlaine addresses his prisoners.

308-310: note the dramatic triplet.
= fortunate.
= ie. "no longer suspicious".
= ie. without choice; line 316 is another alexandrine.
[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT I.
ACT II.

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 fashionèd,
Like his desire lift upwards 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 encompassèd
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,

Entering Characters: the Persian king's brother Cosroe leads his country's highest-ranking nobles and their army northward to Georgia; they are assuming that Theridamas, who has gone on before them, has completed his mission of capturing Tamburlaine.

1: Cosroe speaks these words to let the audience know that the Persian army is on the move.

3-4: the notion that one's destiny is inscribed on one's forehead appears in the scripture of Sikhism, and, according to Ribner, in Muslim belief (p. 64). figures = images;† but in astrology, a figure is also a diagram of the "state and disposition of the heavens … marked down in a figure of 12 triangles," hence suggesting "a fate". Note also the alliteration spanning lines 3-4, as well as the wordplay of forehead and fortune.

= appearance, demeanor.

= lifted.

= mightily.†

12: Old Atlas' burthen = Atlas, son of the Titan god Iapetus, famously held up the heavens on his shoulders. 'twixt = between.
pitch = the points of (Tamburlaine's) shoulders,= ie. Tamburlaine's head.
14: "into which, by the most excellent (sovereign) and careful skill (curious art)".
15: typical elaborate Elizabethan description of the eyes.
16: Tamburlaine's eyes are compared to or described as possessing the power of the spheres of the universe. 16-17: another reference to the Ptolemaic geocentric model of the universe as a series of revolving spheres containing the planets and stars.
17: Heaven is a monosyllable (Hea'n) and heavenly is a disyllable (hea'n-ly).

18: Tamburlaine's eyes, like his auspicious stars, direct his destiny toward kingship.

= worked or finished.

22-23: an angry countenance on the part of Tamburlaine.
And in their smoothness amity and life;

presages (figures) death, but a pleasant one, friendship and life.

lofty brows in folds = a lovely expression describing raised brows creating furrows in the forehead, suggesting an excited state.

24-25: Achilles was the greatest warrior of the Trojan War; Homer describes him as possessing "fair hair" in the Iliad. = careless, playful, unrestrained.

8-31: despite Menaphon's impressive description of Tamburlaine's physique, the real Tamburlaine (whose name was Timur) was a cripple, going through life with a withered right arm (or he may have simply lost two fingers) and a crippled right leg; see Note B in the introductory material at the top of this edition.

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.

52

**Orty.** In happy hour we have set the crown

54

Upon your kingly head that seeks our honour,

In joining with the man ordained by Heaven,

To further every action to the best.

56

**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!

58

**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:

60

And all conjoined to meet the witless king,

That now is marching near to Parthia.

62

And with unwilling soldiers faintly armed,

To seek revenge on me and Tamburlaine,

To whom, sweet Menaphon, direct me straight.

64

**Men.** I will, my lord.

66

[**Exeunt.**]

**ACT II, SCENE II.**

[**Georgia.**]

Enter Mycetes, Meander, with other Lords and Soldiers.

1

**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 of 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,
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 are 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.

Spy. An 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 after greedy spoils,
And more regarding gain than victory,

Like to the cruel brothers of the earth,
Sprong of the teeth of dragons venomous,

Their careless swords shall lanch 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 soldiïrs
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 armý is subdued,
And you march on their slaughtered carcasses,
Share equally the gold that bought their lives,
And live like gentlemen in Persiä.

Strike up the drum! and march courageously!

Fortune herself doth sit upon our crests.

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.

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 satisfactiön.

Tamb. And so mistake you not a whit, my lord;
For fates and oracles [of] Heaven have sworn
To royalize 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 world will strive with hosts of men-at-arms,
To swarm unto the ensign I support:

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 admirèd arms.

Ther. You see, my lord, what working words he hath;

But when you see his actions top his speech,
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 renownèd 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 meeds and valours be advanced
To rooms of honour and nobility.

20: bullets = projectiles, such as arrows, and perhaps rocks
slung from slings.
Jove’s…thunderbolts = the king of the gods was
frequently portrayed in his guise as the controller of
lightning.

= enfolded.15

22: 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.

threat = ie. threaten.
Cyclopian = usually alluding to the one-eyed giant, but
used here to describe the over-sized Titans generally.

23-25: Tamburlaine expects his army’s bright armour to
both outshine the stars in the night-sky (thus seeming to
make them disappear) and blind the enemy when the latter
look on that armour.

27: Theridamas addresses Cosroe; note the double allitera-
tion in this line;.
working = efficacious.1

28-29: when Cosroe sees how Tamburlaine's feats surpass
(top)3 even his abilities in speech, he (Cosroe) can expect to
be either dumbstruck or ready to praise him effusively.

stay = be arrested.

31: ie. "for placing myself and my troops at his disposal".
= renowned, a common alternate form.
= "cause a person to".14

39: "and I value that service as part of all that I have which
is part and parcel of my possessing the crown".

41-43: Cosroe believes that Nemesis (she) will work on his
behalf; sadly, his confidence will prove to be misplaced.

41: she is Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance and
punishment; her job was to watch out for evil-doers, and
"(shape) the demeanor of men in their times of prosperity",
meaning that if one was blessed with too much good fortune,
she would cause that person to experience some suffering to
keep all in proportion. Her primary shrine was in Rhamnus
in Attica (Murray, p. 186).41

44-45: Cosroe promises great promotions for Tamburlaine's
top two commanders when he supplants Mycetes as king.

meeds = merits, deservings.
advanced = promoted.
rooms = offices, positions.
Then haste, Cosroë, to be king alone,
That I with these, my friends, and all my men
May triumph in our long-expected fate.

The king, your brother, is now hard at hand;
Meet with the fool, and rid your royal shoulders
Of such a burden as outweighs the sands
And all the craggy rocks of Caspia.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My lord, we have discoverèd the enemy
Ready to charge you with a mighty army.

Cos. Come, Tamburlaine! now whet thy wingèd sword,
And lift thy lofty arm into the clouds,
That it may reach the King of Persia's crown,
And set it safe on my victorious head.

Tamb. See where it is, the keener curté-axe
That e'er made passage thorough Persian arms.

These are the wings shall make it fly as swift
As doth the lightning or the breath of Heaven,
And kill as sure as it swiftly flies.

Cos. Thy words assure me of kind success;
Go, valiant soldier, go before and charge
The fainting army of that foolish king.

Tamb. Usamcasane and Techelles, come!
We are enough to scare the enemy,
And more than needs to make an emperor.

[Exeunt to the battle.]

ACT II, SCENE IV.

[Georgia, a battlefield.]

Alarums: soldiers enter and exeunt,
Enter Mycetes with his crown in his hand,
and offering to hide it.

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:  
So shall I not be known; or if I be,  
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! dar[es]t give 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. [Taking crown] 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 armèd 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 renownèd man-at-arms,
And none shall keep the crown but Tamburlaine.
Thee do I make my regent of Persia,
And general lieutenant of my armies.−
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 ambassage 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 Persepolis.

Entering Characters: the combined armies of Tamburlaine, Cosroë and Theridamas have defeated the Persians' home army.

= Cosroë now has both Mycetes' crown and the crown he received from the nobles at Act I.i.167ff.
2-5: "To be crowned by Tamburlaine is like being crowned by as many kings as could surround you."
7: ie. "so do I indeed think of it in such a way".
= deputy king; a likely tri-syllable here: RE-ge-ent.
11-15: Meander, we remember, commanded Mycetes' army.
= ie. "I". = "excuse you", ie. "forgive you".
= Dawson suggests "commitment".
= ambassadors.
= ie. belongs.
27: we will to = ie. "we will go to"; note the common Elizabethan grammatical construction of this phrase: in the
With twenty thousand expert soldiers.
The lords and captians of my brother's camp
With little slaughter take Meander's course,
And gladly yield them to my gracious rule. –
Ortygius 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 powers and our lives
Endeavour to preserve and prosper it.

Cos. I will not thank thee, sweet Ortygius;
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 Persepolis.
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 Persepolis.

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

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

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

presence of a word of intent (will), the word of movement (go) may be omitted.

Persepolis = the capital of Persia.

= proven.14
29-31: rather than punish the enemy soldiers whom he has just defeated, Cosro will accept them as his own.
= ie. follow Meander's example.15

34: ie. "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)".
= "made efforts to give your royal position or person".

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

= Marlowe loved to refer to the mines of India, fabled for the great wealth of gold they contained.

47-48: the reference here is unknown; Wolff hypothesizes that the allusion is to those Mongols or Indians who were converted by the sect of eastern Christians called Nestorians.

with fame and usury = "to our renown and profit" (Jump, p. 36).15

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

= ie. the gods.
Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth. −
To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;
To ask and have, command and be obeyed;
When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,
Such power attractive shies in prines’ 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 essay
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.

105: if Tamburlaine can win the crown of Persia for himself, he will make his companions deputy kings; Theridamas will get Parthia, while Techelles and Usumcasane will receive Scythia and Media respectively. Line 105 is long.

107: Tamburlaine checks off a list of those who will submit to him: the Ottoman Emperor Bajazeth (the Turk), the Pope, the Sultan of Egypt (Afric), and the Byzantine Emperor (Greece).
Then shall we send to this triumphing king, And bid him battle for his novel crown?

Nay, quickly then, before his room be hot.

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

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

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?

Go on for me.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II, SCENE VI.

[Georgia or northern Persia.]

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

What means this devilish shepherd to aspire With such a giantly presumption To cast up hills against the face of Heaven,

"shall we challenge Cosroe to battle, winner take all?"

= Jump suggests, "before he has time to warm up his throne by sitting on it" (p. 38).

Tamburlaine momentarily trivializes the gravity of his proposal.

Theridamas feels plunder and booty (purchase) are preferable to attacking an enormously larger army; Tamburlaine's answer shows Theridamas is not quite yet on the same wavelength as his new boss. 

purchase = might also mean "endeavor" or "undertaking".

Tamburlaine will send Techelles to hurry to offer battle to Cosroe before he and his army have gone too far to turn around. 

presently = immediately.

if it is too late to recall Cosroe, then the benefit to be gained will not be worth the amount of work required to catch and defeat him. 

lose labour = waste an effort.

quite = requite, repay.

= me (the "royal we").

"I who". = basically, "for my entertainment".

Tamburlaine will not unfairly attack Cosroe without giving him a chance to prepare properly for battle.

= "with no opposition from me."
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 dares so doubtlessly resolve of rule,
And by _profession_ be ambitious.

_Orty._ _What_ god, or fiend, or spirit of the earth,
Or monster turnèd to a manly shape,
What star or state 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 proportion 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.]

Alarums of battle within.  
Enter the armies to the battle, and after the battle,  
enter Cosroe, wounded; then Tamburlaine,  
Theridamas, Techelles, Usumcasane, with others.

Cos. Barbarous and bloody Tamburlaine,  
Thus to deprive me of my crown and life! –  
Treacherous and false Theridamas,  
Even at the morning of my happy state,  
Scarce being seated in my royal throne,  
To work my downfall and untimely end!  
An uncouth pain torments my grievèd soul,

And Death arrests the organ of my voice,  
Who, entering at the breach thy sword hath made,  
Sacks every vein and artier of my heart. –

Bloody and insatiate Tamburlaine!

Tamb. 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.

resembled = similar in;¹ likely pronounced with four syllables: re-SEM-bel-ed.

34-36: ie. "only bloodshed and one with absolute power (empery, ie. an emperor, meaning Cosroe himself) can stamp out the fire that burns in Tamburlaine to become a king."

that flame = a metaphor for the ambition of Tamburlaine.

38: king and country = the earliest known appearance of this most British of phrases is 1548.
decay = destruction, downfall.²

39-40: all the stars…life = Cosroe apostrophizes to the stars in their collective role as influencers of a person's fate.  
39-40: that make…life = that unmercifully predetermine the length of each person's life.¹²  
dated = allotted.⁶

4-5: ie. "just at the moment when I finally become king".  
happy = fortunate or successful.

⁴ = unfamiliar.²

8-10: in this interesting metaphor, Death is said to enter a wound like a soldier breaking into a breach in a fortification.  
Sacks = pillages.³  
artier = artery.⁵

14-16: Ops was an ancient goddess, married to Saturnus.  
Jupiter was the third son (not the eldest), and actually the youngest of their six children, and it was he who began the rebellion that overthrew their father, resulting in Jupiter becoming king of the gods.  
empyreal Heaven = the highest Heaven, referring to the
Moved me to manage arms against thy state.

What better president than mighty Jove?

Nature that framed us of four elements.

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.

Ther. 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.

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

Usum. 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.

outermost sphere of the Ptolemaic universe, containing the throne of God, the residence of the angels, and so forth.

17: Moved = incited.
manage arms = lead or conduct war.³
state = greatness, royal person.

18: "why not follow the example set by Jove, ie. Jupiter?"
president = precedent, an alternate from.

19-20: the four elements of which the body is comprised, and the bodily humours, or fluids, to which they correspond (fire corresponds to yellow bile, air to blood, water to phlegm, earth to black bile), vie for supremacy; a surplus of yellow bile caused one to be choleric; of blood, sanguine; of phlegm, phlegmatic; and of black bile, melancholic.
framed = made, constructed.
regiment = dominion, sovereign rule,³ ie. greatest influence.

20-21: a well-known passage describing the almost divine urge that drives humans to want to learn everything they can about the universe.¹³

23: ie. the way the earth is constructed or constituted.

24: the unique elliptical paths of the planets had been measured as early as the 2nd century B.C. by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus.⁸
wandering planet's = the planets are said to wander because they do not follow a fixed orbit in the sky as do the stars.

26: ie. "just like the spheres of the universe eternally revolve around the earth".

27: Will = direct or command; the subject of the clause, ie. the things doing the commanding, are the souls of line 22.
wear = ie. wear out.¹

28-30: a well-known passage describing the almost divine urge that drives humans to want to learn everything they can about the universe.¹³

33-35: any man who does not strive to raise himself beyond the highest class of people or level of fortune (sort) through admirable acts is dull and heavy (gross),¹³ and no better than the massive or weighty (massy) earth itself.

40-41: after the Olympian gods came to power (see the note at lines 14-16 above), the three sons of the overthrown (and now former king of the gods) Saturn were assigned kingdoms by lot: Jove received the heavens, Neptune the seas, and Dis (Pluto) the underworld. Like Jove's siblings, Usumcasane and Techelles expect to be allotted their own
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,
Is dry and cold; and now doth ghastly Death
With greedy talents gripe 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 Persia?
All. Tamburlaine! Tamburlaine!

Tamb. Though Mars himself, the angry god of arms,
And all the earthly potentates conspire
To dispossession 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!

= severe or merciless exercises of power.¹
= grows.
= passage to Hades.

51-54: with his blood (possessing heat and moisture) flowing away, Cosroe's body retains only the properties of earth (dry and cold), and as such, with his humours no longer balanced, is gripped (gripe = grip, seize) by Death.
The four elements which comprise the human body both corresponded with each of the four humours and were identified with certain qualities by Aristotle in Book II of his On Generation and Corruption:
(1) blood (a humour) and air (an element) are hot and moist;
(2) earth and black bile are cold and dry;
(3) fire and yellow bile are hot and dry; and
(4) water and phlegm are cold and wet.
When the humours are out of balance, illness sets in.¹⁴,¹⁵,²¹

talents = talons, a common alternate form. The talons go on to connect metaphorically to the harpy of the next line.

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).¹⁹,¹⁴¹

tires = to tire was a term from falconry, describing a hawk tearing its prey with its beak; tires is disyllabic here: ty-ers.

= the Furies were mythological creatures with the appearance of monsters, whose job it was to punish those who committed certain particularly egregious crimes, such as murder of or disobedience to one's parents, by perpetually tormenting them.

= ie. war.
= monarchs.
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.

= ie. more secure.

= not an anachronism, as parliament was in use in English as early as 1300,¹ and in French of course before that; though it seems unlikely Tamburlaine would be familiar with the word.

[Exeunt.]

END OF ACT II.
ACT III.

SCENE I.

[Anatolia, near Constantinople.]

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

Scene I: we join the Ottoman army, which is besieging the Byzantine capital of Constantinople.

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, ruling lands that have been conquered by the Ottomans; as such, they serve at Bajazeth's pleasure, and 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, Maroco (Morocco) is the name of both a city and the region; Marlowe likely intends Morocco here to be the city (perhaps modern Marrakech?). Fess (modern Fez) is a still-extant city in northern Morocco, and 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.

1: Barbar = Ortelius' map labels the area of North Africa west of Egypt as Barbar, a collective name for the lands which include the kingdoms of Fess, Morocco and Argier.

2: We hear the Tartars and the eastern thieves, Under the conduct of one Tamburlaine,

3: Presume a bickering with your emperor,

4: And think to rouse us from our dreadful siege Of the famous Grecian Constantinople.

5-6: as a factual matter, the Ottomans had besieged Constantinople from 1391-8, but were engaged in invading Greece around the time of the real Tamburlaine's arrival in Anatolia in 1400. Tamburlaine's arrival seemed a godsend for the Europeans (the Byzantine capital would not fall to the Turks until 1453).

6: = leadership. = the sense is "to pick a fight". = meaning Bajazeth himself.

7: You know our army is invincible;

8: As many circumcised Turks we have,

9: = that the followers of Islam practiced circumcision was well-known since the days Muhammad; a tradition has it that the Prophet himself invited the 7th century Byzantine emperor Heraclius to join Islam. During his research into the subject, Heraclius learned of the practice of circumcision amongst Muslims.

10: And warlike bands of Christiâns renied.

11: renied = ie. "who have renounced their Christian faith."
As hath the ocean or the Terrene sea
Small drops of water when the moon begins
To join in one her semi-circled 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 Fess.** Renowned Emperor, and mighty general,
What if you sent the bassoes of your guard
To charge him to remain in Asiā,
Or else to threaten death and deadly arms
As from the mouth of mighty Bajazeth.

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:
And if, before the sun have measured Heaven
With triple circuit, thou regret 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 Persiān
As fits the legate of the stately Turk.

[Exit Basso.]

**K. of Arg.** They say he is the King of Persiā;
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, Argier; 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 Fess. 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 Heaven sooner be dissolved,
And all that pierceth Phoebe's 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. Leave to wound me with these words,
And speak of Tamburlaine as he deserves.
The entertainment we have had of him
Is far from villainy 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:

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,
of their capture, he will no doubt come rescue them.

= liberate, free.

42: Leave = cease.
Dyce emends Leave to Agydas, leave, suspecting the line is corrupted.

= that is, Agydas should speak approvingly of him!
= treatment. = from.
= subjection.7
= accounted, ie. considered.

= love.

= words of love, or conversation as between two lovers.
= deeds or exploits.

= the Nile River's.
57: a lovely image of Aurora, the goddess of the morning,
cradling the sun god (him) in her arms.

59-60: the nine Muses were the patron goddesses of music,
song, and all the arts. The reference here is to the story told
by Ovid in Metamorphoses: Pieros, a Thracian, had nine
daughters (the Pierides) whom he named after the nine
Muses, and he challenged the Muses to a singing
competition with his daughters. The Muses won, and in
punishment for their presumption, the nine girls were turned
into magpies (Humphries, pp. 116-128).22

61: Minerva (the Roman Athena) and Neptune (the Roman
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 to 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).41
It is unclear exactly how the comparison of Minerva to
Tamburlaine in this context is intended to flatter the
conqueror.

62-64: "I would raise my worth to a level higher than that of
Juno, sister of Jupiter, if I were married (matched) to
Tamburlaine." Since Juno was also the wife of Jupiter, she
was also queen of the gods.

= disloyal.
67-68: Zenocrate, we remember, has been promised to the
King of Arabia, Alcidamas; see Act I.ii.88.

69-73: Agydas notices that Tamburlaine no longer pays
any attention to Zenocrate since he took the throne
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, and says nothing.]

[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 astoniéd

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 shine as comets, menacing revenge,
And casts 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, tilt 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 Usumcasane.

of Persia.

first (line 69) = ie. at first.

= from there. = stain, ie. deprive of their natural colour.¹

76: "afraid that I am not worthy of his love."

80: Tamburlaine's silence is ominous, and Agydas will recognize it as so.

= dismayed; predecessor to "astonished",¹ astonied has four syllables: as-TON-i-ed.

88-90: Agydas saw in the silent but dreadful look Tamburlaine gave him a vision of his own doom. choler = rage.
shut in secret thoughts = ie. unexpressed.
= comets were believed to be omens of evil. = threatening.

94-105: in this extended metaphor, Agydas compares his present horror at the look directed towards him by Tamburlaine to that felt by a sailor when he is caught in a violent storm.
the Hyades = the seven daughters of Hyas; they wept when their brother (also named Hyas) was killed by a wild animal; the sisters were changed into a constellation, forming the head of Taurus the Bull. Their appearance usually indicates rain, hence the storm described in the following lines.¹⁹

= the Cimmerians were an ancient people who lived around the Black Sea, and were fabled to live in continuous darkness; hence Cimmerian was frequently used by extension to refer to anything dark or black.¹

= the south and north winds, respectively.²⁵
= joust.
98: the colliding spears produce thunder.¹²
= lightning is tri-syllabic: LIGHT-en-ing.

100: ie. "the seaman, afraid, lowers his sails and measures the depth of (sounds) the sea (main) below him".

= overwhelmed with fear.¹
= predict. = ie. Agydas' own soul's.
Tech. See you, Agydas, how the king salutes you? He bids you prophesy what it imports.

[Gives Agydas a dagger.]

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 resolved hand of thine,
Than stay the torments he and Heaven have sworn.
Then haste, Agydas, and prevent the plagues
Which thy prolongèd fates may draw on thee.
Go, wander, free from fear of tyrant's rage,
Removèd from the torments and the hell,
And let Agydas by Agydas die,
And with this stab slumber eternally.

[Stabs himself.]

Tech. Usumcasane, 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, Usumcasane, Theridamas, a Basso, Zenocrate, Anippe, with others.

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?

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.

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.

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.

Tamb. But will those kings accompany your lord?
kings will fight alongside Bajazeth; the more kings there on
the battlefield, the more crowns and kingdoms Tamburlaine
can collect!

Baseline. Such as his highness please; but some must stay
To rule the provinces he late subdued.

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

Usurper. Let him bring millions infinite of men,
Unpeopling Western Africa and Greece,
Yet we assure us of the victory.

Tamburlaine. 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.

Tamburlaine. Well said, Theridamas; speak in that mood;
For will and shall best fitteth Tamburlaine,
Whose smiling stars give him assured hope
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,
Burdening 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 breathe and rest a space,
Are punished with bastones so grievously,
44: he = i.e. Tamburlaine.
in a trice = in only a moment, just like that. This
phrase, and its predecessor at a trice, date back to the
15th and early 16th centuries.1
two kings = i.e. Mycetes and Cosroe.
= i.e. "he who is more".
= force Bajazeth from cover or hiding; rouse is a hunting
term.1
= i.e. as opposed to conditional words such as "might"
or "may".
= expectation.
= i.e. "even before".

3: 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, enslaved captured foes, most of whom at this
point were Christians.

58: Tamburlaine refers to the employment of European
slaves in the galleys of Muslim ships; but see the note
below after line 67.
= bastinadoes, i.e. rods or sticks.3
That they lie panting on the galley's side,
And strive for life at every stroke they give.
These are the cruel pirates of Argier,
That damned train, the scum of Africa,
Inhabited with straggling 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 Fess,
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. Techelles, and the rest, prepare your swords;
I mean 't encounter with that Bajazeth.

Baj. Kings of Fess, Moroccus, 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,

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

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

Baj. Kings of Fess, Moroccus, and Argier,
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 empress,
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 Fess.** 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 Persiäns.

**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 reign 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 gripe 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;

=ie. Tamburlaine. = lacking sexual appetite.¹
= serail or seraglio: where the women of the harem are kept.¹
= haughtily.¹

100: Tamburlaine vows on his sword.
= ie. overthrow.

109-110: the king addresses the men from northwest Africa
(the _Moors_, from "Mauritanians") specifically and the
North Africans (_men of Barbary_) generally.

= "let us cease this talking"; Marlowe's characters often find
themselves caught up in orating instead of acting.

= magnificent or fierce.¹
= huge.

= powerful.
= wait, delay.

130f: Bajazeth addresses his wife _Zabina_.

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.

_pash_ = crush or smash.¹

= grip.
= _complete_ is often stressed on the first syllable, as here.

136: "than all the offspring of Typhon."

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).¹⁹,⁴¹
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, adorned with my crown,
As if thou wert the Empress of the world.
Stir not, Zenocrate, until thou see
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.

\textit{y-sprong} = \textit{ie.} sprung; the \textit{y}- prefix (which derived from the Old English \textit{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.\textsuperscript{1}

= \textit{ie.} are grown up.

138: having finally finished exalting his sons, Bajazeth resumes addressing his wife.

\textit{chair of state} = throne.

\textit{paragon} = equal or partner in marriage.\textsuperscript{1}

= another reference to the king of the gods as the dispenser of thunder and lightning.

\textit{Tamburlaine asks Zenocrate to sit next to the Turkish empress.}

\textit{vaunt of my worth},

= “the object that proclaims my importance or greatness”, presumably meaning his crown, though he could be describing Zenocrate here too.

= "carry on a war of words" (Cunningham, p. 313),\textsuperscript{3} a variation on \textit{manage arms} (conduct war), itself a phrase used multiple times in this play.

= recently.

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

= ramparts or fortifications.\textsuperscript{2}

171: “and my army \textit{(power)} is like the many-headed hydra.” The Lernean \textit{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
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 our strokes to wound the senseless lure,

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 Tamburlaine with his followers.]

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

[Exit Bajazeth with his followers.]

Zab. Base concubine, must thou be placed by me,
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 advocates.

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, and stay.]

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 Christiäns!

= the object of scorn or disdain.¹ = obese woman.¹

= impetuous.²

= ie. Bajazeth, a sarcastic expression.

216: and will beg Zenocrate to intercede on their behalf
and ask for mercy from Tamburlaine.

218-220: the two wives' use of thou in addressing each other
is insulting and signals their respective feelings of scorn;
however, Zabina's addressing her servant as thou is
the normal and accepted manner in which Elizabethans
addressed those of lower status than themselves.

220: Ebea = Ebea is Zabina's maid.
Will she serve = ie. "will she do?", ie. to work under
Ebea as a lowly laundress.

= ie. too refined (to engage in manual labour).
= clothing.

226-7: Zenocrate implies that just as Zabina will be her
(Zenocrate's) slave (drudge), Zabina's maid will be
the slave of Anippe, Zenocrate's maid.

= prepare.

233: referring to the meanest possible tasks, such as
emptying chamber-pots, and the like.

235: the stage direction is unclear; the instruction could be
for the women to cry out, or for trumpets to play, signaling
the commencement of the battle.
and stay = ie. "then stop."

= a monosyllable here.
= ie. Tamburlaine. = ie. Persia's.

= small European deer; note the intra-line rhyme.
= so that. = come out of this.

= Mahomet will always be stressed on the first syllable:
MA-ho-met.

247: the line is short, suggest something has been lost.⁵
manage arms = conduct war.
= who, meaning Bajazeth.
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 damnèd 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 gat 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.

[ Gives the crown to Zenocrate.]
**Tamb.** Not now, Theridamas; *her* time is past.

304 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.

308 **Tamb.** Not all the world shall ransom Bajazeth.

310 **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.

**Tamb.** 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’ *wrack*,

303: *Not now* = "not anymore!" Tamburlaine agrees with Theridamas' assessment.

*her* = *ie. Zabina's.

304-5: a *term* is a statue of an upper body over a pillar from which it appears to emerge;¹ hence the lines offer a nice metaphor for the worlds of Bajazeth and Zabina crumbling at Tamburlaine's feet.

307: Zabina optimistically proposes that her husband's life be spared by paying a ransom; in English wars of the Renaissance, captives of high rank were usually held for ransom.

= defeat.
= originally a religious term, describing an infidel or unbeliever.¹
= Marlowe was wont to pejoratively refer to Roman Catholic rites and customs as *superstitious*; the Elizabethans were encouraged to disparage the Catholic church.

= a particularly interesting etymology: originally *bone-fire*, *bonfire* refers literally to the burning of bones in a great conflagration.¹ We may note that funeral pyres in which the bodies and bones of dead heroes were burned appear regularly in Greek mythology.

= mighty.

327-330: while not exactly clear, Tamburlaine seems to be imagining that he will order all pirate ships to collect and sit idly at the island of Zante, while his own ships sail around the world (lines 331-8).

*pilling* = pillaging, plundering.³
*brigandines* = *ie. brigantines*, small, light and easily-maneuverable vessels used by pirates.¹

= as a historical matter, even the Venetians were not immune from North African piracy.

329: and wait for Christian vessels to arrive, which the pirates will either:
(1) await to become shipwrecked, becoming easy prey for predators, or
(2) attack directly as they try to pass.
If the former, then *wrack* would be equivalent to the modern word *wreck*, and if the later, *wreak*.
*the Straits* = presumably meaning the Strait of Otranto,
which separates Italy and Greece. = modern Zakinthos, or Zante, a large island off the west coast of Greece. 

332-8: Tamburlaine describes the Persian fleet sailing around the world in an easterly direction. 

oriental sea = from the context, the oriental sea should refer to the Indian Ocean; Ortelius' map of Asia, however, identifies the Pacific Ocean by the name of Oceanvs Orientalis.

333: ie. have sailed around India.

334: ie. across the Pacific (Ribner). Mexico is an obvious anachronism, as Columbus would not sail to the Americas for almost another century.

335: "and from there, (across the Atlantic and) to the Straits of Gibraltar (Jubalter)."

337: Keeping in awe = controlling through intimidation. 

the bay of Portingale = Portingale is Portugal, but there is no such bay; as Marlowe is laying out a south-to-north catalogue of oceanic locations (lines 335-8), Ellis suggests he may be referring to the Bay of Biscay, located off the northern shore of Spain.

344-5: in 1398-9, before he took his army west to Asia Minor, Tamburlaine did cross the Indus River and conquer a small portion of India, destroying the city of Delhi. 

ere = before.

= ie. by paying him off.

= lethargic: a word of regret, or even reproach, over the disappointing failure of the Prophet to help them.

= felicitous, gratifying.

= exult. 

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 Egyptiāns,
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.

Scene I: having defeated the Ottomans, Tamburlaine has moved east to Syria, and is now besieging Damascus.
At the time of the invasion of the Levant by Timur (the real Tamburlaine), Syria was ruled by Egypt; we may also observe that Timur's real-life Syrian campaign occurred in early 1401, before he defeated the Ottomans.

Entering Characters: Egypt around 1400 was ruled by a Sultan (here Soldan) of the Burji Mamluk dynasty. The real Soldan at the time of Tamburlaine's siege of Damascus was only about 14 years old. Capolin is one of the Egyptian military commanders.

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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.
Environing 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 Zenocrate,
Whom he detaineth in despite of us,
This arm should send him down to Erebus,
To shroud his shame in darkness of the night.

Mess. Pleseth 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, Zenercate, 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.

5-7: Marlowe, through Bajazeth, seems to be suggesting that Islamic animal sacrifice represents the sacrificing of the Prophet himself, just as Christian Communion represents the consuming of Christ's flesh and blood; Muslims, however, only sacrificed animals as a means of thanking Allah for his bounty.

= the night-sky's fixed stars may be contrasted with the planets, which Marlowe refers to in his works as wandering or erring stars, since they appear in a different part of the sky each night.

= marshland.
= boastful.³

12-13: another reference to the single crystal sphere containing all the fixed stars which revolves around the earth.

= a common image of the universe, or any part of it, as a
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
Strook with the voice of thundering Jupiter.

_Baj._ Then, as I look down to the damned fiends,
Fiends look on me! and thou, _dread god of hell_,
With _eben_ 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!

= Wolff interprets this to mean that "the earth is disdainful of Bajazeth but proud of bearing up Tamburlaine" (p. 239).

28: Dyce asks us to consider whether one more _Stoop_ should be added to the line to correct the meter; however, the word _stoop_ would be emphasized (ie. stressed) everywhere it appears - this is just normal English. So, the dash likely indicates an intended _pause_, which replaces the unstressed beat between the pair of _stoops_ that surround it - in other words, the line is indeed correct as written.

= into pieces.

31: _ie. which have been struck by lightning. Jupiter, the king of the gods, is evoked in his role as controller of thunder and lightning._

_Strook_ = struck, a common alternate form.

= _ie. the demons of hell._
= _ie. Pluto, the god of hell._
= _ebony, _ie. the hard, black wood._

38: in one of the most famous images of Elizabethan drama, Bajazeth, the Sultan of the Ottomans, is reduced by the mighty Tamburlaine to the status of a piece of furniture.

40-65: in this his first major play, Marlowe packs into this single speech references to a number of cosmological beliefs and images of the sky and universe to which he will return repeatedly in his subsequent works.

40-42: _medieval cosmology understood that the earth is surrounded by a region of air_, which itself is then immediately surrounded by a region or layer of fire (it is above the fire layer that the spheres of the universe are found). Tamburlaine is imagining removing the region of air, so that Heaven and its inhabitants can clearly witness how he exults over his defeated foes.

_The triple region of the air_ = _the layer of air_ was imagined to be _composed of three layers_; the lowest region, which adjoins the earth, is of moderate temperature; here live the birds and the beasts. The middle region was thought to be very cold, and the highest region, exceedingly hot, because it is in direct contact with the region of fire.

= the octavo prints _their_, emended to _your_ by Dyce.
Disdain to borrow light of Cynthia!

For I, the chiefest lamp of all the earth,

First rising in the East with mild aspect.

But fixed 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 exhalation,

Fighting for passage, makes the welkin crack,

But ere I march to wealthy Persia,
Or leave Damascus and the Egyptian fields,
As was the fame of Clymene's brain-sick son.
That almost burnt 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

= "from Cynthia", Cynthia being the personification of the moon.

46: Tamburlaine compares himself to the sun, or perhaps suggests his light is greater than that of the sun.

47: the line has a double meaning, the second being astrological: (1) Tamburlaine of course came from the east - like the sun - and originally had a mild countenance or appearance (aspect); (2) aspect also can refer to the position of the heavenly bodies, and hence mild aspect suggests "benign disposition".

48: Tamburlaine, continuing to imagine himself as the sun, asserts he has now reached the peak, or "noon", of his fortunes, metaphorically symbolized by the meridian line, a line (a great circle around the earth, properly) of longitude (north-south) across which the sun passes at noon at a given location (ie. when it is at its highest point).

12 Unlike the real sun, though, Tamburlaine's position is fixed, ie. neither he nor his fortune shall decline.

49 = fire is disyllabic here and in line 51.

= "from you", with extra stress perhaps on you (you being the stars); Tamburlaine's point seems to be that his brightness will so outshine that of the sun that it will have to borrow light from the stars, which had received extra light from Tamburlaine.

50 = meteor: meteors were thought to form out of ignited vapours from the earth.

= sky.

= ere.

59-60: the reference is to the well-known and oft-referred to story of Phaeton, the son of Clymene and the sun god Helios: as an adolescent, Phaeton begged his father to let him drive the chariot that pulled the sun across the sky for one day. After much pleading, Helios reluctantly acquiesced, but warned his son to be careful. Phaeton could not control the horses, and would have crashed onto the earth, burning it, had not Zeus killed him first with a thunderbolt.

fame = the context suggests "story", but the usage is unusual.

brent = burnt.

axle-tree of Heaven = the axis around which the earth rotates and the spheres of the universe revolve.

61-62: Tamburlaine compares the visual impact of his army saturating the air with weapons and projectiles during its anticipated attack on Damascus to the terrifying meteorological display that he imagines accompanied Phaeton as he dragged the sun directly toward the earth.

= grow.
It shall be said I made it red myself,  
To make me think of nothing 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. Zenocrates, 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.]

Baj. Is this a place for mighty Bajazeth?  
Confusion light on him that helps thee thus!

Tamb. There, whiles he lives, shall Bajazeth be kept;  
And, where I go, be thus in triumph drawn;  
And thou, his wife, shalt feed him with the scraps  
My servitors shall bring thee from my board; -  
For he that gives him other food than this,  
Shall sit by him and starve to death himself;  
This is my mind and I will have it so.  
Not all the kings and emperors of the earth,  
If they would lay their crowns before my feet,  
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,
117: briefly, "forever".

Plato's wondrous year, or perfect year, refers to the cycle of time it takes for the revolving spheres of planets and stars to simultaneously 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

= "sit" or "are".

124: "which stand like images or reflections of the Pyramids of Egypt"; Schelling notes that pyramides could also refer to obelisks.

Pyramides is pronounced with four syllables, the stress on the second: py-Ra-mi-des.

= the fields of Memphis, or Egypt.¹

126: allusion to the ibis, Egypt's sacred bird.

state = statue, a common alternate form.¹

= to mask usually means "to disguise (oneself)", but from the context, Bevington suggests simply "dress". There was also a rarer use of mask to mean "wander around aimlessly".¹

130: ie. the Damascenes are all wealthy.

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's, and my father's.

Tamb. Not for the world, Zenocrate, if I have sworn.

Come; bring in the Turk.

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to the notes at the bottom of the page.
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, Environèd with brave Argolian knights. To chase the savage Calydonian boar.

Or Cephalus with lusty Theban youths Against the wolf that angry Themis sent To waste and spoil the sweet Aonian fields.

A monster of five hundred thousand heads, Compact of rapine, piracy, and spoil. The scum of men, the hate and scourge of God, Raves in Egyptia and annoyeth us.

My lord, it is the bloody Tamburlaine, A sturdy felon and a base-bred thief, By murder raisèd to the Persian crown, That dares control us in our territories. To tame the pride of this presumptuous beast, Join your Arabians with the Soldan's power, Let us unite our royal bands in one, And hasten to remove Damascus' siege. It is a blemish to the majesty And high estate of mighty emperors, That such a base usurping vagabond Should brave a king, or wear a princely crown.

K. of Arab. Renomèd Soldan, have ye lately heard

Scene III: the Egyptian army, led by the Soldan, is on the road to Syria to meet and defeat Tamburlaine, and relieve the city of Damascus.

Entering Characters: the King of Arabia is Alcidamas, Zenocrate's original betrothed. Capolin is an Egyptian military commander.

1-3: allusion to the most famous hunt of antiquity, the hunt for the Calydonian boar, a monstrous animal which terrorized 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 = those hunters who came from Argos, on the Peloponnesus. The term knights is of course anachronistic.

4-6: In Book VII of the Metamorphoses, Ovid tells the tale of a monster hunted by Cephalus and the other youth of the city of Thebes. 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).

lusty = vigorous.

Themis is the personification of the state of order, as set by law and custom.

Aonian = Aonia was the area of Greece around Thebes, in the district of Boeotia in central Greece.

7: Tamburlaine's army is compared to a hunted monster, but one comprised of a half-million heads, or soldiers. = allied in. = rape.

10 Raves = could mean either "rages" or "wanders". us = ie. "me", the royal "we".

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

12: sturdy = fierce, cruel or uncompromising. base-bred = ie. born out of wedlock.

= crowns or diadems.

= raise.

= condition or status.

= defy.

= ie. renowned.
The overthrow of mighty Bajazeth
    About the confines of Bithynia?
The slavery wherewith he persecutes
The noble Turk and his great empress?

Sold. I have, and sorrow for his bad success;
    But noble lord of great Arabia,
Be so persuaded that the Soldan is
No more dismayed with tidings of his fall,
Than in the haven when the pilot stands,

And views a stranger's ship rent in the winds,
    And shivered against a craggy rock;
Yet in compassion to his wretched state,
A sacred vow to Heaven and him I make,
Confirming it with Ibis' holy name,
That Tamburlaine shall rue the day, the hour,
Wherein he wrought such ignominious wrong
Unto the hallowed person of a prince,
Or kept the fair Zenocrate so long
As concubine, I fear, to feed his lust.

K. of Arab. Let grief and fury hasten on revenge;
    Let Tamburlaine for his offences feel
Such plagues as Heaven and we 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,
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;

= in the region.
= ie. Tamburlaine.
= misfortune.¹
= news. = ie. Bajazeth's.
34: ie. "than the pilot of a ship who stands in the safety of the harbour".
= foreigner's. = torn apart.
= smashed.
= condition.
= another reference to Egypt's sacred bird.

= test. = metaphorically, "the strength of his army."
= Fame is personified. = overly generous.²
= proclaiming, broadcasting. = biased.¹⁴

= hundred is likely tri-syllabic here: HUN-der-ed.
= merry.²
= desolate.² We may note here that the Soldan's combined forces number less than half of Tamburlaine's estimated 800,000 soldiers reported to the Soldan in Act IV.i.24-31.
= predicts.
= raise.

72: ie. "to cause you, who are base and obscure (a sneering reference to Tamburlaine's low birth), to be forgotten"; in using dim, the Soldan implicitly alludes to Tamburlaine's own description of himself as "the chiepest lamp of all the earth" (Act IV.i.46).
To raze and scatter thy inglorious crew
Of Scythians and slavish Persiäns.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.

[Outside the walls of Damascus.]

A Banquet set out; to it come Tamburlaine,
all in scarlet, Zenocrate, Theridamas, Techelles,
Usumcasane, 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, wingèd 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.

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).

Zeno. My lord, how can you 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?

Tamb. O, let him alone. - Here; eat, sir; take it from my sword's point, or I'll thrust it to thy heart.

{Tambazeth takes it and stamps upon it.}

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

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

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.

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

30 Zeno. My lord, how can you suffer these outrageous curses by these slaves of yours?

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

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

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

56 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.]

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

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

66 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.

68 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

37: "to turn their curses back onto their own (proper) heads."

= "please, give them permission (to continue speaking in this vein).

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

45: Sirrah = a contemptuous term of address, directed at Bajazeth.

why fall you not to = "why haven't you begun to eat yet?"

Tamburlaine refers in this speech 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.

52-53: 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.

67-70: Tamburlaine cruelly pretends to offer his dagger to Bajazeth.

despatch = kill.

= wasting disease.
worth the eating.

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

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

**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.]

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?

**Zeno.** Yes, my lord.

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

**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?

**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? 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.

**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,
(2) he plans to travel to (metaphorically trace) those lands and conquer them with his sword (ie. his pen). 

= ie. naming, or renaming.

= Tamburlaine means he will fix the prime meridian - the primary longitude from which the other longitudes of the world are measured (located at Greenwich, England, in modern times) - in Damascus (Ribner, p. 96-97).

= ie. "by sacrificing all these momentous plans of mine?"

= forever.

= permission.

= ie. the life of Zenocrate's father, the Soldan, will be spared.

126-7: in prose; may'st = should.

= wooden plate.

129-133: Bajazeth describes the pains of starvation.

129-130: consistent with medieval physiological theory, the Turkish emperor describes blood as one of the four fluids, or humours, contained in the body (see the note at Act II.vii.19-20). Each humour was also identified as being either hot or cold in combination with dry or wet; blood was hot and wet, hence Bajazeth describing his blood as full of idle heat.

131: Bajazeth's stomach is trying to save itself, even as those efforts accelerate the death of the rest of his body. 

hasting = hastening, an alternate form.

= because his blood is being drawn to his stomach.

= to spite; lines 135-165 are in prose.

136: "in the hopes that some favourable or successful force or army (happy power) will, with luck, come by, and, feeling pity, free us."

= wooden dish (to eat from).

140: Bajazeth finally resigns himself to eating.

= "not so fast".

= get sick from overeating.

= space to walk around in.

148: Bevington observes that the first course of crowns

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;

For Egypt and Arabia must be mine.

Feed, you slave; thou may'st think thyself happy to be

preserved 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.

[A second course of crowns is brought in.]
(those belonging to Bajazeth's contributory kings) was delivered to Tamburlaine after the defeat of the Turks; see Act III.iii.276-281.

= delicacies.

= assure.

= lucky or successful.¹

171-2: "as far as is the distance from Heaven to the furthest reaches of the east".

place = some editors emend place to plage (meaning region); however, place of Heaven was a common collocation of the era.

watery...bower = morning is watery because it is dewy and ruddy because of its red hue.

bower = abode.¹

173: thence = from there.

the torrid zone = the area between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, ie. the hot regions.¹ Actually, the real Tamburlaine never crossed the northern hemisphere's Tropic of Cancer, which passes through southern Egypt and central Arabia, nor has the fictional Tamburlaine crossed it (yet) either. Tamburlaine is using hyperbole to describe the great lengths he and his companions have travelled.

176: "the fact that none of you is of noble or high birth will not harm your reputations or honours".

177: "for power (virtue) is the spring (fount) from which true honour originates".

= those who deserve it. = ie. personified Virtue.

= granted.

181-2: "and if we do not deserve to keep the crowns through bearing and conduct which is even greater than that we engaged in before".

higher meeds = greater excellence or deserving.²

erst = previously, ie. up till now.
Shall ’stablish me in strong Egyptia,  
We mean to travel to th’ antarctic pole,  
Conquering the people underneath our feet,  
And be renowned as never emperors were.  
Zenocrine, I will not crown thee yet,  
Until with greater honours I be graced.  

[Exeunt.]  

END OF ACT IV.
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 altered 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, Which he observes as parcel of his fame, 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 imprecations,

(Uttered with tears of wretchedness and blood Shed from the heads and hearts of all our sex,

Entering Characters: the four Virgins are maidens who will be sent out of Damascus to try to persuade Tamburlaine to spare their city.

Having waited till the terrible third day of the siege to reach out to Tamburlaine, the citizens of Damascus are understandably worried about their fate.

1: "still doth" = continuously. = ie. Tamburlaine.

4: the Egyptians, we remember, rule Syria, and thus are militarily responsible for protecting Damascus.

5: the sense is that to delay surrender any further will guarantee that they will be destroyed by Tamburlaine.

6 = destruction; if by the third day of a siege a city has not surrendered, Tamburlaine will have every human occupant killed.

11-12: "and if as is customary by the laws of war we throw ourselves at his mercy"

= ie. "Tamburlaine's". = characteristic of or belonging to.

= (an essential) part. 14

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

= ie. heartfelt. 14

= pity. 5

= ie. "and persuade him to treat (use) us".

25-34: in this speech 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.

suits = petitions, entreaties.

imprecations = prayers.
Some made your wives and some your children) Might have entreated your obdurate breasts To entertain some care of our securities

While 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.

Gov. Well, lovely virgins, think our country's care, Our love of honour, loath to be inthralled To foreign powers and rough imperious yokes, Would not with too much cowardice or fear, (Before all hope of rescue were denied) 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 Egyptia, With knees and hearts submissive we entreat Grace to our words and pity to our looks That this device may prove propitious, 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 displeased countenance With happy looks of ruth and lenity. − Leave us, my lord, and loving countrymen; What simple virgins may persuade, we will.

Gov. Farewell, sweet virgins, on whose safe return Depends our city, liberty, and lives.
[Exeunt Governor and Citizens; the Virgins remain.]

ACT V, SCENE II.

[Tamburlaine’s camp outside Damascus.]

Still on-stage: the Virgins of Damascus.

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

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

2 Alas, poor fools! must you be first shall feel

The sworn destruction of Damascus?

4 They know my custom; could they not as well
Have sent ye out, when first my milk-white flags,
Through which sweet Mercy threw her gentle beams,
Reflexing them on your disdainful eyes,
As now, when fury and incensed hate
Flings slaughtering terror from my coal-black tents,
And tells for truth submissions comes too late?

12 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;
In whose sweet person is comprised the sum
Of Nature's skill and heavenly majesty;
Pity our plights! O pity poor Damascus!
Pity old age, within whose silver hairs
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-stayèd 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

69: the Virgins remain on-stage for the next scene.

Scene II: The Virgins are understood to have left Damascus and entered the camp of Tamburlaine’s army.

1f: Tamburlaine addresses the Virgins.
turtles = turtledoves; tortoise was the name assigned to all the reptiles with shells on their backs of the Testudines order.1
frayed = frightened.2 Fray and afraid are cognates, both derived from affray, meaning "to frighten".1

2: fools = helpless ones; the expression is more sympathetic then it appears.
first = ie. "the first persons who".

= plural form of you.
= casting or reflecting.1
= ie. yielding (the city).15
12-17: the Virgins try to flatter Tamburlaine.
happy = fortunate.

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

19-20: ie. "pity our elderly, whom the citizens of Damascus have always honoured and revered."

= probably meaning "apprehensive".1
= oppressed with the notion.14
= know. = mighty. = never stopping or ceasing activity.1

27: part = split.

27-28: prevent...bear = ie. prevent them from living out a peaceful old age.

= grow.
30-31: "and everyone greatly regrets that the governor did
Have 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 
That never nourished thought against thy rule,
The prostrate service of this wretched town,
And take in sign thereof this gilded wreath;
Where to each man of rule hath given his hand,
And wished, as worthy subjects, a
To be investers 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
To charge these dames, and shew my servant, Death,
Sitting in scarlet on their arm'd spears.
Virgins. O pity us!
Tamb. Away with them, I say, and shew them Death.
[The Virgins are taken out.]
I will not spare these proud Egyptians,
Nor change my martial observations.
For all the wealth of Gihon’s golden waves,

= the Gihon, originally the second of Eden’s four rivers (Genesis 2:10), refers here to the Oxus River of central Asia.27

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.

= the word fair is not good enough to describe you”; note that in apostrophizing to Zenocrate, Tamburlaine uses

Re-enter Techelles.

What, have your horsemen shewn the virgins Death?

= toxic or destructive. = the Damascene citizens’.

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

= the Damascene citizens’. Techelles delivered the orders and the cavalry murdered the Virgins.

As are Thessalian drugs or mithridate:

shewn = shown.

But go, my lords, put the rest to the sword.

11: ie. the remaining and entire populatio

[Exeunt all except Tamburlaine.]

Ah, fair Zenocrate! – divine Zenocrate! –

= the word fair is not good enough to describe you”; note that in apostrophizing to Zenocrate, Tamburlaine uses

Fair is too foul an epithet for thee.
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's pride,
Shaking her silver tresses in the air,
Rain'st on the earth resolved 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,
Making 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 Persian'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
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
thee as a signal of his deep affection for her.

= sorrow.  
= wipes.

94-96: Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers, appears in the spring, bringing rain showers with her.
resolved = dissolved.

97: a metaphor for the tears of Zenocrate.
= by tradition, the Muses' mother was actually Mnemosyne, the personification of memory.  
= "takes extensive notes"  

= 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). Schelling suggests Ebena may be a personification of Evening; Wolff wonders if there is a connection with ebony, so that the phrase when Ebena steps to Heaven means "when darkness falls". The fact that the line is metrically irregular suggests it may be corrupt.

103-4: even in the darkest night, Zenocrate's eyes illuminate the heavenly bodies; note how lines 103-5 comprise a dramatic rhyming triplet.

105-113: Tamburlaine admits he has been considering sparing Egypt (which includes Syria) and Zenocrate's father from his wrath.
105: in this poetical description of the stars, Cunningham sees an allusion to Judges 5:20: "They fought from heauen, even the starres in their courses fought against Sisera." (Geneva Bible Version).

= divisive.

= often emended to Persia's.
= expectation of defeat.

114-144: Tamburlaine expounds at length on the effect beauty has on men in general, and on soldiers and himself in particular.
114: "how is it that beauty has such power, as my own troubled thoughts can attest to?" (Bevington, p. 415).

115-124: these 10 lines are comprised of a series of lengthy conditional clauses.
115-8: "if all the pens that all poets ever held were able to put all of their poets' thoughts of beauty into words."
muses = deified inspiration.

119-122: "if all the sublimest expressions, which like a
From their immortal flowers of poesy, mirror reflect humanity's finest facility with words."

Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive humanity's finest facility with words.

The highest reaches of a human wit;

If these had made one poem's period,

And all combined in beauty's worthiness, still = i.e. distill; with quintessence, a chemistry or alchemy metaphor.

Yet should there hover in their restless heads quintessence = essence.

Which into words no virtue can digest, flowers = a monosyllable.

But how unseemly is it for my sex, poesy = poetry, a trisyllable: PO-e-sy.

My discipline of arms and chivalry, wit = capacity for quality in expression.

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; instinct = stressed on its second syllable.

And every warrior that is rapt with love rapt = enraptured.

Of fame, of valour, and of victory,

Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits:

I thus conceiving and subduing both

That which hath stopped the tempest of the gods,

Even from the fiery-spangled veil of Heaven,

To feel the lovely warmth of shepherds' flames,

And march in cottages of strowèd reeds.

Shall give the world to note for all my birth, virtue solely is the sum of glory, = "power alone". = "highest attainable point".

And fashions men with true nobility. − Who's within there?
Tamburlaine, the inflexible conqueror, am allowing myself to be tempted by Zenocrate to conclude terms with her father. Such a hesitation would be unworthy were it not in tribute to beauty, which touches every high-minded hero, and also were not the enticement resisted, as I will resist it, and thus prove myself more resolute than Jove himself." (p. 408).  

We may note the incongruity of Tamburlaine's venture into high romantic poetry and a philosophy of beauty, at the same moment his soldiers are massacring the innocent citizenry of an entire city.

---

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.

---

Enter Techelles, Theridamas, Usumcasane, and others.

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

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.

[Attendents bring in Bajazeth in his cage, followed by Zabina; then exeunt.]

Ther. We know the victory is ours, my lord;

---

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 them to handle, 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

160-1: 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.

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

no way...with us = a proverbial expression, meaning "nothing but disaster". 12
But let us save the reverend Soldan's life,
For fair Zenocrates that so laments his state.

**Tamb.** That will we chiefly see unto, Theridamas,
For sweet Zenocrates, 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.

[Exeunt Tamburlaine, Techelles, Usumcasane, and Persians.]

**Baj.** Go, never to return with victory.
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!
Volleys 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 in 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 aye,
Gripping our bowels with retorquèd thoughts.

= Tamburlaine addresses Bajazeth.
= for.
= ie. away from.
184: "until we are ready to offer battle."

187-8: only Bajazeth and Zabina remain on-stage.

= ie. "may millions". = surround.
= barbed arrows; in such an arrow, 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

= "force you to". = deadly.¹⁴
= ie. arrow.

200: ie. "blasting your body into the sky!"

= "as if they were in their own (proper) homes (ie. their
sheathes)."¹⁵

= ie. on.
= "commands or controls even the gods".¹

212: Bajazeth alludes to the tradition that a promise or vow
made on the river Styx was the most powerful and absolutely
binding one a god could make; thus Tamburlaine, says
Bajazeth, has more power over the gods than even the river
Styx has.

**Cimmerian** = dark or black; see the note at line 95 of Act
III.ii.

**Styx** = the primary river of Hades.

= manner.¹
= forever (remain).

215: *gripping* = gripping or clutching.

*with retorquèd thoughts* = Dyce has the best gloss for
And have no hope to end our ecestasies.

Zab. Then is there left no Mahomet, no God, no fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end
To our infamous monstrous slaveries. —

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 oppressiön,
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

Than noisome parbreak of the Stygian snakes,

Which fills the nooks of hell with standing air,
Infecting all the ghosts with careless griefs!
O dreary engines of my loathed 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 empress,
Brought up and propèd by the hand of fame,
Queen of fifteen contributory queens,
Now thrown to rooms of black abjection.
Smearèd with blotds of basest drudgery,
And villainess to shame, disdain, and misery.

this uniquely Marlovian phrase: "bent back in reflections on our former happiness" (p. 34).

= ie. state of fear or anxiety.

= here and later, the location of infamous in the line suggests the stress falls on the second syllable.

221f: an imperative: "Gape, earth, and let the demons below see up here a hell on earth, as hopeless, etc."

223: blasted = withered.

banks of Erebus = Erebus properly is the dark region souls must pass through on their journey to Hades; by banks of Erebus, Wolff suggests Zabina means the banks of the Styx.

= 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.

228-9: build up...air = daydream of events that will not occur; the expression, which appears in other drama of the era, seems to be used in similar fashion to the more familiar "building castles in the air".

= troubled.

236: noisome parbreak = foul vomit.

Stygian = ie. literally meaning "of the river Styx", but here likely referring to Hades generally.

= stagnant, not-moving.
= souls. = illnesses.

239: typical Elizabethan imagery describing the eyes.

= captivity.
= plural form of "you".
= appointed or supported.

= degradation; Zabina, we remember, is not kept in the cage with her husband.
= menial work.
= servant or slave.
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.

][Exit Zabina.]

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.]

250-4: briefly, biting hunger cuts off Bajazeth's ability to speak words of comfort to his wife.

**ruth** = pity.

**date** = term of existence, ie. life.

**sequel** = remaining period.

259-261: ie. Bajazeth admits his raging emotions have prevented him from being able to engage in intimate discourse with Zabina.

**stayed** = prevented.

**expressless banned** = ineffable, that cannot be expressed. = cursed.\(^5\)

**abridge thy baneful days** = ie. "shorten your life"; **baneful** = hateful.\(^{14}\)

272-3: like prisoners in a modern jail whose belts have been taken away so that they cannot hang themselves, Bajazeth has been allowed no instrument in his cage which he might use to kill himself.

**ministers** = agents.

**decay** = destruction.\(^1\)

**Darkness** is personified as driving a coach.

**pitchy clouds** = encircled. = pitch-black.

**pitchy** = ie. the horses pulling Darkness' coach.

**pined** = wasted away from sorrow or suffering.\(^2\)

**resolved** = dissolved.

**liquid air** = describing air as clear, like water.\(^1\)

**senseless** = unfeeling spear or arrow.\(^1\) = ie. without physical feeling.

290: 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.\(^8\)
Zab. What do mine eyes behold? my husband dead!
His skull all riven in twain! his brains dashed out, –
The brains of Bajazeth, my lord and sovereign:
O Bajazeth, my husband and my lord!
O Bajazeth! O Turk! O Emperor!
Give him his liquor? not I. Bring milk and fire, and
my blood I bring him again. – Tear me in pieces – give
me the sword with a ball of wild-fire upon it. – Down
with him! Down with him! – Go to my child! Away!
Away! Away! – Ah, save that infant! save him, save
him! – I, even I, speak to her. – The sun was down –
streamers white, red, black – here, here, here! – Fling
the meat in his face – Tamburlaine. – Tamburlaine! –
Let the soldiers be buried. – Hell! Death, Tamburlaine,
Hell! Make ready my coach, my chair, my jewels. – I
come! I come! I come!

[She runs against the cage and brains herself.]

Enter Zenocrate with Anippe.

Zeno. Wretched Zenocrate! that liv'st to see
Damascus' walls dyed with Egyptian blood,
Thy father's subjects and thy countrymen;
The streets strowed with dissevered joints of men
And wounded bodies gasping yet for life:
But most accurst, to see the sun-bright troop
Of heavenly virgins and unspotted maids,
(Whose looks might make the angry god of arms
To break his sword and mildly treat of love)
On horsemen's lances to be hoisted up
And guiltlessly endure a cruel death;
For every fell and stout Tartarian steed,
That stamped on others with their thundering hoofs,
When all their riders charged their quivering spears,
Began to check the ground and rein themselves,
Gazing upon the beauty of their looks. –
Ah Tamburlaine! vert thou the cause of this,
That term'st Zenocrate thy dearest love?
Whose lives were dearer to Zenocrate

= split in two; *riven* is a monosyllable: *ri'n*.

299-309: 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.

= 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.

= pennants.

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

315f: 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.

= ie. "the blood of thy".

= strewn.

= untainted by sin or sex.

= ie. Mars.

= discourse on.

= fierce or cruel. = proud or formidable.¹

= levelled,¹⁴ as for a charge.¹⁵

= perhaps "stop suddenly (on)"; an 1887 dictionary has the
following definition of *check*: "when a hound stops on its
own accord, having lost scent".²⁰ Ribner suggests "stamp
upon", and Bevington "paw".

= "you who call".

= ie. the lives of the Virgins.¹²
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 ruth! −
See, see, Anippe, if they breathe or no.

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

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 Emperess!
Ah, Tamburlaine! my love! sweet Tamburlaine!
That fight'st for sceptres and for slippery crowns,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperess!
Thou, that in conduct of thy happy stars
Sleep'st every night with conquests on thy brows,
And yet would'st shun the wavering turns of war,
In fear and feeling of the like distress,
Behold the Turk and his great Emperess!
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 ruth
To see them live so long in misery!
Ah, what may chance to thee, Zenocrate?

Anip. Madam, content yourself, and be resolved
Your love hath Fortune so at his command,
That she shall stay and turn her wheel no more,
= “anything and everything except”.

= plural form of you, addressing her eyes.
= “pitiable suffering” (Dawson, p. 81).15

= ie. figuratively hard to hold on to,2
= under the guidance.12 = lucky.

358-9: 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”.

361: an interesting intertwining of pagan and Islamic faith!

362: "forgive Tamburlaine!"
362-3: pardon his...pity = Bevington suggests, "forgive Tamburlaine for his failure to respect the inevitable downward turn of Fortune (and her wheel) and regard for pity" (p. 417).12

364-6: the sense is something like, "let not Tamburlaine's unchecked cruelty and pursuit of conquest anger the gods, leading them to punish Tamburlaine as he punished Bajazeth and Zabina!"

hapless = unlucky.
= pity.
= happen.

372-3: personified Fortune is regularly portrayed as turning a wheel which arbitrarily raises some people's circumstances and state while lowering those of others. Anippe's point is that the wheel of Tamburlaine's fortune is
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 affector of your excellence,
Comes now, as Turnus 'gainst Aeneas 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 cursèd 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 infâmous through the world:
But as the gods, to end the Trojans' toil,
Prevented Turnus of Lavinia,
And fatally enriched Aeneas' 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

immobile, frozen with his fortune on top, Fortune no longer turning it so as to cast his luck down again.

= ie. with a crown.

=sad.

382: ie. "he who loved (affected) you first".

383: Turnus, the king of the Rutulians, made war against Aeneas when the Trojan landed in Italy after fleeing Troy.

= ie. Tamburlaine.

= death-dealing.

= desires.²

= tortured: should she support her father or her beloved in the impending battle?

= ie. "my capriciousness in this matter causes appropriate suspicion regarding my loyalty".

condemns = censures.¹

396-8: Zenocrate returns to the allusion to Turnus and Aeneas raised by the Messenger Philemus at line 383 above.

Amata, the wife of Latinus, the king of the Italians, wanted their daughter Lavinia to marry Turnus, who, we remember, made war on Aeneas (the Trojan) on his arrival in Italy. With the help of various gods, including his mother Venus, Aeneas killed Turnus in single-combat. He went on to marry Lavinia and found the Roman race.

There is of course an analogy here: Zenocrate (Lavinia), originally meant to marry Alcidamas (Turnus), actually married Tamburlaine (Aeneas), after Tamburlaine (Aeneas) killed Alcidamas (Turnus).

Prevented = deprived.¹

fatally = ie. fatal to Turnus.

= an ending.

401-6: Zenocrate seems to be hoping that Tamburlaine will win an honourable victory, yet save the lives of her father and Alcidamas.

by their resistless powers = by means of the irresistible power of the gods.¹²

= "by virtue of".¹

= an alliance. = in accordance with.¹²

405-6: ie. the Powers who will save her father will, she
Send like defence of fair Arabia.

[Trumpets sound to the battle within: ]

Afterwards, the King of Arabia enters wounded.]

K. of Arab. What cursèd power guides the murdering hands
Of this infâmous tyrant's soldiërs,
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 beart: 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 cursèd object,
Whose fortunes never masterèd 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,
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 desirèd 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.

Tamb. ’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.

_Sold._ 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 wants no pomp, you see;
And for all blot of foul in chastity
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 proved 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 protestation
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
= ie. things to see, spectacles.

= conduct war.

= of necessity, without choice.

= lack.

507-8: Zenocrate has suffered no sexual predation.

_for_ = "as for"12 or "from".14

_I record Heaven_ = "I call on Heaven to witness".5

= "no more distant time".5

= ie. proven.

= ie. joining.

= professions.

= ie. "for your love of Zenocrate."

530: ie. "a little honeymoon-time will give us a breather from incessant warring."

538: _As Juno_ = "the same way Juno looked".

538-9: another reference to the _Battle of the Giants_ (see the note at Act II.vi.1-4). The point here is that the victory over the Giants firmly established Jove's mastery of the universe, and permitted him to confirm Juno, his sister and wife, to be the Queen of the same.

_darted_ = threw.

= harbouring14 or portraying.15 Marlowe used a similar collocation of _shadowing beauty in one's brows_ in Doctor
Triumphs and trophies for my victories;  
Faustus, and the meaning of the expression remains as  
uncertain in that play as it is here.

542: Zenocrate also reminds Tamburlaine of Diana, goddess  
of the hunt, the daughter of Latona.

Or, as Latona's daughter, bent to arms,  
= ie. to India, as far as the Ganges River.

Adding more courage to my conquering mind.  
= father.

To gratify the sweet Zenocrate,  
548: Tamburlaine seems to be giving the Soldan a vice-  
royalty, or at least tributary rights, to lands from Syria to  
India, which would thus include most of the land conquered  
by Tamburlaine to date. The farthest east the real  
Tamburlaine's empire covered probably touched the western  
reaches of the Ganges River.

Egyptians, Moors, and men of Asiā,  
548-9:  

From Barbary unto the western Indie,  
= ie. to India, as far as the Ganges River.

Shall pay a yearly tribute to thy sire:  
= father.

And from the bounds of Afric to the banks  
Of Ganges shall his mighty arm extend.

548

And now, my lords and loving followers,  
That purchased kingdoms by your martial deeds,

550:1: Techelles, Usumcasane and Theridamas, we  
remember, won (purchased) kingdoms of their own  
in northern Africa.

Cast off your armour, put on scarlet robes,  
553: "take up your positions or conditions as kings".  
= surrounded; Environed should be pronounced with four  
syllables here: En-VIR-on-ed.

Mount up your royal places of estate,  
= Alcides is an alternate name for Hercules; Ribner  
identifies Alcides' post as the door post of the Temple  
of Hercules (p. 111).9

Environèd with troops of noblemen,  

And there make laws to rule your provinces.  
556

And now, my lords and loving followers,  
That purchased kingdoms by your martial deeds,

550

552

554

556: "take up your positions or conditions as kings".  
= surrounded; Environed should be pronounced with four  
syllables here: En-VIR-on-ed.

553: Techelles, Usumcasane and Theridamas, we  
remember, won (purchased) kingdoms of their own  
in northern Africa.

550-1:  

552

554

556

558

Thy first-betrothed love, Arabia,  
= is fitting.

Shall we with honour, as beseems, entomb  
= funeral rites.1

With this great Turk and his fair Emperess.  
562: the play concludes with an extra-lengthy line, and  
probably a rhyming couplet (exequies and solemnise likely  
rhymed in Elizabethan pronunciation).

Then, after all these solemn exequies,

558

560

562

564: "the end of the fifth and last Act of this first part."14

We will our celebrated rites of marriage solemnise.  

562

564

Finis Actus quinti & ultimi huius primae partis.

POSTSCRIPT: read the further adventures of Tamburlaine  
and Zenocrate in Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Part  
Two!
Marlowe's Invented Words.

Like all 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 and phrases that research suggests first appeared in Tamburlaine, Part One:

A. Words and Compound Words.

- aspect (meaning countenance, unconfirmed)
- astounding (as an adjective)
- attemptless
- basso-master
- blood-raw
- bristle-pointed
- celebrated (as an adjective describing, e.g. a festival, rather than a person)
- clownage
- countermand (meaning control, unconfirmed)
- encountering (as an adjective, unconfirmed)
- enroll (meaning to wrap up in, unconfirmed)
- ever-howling
- excrutiate (meaning to torture mentally)
- expressless
- fetch (meaning to take a course, unconfirmed)
- fiery-spangled
  fifty-headed
  first-betrothed (as an adjective)
- inchastity (though "unchastity" was old)
  investor
  jigging
- judge (meaning allow judgment to be made about, unconfirmed)
- lustless (meaning without sexual urges)
- marshal (meaning to lead or usher, unconfirmed)
- mother wit (referring to a person who possesses mother wit)
- mountain-foot
- never-stayed
- novel (meaning newly-acquired, unconfirmed)
- obdurate (meaning hard-hearted or obstinate, unconfirmed)
- overmatching (as an adjective)
- overweighing (as an adjective)
- parbreak (as a noun)
- period (meaning goal or point, unconfirmed)
- reflex (meaning to cast, as a beam of light)
- regret (meaning to greet again)
- resistless
- retorqued
- royalize (meaning make famous) (1589)
- sled (meaning a sleigh, pulling people for recreation, unconfirmed)
- smothering (meaning covering completely, unconfirmed)
- spangled (meaning speckled, unconfirmed)
- top (as a verb, meaning to surpass or outdo, unconfirmed)
  triple-worthy confirmed
- Turkess (meaning a female Turk)
unaffrighted
unvalued
vagrant (adjective, applied to things as opposed to people)
valorous
villainess

B. Expressions and Collocations.

*Collocations* are words that are commonly, conventionally and familiarly used together (e.g. "blue sky"), but which when used collectively so do not rise to the level of what may be called an expression. All of the following expressions and collocations make their first appearance in *Tamburlaine, Part One*, and were subsequently used by later writers, and some even continue to be used this day.

Those collocations in *quotation marks* indicate an exactly worded formula that was reused regularly by later writers. Also, the words *one*, *one's*, and *oneself* are used as proxies for any pronoun, e.g. the entry "pull one's house down" represents all variations including "pull my house down", "pull your house down", etc.

"a sudden pinch"
"accomplish one's behest"
"amber hair"
"amity and life"
"ask a parley"
"baneful to one's soul"
"base villain"
"baseness and obscurity" or "obscurity and baseness"
"barest drudgery"
"Bay of Portingale"
"be the footstool"
"bent to arms"
"blind geographer(s)"
"bloody and insatiate"
"bodies strow the field"
"brave and rich"
"characters (en)graven"
"chill and cold"
"Cimmerian clouds"
"circumcised Turk(s)"
"city, liberty and lives"
"confusion light on / upon"
"conquering sword(s)"
"countervail the stars"
"cruel brothers"
"cureless grief(s)"
"dainty show"
"damned train"
"darksome vaults"
"deadly servitude"
"deep affections"
"disordered troops"
"dispatch the life of"
"distempered spirits"
"distressed plight"
"dreadful siege"
"drizzling drops"
"eagles soar"
"ebony sceptres"
"effeminate and faint"
"embossed with silk"
"excess of strength"
"face and personage"
"fading mist(s)"
"far from any man"
"fell and stout"
"filthy bones" (1587)
"fixed upon the earth"
"flesh quakes"
"flight to hell"
"flowery banks (of a river)"
"folded furrow(s)"
"forage up and down"
"friendly truce"
"gasping for life"
"gasping wound(s)"
"gentle beams" (1589)
"gentle victory"
"gliding through the bowels of"
"goodly refreshing"
"gracious stars"
"great and puissant monarch"
"hair dishevelled"
"hallowed person"
"hand of fame"
"hellish poison"
"Hermes" described as "prolocutor to the gods"
"hideous revenge"
"highest thoughts"
"holy Alcoran" (1588)
"humble moans"
"I record Heaven"
"idle heat"
"ignominious wrong"
"immortal flowers"
"imperious eye(s)"
"imperious yoke(s)"
"Indian continent"
"injurious villain(s)"
"intended drifts"
"ivory pen"
"keeping his circuit" (1587)
"killing frown"
"kingly head"
"kingly resolution"
"knowledge infinite"
"last and cruelest"
"Latona's daughter"
"lawless rapine"
"lawless spoil"
"leading a troop of"
"lightsome heaven(s)"
"liquid air"
"loathed sight"
"lofty cedar" / "lofty cedar trees"
"lofty clift"
"malice of one's stars"
"march courageously"
"martial face"
"martial spoil"
"mellowed fruit"
"menacing revenge"
"monstrous slave"
"Moorish fens"
"morning's pride"
"mould or mettle"
"mournful streamer(s)"
"naked action"
"noble and mild"
"nook(s) of hell"
"obdurate breast(s)"
"odds too great"
"pale of complexion"
"partial praise(s)" (1589)
"plumed helm(s)"
"princely lenity"
"privy to the state"
"proportioned like a / the man"
"prostrate service"
"purple shower(s)"
"rebellious wind(s)"
"resistless power(s)"
"rest a space" (1587)
"restless spheres"
"roofs of gold"
"rouse one out of" a location
"rusty coach"
"scald knave(s)"
"scatter and consume"
"scourge and terror"
"scum of men"
"shameless girl" (1588)
"shepherd's flame(s)"
"shining lamps" (1587)
"silly country swain(s)"
"silver tresses"
"simple hole"
"sitting in scarlet"
"skull" split in "twain"
"slaughtered carcasses"
"smiling stars"
"speak but three wise words"
"start a foot"
"straggling runagate(s)"
"stuffed with treasure"
"sudden and hot"
"sundry foughten field(s)"
"sweet accident(s)"
"swelling cloud(s)"
"terror to the world"
"the love of Jove"
"the passage and the port"
"the pride of Christendom"
"the stroke of war"
"the substance of one's child"
"the sum of glory"
"thorny wood"
"threefold army"
"thundering hooves"
"torrid zone" (previously referred to as *torrida zona*)
"tragic (tragical) glass"
"treacherous and false"
"triple region" (of the air)
"turns of war"
"ugly ferryman"
"uncouth pain"
"unquiet fit(s)"
"unspotted maid(s)" (1590)
"utmost virtue"
"vast and deep"
"warrant of one's death"
"warring with a"
"wondrous man"
"wondrous year" and "Plato's wondrous year"
"a month's victuals"
collocation of Gihon and golden
describing "Aurora" as "peeping"
describing "fortune" as being on one's "forehead"
describing a "bullet" as "dipped" in something
describing a sword as enameled
"horse incontinent"
the "blot" of "in chastity"
the "circle of one's arms"
the "fount" of "h onour"
to "appal one's thoughts"
to "applaud" one's "fortune"
to "bid one battle straight"
to "calm the fury of"
to "clear" the "darkened sky"
to "dart mountains"
to "feed upon one's soul"
to "glut one's sword(s)"
to "grace one's bed"
to "grace one's calling"
to "lanch" one's "throat"
to "live and die one's slave"
to "make the welkin crack" and variants, such as howl, roar, etc.

to "marshal" the "way" (1589)

to "melt" one's "fury"

to "menace Heaven"

to "quiver" like a "leaf"

to "rear one's standard"

to "ride in triumph"

to "slice" the "flesh"
(also to "slice" and "cut" one's "flesh")

to "spread one's colours"

to "stain one's altars"

to be "deeply read"

to lie "breathless at one's feet"

to suffer "consumption" from "fretting"

Some of the entries above are paired with a year. In these cases, the entry technically appeared in print before Tamburlaine did in 1590 (the year shown is the year the entry appeared). However, it is very possible that the entry was in fact invented by Marlowe, since he wrote the play in about 1586.

III. Words and Expressions Incorrectly Credited to Marlowe by the OED.

The OED cites Tamburlaine, Part One, as being the publication containing the earliest use of the following words; however, research has shown that the OED is not correct in giving Marlowe credit for using these words first, ie. all of them appeared in works published before 1586, the earliest likely year Tamburlaine was written:

architecture of (used figuratively to mean structure)

Caspian (referring to the Caspian Sea)

ceaseless

fleshless

investment

piling (as an adjective, meaning pillaging)

scum (applied to persons)

semi-circled

the phrase ocean main

the phrase place of estate

the phrase rue the day

the phrase to manage arms
FOOTNOTES.

The footnotes in the annotations correspond as follows:


