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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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:
American Book Company, 1912.


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 renowned and great Tamberlaine". Apparently Mexio himself complained about the fragmentary nature of his own sources, "scarce lendying you any shewe of his conquorous exploytes, the same only confusely, and without any order".

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

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

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

THE PROLOGUE.

From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.

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 = Schelling⁶ suggests "the making of merry or satirical verses."

mother wits = those with native wit or intellect, likely meant ironically.¹

= 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

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 dare 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.

dare 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...
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

Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee. Meaning to mangle all thy provinces.

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

_Tartar_ = Ribner2 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
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 \(\ddot{o}\) injects an extra syllable, common in Elizabethan verse: *RE-so-LU-shee-en*.

= 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;
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;
Ther. Then now, my lord, I humbly take my leave.
Myc. Theridamas, farewell! ten thousand times.
[Exit Theridamas.]
Ah, Menaphon, why stay'st thou thus behind,
When other men press 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.

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.*

76: *crew or gang.5*

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.

87-90: 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 Asii
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.

= please. = ie. Menaphon.
= ie. Tamburlaine.

105: _Prorex_ = Viceroy or Deputy King.¹
_Africa_ = ie. the Levant; some editors emend _Africa_ to _Assyria_, both here and at line 201 below.

106-8: Cosroe continues to insult his brother.
_Babylonia_ is on the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, having been under Persian rule since the 6th century B.C.

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

= where place names like _Asia_ and _Persia_ are intended to be pronounced with three syllables instead of their normal two (_A-si-a_ vs. _A-sia_), the final letter will be printed, as here, with an umlaut ("`) above it.

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

118: Cosroe, punning, is probably suggesting his brother kiss his own posterior.¹² The notion of kissing one's backside appears in print as far back as 1575, in the early Elizabethan comedy _Gammer Gurton's Needle_.

120: Mycetes finishes his sentence begun in line 116, ignoring Cosroe's comment.
_Embossed with silk_ = adorned with designs sewn with silk thread to create a raised surface.¹

_beseems_ = befits.
_state_ = status as monarch.

125-6: note the presence of yet another rhyming couplet.
In most of the Elizabethan drama that succeeded Marlowe, a rhyming couplet would generally, and irregularly, only appear as
(1) the last two lines of a scene or act, or
(2) less frequently, the last two lines spoken by a character to signal the end of his or her part in a particular scene, as here.

= "(are you) confused" or "rendered helpless".¹³
= ie. "as he, a king, would be expected to do?"

[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.
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.

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[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.
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 jewells 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 governed.

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,

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

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.

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.
If you intend to keep your treasure safe.
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?

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).¹

thorough = through, a common two-syllable form.
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.

Magnetes' speech, however, suggests another possibility, namely that the royal party rode north first to visit the leader of the Golden Horde, a Mongol sub-group which was ruling Russia at the time, before turning southwest to go home, and were then taken prisoner as they passed through Scythia.

puissant Cham = mighty khan; 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 man in these lines; the effect is one of intensification.

= ie. "me".

= "as I please", or "unrestrained";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).

wean = nurture or raise, like a child.¹

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

= subjection to others, slavery.¹

= ie. "for so 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. —

This complete armour and this curtle-ax is 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.

Usym. 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)15 or donning a suit of armour captured from the Egyptians (Bevington).12

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-ax = not an axe, but a short, curved sword.7

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.7

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,13 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)".1
= mad or deranged.
But since they measure our deserts so mean,
That in conceit bear empires on our spears,
Affecting thoughts coequal with the clouds,
They shall be kept our 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.
By living Asia's mighty Emperor.

Agyd. I hope our ladies' treasure and our own
May serve for ransom to our liberties:
Return our mules and empty camels back,
That we may travel into Syria,
Where her betrothed lord Alcidamas,
Expect 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.
= "who in our imaginations".
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.

78: drifts = plans.

78: = travellers.

= made famous forever. ¹
= ie. becoming.

= 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.

= value.

= lowliest. = retinue.
= ie. Jove's wife Juno; love and Jove would have rhymed in Elizabethan English.

= 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

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

= wait.

= the famed winged-horse of Greek myth.

= 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 jewëls 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 jewèls 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.

= inlaid or set.
= valuable.

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. 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 possesses 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!".

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.
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

"or would you rather I try to negotiate a peace with them?" 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.

= ie. travelling bags or trunks of the captives.
= ingots of gold. During this speech, Tamburlaine's soldiers spread the jewels and precious metals, taken from the luggage of their captives, over the stage.

= ie. Theridamas.
= pierce. often unnecessarily emended to lance.
= ie. 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.
brunt = attack.

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 characters graven in thy brows,  
And by thy martial face and stout aspect.

Deserv'st 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.

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.

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.

= scratch or graze.\textsuperscript{1,15}

= ie. Jove.

= evidence.\textsuperscript{2}

228: portly = majestic.\textsuperscript{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 / renowned 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".\textsuperscript{1}

= cliffs.

235: the editors cannot agree as to whether the line describes Christian trading ships (merchants)\textsuperscript{3} 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.\textsuperscript{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
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.\(^{40}\)

= partner or associate.\(^{5}\)

252: *Hermes* (the Roman Mercury) was the messenger god, and the god of eloquence.\(^{15}\)

*prolocutor* = spokesman.\(^{1}\)

253: "could speak more movingly (*pathetical*)."\(^{2}\)

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, renownèd Persian, to us all!

Usum. Long may Theridamas remain with us!

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

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.

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

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

8 Men. Of stature tall, and straightly fashionèd,
Like his desire lift upwards and divine;
10 So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,
Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear
12 Old Atlas' burthen; — 'twixt his manly pitch.

A pearl, more worth than all the world, is placed,
14 Wherein by curious sovereignty of art
Are fixed his piercing instruments of sight,
16 Whose fiery circles bear encompassèd
A Heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres,

That guides his steps and actions to the throne,
18 Where honour sits invested royally:
Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion,
19 Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms;
20 His lofty brows in folds do figure death,
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.  

= evidencing.

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.

= "your vivid or lifelike description"12,13

35-36: there are three entities who are competing to see who is most responsible for making Tamburlaine famous: (1) his own innate qualities (Nature), (2) personified Fortune (she who gives a person good or bad luck), and (3) Tamburlaine's stars.

And in their smoothness amity and life; presages (figures) death, but a pleasant one, friendship and life.  

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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.

= "your vivid or lifelike description"12,13

35-36: there are three entities who are competing to see who is most responsible for making Tamburlaine famous: (1) his own innate qualities (Nature), (2) personified Fortune (she who gives a person good or bad luck), and (3) Tamburlaine's stars.

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.  

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= careless, playful, unrestrained.  

= evidencing.
Shall be my regent and remain as king.

Orty. In happy hour we have set the crown

Upon your kingly head that seeks our honour,
In joining with the man ordained by Heaven,
To further every action to the best.

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

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

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

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

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

Men. I will, my lord.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II, SCENE II.

[Georgia.]

Enter Mycetes, Meander, with other Lords and Soldiers.

Myc. Come, my Meander, let us to this gear.
I tell you true, my heart is swoln with wrath
On this same thievish villain, Tamburlaine,
And 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.

Meander. 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.

Meander. 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 soldiërs  
Shall fling in every corner of the field;  
And while the base-born Tartars take it up,  
You, fighting more for honour than for gold,  
Shall massacre those greedy-minded slaves;  
And when their scattered army is subdued,  
And you march on their slaughtered carcasses,  
Share equally the gold that bought their lives,
And live like gentlemen in 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 satisfaction.

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.
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 burthen as outweighs the sands
And all the craggy rocks of Caspia.

Enter a Messenger.

My lord, we have discoverèd the enemy
Ready to charge you with a mighty army.
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.
See where it is, the keenest curtle-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.
Thy words assure me of kind success;
Go, valiant soldier, go before and charge
The fainting army of that foolish king.
Usumcasane 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.

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[e]st 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 -
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.
With twenty thousand expert soldiers.
The lords and captains 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 \textbf{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. \begin{quote}
Your majesty shall shortly have your wish,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis.
\end{quote}

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

Tamb. "And ride in triumph through Persepolis!"
Is it not \textbf{brave} to be a king, Techelles?
Usumcasane and Theridamas, Is it not \textbf{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 (\textit{will}), the word of movement (\textit{go}) may be omitted.

\textit{Persepolis} = the capital of Persia.
= proven.\textsuperscript{14}

29-31: rather than punish the enemy soldiers whom he has just defeated, Cosroe will accept them as his own.
= ie. follow Meander's example.\textsuperscript{15}

34: ie. "and promote you to positions of additional power."
There may also be a bit of wordplay, as \textit{calling} can refer to being called by God into a state of \textit{grace}.\textsuperscript{1}
= ie. "to act for your benefit (\textit{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 \textbf{mines} of \textbf{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.
\begin{quote}
\textit{with fame and usury} = "to our renown and profit" (Jump, p. 36).\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}
= "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 enscahed 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 shines in princes' eyes!

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

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

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

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

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

Usum. What then, my lord?

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

And rest attemptless, faint and destitute?

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

Ther. I know they would with our persuasions.

Tamb. Why then, Theridamas, I'll first assay
To get the Persian kingdom to myself;
Then thou for Parthia; they for Scythia and Media;

And, if I prosper, all shall be as sure
As if the Turk, the Pope, Afric and Greece.

Came creeping to us with their crowns apace.
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,
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,
Or of what mould or mettle he be made,
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.

take over control of the universe). The Giants were a race of monsters born from Mother Earth to overthrow the Olympian gods; they threw boulders (cast up hills) and flaming trees at Mt. Olympus, but the Olympians, with the help of Hercules, suppressed them.

Cosroe sees himself as the king of the gods (Jupiter), and Tamburlaine as the one with giantly presumption.

5-6: actually, there was only one giant whom Jupiter buried under a mountain: this was Typhon, a terrible monster with one-hundred heads, who had also challenged the king of the gods for the right to rule the cosmos. Jupiter killed him with a thunderbolt, and buried him under Mt. Etna (underneath the hills), hence the description of volcanic activity in line 6.

fire = disyllabic here: fi-yer.

10-12: a graphic suggestion that Tamburlaine is the spawn of supernatural beings - maybe good, maybe bad - but not humans.

spung = sprung.

= awe-inspiring.²

14: "he fearlessly intends to rule".
15: "and openly declares his ambition."¹⁴

profession = avowal, from the verb "to profess".

= ie. "no matter what".

= earth or substance.¹²

21: the sense is "let's get in the right frame of mind to do battle (with Tamburlaine).

put on = The meaning may be "stir up" or "urge".¹²⁰
meet = fitting, appropriate.
encountering = an adjective, here meaning "that faces in battle".¹¹

24-25: Ortygius' speech ends with a rhyming couplet.

28-31: an unusually abstract utterance: let's begin with the medieval belief that the human body was made up of four elements: air, earth, fire and water. Cosroe's point is that since he and all his comrades breathe (have sucked) the same air, the elements should exist in each of them in similar proportions, and that those similar proportions should further become evident when their bodies decompose (resolve); therefore, he hopes they will also be all alike in their willingness to love death and life equally - a way to suggest they should not hesitate to die if necessary to fight the good fight.

resolve = dissolve, ie. decompose.¹
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.

Resemble = 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.\(^6\)

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 sweetmess 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.

4-5: ie. "just at the moment when I finally become king".

happy = fortunate or successful.

= 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.

Nature that framed us of four elements.
Warring within our breasts for regiment.

Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend

The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,

Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres.

Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,

Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,

The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

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.

22-25: 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

= happiness.
= note the wordplay of fruition with fruit in line 28.

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
Kingdoms to rule. The implication, of course, is that Tamburlaine is to be identified with Jove (the new king of the gods) and Cosroe the former monarch Saturn.

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

And like a harpy tires on my life.

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

Tamburlaine takes his crown and puts it on.]

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 dispossess me of this diadem,
Yet will I wear it in despite of them,
As great commander of this eastern world,
If you but say that Tamburlaine shall reign.

All. Long live Tamburlaine and reign in Asia!

¹ talents = talons, a common alternate form. The talons go on to connect metaphorically to the harpy of the next line.

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).¹⁹,⁴¹

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.
So now it is more sure on my head, = ie. more secure.

Than if the gods had held a parliament, = 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.

And all pronounced me King of Persiá.

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

2: portly = stately.¹

3: bassoes = Bashaws, or Pashas, Turkish governors or military commanders.³

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

5: Presume a bickering with your emperor,

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

7: You know our army is invincible;

8: As many circumcisèd Turks we have,

9: And warlike bands of Christiàns renied.

¹: Barbary = leadership.¹⁴

³: = the sense is "to pick a fight". = meaning Bajazeth himself.

¹⁴: 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).

= 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.¹⁶

¹⁶: 9: a reference to the Sultan's Janissary corps, an elite body of infantry formed in the 14th century, and initially composed of captured Christian young men who were forced to convert to Islam.¹⁷

¹⁷: 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. Renownèd Emperor, and mighty general,
What if you sent the bassoes of your guard
To charge him to remain in Asià,
Or else to threaten death and deadly arms
As from the mouth of mighty Bajazeth.

Baj. Hie thee, my basso, fast to Persià,
Tell him thy Lord, the Turkish Emperor,
Dread Lord of Afric, Europe, and Asia,
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 regrett 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 Persiàin,
As fits the legate of the stately Turk.

K. of Arg. They say he is the King of Persià;
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, Argiër; 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,
= ie. bring. = (otherwise) accustomed.
= grow.
= abduction.²
= "of all the injuries done to you".

8: Agydas thought that Zenocrate had already adjusted enough to her unfortunate circumstances, at least so that she should not seem so disturbed anymore.
= good looks.
= ie. Juno, the sister and husband of Jove.
= "my initial feelings of".

14-15: "but since then my mind is troubled by other never-ending and disheartening (disconsolate) notions (conceits)".⁵

16: ie. "which gives my face its lifeless hue".

= "if my hardships proceed to their natural conclusions";
Ribner suggests "if my violent passions were given full expression in action" (p. 78).⁹

= picture or image.⁵

20-21: "may the heavens and all that the moon sees below it (meaning the earth) melt away".

Phoebe's = Phoebe was a Titan goddess who was associated with the moon.

= occurrence or fate.¹

= "forever linger".¹ = ie. Tamburlaine's.
= bereft of any of the physical senses.

24-27: Zenocrate has apostrophized to her own life and soul: either they should dwell in Tamburlaine, but abandon her and leave her dead (should Tamburlaine not love her), or they should unite with Tamburlaine's life and soul, so they may be together always.

29ff: Tamburlaine will covertly listen in on the conversation between Agydas and Zenocrate; a convention of the Elizabethan stage allowed characters to spy on each other, confident that they would not be caught.

= out of spite, ie. in defiance.¹⁴
= suspected or reckoned to be.¹

= "unless it is necessary for you to love him (or act as if you love him);" the line as a whole may be a delicate way of saying, "be given access to your body unless he forces himself you."

37-40: once Zenocrate's father, the Soldan of Egypt, learns
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. = liberate, free.
= accounted, ie. considered.

= 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).

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). 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.i.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.

[Exeunt all but Agydas.]

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

To see his choler shut in secret thoughts,  
And wrapt in silence of his angry soul.  
Upon his brows was portrayed ugly death;  
And in his eyes the furies of his heart  
That 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,
Wherewith he may excruciate thy soul,
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?

= a small region, and one-time kingdom, at the extreme northwest of Asia Minor, bordering the Black Sea, and not far from Constantinople. Bithynia is pronounced bi-THY-ni-a, a four-syllable word, with the stress on the second syllable.

3: Tamburlaine is sarcastic, mocking Bajazeth for his absence. 12

4: ie. the Turks' bark is worse than their bite.

= "retrieve you from here!" Tamburlaine has sardonically recalled the final words delivered by Bajazeth to the Basso at Act III.i.42.

= objectively, without bias.

= "Bajazeth's mighty army."

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

17: lusty = vigorous.

Mauritania is the ancient land now comprising Morocco and western Algeria; this area was famous for its horses.

= candidates for the two battles include:

(1) the Battle of Kosovo (1389), in which the Ottomans wiped out a coalition of armies led by the Serbs; it was in this fight that Sultan Murad I (father of Bayezid, our Bajazeth) was killed, and the Ottomans' rule passed to his son Bayezid;

(2) the Battle of Rovine (1395), in which a Wallachian army at least drew even with the Turks, but prince Mircea of Wallachia still ended up having to pay tribute to the Sultan, and recognize his authority; and

(3) the Battle of Nicopolis (1396), in which the Turks, still led by Bayezid, destroyed a crusading army led by Sigismund, the king of Hungary and Croatia.

= "in order to expedite". 14

= ie. "decides to do so", or "believes it to be a good idea".

= plunder.

27: ie. Tamburlaine will take the Turks' horses and make cavalrymen of his own foot-soldiers.

= rob, pillage.

30: Tamburlaine is interested to know if the contributory
kings will fight alongside Bajazeth; the more kings there on the battlefield, the more crowns and kingdoms Tamburlaine can collect!

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

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

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

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

Ther. Even he that in a trice vanquished two kings,
More mighty than the Turkish emperor,
Shall rouse him out of Europe, and pursue
His scattered army till they yield or die.

Tamb. Well said, Theridamas; speak in that mood;
For will and shall best fitteth Tamburlaine,
Whose smiling stars give him assured hope
Of martial triumph ere he meet his foes.

I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God,
The only fear and terror of the world,
Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge
Those Christian captives, which you keep as slaves,
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 = ie. 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 = ie. Mycetes and Cosroe.
= ie. "he who is more".
= force Bajazeth from cover or hiding; rouse is a hunting term.¹

= ie. as opposed to conditional words such as "might" or "may".
= expectation.
= ie. "even before".

53: the epithet Scourge of God was first applied to the 5th century empire-builder Attila the Hun.

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

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

= Tamburlaine refers to the employment of European slaves in the galleys of Muslim ships; but see the note below after line 67.
= bastinadoes, ie. 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,
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 Persiãns.

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 v-sprung from Typhon's loins;

100: Tamburlaine vows on his sword.
109-110: the king addresses the men from northwest Africa
(= "let us cease this talking"); Marlowe's characters often find
themselves caught up in orating instead of acting.

112-113: "let us cease this talking"; Marlowe's characters often find
themselves caught up in orating instead of acting.

120-121: = powerful.
122-123: = 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
to kill Hercules when he was still an infant, but Hercules
managed to strangle them first.

pash = crush or smash.
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 Persiä,
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.

\[\text{y-sprung} = \text{ie. sprung; the y- prefix (which derived from the Old English ge- prefix) was used to emphasize the completion of an action; these prefixes had dropped out of everyday English use by the end of the 15th century, only to be employed by future poets and dramatists to add an archaistic touch to their language.}\]

\[\text{= ie. are grown up.}\]

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

\[\text{chair of state} = \text{throne.}\]

\[\text{= equal or partner in marriage.}\]

\[\text{= another reference to the king of the gods as the dispenser of thunder and lightning.}\]

\[\text{= Tamburlaine asks Zenocrate to sit next to the Turkish empress.}\]

\[\text{= "the object that proclaims my importance or greatness", presumably meaning his crown, though he could be describing Zenocrate here too.}\]

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

\[\text{= recently.}\]

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

\[\text{= ramparts or fortifications.}\]

171: "and my army (power) is like the many-headed hydra."

The Lernæan 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

57
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,
That am the empress of the mighty Turk?

Zeno. Disdainful Turkess and unrevereend 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 Persia,
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 Christiâns!

= 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.

314 Now will the Christian miscreants be glad, Ringing with joy their superstitious bells,

316 And making bonfires for my overthrow. But, ere I die, those foul idolaters Shall make me bonfires with their filthy bones.

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

320 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.

324 The galleys and those pilling brigandines,

326 That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf,

328 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; 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.

= 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. 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.

brigandines = ie. brigantines, small, light and easily maneuverable vessels used by pirates.

= 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,
Shall lie at anchor in the isle Asant,
Until the Persian fleet and men of war,
Sailing along the oriental sea.

Have fetched about the Indian continent,
Even from Persepolis to Mexico,
And thence unto the straits of Jubalter;
Where they shall meet and join their force in one
Keeping in awe the bay of Portingale.

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

Baj. Yet set a ransom on me, Tamburlaine.

Tamb. What, think'st thou Tamburlaine esteems thy gold?
I'll make the kings of India, ere I die,
Offer their mines to sue for peace to me,
And dig for treasure to appease my wrath.—
Come, bind them both, and one lead in the Turk;
The Turkess let my love's maid lead away.

[They bind them.]

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

Zab. O cursèd Mahomet, that mak'st us thus
The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous!

Tamb. Come, bring them in; and for this happy conquest,
Triumph and solemnise a martial feast.

[Hic.] END OF ACT III.
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 Egyptians,
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 1: 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.\footnote{Capolin is one of the Egyptian military commanders.}
= immense cannons, so named because of their resemblance to the fabled and deadly serpent-like creature of the same name.
= the Soldan speaks of himself in the third person.
7: his colours = ie. Tamburlaine's banners or standards.
to our high disgrace = ie. because Tamburlaine has without impediment invaded the Soldan's own lands and invested his own city of Damascus.
= like.
= should.
= commanding.
20: monstrous = a trisyllable here: MON-ster-ous.
Gorgon = ie. Demogorgon, a terrible demon of the underworld.\footnote{The Soldan would not start a foot from him. But speak, what power hath he?}
= ie. jump from being startled or frightened.
= "tell me". = "what size and type of army".
= merciful or reckless.\footnote{Mighty lord, Three hundred thousand men in armour clad, Upon their prancing steeds disdainfully, With wanton paces trampling on the ground:}
= ie. the shooting of missiles such as arrows.
= a bill was a medieval infantry weapon, comprised of a pole with a hook (for unseating cavalry) and one or more spikes at the end.\footnote{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;

30-31: the image is of a mass of men all holding their pole-weapons outward at various angles, the effect resembling a hedgehog.

vironing…round = "surrounding their banner".

32: engines = large machines of war, such as catapults.
munition = large ordinance, artillery.24

= ie. "even if". = equal.1

= the phrase April showers has a lengthy pedigree, first appearing in the opening line of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales: "Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote…"

= possibly meaning "arm" (OED, def. 15 of sort, vb. 1).

= army.

= having moved quickly.

57f: the Messenger explains Tamburlaine’s modus operandi for investing a city.

= personified Darkness, son of Chaos; Erebus represents the dark space souls travel through to get from the earth's surface to Hades.19

57-61: on the first day of a siege, Tamburlaine's tents and accoutrements are white: if the town surrenders to him on this day, its citizens will suffer no harm.

62: ie. "but on the second morning"; Aurora is the goddess of the dawn.

=ie. "are his tents, dress and banners".

65: he will kill only those who wield weapons (manage arms),14 ie. soldiers.

Thomas Fortescue, the author of Marlowe's source for the play, The Collection of Histories (1571), wrote that if a city submitted on the second day, Tamburlaine would only "execute the officers, magistrates, masters of households, and governors, pardoning and forgiving all others whatsoever."

= fail to convince the city to surrender.

= ceremonial tent.5
His spear, his shield, his horse, his armour, plumes, and jetty feathers, menace death and hell!
Without respect of sex, degree, or age,
He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.

**Sold.** Merciless villain! — peasant, ignorant of lawful arms or martial discipline!
Pillage and murder are his usual trades.
The slave usurps the glorious name of war. See, Capolin, the fair Arabian king.

That hath been disappointed by this slave of my fair daughter, and his princely love, may have fresh warning to go war with us, and be revenged for her disparagement.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE II.

[Outside Damascus' walls.]

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

**Tamb.** Bring out my footstool.

[Bajazeth is taken out of the cage.]

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

Make Heaven to frown and every fixed star to suck up poison from the morish 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.  

66-71: any town that does not submit before the third day can expect to be wiped out completely, every man, woman and child slain.

= the laws of arms, ie. the code of conduct which governed honourable warfare.

77: See = an imperative: "see to it that".

The fair Arabian king = ie. Alcidamas, who had been promised to marry Zenocrate.

= notice. 1 = in alliance with.

= dishonour. 1

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 _ebon_ sceptre strike this hateful earth,
And make it swallow both of us at once!

[<i>Tamburlaine steps upon him to mount his throne.</i>]

_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 chiepest 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,

Wrapt in the bowels of a freezing cloud

Fighting for passage, make[s] the welkin crack,

And casts a flash of lightning to the earth:

But ere I march to wealthy Persia,

Or leave Damascus and th' Egyptian fields,

As was the fame of Clymene's brain-sick son,

That almost brent the axle-tree of Heaven.

So shall our swords, our lances, and our shot

Fill all the air with fiery meteors:

Then when the sky shall wax as red as blood
It shall be said I made it red myself,
To make me think of nought but blood and war.

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

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

Tamb. Zenocrate, look better to your slave.

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

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

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

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

[They put him back into the cage.]

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, shall 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.

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.  

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

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

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

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

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

Tamb. Not for the world, Zenocrate, if I have sworn.  
Come; bring in the Turk.  

117: briefly, "forever".  
118: "sit" or "are".  
124: "which stand like images or reflections of the Pyramids of Egypt"; Schelling notes that pyramides could also refer to obelisks.  
Pyramids is pronounced with four syllables, the stress on the second: py-Ra-mi-des.  
126: allusion to the ibis, Egypt's sacred bird.  

stature = statue, a common alternate form.  

= 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".  

130: ie. the Damascenes are all wealthy.  

= "everyone else's lives will also be spared."  
= "everyone else's lives will also be spared."  

= delays, waits.  
= red, the color of Tamburlaine's tents and banners on the second day of a siege.  
142: ie. "and on the third day of the siege".  

143: streamers = long, narrow flags, ie. pennants.  
hanging...heads = ie. hanging limply, as a person might hang his or her head.  

150: ie. "once I have vowed to do something, I would not change my mind for the world."
[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE III.

[Somewhere on the march to Damascus.]

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

Sold. Methinks we march as Meleäger did,
Environ'd 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. Renommèd 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.

10 Raves = could mean either "rages" or "wanders".

us = ie. "me", the royal "we".

= allied in. = rape.

= 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 survey'd 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.ii.46).
To raze and scatter thy inglorious crew
Of Scythians and slavish Persiāns.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.

[Outside the walls of Damascus.]

A Banquet set out; to it come Tamburlaine,
al 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.

[Bajazeth 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

---

In the *Tamburlaine* play by Christopher Marlowe, Zeno asks his lord to suffer the curses of his slaves. Tamburlaine, in response,loathe the curses and proclaims his power to turn the curses back onto the culprits. Tech also requests permission to continue speaking, as the speech is refreshing. Bajazeth, pushed by Tamburlaine, refuses to eat the offered food. Usumcasane suggests that the Sultan should kill his wife to prevent her from being starved. Tamburlaine cruelly offers his dagger to Bajazeth and threatens to despatch her if she does not eat. The conversation reveals Tamburlaine's cruelty and his response to the refusals of Bajazeth.
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.
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.

Zen. 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
fed from my trencher.

Baj. My empty stomach, full of idle heat,
Draws bloody humours from my feeble parts,

Preserving life by hasting 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.]

(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.

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).

= "not so fast".

= space to walk around 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

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.

And thence by land unto the torrid zone.

Deserve these titles I endow you with,
By valour and by magnanimity.

Your births shall be no blemish to your fame,
For virtue is the fount whence honour springs,

And they are worthy she investeth kings.

If we deserve them not with higher meeds
Than erst our states and actions have retained,
Take them away again and make us slaves.

Tamb. Well said, Theridamas; when holy fates
Shall ’stablish me in strong 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.

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.

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

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: "and as is customary by the laws of war we throw ourselves at his mercy".
11-12: "and if as is customary by the laws of war we throw ourselves at his mercy".
16-17: "Tamburlaine's customary procedure will not be altered, through any new ideas or pity, before we are all slaughtered."
18-19: "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.
imprecatiōns = prayers.
Some made your wives and some your children) Might have entreated your obdurate breasts
To entertain some care of our securities

Whiles only danger beat upon our walls,
These more than dangerous warrants of our death
Had never been erected as they be,

Nor you depend on such weak helps as we.

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 propitiöus,
And through the eyes and ears of Tamburlaine
Convey events of mercy to his heart:

Grant that these signs of victory we yield

May bind the temples of his conquering head,
To hide the folded furrows of his brows,
And shadow his 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.

= being.
= stubborn, resistant to persuasion.
30: "to have some consideration for our safety"; the Virgin is bitter and sarcastic.
= ie. "while only the threat of destruction".
32: allusion to the black banners and tents of Tamburlaine. = "would never have been".
34: "we would not have reached this absurd point in which the lives of everyone in the city now depend on us, its weakest citizens, to save them."
36-41: the Governor explains that (1) his concern for Damascus, (2) his desire for honour, and (3) his fear of enslavement, all required that he not submit to Tamburlaine, which would be a cowardly act, so long as there was some hope they would be rescued by the Soldan. think = know that. our = ie. my (the royal "we").
= enslaved.
= ie. "in light of the fact that".
= my.
= "as I do". = "the evil fate our stars have fixed for us".
47-48: "or (you Virgins) be the agents the most important (overweighing) powers of Heaven above have appointed to alleviate this acute point of crisis (extremes)".
= strategy.
56-57: an interesting image of the Virgins' supplications, which Tamburlaine would both see and hear, sending a message of mercy through his eyes and ears to his heart.
= ie. the branches of laurel, with which they hope to make a wreath that Tamburlaine will accept. The laurel was a symbol of victory.
60-61: ie. to cause his anger to fade.
[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.

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

Alas, poor fools! must you be first shall feel

The sworn destruction of Damascus?

They 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?

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

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 bloods,
That never nourished thought against thy rule,
Pity, O pity, sacred Emperor,
The prostrate service of this wretched town,

And take in sign thereof this gilded wreath;

Where to each man of rule hath given his hand,
And wished, as worthy subjects, happy means
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 armèd 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 Egyptiâns,
Nor change my martial observatiöns

not submit to you earlier”.

32: the Virgins toss out an additional bit of gratuitous flattery.

36: ie. "(we) who have never had anything against you".

39: the Virgins ask Tamburlaine to take the gilded wreath as evidence that he will accept the city's surrender.

40-43: every man involved in governing Damascus (each man of rule) has taken part in this favourable opportunity (happy means) to offer Tamburlaine the position of the King of Damascus.

51: "your terror is apparently preventing you from seeing clearly."

52: there = ie. at the point of his sword.

52-53: there sits…edge = personified Death is imagined to be a judge, travelling his circuit and trying cases, deciding whether each individual shall live or die (Wolff, p. 243). by the slicing edge = ie. of Tamburlaine’s sword.

54-55: Death’s courtroom has been transferred from the sword of Tamburlaine to the ends of the spears of his cavalry.

= Death was traditionally imagined to be a skeleton (Ribner, p. 101).

57: straight = immediately.

charge = order; note Tamburlaine’s word play with charge in the next line.

= ie. charge upon. = show, ie. present.

= dressed in the red robe of a judge. = customary practice.
For all the wealth of Gihon's golden waves,
Or for the love of Venus, would she leave
The angry god of arms and lie with me.
They have refused the offer of their lives,
And know my customs are as péremptory
As wrathful planets, death, or destiny.

Re-enter Techelles.

What, have your horsemen shewn the virgins Death?

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

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

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

[Exeunt all except Tamburlaine.]

Ah, fair Zenocrate! − divine Zenocrate! −
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 admirèd 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" about Zenocrate's beauty.
=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,
euen 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,  
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive  
The highest reaches of a human wit:

If these had made one poem's period,  
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,  
Yet should there hover in their restless heads  
Which into words no virtue can digest,  
But how unseemly is it for my sex,  
My discipline of arms and chivalry,  
My nature, and the terror of my name,  
To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint!

Save only that in beauty's just applause,  
With whose instinct the soul of man is touched;  
And every warrior that is rapt with love  
Of fame, of valour, and of victory,  
Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits:

I thus conceiving and subduing both  
That which hath 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,  
That virtue solely is the sum of glory,  
And fashions men with true nobility. −  
Who's within there?

mirror reflect humanity's finest facility with words."

*quintessence* = essence.

*still* = i.e. distill; with *quintessence*, a chemistry or alchemy metaphor.

*flowers* = a monosyllable.

*poesy* = poetry, a trisyllable: PO-e-sy.

*wit* = capacity for quality in expression.

123: "if all these things could be combined into a single verse (period)1 of a poem"; the OED, however, cites this line in the entry for *period* meaning "goal" or "purpose".

125-131: "yet there would still be one idea that poets could never successfully put on paper, one which no power can express in words (no virtue can digest): how unseemly it would be for someone like me, who is a man, a soldier, and feared throughout the world, to be thinking about something as effeminate as beauty."

After such a lovely beginning to the passage, our hero's vain conclusion is anticlimactic!

*faint* = feeble.14

132-6: "except that every true warrior, who by his nature loves fame, valour, and victory, will by necessity inevitably also think about beauty, as does every man".  

*beauty's just applause* = the merited acclamation of beauty.  

*instinct* = stressed on its second syllable.  

*rapt* = enraptured.1

137-8: "I, in fancying yet overcoming (or conquering) that (beauty) which has subdued even the gods"; both refers to conceiving and subduing.

139-141: "beauty, which has caused even the king of the gods to descend from Heaven to pursue it".

The reference here seems to be to one of the loveliest of myths: Jupiter and Mercury, disguised as mortals, went searching for good people, but the doors of a thousand houses were shut in their faces; the impoverished elderly couple Philemon and Baucus, however, invited the gods in and served them as much as their means permitted. In return for their kindness, Jupiter granted the couple any wish; they asked to be made priests of Jupiter and to die together. After drowning all their neighbors, Jupiter turned their home into a temple, and when the couple died, transformed them into intertwining oak and linden trees (Humphries, 200-4).22

*fiery-spangled* = i.e. sparkling with stars.

*strowed reeds* = "reeds strewn on the floor";15 some editors emend this to *straw and weeds*, based on the relevant passage in Arthur Golding’s mid-16th century translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in which he describes Baucus’ cottage as *"thatched all with straw and fennish reede."*

= "power alone". = "highest attainable point".1,15

128-144: here is Schelling's paraphrase of this passage: "I,
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.

We m...
But let us save the reverend Soldan's life, 
For fair Zenocrate that so laments his state.

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

*[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, 
Griping our bowels with retorquèd thoughts.
And have no hope to end our ecstasies.

Zab. Then is there left no Mahomet, no God, No fiend, no fortune, nor no hope of end
To our infamous 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 oppression,
That all the world will see and laugh to scorn
The former triumphs of our mightiness
In this obscure infernal servitude?

Baj. O life, more loathsome to my vexèd thoughts
Than noisome parbreak of the Stygian snakes,
Which fills the nooks of hell with standing air,
Infecting all the ghosts with cureless 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 accursèd beams
And sink not quite into my tortured soul?
You see my wife, my queen, and empress,
Brought up and proppèd by the hand of fame,
Queen of fifteen contributory queens,
Now thrown to rooms of black abjection.
Smearèd with blot of basest drudgery,
And villainess to shame, disdain, and misery.

this uniquely Marlovian phrase: "bent back in reflections on our former happiness" (p. 34).5
= ie. state of fear or anxiety.1
= 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.1
Stygian = ie. literally meaning "of the river Styx", but here likely referring to Hades generally.
= stagnant, not-moving.
= souls. = illnesses.14
239: typical Elizabethan imagery describing the eyes.
= captivity.1
= plural form of "you".
= appointed or supported.1
= degradation; Zabina, we remember, is not kept in the cage with her husband.
= menial work.
= servant or slave.5
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,
**Engrift** 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 loathèd life!

[He brains himself against the cage.]

Re-enter Zabina.
**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! wert 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,
As long as life maintains his mighty arm
That fights for honour to adorn your head.

Enter Philemus, a Messenger.

Zeno. What other heavy news now brings Philemus?

Phil. Madam, your father, and th' Arabian king,
The first affecter of your excellence,
Comes now, as Turnus 'gainst 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 infamóus 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: "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.

= 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.

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.

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.

= "by virtue of".

= an alliance. = in accordance with.

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 soldiêrs,
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,
If I had not been wounded as I am.
Ah! that the deadly pangs I suffer now,
Would lend an hour’s licence to my tongue,
To make discourse of some sweet accidents
Have chanced thy merits in this worthless bondage;
And that I might be privy to the state
Of thy deserved contentment, and thy love;
But, making now a virtue of thy sight,
To drive all sorrow from my fainting soul,
Since death denies me farther cause of joy,
Deprived of care, my heart with comfort dies,
Since thy 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 enthrallèd 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.

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:

= earlier.  
= Euphrates is stressed on its first syllable: EU-phra-tes.

= come out.  
= with.

= ie. established firmly.  
= office, position.

= ie. from fear.

472: ie. just as Jove pulled his own father down from his position as king of the gods.

473: the three Fates (the Fatal Sisters), the sibling-goddesses who measure out the length of, and eventually terminate, each person's life, sweat because they are forced to work overtime when Tamburlaine appears.

478-9: Tamburlaine's army has spilled so much blood that, like water, it has evaporated, forming storm-clouds that then rain the blood back down to earth (Wolff, p. 248).

resolved = dissolved.

480: meteor could be used to describe meteorological phenomena in general; here meteor refers to the rain of blood.

= ie. every drop of blood that seeps into the earth (it).

482-3: another reference to the ferryman of the underworld. The image is of a shore crowded with the multitude of souls Tamburlaine sends down in a short period of time, backing up Charon's workload.

= Marlowe poetically divides Hades into two components, Hell for the damned and Elysium for the blessed.

= fields which have been fought on, ie. battlefields.

= unusual or great importance or significance.

= ie. dead.
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,
Renown'd 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 Persia. —
What saith the noble Soldan and Zenocrate?

Sold. I yield with thanks and protestations
Of endless honour to thee for her love.

Tamb. Then doubt I not but fair Zenocrate
Will soon consent to satisfy us both.

Zeno. Else should I much forget myself, my lord.

Ther. Then let us set the crown upon her head,
That long hath lingered for so high a seat.

Tech. My hand is ready to perform the deed;
For now her marriage-time shall work us rest.

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

Tamb. Then sit thou down, divine Zenocrate;
And here we crown thee Queen of Persia,
And all the kingdoms and dominions
That late the power of Tamburlaine subdued.

As Juno, when the giants were suppressed,
That darted mountains at her brother Jove,
So looks my love, shadowing in her brows
Triumphs and trophies for my victories;
Or, as Latona's daughter, bent to arms,
Adding more courage to my conquering mind.

To gratify the sweet Zenocrate,
Egyptians, Moors, and men of Asiā,
From Barbary unto the western Indie,
Shall pay a yearly tribute to thy sire:

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

And now, my lords and loving followers,
That purchased kingdoms by your martial deeds,
Cast off your armour, put on scarlet robes,
Mount up your royal places of estate,
Environed with troops of noblemen,
And there make laws to rule your provinces.
Hang up your weapons on Alcides' post.

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

We will our celebrated rites of marriage solemnise.

Finis Actus quinti & ultimi huius primae partis.

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.

= ie. to India, as far as the Ganges River.
= father.

548-9: 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.

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

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

= Alcides is an alternate name for Hercules; Ribner identifies Alcides' post as the door post of the Temple of Hercules (p. 111).9

= is fitting.
= funeral rites.1

562: the play concludes with an extra-lengthy line, and probably a rhyming couplet (exequies and solemnise likely rhymed in Elizabethan pronunciation).

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

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)
cleonage
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)
inconstancy (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
retrorqued
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"
"ebon(y) 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 "honour"
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, i.e. 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**

**investion**

**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:


