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MEN WHO CONQUERED
&
THE WOMEN WHO MOV'D THEM

by

NIKITA CHINAMANTHUR

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

PROFESSOR TESSIE PRAKAS

PROFESSOR WARREN LIU

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Introduction

The act of translation is a contested space. An eminent philologist of South Indian poetry, AK Ramanujan, once wrote that translating a poem into a foreign language is also “trying to *translate* a foreign reader into a native one” (Ramanujan). Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great* is an outlandish version of the Asian continent — however, his over-the-top garishness is what makes his translation of foreignness successful. In instances of his descriptions about South Asia are laced with uncut gems and spun with gold: India is the land of riches and glory. That is what makes his translation so appealing — so much as to inspire Dryden’s *Aureng-Zebe* and a million other imaginations. As a near-native speaker of Hindi and steward of other South Asian languages (Kannada, Telugu, some Tamil), I began this journey attempting to understand my history as a diasporic South Asian woman and as a student of English literature. My goal was to find the crumbs in Renaissance England's popular culture and literature alluding to greater ambitions of colonialism and conquest that followed in the early 18th century. I discovered a wealth of texts written by fellow South Asians attempting to do a very similar project. Texts that strive to contextualize our time as British subjects—in name only. There is a justifiably haunting image of a country club during the British Raj with an infamous sign on the gate: "No dogs or Indians allowed." How did South Asians straddle the line of insiders ("Aryans," "Indo-European") and outsiders ("dogs") in the English imagination? How did this transformation occur over a century and a half? Many of these predominantly Anglophone writers are still at the other side of the gate, waiting to see if we can enter a discursive space that acknowledges the many harms of British imperialism. Personally, I struggle with this goal because, for all ends and purposes, English is my mother tongue *and* my lingua franca. It is not my own, yet English is what I know the best.

While I might never have an answer to how the English people felt about the founding and eventual success of the East India Company (E.I.C.), I know that Renaissance England was a time of turmoil for many British subjects. A religious crisis and establishment of the Anglican church; the unceremonious ousting of a sitting monarch; endemic plague cycles; an explosive literary and cultural boom; and, of course, the slow transition *away* from serfdom to capitalism. I would say it is not unlike our current moment, but I believe that would be an understatement. As I have learned, the messy events after Elizabeth I's death—and lack of heir—spurred a momentous production of politically motivated writing: dramatic, poetic, and prosaic.

My primary mode of thinking about early modern context and travelogues is through Jyotsna Singh's seminal work, *Colonial Narratives / Cultural Dialogues.* Singh contextualizes the 17th-century colonial stirrings in the East India Company during the Mughal empire through the lens of three men: Thomas Coryate, Edward Terry, and the E.I.C. ambassador, Thomas Roe. Another valuable source was a dissertation from the 1960s by Ram Chandra Prasad titled "Early English Travellers in India." The first-ever English text written by a South Asian is Sake Dean Mahomed's travelogue from the 19th century. Markedly, this is three centuries after the earliest English travelers to the South Asian subcontinent. One of the most impressive and most important records is from Thomas Roe, the official ambassador to the Mughal court sent by the E.I.C. According to Singh, "[Roe] lays a grid of a European system of differences—a ground for later colonial rule—even though the collective dream of imperial power is yet to take shape" (Singh 40). Roe has difficulty integrating with Mughal, and more generally South Asian, culture. He muses in his journal, which is eventually published: "Religions infinite; lawes none. In this Confusion what can bee expected" (Singh 32). This framing is useful when reading Renaissance texts about South Asia—the othering and Orientalism are unadulterated in these early works.

Ostensibly, *Tamburlaine the Great* and *Aureng-Zebe* partake in similar politics of othering and exoticization. As Singh puts it so aptly, "we can read their picturesque scripts as part of the production of the "real" and imagined "India/Indies" which later became the property of the British Raj" (Singh 47).

Concerning the multitudes of “India,” the collection of essays *Indography* provides more context on the writing (“graph”) and naming of the several Indies. Amrita Sen and Jyotsna Singh’s chapters are the most to my endeavors, centering on the formations of “Indianness” as South Asia rather than the supposedly “virgin” Americas. I studied several texts discussing the creation of the South Asian subcontinent in English writing and imagination, including A.L. Basham’s post-colonial *The Wonder That Was India* which works to separate the South Asian subcontinent from Muslim conquest academically. Basham is a scholar writing in the 1960s and purporting the false Aryan invasion theory that attempted to create kinship between the Brahmins and the Europeans. Much of this Indophilic study occurred during the second half of the British Raj. Colonial instruments such as the *Linguistic Study of India*, influenced by British philologists and the Asiatic Society of Bengal, supported this damaging anti-indigeneity rhetoric that fueled deeper caste divides. Oppressor castes, such as the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, were presumed foreign, European, and exotic to the general, “native” South Asian population.

To speak plainly, I have textual evidence that suggests both writers were motivated in distinct ways to represent the South Asian subcontinent. With all his access to the East India Company, Dryden still chose not to depict an accurate South Asia while engaging with the immensely wealthy Mughal Empire. Based on the portrayal of Aurangzeb—the Mughal ruler—Dryden's play entirely rewrites history and current affairs to accommodate and *reflect* his English audience. The act of translation on Dryden’s part meant making concessions in historical fact and the accuracy of his portrayal of South Asia. Ultimately, his translation of the South Asian subcontinent is an appeasement—a demonstration of South Asian inferiority and lack of regality—for the English public. His predecessors, like Thomas Coryate and Edward Terry, learnt South Asian languages and wrote extensively about their travels in the mid-17th century, well before *Aureng-Zebe*. Terry was a lesser-known traveler to the South Asian subcontinent when he published his account in 1625. Thomas Roe also employed Terry as the next chaplain for the E.I.C.

Meanwhile, Coryate was still riding on the coattails of his *Crudities* (1611) when he embarked on a "quest for the fabled Tamburlaine" (Singh 43). Jyotsna Singh describes Coryate as "a daring actor who frequently takes on a native persona while also learning the classical and vernacular languages" (Singh 44). Coryate engaged actively in the culture and ritual of the Mughal court. He acknowledged its importance in international trade and politics; there was an undeniable amount of respect—and exoticization—for Jahangir's court. Coryate's writings affirm a sense of awe and wonderment at the grandeur of the court. However, while Coryate "was a memorable figure to his immediate contemporaries, he was largely lost to posterity" (Singh 46). Dryden wrote *Aureng-Zebe* sixty years after Coryate and eighty years after Marlowe. Even if Dryden had used Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* as a source, *Aureng-Zebe* would have had to include more than a few passing references. Dryden also critically ignores Marlowe’s antipathy towards rhyme.

On the other hand, Marlowe is exquisite in his attention to detail. He writes as if he were gazing at Ortelius’ “Asiae Nova Descriptio” (Ortelius) and extending an arm to the audience to accompany Tamburlaine on his bloody rampage. Marlowe is inspired by the classics and a growing interest in mapping the world. His character maps the world through domination and conquest. Marlowe intends to provoke English audiences and create a mystique around a lost historical figure like Timur. Hence, I chose to judge the efficacy of both portrayals by defining it as so: the use of engaging formal and structural choices, an overall attention to the characterization of women, and the representation of the South Asian subcontinent *to* an English audience. To no one's surprise, Dryden is the less effective of the two—Marlowe is engaging and exciting, rule-breaking, convention-challenging. At the same time, Dryden clings to the heroic couplet of the past and does so in a terribly unremarkable fashion.

On *Tamburlaine the Great*

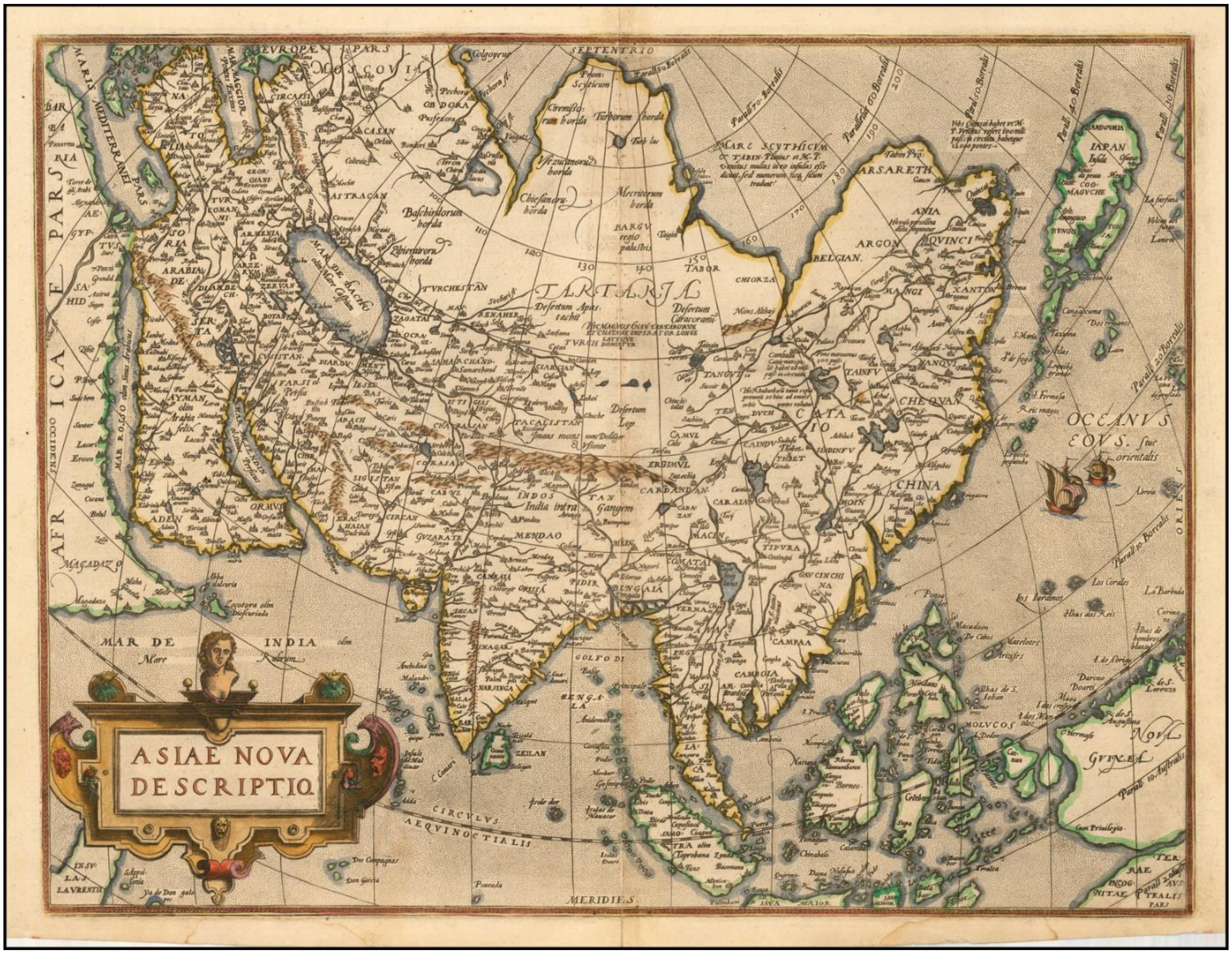
ASIAE NOVA DESCRIPTIO
TARTARIA
CHINA
OCEANVS EOVS. siue orientalis
MAR DE INDIA
SEPTENTRIO
MERIDIES.
CIRCVLVS AEQVINOCTIALIS

Fig. 1 Abraham Ortelius, *Asiae Nova Descriptio*, 1609.

In 1570, the world blinked into existence. Those looking closely and in the right direction would have watched as a Flemish cartographer mapped the first comprehensive atlas of the Old World. A few chose to use this new perspective of the world, including Christopher Marlowe. He wrote in epic proportions to strike awe for the foreign and inconceivable in the hearts of those constrained to the British Isles. *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587-1588) is evidence of such a feat of mythologizing and exoticizing through an active and relatively accurate translation of the foreign.

If Kit Marlowe could rise from the grave and write about the worst men in the world, we would have a very different view of Western civilization. In iambic pentameter, his contemporary William Shakespeare exonerated some of Julius Caesar's and Henry VIII's tyrannies. However, Christopher Marlowe transformed Timur the "Lame" (Britannica: *Timur*) to “Tamburlaine the Great” in two equally impressive parts. As elaborated in the next section regarding *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), I use Timur to refer to the historical Central Asian ruler and Tamburlaine for Marlowe’s titular character. *Tamburlaine the Great* is effective and generous in its portrayal of an absolute tyrant. Here, efficacy relates to the methods of translation and representation of the Asian continent, specifically the South Asian subcontinent. Marlowe translates and interprets Timur and his legacy as one of the most consequential conquerors for the English public. Marlowe's fictional character was "a powerful embodiment of otherness in the Renaissance imagination" (Singh 43). From a divinely inspired ruthless conqueror to a rakishly charming seducer, Marlowe sketches a multidimensional version of a lost historical figure. Marlowe introduces Tamburlaine to English audiences as a bloodthirsty, vengeful tyrant whose adoration and dedication to his love, Zenocrate, eclipses his "slavish" (Marlowe) conquest of Asia.

Tamburlaine the Great is the first English play written and performed in blank verse, a form that avoids the "jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits" (Marlowe Part One 1.Prologue.1) so often found in Tudor drama. Unlike Dryden, Marlowe is an intensely scrutinized playwright even today; there is an abundance of scholarship about all his plays. During his short career, Marlowe rose to immense prominence among the English court and public as a provocative and controversial playwright; in 1593, Marlowe was murdered in a tavern at age 29 (Britannica: *Christopher*). Historians suspect his death was due to his affiliation as a spy for the Queen, lending an air of mystery and political intrigue in the centuries to follow. *Tamburlaine the Great* is a sprawling, expansive work that deserves much more space and consideration than I realistically need to compare with Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe*. Hence, this section discusses the most salient themes in both parts: formal choices—specifically, the "triple"—mythmaking, religion, and the depiction of women. Together, these elements paint an exciting and mythic version of Asian history.

Christopher Marlowe was the first European writer to memorialize Timur in a palpably exciting way. Memorial is a key term for both texts: *Aureng-Zebe* experienced a resurgence during the 19th century after Clive of India's death (Dearing). In the first part, Marlowe traces the first three major conquests of his fictional Tamburlaine: over Mycetes and Cosroe in Persia, over Bajazeth in Turkey, and the Sultan in Egypt. In the second part, Tamburlaine is married to Zenocrate with three adult sons. However, she dies dramatically in the third Act causing Tamburlaine to engage in his bloodiest campaign over Natolia and against Callapine, Bajazeth's son. Then, Tamburlaine dies in the final lines of the play. The ending is unsatisfying since Marlowe prematurely ends the life of a truly incredible character. Both parts were published simultaneously in the same octavo edition; however, they were not performed together (Marlowe xvii). Each part has five Acts, with a varying number of scenes and pacing. While some scenes stretch for several lengthy passages and set changes, other scenes are merely between two characters in deep conversation. The narrative structure is organic and unpredictable, much like blank verse, unlike the formulaic five Act structure of *Aureng-Zebe.* Coincidentally, Dryden enjoyed this depiction of Aurengzeb's great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather (*Timur*); Dryden invokes Tamburlaine as the direct ancestor of his titular character. Unlike Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe*, many more undergraduate students encounter Marlowe's works—including *Tamburlaine the Great.* Tamburlaine is a perfect anti-hero who embodies some of the worst human traits and revels in his tyranny; similarly, Aurengzeb was one of the bloodiest rulers in Mughal history who Dryden reduces to self-righteous son and indecisive lover (Britannica: *Aurangzeb*).

I will be discussing both parts in conjunction, while citing them respectively. Notably, there is a lack of an epilogue to either part or a dedication of any kind. This is quite different from Dryden's rambling twelve-page dedication to the Lord Chamberlain, which also has a prologue and epilogue centered around the Second Hundred Years' War rather than any characters or the play itself. Through Marlowe's formal choices, mythmaking, and the depiction of religion and his leading women—Zenocrate, Zabina, and Olympia—Marlowe conjures an effective and multidimensional image of the "Orient." Specifically, Marlowe employs knowledge from Greco-Roman classics to aid in his mapping of the vast Asian and African continents: the Old World. Notably, Marlowe used Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius' atlas from 1570 (Marlowe xix). This is starkly unlike Dryden, who even while writing a hundred years after Marlowe, chooses not to engage in a faithful rendition of the South Asian subcontinent on stage. Even with better maps, Dryden barely alludes to regions he splits by cardinal direction rather than any other characteristic. Instead, Marlowe marvels and terrifies the audience with a quasi-faithful translation of historical Asian events for a contemporary English audience with precolonial stirrings.

Mythopoeia: Tripling the "emperor of the threefold world"[1]

One of the most prevalent formal choices in *Tamburlaine the Great* is the consistent appearance of triples, either in the number of repetitions, the use of a derivative word (e.g.

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[1] Marlowe Part Two 4.3.118

thrice), or in consonant sounds. When I first encountered the text, I kept noticing these patterns of threes in big structural or plot moves and internally within the verse. On my subsequent reads, I was able to identify over two dozen examples of these triples. This is an intentional and careful consideration on Marlowe's part. My motivations stem from the obnoxious presence of doubles (and carefully placed triples) in Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe,* hence this frame of reference is useful in comparing both texts laterally. In *Part One*, Zenocrate and Bajazeth’s wife Zabina both have three sons each. Bajazeth is Tamburlaine’s fiercest opponent in the first part; Zabina is introduced as the “mother of three braver boys” (Marlowe Part One 3.3.103). There is no historical evidence that Marlowe is drawing upon. Timur had multiple wives, and many, many children much like his contemporaries, which is how his direct descendants could survive for centuries (Britannica: *Timur*). In *Part Two*, only one of Bajazeth and Zabina's sons lives: Callapine, who seeks to avenge his parents' deaths. Marlowe transforms the triple from a set of brothers to parents and their only son in many ways. On a different note, Tamburlaine kills his weakest son, Calyphas. With similar sounding names, Callapine and Calyphas' similarities are hard to deny as two unsuccessful sons of fierce rulers. Therefore, the use and repetition of three as a motif is intentional and worth exploring analytically in this section.

One delightful way triples manifest in *Tamburlaine the Great* is in the repetition of consonant sounds. A line like “triumph, triumphs Tamburlaine,” (Marlowe Part Two 5.1.70) mimics the “*taratantaras*" (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.68) of the trumpet. Hence, the interesting choice to repeat the prefix "tri," even if triumph's etymology is meant to evoke a Roman past rather than "three" ("Triumph, v."); it is an uncanny coincide, nonetheless. Also, the onomatopoeia is an unusual example, since it occurs during an exchange written solely in prose. Calyphas, Tamburlaine's ill-fated son, is denied the pleasure of poetry during his most pivotal scene. He chooses not to fight in a battle, hence being doomed to die at the hands of his father. Similarly, "march with such a multitude of men" (Marlowe Part Two 1.3.56) and "Tyrant, I turn the traitor in thy throat," (Marlowe Part Two 5.1.54) create a sense of rhythm and beat in unrhymed verse. While there may be no "jigging veins" (Marlowe Part One 1.Prologue.1) to couple lines together, Marlowe's diction and syntax enlivens the text. The aesthetics of the wordplay is just as crucial as the geographically accurate mapping of places and mythmaking. *Tamburlaine the Great* engages in an exciting collection of decisive moments heightened through Marlowe's language and characters. These imperceptible moments bring the play together as an intentional epic, rather than a haphazard compilation of Acts.

Another formal choice that addresses several audiences at once is third person self-address. The use of third person in *Tamburlaine the Great* is persistent. There is no significant use of the royal first-person, "we," however Tamburlaine consistently refers to himself in the third person. This detached self-address contributes in part to Marlowe's mythologizing. Tamburlaine repeats this version of himself, hypnotically, as if to convince himself of his wrath and power. Other characters do not question this mode of self-address. One of the first appearances of third person is in the first part: "This complete armour and this curtle-axe / Are adjuncts more beseeming Tamburlaine" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.42-43). Again, the repetition of the 'c' and 'a'-sounds harkens back to Marlowe's motivation to replace end-rhymes with other poetic devices such as consonance and assonance. This excerpt also demonstrates Tamburlaine's active self-mythologizing through language. Compounded with Marlowe's depictions of his curly black-locks and imposing stature,[2] Tamburlaine is intended to scare and strike fear in the hearts of audiences.

Furthermore, Tamburlaine's ambitions are outlined in third person: "Then shalt thou see this Scythian Tamburlaine / Make but a jest to win the Persian crown" (Marlowe Part One 2.5.97-98). The use of "Scythian shepherd" also echoes the original title of *Part One—"The Conquests of Tamburlaine the Scythian Shepherd"* (Marlowe xvii)—and juxtaposes Tamburlaine's origins and his legacy. What prompts a shepherd to slaughter and to conquer? The loaded nature of the word "shepherd" is another useful insight into Marlowe's act of mythmaking. The most famous shepherd in the Christian world is figurative: God. It is important to acknowledge that "shepherd" has different usages operative in different texts and sects of Christianity. However, Tamburlaine is strengthened by his *replacement* of God in *Part Two* and his characterization as the "scourge" of God. Tamburlaine cannot be compared with God's generous and self-sacrificing son, Jesus. That is a strikingly blasphemous allusion, yet *Tamburlaine the Great* toes the line between blasphemous and anti-Muslim. Tamburlaine is also a deeply anti-Christian character, but he is not fully Muslim either. An allusion to God muddies this brutal characterization of Tamburlaine. All in all, the use of third person heightens the dramatics of the play and echoes a neo-classical framework of epic poetry.

Tamburlaine is characterized as both a skilled swordsman—a tyrant and razer of villages—and a charming orator throughout the play. Marlowe considers these two traits equally important to Tamburlaine's growth and conquest. Characters demand "parley" before battles are waged; "swords shall play the orators" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.132) for all in the Old World.

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[2] Timur's mausoleum was excavated in 1941. A Soviet commission found "the skeleton of a man who, though lame in both right limbs, must have been of powerful physique and above-average height." Injuries, of course, sustained from rampage and conquest (*Timur*).

Tamburlaine is no different. In *Part One,* he is able to seduce *or* conquer anyone in his warpath: beginning with Theridamas, who betrays Persia, then Zenocrate, and finally, the Sultan. Tamburlaine's lofty motivations for conquest are elucidated in the second act of *Part One*. In a surprisingly short exchange, Tamburlaine famously asks his trio of trusty advisors if it is "not brave to be a king" and "ride in triumph through Persepolis" (Marlowe Part One 2.5.50-54) as described by Cosroe. Even after four hundred years, these lines never cease to strike a chord; these very lines were quoted in Ellis-Fermor's 1967 collection of critical essays, *Christopher Marlowe* (Ellis-Fermor 26). For centuries, scholars have delighted in Marlowe's works and its linguistic richness; Tamburlaine is an incredibly compelling character. Through Marlowe's words, tyranny inspires then terrifies. Tamburlaine's humble origins motivate a sympathetic reading of a totalitarian autocrat.

Two other characters use third person, albeit less importantly: Mycetes and Callapine. Both men are sniveling and weak rulers with little claim to the throne. Mycetes uses the third person clumsily to evoke the presence of a ruler rather than to craft his self-image (Marlowe Part One 1.1.27) (Marlowe Part One 1.1.77). Mycetes constantly doubts his ability to persuade, so the use of third person is not convincing (Marlowe Part One 1.1.5). Meanwhile, "Callapine, the son of Bajazeth, / [b]orn to be monarch of the western world" (Marlowe Part Two 1.1.1-3)—it is only through his kinship with Bajazeth that links Callapine to the crown of Persia. Callapine does not necessarily deserve a third person self-address. Marlowe successfully appropriates this specific cadence and form in the play for a singular character, Tamburlaine. it. In the publisher's note, it is mentioned that many of the comic sequences in *Tamburlaine the Great* were struck from the original. Mycetes, Callapine, and importantly, Calyphas, serve as remnants of this generic choice to include humor. Callapine's lament in this excerpt would have been ridiculous to witness; by

Part Two, the audience is already in awe of Tamburlaine. Comedy is how Shakespeare eases the tension in his tragedies; no doubt Marlowe would have used comedy to dampen the brutality and self-important mythmaking. Conversely, Dryden chooses not to add any frivolity or humor in *Aureng-Zebe*.[3] Even though the play is well-divided into five Acts and each scene contains set changes, comedy would have created a sense of relief in the audience.

Another example is the formal repetition of “the state of Tamburlaine” (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.120) and “the strength of Tamburlaine” (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.133, 135) towards the end of the play. Tamburlaine’s reasoning is incredibly potent and convincing; part of his power and charm is derived through his language and monologic argumentation. There is no notable soliloquy in *Tamburlaine the Great*. Instead, Marlowe chooses to have characters perform rallying cries and political speeches. Even the cries of despair are directed towards God, Mahomet, or Christ as apostrophes. Tamburlaine is never alone on stage and self-reflecting on his actions as a Shakespearean protagonist might. Even so, Theridamas is "[won] with [Tamburlaine's] words and conquered with [his] looks" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.228). Thus begins Tamburlaine's journey from a "sturdy Scythian" (Marlowe Part One 1.1.36) "shepherd" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.7) to a conqueror and "scourge of God" (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.153-155). His provenance as a shepherd from "Samarcanda" (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.105)—or Samarkhand, a city in present-day Afghanistan that evokes a sense of regality and nostalgia for the post-colonial subcontinental subject—adds to the historicity of Tamburlaine. Mythologically, many cities in Afghanistan are mentioned in Hindu epics such as *The Mahabharata.* These are real places and real battles that resulted in a five-percent reduction of the world population.[4]

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[3] I would not be surprised if the rushed set changes were comical enough for the eagle-eyed audience member.

From Tamburlaine's origin story to his ruthless conquests, all these elements create a mythological fabric for Timur. While mythopoeia is not an exact term for this process, it is useful to consider the act of mythmaking and aggrandizing historical truths to advance Tamburlaine's image. Marlowe actively creates a myth for English audiences to grasp onto: a myth of power, dominance, and blood that stains a third of his imagined world. He employs neo-classicism by using historically Greek and Roman place-names and alluding to mythic battles such as Troy. While part of his geography and etymology is inspired by antiquity, the other part is rooted in the facts—of his era. What is even more curious is that "Marlowe was using an atlas" (Marlowe xix), specifically the one by Abraham Ortelius from 1570. Ethel Seaton's 1960s essay, "Marlowe's Map," discusses his inspiration and employment of a contemporary cartographical record; unfortunately, like much of the scholarship from mid-century academics of lesser renown, the essay is buried in early U.K. editions. In the context of the Mughal Empire, the Ambassador Thomas Roe expresses contempt at the lack of written records in Jahangir's court (Singh). Roe sincerely believed it was a sign of superior intellect and power for the English to have detailed and precise books; conveniently, Roe also never learned any languages used in Jahangir's court to be able to locate and interpret documents for himself. The ideological dissonance stems from the fact that the Emperor of India *embodied* all of his might, while God and the Commons granted the English monarch power through the written word. Marlowe subscribes to the latter school of thought in many ways: he writes to memorialize a turbulent historical figure.

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[4] In a chillingly morbid website from the 2000s, librarian Matthew White cites several sources that estimate Timur's death toll between 12 to 20 million ("Timur Lenk"). Aurangzeb is also mentioned in this extensive record due to his skirmishes with South Indian rulers in the Deccan plateau ("Mughal Empire").

Tamburlaine's mystique also stems from his curious beginnings as the son of a shepherd—another possible allusion to Christ here. Marlowe is widely suspected to be an atheist due to his relatively unknown religious background, so his complete destabilization of God at the end of the play is an interesting insight into the lengths to which he felt comfortable disowning a Christian deity. Eventually, Tamburlaine believes he is the "scourge of God" (Marlowe Part Two 4.1.154) but one that he knows is not Christian or, perhaps even, Muslim. Hence, the idea of Tamburlaine is given some authority through this classical, atheist framework.

Tamburlaine the Great engages in a performance with three levels of audiences: the theatre audience, the other players on stage, and finally, his descendants. While Marlowe is not writing for Timur's descendants, he writes for a future audience. It is made apparent in the epic and neo-classical portrayal of Tamburlaine. This is a legacy that motivates John Dryden to continue a version of Tamburlaine's story for power in *Aureng-Zebe*; in many ways, Aureng-Zebe is Tamburlaine's ideal son as somehow personified by Amyras. Aureng-Zebe is much more vocal and autonomous than Amyras, notably as the titular character of a play. Amyras' ascension to the throne is a little underwhelming and the audience is primed to expect Tamburlaine's empire to splinter like Genghis Khan. However, this insecurity about the future does not bother Marlowe, as there is no epilogue to the play.

Moreover, his players were all men or young boys, allowing for a level of violence and confrontation absent from *Aureng-Zebe;* the women are allowed to fight, too. Meanwhile, Tamburlaine is brash and brazen in his emotional outbursts, brave enough for them to occur in the presence of others. His brutality is not stymied when surrounded by people: Tamburlaine kills his son in front of an audience and enslaves former kings as footstools and chattel. This is especially heightened during *Part Two* and after the death of Zenocrate. Reflecting on the effects of her death on Tamburlaine is a useful transition into Marlowe's characterization of his female characters.

Chainmail to Order Brides: In Captivity, As Conquest and Capitulation

Zenocrate, Tamburlaine's singular lover in the play, is reminiscent of Edmund Spenser's Lady in *The Faerie Queene*. She is regal and reluctant to acquiesce to Tamburlaine's affections, and when she does, it is dramatic and impassioned. In fact, the first words performed by Tamburlaine begin with "Come, lady" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.1). Tamburlaine "catches" her professing her love in his defense to another character in Act 2. Hence, the portrayal of women in *Tamburlaine the Great* captures several nuanced and layered internal conflicts. Marlowe's women are entangled in polysemy and objectification: they represent the captive, the conquest, and the ultimate crown. Zenocrate, uniquely, embodies all three concepts while Zabina and Olympia occupy different meanings. Yet, through progeny, the implications of legacy are biologically and symbolically embedded in these women: Zabina the mother, Olympia the honorable widow, and Zenocrate, who motivates Tamburlaine's bloodiest clashes and bears three sons. Ultimately, the men in their life dictate their legacies and their women's fate: Zabina brains[5] herself like Bajazeth; Olympia's son forces her to kill him; and, Zenocrate's son is brutally slaughtered after her death.

Moreover, Zenocrate's worth is described as having "more worth to Tamburlaine / [t]han the possession of the Persian crown" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.90-91) or "all the gold in India's wealthy arms" (Marlowe Part One 1.2.85). "India" is framed in an interesting and slightly indistinct way: for a contemporary English audience, it could mean the gold and wealth from the New World, however, “India” would have been South Asia to Timur. Thus, framing one of the several examples of Marlowe’s use of “India” in one way or another to exemplify life-changing riches. “Sailing along the oriental sea, / [fetches] about the Indian continent” (Marlowe Part One 3.3.253-254) – therefore, Marlowe is explicitly speaking about the subcontinent, and *not* any American colonies. Usefully, there is an expectation that Marlowe is staying as close to his version of historical or classical fact; the Greeks and Romans both traded with the South Asian subcontinent. Another explicit reference is of the Ganges (Marlowe Part One 5.1.520) and the “diamonds, sapphires, rubies, / [and] fairest pearl of wealthy India” (Marlowe Part Two 3.2.120-121). These gemstones are native to the subcontinent (*GIA*), and Marlowe does not mention the emerald—the lush green stone more commonly found in the Americas (*GIA*). Hence, Marlowe cares about the smallest details and provides the audience with a factual account. Audiences can appreciate this care and believe in the mythmaking and other devices: Tamburlaine is indeed a transformed man.

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[5] This refers to Bajazeth using the metal spikes on his cage to impale himself; Zabina follows ensuite. The implications of Bajazeth and Zabina's "brainings" are too vast to gloss in a section about women. Some scholars have speculated its significance, while many accept it as just another example of ruthlessness or violence motivated by Tamburlaine.

This careful act of translation—to a different time, and a different country—is effective and believable because of details like these. That begs the question, why is Zenocrate worth more than an overwhelming amount of wealth? As with Indamora, Zenocrate represents Tamburlaine's growing wealth and empire—rationalizing his rage and vengeance after her death—while still in captivity. Marlowe does not reveal the circumstances of Zenocrate's abduction. The audience views her presence as a consequence of Tamburlaine's cunning; she is not with him willingly or consensually in Act 1 and is defending him at the onset of Act 2. The latter is Zenocrate's second appearance on stage. Marlowe does little to convince us that Zenocrate loves Tamburlaine unequivocally other than during this apology; meanwhile, Tamburlaine does not actively do anything for her love. A pivotal plot line is that Tamburlaine delays crowning himself as the emperor of Asia until he has won Zenocrate's homeland and the Sultan's heart. On a rare occasion, Tamburlaine seems insecure about his parentage and provenance.

As an “Egyptian”[6] woman, Zenocrate is a suitable complement to Tamburlaine’s own foreignness. She is exoticized as beautiful before her foreignness is emphasized in the text. In the last scene of *Part One*, Zenocrate unusually appeals to Tamburlaine's mercy when conquering her homeland, Egypt. She asks if he would "have some pity for [her] sake, / [b]ecause it is [her] country and [her] father's" (Marlowe Part One 4.2.123-124). It would have been stranger to stay silent. Yet, her character endured much gore for her empathy to extend only to her father: witnessing the braining of Bajazeth and Zabina, for example. Tamburlaine is unconvinced, however; in his eye, Zenocrate is an object to be cherished, protected, and displayed rather than perceived as a self-actualized human. Zenocrate is another one of Tamburlaine's conquests, even if Marlowe is not overt about this impression.

In *Part One* Act 3, as Tamburlaine and Bajazeth battle with swords, Zenocrate and Zabina fight with words. They hurl insults and threaten each other with images of a future in which their respective beloveds fail (Marlowe Part One 3.3.166-211). While there is an element of humor in the scene, there is also an underlying sincerity and fierceness. Another strange fact is the exchange’s location in the third scene of the third Act; Marlowe goes to great lengths to toy with the symbol of triples and their emphasis. Zabina calls Zenocrate a “[base] concubine” (Marlowe Part One 3.3.166) who “shalt be laundress to [her] waiting-maid” (Marlowe Part One 3.3.177). In rebuttal, Zenocrate’s handmaid promises to assign Zabina with the work my chambermaid disdains" (Marlowe Part One 3.3.186-189). This unbecoming, unladylike depiction of women fighting is made possible by a historical reality: no women were allowed on stage during Marlowe's time. Hence, young boys would have performed these roles and conducted themselves in such a manner. Without married women occupying these roles, there would have been no need to display conventional propriety or dignified conduct. This significantly changes the dynamic, reflecting on the conventions of the Elizabethan era. While in Marlowe's lifetime, beheading a sitting English monarch would have been seen as absolutely barbaric, treasonous, and soul-crushing which was not the case in 1675. During Dryden's time, a nascent English libertine movement started forming and deep gorges between Royalists and Republicans. Strangely, Dryden harkened an English form like the heroic couplet, inspired by Spenser, rather than a continental European style. The politics of each writers' era radically shaped their literary decisions and proclivity to provoke audiences. Dryden was blatantly wooing the Lord Chamberlain in the dedication to *Aureng-Zebe* while Marlowe revolutionized English drama through a novel form like blank verse.

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[6] Another confusing detail is when the Sultan invokes Ibis and the Prophet in the same breath (Marlowe Part One 4.3.37). It is an easy conflation of two distinct religions—especially considering their stances on idolatry.

The other two women in the play share similar fates of passivity and repression. As captured subjects, Zabina and Olympia suffer at the hands of their captors—until they radically choose death over a life of servitude to a tyrant or second husband respectively. While Zabina is captured after her husband loses the battle, she can still interact with him with relative freedom as a member of Zenocrate's retinue of servants (Marlowe Part One 4.4). Zabina chooses death over a life of slavery. Notably, she chooses death only after her husband kills himself—inextricably tying their ends together. There is an obscurity as to whether Zabina is in a peaceful state of mind, especially after discovering her husband's corpse; this is one of the rare times Marlowe writes in prose to indicate hysteria. Olympia is removed from her family's side after

Theridamas, one of Tamburlaine's kings, falls in love with her (Marlowe Part Two 4.3.96). Olympia struggles through her entire appearance in the play; she is forced to live and abducted by Theridamas. Yet, in a final act of rebellion, Olympia tricks Theridamas into killing her. Even as the passive recipient of a lethal blow, Olympia regains her sense of agency as a person. Dangerously, this series of events characterizes suicide—or involuntary manslaughter—as powerful and honorable.[7]

Like Indamora, Zenocrate is still a passive woman who catalyzes her man rather than affect change herself. Zenocrate is the face that starts a thousand fires and razes a thousand villages at her husband's behest. Her name is also helpful to consider in terms of her characterization: "Zeno" seems to come from the Greek prefix, "xeno," which means foreign or strange ("Xeno-, Comb. Form.") and the French "crat" vaguely meaning "partisan" or "member" ("-Crat, Comb. Form."). Her name embodies foreignness in a comically over-the-top way, like how Dryden exoticizes Indamora as both a "lover" and the "beloved" of India (using a Latin root nonetheless!). Zenocrate is "[t]he only paragon of Tamburlaine," (Marlowe Part One 3.3.117-119) or so says Tamburlaine. Embedded within this layer of self-address, Tamburlaine reflects Zenocrate's role as his better half, a symmetrical, unblemished complement to himself. Paragon or not, Zenocrate is still confined in Tamburlaine's cage rather than one of her own creation. Even as the most prominent woman in the play, Zenocrate is also the most passive of the three. Her configuration as this statuesque object rather than imperfect or passionate woman might have been more palatable to audiences. As a perfect prize, Zenocrate has more value and the stakes are raised for Tamburlaine.

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[7] Interestingly, there is no gender differential. Bajazeth is the first of many to commit suicide in the name of honor.

By the Alcoran and Mahomet

Religion is by far the most distinctive theme present in *Tamburlaine the Great* that fades to nothingness in Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe.* The absence of believable Muslimness in *Aureng-Zebe* is in stark contrast with the overt—and inaccurate—proclamations of God, Mahomet, and Jesus Christ in *Tamburlaine the Great.* Marlowe never claims any authority to speak about Islam accurately, however, this does not make his depiction less compelling. Each deity is a character, motivating Tamburlaine and his adversaries equally. God does not take sides, but Fortune does on Marlowe and Dryden's stages. God never interferes—and through his lack of interference, Tamburlaine is not damned to hell and Orcanes defeats the perjured sinner, Sigismond. The fire and brimstone visions of the Christian Bible—popularized by American Evangelicals—also appears in Marlowe's play; being consumed by an "empyreal" flame is a consistent theme. Tamburlaine burns villages to ash as a response to Zenocrate's death.

In *Part Two*, a trio of characters engage in an unrequited dialogue their respective gods in *Tamburlaine the Great*. Again, Tamburlaine straddles the fence between hero and villain, occupying the ill-defined, nebulous role of anti-hero; his brutality is unmasked at several points in the play while his love for Zenocrate acts as a justification for some of his violence. In this example, Tamburlaine burns copies of the "Turkish Alcoran" (Marlowe Part Two 5.1.172) and proceeds to ruminate on his relationship with God:

> In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet.
> My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,
> Slew all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,
> And yet I live untouched by Mahomet.
> There is a God full of revenging wrath,
> From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,

> Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey." (Marlowe Part Two 5.1.178-184)

This is such a deviation from Timur who ushered in a lot of intellectual and cultural development for the Islamic world (Britannica: *Timur*). This is a heavy-handed, last-ditch attempt to hammer Tamburlaine's cruelty—implying the cruelty of the larger Muslim population—in English minds. Marlowe's grasp of mythmaking and epic poetry creates a powerful aura around the phrase "scourge" of God, which is repeated throughout *Part Two.* The book-burning celebrates his victory over Orcanes and the Turks, emphasizing the importance of religion to the Turkish characters in the play.

Orcanes and Sigismond, the two central villains in *Part Two,* represent the Islamic and Christian worlds respectively. Orcanes is a predecessor to the Ottoman Empire as the King of Natolia. The Ottomans are fierce Muslim foes in Marlowe's time, hence he portrays Orcanes negatively as a devoutly religious and unhinged individual. In this excerpt, Orcanes and Sigismond exchange a series of oaths as a peace treaty:

> ORCANES. But, Sigismund, confirm it with an oath,
> And swear in sight of heaven and by thy Christ.
>
> SIGISMUND. By Him that made the world and saved my soul,
> The Son of God and issue of a maid,
> Sweet Jesus Christ, I solemnly protest
> And vow to keep this peace inviolable.
>
> ORCANES. By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,
> Whose holy Alcoran remains with us,
> Whose glorious body, when he left the world,

> Closed in a coffin, mounted up the air,
> And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof,
> I swear to keep this truce inviolable; (Marlowe Part Two 1.1.132-142)

Here, three distinct deities are mentioned: Mahomet, Jesus Christ, and God, who is shared by both men's faiths. Sigismond speaks of being saved, while Orcanes references Mecca. These are constructed as unique aspects of both religions respectively. Like with all other place-names, Marlowe lends authority to his portrayal of Muslim characters through this specific untranslated jargon. "Alcoran" is an exotic-sounding word, as are "Mecca" and "temple." This exoticization of non-English or pagan words resurfaces whenever Marlowe references places in Ortelius' atlas which uses names from antiquity. Contextually, both men are in accord, but they do not repeat each other's words exactly foreshadows a potential conflict. Sigismond uses "peace" while Orcanes "truce"; one "protest[s]" and "vow[s]" while the other "swear[s]." Nevertheless, again, Marlowe foreshadows this friction in a seemingly insignificant way similar to how he emphasizes the motif of the triple through alliteration.

The conflict does lead to a startlingly twist, where Sigismond is considered a perjured sinner for betraying Orcane. This creates a tension between a predominantly Christian audience and the gall of Marlowe to frame Sigismond's death as deserved. Then, Orcanes speaks directly to God: "If thou wilt prove thyself a perfect God" (Marlowe Part Two 2.2.56). Indeed, a few lines later the Turks have won the battle against the Hungarians. Part of this characterization reiterates the inferiority of certain Europeans compared to the English. The other part is to advance the tension between a righteous Muslim and the merciless nature of a Muslim ruler like Orcanes. Furthermore, Orcanes argues that "[i]f there be Christ, [the Turks] shall have victory" (Marlowe Part Two 2.2.64). There is no mediator, no "Mahomet," between Orcanes and *Sigismond's* God. This distinction between the Muslim and Christian God is heightened and muddied by the use of the pagan, Jove and Fortune; Marlowe uses deities from several religions and understands the significance of using them in different ways, unlike Dryden collapses pagan and Muslim gods. Marlowe proves that he understands the nuances between two very similar religions.

This subsection's title contains "the Alcoran" because it is a linguist error. "Alcoran" is a literal translation of *the* Quran as I grew up spelling it in South Asia; "al" translates to "the" in Arabic (Britannica: *Al*). "Al" is an article, apparent to the millions of diasporic South Asians who use the Arabic peninsula as a midpoint while flying to the subcontinent. Interestingly, Hindustani[8] does not contain a perfect translation of the article "the." A similar contemporary example is "chai tea," or a more nuanced, "chai latte," since South Asian chai implies the inclusion of milk. If the beverage did not contain milk, it would be referred to in terms of the absence of the ingredient. I am most intrigued by these linguistic slips because culture does not translate *literally*. While they are amusing to encounter four hundred years later, I also regard them as clues to understand how deeply ingrained these simple misconceptions of Asia and the subcontinent were the English perspective. Culture is transmuted rather than translated, leading to dishonest portrayals of foreignness. Renaissance English playwrights did not concern themselves with the success of such transfigurations.

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[8] Hindustani refers to the syncretic form of Hindi and Urdu, where both languages converge lexically.

Literary Lineage and Legacy

The literary lineage of Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great* is quite apparent in Dryden’s *Aureng-Zebe.* Moreover, it is interesting to go back a few more generations to the common ancestor of millions today: Genghis Khan (Khan). Other than a "literary" legacy as continued by Dryden, the legacy of Genghis transcends time and the early modern era. Genghis was one of the most terrifying conquerors and assumed the position of a role model for Timur and Aurangzeb. Claims to Genghis' legacy motivated non-Western rulers during the early modern period, including the Mughals and others in the subcontinent; the sustained use of "Khan" as a last name in Asia is only a tiny representation of Genghis' legacy. Not every person with the last name "Khan" is a chief or ruler today, but Genghis is permanently imprinted in our collective histories as the most successful of khans.

Legacy binds both texts inextricably. Dryden explicitly calls upon Marlowe—while only alluding to other Renaissance writers including Spenser and Shakespeare—during a conversation between Indamora and Melesinda. He describes Aureng-Zebe and Morat as “Tamerlain's Successors,” (Dryden 3.1.85-86) precisely their ambition as conquerors. Aureng-Zebe is Tamburlaine's ideal son, the perfect child of love and tyranny. Tamburlaine sought out immense and absolute loyalty from his advisors; similarly, the historical Aurangzeb murdered his family, Aureng-Zebe continues to be fiercely loyal to the Emperor and does not resist his imprisonment. Despite this perfect successor—on paper—Dryden's Aureng-Zebe would have been mocked by Marlowe's Tamburlaine for being so self-righteous and lost in love. Tamburlaine's love strengthens his empire, while Aureng-Zebe' s love is contested, questioned, and doubted by everyone. It is essential to recognize the significance of *Aureng-Zebe* as a spiritual successor to *Tamburlaine the Great*, as Dryden explicitly frames this link.

On *Aureng-Zebe*

The existence and proliferation (or lack thereof) of John Dryden's *Aureng-Zebe* is a three-hundred-year-old mystery waiting to be solved. Personally, my only interest in Dryden is his portrayal and misrepresentation of the South Asian subcontinent, through ineffective literary strategies. However, academics from the latter half of the 20th century valorize Dryden as the most prolific and influential 17th century English. The play was first performed in court on the eve of Marlowe's 83rd death anniversary (Dearing) and enjoyed a quiet revival during Clive of India's death, as *The Prince of Agra* (Dearing). That said, no more audiences need suffer a three-hour extravaganza of *Aureng-Zebe* to experience the lack of vivacity and excitement in the words. Sir Walter Scott, the noted philologist and scholar, compiled one of the first collected works of John Dryden in the 19th century. The Dearing edition of *Aureng-Zebe* was published in 1994 and contains few original notes, usually citing earlier Dryden scholars or Dryden's contemporaries. Vinton A. Dearing, a relatively prominent scholar of Dryden, spent over five decades compiling the works of John Dryden in twelve comprehensive tomes. After the 1960s, *Aureng-Zebe* hardly enters public consciousness, and Dryden's other works are deemed more relevant to his opus.

In the only scholarly-edition from the 20th century, Dearing references and flattens the differences between quarto and folio versions of *Aureng-Zebe*. Unfortunately, Dearing refrains from commenting on political motivations or any possible subtext on Dryden's part. The play is extensively dedicated[9] to the Earl of Mulgrave, a close supporter of Charles II and James II. As the foremost Restoration era poet and first Poet Laureate of England, Dryden's last *anything* should be culturally significant to the evolution of domestic English literature. In the context of subcontinental English literature, William Shakespeare has had a much more long-lasting and profound effect. Students across India learn and memorize snippets of Shakespeare's dramatic works. Furthermore, Shakespeare has influenced legions of subcontinental creatives[10]—his works are recreated and reproduced in uniquely subcontinental scenarios. Subtracted from their political and cultural contexts, filmmakers reappropriate Shakespeare's basic plots: twin mix-ups in *Twelfth Night* (*Angoor* (1982)), tragedies (*Maqbool* (2004)*, Omkara* (2006)*, Haider* (2014)) and love stories (*Ishaqzaade* (2012)). However, I must warn against undermining the implications of form and *Aureng-Zebe's* legacy as Dryden's last play in heroic couplet. This legacy as the last rhymed play supersedes any post-colonial or Orientalist import to scholars; they prefer to consider the work's formal intrigue rather than contextual.

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[9] The implications of and motivations for a 12-page dedication must be discussed elsewhere. Dearing contends *that Aureng-Zebe* was written in response to the ascension of James II and other current events. The Earl of Mulgrave served as Lord Chamberlain to Charles II from 1673 onwards.

Many articles discuss Dryden's use of satire and heroic couplet, rather than his treatment of the all-South Asian cast. If the title is to be believed, the play centers Aurangzeb, the eldest son and successor of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan—renowned for constructing the most iconic tomb in the subcontinent, the incrementally grimier Taj Mahal. The play features colorful dramatic personae, ranging from the old Emperor and Morat, Aurengzeb's primary rival, to Nourmahal, the Emperor's second wife, and the Emperor's enslaved courtier, Arimant. Finally, the most critical character of Indamora, a Kashmiri princess coveted by almost every character in the play. Arguably, Indamora functions as the spiritual center of the play rather than Aureng-Zebe, appearing with nearly every other character. However, Dryden chose to name the play after Aureng-Zebe, relegating Indamora with the other characters. There is no mention of her noble title as the "Captive Queene of Cassimere" in a subtitle, either. Lastly, the actors are listed alongside the characters, and it is quite interesting to see all the women played by other (presumably married) women. The actress who originated the role of Indamora also acted in a famous production of *Othello* as Desdemona (Dearing).

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[10] See *Shakespeare and Indian Cinemas* (2019) for a more nuanced look.

Notably, the names of several characters in Dryden's imagination stray from the modern standardized transliteration of Urdu and other subcontinental languages. Some names are blatant fictionalization. In Dearing's edition, there is no consistent use of modern transliteration. Hence, I would like to clarify a few key facts. Urdu is a blend of Hindi—the national[11] language of India—Farsi, and Arabic. The official language of Pakistan, Urdu, uses the Arabic script while sharing several words and overall grammatical structures with Hindi. Modern Hindi speakers use loanwords from several subcontinental languages, including Urdu; I can attest to this as a modern Hindi speaker. In the Mughal court, people conversed multilingually, using Farsi for formal correspondence and Hindustani,[12] informally. While early modern travelers like Thomas Coryate and Edward Terry could understand the distinctions between languages, Dryden was not as knowledgeable about this aspect of his subject matter. Even his predecessor Marlowe used an atlas to build the world of Tamburlaine's conquests. Dryden barely understands subcontinental geography with loose allusions to "Balasor" and "Bengale" (Dryden 2.1.400-401). As described in the Introduction, Dryden's lack of experience with the subcontinent is significant when considering etymology, as many practitioners of close reading would encourage. Dryden and I do not share a linguistic background besides English—three hundred years apart. Therefore, his knowledge of the Romance languages plays a much more critical role in creating his entirely fictional characters like Indamora and Melesinda. I will abide by Dryden's imagined world and retain the original 17th-century spellings when discussing the play. However, when addressing historical facts, I will use modern spellings, such as "Shah" instead of "Chah" or "Asif" instead of "Asaph."

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[11] As of May 2022, there is an ongoing debate among Indian film elite, regarding the classification and use of Hindi as a national language.

[12] See footnote 8.

In this section, I will be focusing on two overarching aspects of *Aureng-Zebe*: form, and the constant, sometimes inconsistent, doubling. While both aspects are incredibly linked, I delve into the themes and characterizations emphasized through doubling in the first half and the function of form and structure in the second half. The unique figuration of Indamora as the soul of the text connects the two threads. She is what ultimately drew me to Dryden's *Aureng*-Zebe. Her name and its meaning, which Dearing suggests being "lover of India" or a "beloved of India," confused the Hindi-speaker in me (Dearing 161). "Inda" was a suspicious but plausible sub-in for India and the Indies. This is unlikely since the use of the prefix “Indies” appears in more than one context: America and Asia. “Inda” is not a prefix that suggests India by our modern standards.[13] All to say, the “ind” is more important than the “a.” However, "mora" or just "mor" is a peacock in Sanskrit. Then, the Romance language speaker in me probed a startlingly different possibility: splitting her name as "Ind" and "amora," for which the latter serves as the root for "love" in Latin.

Here, we can imagine Dryden cleverly penning an unsubtle subtextual clue about the characterization and figure of Indamora. By re-framing Indamora as the protagonist, *Aureng-Zebe* is transformed into a metaphor of early English colonial motivations and prospects in the South Asian subcontinent. Indamora shares her name with the “sovereign of the Hindu kingdom of Narsinga” (Gil 209)[14] in William Davenant’s 1635 masque *Temple of Love.* The latter is played by Henrietta Maria, the consort of Charles I. Curiously, Dryden chose such an unusual name, linked to a pre-Restoration monarch and courtly fancies; Indamora in his play is not necessarily Hindu. Dryden's stylistic choices and his thematic impulses allow me to frame Indamora in such a light. The role of a name like Indamora suggests an attempt at mythmaking on Dryden's part. She conveniently becomes a reassertion of "love" for the South Asian subcontinent and the object of desire for a multitude of characters. Aureng-Zebe, the Emperor, Morat all want her; Melesinda befriends her; Nourmahal wants to be her. Even Arimant, the enslaved clerk, falls in love with Indamora despite their significant age and class differences.

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[13] There are no entries in the Oxford English Dictionary for “inda.”

[14] From Chapter 13: “Playing an Indian Queen” by Amrita Sen

Form and Formulae

Aureng-Zebe is a standard five-Act tragedy for the masses with off-stage fighting, torrid love affairs, and Oriental mystique; any political subtext that Dearing implies is disguised in layers of pomp, circumstance, and uninspired, repetitive rhymes. Act IV has two scenes while all other Acts have only one scene; in total, there are six scenes, a doubling (of three). Reflecting on the play's structure, there is no reason why most Acts are only one scene long. Characters enter and exit throughout the scene—arguably, breaking the Acts into shorter scenes would give the audience some contextual change through the set design and a much-needed break between several lengthy, overindulgent lines of rhyming dialogue. As a reader, *Aureng-Zebe* requires some effort to synthesize and understand. Dryden does very little to surprise or delight with comic relief or exceptionally clever wordplay.[15] Instead, words are wasted in *Aureng-Zebe.* It is still unclear why a man who never traveled to India or invested in the East India Company chose to write presumably about James II, veiled in subcontinental politics.

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[15] Ultimately, this reduces to entertainment-value and the writers' engagement with their audiences. While Tywin Lannister from *Game of Thrones* is a leaf out of Tamburlaine's book, few characters are as one-note as Aureng-Zebe. Moreover, the lack of comedy makes *Aureng-Zebe* unbearably long and arduous to read.

Dryden relies on a rhyming propulsive momentum to advance several aspects of the play, most notably the couplet. Dryden popularized the heroic couplet during the Restoration; therefore, as his last rhymed play, *Aureng-Zebe* is historically significant and heavily reliant on the form's established prestige. The heroic couplet generally employs an iambic meter; however, Dryden is not overly concerned with the syllabic distribution in *Aureng-Zebe*. A particularly clunky example of using an iambic pattern is at the start of Act IV, “Death, in it self, is nothing; but we fear / [t]o be we know not what, we know not where” (Dryden 4.1.3-4). I recommend reading those lines out. They make less sense when spoken than when seen on paper. There are a few outrageous instances of this prioritization of meter and form over comprehension in the play. In the 1994 edition, Dearing also makes an inexplicable formatting choice to indent these “exceptional” triplets. Sir Walter Scott and other earlier editions do not share this distinctive formal choice. The first instance appears in Act I, continuing throughout the play, and is as follows:

> ARIM. Commanded his victorious Army back;
> Which, left to
> march as swiftly as
> they may,
> Himself comes first,
> and will be here
> this day,
> Before a close-
> form'd Siege shut
> up his way. (Dryden 1.1.207-210)

I have added the standard notation of triplets in rhymed verse to the left based on other poems and plays I have encountered from the era. Dearing's formatting decision destabilizes the reader at odd points, forcing a double take over the lines. Dearing does not address this particular choice even once in the notes. These three lines share the same end rhyme, creating an impression of incompleteness to the couplet form. Dryden appears to end these stanzas prematurely and unintentionally. Dearing makes this indentation only at certain moments, where characters are in the middle of a longer speech. Several characters have one-line dialogues, usually questions, without any internal rhymes.

Moreover, Dryden abandons rhyme occasionally to demonstrate conflict or disagreement through form. In Act IV, Dryden ends lines without rhymes during conversations when Morat, Aureng-Zebe's younger brother, asks his wife, Melesinda to appeal his cause with Indamora (Dryden 4.1.250-267). Here Dryden uses the ubiquitous sight rhyme between "move" and "love" (Dryden 4.1.266-267). Often, the words are conjugated in the past tense—"mov'd" and "lov'd"—hence passing as a slant rhyme. According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Original Shakespearean Prononciation,* both words have sounded essentially the same for four hundred years. 17th century English speakers pronounced move with an extended “oo” sound (“Mov·e”) and the open “o” sound for love (“Lov·e”). In Act IV, Scene 2, this exact slant rhyme is used repeatedly over a hundred lines of dialogue between Indamora and Aureng-Zebe (Dryden 4.2.50-140). When performed, I expect this rhyme to be particularly grating to the ear, interrupting the emotional intensity of these exchanges between two lovers.

Finally, Dryden begins to rhyme their lines as couplets to demonstrate reconciliation and intimacy when the lovers reunite. While I do not imagine these exchanges to be fast paced, necessarily, they are a good example of stichomythia occurring between characters.

> AUR. Yet then lov'd most.
> IND. You would but half be blest! (Dryden 5.1.600-601)

Interestingly, rivals Aureng-Zebe and Morat also reach a rhymed consensus when discussing Indamora in Act IV:

> AUR. And whence had she the pow'r to work your change?
> MOR. The pow'r of Beauty is not new or strange. (Dryden 4.1.212-13)

The considerable implications of Aureng-Zebe and Morat aligning even slightly are better addressed when discussing the characters as foils. However, formally, Dryden uses his literary devices in seemingly inconsistent ways. While Aureng-Zebe and his brother are not in accord, Dryden diminishes the tension by rhyming their lines together as a couplet. Act IV serves as the rising action to the swift climax in the next scene, and at the start of Act V. As mortal enemies fighting for the throne *and* Indamora, even a trivial consensus like this has fatal implications for both men.

Similarly, Dryden repeats key words in two characters' dialogue in a call-and-response manner. This device creates a purpose for specific couplets in the context of the action. For example, in Act V, Indamora confronts Morat, saying, "Your crimes; and your own Conscience be your Hell" to which he replies, "What bus'ness has my Conscience with a Crown?" (Dryden 5.1.49-50). "Own" and "Crown" are incredibly similar words visually yet transformed when spoken. To rhyme "own" with "crown" requires an unnatural manipulation of sounds to be effective; the word "ow"-"n" is gibberish and "crone" is famously used in this period. A "crown" is not a "crone" and these sight rhymes add to the destabilization. Morat actively denies this connection between self and sovereign, but Dryden uses a sight rhyme for the actor's benefit. Sight rhymes have a tendency to cause some instability while performed or when first read out loud; this is a persistent issue and benefits very few in the audience or on stage. Morat is framed as the antagonist due to his brutal and ruthless nature: he is not worthy of the Crown while a similarly criminal brother, Aureng-Zebe, is. This is one of the more powerful examples of a sight rhyme in the play.

Dryden exploits this visual similarity of English words to the extreme: rhyming words like "bloud" and "shou'd" (Dryden 4.1.252-253) and, of course, "move" with "love" (Dryden 4.1.266-267). Rhyming "move" with "love" appears no less than six times throughout the play and is primarily concentrated during the aforementioned scene between Indamora and Aureng-Zebe. To associate motion or movement with love is a weak but passable claim. First, the simple connotation of *movement* with lovemaking could be acknowledged and how movement is sexualized through *love.* As both characters would have been played by gender-appropriate actors, “movement” is an interesting cloaking literary mode to obscure sex.[16] Hence, this could be one way to interpret the heated debate between Aureng-Zebe and Indamora. Since neither character *moves* distances, they move figuratively—truly, Indamora *moves* the Emperor and Morat in favor of Aureng-Zebe. Her true love shields Aureng-Zebe from his demise more than once, and in turn, Aureng-Zebe repays her protection with malice and distrust. Dryden emphatically avoids rhyming until the characters reach consensus and reconcile; this happens three times in the play, the most dramatic of break-ups happening in Act V. The tempestuous relationship with Indamora aside, Aureng-Zebe is a remarkably static character. While Morat and the Emperor atone for their sins by the end of the play, Aureng-Zebe is a one-tone, “good” victor. He is no tragic Shakespearean figure with shades of grey and layers to his victory. Formally, there is no unpredictability or volatility in the heroic couplet; when divergences occur, either as triplets or as unrhymed verse, they still lack intentionality in *Aureng-Zebe.*

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[16] The most sexually provocative scene is when Nourmahal—the Emperor's wife and Aureng-Zebe's stepmother—attempts to seduce Aureng-Zebe. There is no sex but an implication of surrender. It is a deus ex machina hidden as a shocking revelation as her unfailing love for Aureng-Zebe prevents Nourmahal from poisoning her stepson.

Dryden uses internal doubling as another rhythmic pattern by repeating words across or within lines. This device is not isolated to specific characters or themes. Some examples include "prudent: prudence" (Dryden 1.1.223), "Virtue, virtue" (Dryden 2.1.262), "divide? / Divides" (Dryden 3.1.361-362), "long, long" (Dryden 4.2.15), and "base, / Base" (Dryden 4.2.178-179). Bluntly, I am not impressed with this formal device. By being boring and unnecessarily repetitive—creating a lengthened sense of time, rather than the propulsive forward movement intended by Dryden—this choice is counterproductive and ineffective. In an especially emotionally charged moment, Aureng-Zebe says, "That, that's my grief, that I can onely grieve" (Dryden 4.2.187). The repetition of “that” and “grief” is meant to sound emphatic and dramatic. However, it just sounds sloppy when read out loud; while tripling in *Tamburlaine the Great* ties the play together, lexical repetition in *Aureng-Zebe* is consistently inconsistent and ineffective. These haphazard formal choices undermine the intentionality found in poetry and literature. The line underserves its dramatic and tragic importance. Dryden wanted this device to be meaningful and pointed, yet it appears lazy. Legacy plays an important role in Dryden’s vision for *Aureng-Zebe*—I will discuss this consideration more in the subsection about doubling. The most significant implication for this literary device is in Dryden's obsession with doubles. However, Dryden's last rhymed play falls flat on its face when he uses internal doubling, awkward slant and sight rhymes, and a standard five-Act structure.

Double, Double Foil and Trouble

The first consequential mirroring is in the first and last Acts in simplistic terms. A high-ranking general of the court, Solyman, foreshadows Aureng-Zebe's benefits with victory and the same ridiculous sight rhyme between “move” and “love”:

> SOLYM. Two vast Rewards may well his courage move,
> A Parent's Blessing, and a Mistris Love.
> If he succeed, his recompence, we hear,
> Must be the Captive Queen of Cassimere. (Dryden 1.1.110-114)

And, on cue, the closing lines of the play grant Aureng-Zebe these exact rewards:

> EMP. Receive the Mistris you so long have serv'd;
> Receive the Crown your Loialty preserv'd. (Dryden 5.1.672-673)

Dryden wraps the play up with a comely thesis of sorts, foreshadowing Aureng-Zebe's triumph early on and mimicking the essence in the last lines. However, technically, Aureng-Zebe “receives” three rewards in Act V: "A Parent's Blessing, and a Mistris Love," and "the Crown.” The double repetition of the word “receive” is also a strange decision in an ending couplet; as per a Shakespearean sonnet, the ending couplet holds a lot more significance to the overall impression. If the lines are already rhymed, why begin the lines with the same word? In the first half of the play, Aureng-Zebe is motivated by filial duty to protect his father's realm rather than inherit the Crown. On a historical side note, Aurangzeb slaughtered all those in line to inherit, including his brothers, and imprisoned his father to rule. Dryden would have been aware of these circumstances: his play *Amboyna* about the 1620s Anglo-Dutch conflicts had been written in 1673 and to a relative standard of historical accuracy. Hence, he was able to situate and reference a fifty-year old event.[17] Aurangzeb was the sitting emperor of the Mughals during while Dryden wrote *Aureng-Zebe*. It is doubtful that Dryden, a well-connected and capable writer, unintentionally mangled history. Therefore, this instance is the most notable act of doubling—of prizes won by Aureng-Zebe—because it is the audience's last impression of the play.[18]

There are too many "doubled" or "foiled" pairs in *Aureng-Zebe* to address in totality: characters, dialogue, the 'couplet' are all examples. Therefore, it is crucial to delineate the two most notable examples of characters as foils. The first, ostensibly, must be Aureng-Zebe and Morat, embittered brothers in battle. The second is Indamora and Melesinda. Moreover, the lovely symmetry of comparing lovers is not lost on me, and the relationship between these two sets of foils is helpful in understanding the play thematically. Notably, Indamora stands out as a singular figure in all chaos of war, treason, and incest in a repetitive pattern of doubles. As a foreigner, she is nearly immune to all these plot devices yet is intimately involved in the lives of the Mughal court. She is imprisoned yet has the agency to affect significant change. Compared to Helen of Troy by Nourmahal, Indamora's beauty and virtue motivate every man in the play. However, Indamora's due diligence is only done by being doubled and "foiled" with the other women. Indamora and Melesinda's alliance challenges Indamora and Nourmahal's rivalry. Indamora's thematic expressions are the most successful in the entire play.

To begin, Dryden makes several exceptions to his acts of doubling with the portrayal of Morat. Primarily, while distinguishing between Aureng-Zebe and Morat, Arimant emphasizes that "*Morat* was thrice repuls'd, but thrice by [Aureng-Zebe]" (Dryden 2.1.8). Then, Aureng-

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[17] The equivalent of which would be if a person born in the year 2000 were to write about the 1993 World Trade Center bombing—an act of violence eclipsed by 9/11 in American history. Dryden lived through the English Civil Wars.

[18] *Tamburlaine the Great* also rushes the ending and is quite unsatisfactory to see such an incredible character just die from illness.

Zebe confronts Indamora when he witnesses the apparent attraction between Morat and Indamora. Aureng-Zebe compares himself with Morat, revealing some of his worldly insecurities: “Morat's the name your heart leaps up to meet, / While Aureng-Zebe lies dying at your feet” (Dryden 4.2.42-43). Unlike Tamburlaine, the use of third person weakens Aureng-Zebe’s position. As the audience, we know that Indamora is hopelessly in love with Aureng-Zebe alone. However, for the sake of dramatic irony and tension, Dryden chooses to emphasize Aureng-Zebe’s singular flaw: doubt. Also, Aureng-Zebe repeats Morat's name in groups of three rather than two: “Morat, Morat, Morat … Morat: Morat … Morat” (Dryden 4.2.46-47). In both examples, Dryden writes against his chosen form and rhythm. Morat is characterized in threes rather than twos and interferes with the potency of the double. Morat is weakened by his association with threes rather than strengthened; in part, this is due to Druyen's confusing and inconsistent stanzaic form. Another character who is weakened through in self-referential third person is Callapine. As aforementioned, Aureng-Zebe and Morat fight over Indamora as well. However, they are aligned in their beliefs rather than opposed. They both love Indamora and find her exceptionally beautiful, but Morat's love is selfish and motivated by greed. The triplet is longer than the couplet; it also emphasizes the lack of a complementary partner (as Dearing’s formatting choice demonstrates). Morat functions as the third-wheel to Aureng-Zebe and Indamora. In this interpretation, the triple becomes a sign of greed and is consistent with much of Marlowe’s emphasis on opulence and overindulgence in *Tamburlaine the Great.* As the emperor of the “threefold world,” Tamburlaine’s triples are larger than life: heaven, earth, and, dramatically, hell! Aureng-Zebe is self-sacrificing in his love and even reluctantly accepts the relationship between the Emperor and Indamora. This is Aureng-Zebe's perception of events during his imprisonment.

From Melesinda’s first appearance, Indamora becomes her confidant and friend despite their allegiance to their lovers. Their names are also remarkably similar. According to Dearing, Melesinda could come from Melisendra “said in *Don Quixote* (Part II, ch. 26) to have been a daughter of Charlemagne” (Dearing 161). However, the insertion of “(s)ind” reshapes the name’s geography; “ind” is inscribed into the very essence of both women. “Sindh” refers to the Persian name for the Indus River. However, I doubt Dryden would have made that connection to Farsi intentionally. Indamora characterizes their relationship as affectionate and intimate: "Though our Lords hate, me-thinks we two may love” (Dryden 3.1.100). Dryden allows agency on the part of the women to coalesce as Aureng-Zebe and Morat’s destinies diverge. Melesinda and Indamora comfort each other as they contend with their lovers’ adversarial fates.

> IND. We're both Love's Captives, but with Fate so cross,
> One must be happy by the others loss.
> *Morat,* or *Aureng-Zebe* must fall this day.
> MEL. Too truly *Tamerlain’s* Successors they,
> Each thinks a World too little for his sway. (Dryden 3.1.82-86)

Both women are grappling with the inevitable compromise: either their lover fails and their friend suffers, or their friend lives and their lover dies. Melesinda suffers in both cases since she has been abandoned by Morat and cannot live if he were dead. Also, this scene marks the only explicit mention of “Tamerlain’s Successors” and their lovers’ shared blind ambition. In a later act of shared rhyming, Indamora and Melesinda share a sense of affection and care for each other:

> MEL. Give sorrow vent, and let the sluces go.
> IND. My tears are all congeal'd, and will not flow.
> MEL. Have comfort; yield not to the blows of Fate.

IND. Comfort, like Cordials after death, comes late. (Dryden 5.1.194-197)

With the soft ‘s’ and ‘c’ sounds, there is something naturally feminine to the language in this excerpt. The gentleness of each word is vital to recognize. The repetition of comfort in Melesinda and Indamora's last lines, the echoing of sounds and semantics reflects their commonality and accord. Indamora cannot cry any more: her "tears are all congeal'd." Alas, tears do not congeal, instead blood congeals, invoking some type of deep spiritual or emotional wound when Morat and Aureng-Zebe battle in Act 5. Cruelly, Morat divorces himself from Melesinda in order to win Indamora. A grander metaphor can be construed as the complete renouncement of other pursuits in favor of commerce and capital in the South Asian subcontinent. Historically, East India Company voyages were long and arduous with minimal reward during Dryden's lifetime; the Company had a few factories, but they were also contending with the succession of Aurangzeb. Conversely, Aureng-Zebe wins Indamora’s favor by simply trusting her authenticity and love for him. These relationships are starkly opposed as Morat is cruel and resolute, while Aureng-Zebe's most apparent flaw is his doubt. In a show of resoluteness and stubbornness, Morat divorces Melesinda to pursue Indamora. These opposing characteristics are very intriguing yet underused throughout the play.

The most unlikely and disturbing act of doubling is between Aureng-Zebe and his father, the Emperor, in their shared pursuit of Indamora. Aureng-Zebe is intensely loyal to his father, the Emperor. This competition for Indamora is undermined by the historical existence of the Taj Mahal, a monument to Shah Jahan’s consort, Mumtaz. However, Dryden is keen to emphasize this conflict throughout the play, starting in Act I. The Omrahs, or lord-generals of the Emperor's court, discuss the state of the rebellion and describe the Emperor's sons in detail. While the others are “Rebels and Parricides” (Dryden 1.1.37), Aureng-Zebe is “a Loyal Son: / His Father's

Cause upon his Sword he wears" (Dryden 1.1.107-108). Unfortunately, this fiercely loyal and protective son is transformed into a partial cuckold by his father. Aureng-Zebe is willing to sacrifice his life for his father's empire, yet the Emperor finds his temperament and loyalty distasteful. According to the Emperor, "[c]hildren [are] (the blind effect of Love and Chance, / [fo]rm'd by their sportive Parents ignorance)" (Dryden 3.1.209-210). Dryden uses another set of doubles here: "Love and Chance" and "Parents." Since the Emperor's first wife and Aureng-Zebe's mother is never explicitly mentioned, "Parents" can also imply the influence of Nourmahal—which further complicates the Emperess' love for Aureng-Zebe. Ultimately, the Emperor values Indamora's favor more than he does Aureng-Zebe. Both men proclaim their inner duality yet share the role of "Lover." The Emperor insists he is "a Father, but a Lover too" (Dryden 1.1.289), while Aureng-Zebe aspires for "a Son's and Lover's praise" (Dryden 1.1.466). Even though "Lover" may be a secondary relationship in these excerpts, both men emphatically profess their love for Indamora in the first Act. These assertions are made in the first Act and cause a rift in an already precarious, volatile relationship. This convoluted and incestuous "sharing" of lovers—Dryden does not venture into the sexual yet stresses the romantic interests of father and son[19]—problematizes the comparison between Aureng-Zebe and the Emperor.

Furthermore, Aureng-Zebe and the Emperor are acutely aware of each other's infatuation. Aureng-Zebe laments the change in Indamora's affections, unaware it is at the insistence of the Emperor: "I came to grieve a Father's heart estrang'd; / But little thought to find a Mistris chang'd" (Dryden 1.1.388-389). Aureng-Zebe believes the change is caused by an internal shift in Indamora's perception rather than an external factor. Indamora refuses to speak any further, and with this, Dryden is able to amplify the dramatic irony. The tragic elements of *Aureng-Zebe* rely on this misunderstanding between Aureng-Zebe and Indamora and the litany of Indamora's suitors. Even so, Aureng-Zebe hopes to "emulate [his] great Original" before "invok[ing] in Arms, / [t]he pow'r of Love, and Indamora's Charms" (Dryden 2.1.407-409). In response, the Emperor crowns Morat to spite Aureng-Zebe and his "Mistris, his thy Pow'r" (Dryden 2.1.500-501). Even after the Emperor's betrayal, Aureng-Zebe asserts, "[The Emperor's] Life and Glory are [his] onely end" (Dryden 3.1.219). There is something incredibly tragic and shocking about Aureng-Zebe's loyalty. The disturbing nature of this trio is well-developed and one of the more successful aspects of Dryden's tragedy. Even here, Indamora is still configured at the heart of this conflict.

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[19] Another similarity shared between father and son is Nourmahal's affection. This evolves throughout her life, yet uncomfortably reaffirmed during the seduction of her stepson.

Indamora is hidden within the multitude of doubles: Aureng-Zebe and Morat, Emperor and Aureng-Zebe, Melesinda and Indamora, Nourmahal and Indamora. The former—Aureng-Zebe, Morat, and the Emperor—are infatuated with her. When including the pairs of lovers or potential love interests, Indamora gets further buried beneath layers of lovers: Aureng-Zebe, Emperor, Arimant, Morat, and Melesinda, all of whom proclaim their love or appreciation for Indamora. Nourmahal is the only significant character who thinks of Indamora solely as competition for Aureng-Zebe's heart. However, just as easily, Indamora is compared to Nourmahal and becomes the motivation for all the men in the play. Indamora's bountiful existence in the play is singular even as she is inscribed in these interpersonal relationships. Aureng-Zebe does not attract as many suitors, neither does he fully entrust himself in Indamora's love until the very end; he does not believe she is genuine until she is rendered unavailable to all men but himself.

Indamora should be read as India and the conquest of the South Asian subcontinent in these scaffolded layers of meaning. As "the Captive Queen of *Cassimere*" (Dryden 1.1.113), Indamora already represents the contested land of Kashmir which sits at the heart of modern subcontinental politics, too. Kashmir centralizes the friction between religions—Hindus and Muslims—and commercial interests, similar to how the South Asian subcontinent was characterized in 17th-century terms. While this is essentially an anachronistic observation, the combining of religions is something Dryden does in *Aureng-Zebe* whether intentional or not; like Marlowe, Dryden uses the pagan Jove and Fortune as figures while occasionally acknowledging the Muslim background of the Mughal Empire.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have been arguing about the efficacy of Dryden and Marlowe's representation. However, I am simultaneously implying the existence of an emotional affect in both texts: Marlowe who marvels, and Dryden who disgusts. Conveniently, the affective response is occurring through my interpretation of their translations, rather than any overt literary moves on the parts of the writers. Marlowe, for example, writes a provocative character who threatens to feed rotten victuals to his captives. Nevertheless, I cannot look away from the existence and story of this character, Tamburlaine. The words leap off the page and shock the audience in *Tamburlaine the Great*. It is an incredibly fascinating insight to how Marlowe produces us—the barbaric, the other, the native. Moreover, Aureng-Zebe is a noble prince, yet I do not believe in Dryden's version of this historical figure. The gut-reaction is one I would instead address than ignore, as it stems from my own experience as a South Asian woman. The muddling of Islam and other South Asian religions also influence how I react to the exclamations and religion-ridden monologues of these protagonists. Ruminating on how both playwrights couple Islam with neo-classical, pagan, idolatrous allusions, I am struck by their ignorance and their inaccurate translations. I wonder how after dozens of Crusades there still existed this mystical and fictious version of Islam.

I understand that "effective" is a rather broad term, implying a series of nuanced interpretations of authorial purpose, formal choices, characterization and cast. All the elements in a play contribute to the net efficacy of the playwright's message and intention. What I expect from these two Renaissance playwrights is to feel emotionally moved by their characters. I expect everything an early modern audience would want from a tragedy: exciting battle-sequences, intriguing personalities, plenty of soliloquy, and a voyeuristiasc love story. A tragedy should not disappoint, and I should feel empowered to throw tomatoes if it does. While Marlowe immediately 'conquered' my attention and respect, Dryden seemed to do the opposite quickly. Obviously, I am only one reader among billions: however, the lack of engagement with *Aureng-Zebe*'s content challenges John Dryden's legacy. I am wholly underwhelmed by Dryden's one-dimensional characterization and formal blandness. As his last rhymed play, I expected more from the first Poet Laureate of England. By limiting my textual choices to the 17th century, I gained the chance to study early perceptions of South Asia in the English imagination. I never expected the play with most explicitly South Asian topic—*Aureng-Zebe*—to be such a disappointment. I suppose one can argue that my love for Shakespeare projects unrealistic expectations on the English stage.

Speaking of performances, the most recent production of *Tamburlaine the Great* was by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2018, featuring a Black Tamburlaine. While this portrayal is compelling, I wonder when we will see an Asian or Central Asian Tamburlaine on stage. I also wonder about the ethics of representation in *Tamburlaine the Great* and how Marlowe's four-hundred-year-old words could subvert modern stereotypes of Asian emasculation. Should there be a need for a bloodthirsty, merciless tyrant to counter the depiction of Asian men in the media—I do not think so. Furthermore, I am amazed that the South Asian subcontinent has all but forgotten such an indelible impression of Asian "scourge" in the English imagination. I am less surprised that *Aureng-Zebe* has found a recent home in any modern theatre. People have all but forgotten about this odd instance of the early colonizing dreams of John Dryden and his misappropriation of history.

I want to end where Marlowe might have started: by looking at Abraham Ortelius' map.

I am conflicted about my experiences reading both plays, because it is an uncomfortable insight to early English portrayals of the foreign, i.e., me. This reflection of an Orientalist framework onto my experiences partly functions as a sense of double consciousness and an intrusive, falsified image of my reality. *I* know that Aurangzeb murder his siblings, imprisoned his father, reinstated the infamous “infidel” tax, persecuted non-Muslims: all pack and parcel of any autocratic ruler. Aurangzeb also held off the East India Company’s expansions until his death; there are plenty of speculative articles about what might have happened if he had driven them out instead. However, the sliminess of reading Aureng-Zebe, a man imagined by Dryden, has also biased my perspective and interpretation in this essay. I have read *Aureng-Zebe* twice now, thoroughly, and once while compiling my notes; I still felt underwhelmed and disappointed after every read. Ortelius’ map forced me to look at what kind of knowledge had been accumulated about the Orient during this period. Much of what occurred before the East India Company has been recorded by other white Orientalists of the colonial era. That is to say, generation by generation, the colonial subject loses their collective history. Our best source becomes the ship log, the offhand colonial report,[20] proximity to major port or rail line. Our monuments are transformed into reminders that our ancestors once lived in the vicinity. My map will always be different from Ortelius and include locations he never dreamed of, inaccurately projected from memory.

Tracing the rivers on from the coast of the Indian Ocean, I located my paternal hometown on *Asiae Nova Descriptio*—the one I carry with me and that has carried you through these pages: Chinnamanthur.

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[20] Such as the *Report Of The First Indian Industrial Conference (1905)* in which my great-great paternal grandfather is mentioned. He went to Japan, I will go to North Macedonia.

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