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ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9512-0926>

Hopkins Lisa
(Sheffield, UK)

On the Edge: Christopher Marlowe's comments on Ukraine

Гопкінс Ліза. На межі: коментарі Крістофера Марло про Україну.

У цьому есе розглядаються три шляхи, якими п'єси Марло підводять нас до суверенітету й державності сучасної України: зображення його найвідомішого героя Тамерлана Великого; згадки про річку Дон; і те, як постановка «Дідони, цариці Карфагена» у Zooт пропонує нам потенційну паралель між троянцями та українцями. Тамерлан – скіф, але також і татарин; перетин цих двох ідентичностей дозволяє уявити його як поважного українця і допомагає нам зрозуміти наслідки російського пограбування скіфських артефактів. Геродот – головне класичне джерело для розуміння Скіфії – визначає річку Дон як її кордон; за часів Марло Дон вважався лінією розмежування між Європою та Азією, як в «Едварді II», де королева Ізабелла каже серу Джону з Ено, що вона піде з ним «навіть до самого краю / Європи, або до берегів Танаїсу». Подібно до того, як Україна стала лінією фронту у війні за європейську цивілізацію, так і для королеви Ізабелли річка Дон була ключовим маркером Європи. І зрештою, у фільмі «Дідона, цариця Карфагенська» (*The Show Must Go Online*) усі троянські персонажі спочатку одягнені у відтінки помаранчевого й охристого кольорів, але згодом, коли прибувають до Карфагену, вони перевдягаються у синє. Еней, як і всі інші, одягає синю накидку, але під нею все ще видно його оригінальне охристе вбрання, і воно є жовтішим за інші. І хоча це, очевидно, не було задумано під час першої трансляції вистави у 2021 році, сьогодні створюється враження, що Еней розповідає історію Трої, вдягнувшись у кольори України.

Ключові слова: *Enjambment*, скіфи, татари, Лукан, Ахілл.

Of course Marlowe does not literally comment on Ukraine (the name is not found on *Early English Books Online* before 1655). He was however extremely interested in travel and atlases and may possibly have known Anthony Marlowe, agent for the Muscovy Company, who was based in Deptford, where Marlowe died.¹ In this essay I draw attention to three ways in which Marlowe's plays speak to the sovereignty and nationhood of modern-day Ukraine: his representation of his most famous hero, Tamburlaine the Great; his references to the River Don; and the way in which a Zoom production of *Dido, Queen of Carthage* lends itself to the perception of a potential parallel between Trojans and Ukrainians.

Tamburlaine the Great has two identities, one ancient and one modern: he is a Scythian, but he is also a Tartarian. I want to argue that the intersection of the two makes it possible to understand him as an honorary Ukrainian, and helps us to see the implications of Russian troops' determined looting of Scythian artefacts from Ukrainian museums.² First, though, I want to consider some more general aspects of the representation of Tamburlaine. When Marlowe turned to the story of the historical Timür, he found him defined by one attribute for which he is often still remembered: he was Timür the Lamé. Marlowe jettisons the lameness and focuses instead on making his hero Tamburlaine *the Great*. In what does that greatness consist, and how great is it really? I shall suggest that while Tamburlaine is indeed great in one sense, not least by being connected with Julius Caesar, he is less so in another, because his apparently relentless march of invasion is revealed as not only aimless but also temporary. In this Marlowe's greatest hero is betrayed by Marlowe's greatest

¹ It has sometimes been suggested that Anthony Marlowe was related to Christopher, but Charles Nicholl shows that this is unlikely to have been so (*The Reckoning*, rev. ed. [London: Vintage, 2002], p. 441). We catch a brief glimpse of Anthony Marlowe in 1591 giving aid to a fellow-traveller to Turkey who had overindulged in the local raki and recorded that 'with aqua vita (which they caule rachie) I emongest the rest became drunke, and so sicke that, had not Anthony Marlo put his finger in my throat and caused me to cast, I had died that night most assuredly'. Efterpi Mitsi, Greece in Early English Travel Writing, 1596-1682 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 50.

² On Russian looting of Scythian treasures from Ukraine's museums see Matthew Campbell, 'Culture war: Russia's raids on Ukraine's art treasures', *The Sunday Times* 5 February 2023, 18.

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invention, the ‘mighty line’ of five unrhymed iambic feet which both creates and conditions his characters.

Tamburlaine the Big

It is instructive to compare Marlowe’s representation of Tamburlaine with that of another great man, Julius Caesar, because there are similarities in his approach to the two. In Book One of his epic *Pharsalia*, the Roman poet Lucan explains that Caesar, returning to Italy after ten years away, surprised those who had not seen him since he left: ‘Nec, qualem meminere, vident: maiorque ferusque / Mentibus occurrit’.³ In his translation of this, entitled *Lucan’s First Book*, Marlowe renders this as ‘much changed, looking wild and big’.⁴ Caesar’s appearance is not the only thing to be much changed, because Marlowe’s translation introduces some important new emphases not present in the original. In the first place, Marlowe’s Caesar has definitely altered in appearance whereas Lucan’s has only possibly done so. ‘Nec, qualem meminere, vident’ could be loosely translated as ‘Nor did they see him as they remembered him’: the agency belongs to those who look at him, with the potential implication that it is their memories and/or their perceptions that are at fault, and the concomitant suggestion that the real difference is how Caesar affects them psychologically now that he is a threatening quasi-invader rather than the much less famous and distinguished figure of ten years previously. This Caesar could simply loom larger; that would be a credible explanation of why ‘maiorque ferusque / Mentibus occurrit’. Moreover, ‘big’ is a distinctly idiosyncratic rendering of ‘maiorque’. Its literal meaning is certainly ‘greater’, but if for instance we take a historical figure such as Agrippina Maior, we do not suppose that she was called that because she was *bigger* than her daughter Agrippina Minor; we normally translate her as ‘Agrippina the Elder’. We might also wonder how Caesar could have got bigger: he has certainly not grown in height, since he was already an adult when he left Rome, and though he could

³ M. Annaeus Lucanus, *Pharsalia*, edited by Carolus Hermannus Weise, Book 1, ll. 479–80.
Online: M. Annaeus Lucanus, *Pharsalia*, book 1, line 396 (tufts.edu)

⁴ Christopher Marlowe, *The Collected Poems of Christopher Marlowe*, edited by Patrick Cheney and Brian J. Striar (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2006), l. 475.

conceivably have gained bulk, it doesn't seem very likely given that he has spent ten years campaigning.

It is well established that Marlowe could make some surprising mistakes when translating from Latin,⁵ but I suspect that in this instance one reason Marlowe wants the word 'big' is that it enables him to tap into a specific cultural discourse about Romans and non-Romans. In a world where the image of 'Ovid among the Goths' represented polar extremes of civilisation and barbarism, Marlowe would have been aware both that the Goths were coming increasingly to be associated with Germany and that there was a related and growing trend to understand Germany, the home of Protestantism, as in opposition and antithesis to Rome, the centre of Catholicism. Goths were also increasingly conceived of as physically similar to the Germans, and in this, as in so much else, early modern historians drew on the authority of Tacitus, who had claimed that

the peoples of Germany have never contaminated themselves by intermarriage with foreigners but remain of pure blood, distinct and unlike any other nation. One result of this is that their physical characteristics, in so far as one can generalize about such a large population, are always the same: fierce-looking blue eyes, reddish hair, and big frames.

This assertion of racial purity may sound to twenty-first century ears like a foreshadowing of Nazi ideology, but what would have caught the eye of Renaissance readers would have been the reference to the Germans' 'big frames', for this spoke to a well-established racial stereotype of Goths being bigger than Romans, as in *Titus Andronicus* where Titus says to his brother,

Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we,
No big-boned men framed of the Cyclops' size.⁶

By implication, the Goths with whom he is obviously contrasting himself *were* big-boned, so Titus is proposing a significant difference between them and the Romans. Marlowe's

⁵ Roma Gill, 'Snakes leape by verse', in Christopher Marlowe, edited by Brian Gibbons (London : Ernest Benn, 1968), pp. 135–50.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Jonathan Bate (London : Bloomsbury, 1995), 4.3.46–7.

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‘big’ Caesar, who has been spending time amongst barbarian tribes, now looks like a barbarian himself.

The word ‘big’ in itself also makes him sound like one, for its etymology is conspicuously not Latinate. Here too there is a parallel with *Titus Andronicus*, where we see a remarkable process of exchange whereby Romans and Goths each draw their own vocabulary out of the other. The Goth Tamora exclaims ‘O cruel, irreligious piety’ (1.1.133) and her son Chiron adds ‘Was never Scythia half so barbarous!’ (1.1.134); ‘piety’ is little changed from the Latin *pietas*, and ‘barbarous’ was the onomatopoeic word coined by the Greeks for describing those who did not speak Greek. Indeed the first act ends with a Goth actually speaking Latin as Demetrius exits saying ‘*Per Stygia, per manes vehor*’ (1.1.634). In contrast, the Roman Titus declares ‘Here Goths have given me leave to sheathe my sword’ (1.1.88); ‘give’, ‘leave’, ‘sheathe’ and ‘sword’ are all Germanic in origin. By the same token, when Marlowe translates ‘Nec, qualem meminere, vident: maiorque fesusque / Mentibus occurrit’ as ‘much changed, looking wild and big’, he does not use one word of Latin origin: his big Caesar, who looks like a German, is described in words derived from Anglo-Saxon.

One reason for barbarising Caesar may have been that Marlowe clearly connects his translation of Lucan with his two plays about that arch-barbarian, Tamburlaine the Great. Very early in the translation we find the line ‘Scythia and wild Armenia had been yoked’ (l. 19). Again Marlowe is intervening here: Lucan makes no mention of Armenia, coupling Scythia rather with the ‘glaciale pontum’, the icy sea. However the *Tamburlaine* plays are bookended by references to Armenia, which lay as a buffer zone between the warring Persian and Ottoman empires (its modern capital Yerevan changed hands fourteen times between 1513 and 1737), a conflict which Matthew Dimmock has shown is important to the *Tamburlaine* plays.⁷ Both parts of *Tamburlaine* were performed in 1587, by which time Armenia has been on a war footing for five years, and this sense of a being a dangerous

⁷ Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot : Ashgate, 2005), pp. 138–41.

frontier territory is crucial to Marlowe's three mentions of it. In Part One, the Persian king Cosroe's titles include 'Great lord of Media and Armenia'⁸ and Meander says that the Persian troops have

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. (II.ii.14–17)

At the end of Part Two, Tamburlaine himself declares,

Here I began to march towards Persia,
Along Armenia and the Caspian Sea,
And thence unto Bithynia, where I took
The Turk and his great Empress prisoners.
(Part Two, V.iii.127-30)

In both parts of the play, Armenia is thus an edge territory, a gateway between East and West, and as such it is also a place connected with moving beyond bounds, as in the enjambment of 'passed Armenian deserts now / And pitched our tents under the Georgian hills'.

To import Armenia into his translation of Lucan thus connects the *Pharsalia* to the *Tamburlaine* plays, and so too does the mention of a mysterious river. In Lucan, we hear of

those that dwell
By Cinga's stream, and where swift Rhodanus
Drives Araris to sea; they near the hills
Under whose hoary rocks Gebenna hangs. (ll. 433–6)

Stephen Orgel notes in his edition of Lucan that 'Marlowe is confused; the passage is about a tribe in the Cevennes',⁹ but that is not the only confusion involved, for Orgel glosses Rhodanus and the Rhone and Araris as the Saone. This makes it rather surprising that the Araris also appears in *Tamburlaine*, where Cosroe says,

Our army will be forty thousand strong
When Tamburlaine and brave Theridamas

⁸ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, edited by Mark Thornton Burnett (London : J. M.Dent, 1999), I.i.163. All quotations from Marlowe's plays will be taken from this edition and further references will be given in the text.

⁹ Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations*, edited by Stephen Orgel (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 2007).

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Have met us by the river Araris. (Part One, 2.1.60–2)

The note in the Revels edition of the *Tamburlaine* plays observes that ‘Various attempts have been made to identify this river: e.g. the Araxes in Armenia, ... the Ararus in Scythia ... J. O. Thompson persuasively argues that Marlowe was led to invent this form by his memory of a line from Virgil, *Ecl.*, I,61–2: “Ante pereratis amborum finibus exsul / Aut Ararim Parthus bibit aut Germania Tigrim”’, where the Arar must indeed be the Saône.¹⁰ However it does not seem very likely that Tamburlaine can be thinking of the Saône when he refers to

The host of Xerxes, which by fame is said
To drink the mighty Parthian Araris. (Part One, 2.3.15–16)

Although the whole point of the passage in the *Eclogues* is that the Parthian is not drinking a river close to him but one a very long way away, the host of Xerxes would have to be awfully lost before it could start drinking the Saône. Perhaps Tamburlaine thinks of the Araris not because Marlowe is remembering Virgil but because he is remembering Lucan.

Edges and Enjambment

Marlowe certainly yokes Lucan with the *Tamburlaine* plays in one respect, because in both he uses the same strategy for representing invasion: enjambment, a tactic whose use means that the translation of Lucan is coloured by the *Tamburlaine* plays’ sense of geopolitical flux. Towards the very beginning of the first *Tamburlaine* play, Cosroe says that former Persian emperors

Have triumphed over Afric, and the bounds
Of Europe where the sun dares scarce appear
For freezing meteors and congealèd cold. (Part One, 1.1.9–11)

Not long after, Meander tells Mycetes that Tamburlaine ‘in your confines with his lawless train / Daily commits incivil outrages’ (Part One, 1.1.39–40). Once it was the Persians who disregarded boundaries; now it is Tamburlaine who goes over the end of the line, and that there is a connection between metrical enjambment and geography is confirmed when Mycetes orders,

¹⁰ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, edited by J. S. Cunningham (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 139.

Go, Menaphon, go into Scythia,
And foot by foot follow Theridamas. (Part One, 1.1.85–6)

'Foot' is both the thing on which soldiers march and the unit of measurement for the land they conquer, but it is also the basic unit of an iambic pentameter, which is made up of five feet. In the case of 'And foot by foot follow Theridamas', two of those five feet end with the word 'foot' and the line as a whole ends with a period, but it is also dependent in syntax and sense on the line which came before it, generating a sense of progress and movement which simultaneously mimics the advance of an army and the momentum of the play.

The Lucan translation also relies heavily on enjambment to create its atmosphere of uneasy expansion and unrest. After the initial symmetry of 'Eagles alike displayed, darts answering darts' (l. 7), we are forced to register change and instability as

The ground which Curius and Camillus tilled
Was stretched unto the fields of hinds unknown. (ll. 170–1)

Land which used to be cultivated by named, important Romans has been 'stretched' (and thus implicitly distorted and misshapen); its new owners are not only 'unknown' but 'hinds', that is of no social standing, and the point is underlined by the way 'Was stretched' in itself enacts a stretching of the line that precedes it. There is a similar effect when we are told of Caesar's reaction to the arrival of the men of Rhene:

These being come, their huge power made him bold
To manage greater deeds; the bordering towns
He garrisoned, and Italy he filled with soldiers. (ll. 462–5)

'Made him bold' hangs at the end of a line inviting anxious speculation about 'bold to do what'; 'the bordering towns' are now doubly bordering, closing one line but reaching syntactically into the next.

Unsurprisingly, the effect is most consistently deployed when it comes to Caesar's transgressive crossing of the Rubicon. Initially 'faintness numbed his steps there on the brink' (l. 196), with Caesar's motion being arrested at exactly the same point as the line is and the end of the line marked as a 'brink' just as the bank of the river is. Then, gathering courage, 'he laying aside all lets of war, / Approached the swelling stream with drum and

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ensign' (ll. 206–7), where the fact that 'laying' is a participle' means we know we need to wait for the syntactic resolution of a main verb. At this point the poem steps back from Caesar and focuses on the river itself:

In summer time the purple Rubicon,
Which issues from a small spring, is but shallow,
And creeps along the vales dividing just
The bounds of Italy from Cisalpine France;
But now the winter's wrath, and wat'ry moon
Being three days old, enforced the flood to swell. (ll. 215–220)

The Rubicon is apparently a small and self-contained river at one period of the year, but here it bursts boundaries in every line, for every line but one is enjambed. The positioning of 'dividing just' at the end of a line enhances the effect and itself enacts the process of division even as it describes it.

For Caesar, the Rubicon is a geopolitical boundary which marks the border between Italy and Gaul:

As soon as Caesar got unto the bank
And bounds of Italy, 'Here, here,' saith he,
'An end of peace; here end polluted laws'. (ll. 225–8)

But it is also a frontier between the permissible and impermissible, for it is not only 'polluted laws' but potentially the concept of any laws at all which he goes on to challenge. Having crossed the river, he himself embarks on what might be termed the ultimate enjambment: 'This said, the restless general through the dark' (l. 230), followed by a parenthetical simile which keeps us waiting nearly two whole lines for the verb which will resolve the sentence, 'marched [on]' (l. 232). The 'dark' into which he marches evokes not only the dark of night but the uncertainty of his future, and from now on he, like Tamburlaine, will know no bounds. Curio advises him,

Envy denies all; with thy blood must thou
Aby thy conquest past: the son decrees
To expel the father; share the world thou canst not;
Enjoy it all thou mayst. (ll. 289–92)

Curio's advice is bookended by exhortations to Caesar to glory in what he has already conquered and go on to take everything, but in between it is radically destabilised by an almost

parenthetical observation which is both entirely unrelated to the actual situation (Caesar neither had a son himself nor was fighting his father) and which also uses enjambment to emphasise its sentiment that stasis is impossible and change inevitable.

For Caesar as for Tamburlaine transgressing physical boundaries also connotes challenging spiritual and ideological limits. Marlowe cannot translate what is not there, and so he cannot make Lucan speak of slaughtering the gods in the heavens, but by encouraging his readers to connect Caesar to Tamburlaine, he can invite them to see that on the edge of that 'uncertain shore / Which is nor sea, nor land, but oftentimes both' (ll. 410–11), crossing a small Italian river can be an event with very significant consequences. The river bank, however, is not only literally liminal; the poem's relentless use of enjambment reminds us that it is temporally so as well, and that every moment of apparent stasis must always give way to something that comes next. Invaders march on foot by foot, but the iambic pentameter itself undoes them, trapping their apparent achievements in time and change.

Scythians and Tartars

Marlowe's Caesar may be big both metaphorically and literally, but he can hardly loom larger than Tamburlaine, the hero who made Marlowe's name and spawned a whole host of imitations on the early modern stage. The historical Timür the Lame was an Uzbek warlord, but Marlowe is less interested in Uzbekistan than in places which spoke to the commercial, diplomatic and travel interests of early modern England, across which Tamburlaine and his followers range widely (one of them, Theridamas, crosses the Dniester, which Marlowe calls 'the river Tyros', and 'subdue[s]' three territories in its vicinity, Stoka, Podolia, and Codemia [Part Two, 1.3.209–10]). Tamburlaine himself is repeatedly identified as two things, a Scythian and a Tartarian, and both are resonant in terms of both Marlowe's world and our own.

Herodotus, the major classical source for the understanding of Scythia, declares that 'Once across the Tanais, one has left

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Scythia behind'.¹¹ He means the River Don (the Tanaïs being its classical name), which was regarded as the dividing line between Europe and Asia, and which Marlowe refers to in *Edward II*, where Queen Isabel says to Sir John of Hainault:

Ah sweet Sir John, even to the utmost verge
Of Europe, or the shore of Tanaïs,
Will we with thee to Hainault, so we will. (4.2.29–31)

Just as in 2023 it feels as if Ukraine has become the front line in a war for European civilisation, so for Marlowe's Queen Isabel the River Don is a crucial marker of what constitutes Europe and what does not.

Herodotus' Scythians are savage, beheading their enemies and drinking from their skulls,¹² but Marlowe is more interested in a different aspect of Scythians, which is their passion for gold. A Persian soldier says of Tamburlaine's troops that 'about their necks / Hangs massy chains of gold down to the waist',¹³ and Tamburlaine himself commands,

Lay out our golden wedges to the view,
That their reflections may amaze the Persians.
(Part One, 1.2.139–40)

When Zenocrate dies, he has her corpse 'lapped ... in a sheet of gold' (Part Two, 2.4.130). But as well as being identified as a Scythian, Tamburlaine is also repeatedly referred to as a Tartarian (e.g. 1.1.71, 2.2.16, 2.2.65, and 3.3.151). This would have made sense to anyone in Marlowe's audience who was well informed on the subject of contemporary geographical discourses: John Frampton's *A discoverie of the countries of Tartaria, Scithia, & Cataya, by the northeast: with the maners, fashions, and orders which are vsed in those countries* treats Tartary and Scythia as contiguous and cognate,¹⁴ while the text known as *Antiquitates Judaicae*, which comprises the first two books of the 1555

¹¹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt [1954] (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 2003), p. 247.

¹² Herodotus, *The Histories*, pp. 260–1.

¹³ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part One, edited by Mark Thornton Burnett (London : J. M. Dent, 1999), Part One, l.ii.125–6.

¹⁴ John Frampton, *A discoverie of the countries of Tartaria, Scithia, & Cataya, by the northeast: with the maners, fashions, and orders which are vsed in those countries* (London : Thomas Dawson, 1580).

Omnium gentium mores, refers simply to 'The people of Scythia, whom we now call Tartares'.¹⁵

The Tartars were consistently associated with territory we now understand as Ukrainian. Stephen Batman's 1582 commentary on the thirteenth-century Bartholomaeus Anglicus said of the empire of the Tartars that its 'limits from the South, are Mare Caspium, the river Iaxartes, the mountain Imaus: from the East and from the North, the Ocean: from the West, the Kingdome of the Duke of Moscouia'.¹⁶ Anthony Jenkinson's 1562 map of 'Russia, Muscovy and Tartary' shows 'Tartaria' occupying a huge swathe of territory, including some of what is now Russia, above the Caspian Sea;¹⁷ the Caspian is repeatedly referred to (e. g. 1.1.102, 1.1.168 and 1.2.194) and 'rocks more steep and sharp than Caspian cliffs' (Part Two, 5.3.242) is the last place name Tamburlaine mentions.

The ties between Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Ukraine are also strengthened by the fact that he is associated with Achilles. Tamburlaine's enemy Bajazeth is also the enemy of Greece: he refers to himself as 'conqueror of Graecia' (Part One, III.i.24) and thinks Tamburlaine's main aim is 'to rouse us from our dreadful siege / Of the famous Grecian Constantinople' (Part One, III.i.6). Tamburlaine himself, by contrast, is repeatedly associated with Greece. He calls his future wife 'lovelier than the love of Jove' (Part One, I.ii.87), evoking a Greek god, and swears 'by the love of Pylades and Orestes, / Whose statues we adore in Scythia' (Part One, I.ii.241–2), Hellenising not only himself but his whole nation. Most notably, Menaphon says Tamburlaine has 'a knot of amber hair / Wrappèd in curls, as fierce Achilles' was' (Part One, II.i.23–4). Achilles is a Greek hero, but Herodotus, listing the rivers of Scythia, notes that 'The Hypacyris, the sixth river, flows

¹⁵ *Antiquitates Judaicae*, in *Omnium gentium mores* (London: John Kingston and Henry Sutton, 1555), image 10.

¹⁶ Stephen Batman, Batman vpon Bartholome his booke *De proprietatibus rerum*, newly corrected, enlarged and amended: with such additions as are requisite, vnto euery seuerall booke: taken forth of the most approued authors, the like heretofore not translated in English. Profitable for all estates, as well for the benefite of the mind as the bodie (London: Thomas East, 1582), image 277.

¹⁷ Paul Binding, *Imagined Corners: Exploring the World's First Atlas* (London: Headline, 2003), p. 173.

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from a lake right through the territory of the Scythian nomads, and reaches the sea near Carcinitis, leaving Hylaea and the place called Achilles' Racecourse to the right'.¹⁸ The stretch of land known as Achilles' Racecourse is in modern Ukraine, to the north-west of Crimea, and the name is sometimes also used for Snake Island. Tamburlaine, a modern Achilles, combines a Scythian and a Tartar identity and roots it in this area, establishing its claim to hold Scythian gold in its museums.

Defending not invading

There is one final way in which a Marlowe play – or at least a production of a Marlowe play – has come to speak to the war in Ukraine, although this is entirely by accident. Almost as soon as the first coronavirus lockdown closed theatres in March 2020, Robert Myles launched The Show Must Go Online (<https://robmyles.co.uk/theshowmustgoonline/>) and started bringing Shakespeare's plays to a computer screen near you. In June 2021 the company extended their range with what they called A Month of Marlowe, consisting of full productions of *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage*, *Edward II* and *Doctor Faustus*, all now freely available on YouTube.¹⁹ In *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage*, all the Trojan characters initially wear shades of orange and ochre, but they are subsequently redressed in blue when they arrive in Carthage. Aeneas, the Trojan leader, puts on a layer of blue like everyone else, but his original ochre garment can still be seen underneath, and it is rather more yellowish than some of the others worn. Although this was obviously not initially intended when the production was first broadcast in 2021, it is therefore now possible to perceive Aeneas as telling the tale of Troy while wearing the colours of Ukraine. This underscores something which is fundamental to the British perception of the war in Ukraine, which is that the Ukrainians know what they are fighting for while the Russian occupiers do not. Aeneas too knew what he was doing – defending his country – and that gives his story a power which

¹⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, p. 258.

¹⁹ They can be found respectively at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_9RDK1Hk9k (*Dido*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VO9drlmjhZo> (*Faustus*, director's cut) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=indVMzreHEI> (*Edward*).

moves his hearers to tears. By contrast, nobody is moved by Caesar or by Tamburlaine, whose marching feet are constantly trammelled and mocked by the poetic feet which trip them up through enjambment.

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