



THE SHAKESPEARE COMPACT

If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not,
Speak then to me

—*Macbeth*

(1.3.58–60)

This section summarizes the material in Volume 2, a comprehensive account of Marlowe’s rivalry with Archbishop Whitgift and Queen Elizabeth for the soul of England, the events surrounding Kit’s “death,” and his literary and dramatic relationship with Shakespeare. The companion volume also includes an analysis and commentary on Hamlet, including annotations to the text, and historical resonances for some of the characters, including Hamlet, Horatio, Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, and the Gravedigger. Full documentation drawn from three hundred sources is included in the Endnotes.



Marlowe is the greatest discoverer, the most daring pioneer, in all our poetic literature,” declared critic Algernon Charles Swinburne. “Before Marlowe there was no genuine blank verse and genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared, the path made straight for Shakespeare.” As the premier playwright of his time, Christopher “Kit” Marlowe’s “mighty line” revolutionized the Elizabethan stage. *Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Edward II*, *The Jew of Malta*, and other plays popularized blank verse in the late 1580s and early 1590s and set the standard for the playwrights who followed. On purely stylistic grounds, some critics have attributed the early Shakespearean tragedies and histories to Marlowe, including early versions of the *Henry VI* cycle, *Titus Andronicus*, and *King John*.

With the support of Queen Elizabeth, the Archbishop of Canterbury

John Whitgift initiated a campaign to suppress religious reform among Puritans and nonconformists in early 1593. Harsh laws banishing dissenters (such as the Pilgrim forebears) were pushed through Parliament, members of the House of Commons were arrested, three prominent Separatists were hanged, and the Church of England's campaign against Catholic recusants and priests was intensified. On May 18, 1593, an arrest warrant was issued for Marlowe in connection with the Dutch Church libel. A manifesto signed "Tamburlaine," the hero of Kit's best known play, had been posted calling on apprentices in London to rise up against foreign workers who were taking their jobs. Marlowe was detained following the arrest of Thomas Kyd, a fellow dramatist and former roommate, who on the rack implicated him with atheism. Following his arrest on May 20, Marlowe was released on his own recognizance and ordered to report daily to the Privy Council.

The decision to silence Marlowe was evidently orchestrated under the prelate's aegis by Lord Buckhurst and Sir John Puckering, two officials of the archbishop's ecclesiastical High Commission and the head of the law-and-order faction within the queen's Privy Council. Thomas Drury, a government informer, was recruited to obtain testimony from Richard Baines, an enemy of Marlowe, further charging Kit with atheism, blasphemy, and sedition. In addition to obtaining the Baines Note, Drury appears to have composed the Remembrances, a report on informer Richard Cholmeley, also charging Marlowe with atheism and other capital offenses.

Ten days later, on May 30, 1593, while still on bail, Marlowe was reportedly killed in a knife fight in a tavern brawl in Deptford, London's port, arguing over "le recknynge," or bill, after a day of eating and drinking with three acquaintances. The queen's coroner oversaw an official inquest, and sixteen local jurors acquitted the assailant, Ingram Frizer, on grounds of self-defense. Nicholas Skeres and Robert Poley, the other two men in the room, corroborated Frizer's testimony. Marlowe was believed to have been buried in an unmarked grave in St. Nicholas's Churchyard on June 1.

New evidence, however, shows that Mistress Eleanor Bull's establishment, where the event occurred, housed a customs office associated with the Muscovy Company, England's first joint stock venture, managed by his kinsman, Anthony Marlowe. With vast resources and secret government contracts, the Muscovy Company built ships in Deptford, enjoyed a monopoly of trade with Russia, and had powerful investors and backers, including the late Sir Francis Walsingham, the secretary of state and head of the secret service; William Cecil, Lord Burghley, the lord treasurer and the Crown's most powerful official; and Robert Cecil, Burghley's son, who had effectively replaced Walsingham as principal secretary to the queen.

In government service since his days at Cambridge University, Marlowe

had been protected by the Cecils on previous occasions, most recently in 1592 when an intelligence mission to the Netherlands was compromised by Richard Baines, his chief accuser and a man he had parodied in *The Jew of Malta* for plotting to poison a monastery well. All of the men present with Marlowe on the day he allegedly died had ties to the secret service or its functionaries. Frizer was in the employ of Thomas Walsingham, a former spymaster and Marlowe's current patron, while intelligencer Robert Poley reported to the Cecils and was on record as testifying that he would lie under oath. Skeres was a close associate of Frizer. Poley and probably Skeres had been involved with the Walsinghams in the Babington Plot, an elaborate government sting that resulted in the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. The Walsinghams and later the Cecils oversaw an intelligence network that stretched from Scotland, the Low Countries, and France to the Russian empire and as far as Persia. As masters of deception, they were experienced in clandestine operations, manufacturing and destroying evidence, faking the deaths of operatives, and manufacturing new identities for their agents.

Far from being an ordinary alewife, Widow Eleanor Bull, proprietress of the establishment where the Deptford affair took place, knew the Marlowe family, lent part of her quarters to an office associated with the Muscovy Company, and may have provided rooms for confidential meetings to the Walsinghams and/or Cecils. In fact, Mistress Bull had high connections at court through her late cousin, Blanche Parry, who was Queen Elizabeth's nanny. She was also related to the Cecils, and a Nathaniel Bull, a classmate of Marlowe's at the King's School in Canterbury, may have been her son. Her husband, Richard, worked for a high official at court who had marriage ties to the Marlowe clan. Instead of being a hired room in a squalid tavern where violence was the norm, the site of Marlowe's "death" has all the hallmarks of a family retreat and a government "safe house."

The coroner's inquest on Marlowe's death only came to light in 1925. According to modern surgeons, the stab wound above the eye detailed in the report could not cause instantaneous death but would probably have resulted in a coma lasting several days. It is not known whether a body was substituted for Marlowe's, though if so, a massive eye injury and bloodied face would have disguised its identity. The previous night, Rev. John Penry, a Separatist leader, was suddenly executed at the archbishop's command, and there is speculation that his body was substituted for Marlowe's. The queen's coroner, Sir William Danby, officiated over the inquest instead of local officials because it fell within the *verge*, the twelve-mile radius of the queen's person. He was an old friend and ally of Burghley, and the prison where Penry had been held came under his aegis. Penry's body was never delivered to his family despite many requests.

The connections continue. Sir George Carey, the knight marshal, who had jurisdiction over the verge, was the son of Lord Hunsdon, the lord chamberlain, who had signed the letter to Cambridge University on Marlowe's behalf ordering that his degree be granted in view of his "good service" to Her Majesty. As Lord Chamberlain, with authority over the the office of the Revels, which regulated performances at court, Hunsdon had been active in the theater for many years. He became the patron of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which went on to perform many of the Shakespearean plays (until it became the King's Men under James I). Following Hunsdon's death, Sir George inherited his father's theatrical company and became the patron of the Shakespearean plays, including *Hamlet*.

Marlowe's principal protectors, the Cecils (William and Robert), appear to have orchestrated the events in Deptford and established what can be called the Shakespeare Compact, the arrangement under which his works appeared under the name of the actor from Stratford. Charles Howard, lord admiral of England and hero of the Armada, may also have helped protect Marlowe. As patron of the Lord Admiral's Men, which produced several of Kit's plays, a privy councilor, and a resident of Deptford, he was in a unique position to help shield the poet. *Edward III*, a play recently accepted by most critics into the Shakespearean canon, apotheosizes the navy's heroic defeat of the Spanish Armada and includes sensitive intelligence provided by Lord Howard and Sir Francis Walsingham. As a government agent and possible scout in France at the time, Marlowe would have been in an ideal position to compose this work. The admiral had a history of supporting religious dissenters and was also charged with atheism in the Remembrances along with Marlowe, Hunsdon, and the Cecils.

A year after Marlowe's "death," the London theater was divided by Admiral Howard and his father-in-law, Lord Hunsdon, into two spheres of influence centered around the Lord Admiral's Men and the new Lord Chamberlain's Men. The former continued to perform in the Rose (and later the Fortune) with a repertory based on Marlowe's works, while the latter performed in the Theatre (and later the Globe), featuring the new Shakespearean works. Since both high-ranking men appear to have been involved in sparing Kit, it is likely that the consolidation was primarily designed to create a secure venue for his future writings in the face of continued censorship by Archbishop Whitgift and demands by the Puritans and London officials to close down the stage altogether.

The Cecils, the Walsinghams, the Careys, and the Lord Admiral were not sentimental when it came to affairs of state. Many prominent figures, as well as government agents (like Marlowe), had been sacrificed to Machiavellian political ends. Whoever protected Kit may have admired his poetic nature

and dramatic genius, but the principal reason he would have been protected was that he was the chief molder of public opinion on the London stage. *Edward III*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and other patriotic plays had helped rally the masses behind the Crown and prevent religious strife between Protestants and Catholics. The Cecils, who cultivated writers and staged their own private dramatic performances, were attuned to the propaganda value of the written and spoken word. In the Shakespearean history plays extolling the nation's heritage, especially "this royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle . . . this England" (*Richard II* 2.1.40–50), they succeeded in fashioning a national identity that transcended religious ties. As a result of this partnership, some of the most sublime poetry ever created helped spread British culture and the English language worldwide.

Shakespeare's first published work, *Venus and Adonis*, a long narrative poem, appeared in early June of 1593, about two weeks after Marlowe's alleged death. There was no author mentioned on the title page, but the dedication to Henry Wriothesley, the earl of Southampton, was attributed to William Shakespeare. Yet the dedication page may have been printed separately and hastily inserted after the text was printed. Southampton had no known connection with Shakespeare, but his years at Cambridge University coincided with those of Marlowe's. He was also Burghley's ward and raised as a son. Noting the striking similarity between *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, critics believe that Shakespeare must have had access to Kit's original manuscript, since it was not published until five years later. More likely, the two poems were penned by the same hand.

Richard Field, the printer of *Venus and Adonis*, originally came from Stratford and is assumed by critics to have arranged for Shakespeare to move to London, find employment in the theater, and publish his first work. Field was also the publisher of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and other major sources of Marlowe's early work and printed Burghley's volume on the defeat of the Armada. The Cecils most likely made the arrangements for the publication of Marlowe's poem and future works under Shakespeare's name. They were ideally situated to ask Southampton to finance the venture, to request Field to locate a trustworthy young actor or theater employee to serve as the dramatic standard bearer, and to arrange with the Careys for Will to become a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men and later the Globe theatre.

The complete absence of any early documentary evidence that Will was a poet or playwright supports this conclusion. Born in April 1564, two months after Marlowe, Shakespeare grew up in Stratford. It is not known whether he attended grammar school, but he married at a young age. Between 1585 (and the birth of twins to he and his wife) and 1594, his life is a blank. It is not known what he did during these "Lost Years" or when

he came to London. The next mention of him appears in connection with payment to the Lord Chamberlain's Men for a performance at Court on December 26, 1594. Following *Venus and Adonis*, his name appeared in the dedication to *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594. The first play under his name, *Love's Labor's Lost*, was not published until 1598, though about a dozen plays that appeared in the First Folio were performed in one version or another prior to that date. At least eight other plays published in quarto and attributed to Shakespeare or containing his initials are uniformly rejected by scholars as spurious. As Diana Price, a Shakespeare biographer, notes, not one of the seventy surviving historical records pertaining to Shakespeare mentions him as a writer. Unlike Spenser, Jonson, Nashe, Webster, Beaumont, and other contemporaries, she observes, he is the only dramatist "who left behind no 'personal literary paper trails.'" "[C]ommentary by critics such as Francis Meres [who listed twelve of Shakespeare's plays and his "sugred Sonnets"] demonstrate[s] a critic's familiarity with only a poem or play, not with the man. Nobody back then wrote about the author Shakespeare as though they actually knew him. It is a unique phenomenon."

The case for Shakespeare as a dramatist at this early period rests largely on a pun. In *Groatsworth of Wit*, published in 1592, Robert Greene mentions "an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers . . . the onely Shake-scene in a country." On the basis of the pun on "Shake-scene" and the parody of a passage quoted from *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of Yorke*, an early version of *3 Henry VI*, later published under Shakespeare's name, scholars have concluded that this is the earliest literary reference to Shakespeare, appearing to place him solidly within the London theater in the formative stage of his acting and writing career. However, the pun better fits Edward Alleyn, the leading actor in Kit's plays at the Rose theatre, who had failed to help Greene in a time of poverty and sickness. Two years earlier in *Never Too Late*, Greene had taunted Alleyn and Marlowe in similar language: "Why *Roscius* [Alleyn], art thou proud with *Esop's* Crow, being pranced with the glorie of others feathers? of thy selfe thou canst say nothing, and if the Cobler [Marlowe, the son of a shoemaker] hath taught thee to say *Ave Caesar*, disdain not thy tutor." In any event, many scholars assign *The True Tragedy* to Marlowe and "Ave Caesar" is a famous phrase from *Edward III*, a play now widely attributed to Shakespeare!

As for Will's antecedents, Dr. John Ward, the vicar of Stratford and the first person to investigate Shakespeare's life, interviewed surviving family members and friends and reported that Shakespeare received £1000 a year for two plays a year. Since the normal payment for a play was several pounds, the exorbitant amount—the equivalent of the income of the archbishop, or the cost of maintaining a foreign embassy—would appear to be for serving

as Marlowe's persona; purchasing a sharehold in the company of players; and producing, not composing, the plays and maintaining the troupe over the course of a year. Though probably not a poet or dramatist, Will may have contributed significantly to the performance and publication of the plays. There are some allusions in the plays that appear to refer to Shakespeare's personal life as well as Marlowe's. *Hamlet* hints that the relationship between the two men was close, and in many ways Will probably served as Kit's sounding board, confidant, and dramatic partner.

Supposing that Marlowe was not killed, his whereabouts after May 30, 1593, remain unknown. Robert Poley, the Cecils' agent who hastened back to the meeting in Deptford from the Netherlands, was carrying official letters for the queen. However, he did not deliver them until ten days later, suggesting that he may have been ordered to escort Marlowe into self-imposed exile in Scotland or on the Continent. Another possibility is that Kit departed for Scotland or Russia on the Muscovy Company ship that left on an annual trading voyage north on or shortly after June 1 every year. One of his kinsmen was Clerk of Ships in Deptford. The Shakespearean sonnets include many poems about exile, and *The Jew of Malta*, first published in 1633, hints that he went to Italy ("beyond the Alps" [Prologue 2]) and returned following the passing of Archbishop Whitgift ("the Guise is dead" [3], comparing the prelate to the notorious French persecutor). He even hints that rumors of his death are exaggerated: "Birds of the air will tell of murders past! I am ashamed to hear such fooleries" (16–17). He has returned to Brittany "not to read a lecture" (29)—an allusion to the atheistic lecture Kit was charged with giving—but "to frolic with his friends" (4). Nearly one third of the Shakespearean plays are set in Italy, and critics have long suspected that the author must have traveled there. Living in a sunnier, warmer climate and eating the lighter Mediterranean diet may have also influenced the poet's shift from tragedy to comedy.

Following a revival of Marlowe's poems and plays on stage and in print in 1599, Archbishop Whitgift ordered the public burning of Kit's translation of *Ovid's Elegies*, as well as other erotic and satirical works. Several months later, Shakespeare's *As You Like It* is believed to have debuted at the new Globe theater. In addition to the famous passage about "a great reckoning in a little room" (3.3.14–15) alluding to Marlowe's "death" in Deptford, the play includes at least a half dozen other references to Kit and his works. The sudden flurry of activity concerning Marlowe can be seen not only as a flashpoint in the continuing battle between artists and censors, but also an indication that the poet may have returned to England and defied the archbishop with this outwardly light-hearted but inwardly subversive comedy.

In a case of life imitating art, Essex and his supporters staged a perform-

ance of Shakespeare's *Richard II* just prior to their rebellion against Queen Elizabeth in 1601 to steel their resolve. They performed a scene in the play about the deposition of a sitting monarch that had been banned by the Crown. Although the Lord Chamberlain's Men suffered the queen's displeasure, they did not experience any dire or lasting punishment, unlike the leading conspirators, whose "late innovation" (2.2.316–317) may be alluded to in *Hamlet*. Robert Cecil convinced the queen to save the life of Southampton, Essex's principal supporter, not only on pragmatic grounds (he lacked an heir), but also probably to keep intact the arrangement to fund the production of the Shakespearean plays.

Several contemporaries, including fellow writers, critics, and playgoers, commented on the artistic merits (or demerits) of Marlowe and Shakespeare's works. But there are virtually no reliable references to their individual characters or personalities. In Marlowe's case, his reputation as an iconoclast, street brawler, and atheist with a reckless disregard for authority and a homosexual orientation is based wholly on some of the characters in his plays, civil complaints that were dismissed, or testimony against him extracted under torture or duress. In Shakespeare's case, his reputation as a noble, wise, all-knowing figure is based wholly on the breadth and depth of his plays, while his darker side reflects the anguished narrator of the sonnets (who may be fictional) or the unsavory property and legal cases (involving usury and adultery) in which he was implicated. It would be a cardinal mistake to read too much into any of the meager documents available. Many of the popular assumptions about Marlowe are demonstrably false. As an actor and a government representative, not unlike Prince Hamlet, he appears to have mastered putting on an antic disposition and disarming those around him with his witty jests and light-hearted banter. As the Privy Council observed when it ordered Cambridge University to grant him his degree for "matters touching the benefit of his country," the queen was highly displeased by those who "defamed" him and who are "ignorant in th'affaires he went about." Similarly, behind the sparse documents, scrawled signatures, and busts and tributes, Will Shakespeare's personality remains inscrutable.

Hamlet traces its origin to an early revenge tragedy of the same name staged about 1587–89 and known as the *Ur-Hamlet*. Attributed by critics to dramatist Thomas Kyd, the early version may actually have been written by Marlowe or revised and edited when he and Kyd shared rooms in 1591. It was staged in 1594 by Philip Henslowe, the proprietor of the Rose theatre, who produced Marlowe's and Kyd's works. Following the bonfire in which his books were burned by the archbishop five years later, Kit appears to have returned to the play, elevating its moral and spiritual tone, creating sublime characterizations, and adding allusions to the Essex rebellion and

the War of the Poets launched by Ben Jonson, along with other topical references. Coming hard upon the archbishop's bonfire of the books and *As You Like It*, the new version of *Hamlet* reflected the incestuous relationship between Church and Crown in Elizabethan England and its poisonous effects on society. Claudius's murder of Elder Hamlet and theft of the crown from his son, Prince Hamlet, corresponded with Archbishop Whitgift's destruction of ancient liberties, the plot against Marlowe, and the usurpation of the kingdom of arts and letters. *Hamlet* was registered at the Stationers' Company on July 26, 1602, on the festival day of St. Christopher, Christopher Marlowe's namesake and the saint who rescues those in mortal danger.

In describing how Claudius murdered him and seized the throne, Hamlet's ghost alludes to Marlowe's plight with several puns on Archbishop Whitgift's name: "With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts, / O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power / So to seduce, won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen" (1.5.47–51). The passage reveals not only the identity of the murderous usurper in the play but also points to the man who orchestrated the murderous campaign against religious dissenters, including Marlowe, and who has lusted for power and acquired absolute moral and spiritual sovereignty over Queen Elizabeth. The First Quarto of *Hamlet* contains a version of this passage, but the puns on Whitgift's name did not appear until after the archbishop's death in 1604 and publication of the Second Quarto. In the First Folio, capitalization makes the pun even more explicit: "Oh wicked Wit, and Gifts."

At a social level, Claudius and Gertrude's "o'erhasty marriage" (2.2.60) signifies the unholy matrimony between Church and State that characterized the Elizabethan era. It echoes contemporary Puritan rhetoric, including John Penry's *Reformation No Enemy*, the book that accused Whitgift of seducing the Crown and turning the queen against religious reform and for which he was executed. Among the many other references to Whitgift in *Hamlet*, the Player's speech on the Trojan war alludes to the Puritans' theological assault on the Church of England. In challenging Whitgift's authority, Rev. Thomas Cartwright, the Puritan leader, was likened in the prelate's own authorized account to Pyrrhus in his attack on Priam. Poisoning—signifying slander, tainted doctrines, and toxic policies—is the weapon of choice in the play, from the deadly herb that Claudius uses to kill Elder Hamlet to the envenomed sword that fatally wounds Hamlet. The tainted pearl—known as a "union"—which the king slips into the cup meant for Hamlet but which kills the queen points to the counterfeit union of Church and State that is at the heart of Marlowe's critique of Elizabethan society.

From Queen Elizabeth's perspective, her Religious Settlement offered a

middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. Unlike the inquisitors in Rome and Spain, she assured her subjects that she did not intend “to make windows into men’s souls.” As long as they conformed to the Church of England’s outward creed and attended public worship, their personal beliefs would be respected. Puritans, Separatists, and freethinkers like Marlowe rejected this approach as the height of hypocrisy, valuing only the outward show of piety. In *Hamlet*, Elizabeth’s famous dictum is alluded to in the chamber scene when the prince accosts his mother, the queen, and demands, “You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you” (3.4.22–23). Forced to look at her own complicity, she laments, “Thou turn’st mine eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and grainèd spots / As will not leave their tinct” (97–99). Like the puns on Whitgift’s name, these passages reveal the autobiographical subtext of Marlowe’s play and point to the executed Protestant reformers, martyred Catholics, and other victims of repression who haunt the Elizabethan moral, political, and spiritual landscape.

Many other aspects of the play also suggest Marlowe’s principal authorship. For example, in Ophelia’s highly developed literary abilities, including allusions to many biblical passages, critics see a progressive, feminist perspective and orientation that subtly critiques the dominant patriarchy of the time. It is more plausible that Kit created Ophelia, Rosalind, Portia, Miranda, and the other paragons of female learning than Will Shakespeare, whose own wife and daughters could neither read nor write.

When asked by *The New Yorker* what he would ask Shakespeare in heaven, Harold Jenkins, the editor of the acclaimed *Arden Hamlet*, replied, “Well, I think I would ask him one or two things about the ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy. I think it’s all a little wrong. It doesn’t seem to relate to the immediate context. I’d like to hear his view on it.” Understanding the play as Marlowe’s sheds some light on these matters. The most famous passage in English literature appears to describe Kit’s inner conflict in May 1593 over whether “to be or not to be” (3.1.62) true to himself and stand trial for heresy. The stark choice facing him is whether “to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” (63–64) by defending himself against base charges and facing torture and execution or to “take Arms against a sea of troubles” (65) and stage his death and go into self-imposed exile.

Among the many possible allusions to Marlowe in *Hamlet* are some in the gravediggers’ scene, which includes multiple echoes of his faked death, including several puns on the “Crowners” or coroner’s report. The witty discussion about how long it takes for the body of a tanner to decompose glances at Kit’s heritage as the son and grandson of tanners. The chief clown, as critics note, is the only character in the play who can hold his own

in verbal combat with Hamlet. When the prince asks him whose grave he is digging, the clown replies sagely: "I do not lie in't, yet it is mine" (5.1.105). In unearthing several skulls, including that of Yorick, the clown digs up salient material about Kit's past life. Elsewhere, vital information surfaces, showing that Hamlet is the exact same age (twenty-nine years and three months) as Marlowe was at the time he reputedly died.

The German *Hamlet*, believed to include material from the *Ur-Hamlet*, the earliest Elizabethan version of the play, opens with a prologue featuring Hecate, the queen of the Underworld in Greek and Roman mythology, and the three furies. The tone and spirit is very similar to those of the three witches in the opening scene of *Macbeth* and to the style of Hecate's appearance later in that play. Hecate figures prominently in the play-within-the-play in the Shakespearean versions of *Hamlet*, and as queen of Night is mentioned throughout the Marlovian and Shakespearean works. She or her furies appear in all of Marlowe's works and about two-thirds of the Shakespearean poems and plays. There may even be a symbolic connection. May 30, the day of Marlowe's fateful encounter and "death" in Deptford, is the annual festival of Hecate. The setting and props of Kit's last meal echo the Hecate Supper that was traditionally observed on this occasion. As a classical scholar, Marlowe translated works from Latin and Greek containing passages on Hecate and the three fates. Whether or not Kit deliberately staged his death on her holy day, the queen of Night served as the dark muse and inspiration for the Marlovian and Shakespearean plays and poems.

Adding further weight to the case for Marlowe's authorship is the fact that many of the main stationers who registered, published, or printed the Shakespearean works were associated with Marlowe. James Roberts, who registered *Hamlet* and printed the Second Quarto, acquired a monopoly on printing playbills for the English stage in early 1593 and probably knew Kit from that time, if not earlier. Nicholas Ling, the publisher of Quartos 1 and 2 of *Hamlet*, registered an early edition of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* that is now lost. Valentine Simmes, who was arrested and tortured by Whitgift's henchmen for his role in bringing out subversive religious literature, went on to print Q1 of *Hamlet* and several other Shakespearean plays, as well as Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. Thomas Thorpe, publisher of Marlowe's translation of *Lucan's First Book*, registered *Shake-speare's Sonnets* on May 20, 1609, the anniversary of Marlowe's arrest on May 20, 1593 (and the anniversary of his "death" on May 30, according to the New Style calendar, which was ten days ahead). Edward Blount, who wrote the posthumous foreword to *Hero and Leander* and regarded himself as Kit's literary executor, was the moving force behind the First Folio. William Jaggard, another partner in the venture, first brought out Kit's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*. James

Heminges, co-editor of the Folio, likely would have performed in Marlowe's plays in the early 1590s when he was an actor with Lord Strange's Men.

The dedicatees of the Folio share further links to Marlowe. The First Folio was dedicated to William and Philip Herbert, the sons of Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. Mary's husband, Philip Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke, was one of Marlowe's early theatrical patrons, and Kit wrote a heartfelt dedication to Mary as his muse. Mary reportedly entertained Shakespeare at her home in Wilton and sponsored a performance of *As You Like It*, the most Marlovian of the canonical plays, for King James. A scene from one of her own literary works is considered a major source for the pirate (or rescue) scene in *Hamlet*. Other links suggest that she and Kit may have been romantically attached. Mary's son, William, is the leading candidate among critics to be the mysterious Mr. W. H. to whom Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are dedicated.

In a final clue to Marlowe's role as principal author, the First Folio was registered at the Stationers' Company in London on November 8, 1623, the festival day of Mania, the ancient Roman goddess of the Underworld and counterpart to Hecate. In Britain, that was the night each year when the Celtic king of the fairies opened the door to the spirit world—the perfect anniversary on which to honor Christopher Marlowe (aka Marley, Morley, Marlin), the spiritual son of the sorcerer Merlin and the author of *Dr. Faustus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and the other plays exploring the relation between the natural and supernatural worlds.

A new generation of critics has shown that many of Shakespeare's plays are intricately constructed parodies or commentaries on relations between Church and State. Donna B. Hamilton's *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England*, Kristen Poole's *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton*, and Heather James's *Shakespeare's Troy* show that they especially touch upon issues of uniformity and conformity dear to Archbishop Whitgift and Queen Elizabeth, issues that reached a peak in the Parliament of 1593 (and led up to Marlowe's arrest). These include *The Comedy of Errors*, *King John*, the *Henry IV* plays, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Twelfth Night*. Following James's accession as king, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, *The Tempest*, and other Shakespearean works continue to challenge the ecclesiastical bigotry and religious intolerance that characterized the Stuart era.

Among other affinities, the Marlovian and Shakespearean works demonstrate a profound knowledge of the Bible. A comparative analysis of biblical references in the two canons shows a strikingly high correspondence. The average number of allusions per play—94.3 and 91.7 respectively—differs by only 3 percent. Both groups of works allude to the Gospel of Matthew more than to any other scriptural source, and eight of the ten most frequently

quoted or referenced books in the Bible are the same. After studying for holy orders at Cambridge University, Marlowe received an M.A. in theology and in the Shakespearean plays evidently resumed where he left off.

There are numerous other parallels between the Marlovian and Shakespearean works, including similar scenes, common versification, and identical or kindred lines, images, and words. *Hamlet* alone has over one hundred passages that echo or allude to similar phrases and lines in Marlowe's earlier works. A comprehensive stylistic comparison between the two canons remains to be done. Many characters are cut from the same dramatic cloth, including Barabas and Shylock, Abigail and Jessica, the Duke of Guise and Aaron, Edward II and Richard II, and Mortimer and Hotspur.

There is also much more to be learned about Marlowe's life, "death," and literary resurrection. Some of the key points listed above are undoubtedly in error and will need to be discarded or revised in the light of new evidence or interpretation. Yet on balance, as we observe the four hundredth anniversary of *Hamlet's* publication, it is clear that Marlowe had the motive (saving his life), the means (the protection of the Cecils, probably that of Admiral Howard and the Careys, and the help of the Muscovy Company), and the opportunity (a friendly, familial setting in Deptford) to stage his death and go on (with the aid of Southampton, Richard Field, Edward Blount, James Roberts, Nicholas Ling, Thomas Thorpe, Valentine Simmes, Mary Sidney, and several other patrons and stationers) to bring out approximately forty poems and plays in collaboration with Shakespeare.

As in *Hamlet*, a special providence protected Kit and Will and inspired their sacred task of mirroring the human condition, portraying the form and feature of the age, and holding aloft the torch of liberty and freedom of conscience. Like Prince Hamlet newly invigorated after his shipboard escape, Marlowe's dramatic and poetic mission changed after the wings of death brushed him in May 1593 and he escaped his destiny. He became more resolute and decisive, seeing heaven ordinate in the small, ordinary things of daily life as well as writ large in cosmic omens and signs. He focused more on the redemptive power of good than on the corruptive effects of evil. With the help of his loyal Horatio, he found a continuing outlet for his dramatic genius. Absenting himself from felicity awhile in Stratford for the harsh world of London, Will Shakespeare drew his breath in pain to tell Kit's story. Through the prism of its intricate plot, sublime characterizations, and witty dialogue, *Hamlet* reflects the life and destiny of its creators, embodies a timeless portrait of humanity's moral and spiritual dilemma, and will live forever in our "heart of heart" (3.2.72).