Special 400th Anniversary
Wheaten Garland Edition

HAMLET

By Christopher Marlowe and
William Shakespeare

Edited by Alex Jack
Vol. 2: History and Commentary

“As peace should still her wheaten garland wear”
—Hamlet 5.2.44

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Hamlet
By Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare
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Front Cover: Putative portrait of William Shakespeare, attributed to John Taylor, c. 1610, courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
To the memory of my grandfather,
David Rhys Williams

Every word doth almost (tell) my name,
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed
—Sonnet 76

The Chapel Scene
(Illustration by Eugène Delacroix)
**Principal Sources**


Hamlet—*The Hystorie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke in Histories Tragiques,* vol. 5, by François de Belleforest. 1582. Trans. anonymous, 1608. An adaptation of Saxo’s original story and main Shakespearean source. [The French Hamlet]

Der BB—*Der Bestrafte Brudermord oder Prinz Hamlet aus Dannemarck.* 1710. A German version of *Hamlet,* possibly incorporating material from Marlowe and/or Kyd’s original *Ur-Hamlet.* Der BB’s prologue, similar to the witches’ chorus in *Macbeth,* is included as an appendix Vol. 1, pp. 121–122. [The German Hamlet]


Elizabeth’s Correspondence—G. B. Harrison, ed. *The Letters of Queen Elizabeth I.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1935. [The Queen]


*Please see Works Cited for other sources and references.*
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INTRODUCTION:
SWEETER THAN THE MUSE’S SONG

His talk much sweeter than the Muse’s song.
—Tamburlaine

(3.2.50)

his Special 400th Anniversary Edition of Hamlet celebrates Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare as co-authors. New historical, scientific, and literary evidence suggests that Marlowe—the leading playwright on the London stage in the late 1580s and early 1590s—staged his death in a tavern brawl in the midst of a heresy investigation inspired by John Whitgift, the archbishop of Canterbury, and went on to pen the immortal plays and poems with his dramatic collaborator, the actor Will Shakespeare. For centuries, questions have been raised about the authorship of the Shakespearean works. “I am haunted by the conviction that the divine William is the biggest and most successful fraud ever practiced on a patient world,” lamented Henry James.1 “[Shakespeare] seems to have nothing at all to justify his claim,” mused Freud. “It is quite inconceivable to me that Shakespeare should have got everything second-hand—Hamlet’s neurosis, Lear’s madness, Macbeth’s defiance.”2

In Shakespeare: Co-Author, British scholar Brian Vickers presents compelling evidence that Shakespeare collaborated with others in at least five plays.3 In a recent cover story for the Times Literary Supplement, Jonathan Bate, professor of Shakespeare and Renaissance literature at the University of Warwick and general editor of the Arden Shakespeare, acknowledges that the plays are “working scripts for the theatre rather than finished products of a single authorial mind.”4 “Romantic Shakespeare,’ with his unblotted manuscripts and solo inspiration, has had a very long run for his money,”
Bate continues. In the future, he asserts, Shakespeare’s plays will be regarded as “co-authored” and shaped “by many different hands.” In a break with tradition, Oxford University Press this autumn published *Timon of Athens* with Thomas Middleton as Shakespeare’s co-author.

In a new essay on “Marlowe’s Texts and Authorship,” Oxford scholar Laurie E. Maguire notes that recent stylistic, or linguistic, studies have presented tantalizing evidence that “Marlowe’s hand appears in several Shakespearean texts,” including the *Henry VI* plays, *Titus Andronicus*, *Edward III* (a play recently accepted into the Shakespearean canon), and *Henry V*. David Riggs, an Elizabethan scholar at Stanford University, says that the official version of Marlowe’s death “does not inspire much confidence” and should invoke “skepticism, not easy acquiescence.” The Public Broadcasting System’s *Frontline* televised Michael Rubbo’s *Much Ado About Something*, featuring scholars, Shakespearean actors, and other professionals who believe that Marlowe wrote under the *nom de plume* of Shakespeare.

At the level of popular culture, the Hollywood film *Shakespeare in Love* portrayed Marlowe and Shakespeare as collaborators. Leslie Silbert’s new novel, *The Intelligencer*, has Kit escaping his preordained fate. The *New Yorker* recently ran a cover with a cartoon illustration of several Shakespeares in Central Park, one of whom was reading the *Daily News* with a banner headline proclaiming: “WILL WRIT WRONG. I WROTE HAMLET! CONFESSES MARLOWE.”

“In England, the ridicule invariably heaped on those who suggest that Shakespeare was someone other than the venerated Stratford-on-Avon native is usually enough to stifle discussion of the subject,” the *New York Times* reported this past summer. “But now, a high-profile forum for study of the authorship question has emerged right at Shakespeare’s Globe, that nucleus of Shakespeare performance and education in London modeled on the renowned theater where the author’s plays were produced and performed in his lifetime.” “The Globe is pressing the issue in several ways,” the *Times*’ feature story continued. “This summer and last, it held authorship conferences, which it plans to continue annually. It includes a display on possible alternative authors in its exhibition space. And an entire page of its play programs is devoted to ‘The Authorship Question,’ mentioning [among others] Christopher Marlowe. ‘We each have a different idea of who Shakespeare was,’” the programs say. “Whoever you imagine him to be, you are most welcome here.” Just across the Thames river, Westminster Abbey, England’s literary shrine, recently installed a new stained glass window dedicated to Christopher Marlowe with a question mark by the date of his death, suggesting that he may have survived and gone on to continue writing under Shakespeare’s name.
As these examples show, the perception of Marlowe’s fate has profoundly changed. From the tragic result of a drunken brawl, his “death” has metamorphosed into a state execution. From conceding that his murder was shrouded in intrigue and politically inspired, it is reasonable to consider that it may have been faked and that he assumed a new literary identity as well as an intelligence cover. Like an element whose electrons have jumped to a higher orbit, Christopher Marlowe’s mercurial nature is suddenly taking on the golden luster of his illustrious successor on the London stage.

The first volume of this Special 400th Anniversary Edition of *Hamlet* presents the text of the play along with parallels from Kit’s early work and a summary of the evidence for his survival and what can be called “The Shakespeare Compact,” the arrangement under which he and Shakespeare became collaborators. This second volume offers a comprehensive historical investigation into Marlowe’s life, “death,” and literary resurrection; his creative partnership with Shakespeare; and a literary analysis and interpretation of the play. Each volume can be enjoyed in its own right. For convenience, the material in this account, entitled “Hecate’s Ban: The Comical History of Christopher Marlowe, Clown Prince of England,” is divided into three sections:

1. “Marlowe’s Ghost” examines Marlowe’s life as a playwright and government agent and sets the background for the authorship of *Hamlet*. It focuses on the contest of ideas and wills between the poet and his nemesis, Archbishop Whitgift; Queen Elizabeth’s complicity in religious persecution; and what actually took place at Deptford. The section will show that May 30, 1593, the date of Kit’s reported “death,” has a strong symbolic connection with Hecate, the queen of Night and goddess of magic, forbidden knowledge, and the Underworld, who appears in the Marlovian and Shakespearean plays, especially *Hamlet*.

2. “Shakespeare’s Ghost” describes Will’s entrance on the London literary stage shortly after Marlowe’s exit and the genesis of the Shakespeare Compact. Unlike anti-Stratfordians who reject Will’s authorship because of lack of schooling or an aristocratic pedigree, I believe Shakespeare’s native wit, genius, and common touch uniquely qualified him to serve as Kit’s dramatic partner, shaping the performative elements of the plays. He may have also contributed to their literary development.

3. “Hamlet’s Ghost” looks at the play’s penetrating critique of contemporary Elizabethan society and its allusions to the loyal bond between Marlowe and Shakespeare. This section also suggests historical parallels with some of the major and minor characters in the play, including Claudius and Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the
Gravediggers, Yorick, Osric, and Fortinbras. From the outset, it is important to state that Hamlet is not a roman à clef, and there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the characters and actual people and events. But as in any work of literature, the characters are partially woven from autobiographical strands in the creators’ minds that consciously or unconsciously shaped and influenced the play’s overall themes and development.

Hamlet’s basic plot of seizing the throne through an incestuous marriage, for example, has affinities with a poisonous union between Church and State and usurpation of the kingdom of arts and letters. In revealing how Claudius has masterminded his murder, Hamlet’s ghost alludes to contemporary events with several puns on the name of Archbishop Whitgift, who has lusted for power and acquired absolute moral and spiritual sovereignty over Queen Elizabeth:

GHOST. Ay that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
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 First Quarto of Hamlet contains a version of this passage, but the word play regarding Whitgift’s name did not appear until after the archbishop’s death and the publication of the Second Quarto. By this time, Queen Elizabeth—who referred to Whitgift as her “little black husband,” or spiritual spouse—had also passed away. The First Folio’s capitalization makes the pun even bolder: “Oh wicked Wit and Gifts.” At a social level, Claudius and Gertrude’s “o’erhasty marriage” (2.2.60) in Hamlet signifies the unholy marriage between the Crown and Church.

Supplementing the commentaries are Appendices, a Glossary, Annotations, Changes (emendations), Works Cited, Resources, and an Index.

I am especially grateful to my late grandfather, Rev. David Rhys Williams, for introducing me to the authorship controversy as a child. As the author of Shakespeare, Thy Name Is Marlowe, he contributed, along with Calvin Hoffman, A. D. (Dorothy) Wraight, and other pioneer Marlovians, to developing some of the key planks in the case for Marlowe’s survival. I am also grateful to my agent Susan Cohen and to my friend, Janet Benton, director of Benton Editorial in Philadelphia. They inspired me to focus, unify, and trim back a manuscript that approached the mass and density of Archbishop Whitgift’s 800-page tome in answer to Thomas Cartwright. I am also appre-
ciative to other colleagues and family members, as noted in the Afterword.

Whatever insight and perspective on the Elizabethan era that appears in this edition is due largely to the great Marlovian and Shakespearean editors, scholars, and critics, past and present. The second generation of modern Marlovian researchers, including John Baker, Peter Farey, David More, Louis Ule, and D. Maure Wilbert, has transformed an intriguing theory into a compelling historical model. The Shakespearean editors and critics have also contributed enormously to our understanding of the Elizabethan era and what Prince Hamlet calls “the purpose of playing” (3.2.16). In recent years, the new historicists, cultural materialists, and feminists have revolutionized the way that the plays are understood to be rooted in a particular time and place. Several leading authorities are helping to topple the Olympian assumption that Shakespeare, like Mozart, channeled his art unaided and unblotted. A new generation of Shakespearean actors, screenwriters, and filmmakers is also preparing the way for a new authorial paradigm.

I would especially like to express my appreciation for the work of Donna B. Hamilton, an English professor at the University of Maryland, whose indispensable Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England explores the epic contest that saw Whitgift and Elizabeth, representing Church and Crown, relentlessly persecute Puritan reformers and Separatists, including Thomas Cartwright, Martin Marprelate, John Penry, and James Morice. She shows how the struggle for religious freedom came to a climax in the spring of 1593 (coinciding with the events leading up to Marlowe’s arrest and the events in Deptford) and lies at the heart of the Shakespearean plays.

Other Elizabethan researchers and critics whose penetrating analyses have informed this study include Harold Bloom, Mark Thornton Burnett, Patrick Cheney, Chris Fitter, Marilyn French, Darryl Grantley, Stephen J. Greenblatt, Andrew Gurr, Andrew Hadfield, Heather James, David Scott Kasten, Roy Kendall, Frank Kermode, Bernice W. Kliman, Constance Brown Kuriyama, Arthur F. Kinney, Jeffrey Knapp, Harry Levin, Eric S. Mallin, Laurie E. Maguire, Leah S. Marcus, Arthur McGee, Louis Montrose, Charles Nicholl, Annabel Patterson, Kristen Poole, Diana Price, David Riggs, Steve Roth, Naseeb Shaheen, James Shapiro, Simon Shepherd, Gary Taylor, Neil Taylor, Ann Thompson, Brian Vickers, Stanley Wells, and Richard Wilson. Though they are not partisans of Marlowe, their work has been invaluable to the interpretation advanced in these pages. I am also grateful to the librarians of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, the Berkshire Athenaeum, the Lee Library, the Brookline Public Library, and the Parker Library in Cambridge, England, for their gracious assistance.

I trust the motley touches in this edition of Hamlet will not detract from the enjoyment of the play, whose beauty, majesty, and truth grace nearly
every English edition, foreign translation, stage performance, and screen adaptation. For any errors, blunders, or other mishaps, to paraphrase Prince Hamlet, I would say that it was not I that erred, but Click and Clack, the Tappet brothers on National Public Radio’s Car Talk. Like the gravediggers, their maddening patter on the foibles of our drossy high-tech age and skill in “digging up” past callers and exhuming their mistakes distracted me. Also in Se offendendo, or antic self-defense, I would mention that Garrison Keillor, the resident bard of Prairie Home Companion, also provided treasured mirth with his mesmerizing tales of Lake Wobegone and comic Lutheran misrule. He has a penchant for quoting from Marlowe and on Writers’ Almanac recently gave a concise summary of the case for Kit’s hand in the Shakespearean works.

In presenting a deeper, more intimate portrait of Marlowe, Shakespeare and their supporting cast, I hope that this edition of Hamlet will help exercise, or set free, the troubled spirits involved in the authorship controversy that has haunted the English-speaking world for several centuries. On the global stage, the absolutism and intolerance of the Tudors and Stuarts led the Pilgrims and some of the early Puritans to leave England for America to create institutions embodying freedom of conscience and elective office, as anticipated in Hamlet and the other plays. In a contemporary era of state terror and religious fanaticism, the humanity and spirit of toleration that shines through the Marlovian and Shakespearean works—from Dido Queen of Carthage and Dr. Faustus through Hamlet and The Tempest—are needed on the global stage more urgently than ever.

Beside shining new light on a four-hundred-year-old mystery, it is my fondest wish that this edition, including the play that I regard as Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Quarto 1, will inspire further research into the many unresolved areas explored in these pages. I sincerely hope that this edition can serve as a bridge between the Avon and the Stour, the rivers that run through Will’s native Stratford and Kit’s Canterbury, and help unify Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians. New discoveries and interpretations, based on mutual respect and cooperation, could then lead to more authoritative versions in the future and eventually to a new First Folio of the complete works of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, sweetly singing the muse’s song.

Alex Jack
Becket, Massachusetts
February 26, 2005