

Chapter II

SHAKESPEARE AND MARLOWE COMPARED

What poet of the Elizabethan era is it whose known works display the same kind of literary genius to be found in the First Folio? The orthodox scholars seem to be in little doubt. It is not Bacon, Edward de Vere, the Sixth Earl of Derby, or any other writer publishing works in his own name, who has been compared so favorably and enthusiastically with the author of the First Folio as Christopher Marlowe.

John Ingram wrote:

To the date of his death and indeed for some years after, Marlowe was evidently more esteemed as a poet and more beloved as a man, than ever Shakespeare himself.⁹

Charles Dilke wrote:

Marlowe was the most famous poet of the Elizabethan age.⁹

R. L. Ashurst wrote:

Marlowe was by far the greatest and strongest of Elizabethan dramatists. He had a powerful influence in the mental development of the poet we know as Shakespeare.⁹

Thomas M. Parrott wrote:

Without Marlowe there would never have been the William Shakespeare we know.⁹

Robert M. Theobald wrote:

Marlowe's tones are to be heard in even the most advanced of Shakespeare's plays. There is an organic relation between Marlowe and Shakespeare, which requires explanation. There is an audacity about Shakespeare's diction, which comes by direct descent from Marlowe.⁹

Robert A. Law wrote:

No sufficient reason has yet been advanced for discarding the long accepted belief that Marlowe, at his death in 1593, was a dramatist and poet of far greater repute than was ever William Shakespeare.⁹

William Allan Neilson wrote:

Born in the same year as Shakespeare, Marlowe left behind him at 29 years of age surpassing dramatic work. In the vastness and intensity of his imagination, the splendid dignity of his verse, and the dazzling brilliance of his poetry, Marlowe exhibited the greatest genius that had appeared in the English Drama.⁹

John Bakeless wrote:

Though Marlowe had so few models of his own, it is doubtful whether any other English writer, except Shakespeare, has ever served as a model for so many of his fellows and successors; and no one even among the Elizabethans owed more to Marlowe than Shakespeare himself. In seven of his plays Shakespeare is clearly and probably consciously copying Marlowe and in eleven other plays there are faint traces and suggestions of Marlowe's influence. The exact relationship of these two major figures is one of the chief puzzles of literary history. That it existed—that it was very far-reaching in its effect upon Shakespeare and through him upon all English letters ever after, there is no possible room for doubt. . . . Did Marlowe and Shakespeare know one another intimately? It is hard to doubt it, but it is equally impossible to prove it.¹⁰

Many of the plays included in the First Folio have been attributed to Marlowe in whole or in part by scholars who accept his alleged murder in 1593.¹¹

Titus Andronicus

Edmund Malone: "Written by Christopher Marlowe." William Hazlitt: "Marlowe has a much fairer claim to be the author of *Titus Andronicus* than Shakespeare . . . from internal evidence." F. C. Fleay, too, attributes *Titus Andronicus* to Marlowe.

Richard III

S. S. Ashbaugh: "There is far more of Marlowe than of Shakespeare in *Richard III*." F. C. Fleay: "*Richard*

III bears strong internal evidence of Marlowe's craftsmanship." Jane Lee: "*Richard III* is full of . . . Marlowe's soul and spirit."

Richard II

A. W. Verity: "*Richard II* was written on a model furnished by Marlowe." Sir Sidney Lee: "*Richard II* was clearly suggested by Marlowe's *Edward II*."

Henry VI (Parts I, II, III)

Alexander Dyce: "There is a strong suspicion that the plays are wholly by Marlowe." Ashley Thorndike: "Marlowe's influence, if not his hand, is dominant." Algernon Swinburne: "Marlowe was more or less concerned in the production of these plays."

Among those who suggest Marlowe as the author of either one or all of these plays are A. W. Verity, Felix Schelling, Edmund Malone, Richard Farmer, and George Chalmers.¹¹

As a matter of fact, more than half the works of William Shakespeare have been credited in whole or in part to the authorship of Christopher Marlowe by scholars who take for granted that Marlowe died in 1593. And yet how could this be possible when all of these works were *first* published after the date of his alleged death, and many 30 years thereafter, unless Marlowe himself was not really murdered in 1593 but was murdered in name only? In the light of such a possibility, surely the rumors and records of his early death should be critically re-examined.