

*The Cambridge Introduction to  
Christopher Marlowe*

Providing a comprehensive survey of Christopher Marlowe's literary career, this *Introduction* presents an approachable account of the life, works and influence of the ground-breaking Elizabethan dramatist and poet. It includes in-depth discussions of all of Marlowe's plays, stressing what was new and revolutionary about them as well as how they made use of existing dramatic models. Marlowe's poems and translations, sometimes marginalised in discussions of his work, are analysed to emphasise their literary importance and political resonances. The book includes a balanced discussion of Marlowe's turbulent life, and considers his afterlives: the influence of his work on other writers, and examples of how his plays have been performed. In addition to introducing the reader to the historical and religious contexts within which Marlowe wrote, the *Introduction* stresses the qualities that continue to make his work fascinating: intellectual range, radical irony and an awareness of the dangerously compelling power of theatre.

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# The Cambridge Introduction to Christopher Marlowe

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## Preface

This book can be read consecutively: it begins with a chapter on Marlowe's life and times, and then goes on to discuss his plays from *Tamburlaine* (the play with which he seems to have made his name) to *Edward II* (probably the last of his major dramatic works). There is then a chapter on Marlowe's poetry, his translations, and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, followed by a chapter on his literary and dramatic afterlives. However, the chapters are self-contained, so readers interested primarily in (say) *Doctor Faustus* should be able to begin at Chapter 3 without confusion. (I have indicated points where it might be useful to cross-refer to material in other chapters.)

There are several excellent and affordable collections of Marlowe's plays, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Mark Thornton Burnett's *The Complete Plays* (Everyman, 1998) contains all the plays, and both versions of *Doctor Faustus*, but is currently (2011) difficult to obtain. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen's *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford World's Classics, 1995) omits *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *The Massacre at Paris*. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey's *The Complete Plays* (Penguin Classics, 2003) has all the plays, but omits the B-text of *Faustus* (which appears in Bevington and Rasmussen). I have elected to use Romany and Lindsey; quotations from *Faustus* are from their A-text, except where indicated (in which case they come from the B-text in Bevington and Rasmussen's 1993 Revels edition of the play). References to the poems and translations follow Stephen Orgel's 2007 Penguin Classics edition, although readers may also want to refer to Patrick Cheney and Brian J. Striar's 2006 edition for Oxford University Press (which includes the epigrams by John Davies that were printed with Marlowe's translations of Ovid). I have silently modernised quotations from early modern texts, although I have preserved variant spellings of names: it's important to be aware that 'Marlowe' could also be 'Marley', 'Morley', or 'Marlen'.

I would like to thank my colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University, in particular Annaliese Connolly, Lisa Hopkins and Matt Steggle, for their encouragement, their willingness to read drafts of this book, and the invaluable suggestions they have offered. (Any remaining errors are of course my own.)

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I am also indebted to my students for helping me to develop some of its ideas in lectures and seminars. Sarah Stanton of Cambridge University Press, and two anonymous readers, improved it with their helpful comments, and Rebecca Taylor, Tom O'Reilly, David Watson and Jayashree Prabhu enabled its production. Finally I would like to thank Sophie, Caedmon, and Aphra for their unfailing patience, support and love.



## Key dates

Note: in 1582 most Catholic countries adopted the new calendar proposed by Pope Gregory XIII in place of the existing Julian Calendar, moving the year ahead by ten days. England did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar until 1752, so dates given below refer to the Julian Calendar unless otherwise indicated.

- 17 November 1558: death of Queen Mary, followed by accession of Elizabeth I.
- 22 May 1561: marriage of John Marlowe and Katherine Arthur at church of St George the Martyr, Canterbury, where their children are later christened (see below).
- 21 May 1562: Mary Marlowe christened.
- 26 February 1564: Christopher Marlowe christened.
- May–September 1565: siege of Malta by the Turks.
- 18 or 28 December 1566: Margaret Marlowe christened.
- 28 August 1568: Mary Marlowe buried.
- 31 October 1568: unnamed son of John and Katherine Marlowe christened; buried 5 November.
- 20 August 1569: Joan Marlowe christened.
- 1570: Elizabeth I excommunicated by Pope Pius V.
- 26 July 1570: Thomas Marlowe christened; buried 7 August.
- 14 July 1571: Ann Marlowe christened.
- 23 August 1572: massacre of French Protestants begins in Paris on the evening before St Bartholomew's Day.
- 18 October 1573: Dorothy Marlowe christened.
- 8 April 1576: second Thomas Marlowe christened.
- December 1578: Marlowe enrolls as scholar at the King's School, Canterbury.
- 1580: Jesuit mission to England begins.

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December 1580: Marlowe goes up to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

12 April 1584: Marlowe receives BA; remains at Cambridge to study for MA.  
 Some of his work, e.g. his translation of Ovid's *Amores*, may have been written there.

1587: German *Faustbuch* published.

8 February 1587: Mary, Queen of Scots executed.

29 June 1587: Privy Council write to the authorities of Corpus Christi requesting that Marlowe be allowed to receive his MA.

10 August 1587: 'Christopher Marlo', possibly the playwright, acquires a horse in London from James Wheatley (who in 1588 sues for its return).

16 November 1587: Philip Gawdy refers in a letter to a performance of a play that may be the second part of *Tamburlaine*.

1588: Robert Greene alludes to *Tamburlaine* in *Perimedes the Blacksmith*; earliest possible date of *Doctor Faustus*.

July 1588: Spanish Armada defeated.

9 October 1588: Marlowe sued by Edward Elvyn for £10 lent to him in London that April.

23 December 1588 (Gregorian Calendar): assassination of Duke of Guise, referred to in *The Jew of Malta*.

2 August 1589 (Gregorian Calendar): death of Henri III, accession of Henri IV as King of France.

18 September 1589: Marlowe, William Bradley and Thomas Watson fight in Hog Lane, London. Bradley is killed by Watson, who is arrested along with Marlowe. Marlowe is released on bail 1 October and acquitted 3 December; Watson is found guilty of manslaughter and pardoned in February 1590.

1590: *Tamburlaine the Great* published, as are the first three books of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

1591: Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* published.

1592: Marlowe's source for *Doctor Faustus*, the *English Faust Book* (a translation of the German *Faustbuch*), 'newly imprinted', perhaps indicating that this is not the first English edition.

26 January 1592: Robert Sidney writes to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, of Marlowe's arrest for counterfeiting in Flushing.

26 February 1592: first recorded performance of *The Jew of Malta*, by Strange's Men at the Rose.

- 3 March 1592: 'Harry the VI', possibly Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part One*, performed by Strange's Men at the Rose.
- 9 May 1592: Marlowe bound over in London to keep the peace towards Allen Nicholls and Nicholas Helliott.
- 3 September 1592: Robert Greene dies; Marlowe is referred to in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, purportedly written by Greene on his deathbed.
- 15 September 1592: Marlowe arrested following street fight in Canterbury with William Corkine, who eventually drops his legal case against him.
- 26 September 1592: Thomas Watson buried; his *Amintae Gaudia* features a Latin dedication by 'C. M.', probably Marlowe, to Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke.
- 14 December 1592: death of Sir Roger Manwood, for whom Marlowe writes a Latin epitaph.
- 26 January 1593: *The Massacre at Paris* performed by Strange's Men at the Rose.
- 28 January 1593: playhouses close due to plague and do not reopen until late December.
- 5 May 1593: xenophobic verse libel signed 'Tamburlaine' posted on Dutch church in Broad Street.
- 12 May 1593: Thomas Kyd arrested.
- 18 May 1593: warrant issued for Marlowe to appear before Privy Council.
- 20 May 1593: Marlowe arrested at house of Thomas Walsingham in Scadbury, Kent; brought before Privy Council and charged to report to them daily.
- 26 May 1593/2 June 1593: possible dates for the delivery of Richard Baines's note on Marlowe to the Privy Council.
- 30 May 1593: Marlowe stabbed to death at house of Eleanor Bull, Deptford; coroner's report says that he was killed in self-defence by Ingram Frizer in the presence of Robert Poley and Nicholas Skeres.
- 1 June 1593: Marlowe buried at St Nicholas's church, Deptford.
- 28 June 1593: Ingram Frizer pardoned by the Queen.
- 1594: *Dido, Queen of Carthage* and *Edward II* both published.
- 30 September 1594: first recorded performance of *Doctor Faustus* by the Admiral's Men at the Rose, though its first actual performance was probably earlier than this.
- 1597: Thomas Beard refers to Marlowe's death in his *Theatre of God's Judgements*.

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- 1598: Francis Meres refers to Marlowe's death in his *Palladis Tamia*. First known edition of *Hero and Leander* published, as are George Chapman's and Henry Petow's continuations.
- 1599: A version of 'The Passionate Shepherd' is published in *The Passionate Pilgrim*.
- 1 June 1599: John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London, prohibit the further publication of satires and epigrams including 'Davies' Epigrams, with Marlowe's Elegies' (i.e. his translation of Ovid), and call for existing copies to be burnt.
- 1600: The more familiar version of 'The Passionate Shepherd' appears in *England's Helicon; Lucan's First Book* (Marlowe's translation of the *Pharsalia*) published.
- 22 November 1602: Philip Henslowe lends the Admiral's Men £4 to pay William Birde and Samuel Rowley for additions to *Doctor Faustus*.
- 1604: A-text of *Doctor Faustus* published.
- 1616: B-text of *Doctor Faustus* published.
- 1633: *The Jew of Malta* published following performances at Court and at the Cockpit theatre.