

From Armada to Marlowe to Shakespeare

Kit Marlowe's Perfect Crime Getting Away With Non-Murder

Playwright-Spy Christopher Marlowe Scripts Own Escape from Star Chamber Torture — And Turns Into Shakespeare 2 Weeks Later

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The following is not literary, but exploratory. In unequal parts detection, satire, probe, goofiness, takeoff, revelation. Shamelessly inconsistent in style, gravity, and historicity. Don't take it too seriously. Or too lightly. [2018/12/17]

A 1586

A1 Fotheringhay Castle, England, October

Mary Stuart, formerly French royalty and Queen of Scots, now Queen Elizabeth's prisoner:

[Kneeling at prayer]

Sir Francis Walsingham [of England's ruling Privy Council, funder and chief of Europe's ablest espionage ring, a spiere inspired by Elizabeth's guiding brain, Lord Burghley (Wm.Cecil), including London's top playwright Christopher Marlowe (1564-1623) & primo-spy Robert Poley (both out of Cambridge University, as was Cecil), as well as Europe's smartest cryptographers; entering Mary's chamber, ecstatically preparing to gloat at his ring's having just busted the code of her loyalists' Babington Plot, which aimed at putting Mary on Elizabeth's throne]:

My lady —

Pray you in code? You do conspire in same.

Mary [startled, but settling into chair with forced calm]:

Lord Walsingham, my only prayer remains to know the jealous demon behind your latest scheme to sever my ever loyal head.

Walsingham:

Your prayer is right promptly half answered,
Though it is *your* scheme that I speak upon,
Since your degenerate life of deceit
Has at the last ensnared your Romish soul.

Mary:

My soul?! Thanks be you credit a Catholic may have one. But speak you unmetrically of your mission.

Walsingham:

Heartily will I: know then that your spies' and assassins' code is broken. As thus your perversely-regicidal royalty's pretense to innocent piety. As indeed your very life.

Mary:

It is a comfort in my impotent dotage that your lordship's years of implications do surely echo as reliably and as tediously as ever.

Walsingham:

Your co-conspirator Babington is undone, as therefore is Your Highness — your very former highness. Of late years, Oxford & Cambridge — you've heard of them? — have bred the cleverest agents and brightest code-masters that ever ran craft through. Know you now that these have intercepted and decyphered your missives of late — which leave no doubt of your part in papists' tireless plots at murdering our divine monarch. The only comfort I may offer is assurance that the headsman's blade is painless — and sufficiently imminent that tedium will be the least of My Lady's woes.

Mary [aroused]:

My dear esteemed sovereign and cousin Elizabeth surely cannot — *cannot* do what you hope to fright me with, sir. Not. . . . *not* with my own son James standing next in succession to Her Majesty.

Walsingham:

Revert to knee-work superstitious,
At last reduced to no weapon besides,
O'er-gloomed by Asra-èl's¹ penumbral doom.

[Exit.]

A2 Rose Theatre anteroom, following premiere of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*

Playwright Robert Greene:

Henslowe, why this orgy of overpraise upon the child Kit Marlowe?

Rose Theatre Manager Philip Henslowe [to all]:

If celebrity actor and play-paymaster Ned Alleyn compensated Greene better, he'd be less green.

Greene:

A pun 'neath even you. I grant little Kit's try-outing play, *Tamburlaine*, has bits of astonishing verbal magic. But our would-be play-wrighter and upstart crow Ned Alleyn ought not forget his old reliable word-masters, without whose gifts his shake-scene bellows die.

Henslowe [as Christopher Marlowe enters]:

Kit Marlowe! Your *Tamburlaine* is the rage of London! acclaim from pits to nobles —

War! Gore! Prose that flows so past prosaic

Into poesy like unto music!

Grandeur! Humbly born *Tamburlaine* come to Parthian glory! — and so like yourself, mere cobbler's son — [to all] your launching blank verse onto our nation's stage is an epoch in the 'story of our calling! And [aside to Marlowe] — we'll mundanely exploit to the top our sensation's fiscal gain.

Christopher Marlowe [aside]:

Fret not — even now I balance and shape *Tamburlaine Two* at your insistence, though I look and long beyond, out onto vast new pastures of versal verse, already contemplated. For the wages of Attic weakness, there's satan-toy necromancer Faust, who dreamt of Trojan Helen from time afar:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Forget not boy-enthralled Edward II,
And bentback boy-garroter Richard III.
If seek thee tragedies incarnadine,
There be a wealth² of murdered majesties:
Caesar, Macbeth, Richard II, Henry VI.
Richard III. Edward II, hapless Hamlet.
Their scheme-flush palaces shall be my home.

Greene:

Though your morals and irreligion offend my senses, Kit, I confess uneven *Tamburlaine* hits masterful word-musical moments that augur well — if you will but leash your appetites, and passion for heretical risk.

Henslowe:

Music, yes, but first Kit must soar to the heights of the depths — to be the Jove of the pits.

Marlowe:

There's tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow for that. But for the present, I debauch this very eve — for he who loves not tobacco and boys is a fool.³

Greene:

To my last syllable, I'll stay the fool.

[Exeunt.]

¹"Asrael", the Angel of Death, was the title of the 1907 tragic 2nd Symphony Op.27 of Josef Suk, which mourned — most affectingly in its memorable finale — the recent successive deaths of the two most irreplaceable souls of his life, Antonin Dvořák and his daughter Otilie, Suk's wife. Though never again composing at quite the same lofty plane (as in his opp.24-27), Suk lived past those shocks, ultimately winning the music competition at 1932's Los Angeles Olympics, for his march "Towards a New Life" — a title apt to both his and Marlowe's survival.

²Early Marlowe considers (*Richard II* 3.2): ". . . sad stories of the death of Kings:/ How some have been depos'd, some slain in warre,/ Some haunted by the Ghosts they have depos'd/ Some poyson'd by their wives, some sleeping kill'd;/ All murder'd. For within the hollow Crowne/ That rounds the mortall Temples of a King/ Keepest Death his Court. . . ."

³John Bakeless *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe* (2vols) 1942 Harvard vol.1 p.128. (NB: author DR is assertively anti-smoking.) Stewart Young argues "boys" is an error for "booz", which is contextually consistent. See Ros Barber *Marlowe Papers* 2012 pp.119&419.

A3 Spies Extraordinaire: Rob't Poley, Nicholas Skeres, & Marlowe at London Pub*Marlowe:*

As play-wrighter, I must draw from Master Robert the apprenticeship of his Cambridge years. Acting, perchance?

Robert Poley:

Sardonically bait me as you will, I'll not play the modest genius. Would you had been on scene with me to share the look upon the Catholic schemer Babington's visage, when *MY* treason upon *HIS* confronted him full, redeeming thereby all my prison years in London's Tower, playacting at pious fellowship among the papists who plot to slay our Queen upon her throne, to place the Romanist pretender thereon. Even when struck with my confession to his face, Babington staunchly spurned it with that dear immunity from reason's disturbance so endemic to his faith.

Nicholas Skeres:

Now that our Lord Walsingham's agents and his supremely gifted code-piercers have outspied Mary's spy-legions, will our too merciful Queen agree to her shortening at last?

Poley:

Shortly methinks. It'll need all Lord Cecil's intimate guile upon her —

Marlowe:

— to come to a head.

Skeres:

Royal blood spilling its like — but who better to spur the deed than Burghley, the Prince of Guile?

Marlowe:

Mightn't his Lordship kill her with pamphlets abroad the nation, as with Norfolk? — to raise another Hurly-Burghley toward the axe?

Poley:

Aye, Cecil, webspinningest spyder of the realm. And Mary's end by Poley's deft devices elevates my unperceivèd soul onto the remotest cloud of the precious elite, those singularly clever if physically feeble channellers of the course of history's unfeeble torrent, like unto Homer's guiding gods, but greater yet for our unmythic tangibility. That none will ever know of our heroic daring, only perfects Poley's unsurpassèd genius at darkest intrigue, which is life itself to me — as playwroughting is life's cor to that unique everbrother who has honored us this eve by quaffing at our very table. [Exeunt.]

B 1587 — Writ Large**B1 Royal Palace***Queen Elizabeth:*

Again you lay before me a writ of execution. Why press me yet the more to murder my cousin Mary Stuart?

Spymaster Francis Walsingham:

To prevent yet further murders, with yours assuredly encompassed among them. You have for yet awhile seen her deviously encoded missives directly advising and conspiring with the papist plotters for your assassination.

Charles Howard of Effingham:

Sir Francis speaks aright. Present delay could issue fatal not only to Your Majesty but to all who risk their lives and treasure to maintain the crown and the protestant Church of England, of which you are god's sole legitimate pontiff. Remove the invincibly pious Catholic persona the papists long to enthrone — they've only her son to plop in your place, who's more in love with his lad than his Lord.

Queen:

I like not the fratricidal deed, nonetheless, you prick me from inaction. I will sign, but on your score — for potentially fateful consequences yet un contemplated.

Walsingham:

I gladly accept, good and wise lady, and thank your soul for your seal. It will be finished.

[Exit.]

B2 Fotheringhay Castle, February: Terror of the Blade*Mary [on the castle's scaffold, as England's nobility looks on]:*

I die innocent and with nought but love and loyalty for my divinely anointed cousin.

Superprotestant among gentry [aside]:

Why then now before us, entertaining rote with rote?

[Bladefall. Executioner's head-display fumbles, leaving hand with nought but Mary's wig.]

Secret-Catholic noble among observing gentry [aside]:

The lady dies to scare the heirs of England's loyal papal past. So endeth terremony-theatre at England's vilest pit.

[Exeunt all but he, who kneels when none but his envisioned god can see.]

B3 St.Peter's, Rome

Pope Sixtus V:

How will we resanctify rebel Britannium's degraded soil? — fresh moist with the true queen's sacred blood, poison'd by usurper Elizabeth's undoing of martyr Babington's holy toil! Decades of English heresy stretch on — commencing at saintly Mary Tudor's death, grown bolder with the Protestant-sanctioned brigand Drake — even daring loot the Spanish crown's most bullion-laden ship off Panama! For 30 years England's return to Rome's bosom has so oft seemed in-grasp, only to remain a damnèd minim beyond. Excommunicating the bastard Elizabeth — who knights sea-thieves the more, the more they thieve! — had not immediate result, yet inspired invisible thousands of holy faithful to the wish of excising the heretical blemish she embodies. As did her schismatic father Henry VIII, unlawfully wed — &wed&wed&wed&wed — who spawned unbaptized birth not just to her but to that damnèd lust-engendered English-pope fantasie — and stole our monastic booty to boot. Her sleep is ever punished by unshakable terror of assassination by any among our unperceivèd faithful.

Cardinal:

If the protestant plague is not soon disinfected, the most trifling monarch aiming at prancing tall before his subjects will add “Local Pope” to his titles. Ere long, you'll be merely another church among a potpourri of popery, equivalently insulted as no more than “bishop of Rome” — and our business, as just the “Roman church”.

Pope:

Has slumber captured God Himself? Mary Stuart murdered! Elizabeth's pirates fleecing our fleets? We tire of waiting on Britain's self-reform. Our merciful patience is strangled to its end. Our wrongèd Spanish Emperor Philip was&is rightful king of England, as was church-blessèd Conqueror William the First, who invaded by sea to slay King Harold at Hastings, proving England's capture can be effected — by one imbued with pious legitimacy. We will grant good Philip all holy and lethal assistance he desires! Alert the money-changers and entrance our most ambitious nobles by lure: their common felicity in henceforth advancing by lawful magic — indeed a leap above alchemy — necromancing a modest gold investment into a large English estate and a peer's title.

B4 Spanish Court

Spain's King Philip II:

Do none remember that I was truly King of England ere King of Spain? — just as good Mary Stuart was to be Queen of France ere flight to Scotland? Through the Catholic diplomacy of Count Egmont⁴ did I marry Queen Mary Tudor. Our ungratefully slandered holy cleansing of protestant witchcraft foundered — thus “Bloody Mary” is her English memory, so inopportune to our reborn cause. A generation past I was mere boy-prince of Spain, e'en while manfully astride British soil as legitimate King of that since tragically benighted land, ere the ill-starred timing of my father's death returned me to steer our Spanish Empire just at Mary's unfelicitous end. I pray hourly god might grant me —

Courtier [running in]:

your prayer is forthwith answered! — a trusty omen. God's true pontiff pledges full gold enough shall sure be found, to mount the armèd navy required for salvation of the blighted isle. And the Duke of Parma stays loyal to your holy mission.

Philip:

Blessèd trinity be thanked for these papal blessings newborn — and those glories to be! Prayers to this sure end we now command across the realm. But then — *hie us to work.* [Exeunt.]

C 1588

C1 Summer, Calais Coast: HMS *Revenge* [Armada battle based on Drake's “lost” fanciful rendition]

Sir Francis Drake:

These bloody Spanish locusts aim to steal our wares and lands, undo our reborn Christian Church of England, and enslave all they do not murder — slaughtering as notoriously as their Romish brothers at the Paris Massacre, when thousands of protestant Huguenots, not at sanctuary in Walsingham's embassy, were murdered by Mary Stuart's cousin Guise. Should some among us fall that England may thrive, our English dead and our cause will live forevermore in legend. To the ends of their spans, the heroes who live will be — like unto those at Agincourt — the envy of all unlucky Englishmen who missed the passion of our sea-history's fiery pinnacle raging now before us. Where the Spanish fleet's front cracks, hesitate not: into the breach! Our God and our courage grant us victory sure! Press on 'til the bloody predators sink or flee.

First Mate [rushing in]:

Sire, our tactics triumph! — behold the foraging fleet aflame! Our sneak surprise succeeds, the enemy retires in chickenyard chaos — most running, a few enfeebled stragglers yet firing, to little effect.

⁴Bloody Mary's nuptial negotiator Egmont was later captured during a Spanish invasion of Holland, when he couldn't get-outta-town fast enough. Executed, he was posthumously transformed by Goethe's *Egmont* & its 10-part musical Beethoven dramatization, into a hero of religious freedom. Dedicated to an appreciative Goethe, the music was *exceptionally* composed without fee by Beethoven, its Overture the intense pinnacle of his legacy.

Drake:

Our pitchy fireships've frightened and lighted the Spanish force. It lies now beneath our mightiest guns. Rapid reload be our English cannons' hallmark. Answer the brigands' sateless hunger! — Let them eat cannonballs! Ram them with fire! Burn the flamers to the waterline! Cannon-blast the rest and see how well the papists savour the other end of a massacre! [Exeunt.]

C2 HMS *Ark Royal's* Celebration: Howard, arctic explorer Martin Frobisher, Drake & cousin John Hawkins

Frobisher:

Time for well-earned toasting and boasting —

Drake:

Our navy, god's new David, has slain low the invading Goliath. Let papal aggressions henceforth be squandered at no more than yet-another doomèd attack upon Sosigenes' canonical calendar, timelessly timing our days since Caesar

John Hawkins:

— while we take joyous hours to gloat afloat.

Drake:

I, Sir Francis, am the 1st sea-captain to circuit the globe alive, and the least leashed privateer who ever stole Hispanic gold upon the oceans high, bullion itself stolen from the Incas' empire, so cruelly gobbled by those selfsame slavers who look&lurk to munch down England too. Triumphant o'er the Armada, I add the realm's salvation to my laurels.

Howard:

Our laurels.

Drake:

YesYes. I'd been afear'd the gentility of prior gold-bought knighthood might unman me. But Philip salvaged Drake from softhood by vouchsafing him a whole navy of tinder to his guns, so granting Drake and his fellow boozier cousin Hawkins a final glowing memorial of floating firewood gaudily beflaggèd & aflame. And a chance to tweak the beak of the richest despot of them all.

Frobisher:

You're scripting your legend already? Without the Armada-scattering storms, it wouldn't've been so easy.

Drake:

Easy?! Easier — Oh — Why quibble? We'll get the credit. Hereabouts anyway. And we did in truth risk our fortunes and very lives at venture grand, and for nobler cause than gold — freedom from the Catholic Empire —

Hawkins:

— Drake dreams the nascent British Empire will boast greater freedom of dissent?

Howard:

Speak *you* of freedom? — who ran slaves in the Caribees and brought Africans in chain & pain, to lifetime sentences in the armèd jail that English America will be to them forever?

Hawkins [head hanging]:

You would adduce the worst —

Frobisher:

— you yourself brought up the theme of freedom —

Hawkins:

— no, fellow-slaver Drake did the honors —

Drake:

— a theme that Jack had best not duel upon. My worthy crew comprised bold and liberated slaves — in our ever-glorious Panamanian liberation of Philip's stolen galleon-bullion.

Howard:

Talk of real gold near pyrites-infamous⁵ Frobisher is tactless — and unbalanced on the day of his share of our lives' most immortal success, which will sure set a knighthood atop England's memory of his discoveries of land in the arctic New World —

Hawkins:

— and Frobisher Bay. But the Armada we've repelled must leave a stain. It will so quake England, you may count upon a protestant version of persecuting heretics. Not only Catholics, but atheists, Puritans, perverts — dissenters will mute their tongues to keep them. Persecutions will roll. With heads beside.

Drake:

As to your fearful prospect, I cheerily contend: the more we buccaneers splinter the Earth's empires and churches, the more's the prospect one'll someyear prize unchannelled speech — o brave new world! [Boozeunt]

⁵During his earlier Canadian explorations, Frobisher became known for bringing back to the queen tons of fool's-gold.

C3 Tilbury August 17

Queen Elizabeth [drama-fictionally on horseback in full play-regalia, after consultation with on-scene but dark-background, barely-glimpsed spymaster Lord Francis Walsingham]:

I thank my people and my prescient Council for their loyalty and wisdom, and our navy for torching those who'd torchure-at-the-stake our anglican loyalists — like unto Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's crispy fate — for their spurning Romanist tyrannical superstition; who'd rob us of our land, our treasure, our freedom, & our faith. Come what invasions the Spanish pest may launch, we fain shall resist to the death! Ev'n did the Spaniards slip our ships, they would on land find but English lions!

Crowd:

[chanting in unison] Thank God and Queen!

[regularly interjected: a few bold&waggish lionine roars, of motley gravity]

Queen Elizabeth [with Churchilled-out unwavering voice]:

If the bloody Romish wave crashes full upon our shores, we shall fight on the beaches. We shall fight on the landing grounds. We shall fight in the fields, and in the streets. We shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender. I am yet again myself in combat prepared to die with sword in hand, as did the last imperial Constantine, as Constantinople fell to the Turk a century past.

Crowd:

We would die first!

Queen:

Thank god and our admirals it came not to that hellish end, for our ships and our agents abroad blunted evil ere it reached our island home.

Playwright Thomas Kyd [in crowd, aside to Marlowe]:

Kit, my love, will ever again we see such joyful days for England?

Marlowe [aside to Kyd, as he grasps his hand]:

Well, it's gratifying — even startling — that my late dark schemings o'er seas with the Duke of Parma are among those credits touched upon by Her Majesty. Though never by name. That's the game.

Kyd:

Still centered on self! There were occasional other heroes of the victory.

Marlowe:

Conceit is brother to ambition. But, then — our KyddyKit union'll make our names upon another stage. [Exeunt.]

C4 Rome in Gloom

Pope:

The Armada wrecked!

Was this the farce that lost a thousand ships
And spurned the popeless powers of Brit'ium?

Their navy was but a quarter ours. *all* of you predicted: what-could-possibly-go-wrong!

Cardinal:

Only everything.

Pope:

Be not arch, but lay forth the grim details: How? *How?*

Cardinal:

Thanks to schismatic Continental Protestants, English bribes, negotiations, agents, and spies, the soldiers due at Holland never fully came aboard, harried by sudden English raids. Storms scattered our ships, whilst theirs proved agile — & smaller targets.

Pope:

Failure will be my monument —

Cardinal:

— yet take heart, more holy tortuous paths to English power are even now explored; schemes along many multiply even as we confer. And at least god's Armada frightened the schismatic devils, so trust that Elizabeth's monopolistic owners will turn the screws upon dissent as she ne'er did ere. From said panic's spying, persecution, and torture, trust that yet more plots will fester. I leave your Holiness with the comfort that between these and the fear of yet further invasions, the bastard usurper's crown will rest upon a skull ever-beehive-buzzy with nightmare hauntings. [Exit.]

C5 1589 January: French Army Camp Outside Paris, Preparing Occupation*King Henry III of France:*

As our forces rest, I hear yet again that a Romish clique remains displeased that the Duke of Guise died by our command of late. Know they not that his massacre of the protestant Huguenots degraded the glory of France?

Courtier:

Your majesty, a friar Clément beseeches your royal audience to discuss the very point.

Henry:

Have the good friar⁶ approach that we may hear his desire.

Clément [approaches slow, then rapidly]:

I protest the murder of Guise — *thusly* [lunges & stabs Henry].

Courtier:

Guards! Quick! [Bodyguards immediately kill Clément.]

Henry:

I am just scratched — but — cannot stand. [Collapses.]

Courtier:

The king swoons — hang leery of the blade on chance of poison. No — the king is — dead. Clear the palace of all but peers and bloody guards. And — that it may step back from Paris — alert the army forthwith of our regicidal disaster. Damned stars! [Exit.]

D 1593**D1 January, Kyd's home***Marlowe:*

Dear Kyd, who chose to live with me and be my love in kind-remembered past, know you that I dream upon a drama of the Guise limb of Mary Stuart's unkillable killer-family-tree, which does yet seethe in hot frustration at failure of Ridolfi's bungled plot to launch an early armada for enthroning Mary in our queen's stead. Sixteen years past, the Duke of Guise murdered good protestants by the thousand at Paris and about — the Huguenot Massacre, inspiring our late cynosure Francis Walsingham to swear his eternal oath that papism would never foul this precious stone set in the silver sea, this blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England — a paean I must surely place into one among my British histories.

Kyd:

Unsurpassèd bard, snuffless star to be, embodiment of dangerous indiscretion, your courage undoes me. Following Philip's near miss, our perturbèd lords spy and herd all. Since jealous Greene hinted at your circle's atheism five years past, rumors multiply of Marlowe's scoffing at religion and sundry conventions, especially in Eros' realm. Freethinker Raleigh's blessing — and Thomas Walsingham's maintenance of his uncle Francis' spy-ring peerless — confers protection Olympian; and your most artful spying last year amongst the Dutch coin-fakers was of such service to the crown as to double that. Yet there is on Earth no bottomless well from which to draw infinite immunity.

Marlowe:

I thank you, Kyd, for your love's concern, but know you that, being leagues ahead of my dull detractors' wit, I a'ready plan escape, should the anachronistic farces of dorkness descend upon me. Which returns me to the bloody Paris play I spoke upon. What think you of staging the history which, as ambassador to France, Sir Francis Walsingham witnessed close, when Paris' fortunate few unmurdered Protestant Huguenots sought refuge in the English embassy?

Kyd:

Would that Sir Francis had lived to see that bold salvation resurrected — for enlightenment of papists in the pits.

Marlowe:

I change a fragment of the bloody tale,
For a cause which may long lay unperceived:
King Henry will murder his murderer.

Kyd:

Being unarmèd, how would Henry kill?

Marlowe:

In the brief moments left him on this Earth,
He'll strip Clément of his envenomed blade,
Heroically dispatching the papist,
By the very device of his perfidy.

⁶The party who nearly assassinated Napoleon on 1800/12/24 later became a Roman church priest in the U.S. Stauffenberg was a member of the same church when he tried to kill Hitler on 1944/7/20. That Roman church people made the most serious attempts at eliminating Europe's two bloodiest modern tyrants (both nominally Catholic themselves, of course) is a credit to the church that has been neglected.

Kyd:

Dramatic purpose to history's wrenching.

Marlowe:

Not my sole intent. But, enough shopchat;
We loving playwrights now trade drama for dream.

[Sexeunt]

D2 April, Marlowe's Home

Marlowe:

Thanks to rumors birthed by the late Greene's envy, whiffs of my heresies waft yet further abroad. Pursuant to escape from attendant dangers, I've counterbirthed an unfathomable plot, and am even now registering my greenest poem, *Venus & Adonis*, anonymously,⁷ as launch of that design. Be patient — you'll soon perceive the purpose.

Kyd:

Why suspend your own lover's curiosity?

Marlowe:

All in good time.

Kyd:

But the worlds you conjure ensure your name's immortality!

Marlowe:

I remind you: What's in a name? Why fret o'er the bubble, Reputation? It is my inimitable spirit that shall reign immortal whatever the name.

Kyd:

What scheme you, that thy name is now of sleight account?

Marlowe:

All in bad time.

[Exeunt.]

D3 April. Smokefilled Room.

Sir Walter Raleigh [doing tobacco] :

There's waxing general hubbub on the heresy of our circle, and your verbal indiscretions trigger tremors to undo you. It is an essential of survival to learn that governments permit free speech only so long as it's ineffectual.⁸ Take public action against their schemes, and you'll quick learn more of actual liberty in England than you'll want to know, or I can impart or shield.

Marlowe [matching Raleigh's smoke]:

I've discussed with profit said danger with our spieri's guide and benefactor Thomas Walsingham, who is like unto god in his goodness, power, and invisibility, differing solely in the mere detail of actually existing, a chance diversion stirring theological inquiry: Raleigh, how take the unearthly unmirthly? Such as [mock sotto voce] *conveniently-invisible* eternity of Christian heaven, said to follow our puny mortal century, when blatantly, were it real, by the o'erwhelming temporal ratio, we are infinitely⁹ more likely to be gloriously situate in its ethereal expanse than pinched within our proportionally zeroic span upon this frantic planet?

Raleigh:

And why are the faithful, seeing the world's evil, so prone to admit humble puzzlement at god's plan, while yet on like evidence so arrogantly, insisently, and too often murderously sure there is a god?

Marlowe:

How else maintain poor ragged knaves' religious thrall, to gold-adornèd princes' unthralled dreams of wealth and empire? — absent just that flagrant contradiction in logic. Why else must governments invent and reinvent ecclesial mythology? — proclaiming each successive version the infallible one at last — and so lethally shield their fragile holy jests from the satan of reason, rendering doubt so villainous that men, who cannot in logical battle defend their faith therefrom, continue yet believing in and cleaving to the indefensible. Raleigh, if there be a more obvious fraud¹⁰ than religion, I would be enlightened by your naming it.

Raleigh:

Are such off-the-cuff sacrileges inspired by taking the divinest of the New World's tobacco deep?

Marlowe [starting yet another smoke]:

My robust health continues, inspired by your rich American bounty.

Raleigh [lighting up own next smoke]:

Our exalted — and exorbitantly profitable — drug we import from 'cross the sea, while the ever avaricious mercantile

⁷S.Blumenfeld *Marlowe-Shakespeare Connection* 2008 London p.230.

⁸See www.dioi.org/vols/w11.pdf, *DIO* 1.1 ¶2 §A3.

⁹See www.dioi.org/vols/w80.pdf, *DIO* 8 ¶5 §L3.

¹⁰That Marlowe thought Moses, Jesus, churches, etc, were frauds is part of spy-colleague Richard Baines' 1593/5/27 testimony to the Privy Council. See §E1 below.

forces now capturing England's Privy helm do instead import foreigners from neighbor Holland, though of suspect loyalty to my Lady's Church, and enfeebling to native labor's wages.

Marlowe:

Hollanders have dike-blocked floods for centuries, yet cannot sense our apprehension while flooding us with scabs?

Raleigh:

Why am I alone the Privy Councillor sensing danger in the worker wave from Holland?

Marlowe:

Beyond their own years, our gain-grabber merchants care not for the future of the realm —

Raleigh:

— or even the future they leave their own offspring.

Marlowe:

Nothing slays a dear land of plenty swifter than undear labor plenty —

Raleigh:

— slyly cheating the very lure of wealth that lights our workers' energy — by injecting into England foreign workers

Marlowe:

— swordlessly surrendering an isle not otherwise invaded¹¹ with success since our Norman forbears. Little surprise the Council suppresses atheism, hoping under-rewarded workers envision wages after death from Jesus' justice.

Raleigh:

Amongst the Privy Councillors the pinnacle of risibility is their oft-parroted mercantile lament that our nation's finances will collapse without alien labor.

Marlowe [laughing]:

If otherwise no enterprise may rise,
Then it must follow as the night the day:
The world entire's economy must swoon
Absent desperate¹² workers from the Moon!

Raleigh [guffawing]:

The economic theory of the sky!
Yet when will Holland's scabflow-tide be dammed?

Marlowe:

When one will risk forever to be damned.

D4 April

Dungeon Rackmaster [torturing Kyd for information]:

Dutch church doors littered asudden — with threats against our new Dutch labor, frightening through spectre of Parisian Huguenots' ill fate — the documents signed Tamburlaine, title of the premier play of your colleague and once-bedmate, who cuddled close in bestial sin.

Kyd [Rack-stretched]:

I swear by all holy that I know nothing of the Dutch Church Libels.

Rackman:

Wrong song.

To your blasphemous ilk, nought is holy.

Kyd [alternately fainting & screaming]:

How can I speak when pain does blank my mind?

Rackman:

The lever eases. Reward my kindness.

Kyd [chortle-scoffing bitterly]:

Yes, yes — t'was Marlowe wrote the threats — as you've a'ready divined, allaying guilt for informing at the last.

But I spill too late.

My body is now broken for all time.¹³

Rackman: The realm and its boys are safer for that.

Kyd: So now you'll sully forever my name? [Faints]

Rackman: My guild isn't known for guilt or for shame.

[Exit.]

¹¹ See www.dioi.org/vols/wg0.pdf, *DIO 16* ¶4 §G7. Actually, Henry VII had successfully invaded England by sea (1485), and William III was later to do likewise (1688).

¹² See, e.g., *New York Times* editorial 2004/1/9 on the US economy's dependence upon dirty jobs being cheaply done by "desperate" alien workers. Of course, the cash-strapped *NYT* only stays alive due to (a fact rarely cited in the US' Free Press) loans from Lebanese businessman Carlos Slim, richest man in Mexico. Two questions: [1] when the *NYT* found itself running out of fiscal credit, why did it have to endanger its journalistic credit by seeking funds not from Warren Buffett or Bill Gates, but from the richest man in a narco-state, with connexions to an Islamic area of the world? [2] If the *NYT* is commendably (if belatedly) concerned to investigate foreign influence upon the US government, why is it silently unconcerned about foreign influence upon itself?

¹³ Kyd died from his torture the following year.

E May

E1 Star Chamber, end of May meeting of Privy Council, incl. England's most powerful figure, English spier's originator Robert Cecil, and spy-procurer Francis Walsingham as England's spymaster-supreme

John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury:

We have some days past issued warrants for arrest of blasphemers, atheist, & buggerer Christopher Marlowe, and have found him hiding at Thomas Walsingham's estate. Supported by today's guest Essex, Councillor Robert Cecil insisted — incomprehensibly, given that atheism is treason against god's earthly pontiff Elizabeth — that Marlowe be bailed for the nonce. Against the chance of freedom, he has been severely warned to keep daily attendance upon our lordships. We continue to collect full enough evidence to ensure his ensnarement and execution — after sufficient torture to flush out names of fellow degenerates. Baines, his spying companion last year in Holland will now provide a round of justifications.

Richard Baines:

As a former co-spy I can testify to your Lordships as to Marlowe's iniquity most foul. Within mine, Greene's, & others' hearing he has scoffed at god, Elizabeth, the Afterlife, & our Church of England — even calling Moses a mountaintop chiseler & Jesus a carnival magician, and teaching young men that religion is a fraud¹⁴ imposed to cow men thus to bend them to their rulers' uses. He has diseased our young men's morals and now by his Dutch Church Libels arrogantly imagines he may interfere in matters of commerce and of labor.

Lord Robert Cecil:

Was not your fellow slanderer Greene starved to misery by miserly userer and Shake-Scene-actor Ned Alleyn? — and thus deceased last year? So of what account be his witness today?

Archbishop [undeterred]:

Marlowe's heretical infection must be more than blunted. It must be reversed, sent fleeing, expunged — punished so overwhelmingly, so hideously as to warn other blasphemers of the hellfire fate awaiting corruptors of youth.

Lord Robert Cecil:

Marlowe is like myself of common origin and now a multilinguist through Cambridge University. He is indeed heretical, yet the whole Raleigh circle is so but nevertheless is genially tholed. Marlowe differs in his revolutionary passion for action which by his vision would uplift men and protect the realm. True he has, against Raleigh's advice, far overstepped proper bounds in public discourse, but Essex and I — who accord on little else — do ask for consideration of Marlowe's learned and unprecedentedly beautiful literary contributions, to this nation's lasting grandeur.

Rob't Devereux Earl of Essex:

Just a passing thought: since Marlowe's atheism is — as we all do solemnly swear — assuredly false, why not refute him instead of racking him?

Archbishop:

Is it not safer for the realm if both medicines are brought forth against the illness of doubt?

Essex:

I know not what came over me. Unguarded speech in Elizabeth's England?! — What was I unguardedly thinking?

Archbishop:

A cautionary rhyme to certain overcertain sarcastic lords — from an amateur and professional politician:
those of careless tongue
lose their heads ere longue —

Council:

[muffled snickers at wannabe poet]

Archbishop:

— I quake when I sense in this very company the slightest zephyrs of mercy towards that satanic libertine, who cannot merely burn but first must be tortured long, to shake names and blare emphatic humiliation for his sins, impressing the wages of heresy upon our realm's infirm. Let us retire for the day on the instance of this vile apostate, but determined
that our next conclave must demand
a swift start to his unswift end.

Council:

— [unambivalent sniggers, safely inaudible,
at Whitgift's stumbling fling at iambic quadrameter: {able quadrameter: Scott's nobly anti-deceit 1808 *Marmion*}
just another couplet-flop] —

Essex [aside]:

A divine whose rhymes would be hooted from a nursery — fixed at lowing the highest poet of the world. [Exeunt.]

¹⁴E.g., Chas. Nicholl *The Reckoning: the Murder of Christopher Marlowe* 1992 London pp.47, 57.
(For modern use of "thole"[root and synonym for: tolerate] see www.dioi.org/dou.htm#tsnp.)

E2 Shortly After, Theatre District Pub*Publisher Edward Blount:*

Kit! — Thanks be, for you yet remain at large.

Marlowe [puffing-exhausted from sprinting unrecognized through slum alleys to meet Blount in secret]:

Dodging through darkways, tripping o'er my tongue

(a turn of phrase I'll turn again to gain). {*Hamlet* 3.2.}

For ignoring Raleigh's many warnings,

My time upon this English earth is short.

The Privy Council meets to doom my voice,

Thus let me quick impart what Blount needs know.

*Blount:*Count me in as long promised, dear valued friend, unequalled creator. You've asked that *Venus* be published instant under shadowy userer Shakespeare's name, with your just-concocted and politic dedication to young Earl of Southampton, protégé of powerful Essex, old Walsingham's son-in-law.*Marlowe* [handing ms to Blount]:This my unpolished¹⁵ but long-promised play*Massacre at Paris*, I leave with you.*Blount:*But, as you wish, your plays beyond must be anonymous for the nonce. And if the veriest rumor of your salvation airs a few years hence, fellow Cantab Francis Meres stands alert to overnight ascribe the lot to Shakespeare, while of equal sudden George Chapman releases your completed pseudo-incomplete poem *Hero & Leander* to remind all that Marlowe is sure dead. We'll hope the confluence is not over-stark.¹⁶*Marlowe* [still breathless]:On the morrow, east of London, at Deptford port on the Thames' south bank, after appearing in town, I'm to flee by ship. I connive in the soon after sham-shame wreckage of my name. I may never return to my home, my family, my friends. And my loves. But my craft I'll not abandon, if you but help as we agreed. Walsingham will fund scribes, thus the plays I'll send from the Continent will go pristine to the players absent trace of my hand. Of my latest play, *Massacre at Paris*, I ask that you retain a leaf¹⁷ in my hand as a last token of the real Marlowe — trusting *Massacre* to be staged anon, rendering credible tomorrow's like-scripted blade-reversal game — and to clue remote posterity to my most deadly play, Marlowe's own Deptford demise! Though roughly hewn, *Massacre* will succeed on synergised mayhem & Protestant rage.*Blount:*

Your Greek slithers among your English.

*Marlowe:*Another play I think upon is the oft-told tale of Denmark's Hamlet. My *Hamlet* will be Marlowe's apogee! — bearing my grandest soliloquies, and as a touch, it will end in yet another blade-trade, akin to *Massacre*'s final scene, as vengeful assassin Laertes' poisoned fatal foil deals death to Hamlet — then is scuffled to the hand of the doomed victim, who with same delivers quietus to his would-be-slyer slayer. Future poets must ultimately perceive that our thrice-tapped blade-flip device was as fictional at Deptford as for *Massacre & Hamlet*.*Blount:*

If parallels are not perceived at first, they're sure to be ere the end of man.

*Marlowe:*Years hence when final revisions crown plays of my dying days, dear Walsingham and a new and dark rich friend have put funds ahead for release of all in folio, with you as publisher. If danger has passed for present agents of my flight, my name goes upon the folio cover — else put my front upon the front. *By then, I will be he.**Blount:*

As I now prepare to settle your estate, I must inquire: is it too transparent that said immortal volume be arranged and published under the eye of the accursèd Marlowe's executor, myself? Shakespeare's unremarkability, and his debut right upon the heels of your banishment-vanishment, are clues which more than suffice to reveal the dangerous truth in time. Why tie a skyrocket to these?

*Marlowe:*Merely more clues left to posterity, enlightening those who follow wise William of Occam in the path of reason and discovery. Yet the Privy Council's documental secrecy and our Deptford guile will leave no *tangible trail*, thus the mass of those impoverished minds who require such instruction will fourth-wit be noseled by our genius into accepting my extinction, guided into petrimmunity from mere evidence, improbability, inconsistency, and logic against it, whatever

¹⁵*Massacre*'s unfinished state is discussed for its significance at www.dioi.org/vols/wi0.pdf, *DIO 18* §P2. The play's incomplete messiness makes no sense if it was staged in 1593 January as anti-Marlovian Nicholl believed. The correct 1594 January date is obvious to a calendarist: *idem*.

¹⁶The confluence came to pass 5^y later, in 1598. See www.dioi.org/vols/wi0.pdf, *DIO 18* §§L5-L9.

¹⁷Folger Library holds such, which some assert could be direct from Marlowe.

gifted detectors may unravel in centuries to come. Just as we wish! — for now keeping all snug from inquisitors' sanguine maws, 'til long past our fraternity's flight to the grave's eternal surety. If Council's usual privynance holds, few or none will relate Marlowe's exit to Shakespeare's entrance. But if — as likely — Archbishop Whitgift imparts the slightest glimpse of Council's late doings to his holy colleagues for their relish and pulpit fury, my public Death solidifies as were it tombstone, even absent bruted sequentiality.

Blount:

Then Shakespeare's credit may be fixed for all time.

Marlowe:

I'll not forget your advice and partshare, in our ennobling of the souls of our time, and past same. Keep you well — and hope and look for my return. [Exit.]

F The Perfect Non-Murder

F1 May 29 Night at Eleanor Bull's Guesthouse

Poley [ecstatically swelling]:

So — our Walsingham ring to the rescue yet again. Like earlier deeds! The job's quicker — a few hours work instead of years. And far easier, just a standard cloak&dagger bit — saving one person instead of a whole nation. BUT . . . whom we rescue for the ages is one I'm proud to own as fellow Cantab, colleague, and friend — the sublimest poet that was ever on this Earth. And is not Poley the most blessed spy in all sneakdom's annals? — that Fate should *DOUBLY* grant grand spy-enterprise? My prior pride in saving England yields now to greater glory yet, in saving works that will outlive the British empire, enduring "for all time!"¹⁸ — wrought from dream to substance through our spymate, nonpareil creator Kit Marlowe.

Skeres:

And you fill my cup of pride with thanks as well, for I entered life lower than Poley and am even yet a mere errand-errant. Thus will my felicity at celestial elevation be the greater.

Poley:

Now down to it. Skeres, you have the dagger, hammer, and body that I ordered be brought?

Skeres:

As reliably as ever was.

Poley:

Recall we thought first of sampling corpses from the resurrectionists, but with plague o'erwhelming London, the notion died. Instead, sufficient invisible coin from on high in apt invisible hands, has produced the corpse of like-aged and like-persecuted John Penry, freshly hanged nearby, just hours ago on our convenient sudden,¹⁹ for a long lingering charge of sedition.

Skeres:

But what's your plan?

Poley:

I counseled, but it's mostly Kit's deeply devious scheme — he's been concocting fiction and plots for years, so who more apt?

Ingram Frizer [of Thos. Walsingham's household]:

Why call me into this?

Poley:

Because you are going to kill Christopher Marlowe.

Skeres:

Murder! Now hold! This is outrageous — intolerable. Nobody warned me of this! — You know full well that murder'll cost you plenty more coin than bought me and brought me into this scheme.

Frizer [smiling]:

This is getting so . . . enticing.

Poley [in his lordliest Cambridge accent]:

Sorry to disappoint you lowlife lot, but I speak of FAKE murder.

Skeres&Frizer [in exaggeratedly-hanghead downcast chorus]:

Oh —

¹⁸ Ben Jonson's preface to the 1623 First Folio (*The First Folio of Shakespeare*, prepared by Charlton Hinman, Norton, NYC 1968, pp.9-10) p.10. [DIO's copy of this reproduction was left to us by our late lifetime friend R.L.Smith. The present play's several quotes from Marlowe are verbatim from the First Folio. (Editions of the plays that are commonly read today exhibit occasional divergences from the 1623 original.)]

¹⁹ Among Peter Farey's wealth of Marlovian contributions (www2.prestel.co.uk/rey/biog.htm) is the tempting theory that the entire fake-horrid-death escape plan was pre-agreed-upon from England's rulership, as a compromise between those who wished private preservation of a unique talent and those who required publicly perceived punishment of heresy & treason. Wellknown dissenter John Penry's death on the eve of Marlowe's "death" is the provocative discovery of David More (while Editor of *The Marlovian*). See Blumenfeld pp.211, 218, & 240.

Poley:

Kit's idea being to put himself beyond not just the *reach* of the vengeful law but the very *thought* of same, by convincing all that he is dead, so there be no point in seeking for him. Only if that fraud succeeds is Marlowe truly free.

Skeres:

Thus the man-shell corpse before us.

Frizer:

What need we a dagger if he's already done? And how can subterfuge succeed with a face not Marlowe's?

Poley:

Marlowe's first answer to your double protests is singular: "Oh, death's a great disguiser"²⁰ —

Skeres:

— how true! ah — I'm told —

Poley:

— "and you may adde to it" by dagger. Marlowe's plan is that we simulate a brawl on the morrow at this port²¹ of Deptford on the Thames, from whose strand he'll sail downriver straight to Europe, just as soon he's shown himself to Mistress Bull and sundry, and slipped away the few yards to the dock and embarked. We then stab the corpse's face to obscure identity, raise alarm, and present the coroner with the bloody result, so that he and all who hear of this will be **justly and absolutely sure** that Marlowe is dead, neglecting that their chain of herded attachment to said proposition is only as strong as its weakest link: the body's IDENTIFICATION. Which must be by us, his friends — who better? True, the trick's cruder than magic-for-idiots, but — watch it work. Not just on coroner Danby but on weaklink-blind generations to come.

Skeres:

But isn't facial damage's purpose too obvious? — who stabs someone in the face? We should balance the head-blow with a flock to the torso.

Poley:

The blow must be but one,²² for Frizer to dodge indictment for killing an unarmed man. One blow be forgivable hot passion, leaving accident credible. More speaks vengeful murder. For that symmetry of blows you rightly seek, slight sanguine scars on Frizer's crown will suffice.

Frizer [grumpily]:

So now I'm to *bleed*, too? For *symmetry*? —

Poley:

— even if coroner Danby hasn't been turned by coin of Walsingham or other, consider: as thousands of plague-stilled corpses flow daily past, he'll not pause a minute over any one among them. Have courage and take comfort from the omen of Marlowe's bail-freedom — signifying his high friends o'erseeing these epochal events. For surely the least likely part of Marlowe's scheme is not our present corpse & tools but the *bailing of a traitor* — **yet it is already done**. Our simple successes must follow that impossible success.

Skeres:

Impart the simulation Kit has scripted.

Poley:

We'll report a wrangle 'twixt Frizer and Marlowe over a bill of fare, and Kit asks that his own rôle in it be as humiliating as we can devise. Both in order that it satisfy the archbishop's bloodthirst — and that it seem incredible Kit would conspire at so fatally and vilely destroying his name.

Frizer:

Such as it is.

Skeres:

Was.

Poley:

A nice touch is his advice to report that his own²³ dagger was left at home, so only one blade be in play, which ensures the match of Frizer's to the wound. Having stolen backturned Frizer's dagger, Marlowe will be damned for stabbing an unarmed man from behind, multiplying disgrace by disgrace. Then, following his latest (other) play's regal precedent at *Massacre at Paris*' end, Frizer will seize the dagger from Marlowe's hand and stab him once in the brow.

Skeres:

How can one stab atop the face be passed off as fatal? — especially wih Frizer's headblood so trifling.

Poley:

True, the brow is hard; but blood-flow and brain-ooze from there will mask already-shattered face beyond cognizance

²⁰ *Measure for Measure* 4.2.

²¹ Blumenfeld p.219. (Deptford was the port where Henry Hudson's ship returned home in 1611.)

²² See www.dioi.org/vols/wi0.pdf, *DIO 18* §E12 [2].

²³ Calvin Hoffman *Murder of the Man Who Was 'Shakespeare'* 1955 NYC p.48.

— and the hanging's ropeburn beyond notice. A belated truce must occur in a trice; for after we feign loud commotion, witnesses unbribed may quick invade our play. And an unbribed man can never be trusted.

Skeres [smugly chuckling]:

I ponder several score pounds further insurances of our trustworth.

Poley:

Now's not the time to bargain — enough that Walsingham will love you for this. And forever.

Frizer:

I know my lord is true. I am entigered.

Poley:

Frizer, on the morrow you will hammer dagger into forehead over yon eye, with strength enough to split Penry's skull for its distortion's gain, in hope that coroner and jury will fear²⁴ to stare too long upon spilt brains and dangling eyeball.

Frizer [gagging on verge of nausea]:

Ah — even absent murder, methinks we are too lightly paid.

Skeres [paling & turning away]:

I second yon wretch's retch.

Poley:

Enough of softness at mere prospect, when morrow's deed will want steel. We actors peer now o'er the verge of our most glorious day. [Baskeunt]

F2 Deptford Garden May 30

Marlowe:

We have walked for hours in this peaceful garden that I be placed as at Deptford by many eyes, ere the peaceless play to be performed this day.

Poley:

It's not done yet, but your corpse is at hand, and your latest tragedy's serpentine plot rehearsed.

Marlowe:

When you tell the tale of my craven slices upon Frizer's hindscalp, remember that Poley & Skeres must be said to have flanked Frizer in parallel upon a supping table's bench, so that in no wise could he take flight, not fore nor aft, neither left nor right — thus will his defensive tale sure whisk him from jail forthwith.

Poley:

We are not unaware of the care your scheme has taken to shield our lives.

Marlowe:

I am thrice honored by my dear friends.

Poley:

Your thanks are nothing beside we players' privilege, as actors in the most crucial and flawlessly designed of all theatre creations, a great reckoning in a little room²⁵ — and upon the stage of the universe.

Marlowe:

Given our guile, and the surety that centuries — and we — will pass before the coroner's record will light, revealing that the witnesses to the corpse's identity were the realm's most skilled and devious liars, as Babington's end attests —

Poley [beaming]:

— I blush with pride —

Skeres [joyfully]:

— I second the blush —

Marlowe:

— 'twill be the next millennium ere the secret be induced and known to all, when it cannot harm unseen heroes of centuries past.

Skeres [to Marlowe]:

Fellow dissembler, you've inversely done the crime that all say none can do: you have created *the perfect non-murder*.

Poley:

Those jealous of creative gifts ever beyond their longing, say those merely dream who cannot do. Thus Kit's pristine achievement, that we few now dare&share, refutes said slander for all time — albeit in secret for centuries hence. What irony can exceed our triumph when the greatest of all literary dreamers has *in real life* designed what will ultimately, when properly placed among outed successes, become famous as the most durably impenetrable crime ever wrought!

Marlowe:

You sully my soul even while felicitating same with pride's corrupting joy. Yet alas it is time I slip to ship, though my tears of happiness — at breathing yet — are braided with those of melancholy. Will ever I set eyes upon green England more? When shall we four meet again? Shall we ever, indeed? Farewell, perhaps forever, as I trade

²⁴Inspired suggestion by R.Barber 2012 p.210.

²⁵Touchstone in *As You Like It* 3.3.

Winter's dreammare of incipient extinction through all eternity, for Spring's fresh prospect of freedom secure to conjure dramatic poemusical flights, at last realizing the hope of unhindered and munificently sponsored retirement from ungrateful mundanity, taking passage to my own creative heaven's gate. This by good assurance of noble lovers of pioneer fashioning of the English language, Walsingham — and a newfound benefactor, a lender who's been around the theatre, and whose name might even acquire a minim of passing recognition from our venture. You'll know it soon enough. Eternal parting thanks to my boldest saviours, those who've leaped jointly high to outdo god himself, to out-Jesus Jesus. *I, atheist Christopher Marlowe, will rise from death.* Jesus never did, his post-Easter invisibility risibly passed off as *god's* fear of the human police! — he that was said to have repulsed already Dis himself, now succumbing to Resurrectile Dis-function? Sure had he returned to life on Easter Sunday his reborn self would in triumph²⁶ have marched godboldly through the streets of Jerusalem, mounting the Mount of Olives, marvelled at by all who'd shared the horror of witnessing his sure-fatal crucifixion, thereby curtailing centuries of religious slaughter by converting the world to Christianity forthwith.

Poley:

How can the faithful go years, decades, whole lifetimes believing the Christian myth, while never pausing for two successive minutes, to ponder the obvious implications of its paradoxes?

Marlowe:

Do none wonder that among the disciples, Judas alone²⁷ was so cast down by Jesus' secret life of luxury, that the mere man Judas brought the Earth-god Jesus to apprehension, arrest, torture, and death?

Poley:

Was Judas not the most evil disciple of legend but rather he who truly loved mankind, asking why money spent on expensive ointment for merry Mary massage might not be better²⁸ devoted to alleviating poverty? — Judas ironically suffering perpetual calumny for a higher and more sympathetic ethic than the terrestrial god's cold and ponderable reply [fn 28] that poverty was eternal on Earth but he was not. And was Judas' soon-after death any more voluntary than Penry's? Or was it an enraged racket's vengeance for loss of its plebeian magic-show's premier attraction?

Marlowe:

Too-unconsidered points, good Robert, worthy of your agile Cantab mind — to which I owe as well my slipping torture, as the Christian god could not.

Poley [swelling]:

Enlightened skepticism is but part of Marlowe's precious and thankfully undaggered brain. The privy privilege of friendship with and salvation of England's sublimest mind, is Poley's apotheosis eternal — though here alloyed by Kit's departure, and awareness that my life's epochal but ever-hidden glories now crest, their highest deeds fulfilled.

Marlowe:

My creations hence arise from exalted fervor in memory of our fast and daring brotherhood, which saved England from Philip's grasp and now preserves my font of poesy for enrichment of all generations to be. [Exit.]

F3 Later Same Day at Bull Guesthouse

Skeres [yelling in panic to Poley]:

Robert, we may be undone — and headed for the headless! I heard rumor of Kit at the strand, espied embarking!

Poley:

Tremble not. Why think you we four earlier this day feasted at the pub aboard Drake's circumglobèd ship, the *Golden Hind*, so happily retired to honoured display at Deptford. We scotch rumor by charging loose witnesses with wine-inspired confusion of one ship with another. I trow and will ensure that memory of immortal Marlowe upon his final day of life going aboard the *Golden Hind* — not his escape ship to meet his fellow spies — will last through the centuries.²⁹ Skeres, we must now prepare the corpse.

Skeres [thus calmed — and soon busy hammering dagger into Penry's skull]:

Skulls are harder than you imagine; but also brittle — SO IT SPLITS —

Frizer:

— NO, IT EXPLODES! [as Penry's brains gush, right eyeball protrudes but stays put]

Skeres:

Yet of what value are Poley's pledges of reward? — when e'en an eyeball's promised dangle disappoints —

Poley:

— take then your pay in brains — right there aplenty! —

²⁶The possibility that underworld-god Dis [Hades or Pluto] ultimately retained Jesus in the Earth is so unacceptable to Christians that the gospels explain Jesus' post-resurrection non-visibility — which the post-gospels book of Acts transparently tried belatedly to deny (probably reacting to natural skepticism) — as from his intimidation by the mortal gov't. Odd for god.

²⁷See *DIO* 8 ¶5 §C2.

²⁸John 11.2 & 12.3-9. Less specific versions at Mark 14.3-11 & Matt.26:7-16.

Re Judas, see, e.g., Mark 14.10-11, Matt.27.3-10, Luke 22.4-5, John 12.4-8, Acts 1.16-18.

²⁹Nathan Dews *History of Deptford* . . . Deptford 1883 p.124. (The 1797 mutiny-ship *Hermione* was pointedly memory-holed at Deptford c.1805.)

Frizer:

— and Nick could use 'em. Now to symmetric stabbing of my head. Bleed as you must but leave no flows that may prove fatal to my patal beauty.

Skeres:

Can our grizzled Frizer be now jester to our little court? Can stage glory be distant far?

Frizer:

Must I be bled and mocked upon the selfsame day, o brutest of cutpurses,³⁰ Skeres? Faint you yet before mirrors?

Poley [lightly stabbing the back of Frizer's head]:

Ah, fresh blood for the enhancement of our corpse.

Frizer:

I sense going white from drainage! Hand me one of Skeres' abandoned mirrors —

Poley:

— your infantile jests at danger betoken fear — yet have courage. Thanks to Kit's bail, we are halfplus home, even as in hours so little past the starting gate. It's nigh time to raise the house. Ready? — HELP!

Skeres&Frizer:

HELP!

Innkeeper Eleanor Bull [bursting in]:

What mischief now, my ever-loutish lot?

Frizer:

Oh! — a hideous accident! — our dear friend Kit Marlowe lies wounded. He moves not. Summon help!

Bull [checking pulse]:

Wounded? He's dead! Horrible! The worst. Just what a respectable innkeeper needs — a bloody scandal.

Skeres:

Real blood anyways —

Poley [in command]:

— stifle the pathetic jests, and get the bulls to Bull's.

[Exeunt.]

G Prophecy & Resurrection: Atheist Easter

G1 Coroner & Jury Gathered

Poley [quietly to Skeres & Frizer]:

Let me do the talk. Adding to jurymen's aversion to vision of eyeball-horror, further distraction from the crux of identification to minutiae of brawl-mechanics will fog and slumber the court. Watch me and learn.

Coroner Wm. Danby [glowering — officially]:

How did the killing happen? Be brief.

Poley:

Your Lordship, this poor bloody vessel held once the soul of our friend Kit — that is to say Christopher Marlowe — who, inflamed over cost of our repast, did hotly pounce upon our friend Ingram Frizer who defended himself too well, to his sorrow. We bring the dagger that Marlowe snatched a'sudden from Frizer's sheath, ferally striking his crown. Bleeding Frizer was so pinned fore&aft 'twixt table and bench, while blocked left&right by friends Nicholas Skeres and myself seated on either side, that he could not retreat; strong Frizer grabbed frail Kit's blade and when pushing him away did accidentally strike without intent as to either place or part of dagger. By chance it happened that the point was forward and by further chance it struck at forehead near eye, with the sad and horrid result laid before us.

Danby:

Excess detail hardly answers our charge of brevity. Once Marlowe was disarmed, killing him was needless. Defendant Frizer's several accidents seem improbable in series. I will have him held for further weighing of his story's truth, though I see no sure proof of ill intent towards his friend. Bailiffs quick remove this rotting remnant ere it fouls the court more. We will preserve in script full tale of these gymnastic events at Deptford.

Poley [lip-motionless aside to Frizer, sotto-voce]:

Did I not predict that diversion from the beam of identity-fraud to the mote of brawl-nits would succeed? You'll be out in a month. And lifetime secure³¹ for it.

[Exeunt.]

³⁰Bakeless 1:183. (The use of 2 fellow spies as witnesses to the fake killing of a 3rd is key to Graham Greene's 1949 British film, *The Third Man*.)

³¹The incongruity that quickly-sprung Frizer was quicker-rehired by T. Walsingham — despite having just killed his valued friend — has attracted notice by Bakeless *op cit* 1:157f, Blumenfeld p.40, even *EncycBrit* 14:925, 1961 ed.

G2 Thirteen Days After Deptford, June 12: London Bookstalls*Queen's Servant Richard Stonley:*

Storekeeper, who's this fresh author? William something. Let's see: William Shakespeare. Never heard of him, but browsing through his *Venus & Adonis* I am exalted by wordflight never approached but by Marlowe's mighty line.³² How can one of no prior appearance — nor membership in any intellectual circle known to me in London — arise a phoenix from a vacuum? As steeply as suddenly, his verses soar in verbal music — and maturity! — at the uranian heights of those vouchsafed us by the most divine of all prior bards! And this, so strangely, appearing under two weeks³³ after the hitherto-incomparable Marlowe's death.

BookStoreOwner:

So lamented by our poets.

Stonley:

So huzzahed by our divines, who a'ready thunder to their flocks, savouring God's awful vengeance upon scoffers at His power.

Owner [anachronistically]:

Marlowe's woes trigger prelates to snigger
He died of a surfeit of just deserts.

The poem you peruse was registered without author last April but bears at outset a since-appended dedication, by this new fellow Shakespeare, to Essex' boy, Earl of Southampton, announcing *Venus* as Shakespeare's first creation.

Stonley:

Such deftness — as if he'd been writing for years!

G3 September 22: Stonley's Home*Stonley:*

What make you of nature-gifted rustic Shakespeare's lightning dawn? *Venus & Adonis* is registered today as his, but I learn there be no manuscript in his hand.

Ben Jonson:

Many wonder at Stratford's enigma,
Who keeps to self, and pens no missives,
Pleads pain of hand whenever asked to write,
Having³⁴ small Latin and less Greek, it's said —
Weirder yet, he even shuns debauches.³⁵

Stonley:

Venus' creator must be deep steeped in the classics — but how, with feeble Latin and feebler Greek?

Jonson:

More to the point, how would Shakespeare be schooled at all while in the lack of Latin? — which be the common language of instruction³⁶ at all our grammar schools.

Stonley:

Some divine a front though none explain it.
Why the creator's flight into darkness?

Jonson:

How shall we ever know, when all are feared to publish doubt, Shakespeare being wealthy and famously litigious?

Stonley:

Know you eo-geography's curiosity that the first precise extant measure of the girth of Earth appeared at the very time and place when Alexandria's wondrous lighthouse was raised half a stade into the clouds above the harbor isle of Pharos? — a flame-capped pylon gargantuanly towering to guide ships as distant as 202 stades at sea, whilst ingeniously

³²Jonson *op cit* [fn 18] p.9; Bakeless 2:173f.

³³The dedication that prefaces Shakespeare's *Venus&Adonis* specifies it's his 1st publication. That it hit the street under 2 weeks after Marlowe's disappearance is acknowledged even by the Stratfordians' leading anti-Marlovian, Chas. Nicholl (at Paul Edmondson & Stanley Wells, Eds., *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt* U.Cambridge 2013 p.29), who passes off the segue as just an "apparent chronological neatness". But unglubbable Ted Hughes (England's Poet Laureate 1984-1998) perceives the obvious while commenting on creativity vs worldliness and celebrity: "The way to really develop as a writer is to make yourself a political outcast, so that you have to live in secret. This is how Marlowe developed into Shakespeare." (Quoted at Barber p.v.) Hughes is one of numerous authors and jurists who have realized for over a century that Shakespeare never wrote a play: e.g., Twain, H.James, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Justice Stevens. Hughes' observation on word-music revolutionary Marlowe reminds one of Beethoven, whose isolation by near-deafness led to orchestral music's greatest creative revolution. (Similarly, an astonishing number of English words were born during the Elizabethan period.) Before his exile, Marlowe was playcraft's free spirit, much as Caravaggio was painting's. We owe it to the Walsingham family that Marlowe did not suffer the same early extinction as snuffed Caravaggio in 1610 at age 37^y, even while Marlowe lived on to cap his career with the *Tempest* the following year — when also appeared the 1611 King James Version of the Bible, for which it's possible Marlowe provided anonymous assistance.

³⁴ Jonson *op cit* [fn 18] p.9; Diana Price *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography* 2001 London pp.187&211.

³⁵*Ibid* p.127.

³⁶Carol Rutter at Edmondson & Wells *op cit* p.135. First connexion to Jonson's Latin-Greek testimony (fn 34): Rawlins *Bardbeard* §I3.

yet yielding Earth's radius from the square of that very farthest³⁷ of its light's sightability. Is it not [winking at Jonson] a like wonder of time **AND** place that London's blank verse pioneer Kit Marlowe's lyric blaze, feared snuffed to eternity, has, in our selfsame town of London — *within 4 miles and 2 weeks of where and when it died* — reflamed to lofty metric life in an ere-unknown genius? And he but a countrybred lucrelender?

Jonson [returning wink]:

True-blessed are we that shadowy entities let not our loss be longstanding. As we are uplifted by Shakespeare's honeytongued verse, it is transcendantly as if

We worship at an Atheist Easter
As dear dead muse Kit Marlowe resurrects.³⁸

[Curtain.]

[See www.dioi.org/vols/wi0.pdf, for *DIO's* book *BardBeard*, which makes the case for Marlowe's authorship of Shakespeare, by the criteria of science & epistemological philosophy of science, providing detailed source citations & cross-references. The play's words are Elizabethan-era almost exclusively, but the style departs at will. *DIO* asks forbearance of occasional blatant borrowings from or takeoffs on Marlowe (whose gift for language we couldn't even pretend to approach), all of which are easily recognized by experts. This is not literature but (loose) historical dramedy.]

³⁷See *Griffith Observer* 2018 August, or www.dioi.org/vols/we0.pdf, *DIO 14* ¶1 pp.3-12, reconstructing architect Sostratos' intent to build the Pharos exactly 300 feet high, so that *the square of its visibility distance in stades equalled the Earth's radius in stades*. [The stade was uniformized c.300 BC by Pharaoh Ptolemy Soter to equal 185 meters or 1/10 of a modern nautical mile: www.dioi.org/tm.pdf.] At 1st glance, this will sound dimensionally impossible to scientists, who ought to check the cited source's eq.21 to understand how&why it works so neatly — and to see how atmospheric refraction would enhance the empirical result by 6/5, which is almost exactly the long-wheelspinningly-debated error in the 19%-high Sostratos-Eratosthenes-Strabo Earth-circumference, 256000 stades (*Archive for History of Exact Sciences* 26.3:211-219, 1982): *Griffith Observer* 82:9-16, 2018 Aug (www.dioi.org/g828.pdf) p.14. For airbent horizontal light's inverse effect (5/6, not 6/5) on later ancient Earth-measure (by double-sunsets), see Rawlins, *Amer.J.Physics* 47:126-128, 1979. This under-estimate, 180000 stades (attributed to Poseidonios, c.50 BC), so long endured as to influence Columbus, over 1000^y later. Through the 1990s, the double-sunset method of Earth-measure was applied-physics example #1 in the standard physics textbook Halliday, Resnick, & Walker, with frontispiece sunset photo & generous credit to DR. For another controversy's induction-inspiring multi-confluence, see R.Byrd's quadruply-simultaneous claims, doubted at Rawlins *Peary . . . Fiction?* Wash DC 1973 p.263 — & vindicated: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/09/did-byrd-reach-pole-his-diary-hints-no.html>, *New York Times* 1996/5/9 p.1; www.dioi.org/vols/wa0.pdf, *DIO 10*:3-106, 2000, co-published with the University of Cambridge's *Polar Record* 50:25-50, 2000.

³⁸Fulfilling Marlowe's sacrilegious prophecy-boast above at §F2.