

■ Tekst 12

Mystery of Marlowe murder is solved

by Amelia Hill

THE DEATH of Christopher Marlowe is one of the most enduring mysteries of literary history. Now a new twist to the tale has been uncovered by an author who claims to know why the playwright was murdered.

Marlowe died at 29 in a tavern brawl. Historians have claimed his death was an accident, or a premeditated killing designed to protect a high-ranking member of the Elizabethan government. Some have even said the killing was faked to allow Marlowe to escape his political enemies.

New research, however, backs the theory that his death was ordered by the higher echelons of society – and claims to reveal the secret behind it.

Marlowe, a spy, counter-spy, atheist, homosexual and government critic, was fêted for his plays, including *Tamburlaine*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward II* and *Dr Faustus*. In the official version of his death, Marlowe was murdered in 1593 after spending the day smoking and playing backgammon with Ingram Frizer, Nicholas Keres and Robert Poley in Deptford, south London. Shortly after the four had eaten supper, Marlowe and Frizer quarrelled over who was to pay the bill. Marlowe grabbed Frizer's dagger, slashing at him wildly about the

head. Frizer drove the dagger into Marlowe's head, above the right eye. Death was instantaneous.

'It has come down to us as a brawl,' said Mei Trow, a scholar and author of *Who Killed Kit Marlowe?* 'Except it did not happen that way. It was an elaborate fabrication to cover up the murder.'

The truth, Trow maintains, was discovered in a document in the British Museum, indicating that members of the then Privy Council, the highest court in the land, were atheists – a heresy in Elizabethan law that was punished with execution.

Trow believes Marlowe discovered the truth about four Council members: William Cecil, Baron Burghley; his son Robert Cecil; Lord Henry Howard and Baron Henry Carey Hunsdon.

'Marlowe had evidence of their heretical and blasphemous views,' Trow said. 'Exactly how he found out we cannot know, but as the winter of 1592-93 turned into spring Marlowe was becoming ever more outrageous.'

In January 1593 *Edward II* was performed, slipping past the censor, despite a general acknowledgement that Marlowe had used the play to hint at his knowledge. 'The play's *Edward II* is clearly used to symbolise Elizabeth, while Burghley and the Cecil clan are represented by Gaveston,' said Trow. 'Could there



Christopher Marlowe's portrait at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

be a clearer denunciation of the Machiavellians who ran Elizabethan England?

The four subjects of his taunts, Trow maintains, had to silence Marlowe 'because of what he knew'. Frizer, Keres and Poley were promised immunity from prosecution if they carried out the murder, a claim supported by the fact that all were cleared after a short trial and granted titles and positions of wealth and influence.

Trow said: 'Marlowe was a maverick, a rebel, a whistleblower. In the paranoia of the Elizabethan police state, great men bent the law to their own ends. Many suffered as a result; Marlowe was only the most famous of them.'

'The Observer'

Lees bij de volgende opgaven steeds eerst de vraag voordat je de bijbehorende tekst raadpleegt.

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“Mystery of Marlowe murder is solved” (titel)

Je vraagt je af *waarom* Marlowe werd vermoord.

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