

Question 51

Are there any factual objections to the belief that Christopher Marlowe wrote the work attributed to Shakespeare?

Charles Nicholl

There are many implausibilities about the idea that Christopher Marlowe wrote the plays of Shakespeare, but over and above these there is one glaring factual objection, which is that Marlowe was stabbed to death in 1593, as evidenced in various documents, including a coroner's report, and that he was therefore actually dead when most of the Shakespeare plays were written.

To counter this very large stumbling-block a complicated story has been proposed, in which the body seen by the coroner was actually somebody else's, and Marlowe had meanwhile been spirited away to the continent, there to spend the next twenty odd years grooming his false whiskers and writing plays such as *Hamlet*.

There are many interesting questions to be asked about Marlowe's relationship with Shakespeare, but the question 'Did he *write* the plays of Shakespeare?' is not one of them.