

# Christopher Marlowe





1564-1593

**Christopher Marlowe**(baptised 26 February 1564; died 30 May 1593) was an English dramatist, poet and translator of the Elizabethan era.

- Marlowe was born in 1564 (the same year as Shakespeare), the son of a shoemaker at Canterbury. His date of birth is not known, but he was baptised on 26 February 1564, and is likely to have been born a few days before.
- Taking his master's degree after seven years at Cambridge, in 1587, he followed the other 'university wits' to London. which included the poets D. Lilly, T. Nash, R. Green, J. Peel, and T. Lodge. And almost at once began writing for the stage. There, probably the same year and the next, he astonished the public with the two parts of 'Tamburlaine the Great,' His first dramas were composed in blank verse. was performed in London in 1587.



Marlowe was christened at St. George's Church, in Canterbury.

- These plays are splendidly imaginative and poetic, and were by far the most powerful that had yet been written in England.
- In 1589 Marlowe was charged with the murder of William Bradley and sent to Newgate Prison, but acquitted after two weeks. It was not the last time when the quick tempered author was arrested and jailed. In 1592 an injunction was brought against him because of a street fight, in which a man was killed. Marlowe was also deported from Netherlands for counterfeiting gold coins.
- Numerous plays have been assigned to Marlowe. Unfortunately, Marlowe neglected to publish authoritative texts, and his literary remnants consist much of incomplete works. However, his blank verse, written with great intensity, and villain-heroes - a new type on the English stage - influenced deeply the theatre of his time.

Marlowe's major plays were written between 1585 and 1593, among them Tamburlaine, Parts I and II, and THE JEW OF MALTA, a tragedy and parody of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). Machiavelli - or Machiavel as Marlowe calls him - is portrayed as the embodiment of political manipulator. *"If one takes The Jew of Malta not as a tragedy, or as a "tragedy of blood," but as a farce, the concluding act becomes intelligible; and if we attend with a careful ear to the versification, we find that Marlowe develops a tone to suit this farce, and even perhaps that this tone is his most powerful and mature tone."* (T.S. Eliot in *Selected Essays*, new edition, 1960)

**THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS** was based on the medieval legend of the bargain with the Devil. "Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters," says in the beginning of the play,. Eventually, after making his pact with the Devil and finding only empty answers to his questions, the tragic hero rejects black magic and calls upon Christ to save him. Marlowe himself was a soulmate of Faustus, accused of atheism.



W.P.A. FEDERAL THEATRE PRESENTS

# FAUSTUS

BY CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE



MAXINE ELLIOTT'S THEATRE  
109 WEST 39<sup>th</sup> STREET

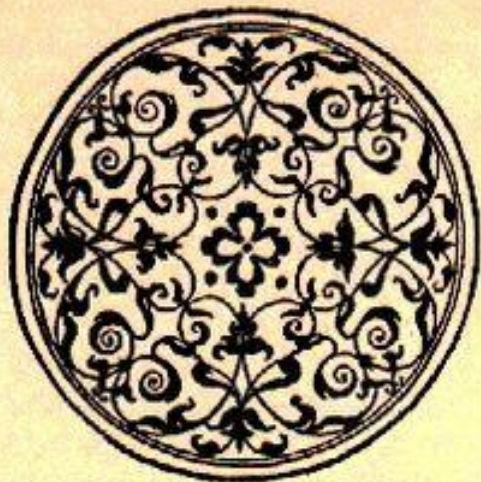
FEDERAL ART PROJECT, NYC

Poster for WPA  
performance of  
Marlowe's  
*Faustus*, New  
York, circa 1935

Edward the Second is an English history play about the deposition of King Edward II by his barons and the Queen, who resent the undue influence the king's favourites have in court and state affairs. The play was entered into the Stationers' Register on 6 July 1593, five weeks after Marlowe's death. The full title of the earliest extant edition, of 1594, is "The Troublesome Reign and Lamentable Death of Edward the Second, King of England, with the Tragical Fall of Proud Mortimer." The play was first acted in 1592 or 1593.

The troublefome  
raigne and lamentable death of  
Edward *the second*, King of  
England: with the tragicall  
*fall of proud* Mortimer:

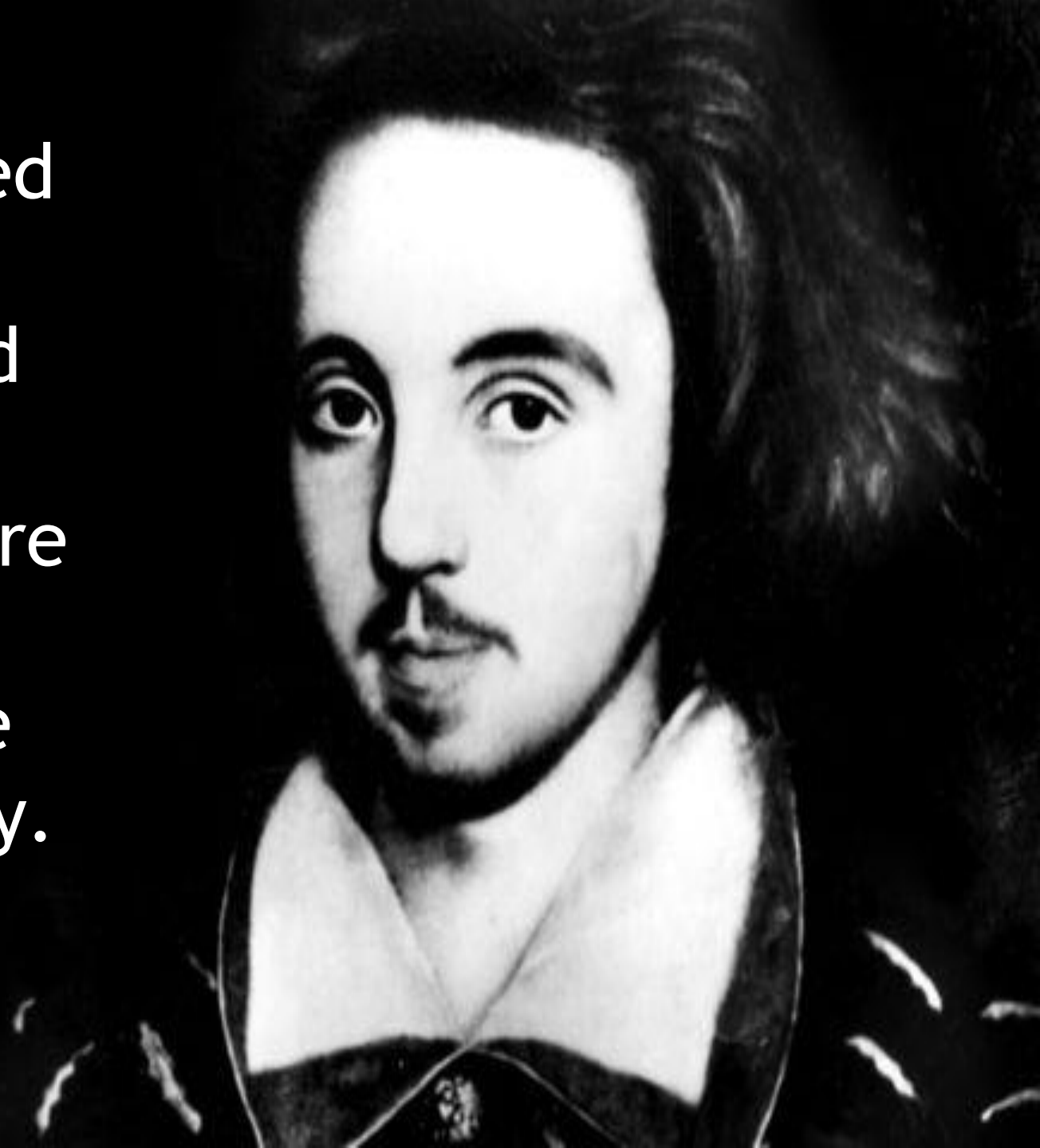
As it was fundrie times publicly acted  
*in the honourable citie of London*, by the  
right honourable the Earle of Pem-  
*brooke his seruants.*  
*Written by* Chri. Marlow *Gent.*



Imprinted at London for *William Iones*,  
dwelling neere Holbourne conduit, at the  
*signe of the Gunne.* 1594.

Title page of  
the earliest  
published text  
of *Edward II*  
(1594)

He was killed  
in 1593 in a  
reckless and  
foolish  
brawl, before  
he had  
reached the  
age of thirty.



- If Marlowe's life was unworthy, the fault must be laid rather at the door of circumstances than of his own genuine nature.
- His plays show him to have been an ardent idealist and a representative of many of the qualities that made the greatness of the Renaissance. The Renaissance learning, the apparently boundless vistas which it had opened to the human spirit, and the consciousness of his own power, evidently intoxicated Marlowe with a vast ambition to achieve results which in his youthful inexperience he could scarcely even picture to himself.

Thank you for your attention