



The Marlowe Papers: A Novel

Ros Barber

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Winner of the 2013 Desmond Elliott Prize

Longlisted for the 2013 Women's Prize for Fiction

You're the author of the greatest plays of all time.

But nobody knows.

And if it gets out, you're dead.

On May 30, 1593, a celebrated young playwright was killed in a tavern brawl in London. That, at least, was the official version. Now Christopher Marlowe reveals the truth: that his "death" was an elaborate ruse to avoid a conviction of heresy; that he was spirited across the English Channel to live on in lonely exile; that he continued to write plays and poetry, hiding behind the name of a colorless man from Stratford—one William Shakespeare.

With the grip of a thriller and the emotional force of a sonnet, this remarkable novel in verse gives voice to a man who was brilliant, passionate, and mercurial. A cobbler's son who counted nobles among his friends, a spy in the Queen's service, a fickle lover and a declared religious skeptic, Christopher Marlowe always courted trouble. In this memoir, love letter, confession, and settling of accounts, Ros Barber brings Christopher Marlowe and his era to vivid life in *The Marlowe Papers*.

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