The attacks on Kit Marlowe’s reputation following the Deptford register entry that he had been ‘slain by Francis Frizer’ were two-fold: Richard Baines’s note, and Kyd’s letters to Sir John Puckering. Neither was circulated to the general public. Baines was an informer and Kyd was trying to clear his own name. Anonymity was Marlowe’s fate in June 1593, not instant vilification; but these pieces of correspondence sowed the seed for sporadic vilification over the next hundred years, and have attained an importance beyond their merit.

The first revelation in Baines’s allegations was the placing of Marlowe in Raleigh’s circle, though he was credited with Hariot’s work about Old Testament chronology. Baines claimed Marlowe said ‘that the Indians and many Authors of antiquity have assuredly writen above 16 thousand years agone where as Adam is proved to have lived w’hin 6 thousand yeares’, and praised Hariot ‘that Moyses was but a Jugler, & that one Heriots being Sir W Raleighs man can do more than he’.

Two relevant facts emerge from this. The source of Baines’s information is not given other than as Marlowe talking in Raleigh’s circle, and Baines could not conceivably have been a member and have heard the remarks first-hand; and Hariot has turned out to be right, as Old Testament chronology is not scientifically accurate. So modern writers who claim that Marlowe was an atheist, and cite Baines, fly in the face of what they themselves believe. This had not been done with, say, Raleigh and Shakespeare, and Marlowe deserves better treatment. It is an example of how some writers want to paint Marlowe blacker than he was.

Baines made an allegation that foreshadowed Nietzsche.
WHO WAS KIT MARLOWE?

Marlowe was supposed to have said 'that the beginning of Religion was only to keep men in awe'. This again sounds more like Hariot than the author of Doctor Faustus, who was genuinely in awe of divine retribution.

Contradictory remarks follow.

That it was an easy matter for Moyses being brought vp in all the artes of the Egiptians to abuse the Jewes being a rude & grosse people.

That Christ was a bastard and his mother dishonest.

That he was the sonne of a Carpenter, and that if the Jewes among whome he was borne did Crucify him theie best knew him and whence he Came.

'The Jewes being a rude & grosse people' is an accusation which might be levelled against the author of The Jew of Malta. But the same Jews are imputed to have judgement: 'they best knew him and whence he Came'. These are examples of irreligious remarks which a Catholic of the Elizabethan period liked to describe as 'Protestant'. Protestants, to informers of Baines's Catholic sympathies, were irreligious; Elizabeth's court should return to the true religion, or ensure this by naming a Catholic successor.

Papist sympathies are then imputed to Marlowe.

That if there be any god or any good religion, then it is in the papistes because the service of god is performed wth more Ceremonies, as Elevation of the mass, organs, singing men, Shaven Crownes & cta. that all protestantes are Hypocriticall asses.

In Baines's picture Marlowe is inconsistent, to say the least! There are other irreligious allegations, and then the two, again inconsistent, about homosexuality.

That St John the Evangelist was bedfellow to C[hrist] and leaned alyvais in his bosome, that he vsed him as the sinners of Sodoma.

That all they that loue not Tobacco & Boies were fooles.

Another alleged 'belief' contains praise of Catholic-type ceremonial, mixed with a reference to pipe-smoking.

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That if Christ would haue instituted the sacrament wth more Ceremoniall Reverence it would haue bin had in more admiration, that it would haue bin much better being administered in a Tobacco pipe.

Baines concludes:

These things, wth many other shall by good & honest witnes be aproved to be his opinions and Comon Speeches, and that this Marlow doth not only hould them himself, but almost into every Company he Cometh he perswades men to Atheism willing them not to be afeard of bugbeares and hobgoblins, vterly scorning both god and his ministers as J Richard Baines will Justify & approue both by mine oth and the testimony of many honest men, and almost al men with whom he hath Conversed any time will testify the same, and as I think all men in Christianity ought to indevor that the mouth of so dangerous a member may be stopped, he saith likewise that he hath quoted a number of Contraieties oute of the Scripture wth he hath giuen to some great men who in Convenient time shalbe named. When these things shalbe Called in question the witnes shalbe produced.

Baines had begun preparing the allegations when he knew Marlowe was accused of atheism and was appearing before the Privy Council. He received an unexpected gift about the evil ways of Protestants (against which his efforts were aimed) when he heard of the entry at Deftord. That Marlowe's friends did not respond was probably because they did not know of Baines's allegations. Others of Raleigh's circle were to be accused the next year of atheism, and to be 'examined' at Cerne Abbas.

Kyd's first letter to Sir John Puckering has already been quoted, as Kyd and Marlowe were 'writinge in one chamber twoe years synce' and Kyd knew more about Marlowe than Baines. Kyd explained that he came to meet Marlowe when working for the same troupe of players.

The main reason for Kyd's first letter was to claim that he, Kyd, was unjustly accused of atheism and that Marlowe owned the offending paper. Even then he only said: 'to cleere my selfe of being thought an Atheist, which some will sweare he was.' Not everyone would accuse Marlowe of atheism.
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Kyd went on to describe the wide-ranging discussions of Marlowe, 'Harriott, Warner, Royden, and some stationers of Paul's churchyard'. Hariot, a scholar of considerable standing, thus appeared in both sets of accusations. In fact Kyd's second letter, unsigned, demonstrates probable collusion with Baines. Kyd's first two points are similar to two in Baines's list, but in the second Paul has become the juggler, not Moses. If Baines contrived a meeting with Kyd in prison, perhaps they could not hear each other clearly.

The two points were:

1. He would report St John to be o' savio' Christes Alexis I cover it with reverence and trembling that is that Christ did loue him with an extraordinary louve.
2. That for me to wryte a poem of St paules conversion as I was determined he said wold be as if I should go wryte a book of fast & loose, esteeming Paul a Jugler.

Baines probably told Kyd of the Deptford entry, as Kyd refers to Marlowe's alleged 'rashness in attempting soden pryvie injuries to men' though I did 'often reprehend him for it'. Marlowe's three court appearances, and the reasons for them, show that Marlowe was gentler than many of his contemporaries, and there is no record of Kyd's being involved with any of them; Kyd saw in Baines's news a chance to condemn Marlowe in an effort to exonerate himself. He did not succeed. Kyd was not exonerated. And it was several years before criticism of Marlowe was to appear in writing again.

This new criticism was by a Puritan named Thomas Beard, in the Theatre of Gods Judgement (1597), and it sparked off defence of Kit with the publication of Hero and Leander the next year. Beard's criticisms were:

Not inferior to any of the former in Atheisme & impiety, and equall to all in manner of punishment was one of our own nation, of fresh and late memory, called Marlin, by profession a scholler, brought vp from his youth in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, but by practise a play-

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maker, and a Poet of scurrillitie, who by giving too large a swinge to his owne wit, and suffering his lust to haue the full raines, fell (not without just desert) to that outrage and extremity, that hee denied God and his sonne Christ, and not only in word blaspheimed the trinitie, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote bookes against it, affirming our Saviour to be but a deceiuer, and Moses to be but a conjurer and seducer of the people, and the holy Bible but vaine and idle stories, and all religion but a deuce of policie. But see what a hooke the Lord put in the nothrils of this barking dogge: It so fell out, that in London streets as he purposed to stab one whom he ought a grudge vnto with his dagger, the other party perceiving so avoided the stroke, that withall catching hold of his wretch, he stabbed his owne dagger into his owne head, in such sort, that notwithstanding all the means of surgerie that could be wrought, hee shortly after died thereof. The manner of his death being so terrible (for hee euen cursed and blaspheimed to his last gaspe, and together with his breast an oth flew out of his mouth) that it was not only a manifest signe of Gods judgement, but also an horrible and fearefull terour to all that beheld him. But herein did the justice of God most notably appeare, in that hee compelled his owne hand which had written those blasphemies to be the instrument to punish him, and that in his braine, which had deuised the same.

Beard's piece was garbled, even about the stabbing, which he placed in a London street, and he has Marlowe stabbing himself. Extraordinarily this picture of Marlowe is sometimes quoted, even though it bears little resemblance to the character of Marlowe in his writing, and none to what happened, including the Deptford misapprehensions. Several other Puritans took up this description in the years that followed, adding ornament that divorced it still further from fact:

We read of one Marlin, a Cambridge Scholler, who was a Poet, and a filthy Play-maker, this wretch accounted that meeke seruant of God Moses to be but a Coniurer, and our sweete Saviour but a seducer and a deceiuer of the people. But harken yee braine-sicke and prophane Poets, and Players, that bewitch idle eares with foolish vanities: what fell vpon this prophane wretch, hauing a quarrell against one whom
he met in a stree in London, and would haue stabd him: But
the partie perceiuing his villany preuented him with catching his hand,
and turning his owne dagger into his braines, and so blaspheming
and cursing, he yelded vp his stinking breath: mark this yee Players,
that lue by making fooles laugh at sinne and wickednesse.

Edmund Rudierde
The Thunderbolt of Gods Wrath against Harde-hearted
and Stiffe-necked Sinners, 1618.

In two versions (Francis Meres Palladis Tamia, 1598, and
Anthony a Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, 1691) Frizer was a rival
in love for ‘a certain Woman’. So whatever the inaccuracies of
the descriptions of Marlowe’s death, no one was accusing him of
homosexuality in the seventeenth century!

But see the end of this person, which was noted by all, especially
the Precisians. For it so fell out, that he being deeply in love with
a certain Woman, had for his rival a bawdy serving man, one rather
fit to be a Pimp, than an ingenuous Amoretto as Marlo conceived
himself to be. Whereupon Marlo taking it to be a high affront, rush’d
in upon, to stab, him, with his dagger. But the serving man being
very quick, so avoided the stroke, that with all catching hold of
Marlo’s wrist, he stab’d his own dagger into his own head, in such
sort, that notwithstanding all the means of surgery that could be
wrought, he shortly after died of his wound.

Anthony a Wood
Athenae Oxonienses, 1691.

From Edmund Rudierde’s piece of 1618 we see that Marlowe’s
alleged statements ‘that Moses was a conjurer’ or juggler, and
Christ a ‘seducer’, were the only ones still quoted. Moses also
featured in the accusations against Raleigh’s circle at Cerne Abbas
and later. No doubt Baines went on talking, and then interested
parties for and against Marlowe’s and Raleigh’s circles sought
out and read relevant documents, including Baines’s note of 1593.
Shakespeare had read this note by the time he wrote the scenes
about the burial of Ophelia in Hamlet. Shakespeare was to re-
member Marlowe in The Tempest at the end of his career, earlier

in the Sonnets, and there are a number of Faustus quotes in the
Ophelia burial scenes in Hamlet as well as the reference to
Baines’s note. This was when Hamlet talked of the ‘bugs and
goblins in my life’, echoing Baines’s ‘willing them not to be
afraid of bugbeares and hobgoblins’.

There are similar references in both plays to Alexander and
Caesar, and to Wittenberg, where both Hamlet and Faustus had
studied. Faustus’s ‘Mountains and hills, come, come and fall
on me’, becomes Hamlet’s ‘And, if thou prate of mountains, let
them throw Millions of acres on us’, which Hamlet said standing
in the grave.

Both call on moving stars:

Hamlet: . . . whose phase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand . . .

Faustus: Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease . . .
The stars move still, time runs, . . .
You stars reigned at my nativity . . .
Now draw up Faustus . . .

In Shakespeare’s play, at the grave, Laertes said to Hamlet
‘The devil take thy soul!’ which is what happened to Faustus.
While some critics think Shakespeare’s Hamlet refers to the
Earl of Essex because Lord Burleigh is satirized as Polonius,
there is no doubt that Shakespeare thought of Marlowe in
Ophelia’s burial scenes. Most probably Hamlet was just Hamlet;
there had been an earlier play by Kyd, and the Danish Amleth
legend was well known. Polonius/Burleigh, and Hamlet/
Marlowe in the burial scenes, were separate ingredients.

However, because Shakespeare thought of Marlowe in this
way it does suggest that he might have been present at a garden
burial of Marlowe.

The publication of Hero and Leander after Thomas Beard’s
criticisms, with its introduction by Blout which obliquely alludes to such a burial setting, brought in Audrey Walsingham's name with the dedication to her of Chapman's completion of the poem. It is possible she was the subject of the 'lewd love' for whom Marlowe's rival, a serving man, slew him, according to Francis Meres in 1598—the year of *Hero and Leander*'s publication—and the woman for whom the serving man was 'rather fit to be a Pimp' according to Anthony a Wood ninety years later. Frizer did conduct some shady deals for Lady Audrey.

The manuscript copy of 'Come Live With Me and Be My Love', coupled with Raleigh's 'Reply', which appeared in the commonplace book of the chaplain to the Earl of Pembroke, could have been given to him by Audrey, who was a friend of Mrs Thornborough (according to evidence given at the trial of the Earl and Countess of Somerset for the murder of Thomas Overbury). Marlowe of course was connected with the Pembroke household in that he had written *Edward II* for the Earl's players, but he would not necessarily have known the chaplain.

The indictment against a man called Richard Chomley by an anonymous informer should also be noted. Irreligious accusations against him are so like those imputed to Marlowe that they seem to have been standard form at the time, and not personalized.

His seconde course is to make a Ieste of the Scripture wth these fearfull horrible & damnable speeches, that Ihesus Christe was a bastarde S' Mary a whore & the Angell Gabriell a Bawde to the holy ghoeste & that Christe was Iustly p[er]secuted by the Iews for his owne foolishnes that Moyse was a Jugler & Aaron a Cosoner the one for his miracles to Pharao to prove there was a god, & the other for takainge the Earerings of the children of Israell to make a golden calfe wth many other blasphemous speeches of the devine essence of god wth I feare to rehearse This Cursed Cholmeley hath Lx therefore of his company & hee is seldom in his felowes & therefore I bee-seech yo worship have a special care of yo' selfe in apprehendinge him for they bee resolute murderinge myndes.

**Aftermath**

However, Chomley differed in one way from Marlowe. He made accusations against others of atheism and machiavellianism, according to the informer. This at least demonstrates that Marlowe was not unusual in being thus accused. Some people who read about Marlowe in isolation make the mistake of thinking that atheism and machiavellianism charges were rare. According to the indictment, Chomley accused the most unlikely people of these evils.

That hee speaketh in generall all evill of the Counsell; sayenge that they are all Atheistes & Machiavillians, especially my Lord Admirall.

That hee made certen libellious verses in Comendacen of papistes & Seminary priestes very greatlye inveighinge against the State, amonge wth lynes this was one, Nor may the Prince deny the Papall Crowne.

That hee had a certen booke (as hee saith) deliverd him by S' Robt Cecil of whom hee geveth very scandalous reporte, that hee should invite him to consider thereof & to frame verses & libells in Comendacen of constant Priests & vertuous Recusants, this booke is in Custode & is called an Epistle of Comforte & is printed at Paris.

That he railes at Mr Topcliffe & hath written another libell IOyntlye againsts S' Francis Drake & Iustice younge whom hee saith hee will Couple vp together because hee hateth them alike.

That when the muteny happened after the Portingale voyage in the Strand hee said that hee repented of nothinhe more then that hee had not killed my Lord Threasor wth his owne handes sayenge that hee could not have Done god better service, this was spoken in the hearinge of Franciss Clerke & many other Souldiers.

That hee saith hee doeth entirely hate the Lord Chamberlyen & hath good cause to so doe.

He does not forget Marlowe, and claims that Marlowe actually spoke about atheism to him as well as to Raleigh's circle.

It was easy for the few people who claimed to have heard atheism preached by Marlowe to do so after his death, as Marlowe could not defend himself. But against such statements should be put Marlowe's own *Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe had spoken for himself in his plays.
WHO WAS KIT MARLOWE?

Due to circumstances not of his own making, Marlowe has appeared an enigmatic figure. This is not so if hearsay statements are seen in perspective, if he is placed in his period, and if his works are read without preconceived ideas.

Perhaps he achieved success too young, but as the forces which helped him to early success also caused his eclipse, one cannot be taken without the other.

He was a pioneering genius, leaving an example both as playwright and poet for others to follow. The first novelists, for example, did not achieve for their art form what Marlowe did, in his late twenties, with _Edward II_ and _Doctor Faustus_.

Marlowe's life complemented his work, and it is sad if unsubstantiated hearsay statements confuse understanding of his personality.

For example, his youthful beliefs, as set out in _Tamburlaine_, inspire all lovers of beauty:

What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?
If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspir'd their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admired themes;
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit;
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.

This is Christopher Marlowe.